

Antigua and Barbuda engages in high-level discussions at WGS

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Discussions were described as highly productive, focusing on co-operation to unlock untapped tourism potential, the development of air-links between Africa and the Caribbean, and opportunities for bilateral investment. The meeting concluded with an agreement to establish a Joint Technical Team to further explore areas of mutual collaboration. The team will

be headed by Antigua and Barbuda's Non-Resident Ambassador to the State of Qatar, Theon Ali.

Meanwhile, Minister Maria Browne led a bilateral engagement with a senior representative of **JETEX**, a global leader in private aviation services, including Fixed Base Operations (FBOs), VIP terminal management,

The Antigua and Barbuda delegation attending the World Governments Summit (WGS) in Dubai has engaged in high-level discussions marking a strong and purposeful start to the country's participation in the global forum.

Led by Prime Minister Gaston Browne, together with the Minister of Works, Maria Browne, and other officials, the delegation attended the official opening of the Summit, following which Prime Minister Browne engaged in several rounds of bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening South-South cooperation, expanding economic opportunities, and advancing strategic partnerships.

Prime Minister Browne's first bilateral meeting was held with the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.



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and bespoke services for high-net-worth and ultra-high-net-worth clientele. Discussions centered on Antigua and Barbuda's potential as a hub within the niche of private aviation and luxury travel services.

Minister Browne underscored that Antigua and Barbuda is well positioned to explore this business opportunity, noting that the country's modern infrastructure, coupled with its reputation for privacy, exclusivity, and high-end hospitality, aligns well with the expectations of JETEX's clientele. JETEX committed to undertaking a visit to Antigua and Barbuda within the coming weeks to further assess and advance this potential collaboration.

Prime Minister Browne subsequently held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart from the Republic of Botswana, President Duma Gideon Boko. The Prime Minister commended Botswana as one of Africa's most politically stable economies, with strong public institutions and a long-standing record of prudent economic management. Discussions included proposals for establishing joint technical committees to explore cooperation in public sector capacity development and the role of sovereign wealth funds in supporting social welfare programmes.

Botswana also expressed keen interest in learning from Antigua and Barbuda's successful Citizenship by Investment Programme, recognizing the country as a leading example of effective implementation.

Further engagements included a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Professor Dr. Amon Murwira. Talks focused on collaboration in developing joint tourism packages between the two countries, as well as potential cooperation in military and defence-related areas.

Prime Minister Browne concluded the day with a series of media engagements. He is scheduled to continue his active participation at WGS 2026 as a panelist in the main Summit session and at a high-level roundtable discus-

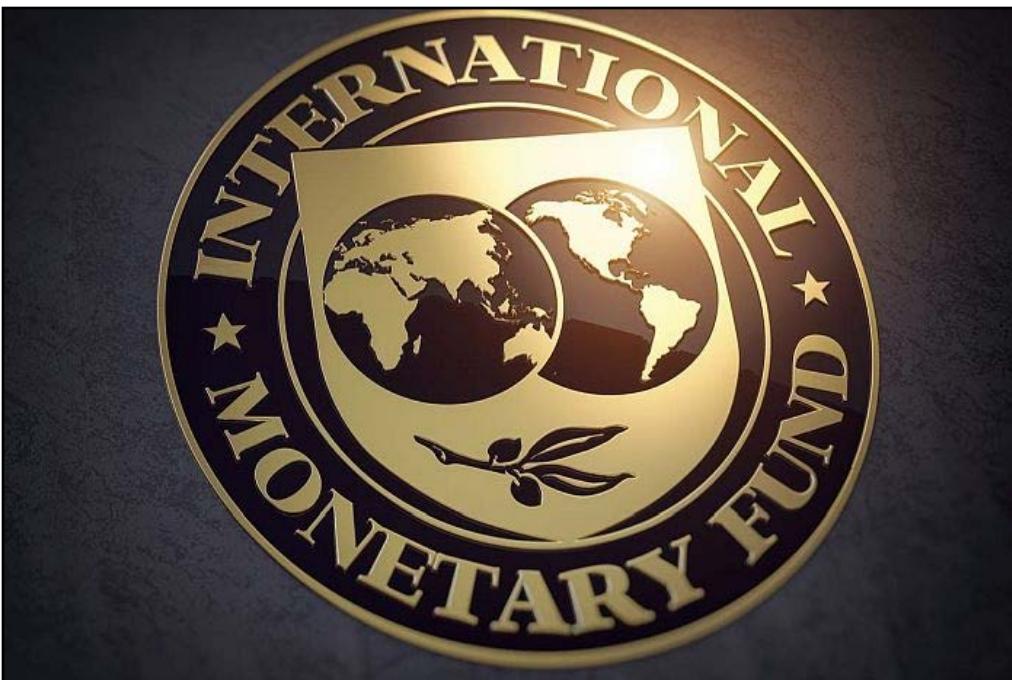


sion on the **Future of Tourism**.

Prime Minister Browne and Minister Browne were supported throughout the day by Ambassador Theon Ali;

Special Envoy Armand Arton; and Antigua and Barbuda's Climate Ambassador, Ruleta Camacho-Thomas.

IMF predicts further improvements to the local economy



predicting further strengthening of the Antigua and Barbuda economy for the fiscal year, 2926.

Following the annual Article 4 consultation when the IMF and other financial institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank, met with top government officials, the IMF said its staff's baseline is for Antigua and Barbuda's economic expansion to continue at a stable pace.

"Staff projects real GDP growth in 2026 of 2.8 percent, converging in the medium term to the estimated potential growth rate of 2½ percent.

"This projection assumes a pickup in visitor arrivals, supported by Antigua and Barbuda's hosting of events

of Government Meeting in November 2026, and expanded room capacity and port facilities. Staff projects inflation to stabilize at around 2 percent by end-2026, converging to levels in ECCU peers and the United States," the Article 4 report highlighted.

The report noted that current account deficit is expected to narrow modestly from 11½ percent of GDP in 2025 to 10¾ percent in 2026 and to continue gradually improving over the medium term. Staff's baseline envisages a further gradual decline in the public debt-to-GDP ratio, consistent with meeting the regional debt target (60 percent of GDP before 2035), but with arrears and high financing needs yet to be ful-

ly addressed.

The IMF report cautioned that there could be risks to its forecast driven by instability in the global situation. "Risks to the outlook are tilted to the downside amid global headwinds, but upside risks are significant as well. External risks include prolonged global uncertainty, deepening geopolitical fragmentation, and commodity price volatility, which could potentially dampen financial inflows and growth prospects," it warned.

Additionally, the IMF advised that CIP-related inflows are subject to downside risks following recent U.S. travel policy announcements. Additional downside risks stem from vulnerabilities related to extreme weather events and capacity constraints in the construction sector.

"There are also significant upside risks, including stronger tourism demand; greater payoffs from investments in improved air connectivity, development of new cruise facilities, and hosting of special events; and accelerated progress in implementing productivity-enhancing structural reforms," the report stated.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, the country's Finance Minister, has welcomed the IMF report noting that it was a validation for the government's 'excellent stewardship' of the nation's economy and affairs.



AG Sir Steadroy Benjamin spearheads efforts to establish a Law School at UWI FIC

The Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin is pushing ahead with plans to establish a law school at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus...this is expected to become operational for the start of the 2027-28 Academic Year.

The Attorney General sees this as an essential development not only for Antigua and Barbuda but for the other OECS countries as well.

Sir Steadroy has reported that talks are at an advanced stage for the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus to start delivering the LLB programme locally, with support from the Jamaica-based UWI Mona Campus.

Sir Steadroy says the move is about better access for Antiguans and Barbudans and students across the OECS, while maintaining high standards.



Adding a law school forms part of the expansion of the course offerings at the

UWI FIC, which is seen as a university that will serve the OECS region.

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Local News

Nine trainers certified in Training for Instructors Course

Nine additional persons from Antigua and Barbuda are now certified to conduct training in Shelter and Shelter Management and Initial Damage Assessment after a five-day course funded by the US government's Regional Disaster Assistance Programme.

The "Hand Off Course", held last week at the National Office of Disaster Services (NODS), is a series of sessions that focused on Content and Training for Instructors.

Disaster Management Training Facilitator, Velda Joseph, led the sessions and was supported by Disaster Risk Management Specialist responsible for Antigua and Barbuda, Terry Morris.

Joseph said the training went exceedingly well. *"I'm happy to say that all nine persons passed and so Antigua and Barbuda now has a new crop of nine persons who are able to help in spreading the good news, spreading the word on how persons can build resilience, how persons can better prepare themselves".*

Joseph says this should help the country see a reduction in the effects of a disaster resulting in less pressure being placed on the national system. *"We're hoping that they go through the different communities and teach per-*



sons, instruct persons, get a new set of instructors", said Joseph.

Workshop participant Mellissa Chandler said she benefited greatly from the sessions. *"The information was great and the facilitators were on point and gave us crucial information to help us be better trainers. The participants as well were very interactive and we worked together as a team to ensure that everything went smoothly. It was a very taxing five days but we thoroughly enjoyed it and the camarade-*

rie", said Chandler.

Tijahma Burns was another participant in the five-day workshop. *"I thought the different levels that we would have gone through were very insightful. It basically gave us new insight and a lot of information and knowledge on how to operate during disaster situations", said Burns.*

The workshop participants can travel to other countries to help build their own team of instructors and also to work in the aftermath of a disaster.

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Police probe the discovery of a body on the old Ottos Shool compound

Police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the discovery of a male body on the compound of the Old Ottos School shortly after midday on Monday, February 2.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the deceased was discovered in the back of an abandoned Hyundai Tucson motor jeep.

The individual was found partially dressed, wearing long blue jeans and black socks, and without a shirt.

The body was pronounced dead at approximately 2:25 p.m by a medical doctor, who arrived at the scene.

Police are now treating the matter as a suspicious death and are



actively working to ascertain the full identity of the deceased, as well as the circumstances surrounding the incident.

The police are appealing to anyone who may have information that could assist with this inves-

tigation to contact the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3931, or call Crimestoppers at 800-TIPS (8477).

The police will continue to provide further updates as the investigation unfolds.

Police Targeted Operations Result in Seizure of Firearm and Ammunition and Multiple Arrests



Police officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department Task Force (CIDTF) and the Gang and Guns Suppression Unit

(GAGSU) conducted a series of targeted operations and executed multiple search warrants across Antigua on Tuesday, resulting in several arrests and the seizure of a firearm and ammunition.

During the coordinated operations, several individuals were taken into custody on suspicion of House-breaking and Larceny.

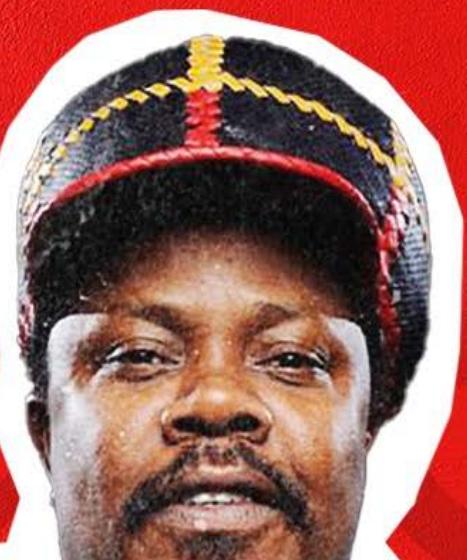
Police also seized one (.25) pistol, along with a magazine containing six (6) matching rounds of ammunition, and large sums of Eastern Caribbean and Canadian Currencies.

The items were taken to the police station for further investigation. The suspects remain in police custody as investigations continue.

The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda remains resolute in its commitment to disrupting criminal activity, removing illegal firearms from communities, and ensuring the safety and security of all residents.

The public is encouraged to continue partnering with the police by reporting suspicious or criminal activity to the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913 or Crimestoppers at 800-TIPS (8477).

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Local News

Principal Nursing Officer was among participants at a recent regional meeting on primary health care



The Ministry of Health was represented by the Acting Principal Nursing Officer, Almarie Coates at the Second high-level, Regional Meeting of the Primary Health Care Alliance for the Americas, under the theme: *Primary Health Care as an Accelerator of Health System Transformation in the Americas*.

The meeting took place in Rio de Janeiro Brazil, during the period January 26th -28th 2026.

This was a joint initiative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO),

the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Over two hundred participants representing twenty-four countries took part in this high-level meeting, these included: the Director of Pan American Health Organization, Jarbas Barbosa, and Assistant Director, Dr. Rhonda Sealy Thomas, Ministers of Health from the Caribbean and Latin America. Directors of Primary Health Care Services in the Caribbean and Latin America. Principal/ Chief Nursing Officers.

In this meeting, a review of the progress achieved and the definition of the next phase of collective action were done. This event also served as a strategic platform for exchange, learning and alignment among Ministries of Health, technical partners and financial institutions with the shared goals of accelerating the transformation of Primary Health Care centered health systems.

Objectives of the meeting were:

- Review country trajectories in implementing PHC as an accelerator of Health system
- Exchange innovative experiences in national-level PHC implementation that demonstrate improvements in access, outcomes, and efficiency
- Identify opportunities to expand investment and innovation in integrated, people centered service delivery
- Take stock of the alliance's progress in meeting its objectives and strengthening regional collaboration
- Reaffirm the strategic value of the alliance for primary Health Care and establish a renewed commitment from its members to deepen joint action in Primary Health care based health transformation.

The Alliance for Primary Health Care in the Americas was launched in December 2023 at Montevideo, Uruguay as a unique regional mechanism to accelerate Primary Health Care implementation through investment, and innovation.

Its purpose is to support countries in transforming their health systems through joint action, coordinated policy guidance and harmonized investment planning



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SLBMC Observes World Cancer Day Under the Theme “United by Unique”

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February 4, 2026

SLBMC observes World Cancer Day under the theme 'United by Unique.' We honor the individual journeys of our patients and remain committed to providing compassionate, patient-centered care for all.

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It's World Cancer Day, February 4, 2026, as the world pauses to recognize the millions of people who are affected with this disease and the herculean efforts that are being made across the globe to find cures and to save lives.

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLB-

MC) joins the global community in observing World Cancer Day under the theme "United by Unique," which highlights the individuality of every cancer journey while reinforcing the shared responsibility to improve prevention, care, and outcomes for all.

The theme recognizes that no two cancer experiences are the same, yet patients, families, healthcare professionals, and communities are united in the collective fight against the disease. SLBMC continues to provide patient-centered cancer care, grounded in compassion, clinical expertise, and respect for each individual's needs.

As the country's national referral hospital, SLBMC emphasizes that awareness and early detection are the most powerful tools in our arsenal. The hospital encourages the public to prioritize their health by engaging in recommended screenings, seeking medical advice promptly, and maintaining open communication with healthcare providers.

On this World Cancer Day, SLBMC also pauses to acknowledge the dedication of its oncology clinicians, nurses, and support staff. Their tireless work ensures that every patient is supported, heard, and cared for throughout their journey.

SLBMC remains committed to strengthening cancer services and working with partners to ensure that every patient receives care that reflects both their unique experience and the highest standards of quality and dignity.

Saturday 7th February 2026, 05:30
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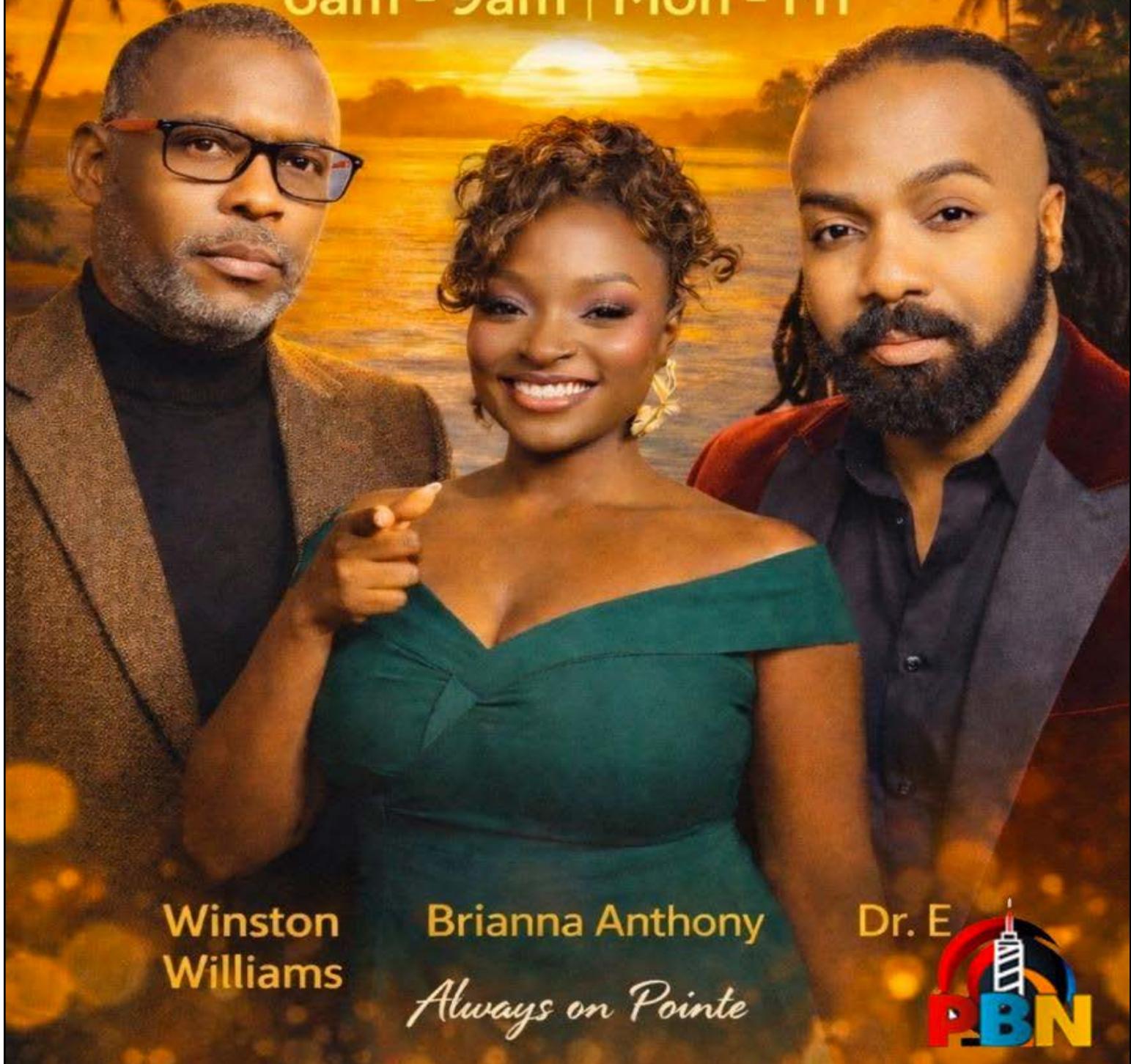


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Regional News

Johnson Smith urges Haiti to respect Feb 7 red line on transition amid council turmoil

Days before Haiti's transitional government is set to expire, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith has warned that any move away from the February 7 deadline would risk further fragmentation, insisting that the agreed-upon date must be the final day for the current council.

Deep-seated infighting within the country's Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) has reached a breaking point, with a majority of the council voting to fire Prime Minister Alix Dider Fils-Aimé on January 21, weeks before the body's own mandate is set to expire on February 7.

"We are deeply concerned," Johnson Smith told journalists at the International Economic Forum in Panama City last week.

"Fragmentation at this time is the last thing that is needed. What is needed is a clear recognition that February 7th was agreed, after deep stakeholder engagement, to be the final day of existence of the Transitional Presidential Council. And the need to move immediately to a clear mechanism or clear leadership that will deliver elections and continue the stable leadership that has been delivered under the presidency, in the TPC of President [Laurent] Saint-Cyr, and Prime Minister Fils-Aimé, as a combined effort, that that is something that does seem to bode well for Haiti," she added.

Her comments follow a statement issued by CARICOM, which called for Haitian leaders to halt the "fragmentation" that regional leaders say serves only to empower the French-speaking nation's marauding gangs.

Noting that the council's mandate must end as scheduled, the regional bloc urged stakeholders to abandon the current political impasse and prioritise a consensus-driven path towards elections.



In a sharp rebuke of the internal power struggles, the regional body said: "The current impasse within the Haitian Transitional Presidential Council, following the inconclusive efforts of some members to dismiss the prime minister, renders more complex an already-fraught governance transition process. Meanwhile, the people of Haiti continue to suffer unimaginable violence and deprivation. This is unacceptable. It is crucial that stakeholders put aside differences to reach consensus."

Political turmoil and gang violence have intensified the guns-for-drugs trade in Haiti and has fuelled a human-smuggling market, directly challenging Jamaica's border security and straining national resources amid a rise in irregular arrivals.

Last week, 31 Haitians – 23 males and eight females – were found in a house in Kitson Town, St Catherine, following a police operation.

In December 2025, 29 Haitians were found in an Airbnb in Portmore, with many having overstayed their allotted transit time.

Johnson Smith said a clear mechanism and leadership are needed that will deliver elections and continue

the stable leadership that has been delivered under the presidency of Saint-Cyr, and Fils-Aimé, through a combined effort.

"That is something that does seem to bode well for Haiti. And to disrupt that at this time might not be in the best interest, but we continue to engage through the EPG (Eminent Persons Group)," she said.

The council, established in April 2024 following the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, had a mandate to organise free and fair elections.

The legal framework governing this transition explicitly set February 7, 2026 as the date a new, democratically elected president was supposed to be sworn into office.

With no elected successor ready, the council's legal authority to rule effectively expires on Saturday, creating a power vacuum that many fear will lead to further unrest.

Several members of the council are seeking to extend their mandate, arguing that this is to maintain order, eventually holding elections in late 2026 or 2027.

However, critics argue that because the council failed in its primary mission, it loses legitimacy on February 7.

Some have called for a Supreme Court judge to take over as a provisional president, a move that has historical precedent but is currently legally disputed.

The United States and other international partners have recently taken a hard line, underscoring that the transition's timeline is non-negotiable, even as they support Fils-Aimé to keep the government functioning. (Jamaica Gleaner)

Tobago faces supply shortages amid cargo shipping

A supply shortage is emerging in Tobago amid the absence of an operational cargo vessel to supply the sister island.

The Express visited several supermarkets and hardware stores across Tobago yesterday and observed shortages of key supplies, with cement notably unavailable at a number of outlets. One businessman said he had implemented reduced working hours for staff in an effort to avoid layoffs.

Chairman of the Tobago arm of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce Curtis Williams says developments affecting the inter-island sea bridge are cause for serious concern, coupled with a shortage of space on existing vessels to transport cargo between Trinidad and Tobago.

“The Galleons Passage cannot bring the cargo that is needed on the island, so it leaves the construction sector, it leaves the food and beverage sector, it leaves other sectors in real challenges. Those folks in scrap iron—they can’t even move their scrap iron from point A to point B; those that need cement for construction... they just can’t get it, they are not getting the bulk cement they accustomed getting,” Williams told the Express.

Almandoz Hardware, Belfon Hardware, Richard Hardware and Singh’s Hardware have all indicated that cement is currently unavailable, with additional



shortages reported in sand, steel, lumber and concrete blocks.

Meanwhile, some empty shelves were also observed at the PennySavers supermarket in Carnbee. Williams said two cargo vessels are required to adequately service the inter-island seabridge.

He noted that this recommendation was made last year during a high-level meeting involving Minister of Works and Infrastructure Jearlean John, THA Chief Secretary Farley Augustine and officials of the Port Authority.

“One of the measures we indicated to them is to have two cargo vessels—two smaller cargo vessels—that could reach the demand of the island, and they interchange; because when one vessel has to go on dry dock, wet dock, or when one vessel breaks down for any unforeseen circumstances, we would still have a vessel moving the cargo between the two islands.”

He warned that prices in Tobago are expected to increase in the near future.

“We are the ones seeing

the mini-marts complaining that liquor licence move from \$1,800-\$9,000; and then gas—the natural gas—is going up to feed all these manufacturers; so you know prices is going to go up in Tobago.”

There is a lack of lumber extreme shortages: There is a lack of lumber, cement, sand, and a shortage of steel at Almandoz Hardware in Scarborough Tobago.

In response to these developments, Minister of Works and Infrastructure Jearlean John said welding of the damaged Blue Wave Harmony vessel started on Sunday.

“We are very big on safety of the boat and ultimately passengers, so we sent people over since Friday to start that welding; but that did not start until Sunday because of the preliminary work that had to take place,” John said.

She said efforts were being made to have the MV Blue Wave Harmony in operation before the end of the week.

“That boat would leave the port of Scarborough for Port of Spain for some further checks and, fingers crossed,

it should be on the route by Wednesday, Thursday of this week,” she said.

And on Sunday, mechanical issues were reported aboard the T&T Spirit after the vessel departed the Port of Spain terminal at 9.30 a.m.

The ship did not arrive in Tobago until after 3 p.m., and further delays were experienced when the vessel’s ramp malfunctioned.

As a result, passengers and vehicles were unable to disembark until approximately 6 p.m.

According to the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago passenger ferry T&T Spirit is currently berthed and undergoing technical assessment at the Port of Spain Ferry Terminal. As a precautionary measure, the T&T Spirit was withdrawn from service and subsequently returned to Port of Spain Sunday and arrived after midnight yesterday. The Port Authority, in co-ordination with NIDCO, is maintaining contingency arrangements to support inter-island ferry operations and to accommodate affected passengers, including the adjustment of sailings where necessary, the Port Authority said in a release.

“The Port Authority apologises to all passengers affected by the disruption and thanks the travelling public for its patience as these assessments and operational adjustments continue,” it added. (Trinidad Express)

Regional News

Dominican Republic police say bodies of four decapitated women found near border with Haiti

Authorities in the Dominican Republic said Monday the bodies of at least four decapitated women have been found along the border it shares with Haiti, marking an unusual discovery.

Police spokesman Diego Pesqueira said the victims are Haitian and were found along the southern part of the border.

He added that Dominican authorities are only investigating one of the four deaths because only one body was found on the Dominican side.

Pesqueira said investigators believe the women were killed and then thrown into a river that swept the bodies away and deposited them where they were later found.

He said Dominican authorities detained one man who denied involvement and later turned him over to Haitian National Police.

It wasn't immediately clear if the man



was charged.

A Haitian police spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

While gang violence keeps surging across Haiti and remains common, it is rare to find the bodies of decapitated women. (AP)

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Paris prosecutors raid France offices of Elon Musk's X



The French offices of Elon Musk's X have been raided by the Paris prosecutor's cyber-crime unit, as part of an investigation into suspected offences including unlawful data extraction and complicity in the possession of child pornography.

The prosecutor's office said the probe began in January 2025 when it started looking into content recommended by the social media platform's algorithm, before being widened to include its controversial AI chatbot, Grok.

In a statement, it added that both Musk and former X chief executive Linda Yaccarino had been summoned to appear at hearings in April.

X has yet to comment but has previously characterised the investigation as an attack on free speech.

The BBC has approached the company for a response.

X previously described the widening of the probe, in July 2025, in a post at the time, as "politically-motivated" and denied allegations it had manipulated its algorithm.

Prosecutors say they are now investigating whether X has broken the law across multiple areas.

Among potential crimes it said it

would investigate were complicity in possession or organised distribution of images of children of a pornographic nature, infringement of people's image rights with sexual deepfakes and fraudulent data extraction by an organised group.

The prosecutor's office also said it was leaving X and would communicate on LinkedIn and Instagram from now on.

Separately, UK authorities have given an update on their investigations into sexual deepfakes created by Musk's AI tool Grok and shared on X.

The images - often made using real images of women without their consent - prompted a barrage of criticism in January from victims, online safety campaigners and politicians.

The company eventually intervened to prevent the practice, after Ofcom and others launched investigations.

In an update on Tuesday, Ofcom said it was continuing to investigate the platform and was treating it as "a matter of urgency".

It added it was currently unable to investigate the creation of illegal images by Grok in this case because it did not have sufficient powers relating to

chatbots.

However, another regulator - the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) - said it was launching its own probe, in conjunction with Ofcom, into the processing of personal data in relation to the Grok.

"The reports about Grok raise deeply troubling questions about how people's personal data has been used to generate intimate or sexualised images without their knowledge or consent, and whether the necessary safeguards were put in place to prevent this," said William Malcolm, the ICO's executive director for regulatory risk & innovation.

In late January, the European Commission announced an investigation into its parent company xAI over concerns about the images.

A Commission spokesperson said it was in touch with France over its search of X's office in Paris.

Pavel Durov - founder of the messaging app Telegram - criticised the French authorities on Tuesday, accusing France of being "the only country in the world that is criminally persecuting all social networks that give people some degree of freedom".

"Don't be mistaken: this is not a free country," he added in a post on X.

Durov was arrested and detained in France in August 2024 over alleged moderation lapses on his messaging app, which the Paris prosecutor's office said had failed to curb criminal activity.

He was permitted to leave the country last March after the platform made some changes to the way it operates following the arrest.

These included sharing some user data with authorities in response to legal requests. (BBC)

Trump seeks \$1bn in damages from Harvard



US President Donald Trump announced he will be seeking \$1bn (£730m) in damages from Harvard University in his administration's ongoing feud with the institution.

The news comes after the New York Times reported that the Trump administration had to backtrack from its demand for a \$200m payment in negotiations with the university.

Trump cited the story in a Truth Social post late on Monday, blaming Harvard for "feeding a lot of nonsense" to the New York Times.

Trump officials have accused Harvard of not doing enough to tackle antisemitism during pro-Palestinian protests. Harvard has rejected the accusation.

Harvard has been a central target in the White House's campaign to stamp out what it calls "woke" and

"radical left" ideologies on American campuses.

In April last year, Trump revoked around \$2bn in research grants to Harvard and froze federal funding.

The university sued the Trump administration over the move, saying no government "should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue".

A US federal court later overturned the billions in funding cuts, ruling the government had violated university's free speech rights.

The White House vowed to immediately challenge the "egregious decision", saying Harvard remains "ineligible for grants in the future".

Before Monday's announcement, the government had been in discuss-

sions with Harvard over a potential deal to unfreeze federal funding.

"We are now seeking One Billion Dollars in damages, and want nothing further to do, into the future, with Harvard University," Trump wrote on Monday.

He accused Harvard of "serious and heinous illegalities", but did not clarify how he believed it had broken the law.

Trump has previously threatened to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status and take control of the university's patents stemming from federally funded research.

Three other Ivy League universities, Columbia, Penn and Brown, struck deals with Trump to preserve funding that was at risk due to similar claims by the administration, rather than go to court. (BBC)

Clintons agree to testify on Epstein as vote looms to hold them in contempt of Congress



Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, have agreed to testify in the congressional investigation into late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. It comes days before a vote on whether to hold the couple in criminal contempt for refusing to appear before the House Oversight Committee after a months-long standoff.

Bill Clinton was acquainted with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, but has denied knowledge of his sex offending and says he cut off contact two decades ago.

It's unclear when the depositions will take place, but it will be the first time a former US president has testified to a congressional panel since Gerald Ford did so in 1983.

The Clintons had long resisted a demand to appear before the committee, saying they had already given sworn statements representing the "limited information" they had on Epstein.

They had dismissed the legal summonses issued by the committee as "nothing more than a ploy to attempt to embarrass political rivals, as President Trump has directed".

The House Oversight Committee, led by Republicans, then approved the measure to hold the Clintons in contempt late last month, with the support of several Democrats.

On Saturday, lawyers for the couple made an offer for them to provide limited testimony that would have centred

on a four-hour interview by Bill Clinton. But House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer expressed concerns that the former president would stonewall questions and run down the clock.

On Monday evening, Bill Clinton's deputy chief of staff Angel Ureña posted on X confirming the couple would appear before the panel.

"They negotiated in good faith," Ureña wrote in a tweet directed at the House Oversight Committee. "You did not. "They told you under oath what they know, but you don't care. But the former President and former Secretary of State will be there. They look forward to setting a precedent that applies to everyone."

Afterwards, it was announced that lawmakers' consideration of the contempt resolutions against the Clintons would be postponed. House Rules Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx said the Oversight Committee needed more time "to clarify with the Clintons what they are actually agreeing to".

For his part, Comer said: "I will clarify the terms they are agreeing to and then discuss next steps with my committee members."

Neither Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing by survivors of Epstein's abuse, and they have denied knowledge of his sex offending.

Hillary Clinton, former US senator and secretary of state, and the Democratic presidential nominee in 2016, has said

she never met or spoke to Epstein. Epstein's private jet logs show that Clinton took four international flights in 2002 and 2003.

Shortly after Epstein was arrested on sex trafficking charges in July 2019, Clinton's spokesperson said the former president took trips on the plane including "stops in connection with the work of the Clinton Foundation".

The former president also appears at the late financier's estate in photos that were among a batch of records released by the justice department to comply with a law passed by Congress mandating the disclosure of all investigative material relating to the late convicted paedophile.

One picture shows the former president swimming in a pool, and another shows him lying on his back with his hands behind his head in what appears to be a hot tub.

Ureña, Clinton's spokesman, said at the time the photos were released in December that they were decades old and Clinton had stopped associating with Epstein before his crimes came to light. Last month, the Clintons wrote a letter to James Comer, the House Oversight Committee chairman, criticising his handling of the Epstein investigation.

"The decisions you have made, and the priorities you have set as chairman regarding the Epstein investigation, have prevented progress in discovering the facts about the government's role," the letter said.

They added: "There is no plausible explanation for what you are doing other than partisan politics."

Comer previously noted the subpoenas to the Clintons were approved in a bipartisan vote and said "no-one is above the law".

"We communicated with President Clinton's legal team for months now, giving them opportunity after opportunity to come in, to give us a day, and they continue to delay, delay, delay," said the Kentucky Republican. (BBC)

Rape trial begins for son of Norway's crown princess in tense moment for royal family



A year and a half after Marius Borg Høiby was arrested over a violent episode at a woman's flat's in Oslo, the son of Norway's crown princess has gone on trial, in the biggest case to come to court here for years.

Wearing a brown sweater and glasses, Høiby pleaded not guilty to four charges of rape, as the public prosecutor detailed the 38 charges against him.

His lawyer said he was a young man who deserved a fair trial but press treatment of him had been anything but normal.

The seven-week trial opened at Oslo district court against a backdrop of almost daily revelations surrounding him and his mother, Crown Princess Mette-Marit.

The crown princess is facing increasing criticism after it emerged she was cited in hundreds of emails showing extensive contacts with late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

She has admitted showing "poor judgement", but the fallout has already begun, with one organisation dropping her as patron for its annual prize.

Her son appeared in court on Tuesday in an ordinary sweater, white T-shirt and green trousers, his blond hair cut

short. He later removed the sweater and sat in court in a simple T-shirt.

On the eve of the trial, it emerged he had been detained for a fourth time, in circumstances not unlike his initial arrest, on suspicion of assault, making threats with a knife and violating a restraining order.

As police have placed him on remand for four weeks, he began the trial in custody.

His defence team intends to appeal against the decision.

Heavy court restrictions have been imposed on the trial, with a ban on any photos of the defendant inside or outside court. The judge broke into English at one point to emphasise the rules to international media.

As the charges were read out, he pleaded not guilty to the four accusations of rape, speaking very quietly.

He partially admitted charges relating to a woman in Frogner in western Oslo in August 2024, admitting bodily harm but denying abuse. He admitted to several other charges, including violating a restraining order, transporting marijuana and speeding.

At times he fiddled with a bracelet as public prosecutor Sturla Henriksbø

detailed the charges against him.

Sitting opposite, to the right of the prosecutor, were some of the women named as victims in the case. The court has banned any detail that might identify the four women involved - a point underlined by the judge as proceedings opened.

The prosecutor set out details of the rape charges, alleging that the first took place during an after-party in December 2018 in the basement of the defendant's parents' house when he was 21.

All four are alleged to have taken place when the women were either asleep or incapacitated.

Defence counsel Ellen Holager Andenæs said Marius Borg Høiby should be treated as innocent unless proven otherwise, and said it would be strange if someone facing such a "tsunami of negative publicity over such a long time" did not feel they were losing control of their life and destiny.

The royal family will not attend the trial in Courtroom 250 at Oslo district court, which has attracted enormous interest throughout Norway and beyond.

Commentators do not see that as particularly surprising, with King Harald V and Queen Sonja heading to the Winter Olympics in Italy later this week, but it adds to a sense of isolation surrounding Crown Prince Haakon's stepson.

Marius Borg Høiby was born four years before Mette-Marit married the crown prince, and although he is seen as a close member of the family, he is not part of the royal family itself and not a public figure.

He faces an array of 38 charges: rape with sexual intercourse while a woman was unconscious in October 2023

three counts of rape by sexual assault on incapacitated women - considered rape in Norway - in December 2018, March 2024 and November 2024 six counts of sexually offensive conduct without consent - including filming of victims causing bodily harm repeatedly abusing a current or ex-partner through threats, coercion or violence violating a restraining order against him transporting 3.5kg of marijuana speeding

Some of the charges involving abuse and threats in August 2024 relate to the so-called "Frogner woman", and it is understood that his latest arrest is linked to her too.

He is expected to give evidence for the first time on Wednesday. The case will be decided by three judges - if they find him guilty he could go to jail for at least 10 years.

His mother suffers from a serious lung condition and has difficulty breathing. But it is not her health that has become the talk of Norway in recent days, rather her name cited in more than 900 emails published by the US Department of Justice late last week.

The tone suggests a future queen of Norway exchanging messages with her guard down, even though she knows she is talking to a registered sex offender who had spent time in jail. It has also emerged she spent four days at his home in Florida when he was not present.

The Sex and Society foundation, which focuses on sexual and reproductive rights, has said it no longer wants Mette-Marit to act as high patron for its annual Shameless Prize, because what had emerged was incompatible with what it stood for.

The crown princess is Norway's future queen, and the decision will come as a blow to her reputation.

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre urged Mette-Marit to "explain the extent of the contacts that have taken place".

Caroline Vagle, who is royal expert for celebrity-magazine See and Hear,

believes these revelations will follow the crown princess for the rest of her life.

"The Norwegian public is shocked and disappointed, and I have to say I agree," she says. "The only right course of action now is to put all the cards on the table."

Ole-Jørgen Schulsrud-Hansen, a historian and royal correspondent for Norway's TV2, believes the princess's advisers and wider royal court should have known she was exchanging messages with Epstein and stopped it happening.

"In extension of that you also ask the foreign office. They are in place to protect Norway's standing internationally, and this is hurting that image internationally," he told the BBC.

Norway's royal family remains very popular, with a Norstat opinion poll

not long ago suggesting 73% were in favour of it.

However, the leader of Norway's Green Party, Arild Hermstad, who is a republican says the email exchanges point to a monarchy that is not working: "It really puts not only the royal family in a big squeeze, but also for Norway itself, how do you actually solve this? At least she has to be very honest and frank.

By coincidence, Norwegian MPs vote on Tuesday on a motion that republicans submit by tradition every few years, although no-one expects it to attract much support.

Nevertheless Hermstad believes many MPs are sensitive to the future of the royal house. "It's hard to imagine how they're going to get out of this really big scandal." (BBC)



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Sports News

Sea View Farm FC returns to the top of the Second Division League



The Sea View Farm football team

The Sea View Farm FC returned to winning form in the latest round of matches to regain sole leadership of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Monday.

After dropping points in their two previous outings, Sea View Farm FC recorded their eighth win in 11 matches by snatching a 2-1 victory against the JSC Progressors at the Sea View Farm playing field.

Following a goalless first half, Leon Cort scored in the 56th minute to put JSC Progressors ahead. However, Nigel Graham got the equalizer with a strike in the 62nd minute and teammate Leon O'Garry snatched the winner for Sea View Farm FC with an 81st-minute conversion.

The result allows Sea View Farm to move from third place to the top of the Second Division with 26 points, one more than the second-placed Guydadli Jets, who have two games in hand.

JSC Progressors remain on seven points after losing for the eighth time in 11 matches.

Kelton Dalso Real Blizzard kept their unbeaten run intact to remain in third place, securing their seventh win in 10 matches by snatching a one-nil win against Glanvilles FC at the New Winthorpes playing field.

Following a goalless first half, Lincoln Zerwanzah Celestine broke the deadlock by converting a penalty kick in the 58th minute to snatch victory for Real Blizzard.

The result allows Real Blizzard to

advance to 24 points, one ahead of the Young Lions of Old Road, who slipped from second to fourth place with 23 points from nine matches.

Glanvilles FC remains on seven points after suffering their fifth defeat in eight matches.

Blackburn Palace notched up their sixth win in 10 matches by pulling off a 2-0 victory against TAMO FC at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

The goals were scored by Jayvin Ambrose in the second minute and Jahkim Benjamin in the 47th minute.

The result allows Blackburn Palace to move on to 19 points, while TAMO FC remains on three points after losing for the eighth time in nine matches.

The Urlings Golden Stars claimed their fourth win in nine matches by pulling off a 3-1 victory against Bethesda SC at the Urlings playing field.

Oshale Simon scored in the 28th minute to give Bethesda a one-nil lead at halftime. Raheem Horsford scored the first of two goals by converting a penalty kick in the 53rd minute to equalize for Urlings.

Horsford converted his second goal in the 74th minute to seal the win after his teammate Taeim Tonge scored in the 58th minute to give Urlings a 2-1 lead.

The Urlings Golden Stars advanced to 14 points, while Bethesda remains on 13 points after suffering their third straight defeat in eight matches.



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Sports News

Cricket West Indies and Shane Dowrich reach amicable resolution

Cricket West Indies (CWI) and Barbadian former West Indies wicketkeeper-batsman Shane Dowrich have resolved legal matters arising from Dowrich's early return from the West Indies tour of New Zealand in 2020.

The issues are related to Dowrich's eligibility for selection and the non-renewal of his central playing contract. After engagement between the parties, the matter has now been brought to a close.

Both parties are glad to report that the legal issues surrounding Shane's early return from the New Zealand tour of 2020 have been settled amicably.

Chris Dehring, Chief Executive Officer of Cricket West Indies, said, "CWI is pleased that an agreement has been reached and welcomes Shane to be part of its coaching structure as he moves into further professional development, having retired from international cricket in December 2023."

Philip Nicholls, Attorney-at-Law for Mr. Dowrich, stated, "Shane is



Shane Dowrich

delighted that this uncertain period over the last five years has come to an end and is now looking forward to forging a coaching career and maintaining his involvement in the game he loves, having hung up his gloves in 2023.

"He welcomed the opportunity

to pass on the knowledge gained during a career that included 35 Test matches to the next generation of cricketers, and wicketkeepers in particular."

Both parties agree that the terms of the settlement will remain confidential between them.



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Sports News

Morocco to appeal sanctions over Africa Cup final against Senegal

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — Morocco has decided to appeal a ruling that resulted in fines of US\$415,000 and match bans because of a chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final, its soccer federation said Tuesday.

CAF, African soccer's governing body, last month fined the host and Senegal over unrest at last month's final in the Moroccan capital. Senegal won the game 1-0 after extra-time and decided not to appeal the ruling.

The Moroccan federation and forward Ismael Saibari were issued fines totaling US\$415,000. Saibari and captain Achraf Hakimi were also banned from games.

During the final, ball boys tried to seize a towel belonging to Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, apparently to distract him, an incident that alone led to a US\$200,000 fine for the host.

Morocco sees CAF's sanctions as disproportionate to the incidents.

"Given the incompatibility of these sanctions with the scale and severity of the incidents, the FRMF has decided to appeal these decisions," Morocco's soccer federation said in a statement.

The final was marred by Senegalese players walking off the field in protest at a stoppage-time penalty and fans at-



Morocco's Achraf Hakimi, left, and Senegal's Sadio Mane battle for the ball during the Africa Cup of Nations final soccer match between Senegal and Morocco in Rabat, Morocco, Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026. (AP)

tempting to storm the pitch. Outraged visiting supporters threw chairs and clashed with stewards. Eighteen people are awaiting trial on hooliganism charges.

CAF fined the Senegalese soccer federation and national team coach Pape Thiaw a total of US\$715,000. It also issued match suspensions to Thiaw and bans to two other players.

The match bans apply only to Africa games, not the World Cup kicking off

in June, which Senegal and Morocco have qualified for.

After the tumultuous final, the tension moved from the pitch to social media. In Morocco, human rights groups warned against a surge in what they called "hate speech toward sub-Saharan residents."

In response, officials from Morocco and Senegal called for calm, and sought to reaffirm their countries' economic and diplomatic ties.

Results of matches in the Inter-Schools' Netball League

The Ministry of Sports Inter-Schools' Netball League continued with matches in the Under-13 Secondary Division on Monday.

The Antigua Girls High School fourth team (AGHS 4) trounced Sir Novelle Richards Academy (SNRA) 17-1.

The Antigua Girls High School third team (AGHS 3) prevailed 8-4 over Christ the King High School.

The Antigua Girls High School fourth team (AGHS 4) pulled off a 7-3 victory over the Antigua Girls High School third team (AGHS 3).

The Antigua Girls High School second team (AGHS 2) snatched a 9-6 victory against Christ the King High School.

The Princess Margaret School clinched a 6-5 victory over All Saints Secondary School, and Jennings Secondary School surged to an 8-2 victory against the Antigua Girls High School first team (AGHS 1).

Antiguans to contest CONCACAF Men's Under-17 Qualifiers



The Antigua and Barbuda National Men's Under-17 football squad. (Photo courtesy of the ABFA)

The Antigua and Barbuda national team is among the teams from 34 member associations that are set to participate in the 2026 CONCACAF Men's Under-17 Qualifiers this week.

The teams are divided into eight groups and will be using the competition from February 3 to 12 to qualify for the 2026 FIFA Men's Under-17 World Cup in Qatar in November.

The CONCACAF qualifying matches will take place in six countries. Group A will be hosted at Hasely Crawford Stadium in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, while Group B will take place at Estadio Rommel Fernández in Panama City, Panama.

Groups C and F will be held at Estadio Cementos Progreso in Guatemala City, Guatemala, while Groups D and G will be hosted at the FCRF Federation Fields in San Rafael de Alajuela, Costa Rica.

Group E will take place at Arnos Vale Stadium in Arnos Vale, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines, and Group H will be hosted at Estadio Francisco Morazán in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Antigua and Barbuda will compete in Group C alongside Haiti, Guatemala, and Grenada.

The 20-member Antigua and Barbuda squad departed for Guatemala on Tuesday. Included in the squad are goalkeepers Eric Morata and Mekhi Phillip, along with forwards Shamar Walters, Malik Samuels, Tafari Looby, Jaquan Watts, Jaden Joseph, Shumba Thomas, and Robert Jeffrey.

Also included are defenders Jamil Thomas, Cody Richardson, Deonre Joseph, Jahte Sheppard, and Chase Joseph, as well as midfielders Kammarlie Benjamin, Jaden Goodman, Joshua Henriques, K'Vonte Lewis, Collin Harry, and Kharique Joseph.

The players are accompanied by head coach Auckland "Pin Up" Jarvis, assistant coach Gayson "Blubbler" Gregory, and goalkeeper coach

Janiel "Board" Simon.

Antigua and Barbuda will face Guatemala in their opening game at Estadio Cementos Progreso in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on Thursday, February 5.

The Antiguans will meet Haiti on Saturday, February 7, and will play their final match against Grenada on Tuesday, February 10.

This year's CONCACAF Qualifying competition will follow the same single-round format introduced for the 2025 edition.

Each team will face every team in its group once throughout the qualifiers. The eight group winners will secure a berth in the 2026 FIFA U-17 World Cup in Qatar in November.

In the previous edition of the CONCACAF Under-17 Men's Qualifiers, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, and the United States of America topped their respective groups to secure qualification for the 2025 FIFA Under-17 World Cup in Qatar.