

# Government is building the infrastructure for a Creative Arts Industry

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**Double celebration...Prime Minister Gaston Browne (right) shares a friendly moment on Monday with Senator Shenella Govia (left) at a party at the OPM where staff gathered to celebrate their joint birthday**

## Government is building the infrastructure for a Creative Arts Industry



The Antigua and Barbuda government is ***‘putting its money where its mouth is’*** in its determination to build a robust Creative Arts Industry with linkages to the country’s all-important tourism industry.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who recently entered the creative space by writing and producing music through his alter ego, Gassy Dread, and who has been promoting the need for the country to tap into the immense talents of its people, said the plans go far beyond music.

Prime Minister Browne outlined significant government spending to develop infrastructure for the arts representing long-term investment in the creative economy, including the establishment of a Performing Arts Centre now under construction.

According to the prime minister the signature project so far is the conversion of the former Deluxe Cinema facility into a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre.

- Total projected investment: EC\$25–30 million

- Approximately EC\$12 million recently allocated to National Housing for retrofitting
- Funds already disbursed and in the bank
- Target completion date: September 2026

Delving further in the plans for the creative industry, the prime minister revealed that a key component would be the establishment of a national training and artist development programme.

He disclosed that the government also plans to acquire the building adjacent to the Performing Arts Centre. This space will serve as a training institute for artists, hosting:

- Masterclasses led by international professionals
- Skills development for local performers, musicians, and creatives
- Product quality improvement to meet global standards

The Prime Minister emphasized that participation would not be limited to a select few. Instead, the goal is to build a broad network of Antiguan and Bar-

budan artists and producer, strengthening the cultural sector as an economic and identity-building force.

He linked this investment directly to national development, underscoring the intention to integrate culture more deeply into the country’s growth strategy.

According to the Prime Minister culture must not stand apart from the economy — it must be woven directly into Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism product.

The goal is clear, he emphasized, tourism should not operate as an ‘enclave industry’ benefiting only a small segment of society. Instead, it must become inclusive, ensuring that the majority — if not all — Antiguan and Barbudans can share equitably in the sector’s success. By strengthening the creative ecosystem and connecting artists, producers, and performers with tourism platforms, the government hopes to create new economic pathways tied to culture, performance, and heritage.



## More CHOGM-related training is underway



**Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene**



**Ambassador Dr. Clarence Pilgrim**



As the countdown to Antigua and Barbuda's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November gathers momentum, the second in a series of training exercises for officials involved in the planning of the event is now underway.

Taking place at the Training Centre of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force at Camp Blizzard, the two-week sessions are being coordinated by a team of experts from the Canadian military. It's the second such training to take place in preparation for CHOGM. The first such exercise took place towards the end of 2025.

Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene, who has portfolio responsibility for overseeing the planning of the event, said CHOGM 2026 represents far more than a diplomatic gathering; it is a testament to our nation's standing and a monumental national endeavour.

"Its success hinges on our collective discipline, our synchronized planning and our unwavering commitment to precision. At the heart of this undertaking lies our solemn responsibility



to ensure security and stability. Therefore, let us be clear: the work we begin here is not theoretical. It is the essential blueprint for safety, for operational continuity and for the absolute confidence of the international community," Minister Greene observed.

The Foreign Affairs Minister also noted that the training forms part of the government's overarching plans to promote Antigua and Barbuda as a place to host conferences, meetings and exhibitions now and in the future.

"The capacity we build through this collaboration extends beyond a single



# Local News



event. It elevates our nation's technical proficiency, cementing our credentials as a premier destination for global dialogue. We are cultivating a legacy of first-class professionals, whose expertise will propel our national vision of becoming a cornerstone for international conferences and events," he stated.

The Chairman of the National Task Force, Permanent Secretary, Ambassador Dr. Clarence Pilgrim, in his remarks, emphasized that with eight and a half months to go before CHOGM starts, the planning is now

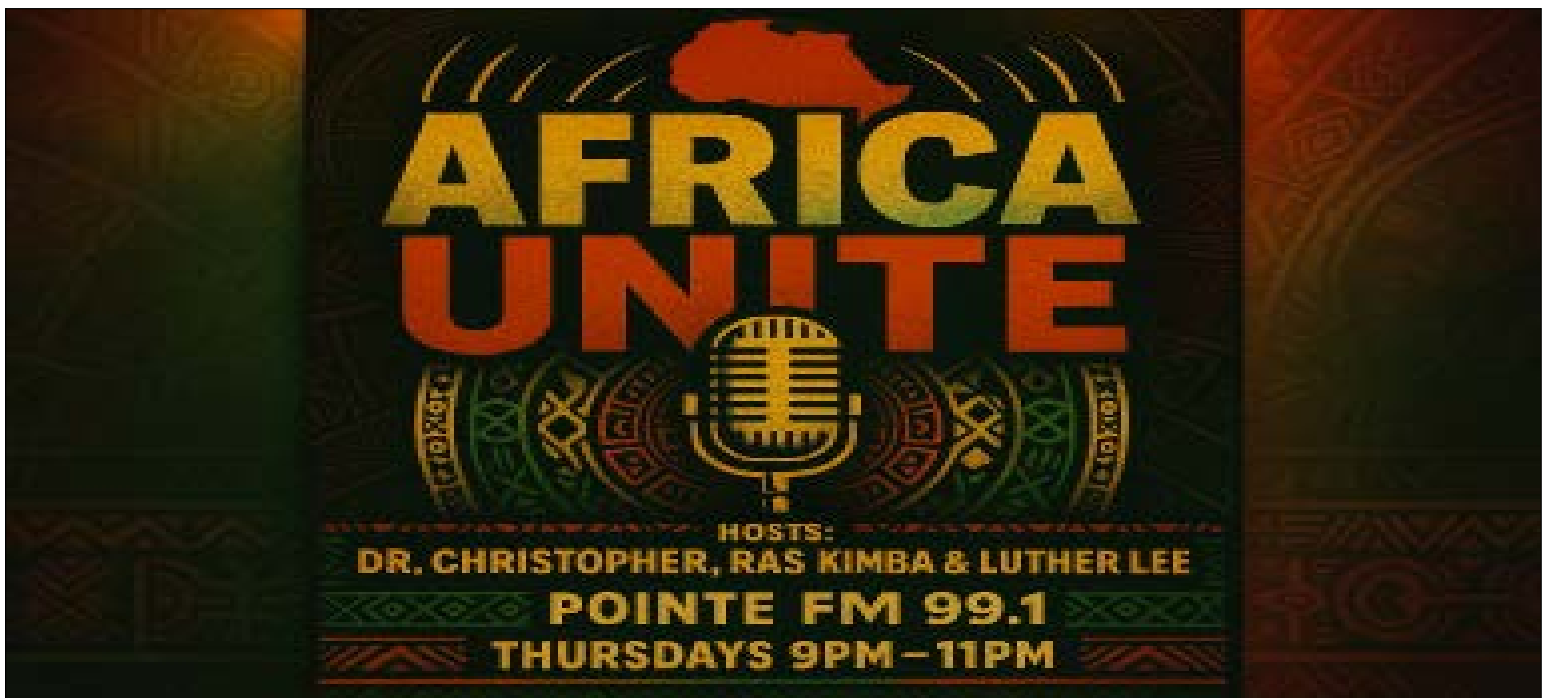
entering a critical stage.

"At this stage of any major national undertaking, success is shaped not by intention alone, but by the quality of our systems, the strength of our partnerships, and the discipline of execution.

"From a project management perspective, we are now progressing from strategy into operations — developing clear frameworks, practical standard operating procedures, robust governance arrangements, and integrated risk and continuity planning that will guide decision-making in real time," he indicated.

Dr. Pilgrim pointed to the existence of the National CHOGM Secretariat, managed by the Coordinator, which will serve as the Central Coordination Platform — the hub through which information flows, actions are aligned, challenges are escalated, and agencies work as one unified delivery system.

"CHOGM is a whole-of-government programme of exceptional scale and complexity. It brings together security, logistics, health services, transport, protocol, communications, infrastructure and international partners into a single national effort," he declared.





## Census Office makes another appeal for public cooperation with the ongoing national census

The Census Office is encouraging the full cooperation of all residents as work continues on the 2025 Population and Housing Census across Antigua and Barbuda.

The Population and Housing Census is a critical national exercise that provides essential data used to inform government policy, national development planning, and the allocation of resources in key areas such as health, education, housing, employment, and infrastructure. Accurate census data ensures that decisions affecting communities are based on reliable and up-to-date information.


Census officials are reminding residents that as stipulated by law, they are required to participate in the Census. As the trained census fieldworkers continue conducting interviews in communities, residents are urged to cooperate fully by providing accurate information.

The Census Office further assures the public that all information collected during the Census is strictly confidential and protected by law. Individual responses will not be shared and will be used solely for statistical purposes.

The Office extends its sincere appreciation to residents who have already

participated and encourages those who have not yet been counted to do so when approached. Public cooperation is vital to the success of the Census and to ensuring that every person and household is accurately represented.


For further information or verification of census fieldworkers, residents may contact the Census Office directly at 562-7495, 562-7492, or 462 4775.



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# 53 new recruits begin training at the Sir Wright F. George Police Academy

A cohort of fifty-three (53) recruits have commenced formal training at the Sir Wright F. George Police Academy with the expectation that they too will become full-fledged police men and women.

The occasion is the start of Course #50 as the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda moves to beef up its numbers against the background of the government's all out drive to drastically reduce crime.

A brief opening ceremony was held on Monday at the Sir Wright F. George Police Academy (Open Campus) to formally usher in the new training cycle. The ceremony was attended by Commissioner of Police Everton Jeffers, along with senior members of the Police Administration.

Addressing the recruits, Commissioner Jeffers emphasized that policing is not merely a job, but a noble calling to serve the nation and the people of Antigua and Barbuda with honour, courage, and integrity. He reminded the recruits that the uniform represents trust, authority, and responsibility, and urged them to wear it with humility and pride.

"Our nation needs men and women who will make a difference," Commissioner Jeffers stated. "It needs officers who will respect the rights and dignity of all people, officers who will be compassionate, fair, and respectful to persons of every class and from every walk of life."

Deputy Commissioner of Police and former Commandant of the Academy, Louisa Benjamin-Quashie, delivered welcoming remarks, while the newly appointed Commandant, Superintendent Rodney Ellis, encouraged the recruits to remain fo-



cused and committed as they embark on the demanding training ahead. Pastor Kendall Doyle also offered words of inspiration and prayer.

Recruit training is expected to span six (6) months, during which the recruits will undergo rigorous academic, physical, and practical instruction aimed at preparing them for professional and ethical service within the

Force.

The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda extends best wishes to the recruits as they begin this important journey of service to country.

– END –



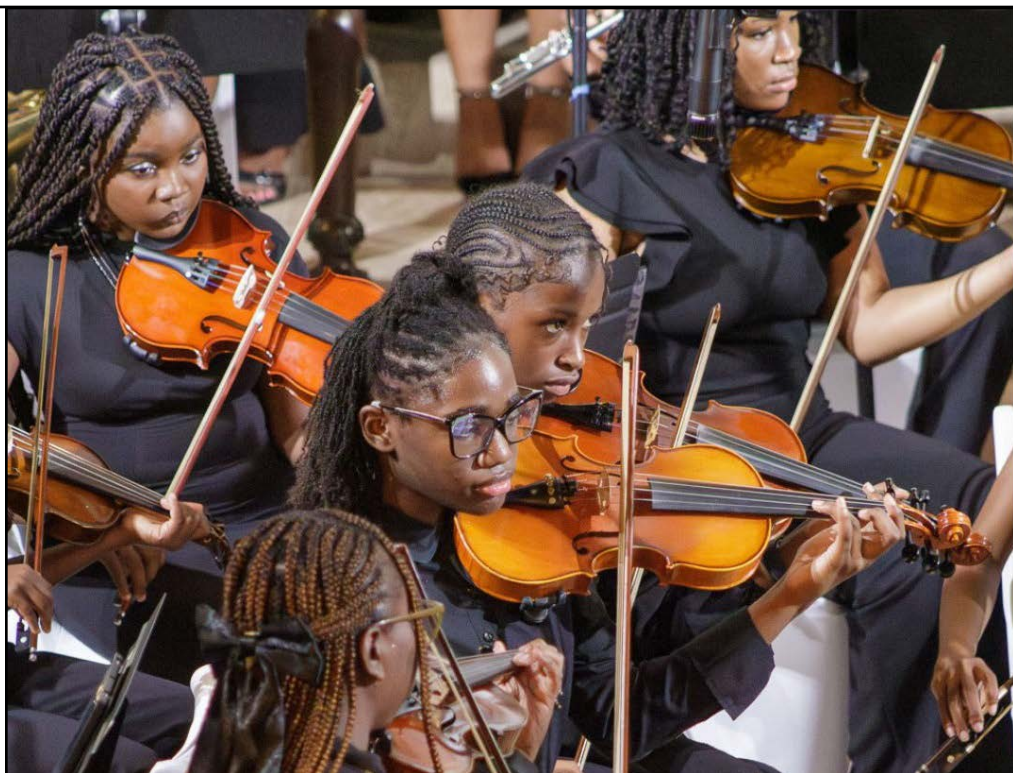
## Itagui Inc. Supports the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra

The Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO) has received a generous donation from Itagui Inc., in support of the Orchestra's Building Fund and its Train the Trainers Programme.

The ABYSO building will serve as the permanent home of the Orchestra, providing a safe, inspiring and purpose-built environment where students can learn, rehearse and grow. The Train the Trainers Programme focuses on developing young leaders by equipping them with the skills to teach a range of orchestral instruments. Through this donation, one of ABYSO's young trainers will be supported as an Itagui-sponsored chair.

Stewart Gordon, representing Itagui Inc., shared his enthusiasm for the programme, stating, "I have personally seen how this programme continues to grow in quality and confidence. The young people who are part of the ABYSO are inspiring examples of what can be achieved when we challenge our youth to embrace excellence. Itagui Inc. is honoured to contribute to a programme that consistently promotes discipline, teamwork and leadership skills among so many young people."

Expressing gratitude on behalf of the Orchestra, Managing Director Claudine Benjamin welcomed the partnership, noting, "Investing in young people and the arts is a winning formula. We are incredibly grateful for partners



such as Itagui Inc. who appreciate the work that we do and are willing to support its continuity. This gift will directly support the long-term viability of the Orchestra, and we look forward to continued collaboration with Itagui Inc."

The ABYSO operates year-round after-school programmes for young people at all levels of instrumental and choral learning, from beginners to senior musicians. Public performances throughout the year showcase the students' dedication and talent, ranging from orchestral standards and musical

theatre productions to intimate chamber performances.

In addition, ABYSO's international partnerships bring world-class musicians, composers and conductors to Antigua and Barbuda to work alongside the young musicians. Traineeships also provide opportunities to develop new or enhanced skills, including instrument repair. The ABYSO is a registered non-profit organisation governed by an eleven-member Board of volunteers drawn from the arts, business and philanthropic communities.

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# Bolinda Baptiste receives part scholarship from Halo to further studies at UWI



Bolinda Baptiste has received a part scholarship from The Halo Foundation, to attend the University of the West Indies (UWI) Global Campus.

Baptiste is currently enrolled in the Office Management programme, where she is developing essential administrative and professional skills to support her

educational advancement and career growth.

Through this support, the Halo Foundation continues to demonstrate its strong commitment to education and youth development, as the charity dedicates a fraction of its surplus to assist individuals who strive for academic excellence.

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## HRPAB commemorates its 15th Anniversary



Human Resource Professionals of Antigua and Barbuda (HRPAB) is marking its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a week of activities running from February 8 to 13.

The celebrations are being held under the theme; *Clear Vision, Bold Steps: Towards an Im-*

*pactful Future*. The week began with Church worship followed by a Luncheon and Awards Ceremony. Tribute was paid to the association's first executive and to inaugural members who remain active in HRPAB. Special awards of appreciation were pre-

sented to Desiree Edwards, J. Arlene Martin, Lucette James, Laurie Louard, and the Antigua and Barbuda Employers' Federation.

President of HRPAB, Dr. Miguella Christopher, noted that the theme was a fitting one. She said it offered an opportunity for the body to reflect, re-envision its future, and determine the actions required to make a more meaningful impact in the workplace.

Other activities set for the week are a media launch of public service videos, a professional development workshop, an outreach activity, and an HRPAB Represent Day. The Association extends an invitation to all HR professionals and students of HR Management to become members.

They can be contacted via email at [hrpro.ab@gmail.com](mailto:hrpro.ab@gmail.com)





## Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission Pays Tribute to Mrs. Glendina McKay

The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) extends its condolences to the family of former Commissioner, Glendina McKay, who passed away on February 1, 2026, at the age of 83.

McKay was nominated by the United Progressive Party (UPP) and served with distinction as a Member of the Commission from August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, to April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Throughout her tenure, she brought integrity, diligence, and a deep respect for democratic principles to the work of the Commission.



Her son, Victor McKay Jr., shared that “she took her tenure at ABEC very seriously and was very happy to play a role in shaping the democratic development

of the twin island state”.

ABEC remembers McKay as a committed public servant who approached her responsibilities with seriousness and pride.

Her thoughtful contributions and steadfast dedication assisted in strengthening the Commission’s work and reflected her belief in free, fair, and transparent electoral processes. Her legacy of commitment to democratic development and public service will be a lasting testimony to her personal integrity.



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# Truth versus Hypocrisy



*By Sergio Martinez*

The current US Secretary of State and his spokespeople in our Caribbean region spare no effort in their campaigns of lies and slander, trying to denigrate at all costs the humanitarian and solidarity work carried out by thousands of Cuban health professionals, who voluntarily and under the strictest observance of the ethical and labor codes that are based on international law and norms, provide their service in more than 56 countries across the globe.

The vile accusations against Cuba or the countries and governments with which there are currently bilateral medical collaboration agreements, of promoting or permitting forms of forced labor, have been and always will be rejected by the vast majority of nations and their people, who recognize the humanism and professionalism of Cuban collaborators, and their important contribution to improving the health standards of the countries in which they provide their services.

The US government is utterly immoral in trying to accuse others of promoting slave labor or other forms of labor exploitation. Before launching its hypocritical campaigns, it should first look

within its own borders, where labor discrimination, forced labor, and even child labor exploitation are commonplace. Let's consider a few examples.

According to an analysis by the consulting firm Edgeworth published by the US-based organization Open Democracy, between \$11.6 billion and \$18.8 billion USD is stolen annually from the wages of incarcerated workers by the federal government, state institutions, and private companies. The study points out that these stolen wages represent not only a loss of income for incarcerated individuals but also a loss of livelihood for their children, families, and communities, further reinforcing their financial vulnerability, undermining rehabilitation, and perpetuating cycles of poverty and incarceration. To understand the scale of this situation, the report states that nearly 50% of adults in the United States have had a direct family member incarcerated, though among African Americans, that proportion rises to 63%. In other words, African American families are disproportionately affected by this practice of forced labor and wage theft. What is most reprehensible is that today, numerous states in the so-called "American democratic paradise," such as Louisiana, have legislatures that defend and support this form of forced labor.

As if this weren't enough, the United States has earned a bad reputation as one of the countries characterized by the exploitation of child labor, especially of immigrant children and young people, who are frequently employed in the most dangerous jobs. According to a recent article published by the Center for Public Integrity, "How US policy drives child labor", the US has a history of child labor exploitation. Poverty and the lack of safe options, are exploited by the self-serving interests of American business owners, forcing young immigrants and children to work in extremely dangerous

and adverse conditions. This is compounded by restrictive and racist immigration laws, which place these minors at greater risk of exploitation and debt bondage.

As I have mentioned in others opportunities, the US government, and especially its Secretary of State, in its schizophrenic anti-Cuban obsession, is threatening to impose sanctions on nearly a quarter of the world's nations, including some considered US allies, for requesting Cuba's support in developing their public health programs. How is it possible to be so cruel as to threaten small developing countries with draconian punitive measures to force them to accept Washington's dictates at the expense of their people's sacred right to health? The US government and its Secretary of State seem unconcerned that their measures could deprive millions of people worldwide of the essential healthcare services currently provided by Cuban healthcare workers and those implemented through programs developed by international organizations such as the World Health Organization.

It would be fair to ask how many doctors or nurses the US government provided to small countries in our beloved Caribbean to help them face the difficult health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. How many vaccines did it offer? Instead of promoting slanderous campaigns against the medical collaboration that Cuba provides to third countries, the Secretary of State and his spokespeople should propose to the Cuban government and health authorities the possibility of developing joint efforts to support the development of public health systems for the people of our region.

Washington should learn once and for all that solidarity can never be blocked, and as our dear graduates from Antigua and Barbuda at Cuban universities affirm, "Viral Trumpism cannot infect the Cuban Internationalism".



# What Bad Bunny Taught Us About Caribbean Unity and Identity



*By Shermain Jeremy*

Sunday night, I watched Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime performance and felt something I did not expect: recognition.

I don't speak Spanish, but I understood the story. And I'm willing to bet many Caribbean people—across English, Spanish, French, and Dutch-speaking islands—felt that same jolt of familiarity.

Because what appeared on that global stage wasn't just about "Puerto Rico." It was about the Caribbean—our shared memory, our shared survival, our shared everyday life—rendered with confidence and cultural precision in front of an audience that too often sees us only as vacation backdrops or small islands with big smiles.

What struck me most were the scenes that didn't need translation: the cane fields and the labour imagery; the corner community; the familiar rhythms of street life; the small vendors and the rituals; the sense that culture is not a costume you put on for tourists, but something

you live. The performance didn't ask permission to be authentic. It simply was.

And then came the moment that hit like a ton of bricks: this performance wasn't "my" history or "your" history. It was our history.

For many in the Caribbean, sugarcane is not merely a crop. It is a symbol of how our islands were engineered—economically, socially, and psychologically—through a plantation system that extracted wealth outward while forcing human beings inward into brutal labour.

The plantation economy didn't stop at language lines. British, French, Spanish, and Dutch colonial powers all built versions of the same machine. Sugar plantations and the forced labour that sustained them shaped island after island.

That's why a cane field on an American football field can feel like Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Guyana, Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Dominican Republic. The plantation story isn't owned by any one island. It is a regional inheritance—painful, foundational—and it helps explain why the Caribbean can feel like family even when we don't share a tongue.

So when Bad Bunny put cane fields and working-class life at the center of the Super Bowl, it wasn't just spectacle. It was visibility. It treated our history—and our people—as worthy of being seen.

The same is true of the small scenes: dominoes on the corner, the nail salon, trucks of freshly cut coconut, the snow cone vendor on the street. These aren't props. They are the social rituals and micro-economies that hold communities together—culture

as infrastructure.

And that is why the performance mattered. It centered ordinary Caribbean life as art: not a stereotype, not a postcard, but truth.

Which brings me to the uncomfortable part: we still behave as if the Caribbean is several regions that happen to share a sea—English here, Spanish there, French elsewhere, Dutch on the margins. We cooperate in pockets, but rarely move as one.

Yet our common ground runs deeper than aesthetics. It's structural. We share the same vulnerabilities—small markets, external dependency, exposure to global shocks—and the same strengths: creativity, resilience, outsized cultural impact, and diasporas that can move ideas and opportunity across borders.

Sunday night reminded me that language does not have to be a barrier to belonging. You can understand a people through their scenes. You can understand a region through its symbols. You can feel "us" even when the words are not yours.

We don't live in soft times. The world is tense. Geopolitics is louder than it has been in years. Power is increasingly concentrated. Disinformation travels faster than truth. And small states—especially small islands—are often treated like chess pieces rather than stakeholders.

In those conditions, unity is not a slogan. It is leverage.

This is not a new thought. We have regional institutions built on this exact logic. We have decades of speeches and summits saying the same thing: cooperation is essential. Integration is necessary. Collective negotiating power matters.



# Feature

But we struggle to make unity feel real at the level of people.

Policy can create frameworks, but culture creates identity.

That is why the ending of the performance matters as much as the cane fields. A parade of flags, the visual insistence that multiple places belong in one story, and a clear message that love and unity are stronger than hate—these aren't just artistic flourishes. They are reminders that symbols can do what bureaucracy cannot: build emotional agreement.

The Caribbean doesn't need lessons in cultural excellence. What we can learn is how to tell one story while still honouring many identities.

Bad Bunny didn't dilute his culture to make it "palatable" on that world stage. He didn't translate himself into something smaller for broader consumption. He went deeper into specificity—and that specificity became universally understood.

There is a regional lesson in that.

The Caribbean often tries to unite by sanding down difference: "Let's find what we can all agree on." But unity doesn't require sameness. It requires a shared narrative—one that can hold multiple languages, islands, and histories at once.

We need more of that.

We need cultural projects that cross language lines: joint festivals, co-produced documentaries, touring showcases, shared media platforms, and co-marketing efforts that sell the Caribbean not as a set of competing islands, but as a connected region with distinct flavours. We need young people to grow up hearing each other's music without subtitles being treated like borders.

And yes, we need political and economic cooperation too—stronger trade, shared disaster preparedness, regional mobility that actually works, coordinated diplomacy in global fo-

rums. But if the people don't feel a shared "we," the policy will always be fragile.

Culture can strengthen the "we."

Sunday night was not just entertainment. It was a mirror.

It reflected a Caribbean identity that already exists beneath our separations. It reminded us that we carry shared histories that were imposed on us—but also shared cultures we built ourselves in response.

The more important question is: what do we know about each other—and what are we willing to build together?

Because if a Spanish-language performance on the biggest U.S. stage can make an Antiguan who doesn't speak Spanish feel seen, then surely we can find ways—within our own region—to see each other too.

And in times like these, seeing each other isn't sentimental.

It's survival.



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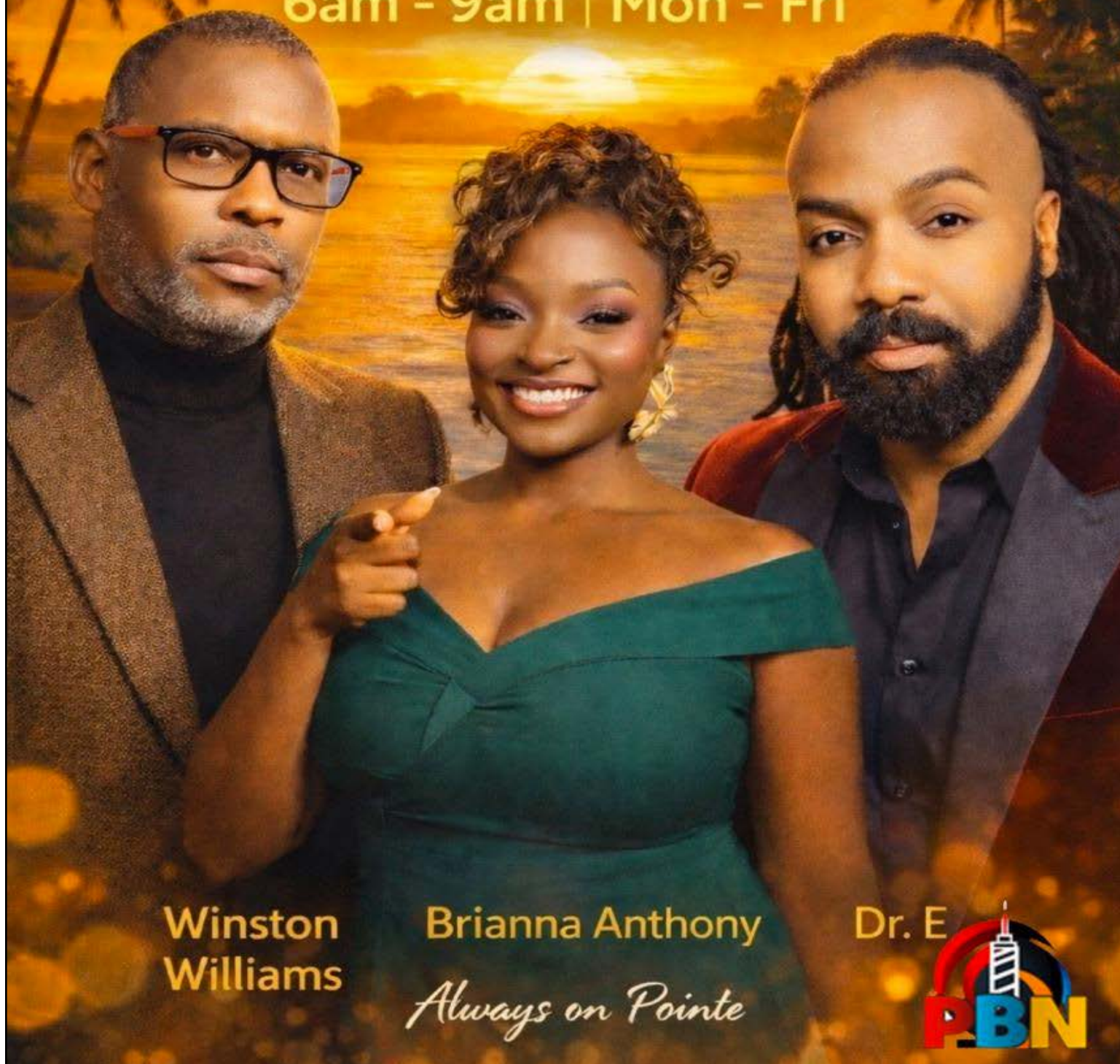
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## SVG govt announces radical disarmament strategy after weekend killings

On Sunday, February 8, 2026, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines held a three-hour emergency summit chaired by St. Clair Leacock, Minister for National Security.

Flanking him were Commissioner of Police Enville Williams, the High Command of the St. Vincent Police Force (RSVGPF), and key tactical leads from the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Coast Guard Service.

The core objective was to confront the “grave concern” of violence and to bridge the widening gap between high-level policy and boots-on-the-ground execution.

In the crucible of a small island state, localised violence acts as a corrosive agent on national stability, dissolving public confidence and challenging the state’s monopoly on force. The psychological impact of these brazen executions has necessitated an immediate and overwhelming response to prevent a permanent fracture in the social fabric.

The specific incidents that triggered Sunday’s emergency response occurred in a chilling 24-hour window:

- Mr. Kevin Richards (25): Formerly of Montaque, Mesopotamia. Fatally shot on Friday, February 6, 2026.
- Mr. Lenford Peters (43): Formerly of Richland Park. Fatally shot on Saturday, February 7, 2026.

These specific tragedies illustrate the lethal reality of a clandestine proliferation of arms, a trend the state now intends to reverse through a radical policy of mandated disarmament.

The strategic rationale for the Government’s sudden tightening of fire-arm controls is rooted in a sobering assessment: the “wrong people” have secured a tactical advantage. To regain the initiative, Minister Leacock announced an unprecedented state-mandated disarmament and an overhaul of



the licensing landscape.

This radical shift moves the nation

away from legacy protocols and toward a model of extreme scrutiny, acknowledging that the previous pro-



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# Regional News

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lification of high-powered weaponry among civilians is no longer tenable under current security conditions.

Minister Leacock detailed an aggressive three-pronged legislative crackdown:

- **Audit and Review:** An immediate, comprehensive audit of the entire legal framework and historical process governing firearm licenses and permits.
- **Rigorous Vetting:** The implementation of stringent background checks designed to identify and eliminate risk factors before a permit is even considered.
- **Unprecedented Recall:** The immediate and mandatory revocation of all civilian licenses for “high-powered rifles,” marking a significant move to strip lethal military-grade capacity from the private sector.

However, legislative intervention maybe toothless without total territorial dominance in areas where gang influence threatens to supersede the rule of law.

The Minister’s mandate centers on the absolute preservation of territorial integrity. Issuing a stern ultimatum, Leacock asserted that no gang or individual will be permitted to exert control over any quadrant of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The government’s stance is a rejection of the “normalization of gang culture,” viewing any attempt to create criminal “no-go zones”

as a direct challenge to the authority of the state.

While the police lead the physical suppression, the Minister argued that a “Collaborative Approach” is the only way to ensure these criminal structures do not reform. This multi-sectoral requirement is outlined as follows:

While this social strategy targets the roots of criminality, its execution relies on the immediate injection of capital to close the tactical deficits within the police force.

During the emergency meeting, Commissioner Enville Williams was candid regarding the Force’s tactical deficits, identifying critical operational gaps that have hindered the RSVG-PF’s effectiveness.

The Commissioner and Minister identified several “make-or-break” requirements:

- **Personnel Dynamics:** Addressing manpower shortages and high attrition rates that have strained the front lines.
- **Officer Welfare:** Improvements to working conditions and emoluments (salaries/benefits) to bolster morale and retention.
- **Technical Capacity:** Enhancing traffic management systems and acquiring modern operational assets to combat mobile criminal units.

Leacock assured the High Command of “full support,” noting that the 2026

National Budget contains specific initiatives designed to bolster these efforts. This financial mobilization is the prerequisite for a new, aggressive operational phase—one that begins with a final, public ultimatum to those fueling the crisis.

The ultimate differentiator in modern crime detection is the strength of “Public-Police Partnerships.” In an era where illegal weapons move through clandestine Diaspora links and local networks, the RSVGPF is banking on citizen cooperation to break the silence that shields criminal elements. The state has made it clear that “turning a blind eye” is no longer a neutral act; it is a direct threat to national safety.

“The Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force urge all law-abiding citizens to partner with the police in building safer communities. Public cooperation is essential to the effective prevention and detection of crime. Citizens are reminded: Do not turn a blind eye to crime. Do not harbour criminals. If you see something, say something”.

“To those engaged in criminal activity: cease all unlawful conduct immediately or face the full consequences of the law. The Force remains resolute in its mandate to investigate, arrest, and prosecute offenders in the interest of public safety and national security.” (St. Vincent Times)





## U.S. issues a ban on St Lucia's top resort



The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown has issued a security alert concerning Saint Lucia, specifically prohibiting U.S. government personnel from staying at the Ladera Resort near Soufriere.

This directive was enacted following what was reported as by the U.S. State Department as an internal review of security risks associated with the location, which concluded that the resort presents potential dangers due to crime and inadequate emergency response capabilities.

Effective immediately, U.S. government employees are not allowed to stay at the resort, as the embassy assessed that crime could pose a serious risk to safety and that the facility might not respond effectively to emergencies.

On February 4, 2026, the embassy publicly released an assessment highlighting the concerns, stating that "crime may pose a serious risk to guest safety, and the resort may not be able to respond adequately."

Although the embassy has not disclosed specific intelligence or active

threat reports that prompted this decision, the restriction serves as a mandatory safety protocol for U.S. personnel. Private U.S. citizens are also advised to exercise heightened vigilance, as it is alleged by the U.S. that the safety infrastructure at Ladera Resort may not meet standard emergency response requirements.

In addition to the security alert, the U.S. Embassy addressed recent statements made by the Government of Saint Lucia regarding diplomatic and educational issues. The embassy clarified that it has not issued any instructions to Saint Lucia to prevent students from studying medicine in Cuba, contradicting Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre's assertions.

Furthermore, the embassy refuted claims that the U.S. intended to sever regional diplomatic ties, affirming that while it does not support Cuba's medical programs, it has not directed Saint Lucia to cut regional relations.

Despite the close timing of these diplomatic clarifications and the se-

curity alert, the embassy emphasized that safety assessments for personnel remain independent of diplomatic discourse, and the overall travel status for Saint Lucia remains unchanged, with personal vigilance remaining the primary defense for travelers in the area.

The Ladera Resort is the only resort that sits on a UNESCO World Heritage Site, sitting in between the iconic Pitons of St Lucia.

The five-star luxury resort is reported to be the top hospitality earner on the island, bringing in USD 17.6 million in the last fiscal year.

The embassy's statement included the following directives:

Avoid the Ladera Resort.

Stay aware of your surroundings.

Give your itinerary to a family member or friend.

Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.

Carry a copy of your passport. Leave originals in your hotel safe. (Dominica News Online)



## In Puerto Rico, fans thrilled with Bad Bunny's Super Bowl show



In the town square in Vega Baja, a small municipality near Puerto Rico's capital San Juan, retired teacher Madeline Miranda was bubbling with excitement after watching Bad Bunny perform at the Super Bowl.

After all, Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio was once one of her former students, and years away from becoming a global superstar.

"I danced, I screamed, I swore, and I gave it my all," said the 75-year-old Miranda, who joined about 100 other people to watch the performance by Vega Baja's most famous native son.

People of all ages turned out, many of them bringing beach chairs — and drinks — to wait for the big moment.

Vega Baja is not exactly a place where American football is all that popular, and few of those present really paid attention to the game, which the Seattle Seahawks won over the New England Patriots.

Bad Bunny was the only show in town.

When he finally appeared on screen singing one of his biggest hits, "Titi Me Pregunto," the crowd shrieked with joy. Some waved Puerto Rican

flags, and others clapped.

The party had begun.

"I feel so proud that someone from Vega Baja has reached such heights. This shows that our presence is growing stronger in the United States and around the world," David Fontanez, a 66-year-old retiree, told AFP.

Other watch parties took place in Old San Juan.

Bad Bunny's performance celebrated Puerto Rico, a United States (US) island territory in the Caribbean — from the lyrics of his songs to his set design featuring sugar cane and his salmon-colored "La Casita" (little house). Fans cheered each reference.

He also made history as the first Super Bowl headliner to sing entirely in Spanish. A week ago, he became the first performer to win the Grammy for Album of the Year for a Spanish-language work.

For 14-year-old Pedro Melendez Barrio, the singer is a "great inspiration" for those who live in Vega Baja.

"He makes me feel very proud and also very happy. I think that if he has achieved all this, I can achieve this too. That really motivates me."

Many said they were grateful to the 31-year-old Bad Bunny for championing his homeland.

Last year, he completed a wildly successful concert residency in San Juan, giving the island a major economic boost as fans flocked to see him.

"He brought to the Super Bowl the essence of what we, Puerto Ricans, are," said Miranda, who remembers young Benito as a "very quiet and disciplined" child.

"He's a great ambassador for this community."

Some Puerto Ricans made mention of the conservative backlash that Bad Bunny faced after he was named as the halftime show headliner, largely due to the fact that he sings in Spanish.

Indeed, after the show, US President Donald Trump suggested that "nobody understands a word this guy is saying."

But most said what was more important was Bad Bunny's ability to amplify the voice of Puerto Ricans, who are US citizens but do not have the right to vote for president.

"He has reflected a lot of our culture (in his work), what's happening in Puerto Rico, and the situation of immigrants," Madeline Garcia, 31, said after the show.

"We ignore the controversy because, whether they like it or not, we're also part of the United States. And even if our language is Spanish, most Puerto Ricans speak English."

The excitement stretched far outside of Puerto Rico, with the artiste's inclusion of flags and lyrics mentioning the majority of North, South and Central America, as well as the Caribbean. Online reactions from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands conveyed surprise and delight at the recognition. Bad Bunny closed the show by holding up a football emblazoned with the words "We are all America". (AFP)



## Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Pablo Guanipa freed after eight months in prison

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Pablo Guanipa on Sunday was released after more than eight months in prison for what are widely considered to be politically motivated accusations.

Guanipa, one of the closest allies of opposition powerhouse María Corina Machado, had been held at a detention facility in the capital, Caracas.

His release comes as the government of acting President Delcy Rodríguez faces mounting pressure to free hundreds of people whose detentions months or years ago have been linked to their political beliefs.

“Today, we are being released,” Guanipa, standing with an armoured vehicle and officers behind him, said in a video posted on X.

“Much to discuss about the present and future of Venezuela, always with the truth at the forefront.”

Venezuelan-based prisoners’ rights group Foro Penal confirmed the release of at least 18 people on Sunday.

In addition to Guanipa, Machado’s political organization said some of its local political organizers as well as her attorney, Perkins Rocha, were among those freed.

“Let’s go for the freedom of Venezuela!” she posted on X.

Guanipa was detained in late May and accused by Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello of participating in an alleged “terrorist group” plotting to boycott that month’s legislative election. Guanipa’s brother Tomás rejected the



accusation, and said that the arrest was meant to crack down on dissent.

“Thinking differently cannot be criminalized in Venezuela, and today, Juan Pablo Guanipa is a prisoner of conscience of this regime,” Tomás Guanipa said after the arrest.

“He has the right to think as he thinks, the right to defend his ideas, and the right to be treated under a constitution that is not being enforced today.”

Rodríguez was sworn in as Venezuela’s acting president after the capture in Caracas of then-President Nicolás Maduro by the US military last month.

Her government announced on January 8 it would free a significant number of prisoners — a central demand of the country’s opposition and human rights organizations with backing

from the United States — but families and rights watchdogs have criticized authorities for the slow pace of the releases.

The ruling party-controlled National Assembly this week began debating an amnesty bill that could lead to the release of hundreds of prisoners.

The opposition and non-governmental organizations have reacted with cautious optimism as well as with suggestions and demands for more information on the contents of the proposal.

National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez on Friday posted a video on Instagram showing him outside a detention centre in Caracas and saying that “everyone” would be released no later than next week, once the amnesty bill is approved. (AP)



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## At least 30 people killed in Nigeria road accident



At least 30 people have been killed and an unspecified number of people injured in a road accident in northwest Nigeria, authorities said.

The accident occurred Sunday in Kwanar Barde in the Gezawa area of Kano state and was caused by “reckless driving” by the driver of a truck-trailer, Gov. Abba Yusuf said in a statement. He did not specify what other vehicles were involved.

Yusuf described the accident as “heartbreaking and a great loss” to the affected families and the state. He did not provide more details of the accident.

Africa’s most populous country recorded 5,421 deaths in 9,570 road accidents in 2024, according to data by the country’s Federal Road Safety Corps.

Experts say a combination

of factors including a network of bad roads, lax enforcement of traffic laws and indiscipline by some drivers produce the grim statistics.

In December, boxing heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua was in a deadly car crash that injured him and killed Sina Ghami and Latif “Latz” Ayodele, two of his friends, in southwest Nigeria.

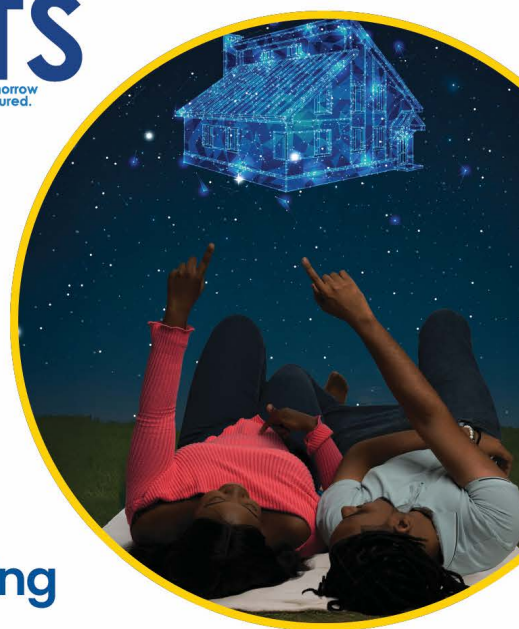
Adeniyi Mobolaji Kayode, Joshua’s driver, was charged with dangerous and reckless driving and his trial is scheduled to begin later this month.

Africa has the highest road fatality rate in the world despite having only about 3% of the world’s vehicles, mainly due to weak enforcement of road laws, poor infrastructure and widespread use of unsafe transport. (AP)



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## ‘Take the vaccine, please,’ top US health official says in an appeal as measles cases rise

A leading US health official on Sunday urged people to get inoculated against the measles at a time of outbreaks across several states and as the United States is at risk of losing its measles elimination status.

“Take the vaccine, please,” said Dr Mehmet Oz, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator whose boss has raised suspicion about the safety and importance of vaccines. “We have a solution for our problem.”

Oz, a heart surgeon, defended some recently revised federal vaccine recommendations as well as past comments from President Donald Trump and the nation’s health chief, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., about the efficacy of vaccines.

From Oz, there was a clear message on the measles.

“Not all illnesses are equally dangerous and not all people are equally susceptible to those illnesses,” he told CNN’s “State of the Union.”

“But measles is one you should get your vaccine.”

An outbreak in South Carolina in the hundreds has surpassed the recorded case count in Texas’ 2025 outbreak, and there is also one on the Utah-Arizona border. Multiple other states have had confirmed cases this year. The outbreaks have mostly impacted children and have come as infectious disease experts warn that rising public distrust of vaccines generally may be contributing to the spread of a disease once declared eradicated by public health officials.



Asked in the television interview whether people should fear the measles, Oz replied, “Oh, for sure.” He said Medicare and Medicaid will continue to cover the measles vaccine as part of the insurance programs.

“There will never be a barrier to Americans get access to the measles vaccine. And it is part of the core schedule,” Oz said.

But Oz also said “we have advocated for measles vaccines all along” and that Kennedy “has been on the very front of this.”

Questions about vaccines did not come up later in a Kennedy interview on Fox News Channel’s “The Sunday Briefing,” where he was asked about what kind of Super Bowl snack he might have (probably yogurt). He also said he eats steak with sauerkraut in the mornings.

Critics of Kennedy have argued that the health secretary’s longtime scepticism of US vaccine recom-

mendations and past sympathy for the unfounded claim that vaccines may cause autism may influence official public health guidance in ways contrary to the medical consensus.

Oz argued that Kennedy’s stance was supportive of the measles vaccine despite Kennedy’s general comments about the recommended vaccine schedule.

“When the first outbreak happened in Texas, he said, get your vaccines for measles, because that’s an example of an ailment that you should get vaccinated against,” Oz said.

The Republican administration last month dropped some vaccine recommendations for children, an overhaul of the traditional vaccine schedule that the Department of Health and Human Services said was in response to a request from Trump. (AP)





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## Success for Pigotts Bullets in Premier Division League



*A starting XI of the Pigotts Bullets football team*

The Pigotts Bullets secured another win to move into fourth place in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Sunday.

The Pigotts Bullets FC notched up their ninth win in 14 matches by pulling off a 2-0 victory against the Attacking Saints FC in the second game of a double-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Javier Wilmott scored in the 15th minute to give the Bullets a one-nil lead at halftime, and Jamol Yorke wrapped up the victory with a 63rd-minute conver-

sion.

The result allows the Pigotts Bullets to move ahead of Aston Villa Lions FC into fourth place on goal difference. Both teams have 24 points, but the Villa Lions have played 13 matches, one less than the Bullets.

The Attacking Saints remain in ninth place in the 12-team standings with 13 points after crashing to their ninth defeat in 14 matches.

Old Road FC moved from fourth to third place on goal difference after battling to a 1-1 draw with Garden Stars in Sunday's second game.

Chantomoi Taylor scored on the stroke of halftime with a strike in the 45th minute to give Old Road the lead.

Substitute Kenja Benjamin scored in the last minute of regulation with a 90-minute conversion to salvage the draw for Garden Stars.

Their third draw in 14 matches allows Old Road FC to advance to 27 points, the same as the Pigotts Bullets and the Villa Lions.

The Garden Stars consolidated their position in seventh place with 20 points by securing their fifth draw in 14 matches.



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## Winning start for AGS in Secondary Schools Cricket T20 contest

The Antigua Grammar School (AGS) has made a successful start to their campaign in the T20 Competition in the Under-19 Boys Division in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools Cricket Championship.

The Antigua Grammar School crushed Sir Novelle Richards Academy by 152 runs in their opening-round encounter at the Antigua Grammar School playing field.

Leonardo Drearey slammed a century to propel

Antigua Grammar School to 189 for five off their 20 overs. Drearey struck 101 off 69 balls, including 15 fours and three sixes.

Hosea Roberts hit 22, Isiah Harris made 19, and Shane Walsh scored 13. Rayquan Charles picked up three for 32.

In reply, Sir Novelle Richards Academy was dismissed for 37 in 11.3 overs. No batsman managed to reach double figures, but there was a contribution of 22 extras, including 21

wides.

Donte Odlum bagged three wickets for seven runs, Irvin Smith claimed two wickets for four runs, and Mare Crawford captured two wickets for six runs.

A winning start to the T20 competition as well for Clare Hall Secondary School, which snatched a 13-run victory against Jennings Secondary in a match reduced to 14 overs at the Rising Sun playing field.

Chasing 117 to win, Jen-

nings Secondary School was restricted to 103 for four off their 14 overs. Dale Johashen hit 35, and Estan Hill scored 18. Jaden Joseph took two for 17, and Kiscean Francis picked up two for 21.

Batting first, Clare Hall Secondary School made 116 for three off their 14 overs. Jaden Joseph slammed 41, and Glenroy Richards struck 31.

Estan Hill claimed two for 14, and Emanuel Stout captured one for 15.

## Another win for Flyers in defense of ABBA Division One league title



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

The Flyers made it two wins in a row with a hard-fought 83-72 victory over

All Saints Slam in the opening game of a Division One double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Adonis Humphreys sank 21 points and grabbed 19 rebounds, TJ Williams converted 20 points and claimed seven rebounds, and Daniel Perez chipped in with 18 points, five rebounds, and five steals for the Flyers.

Rolontae Knowles produced 21 points, eight rebounds, and six assists; Andrew Daigle scored 20 points, and Andre Burnett chipped in with 10 points, seven rebounds, and five steals for All Saints Slam, who lost for the second time in as many games.

The Cuties Ovals Ojays also recorded their second win in their Division One campaign with a 98-82 victory against Da Project.

Sam Taylor produced 26 points, eight rebounds, eight steals, and six assists, and Jaylen Owens scored 25 points as the top performers for the Ovals Ojays.

In support, Jabari Smith contributed 19 points, 15 rebounds, and five assists; Jayleyle Joseph sank 15 points and snatched six rebounds; and Kareem Edwards converted 13 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Ovals Ojays.

T-Shawn Lewis sank 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds; Malik Moore converted 24 points and claimed eight rebounds; Domnick Anthony scored 12 points; and Delonte Phillip chipped in with nine points and six rebounds for Da Project, who suffered their second loss in three games.



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## Antiguan footballer to benefit from donation by Omonia Football Club



**Kevin McIntosh, left, with members of the CPTSA Wings Football Unit, including Barbara Coates, right, after making the presentation at the Christ the King High School on Saturday, February 7, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the CPTSA Wings Sports Club)**

Some of the young footballers in Antigua and Barbuda will benefit from a major donation, which was made by the Omonia Football Club in London, England.

The equipment, comprising uniforms and various football gear such as boots and shin pads, was presented to the CPTSA Wings Sports Club by Antiguan Kevin McIntosh, a former coach at Omonia Football Club, on Saturday.

McIntosh, who presented the equipment to the chairperson of the Football Unit of the CPTSA Wings Sports Club, Barbara Coates, said the donation from Omonia Football Club was facilitated by the High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda to the

United Kingdom, Her Excellency Karen Mae Hill.

“Representatives of Omonia Football Club met up with Karen Mae Hill, and she arranged to receive the equipment and sent it all the way to Antigua for us so we can benefit from the generosity of Omonia FC,” McIntosh said.

“This is something that we want to continue for many years because we know that football gear is very costly, especially when someone is just starting out to play the game,” added McIntosh, who also played an instrumental role in facilitating the donation.

Coates said the gesture marked a wonderful story of generosity and community spirit.

“It’s great to see how sports organizations can come together to support the development of youth sports in different parts of the world,” Coates stated.

Coates said the donation will undoubtedly make a significant impact on the children in Antigua and Barbuda.

“By giving young players access to equipment and uniforms, not only will it improve their experience, but it will also motivate them to get involved in football and help grow the sport on the island,” she said.

“It’s not just for Wings players but for other young athletes within the communities, ensuring the development of football across the island.”



## Blackhawks beat Tigers to stay atop of ABCA two-day contest

The PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks recorded their third win in four matches to remain as unbeaten leaders of the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship over the weekend.

The Blackhawks continued their campaign for a fifth consecutive title with an eight-wicket victory against the Jennings Tigers at Ball Beef in Liberta.

The Tigers were dismissed in their first innings for 200 in 46.5 overs after being sent in to bat. Amari Goodridge and Paul Miller each made 45, and Shane Burton hit 44. Leg-spinner Hayden Walsh Jr. bagged three for 13, and off-spinner Kofi James claimed three for 39.

In reply, James slammed a century as the Blackhawks were all out for 274 in 55.2 overs. James, who opened the innings, cracked 132 off 90 balls, including 10 fours and eight sixes.

Elroy Francis Jr. struck 47, and Michael Greaves scored 38. Captain and left-arm spinner Glenton Williams captured six for 101, and Xavier Free-land picked up three for 56.

Trailing by 74 runs, the Jennings Tigers were all out in their second innings for 180 in 30.5 overs. Burton cracked 73, and Goodridge made 30. James grabbed four for 52, and Walsh Jr. took three for 43.

Set 107 to win, the Liberta Blackhawks achieved victory by scoring 110 for two in 20 overs. Greaves hit 50 not out, and James scored 37.

Tertiary Institutions and Schools recorded their first win in the competition by pulling off an eight-wicket victory over Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles at



**Kofi James**

Bethesda.

The Golden Eagles declared their first innings at 172 for nine in 34 overs after winning the toss and electing to bat. Mbeki slammed 82, while Giovonte Depeiza captured four for 37.

Tertiary Institutions and Schools were dismissed in their first innings for 233 in 57.4 overs. Damel Evelyn slammed 58, Hosea Roberts cracked 54, Xanden Hobson hit 50, and Johann Layne scored 32. Pacer Jawakie Joseph took four for 54.

Trailing by 61 runs, Bethesda crashed to 140 all out in 36.1 overs in their second innings. Captain Kevin Pitman hit 50, Jawakie Joseph struck 37, and Mbeki scored 31. Layne bagged three for 38, and Depeiza claimed three for 49.

Set 80 runs to win, Tertiary Institutions and Schools achieved victory by scoring 85 for two in 11.3 overs. Depeiza hit 32 not out.

There were no outright winners in the other three fourth-round matches. The All Saints Pythons and WES Rising Sun Spartans played to a draw at the

Mock Pond playing field in All Saints.

Scores: All Saints Pythons 336/9 declared in 66.3 overs (Michael Haynes Dover 130, Raneico Smith 56, Demetri Lucas 40, Shamar Pereira 31; Ryan Badoo 4/132; Rising Sun Spartans 284/6 in 63 overs (Kerique Mentore 72, Brandon Jn Baptiste 50, Royal Richards 42, Dean Williams 42, Kerry Mentore 34; Kadeem Josiah 4/73).

CMW New Winthorpes Lions and Empire Nation fought to a draw at New Winthorpes.

Scores: New Winthorpes Lions 142 all out in 34.2 overs (Demari Benta 85; Micah McKenzie 3/46) and 83/4 in 23 overs (Cameron Pennyfeather 35); Empire Nation 169 all out in 37.4 overs (George Elvin 39, JQuan Athanaze 38, Tanez Francis 34; Zishan Motara 3/19).

The Pigotts Crushers and the Bolans Blasters played to a draw at Pigotts.

Scores: Pigotts Crushers 305 all out in 52.4 overs (Carlton Tuckett 67, Malique Walsh 60; Taiem Tonge 3/73); Bolans Blasters 122/6 in 27 overs (Mikyle Louis 84).