

More lands are earmarked for local tourism properties

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Antigua and Barbuda Governor-General, Sir Rodney Williams, and Sandra, Lady Williams, participated in two major United Nations engagements this week reaffirming Antigua and Barbuda's leadership in advancing gender equality, inclusive innovation, youth empowerment, and sustainable development.

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More lands are earmarked for local tourism properties

The government is going to extra mile to provide incentives for Antiguan and Barbudans to become more involved in the main driver of the country's economy, the tourism industry.

This week, the Cabinet took decisive action to expand local participation in the nation's thriving economy during a period of sustained growth and forward-looking development.

Cabinet noted that over the past eleven years under the leadership of Prime Minister **Gaston Browne**, Antigua and Barbuda has transitioned from a fragile post-crisis economy to one of the region's most resilient and dynamic.

"After experiencing an era of low growth and elevated public debt a decade ago, the Government has delivered consistent economic expansion, stronger fiscal performance, and diversified activity across tourism, construction, financial services, and other key sectors. Recent estimates show robust GDP growth in 2025 and a projected expansion of around **5 percent in 2026**, positioning Antigua and Barbuda's economy close to a **\$7 billion output** for the first time in history," Cabinet spokesman Maurice Merchant revealed.

According to Merchant the Cabinet says is of the view that this reflects dis-

ciplined economic management, strategic investment, rising employment, and expanding economic activity.

Cabinet Members, recognising the importance of ensuring that local Antiguan and Barbudans have meaningful access to opportunities in the entertainment, leisure, and broader travel economy, agreed on a suite of policy measures designed to transform enclave industries into inclusive engines of prosperity for the nation's citizens.

Key policy decisions agreed by Cabinet include:

1. **Establishment of a Certificate Programme by the Ministry of Tourism**
 - To legitimise and strengthen the participation of local businesses in the tourism, entertainment and leisure sectors.
2. **Introduction of a Licensing Regime for Real Estate Agents and Property Managers**
 - To protect consumers, raise industry standards, and support professionalisation of the real estate sector.
3. **Incentives for Local Leisure and Entertainment Businesses**
 - To enhance competitiveness, stimulate investment, and support the growth of local entrepre-



Director of Communications in the Office of the Prime Minister, Maurice Merchant

neurs in these dynamic sectors.

4. **Waivers of Duties and Taxes on Capital Equipment for Boat Tours and Water Sports Operators**
 - To reduce barriers to entry and modernise local offerings in water-based tourism activities.

In alignment with strategic efforts to deepen local engagement and ownership in high-value tourism assets, Cabinet agreed to support the **Shell Beach project** for local Airbnb-style investment properties by allocating:

- **50 acres at Willoby Bay, and**
- **15 acres at Royalton.**



APUA presents a comprehensive plan to Cabinet to modernize the water distribution system

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority wants to undertake a multi-million-dollar upgrade of the country's water distribution system with new pipes, centralized storage tanks, and an automated network of valves to regulate volume flow to enhance overall efficiency.

General Manager John Bradshaw told Cabinet this week that the Authority continues to advance a comprehensive national water infrastructure modernization and expansion programme aimed at ensuring a safe, reliable, and sustainable water supply for residents, businesses, and the tourism sector.

He said that ensuring a resilient and efficient water distribution system remains a primary mandate of APUA. The Authority has identified that the existing distribution network in St. John's City is aging and largely comprised of cast iron pipelines that have deteriorated over time, resulting in reduced carrying capacity and challenges in maintaining consistent service delivery. To address these concerns while minimizing disruption to urban activities, APUA is implementing the replacement programme in strategic phases.

St. John's City Pipeline Replacement – Phase 1

Phase 1 of the replacement project targets the high-density corridor between Independence Avenue and Market Street, extending east to west to the sea, and bounded north to south by New Gate Street and Nevis Street. All internal streets and lanes within this area are included in the upgrade schedule.

According to Bradshaw the new distribution system will be gravity-fed from the Grays Hill Tank, with additional redundancies integrated to ensure system reliability. The project includes the replacement of outdated cast iron pipes with High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipelines, selected for their superior durability, enhanced hydraulic efficiency, and long-term reliability. The installation incorporates 14-inch,



APUA General Manager John Bradshaw

12-inch, and 6-inch diameter pipes supported by internationally certified hardware, including AVK gate valves and stainless-steel backup rings.

"The works are divided into nine sections to reduce traffic and commercial disruptions. Construction involves extensive civil works, including excavation estimated at approximately 60 percent rock and 40 percent soil, manual ditch grading, pipe bedding, haunching, backfilling, and full asphalt restoration of affected roadways," he told Cabinet.

SCADA Modernization Initiative

Bradshaw reported that APUA continues to strengthen operational monitoring through Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, which currently provide live operational dashboards, historical data analysis, real-time tank monitoring, pressure and flow visibility, and early detection of system abnormalities.

CTL has submitted a proposal for an advanced, island-wide SCADA network. The proposed system will include redundant servers at APUA Headquarters, secure cellular communications, automation of booster pump stations, and monitoring across 25 critical tank sites. The system will significantly improve leak detection, reduce water loss, and enhance overall system reliability while providing comprehensive training for APUA personnel.

Grays Hill / Five Islands Expansion Project

APUA is also progressing strategic infrastructure expansion to support population growth and development in the Five Islands area, including the continued expansion of the UWI Five Islands Campus. Population projections indicate growth from 84,816 in 2011 to approximately 125,219 by 2050.

Infrastructure improvements will support Green Bay, Cooks Hill, Denfields, Yepton, and Five Islands Village. The project includes the construction of a new Cooks Hill Tank, specialized pump stations, and two major transmission pipelines connecting Grays Hill, Cooks Hill, and Five Islands. Engineering designs meet American Water Works Association (AWWA) standards and support peak daily flow demands of approximately 1.25 million gallons.

Barnes Hill / Coolidge Sump Rehabilitation

Technical assessments at the Barnes Hill Coolidge Sump identified minor structural deterioration, including mortar render spalling and water intrusion. Immediate stabilization works have been completed, and corrective repairs are currently underway. Project completion is scheduled for February 20, 2026, subject to favorable site conditions, with ongoing monitoring to ensure long-term structural reliability.

Wink Eye and New Winthropes Water Storage Facilities

APUA is constructing two reinforced concrete storage tanks at Wink Eye and New Winthropes at an estimated cost of EC\$2 million. These facilities will provide critical storage capacity and pressure stabilization for growing residential and commercial areas. The tanks will store water produced by the Seven Seas SWRO Plant at Barnacle Point, supporting communities including Hodges Bay, Cedar Valley, Crosbies, Blue Waters, and the V.C. Bird International Airport.

Cabinet to Review and Approve Work Permits to Protect Local Jobs



LABOUR DEPARTMENT ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has taken responsibility for the review and approval of work permit applications in the country, a process which the Minister of Labour and the Labour Department had oversight.

It was one of the decisions made by the Cabinet at its weekly meeting on Wednesday, arising out of growing concerns being expressed by Antiguan and Barbudans that available jobs, in which citizens can gain employment, are being secured by expatriates, through work permit applications.

During Thursday's Post-Cabinet Press Briefing, Director General of Communications, Maurice Merchant, explained further to reporters why Cabinet's intervention is necessary.

According to Merchant, Cabinet believes the current process would benefit from "additional eyes," particularly as the government sharpens its focus on protecting jobs that can be filled by qualified locals.

"The Minister, who would normally get recommendations from the Ministry of Labour in terms of work permits, needs additional assistance," Merchant explained. "Because of the focus that the Cabinet is placing on providing opportunities for local individuals, in particular sectors where Antiguan and Barbudans can fill these positions, it needs additional eyes."

He said Cabinet ministers — who collectively oversee various sectors including tourism, construction,

health, and education — are uniquely positioned to identify areas where local workers can meet labour demands and where foreign labour may not be necessary.

"The Cabinet has decided that it will play a greater role with all aspects of the nation's economy because it comprises ministers responsible for various sectors," Merchant said. "They will have greater insight as to where locals can make contributions and can fill positions."

The new approach is aimed at preventing situations where foreign nationals are granted work permits for roles that could otherwise be filled by citizens or residents.

Officials say the measure is not designed to slow down business oper-

ations or restrict legitimate needs for specialized foreign labour, but rather to ensure that the interests of the local workforce remain central to the decision-making process.

Merchant noted that Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin, who also holds portfolio responsibility for matters of Labour, believes the enhanced oversight could, in some cases, actually shorten the approval process by streamlining decisions at the Cabinet level.

"It will, in some cases, probably speed up the approval process for work permits, while ensuring that the aim of the Cabinet — to ensure that local Antiguan and Barbudans benefit from opportunities that are available — is delivered to the people," Merchant said.



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Cabinet Resolute Members Did Not Benefit from Alfa Nero Commission

Cabinet sought answers from diplomat Johann Hesse this week regarding the commission his company received from the sale of the Alfa Nero.

It is the latest salvo in the fallout associated with government's decision to sell the superyacht that had racked up costs and which posed an environmental threat while moored in Falmouth Harbour almost abandoned for more than two years.

The recent claim is that Ambassador to the African Union, Johann Hesse, received a commission payment of US\$450,000 connected to the sale of the superyacht *Alfa Nero*. The claims, which emerged through court-related filings, have sought to suggest a link between Ambassador Hesse and Prime Minister Gaston Browne, raising questions about whether any government official benefitted personally from the transaction.

In response, Cabinet summoned Ambassador Hesse to provide a direct explanation as part of what officials described as a commitment to transparency and accountability.

During the meeting on Wednesday, Hesse informed Cabinet that neither government officials nor Cabinet members had prior knowledge of any commission arrangement involving him. He explained that the US\$450,000 payment was made not to him personally, but to a United Kingdom-registered company owned by his business partner, Mr. Rufus Gobat.

According to Hesse, the company earned the commission after successfully identifying and securing a buyer for the luxury vessel during the initial bidding phase of the sale process. He assured that the firm is tax compliant and that the payment was declared to UK authorities.

Mr. Gobat, who joined the Cabinet meeting virtually, confirmed that the commission was fully declared and that all applicable taxes were paid in the United Kingdom.



Both Hesse and Gobat have since sworn affidavits affirming that no government official, Cabinet member, or any family member of a government official — including the Prime Minister — received any benefit from the commission. The two men also indicated plans to issue public statements addressing the matter.

Speaking at Thursday's Post-Cabinet Press Briefing, Director General of Communications Maurice Merchant clarified that the commission did not originate from government funds or from proceeds of the yacht's sale to the State.

"The commission was paid on the sale of the *Alfa Nero* through agents who were involved in the process," Merchant said. "The funds from the sale went directly to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. The commission did not come from government coffers."

Merchant noted that during the initial bidding phase, agents who helped procure buyers could earn commissions for their services, similar to standard brokerage practices.

He pushed back against suggestions that Prime Minister Browne or his family had any personal involvement or financial gain, describing attempts to link the Prime Minister to the payment as "far-reaching" and, in some instances, "bordering on the ridiculous."

"While the Prime Minister and Mr.

Hesse know each other, as is typical for ambassadors and government officials, to characterize him as the Prime Minister's 'right-hand man' is inaccurate," Merchant said. "If they interact twice in six months, that would be a lot."

Merchant added that Cabinet had no prior knowledge of Hesse or Gobat's private business dealings related to the sale and only sought clarification once the allegations surfaced publicly.

"As long as government funds are not involved, individuals have the right to conduct private business," he stated.

The Government maintains that all documentation related to the direct sale of the *Alfa Nero* has already been released and insists the matter has been thoroughly addressed. Officials say the administration considers the issue largely settled but will continue to defend its position against what it calls baseless or politically motivated claims.

"The Government believes that the *Alfa Nero* is a dead issue," Merchant said. "Whenever challenges arise, the attorneys are prepared to defend the Government's actions, as well as those of the Prime Minister and any other officials involved."

The *Alfa Nero* sale has faced repeated legal and political scrutiny, but Cabinet members say they remain confident that the transaction was conducted properly and in the best interest of the country.

GG, Lady Williams participate in United Nations Observance of Marking Women and Girls in Science Day



Antigua and Barbuda Governor-General, Sir Rodney Williams, and Sandra, Lady Williams, participated in two major United Nations engagements this week reaffirming Antigua and Barbuda's leadership in advancing gender equality, inclusive innovation, youth empowerment, and sustainable development.

At the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Sir Rodney addressed the Assembly marking the 11th International Day of Women and Girls in Science, calling for a transition "from vision to impact" in closing the gender gap in STEM fields.

He underscored global disparities in access to science and technology and

highlighted Antigua and Barbuda's pioneering gender policy within the Ministry of Works, which has expanded opportunities for women in engineering, project management, surveying, and construction.

Lady Williams also participated in the observance, reinforcing the importance of ensuring that women and girls are not merely included in STEM, but are empowered to lead and innovate.

Later, the Governor General delivered remarks at the Pledge for Peace: Youth Empowerment Forum, held in the United Nations General Assembly Hall. The Forum, convened by the International WeLoveU Foundation and co-sponsored by the Permanent Mis-

sion of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, brought together more than 1,000 youth leaders, delegates, and global partners.

In his address, Sir Rodney emphasized that youth leadership is not preparation for the future, it is essential to transformation now. He referenced the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), the foundation document that arose from the historic SIDS4 conference in Antigua and Barbuda, as a framework for placing young people at the center of resilient prosperity for Small Island Developing States.

Sir Rodney expressed appreciation to Ambassador Walton Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Consular Officer Michelle Lightfoot and Daniel Lee, President of the International WeLoveU Foundation United States Chapter for their initiative and coordinating roles in the important exercise.

He also commended the two youth representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Kamalie Mannix and Latisha Brown, praising their enthusiasm and active engagement as participants in the forum.

The various partners who facilitated Antigua and Barbuda's in-person engagement were also singled out for praise by Sir Rodney.

The day's engagements showcased Antigua and Barbuda's continued active presence within multilateral dialogue at the highest level. Through participation in both the Women and Girls in Science Assembly and the Youth Empowerment Forum, both the Governor General and Lady Williams reinforced the nation's commitment to Gender equity in STEM and artificial intelligence, Disability-inclusive innovation, Youth leadership in climate resilience and volunteerism and sustainable development for Small Island Developing States.

MP Smith donates to football clubs in All Saints West

The member of parliament for All Saints West constituency, Agriculture Minister, Anthony Smith Jnr., has donated over \$20,000.00 to football clubs in the constituency.

“This week, I had the pleasure of contributing \$10,000 each to both the Sea View Farm and Freemans Village Football Clubs.

“Investing in our youth and supporting sports development in All Saints West is not optional; it’s essential. When we strengthen our clubs, we strengthen our communities. From the very beginning of this season, we made a commitment to treat both teams equally; contributing the same amount in the first round and now again in the second round. Fairness and consistency matter,” MP Smith declared.

According to the MP, the young people of the constituency deserve opportunity, structure, and support, and he remains committed to ensuring they have it.



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St. Joseph's Academy Interact Club makes donation to Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross

The Interact Club of St. Joseph's Academy (SJA) continues to make a meaningful impact in the community through a series of charitable initiatives as part of its ongoing "Season of Giving."

This week, the club donated a collection of used clothing items to the Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross. The items will support the organization's thrift store, which plays a vital role in assisting individuals and families in need across the island. The clothing drive was entirely organized and executed by the Interactors, who solicited donations from their peers and the wider school community.

Earlier this term, the SJA Interact Club launched its giving initiatives with a gesture of appreciation to the doctors at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, presenting them with a donation of donuts in recognition of their dedication and service to the nation's healthcare system.


The club later partnered with its sister organization, the Interact Club of Christ the King School, to further support the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre. Together, the students donated bedding, curtains, clocks, and electric kettles



to the Pediatric Ward, contributing to the comfort and well-being of young patients and their families.



Through these efforts, the Interact Club of St. Joseph's Academy

continues to exemplify the spirit of service above self, demonstrating leadership, compassion, and a strong commitment to community development.



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Flow Champions Youth Digital Safety and Empowers Students with Necessary Online Skills

Flow marked Safer Internet Day 2026 as part of a global initiative observed in more than 170 countries.

The company celebrated this by hosting a youth focused interactive presentation with students at Clare Hall Secondary School and All Saints Secondary School. Guided by the global theme, “Smart tech, safe choices, exploring the safe and responsible use of AI,” the session brought together students, principals, and teachers for discussions on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and responsible digital behaviour.

Flow Ambassador Lisa Abraham delivered the presentation, engaging students through open dialogue and real-world examples. The topics that were highlighted included online safety, ethical use of AI, cybercrime, misinformation, and protecting personal data. The student centred format encouraged critical thinking and practical reflection on making safer choices online.

Flow’s Marketing Manager Shand Merchant commented that “this unique initiative reaffirmed Flow’s commitment to empowering young people with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the digital world responsibly. We will continue to champion safer, more inclusive online spaces across the region”



Custodial Training Successfully Conducted

The Central Board of Health successfully concluded a comprehensive training session for custodians focusing on proper cleaning and sanitizing techniques, the safe and effective use of chemicals, and the correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

A department spokesman said this initiative reinforces the critical role custodians play in maintaining safe, healthy, and hygienic environments within workplaces and public spaces.

Proper cleaning and disinfection are essential in preventing the spread of germs, reducing pest infestations, and protecting both staff and the public.

Participants were engaged in practical demonstrations and discussions on:

- ▶ Correct dilution and handling of cleaning chemicals
- ▶ Safe storage procedures
- ▶ Appropriate PPE selection and usage



Custodial training being conducted by the Central Board of Health

- ▶ Best practices for sanitation and infection prevention

The spokesman observed that custodians are on the frontline of environmental health. Their work directly contributes to disease prevention, workplace safety, and overall public

health. “We commend them for their dedication and commitment to excellence,” the spokesman declared.

A clean environment is everyone’s responsibility — and this week’s training strengthens the collective effort toward healthier spaces for all



DAILY PROGRAMMING




EARLY VIBRATIONS	6AM-10AM MON. - FRI.
WITH GREMSTA	
THE RUSH HOUR SHOW	5PM-7PM MON. - FRI.
WITH ROGER LAKE	6AM-9AM SATURDAYS
TOUCHLINE	7PM-9PM MON. - THURS.
WITH EPILUS	
BAD COMPANY	2PM-6PM THURS. 12PM-4PM SATURDAYS
LIVE FROM THE V.I.	& 1PM-5PM ON SUNDAYS
REGGAE INSPIRATION	9PM-12AM MON. THURS. SUNDAY
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From CSEC Star to Regional TVET Standout Antigua and Barbuda's **Khalique Harris** of St. Joseph's Academy, was recognized as the Most Outstanding CSEC Candidate in the Region for Technical and Vocational Studies at the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Regional Awards Ceremony, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 11th December, 2025. Antigua and Barbuda's celebration of academic excellence this year carries a powerful reminder. Outstanding results are rarely solitary achievements. They are often the visible edge of quiet discipline, family sacrifice, and sustained belief.

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

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

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

Behind the accolades, however, lies a story grounded firmly at home. Khalique's journey has been anchored by consistent family support, disciplined structure, and deep spiritual conviction. His mother, Rita, played a



central role in creating the conditions for success, managing the daily details that often go unseen. From meals and uniforms to maintaining a calm study environment, her presence was constant.

"Most of the time, what I would do when he's studying, I would stay in the living room with him, so he doesn't feel alone," Rita explained. *"You might not be able to do the physics, you might not be able to understand the maths, but one thing that you can do is to give them that support, be that strong tower, be that praying person for them."*

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

Now looking ahead, Khalique is already charting his next chapter. He is currently pursuing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme while preparing for the SAT exam-

inations, with aspirations of gaining admission to top-tier U.S. institutions such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Cornell University.

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

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

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

13th February

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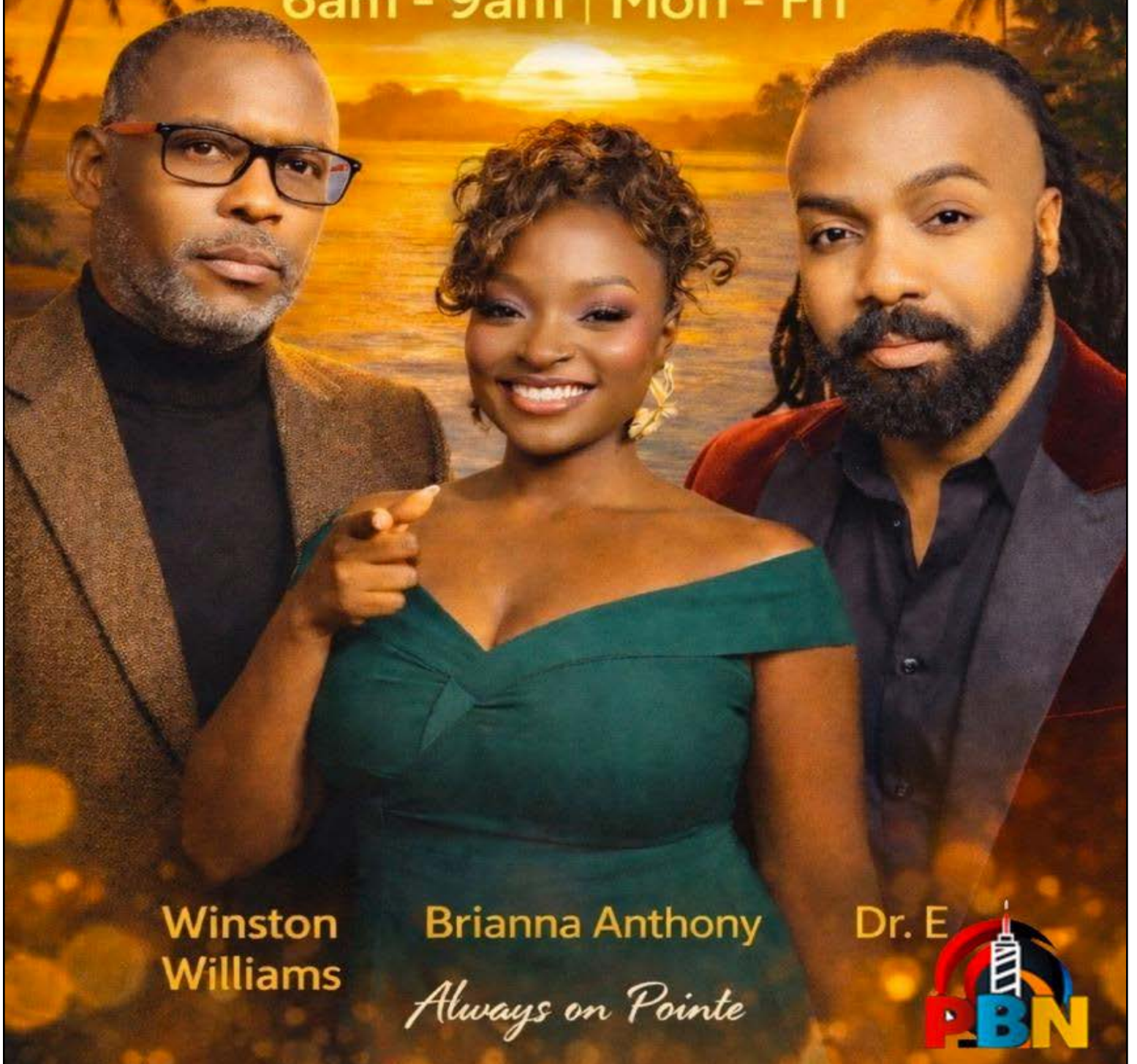
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Regional News



Mia Mottley and Barbados Labour Party win a third consecutive term!



Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley had led the Barbados Labour Party to an unprecedented 30-0 victory for the third successive time in Barbados' electoral history.

With similar margins of victory in 2018 and again in 2022, there was a school of thought and hope, in some quarters, that the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) could mount a serious challenge and possibly snatch some of the ridings.

That was not to be.

It was after 3 a.m. when Neil Rowe was declared the duly elected member for St Michael North West – after a recount of one of the boxes – ending any hopes of the DLP securing at least one seat. None of the other parties factored.

A jubilant Mottley had earlier declared Friday February 13 a national holiday, giving Barbadians a long weekend, even as she admonished

them to go to work today. She said they would meet at the National Botanical Gardens at Waterford – in her constituency – for the big celebration on Saturday at 4 p.m.

Speaking to the red-clad party faithful who thronged the BLP headquarters at Roebuck Street, Mottley thanked

those who made the victory possible.

Both the Prime Minister and the new Attorney General Wilfred Abrahams were sworn in Thursday as Dale Marshall has retired.

Cabinet will be sworn in on Monday, with a return to Parliament anticipated no later than next week Friday. (SAT)

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

Notice is hereby given, in accordance with Section 32 of the Constitution, that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Antigua and Barbuda Scout Association will be held at the Office of the Governor General and Chief Scout located at the Government House in St. John's, Antigua on Thursday 26th February 2026 at 5:00 p.m. The election of officers for the period March 2026 – February 2029 will also be conducted.

All Members are invited to attend punctually and to note that subscriptions for 2026 are now due and payable.

In Trinidad and Tobago La Brea MP condemns theft of cables from Pt D'or Recreation Ground



La Brea MP Clyde Elder has condemned the theft of electrical cables from the Pt D'or Recreation Ground, describing it as a blow to community development.

The cables were discovered missing yesterday. T&TEC was informed by a contractor that six pieces of cable, each 30 feet long and valued at \$3,500, had been placed underground on Tuesday before workers finished at 3.45 pm. The site is in an open area with unrestricted public access. When the contractor returned at 7 am, the cables were gone.

In a Facebook post, Elder said he had committed to refurbishing the lighting at the recreation ground before or immediately after Carnival.

"The installation crews unearthed the armoured cables to examine their integrity for reuse into the project. To my dismay and great disappointment the cables were stolen overnight on the

10.02.26," he said.

Elder described the incident as a "direct attack on the development of La Brea" and called on residents to condemn the act.

"I condemn this criminal act in the strongest possible way, and I call on every right thinking and law-abiding constituent to do the same. Stealing from a community whether it is public infrastructure, a local business, or a shared resource creates profound, long-lasting, and often irreversible negative consequences," he said.

"Theft of Public Resources, such as Copper Cable, Park Equipment, or Building Materials, directly reduces the government's ability to deliver services. Every dollar lost to theft is a dollar not invested in development."

Elder said he is confident the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will bring those responsible to justice.




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Regional News

Health department will be hands on to ensure food safety at Carnival events, says health official

As the public prepares for Mas Dominik 2026, the Environmental Health Department is ensuring that all necessary food safety measures are put in place to prevent foodborne illnesses. Senior Environmental Health Officer, Calma Louis, who was addressing a press conference recently, said that environmental health officers will be actively involved in mass gathering surveillance and monitoring at most of the Carnival activities.

“So you will see us at Sunrise, you will see us at VIVA...,” she said. “Our goal is not to disrupt the celebration, but to work alongside vendors and event organizers to ensure that the food is prepared and served safely.”

Louis continued, “We are therefore soliciting a full cooperation of our vendors and patrons as officers carry out their duties to protect the health of the public.”

She also reminded vendors and their assistants to maintain clean and sanitary vending areas at all times and to be properly attired with the appropriate hair covering and aprons.

“No sleeveless, [no shorts] just come



properly dressed to make the money,” she urged.

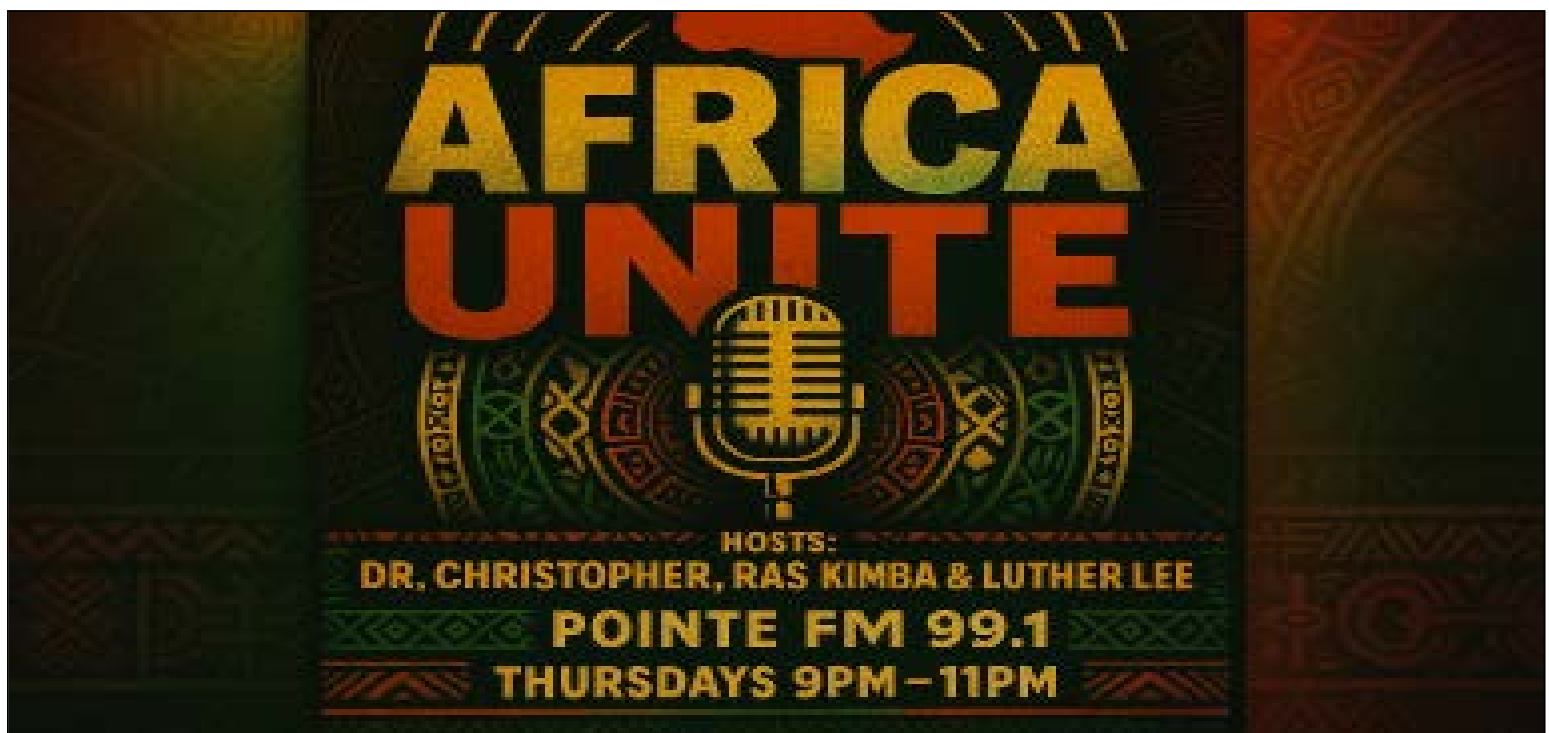
Furthermore, Louis said hand hygiene is the key to preventing any food-borne illness, “especially after you use the washroom and handling money or raw food.”

Additionally, she noted that any food handler experiencing symptoms of illnesses, particularly vomiting or diarrhea

must stay away from the food preparation area and the food service.

Louis emphasized that this applies not only to the persons at the stalls, “but even those preparing at home to take to the local vending location.”

She stated that protecting the public starts with responsible practices from every food handler.



The Trump Administration has ordered a draw down of federal law enforcement from Minnesota



The US immigration enforcement surge in Minnesota will end, President Donald Trump's border tsar told reporters on Thursday.

Tom Homan said Trump had approved his request to conclude the operation, adding he would stay in Minnesota "a little longer to oversee the drawdown, to ensure its success".

Homan said Operation Metro Surge had resulted in many illegal immigrants who had committed violent crimes being detained for deportation. But the surge also sparked nationwide protests when two US citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, were killed by immigration officers.

After the news conference, top Minnesota and federal officials appeared at a Capitol Hill hearing on Trump's immigration crackdown.

Officials in Minnesota have been able to "greatly reduce the number of targets" for immigration enforcement, Homan said, adding that Operation Metro Surge was a "great success".

More than 4,000 undocumented immigrants had been arrested, according to Homan, including men he said were convicted of rape and other sexual misconduct.

Homan said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has always

had a presence in Minnesota and will continue to have one.

He said that the surge's end came after an unprecedented level of cooperation between federal agents and local law enforcement, with local officials increasing their crackdown on protesters he called public safety threats and local jails more willing to notify ICE of the release dates for individuals it was seeking.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz said at a news conference following Homan's announcement that he was "cautiously optimistic" about the drawdown of federal agents.

"The fact of the matter is they left us with deep damage, generational trauma," Walz said. "They left us with economic ruin in some cases. They left us with many unanswered questions."

The governor is expected to soon propose a \$10m (£7m) emergency fund for small businesses who say they were financially hurt by the surge.

Following the fatal shooting of Alex Pretti last month, President Donald Trump dispatched Homan to Minneapolis to oversee the surge, sidelining the operation's leader, Greg Bovino, who had faced intense criticism for ICE's use of force and what many in the city alleged were civil rights violations.

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In Tehran, rallies for Iran's revolution overshadowed by discontent and defiance



When clocks struck nine across Tehran on Tuesday, the night skies filled with sound in celebration of the 47th year of the Iranian revolution.

We listened from our hotel balcony as chants of “God is greatest” rose from rooftops and roared from windows. Fireworks flared in a kaleidoscope of brilliant colours.

But this year, in this annual explosion of light and sound, there was a discordant note.

We heard “death to the dictator” shouted too from somewhere in the darkness of the city, from the safety of spaces indoors.

It was a dramatic echo of the extraordinary wave of protests, which swept some streets and squares of Tehran, and towns and cities across this country last month. They were met with unprecedented lethal force and a huge loss of life unseen in pre-

vious uprisings.

It’s our first trip to Iran since the protests, as the authorities slowly lift their near total internet blackout, described as one of the longest digital shutdowns in history, and gradually allow a small number of international media to return.

The mood in the capital is in stark contrast to our visit last June, at the end of the 12-day war with Israel, which also drew in America’s attacks on Iran’s nuclear sites.

That deadly conflagration had left many residents, including those who fled Tehran for safer cities, shaken by the blistering attacks and cemented their attachment to their country.

Now, this sprawling metropolis set against the stunning, snowy Mount Damavand is decked out in flags and bunting to mark what’s known as the

“ten days of dawn”.

In 1979, this period ushered in an historic revolution that ousted the shah, totally transformed Iran, and created a radical “axis of resistance” among its allies across the region which has long been condemned and confronted by its enemies.

This year, the days are overshadowed by discontent and defiance over everything from the soaring prices of everyday goods hitting people’s pockets, to calls which sounded on streets last month for an end to clerical rule.

These internal pressures, compounded by US President Donald Trump’s warning of more military strikes if diplomacy fails, now pose an unparalleled challenge to Iran’s ageing theocracy.

Remote Community still reeling after Canada's worst mass shooting in years

The father of a 12-year-old victim of the mass shooting in a remote Canadian town tearfully recounted the desperate hours spent trying to learn what happened to her, only to find out from an older girl, not the authorities.

Lance Younge told CTV News on Wednesday that his son Ethan texted "I love you" shortly after 3 p.m. Tuesday and then called a short time later to say he was hiding in a utility room at his school in the small mountain community of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, but that he didn't know where his sister Kylie was.

The family would find out hours later that Kylie Smith was one of the eight victims, mostly children, who were killed in attacks at the school and the home of the 18-year-old shooting suspect, who died from an apparent self-inflicted wound.

While looking for Kylie, Younge said he walked around the local recreation center where students were reuniting with their families for about six hours, but that police wouldn't tell him anything.

"I went home not knowing where my daughter was until a high school kid ... came here and told us her story about trying to save my daughter's life," he said. "The police didn't tell us anything. We had to find out through the community and through kids and rumors in the stands."

The motive for Canada's deadliest attack in years remained unclear Thursday.

Mourners braved frigid cold Wednesday night to grieve the victims, with Mayor Darryl Krakowka telling them, "It's OK to cry."

Krakowka described the town as "one big family," and encouraged people to reach out and support each other, especially the families of those who died in the attack. The community must support victims' families "forever," not



only in the days and weeks to come, he said. Jesse Van Rootselaar, whom investigators identified as the shoot-

er, had a history of police visits to her home to check on her mental health, authorities said.



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Wings continue to promote women's basketball with Gillian Brazier tournament

Encouraging females to play basketball is one of the main aims of the CPTSA Wings Sports Club in staging its annual women's tournament.

The importance of women's basketball will once again come into focus when the Wings Sports Club stages its 20th Gillian Brazier Basketball Tournament at the JSC Sports Complex from March 30 to April 4 this year.

Organizer Valencia Burnette of the Basketball Unit of the Wings Sports Club said the Gillian Brazier tournament highlights the importance of developing female basketball players in Antigua and Barbuda.

"Wings has been staging the longest-running female tournament, and we put a lot of emphasis on developing female basketball players," Burnette said.

"We staged this tournament for the first time in 2001, and although we missed a few years in between, we greatly want to encourage the young women to continue to play and also attract new female players to participate."

For more than two decades, the local governing body for the sport, the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA), has not organized a national female programme.

There is a female school basketball league that is staged annually by the Ministry of Sports. But outside of the school league, only the Wings Sports Club and the Cyclones, the creation of former national player Oslyn "Pigeon" Gregory, provide an avenue for female players to continue their development in Antigua and Barbuda.

Burnette, who is a former player, said there continues to be a decline in female participation in the sport



Valencia Burnette, third right, along with members of the Wings Mystics at a bake sale at Ruthlyn's Car Park on Lower Nevis Street in St. John's on Saturday, February 7, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the Wings Sports Club)

of basketball in Antigua and Barbuda. However, Burnette is hoping this year's Gillian Brazier Tournament, which is held in honour of the former national player, will inspire more young women to play the sport.

"I have personally noticed that female basketball is declining in Antigua and Barbuda. The female players in the school league have declined also, with only a few teams taking part this year and most of those teams comprised of players of the Wings Sports Club," Burnette said.

"We are hoping that the Gillian Brazier tournament can provide some inspiration to let them see home players from other countries are excelling in the sport.

"They can emulate them because the sport can provide opportunities for players to use basketball as an avenue to further their careers and education.

"It is not just a boys' sport, and women's basketball is flourishing in other

countries. We at Wings will continue to focus on developing our players, and we want to encourage everyone to come out and support the Gillian Brazier tournament."

Defending champions Stingers, one of three teams from Canada, will once again be contesting this year's event. The other Canadian teams, Canucks and Maple Marauders, will be joined by teams from Barbados and Dominica, along with Cyclones and Wings Mystics of Antigua.

The major sponsors of the 20th Gillian Brazier Tournament are Antigua & Barbuda Social Security, ZandaPay, Hutchinson, Subway, Premier Beverages, and the Antigua and Barbuda Transports Board.

The Wings held a fundraising bake sale on Saturday, February 7. The Gillian Brazier Basketball Committee is seeking to raise, at least, EC \$35,000 to offset the cost of hosting this year's tournament.



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**ANTIGUA
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Phoenix and Daggers return to winning form in ABBA's Second Division



Michael Joseph Phoenix and Old Road Daggers returned to winning form in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA) Second Division on Wednesday night.

Both teams, who won their opening games but suffered losses in their second encounters, rebounded to record their second win in three matches during a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

The Phoenix pulled off an 80-71 victory against Da Project 2, who lost for the first time after winning their opening game.

Adrian Carnegie shot a game-high 31 points, Shalom Bloodman converted 12 points and snatched 15 rebounds, and Daysher Samuel chipped in with nine points, 10 rebounds, and eight assists for the Phoenix.

Nathan Matthew sank 21 points, Kevin Pimental converted 19 points

and claimed five rebounds, and Gabriel De-Suza scored 11 points for Da Project 2.

The Old Road Daggers snatched a narrow 68-67 victory against Ramco Pharmacy Fearless Crew, who suffered their second defeat in three games.

Wester Batista-Perez shot a game-high 29 points, Devea Aaron produced 17 points, eight rebounds, and five assists, and Rafiki Harris scored 13 points and claimed six rebounds for the Old Road Daggers.

Takeem Martin sank 28 points and grabbed 27 rebounds, and Emeka Emujuru Oupe converted 16 points and snatched 14 rebounds for the Fearless Crew.

CHSS among winners in School Basketball League

The Clare Hall Secondary School (CHSS) was among the winners in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday.

Clare Hall Secondary School clinched a hard-fought 52-43 victory against St. Joseph's Academy in the Junior Boys Division affair.

Tajahron Davis shot a game-high 33 points for Clare Hall Secondary School, while Jayden Lewis scored 19 points and Erije Joseph converted 10 points for St. Joseph's Academy.

Success as well for Island Academy, which coasted to a commanding 66-27 victory over Jennings Secondary School in the Senior Boys Division.

Khalique Harris sank 29 points and Tristan Thibou converted 24 points for Is-



land Academy, while Louis Catholic in the Mini Boys points as Greenbay Primary. **Tajahron Davis of Clare Hall Secondary School dribbles up the court during his team's encounter against St. Joseph's Academy in the Junior Boys Division in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday, February 11, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the Inter-School Basketball League)**

Morla scored 15 points for Jennings Secondary School.

In other results, Lenys Paul scored 10 points to lead Greenbay Primary to a 22-9 victory against St. John's

Primary Division.

Jasiel Henry sank five points, and Darielle Perez converted four points for St. John's Catholic Primary.

Joelyse Bridge scored four

ry notched up an 8-1 victory against Mary E. Pigott School in the Mini Girls Primary Division.

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St. John's Antigua

The battle for supremacy in the Premier Division resumes this weekend

Teams will resume their quest for supremacy in the nation's top domestic football league this weekend.

The Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League will continue with the fourth round of matches in the second stage of the 12-team round-robin competition at the ABFA Technical Center.

Former champions, Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades will hope to stay in touch with leaders and back-to-back champions All Saints United with a victory on Saturday.

The Grenades, who have a game in hand, are currently in second place with 32 points, three adrift of leaders All Saints United.

The Grenades will resume their battle for supremacy when they take on struggling John Hughes FC in the sec-

ond game of Saturday's triple-header at 6 pm.

John Hughes, who are languishing third from the bottom of the standings with 10 points, need to start picking up points to stave off automatic relegation to the First Division at the end of the season.

All Saints United will seek to maintain their lead and remain on course for a hat trick of Premier League titles when they face bottom team, Ottos Rangers, in the opening game of Sunday's triple-header at 4 pm.

The Ottos Rangers are desperately in need of a change in fortunes, having lost 12 of their 14 matches to become firmly rooted in the cellar with just one win and a total of four points.

A tense battle for a top-three finish is being developed between Old

Road FC, the Aston Villa Lions, and the Pigotts Bullets. All three teams are currently on 27 points, with Old Road FC occupying third place on goal difference.

However, Old Road FC and the Pigotts Bullets have both played 14 matches, one more than the Villa Lions, who will tackle the Garden Stars in the last game of Sunday's triple-header at 8 pm.

The Villa Lions match will be preceded by a clash between Old Road FC and the Pigotts Bullets at 6 pm on Sunday.

Green City will meet Sir Molwyn Joseph Jennings United in Saturday's opening game at 4 pm, while the Potters Tigers and the Attacking Saints will clash in the last encounter on Saturday at 8 pm.



Players of Old Road FC (blue and white uniform) and the Pigotts Bullets compete in the Premier Division League at the ABFA Technical Center on Sunday, January 18, 2026. (Photo courtesy the ABFA)

Blackhawks and Lions to clash in ABCA two-day contest

Cup holders PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks and CMW New Winthropes Lions will meet in a top-of-the-table clash when the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship resumes this weekend.

The Blackhawks, who are unbeaten and current leaders of the competition, will host the Lions at Ball Beef in Liberta in one of five fifth-round matches that are slated to commence at 10 am

on Saturday.

The Liberta Blackhawks will be seeking their fourth win in five matches in their quest for a fifth consecutive ABCA two-day title.

They will enter their clash with the Lions in dominant form, having won three of their previous four matches to lead the 10-team round-robin competition with 42 points.

The Lions, who are also unbeaten and have won two of their previous four

matches, are currently in second place with 33 points.

The Bolans Blasters and the WES Rising Sun Spartans will go into their respective fifth-round matches tied in third place with 22 points each, one point ahead of both Empire Nation and the Jennings Tigers with 21 points apiece.

All four teams will be hoping to separate themselves from the pack with success this weekend. The Bolans Blasters will clash with the Jennings Tigers in a round-south derby at Jennings, while the Rising Sun Spartans will take on Empire Nation at Rising Sun in St. John's.

The trailing pack, comprising the bottom four teams, will be aiming to make up lost ground with improved performances in their respective fifth-round matches this weekend.

The Pigotts Crushers, currently in seventh place with 19 points, will travel to Bethesda to tackle Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles, who are occupying the cellar with six points from four matches.

The Bethesda Golden Eagles will be seeking a definite improvement in all aspects of their game, having lost three of their four matches.

Buoyed by their first win in an eight-wicket victory against Bethesda last weekend, Tertiary Institutions and Schools will be hoping for more success when they meet the struggling All Saints Pythons at the Factory Grounds.

Tertiary Institutions and Schools will enter this weekend's match in eighth place with 15 points, while the All Saints Pythons, who have lost two and drawn the other two of their previous four matches, are currently second from the bottom of the standings with just seven points.



Players of the Liberta Blackhawks celebrate after retaining the ABCA Two-Day title at Ball Beef on Sunday, March 30, 2025. (Photo courtesy of the ABCA)