

The House of Representative to Celebrate Sir Robin's 50th Anniversary as an MP

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The House of Representatives will convene a special session at the Parliament Chambers this morning (Wednesday 18) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Sir Robin Yearwood's tenure as a parliamentarian.

On February 18, 1976, Sir Robin was first elected to the House of Representatives as a member of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party headed by Vere Cornwall Bird, who himself was returning to the house after the defeat of the labour party by the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) in 1971.

Sir Robin has won his seat in every successive election since then making him the longest serving elected politician not only in the Caribbean but throughout the Commonwealth as well.

Sir Robin has served Antigua and Barbuda well as over his long tenure as he has held key portfolio responsibilities for ministries such as finance, agriculture, aviation, utilities and energy.

At the special session, the Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams, will join members of the House at the sit-

ting and he too, is expected to offer a tribute to Sir Robin.

The session will commence with

the entry of the Speaker, followed by prayers and the adoption of a motion to amend the Order Paper in keeping with the Standing Orders.



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Foreign Minister Greene Advances Practical Solutions to the Transboundary Sargassum Crisis

During the recent parliamentary engagement on Climate Resilience, Sargassum and Renewable Energy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, E.P. Chet Greene, called for a solutions-driven response to the escalating and transboundary sargassum crisis affecting the Caribbean.

Minister Greene noted briefly that while climate change is contributing to warming seas and shifts in ocean circulation that influence bloom dynamics, scientific evidence also points to nutrient enrichment and pollution — including discharges from major river systems such as the Amazon — as key amplifiers of sargassum growth. The phenomenon is therefore both climate-related and pollution-driven, and critically, transboundary in nature, with Caribbean states managing downstream impacts of upstream drivers beyond their jurisdiction.

The Minister emphasised, however, that the focus must now be on structured and sustained solutions.

He advanced a balanced two-track strategy.

First, immediate stabilisation and emergency support must continue. Sargassum remains a recurring coastal emergency for Small Island Developing States. Antigua and Barbuda faces significant and ongoing clean-up costs, tourism disruption, fisheries impacts, in-



frastructure corrosion from hydrogen sulphide emissions, and public health concerns.

Minister Greene stressed that sustained financing for clean-up operations, equipment, coastal community response, early warning systems, and environmental and health monitoring must not be deprioritised. He suggested that without continued support, small economies will continue to divert scarce national resources from critical social and development priorities.

Second, the Minister called for structured regional scaling of utilisation and innovation. While sargassum presents a burden, it also offers potential opportunities within a broader renewable energy and circular economy transition. Biomass energy generation, bio-

gas production, and industrial applications remain promising pathways. However, he cautioned that these require coordinated regional research platforms, shared pilot projects, harmonised environmental standards, aggregation models to achieve commercial scale, and blended financing mechanisms suited to small economies.

“Sargassum-to-energy is not an overnight solution,” Minister Greene stated. “It is a medium- to long-term transition that must be responsibly designed, financed, and implemented at regional scale.”

He further called for strengthened international cooperation, particularly between Caribbean states and development partners, to support both immediate management costs and medium-term innovation. Financing tools must reflect the transboundary nature of the crisis and the limited fiscal space of SIDS.

In closing, Minister Greene reaffirmed that for Antigua and Barbuda, sargassum is not a single-policy issue. It is simultaneously an environmental challenge, a fiscal stressor, a public health concern, a tourism risk, and a potential renewable energy opportunity.

“The policy message is straightforward,” he concluded. “Support stability today, and build resilience for tomorrow.”



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Police Warn Residents of Electronic Fraud

The police are issuing an urgent warning to residents regarding a noticeable increase in reports of electronic fraud and unauthorized banking transactions.

Several persons have been making complaints to the police concerning the mysterious disappearance of monies from their bank accounts.

These matters have become a serious concern for the Police Administration.

In response to the growing trend, the Police Administration is actively seeking dialogue with officials within the banking sector and other financial institutions to strengthen collaborative efforts aimed at protecting customers and enhancing fraud prevention measures.

Meanwhile, residents are strongly urged to exercise vigilance and to desist from disclosing personal or banking information online, particularly in response to unsolicited emails, messages, phone calls, or suspicious websites.

The police have also issued several safety tips to help protect residents from online fraud. These include:



- Never share confidential information such as PINs, passwords, one-time codes (OTPs), or security answers.
- Avoid clicking unknown links in emails, text messages, or social media posts.
- Verify communications claiming to be from your bank by contacting the institution directly.
- Use secure websites. Only look for "https://" and the padlock symbol.
- Enable transaction alerts to monitor account activity in real time.
- Regularly review bank statements

and report discrepancies immediately.

- Use strong, unique passwords and update them frequently.
- Avoid conducting financial transactions over public Wi-Fi networks.
- Keep devices updated with the latest security patches and antivirus protection.

The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to safeguarding the public and urges anyone who suspects fraudulent activity to contact the Criminal Investigations Department or their banking institution without delay.

All Saints Man Charged Following Firearm and Ammunition Seizure



The police have arrested and formally charged 31-year-old Xavier Alexis Davis of All Saints following the seizure of firearms and ammunition during an operation conducted in the Mack Pond area.

Davis has been charged with:

- Possession of one (1) 9mm Canik Mete MC9 pistol,
- Possession of one (1) Glock 43X 9mm pistol,
- Possession of one (1) 30-round magazine,

Possession of one (1) 12-round magazine,

Possession of ninety-three (93) 9mm rounds of ammunition, and

Possession of one (1) .25 round of ammunition.

The charges stem from an operation conducted by officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Task Force on Monday night.

The accused is expected before the court on Wednesday.

Technical Support Boosts Cobbs Cross School's Agricultural Programme



Bradbury Browne offering technical support.

The agricultural programme at the Cobbs Cross Primary school received a major boost with the acquisition of a drip irrigation system for its garden that will see the institution achieve sustainable agriculture.

The initiative, supported and coordinated by the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and its partners, aims to improve water efficiency, enhance student learning, and strengthen food security within the school community.

According to the IICA National Specialist, Craig Thomas, this activity was designed to address challenges faced by the school's garden, including inconsistent rainfall and the need for more efficient water use. Drip irrigation delivers water directly to plant roots, reducing waste and ensuring healthier crops.

The Principal Mae Hypolite along with the Agricultural Science teacher and students were actively involved in the installation process, turning the exercise into a hands-on educational opportunity.

During the installation, the principal



All hands on deck installation of driplines



observed, "This system not only helps our plants thrive but also teaches our children the importance of conserving resources."

GroTech Farms' Bradbury Browne provided technical support, equipment, and training to ensure the system's long-term success. The initiative complements other green projects at Cobbs Cross Primary, including tree planting and climate action activities



Student connecting the endcap for the driplines.



Soil and water conservation using grass mulch to retain moisture.

that have engaged students in environmental stewardship.

This action will have significant impact on water savings which will be up to 70% less water used compared to traditional methods. The project sets the stage for integrating rainwater harvesting and expanding the garden programme.

Officials Confident Design Changes Won't Delay Construction of Five Islands Primary School

Construction of the new primary school at Five Islands is expected to move ahead without disruption, despite recent structural adjustments prompted by technical assessments at the project site.

It was revealed last week that amendments to the building's structural and foundation designs were made after a completed geotechnical study revealed that the existing soil conditions would not adequately support the original construction plan. Despite this, Director General of Communications, Maurice Merchant, said the overall timeline for the school's completion remains intact.

The new facility is being developed as part of broader plans to optimize land use in the area. Once completed, the site currently occupied by the existing school will be repurposed

to facilitate the continued expansion of the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus.

According to the project's technical team, the geotechnical survey was carried out after early site works began and engineers detected concerns about the soil's load-bearing capacity. As a result, planners were required to revisit the original drawings and modify the foundation approach.

"The soil type would not have supported the initial proposal," Merchant stated. "So adjustments had to be made to ensure the structure's long-term safety and stability."

Those adjustments include incorporating a steel frame foundation system, which engineers say will provide greater strength and durability while allowing contractors to stay on schedule.

"The new steel frame foundation will ensure that we are able to meet the various deadlines that have been put in place," Maurice Merchant pointed out. "Once all approvals are received, work will continue as planned."

While some delays occurred during the review and redesign phase, authorities stress that these were precautionary measures designed to prevent more serious issues later in the project. They noted that conducting the geotechnical work and revising the plans now would ultimately save time and resources.

The upgraded primary school is expected to deliver modern facilities and a safer learning environment for students, while the eventual relocation will free up space to support tertiary education expansion in Five Islands.



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Mill Reef Club makes timely donation to GARD Center



**Executive Director of the GARD Center
June Jackson**

The Gilbert Agricultural & Rural Development Center (GARD Center) is the latest recipient of development funding coming from the Mill Reef Fund.

In a media release, the GARD Center announced that it has received a US\$20,000.00 grant from the Fund in support of its Food Security Training and Plant Demonstration Site.

“This grant represents a significant investment in the advancement of sustainable agriculture and the strengthening of food security across the island. Through this funding, GARD Center will continue expanding its training programmes, enhancing practical demonstrations, and equipping farmers and community members with the knowledge and skills necessary to build resilience within the agricultural sector,” Executive Director of the GARD Center June Jackson reported.

She said the GARD Center is steadfast in its “commitment to empowering communities through hands-on agricultural education as it continues to make a meaningful and lasting impact.

“Throughout the years the Board of the Mill Reef Fund has recognized the Center’s achievements, applauded our dedication and shared our vision and passion for the vulnerable youth, women, and men in our twin-island state. They have consistently supported the

important initiatives of the Center especially in giving these individuals a second chance to become productive citizens,” Jackson revealed.

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.

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Halo Foundation Announces Patronage of Generation Next Football Club



Sir Rodney Williams, Mr. Ricky Santos, Generation Next Football Club and Lady Williams.

The Halo Foundation has announced that the Generation Next Football Club has come under its official patronage. This new partnership marks an important milestone in the Halo Foundation's commitment to supporting sports, youth development, and community engagement through football.

Generation Next has been actively engaged in Antigua and Barbuda, showcasing passion, teamwork, and dedication on and off the pitch.

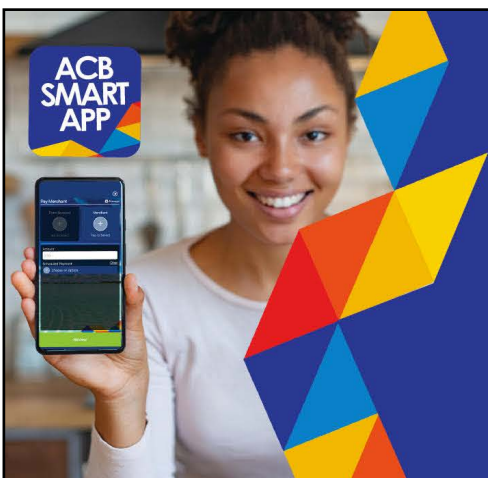
Through its work, the club has been able to provide young athletes with educational opportunities through the offer of scholarships and professional training programs.

Its vision is to see "young athlete-scholars from underserved Caribbean communities break barriers and transform society — empowered by education and sport to lead purposeful, global lives."

The mission of the GN Trust "supports secondary and tertiary edu-

cation and sports scholarships for student-athletes from the Caribbean's underserved communities. [It] grants opportunities, guidance, and access so that talents are developed, potential is realised, and futures are unlocked."

This patronage addition will help elevate the club's ability to train players, increase community involvement, and reach higher competitive levels.



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Flow Announces First Winner in “Riddim & Rewards” Promotion



Flow congratulates Annalie Thomas, the first winner in its ongoing Riddim & Rewards campaign. Thomas received \$500 after activating an Always On plan, becoming the first of several weekly winners. Customers can enter for a chance to win by activating any 3 Day, 7 Day, or 30 Day Always On Prepaid plan, with \$500 awarded weekly and a \$1,000 grand prize still up for grabs.

Villa Primary School students visit PM Browne

Prime Minister Gaston Browne may be busy with managing the complex affairs of governing Antigua and Barbuda, but he has always had time to spend with the nation's young people.

This was no different on Tuesday, February 17, when students and teachers from the Villa Primary School called on the prime minister for an interactive session; one which he gladly accommodated.

The prime minister used the opportunity to underscore the importance of education and he strongly urged the students to be serious about their education and their future. He also gave them an impromptu civics lesson on the operations of the government system that is practiced in Antigua and Barbuda.

As an example, PM Browne explained the three branches of government; the Executive (Cabinet), the Legislature (Parliament) and the Judiciary (the courts).

He also explained the parliamentary democracy where political parties vie for the right to govern the country through regular general elections. Additionally, he further explained the significance of the political colours worn by members of the political parties at election time.

The nation's leader noted that he too was a student at the Villa Primary school and as such the institution holds a special place in his heart.



Feature

Scrub Life Cares Launches “The Open Closet” Initiative at Fifth Annual Grow With The Flo Women & Girls’ Health Expo

Scrub Life Cares, a public health nonprofit dedicated to advancing menstrual equity, comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education and holistic wellness, is proud to announce The Open Closet, a community-centered clothing initiative debuting at the upcoming Grow With The Flo Women & Girls’ Health Expo happening on May 23rd, 2026.

The Open Closet is a dedicated, welcoming space where attendees can browse, select, and take home clean, gently used, or new clothing at no cost. The initiative reflects Scrub Life Cares’ commitment to addressing health and social needs through dignity-affirming, community-based solutions.

As a community-based public health organization, Scrub Life Cares has seen firsthand how access to appropriate clothing can influence confidence, emotional well-being, social participation, and overall quality of life. The organization also recognizes the growing impact of clothing overproduction and textile waste, which contribute to environmental harm, resource depletion, and increased community burden through landfill overflow and pollution. The Open Closet was created to address both realities—supporting individuals’ well-being while encouraging sustainable, community-centered giving.

“Health is influenced by social, environmental, and economic conditions,” said Tanya Ambrose, Founder and CEO of Scrub Life Cares. “The Open Closet allows us to respond to real community needs while also encouraging mindful giving. When individuals donate quality clothing instead of discarding it, they support both people and the

planet.”

The initiative operates as a give-and-receive model rooted in dignity, allowing attendees to freely choose clothing items they love and will wear without registration requirements or eligibility screening. This approach prioritizes autonomy, reduces stigma, and reinforces respect for individual choice.

Community Donation Call

Scrub Life Cares is inviting indi-

viduals, businesses, and community partners to contribute:

Clean, gently used clothing and shoes

New clothing items

Pieces in good condition that donors would feel comfortable wearing or sharing with loved ones

Donations will be accepted through April 30, 2026, allowing time for sorting, quality checks, and preparation ahead of the Expo.



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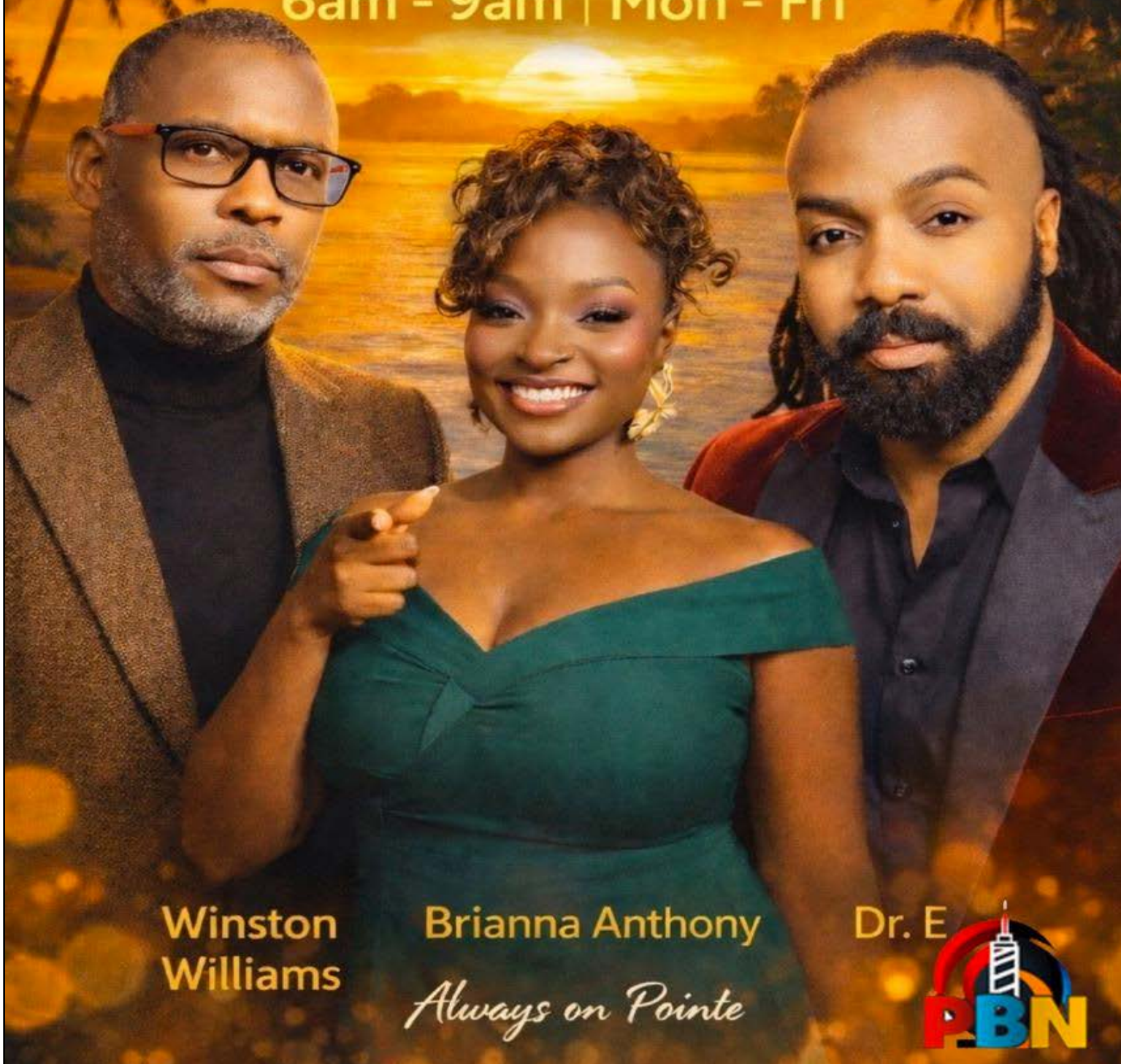
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From Hangzhou to Antigua: Why This Friendship Matters



Professor Min Zhou
Director of Center for Caribbean Studies at Hangzhou Normal University, China

Hangzhou and Antigua are separated by more than ten thousand kilometres of ocean, yet the distance between them has never felt shorter to me. As the Chinese New Year arrives on 17 February 2026, ushering in the Year of the Fire Horse, I find myself thinking not of geopolitics or trade figures, but of people — the people on both sides of that vast blue expanse whose lives have quietly grown closer over the past four decades. In Chinese tradition, the Horse embodies vitality, perseverance, and the spirit of bold exploration. The saying “□□□□” — “success arrives with the horse” — captures a wish I hold dear for the friendship between China and Antigua and Barbuda: may it continue to grow with warmth, with purpose, and with ever deeper mutual understanding.

I say “never shorter” because last August I had the privilege of visiting your beautiful twin-island nation for the first time. For someone who has devoted over twenty years to the study of the Caribbean — its literature, its history, its richly layered cultures — the experience was revelatory. There is a world of difference between

reading about a place and breathing its air; between studying a culture in a library and being embraced by its people. From the moment I arrived, I was welcomed not as a visiting scholar from afar, but simply as a friend. During an interview on ABS Television, I spoke about the work of our Caribbean Studies Center at Hangzhou Normal University and the concept of “civilisational mutual learning” — the conviction that the peoples of the Global South have profound wisdom to share with one another. I was moved beyond words when Joy

Lawrence, the distinguished Antiguan author, responded: “Professor Zhou has brought new light to Caribbean culture through her scholarship. This understanding from far away actually helps us see ourselves more deeply.” Her words confirmed what I have long believed: genuine scholarly engagement is never a one-way street; it enriches both the giver and the receiver. Our two nations have understood this from the very beginning. When China and Antigua and Barbuda established diplomatic relations on 1 January 1983 — just fourteen months

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after your independence, and among the earliest such ties in the Eastern Caribbean — what drew us together was something deeper than strategic calculation. It was a quiet kinship: a shared understanding, born of our respective histories, of what it means to fight for sovereignty and to build a future on one's own terms. That kinship found a particularly warm expression in January 2024, when Prime Minister Gaston Browne visited Hangzhou Normal University and delivered an inspiring address on education and international cooperation. The university was honoured to confer upon him the title of Honorary Professor — a gesture that recognised not his political office, but his personal dedication to cross-cultural dialogue and the advancement of young people in both our countries. I am proud to call Prime Minister Browne a colleague in the Hangzhou Normal University family.

What gives this friendship its living texture is the daily work of cooperation that touches ordinary lives. In December 2025, a delegation from Hangzhou Normal University signed seven healthcare agreements with Antigua and Barbuda, opening new pathways in telemedicine, cardiovascular care, and medical training for Antiguan people. In the fields, Chinese agricultural specialists have worked side by side with Antiguan farmers on water-saving irrigation and crop diver-

sification — what Governor-General Sir Rodney Williams has aptly described as “instruments of resilience” for a nation confronting the realities of climate change. Chinese government scholarships continue to bring Antiguan and Barbudan students to study in China, creating bonds that outlast any single programme. During my visit, I met young Antiguan who greeted me in Mandarin and asked perceptive questions about Chinese literature and philosophy. In their curiosity, I saw the future of our friendship.

What has struck me most, across two decades of Caribbean scholarship, is how profoundly our civilisations resonate at the level of lived experience — despite the vast distance between us. Both Chinese and Antiguan cultures place family and community at the centre of social life. Both possess deep traditions of oral narrative: the Chinese art of “shuōshu” and the Caribbean tradition of Anansi storytelling both transmit wisdom across generations through the alchemy of the spoken word. Both express love and memory through food: the Chinese New Year reunion dinner, with its symbolic abundance, finds a kindred spirit in pepperpot and ducana, dishes that carry the taste of generations in every mouthful. And each summer, during Antigua's magnificent Carnival, members of the local Chinese community join the celebration in tra-

ditional dress — Chinese silk moving alongside Caribbean sequins in the same warm sunlight. This is the image I hold closest: not two cultures merging into one, but two cultures dancing together, each made more vivid by the other's presence.

I returned from Antigua last summer not as a distant academic, but as a colleague visiting the homeland of a fellow member of the Hangzhou Normal University family. I carried home with me a sunset over English Harbour, the aroma of conch fritters from a roadside stall, the sound of calypso drifting through an open window, and the warmth of new friendships that already felt like old ones. These experiences have strengthened my resolve in the work of our Center, where we have recently established what is believed to be the world's first doctoral programme in Chinese-Caribbean Civilisational Mutual Learning and International Communication — dedicated to nurturing a generation of scholars equally at home in the intellectual traditions of both our worlds. It is they who will write the next chapter of this story. As we say in China: “□□□□□□□□□□” — “When a true friend exists somewhere across the sea, even the farthest shore feels close as a neighbour.” From Hangzhou to Antigua, □□□□ — Happy Year of the Horse!



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Tufton: Jamaica hammering out new health MOU with Cuba

Jamaica is renegotiating its long-running medical cooperation programme with Cuba amid renewed pressure from the United States.

Health and Wellness Minister Dr Christopher Tufton confirmed that while the previous memorandum of understanding (MOU) has expired, nearly 300 Cuban doctors and specialists continue to serve under existing contracts.

“It’s still in effect. We still have the Cuban workers here,” Tufton told *The Gleaner*. “There is a negotiation, though, that is taking place re the current agreement; the old one has expired and some conversations have been taking place, and that process is ongoing, lengthy and ongoing.”

No new MOU has been signed, and Tufton acknowledged that outstanding requests from Jamaica could jeopardise a final deal. He declined to disclose the specific requirements being sought.

“But we are waiting,” said Tufton, “and so the programme continues – the Cuban Eye Care Programme, the Cubans in hospitals and health centres that are doing work.”

Late last year, scores of Cuban medics returned home, including a respected orthopaedic surgeon at the Kingston Public Hospital whose sudden departure left patients stunned.

Some expressed sadness.

“He took time to listen to the patients, he learnt the Patois so he could understand them, and he explained to them what was happening to them, and how



he would treat them. He did not rough up the people, like some of the other people we have here. Because of that, his clinics were always full, and go on very long,” a hospital official, who did not want to be identified, told *The Gleaner* last week.

Jamaica’s medical cooperation with Cuba stretches back more than 50 years and has become a pillar of the public health system. In a March 20, 2025 statement, Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith said the programme remains “vital”, noting that a review had begun before international scrutiny intensified.

That scrutiny has sharpened since the return of US President Donald Trump to the White House in January 2025. Washington has accused Cuba’s overseas medical missions of constituting

forced labour and human trafficking – allegations repeatedly rejected by Caribbean leaders.

In a Facebook post, the US Embassy in Barbados warned that foreign governments participating in the programme risk complicity in labour abuses, and urged Caribbean states to pursue “alternative methods” of recruiting healthcare workers.

The US has also imposed visa restrictions on officials in the region. In 2025, Grenadian Finance Minister Dennis Cornwall was among those targeted over what Washington described as involvement in the Cuban medical mission scheme. Similar pressure has been reported in Antigua and Barbuda, and St Kitts and Nevis.

Caribbean leaders have pushed back forcefully.

St Lucia Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre said recently that the US had told his country to stop sending nationals to study medicine in Cuba – a claim Washington later said it had not “recently” discussed with Castries.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Motley declared last year she would rather lose her US visa than abandon the Cuban partnership, rejecting claims that the programme amounts to human trafficking.

Jamaica has also defended the programme.

Cuba has trained hundreds of Caribbean doctors and dentists under government scholarships since the 1970s, many of whom now serve across the region. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)



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Regional News

IICA signs agreement with Costa Rican gov't to bolster country's agriculture industry

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) of Costa Rica has entered into a formal partnership with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), marking a significant step forward in the country's efforts to enhance its agricultural sector.

This collaboration aims to support and implement the government's strategic initiatives to modernize and strengthen agricultural practices across the nation.

As part of this agreement, IICA reports that it will assist in executing the Verification Strategy for the Program for Sustainable and Competitive Agriculture, also known as Payment for Results (PfR). The organization stated via press release that this program is an important tool designed to ensure rigorous technical oversight, promote transparency, and achieve key strategic goals within Costa Rica's agricultural landscape.

The partnership was officially launched during the unveiling of MAG's new digital single file system. The event was attended by Víctor Carvajal Porras, Costa Rica's Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, and Marco Zapata, IICA's representative in the country. Muhammad Ibrahim, Director General of IICA, also participated as an honorary witness at the occasion.



Funded by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the PfR initiative involves an investment of USD 140 million aimed at transforming Costa Rica's agricultural sector. The funds will be used to improve coordination among institutions, simplify administrative processes, and establish robust technical verification mechanisms, all supported by IICA's expertise.

Over the course of five years, the program targets the achievement of eight strategic indicators, with IICA responsible for their technical verification. During the launch event, IICA's Director General Muhammad Ibrahim held discussions with Minister Carvajal and Costa Rica's Minister of Environment and Energy, Franz Tattenbach Capra.

He shared details about plans to deepen cooperation with the nation and enhance sustainable agricultural ini-

tatives, as per the release.

Additionally, Ibrahim engaged with staff members to explore upcoming programs focused on creating sustainable agricultural landscapes, aligned with Costa Rica's national agenda.

The PfR initiative is built around several core pillars, including:

- Digital transformation of the agricultural sector
- Enhancement of agricultural traceability systems
- Upgrading infrastructure
- Adoption of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs)
- Development of Payment for Environmental Services (PES) mechanisms
- Promotion of green financing strategies

Franz Tattenbach Capra, Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica; Víctor Carvajal Porras, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock; and IICA Director General Muhammad

Ibrahim discussed the Institute's plans to strengthen cooperation with its member countries. Photo: IICA

Reportedly, this agreement emphasizes IICA's role as a key technical partner for Costa Rica, leveraging its extensive regional experience, institutional coordination capabilities, and methodological expertise. IICA indicated that its involvement ensures that the implementation of the program adheres to international standards of management, evaluation, and accountability.

Muhammad Ibrahim highlighted the importance of these efforts, stating, "The transformation and modernization of the agricultural sector are essential to respond to national demands and global challenges. IICA works in close coordination with ministries and key stakeholders, including the private sector, to overcome barriers, strengthen traceability and ensure that agriculture continues advancing with sustainability and competitiveness."

Through this collaboration with MAG, IICA reaffirms "its technical leadership in strengthening agricultural public policies", fostering a more sustainable, innovative, and resilient agricultural sector in Costa Rica—one that aligns with environmental commitments and international market requirements. (Dominica News Online)

UWI hosts Nigerian Vice-Chancellor delegation



Last week marked another milestone in strengthening connections between the Caribbean and Africa.

According to a UWI media release, a delegation of 20 newly appointed Vice-Chancellors from Nigeria visited The University of the West Indies (UWI) headquarters in Jamaica, where they were welcomed by UWI Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles.

This visit was initiated by the Nigerian Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Universities (CVCNU), aiming to give emerging Nigerian university leaders firsthand insight into UWI's achievements and its approach to navigating the complex interplay of national priorities and global issues, said a UWI release. The university also indicated that the initiative aligns with the broader efforts of higher education institutions in the Global South to develop sustainable strategies for international engagement and competitiveness.

Nigeria boasts approximately 140 public universities alongside a similar number of private institutions. Meanwhile, UWI is recognized as a leading and reputable institution globally,

ranked among the top 3.6% of the 33,000 universities worldwide by the Times Higher Education (THE), as per the release.

Specifically, the Nigerian delegation and UWI representatives gathered from February 10-12 for the Africa-Caribbean Higher Education Summit. Reportedly, the event fostered lively discussions on various topics, including long-term strategic planning, research for societal development, curriculum standards, global university rankings, optimizing impact amid limited resources, and fostering visionary leadership.

The UWI reports that during the opening ceremony, Vice-Chancellor Beckles described the event as “a spiritual moment,” emphasizing the deep-rooted historical connections between the Caribbean and Africa. He highlighted Nigeria's significant intellectual influence on UWI's evolution, stating that “Nigeria has had a profound intellectual impact on the development of this university”, and that UWI's history cannot be separated from these fundamental regional ties.

Professor Andrew Haruna, Secre-

tary-General of the CVCNU, acknowledged both the opportunities and hurdles facing Nigeria's higher education system. He also pointed out the long-standing contributions of Caribbean scholars to Nigerian academic and intellectual life. Haruna expressed optimism that this partnership would foster innovative models of transnational education and strengthen sectoral collaborations.

Further cementing the partnership, Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown Polytechnic and a prominent member of the Caribbean diaspora in Canada, delivered the keynote address. He urged the development of purpose-driven universities and emphasized the importance of indigenous publishing, which plays a vital role in elevating research from the Global South on the global stage.

Throughout the three-day summit, the participation of all UWI Principals and Pro Vice-Chancellors demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the “ONE UWI” vision. Their active engagement fostered a dynamic environment for collaboration and exchange of ideas, with each leader contributing valuable perspectives, said the release.

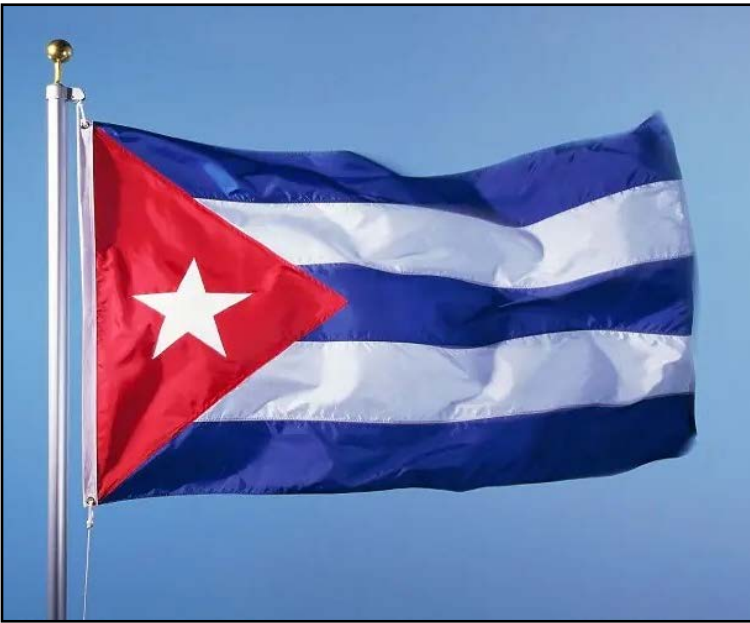
On the final day, Professor C. Justin Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UWI's Five Islands Campus, provided closing remarks.

He highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation, stating, “South-South collaboration is not a consolation prize. It is a strategic imperative...The solutions to the challenges facing developing nations will increasingly

come from institutions like ours—working together, learning from one another, and refusing to wait for permission to lead.” (Dominica News Online)

Regional News

Gonsalves urges SVG govt to send humanitarian aid to Cuba



St Vincent's leader of the Opposition, Ralph Gonsalves, has called on the current government to send shipments of flour and rice to Cuba.

Gonsalves on Monday stated that the assistance should be a humanitarian act rather than an ideological one.

He argued that aid is necessary because of the "blockade" and the tightening of restrictions on Cuba by United States authorities.

He emphasized that Cuba has helped St. Vincent and the Grenadines "immensely" in the past. He believes the country has a duty to show assistance "in real terms" to those who have stood in solidarity with them.

Gonsalves cited the Book of Matthew, Chapter 25, as the mandate for providing this help. He challenged the "Christian" values of U.S. leaders like Donald Trump and Marco Rubio, stating that they must show their faith through actions rather than just words.

He expressed concern that the current administration might "put aside" Cuban district doctors and urged them to maintain their relationship through this aid.

Gonsalves noted that his party had provided similar assistance to Cuba in the past and insisted that St. Vincent and the Grenadines must continue to support its "Cuban brothers". (St Vincent Times)

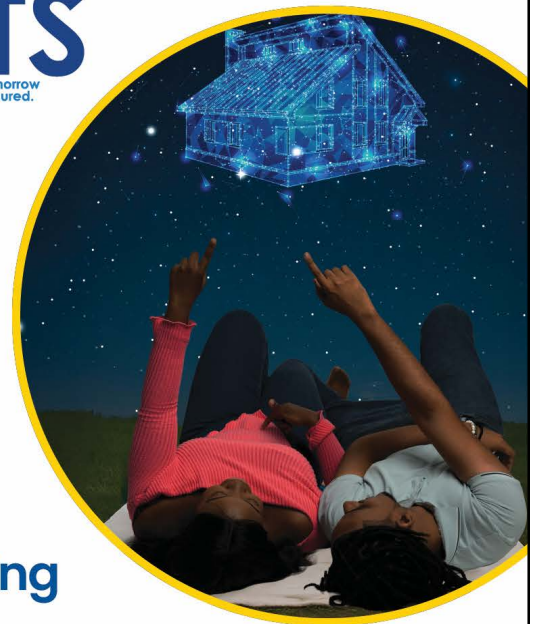


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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

Hillary Clinton accuses Trump administration of Epstein files 'cover-up' in BBC interview

Hillary Clinton has accused US President Donald Trump's administration of a "cover-up" over its handling of files related to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"Get the files out. They are slow-walking it," the former US secretary of state told the BBC in Berlin, where she attended the annual World Forum.

The White House insisted that by releasing the files they had done "more for the victims than Democrats ever have".

Millions of new files relating to the late sex offender Epstein were released by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) earlier this month.

At the time, the deputy attorney general said three million pages were not released - due to the existence of personal medical files, graphic depictions of child abuse or other material that would jeopardise investigations.

When asked whether Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor should go before a congressional committee, Hillary Clinton said: "I think everybody should testify who is asked to testify."

Appearing in the files is not an indication of wrongdoing. Andrew has always denied any wrongdoing.

The committee does not have the power to compel him to appear in front of them, but put pressure on the



Clintons to do so, which they agreed to last month.

Bill Clinton will make his appearance on 27 February and Hillary Clinton will appear the day before.

A planned vote to hold the Clintons in contempt of Congress for initially refusing to appear was shelved after the pair agreed to testify. It will be the first time a former US president has testified to a congressional panel since Gerald Ford did so in 1983.

Hillary Clinton reiterated the couple's call for their congressional committee hearing to be in public rather than a

closed-door deposition.

"We will show up but we think it would be better to have it in public," Hillary Clinton told the BBC.

Republican committee chair James Comer had accused the Clintons of "delay", saying the pair "caved" as a contempt vote loomed.

"I just want it to be fair," said Hillary Clinton. "I want everybody treated the same way."

"We have nothing to hide. We have called for the full release of these files repeatedly. We think sunlight is the best disinfectant."

Thursday 19th February 2026, 01:30
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WEST INDIES



ITALY



**ICC MEN'S T20
 WORLD CUP**
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International

AROUND THE WORLD



The former presidential candidate argued that she and her husband were being used to divert attention away from Trump.

“Look at this shiny object. We’re going to have the Clintons, even Hillary Clinton, who never met the guy.”

Hillary Clinton said she had met Ghislaine Maxwell - Epstein’s convicted associate - “on a few occasions”.

Bill Clinton - who was featured in the Epstein files - was acquainted with Epstein but said he cut off contact two decades ago.

Neither Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing by survivors of Epstein’s abuse, and both have denied knowledge of his sex offending at the time.

The millions of new files relating to Epstein that were made public by the US justice department earlier this month after Congress passed a law requiring the agency to release material related to investigations of Epstein.

The Department of Justice (DoJ) has now said it has released all of the files required by the Epstein Files Transparency Act, but lawmakers have argued the release is insufficient. Kentucky Republican Representative Thomas

Massie, who co-wrote the law, called for the DoJ to also release internal memos outlining past decisions on whether to charge Epstein and his associates.

Epstein took his own life in a New York prison cell on 10 August 2019 as he awaited, without the chance of bail, his trial on sex trafficking charges. It came more than a decade after his conviction for soliciting prostitution from a minor, for which he was registered as a sex offender.

Andrew, the former prince, has faced growing pressure from some US officials and the family of his prominent accuser Virginia Giuffre to testify before the Oversight Committee about his links to Epstein.

Andrew has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and reached an out-of-court settlement with Giuffre in 2022 containing no admission of liability. Giuffre died by suicide in 2025.

Trump - who is mentioned in the Epstein files - has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein, with whom he says he severed contact decades ago, and has not been accused of any crimes by Epstein’s victims.

When asked about Hillary Clinton’s comments in the interview, Trump told the BBC he had nothing to hide.

“I’ve been exonerated. I had nothing to do with Jeffrey Epstein. They went in hoping that they’d find it, and they found just the opposite,” he said aboard Air Force One.

“They’re getting pulled in. And that’s their problem... Clinton and many other Democrats have been pulled in.”

In relation to the allegations against Trump, the DoJ has previously said: “Some docs contain untrue and sensationalist claims against Trump that were submitted to the FBI right before the 2020 election. To be clear the claims are unfounded and false and if they have any shred of credibility they certainly would have been weaponised against Trump already.”

The White House said: “By releasing thousands of pages of documents, co-operating with the House Oversight Committee’s subpoena request, and President Trump recently calling for further investigations into Epstein’s Democrat friends, the Trump Administration has done more for the victims than Democrats ever have.” (BBC)



New nuclear talks between US and Iran begin in Geneva

A second round of talks between Iran and the United States, aimed at resolving their dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme, have begun in the Swiss city of Geneva.

The indirect discussions follow repeated military threats against Iran over the country's deadly crackdown on anti-government protests and over its nuclear activities.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One ahead of the latest talks, US President Donald Trump said he believed Iran wanted to make a deal.

The foreign ministry in Tehran, meanwhile, said it believed that the US position on the nuclear issue had moved towards "a more realistic one".

Iran says Tuesday's meeting, mediated by Oman, will focus on its nuclear programme and the potential lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the US.

Washington has previously indicated it wants to discuss other issues as well, such as Iran's missile development.

Framing the talks as "very important", Trump said he would be "indirectly" involved and suggested Tehran was motivated this time to negotiate.

"I don't think they want the consequences of not making a deal," Trump said, adding that Iran learned the consequences of a tough posture in talks last summer when the US bombed Iranian nuclear sites.

"We could have had a deal instead of sending the B-2s in to knock out their nuclear potential. And we had to send the B-2s," the US president said, referring to the stealth bombers that carried out the bombings. "I hope they're going to be more reasonable."

Trump's threats come amid a US military build-up in the Middle East over the past few weeks.

BBC Verify has now confirmed the location of US aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln near Iran using sat-



ellite imagery.

The US has also reportedly sent the USS Gerald R Ford, the world's largest warship, to the Middle East, which could arrive in the region within the next three weeks.

Speaking on Tuesday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei responded to Trump's threats of military action by saying: "More dangerous than an aircraft carrier is the weapon that can send it to the bottom of the sea."

"He says the US's army is the strongest army in the world. The 'strongest army in the world' may sometimes receive such a blow that it cannot get back up."

Khamenei also accused the US of attempting to predetermine the outcome of negotiations and said that would be a "wrong and foolish thing to do".

Satellite image of USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea next to map of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman showing the USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of Oman

In addition to the Abraham Lincoln's arrival, BBC Verify has also tracked an increase of US destroyers, combat ships and fighter jets in the region.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi met with the UN nuclear watchdog

chief on Monday, saying in a post on X he was in Geneva to "achieve a fair and equitable deal".

"What is not on the table: submission before threats," Araqchi said.

Iran has responded to the US build-up with its own show of force. On Monday the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched a maritime drill in the Strait of Hormuz, located in the Gulf between Oman and Iran.

The Strait is considered a vital international waterway and oil export route from Gulf Arab states.

Washington has dispatched Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the White House said on Sunday.

Both were involved in indirect talks in the Gulf state of Oman earlier in February, which Araqchi, who led the Iranian delegation, described afterwards as a "good beginning".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday that reaching a deal with Tehran would be "very difficult".

"I think that there's an opportunity here to diplomatically reach an agreement ... but I don't want to overstate it either," Rubio said during a visit to Hungary. "It's going to be hard." (BBC)

Jesse Jackson, who led US Civil Rights Movement after King, dies

The Reverend Jesse L Jackson, a protégé of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr and two-time United States presidential candidate who led the Civil Rights Movement for decades after King's assassination, has died.

He was 84.

Jackson died Tuesday surrounded by family, according to a statement posted online from the family.

As a young organiser in Chicago, Jackson was called to meet with King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis shortly before King was killed and he publicly positioned himself thereafter as King's successor.

Jackson led a lifetime of crusades in the United States and abroad, advocating for the poor and underrepresented on issues from voting rights and job opportunities to education and health care.

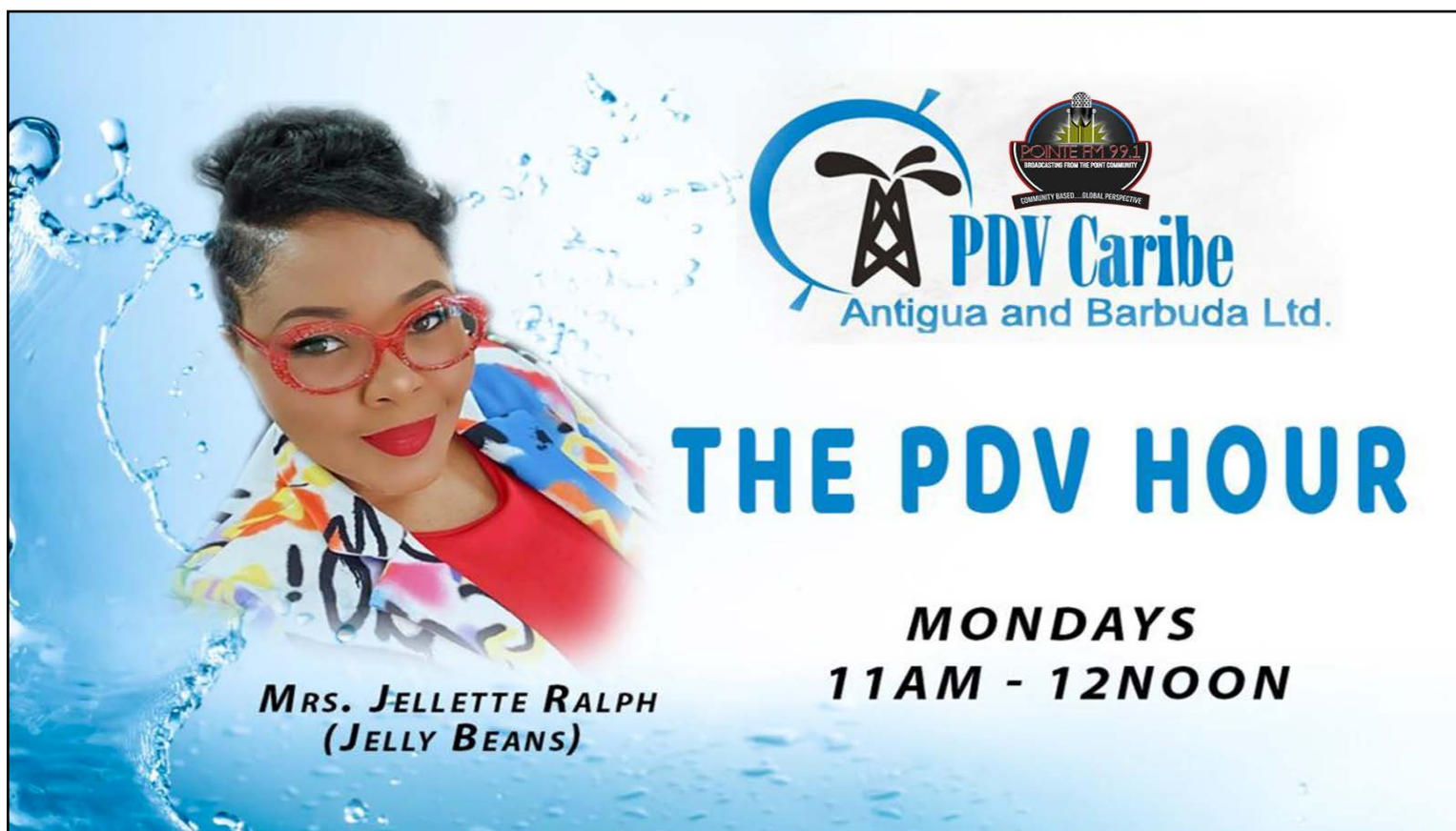
He scored diplomatic victories with world leaders, and through his Rain-



bow/PUSH Coalition, he channeled cries for Black pride and self-determination into corporate boardrooms, pressuring executives to make America a more open and equitable society.

And when he declared, "I am Some-

body," in a poem he often repeated, he sought to reach people of all colors. "I may be poor, but I am Somebody; I may be young; but I am Somebody; I may be on welfare, but I am Somebody," Jackson intoned. (AP)



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Daggers and Fearless Crew record wins in ABBA's Second Division



The Old Road Daggers and Ramco Pharmacy Fearless Crew secured wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA) Second Division on Monday night.

The Old Road Daggers notched up their third win in four encounters with

a commanding 104-58 victory against the Navigators 2 in the opening game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Wester Perez shot a game-high 33 points, and Kwame Huntley sank 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to lead the Daggers.

In support, Craig Thomas converted 12 points and snatched eight rebounds, Sheldon George sank 10 points and claimed eight rebounds, and Ryan Shepherd scored eight points and secured 16 rebounds for the Old Road Daggers.

Molefi Joseph sank 11 points; Raheem Sawyer scored nine points; Ricky Willock had eight points and nine rebounds; and Henry Dorsette chipped in with eight points and seven rebounds for the Navigators 2, who

were playing their first game this season.

The Fearless crew won for the second time in four encounters by snatching a narrow 82-77 victory over Da Project 2 in Monday's second game.

Emeka Emujuru Oupe shot a game-high 26 points and claimed eight rebounds, Takeem Martin sank 20 points and grabbed 16 rebounds, and Jesus Lopez produced 16 points, eight assists, and seven steals for the Fearless Crew.

Kevin Pimental sank 17 points and secured eight rebounds, Gabriel De-Suza scored 17 points, Nathan Matthew converted 14 points, and Erije Joseph chipped in with nine points for Da Project 2, which lost for the second time in three games.



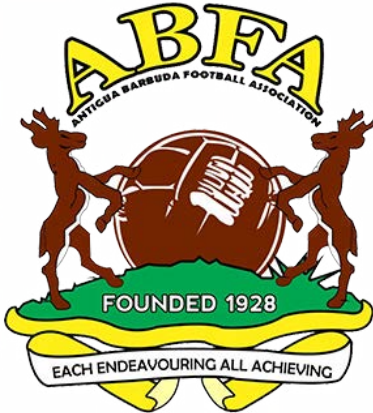
DAILY PROGRAMMING




EARLY VIBRATIONS	6AM-10AM MON. - FRI.
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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
WITH SELECTOR KEEGAN	
JAH WADADLI	7PM-9PM FRIDAYS
WITH DJ JAH WADADLI	

Sports News

Blackhawks get first win in Second Division League



The Liberta Blackhawks recorded their first win this season in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division on Monday.

Malique Martin struck a hat trick as the Blackhawks notched up their first win in 11 matches by snatching a 3-2 victory over Glanvilles FC at the Glanvilles playing field.

Martin had conversions in the 14th, 66th, and 78th minutes to secure victory for the Blackhawks.

Jordan Raymond put Glanvilles FC ahead with a strike in the 11th minute, and teammate Roshane Burton scored his team's second goal by converting a penalty kick in the 23rd minute.

The result allows the Liberta Blackhawks to move on to four points, while Glanvilles FC remains on seven points after suffering their seventh defeat in 10 matches.

The Urlings Golden Stars claimed their fifth win in 11 matches by pulling off a 1-0 victory against Earthquakes FC at the Fort Road playing field.

Derrick Pryce scored the winner and only goal of the match with a strike in the 32nd minute.

The Urlings Golden Stars advanced to 17 points, while Earthquakes FC remains on eight points after losing for the ninth time in 13 matches.

Point West Ham notched up their fourth win in 10 matches with a 3-0 victory over JSC Progressors at the St. Johnstone's Village Stadium.

The goals for Point West Ham were scored by Jahmarley Barzey in the third minute, Anderson Herbert in the eighth minute, and Jonte Wyre in the 85th minute.

The result allows Point West Ham FC to advance to 15 points, while the JSC Progressors remain on seven points after losing for the 10th time in 13 matches.

However, the match at Old Road between the Young Lions and Sea View Farm was not played. The match was postponed after the match referee claimed the field was not properly marked.

It means that both teams remain two points behind unbeaten leaders Guydadli Jets FC, who have 31 points from 11 matches.

The Young Lions remain in second place ahead of Sea View Farm FC on goal difference. Both teams have 29 points, but the Young Lions have played 11 matches, one less than Sea View Farm FC.



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ABCAS and AGS claim wins in School Basketball League



The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) and Antigua Grammar School (AGS) were among the winners in the latest round of matches in the Senior Boys Division of the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League on Monday.

The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies coasted to a commanding 59-25 victory against Jennings Secondary School at the JSC Sports Complex.

Kadeem Simon shot a game-high 19 points, Gladstone Joseph sank 17 points, and Duwan Edwards converted 15 points for ABCAS. Devonte Smith

scored seven points for Jennings Secondary School.

Derick Perez produced a game-high 28 points to lead the Antigua Grammar School to an emphatic 72-47 victory over Sir McChesney George High School.

In support, Raheem Sawyer sank 20 points, Jordan Andrew scored 14 points, and Jovan Gordon chipped in with 10 points for Antigua Grammar School. Eli Harris converted 19 points for Sir McChesney George High School.

The Jennings Secondary clinched a

narrow 39-30 victory over the Sir Novelle Richards Academy in the Junior Boys Division.

Lewis Mecla sank 19 points and Shondell Edwards scored 10 points for Jennings Secondary, while Jaden Royer converted 15 points and Latrell Barthley scored 12 points for Sir Novelle Richards Academy.

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

Christ the King High School beat Pares Secondary 14-5, while Clare Hall Secondary School snatched a 7-6 victory against Sir Novelle Richards Academy.

Princess Margaret School prevailed 10-3 against the Antigua Girls High School third team (AGHS 3), while the Antigua Girls High School second team (AGHS 2) snatched a narrow 7-4 victory over the Antigua Girls High School first team (AGHS 1).

Christ the King High School pulled off an 8-4 victory against All Saints Secondary School, while Princess Margaret School coasted to a 13-6 victory over Clare Hall Secondary School.

Princess Margaret School notched up a 10-2 win against the Antigua Girls High School second team (AGHS 2), and Princess Margaret School snatched a 7-5 victory over the Antigua Girls High School first team (AGHS 1).





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Coco Gauff speaks out, doesn't 'like what's going on' in US



Coco Gauff

DUBAI, UAE (Reuters) - Coco Gauff said at a press conference Sunday at the Dubai Tennis Championships that she's "proud to be an American" while also denouncing the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis last month.

"Everything going on in the US -- obviously I'm not really for it. I don't think people should be dying in the streets just for existing. I don't like what's going on," Gauff said.

Gauff, 21, a two-time Grand Slam champion, is the latest in a growing list of American athletes who have voiced their displeasure with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, who were responsible for the deaths of Good and Pretti.

Winter Olympian Hunter Hess told reporters on Feb. 6, "Just because I'm wearing the flag doesn't mean

I represent everything that's going on in the US." That drew a reaction from President Donald Trump, who called Hess a "real Loser" on his Truth Social platform.

Madison Keys, who is ranked No. 17 on the WTA circuit and fourth among American women, also weighed in on the subject.

"I am hopeful that we as a country can come together and get back to the values that I think make our country great," Keys said. "We are very diverse. We are a home of immigrants. and I hope that we can get back to those values."

On the men's side, top-ranked American player Taylor Fritz opted out of the topic.

"I feel like whatever I say here is going to get put in a headline, and it's going to get taken out of con-

text," he said. "So, I'd really rather not do something that's going to cause a big distraction for me in the middle of the tournament."

Gauff, whose grandmother was the first Black student to attend public school in Delray Beach, Fla., in 1961, said players have the "right" not to comment on politics, but she will continue to answer questions on the subject.

"I think the biggest thing I hate is when people say stay out of it when we're being asked it," she said.

"If you ask me, I'm going to give you my honest answer. For me, that's my honest answer. I always try to always answer honestly. I have no problems. I lived this. My grandma is literally an activist. This is literally my life. I'm OK answering tough questions."

Australia crashes out of T20 World Cup



The Ireland and Zimbabwe players were welcomed by rain in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, for their ICC Men's T20 World Cup match on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. (Getty Images)

PALLEKELE, Sri Lanka (AP) — Australia, the 2021 champion, crashed out of cricket's T20 World Cup on Tuesday after Zimbabwe's Group B game against Ireland was abandoned because of rain without a ball being bowled.

But the no-result in Pallekele meant Zimbabwe qualified for the second stage of the tournament for the first time.

Seven teams have now qualified for the second round. Zimbabwe will be in Group 1 along with defending champion India, the West Indies and South Africa. Sri Lanka is in Group 2 with England, New Zealand and Pakistan or USA.

Earlier, Canada batter Yuvraj Samra's exhilarating century proved in vain as New Zealand advanced to the Super 8s with an eight-wicket win in Chennai, India.

New Zealand's resounding victory knocked 2024 semi-finalist Afghanistan out of the tournament.

Also on Tuesday, Nepal pulled off a seven-wicket win over Scotland in

Mumbai in their final Group C game. Both sides have already been eliminated. Scotland made 170 for seven off their 20 overs, and Nepal achieved victory at 171 for three in 19.2 overs.

Samra's 110 off 65 balls, which included six sixes and 11 fours, had earlier guided Canada to 173 for four after captain Dilpreet Bajwa won the toss and elected to bat.

The 19-year-old Samra, who caught the eye last year when he smashed a 15-ball half century against the Bahamas, became the first batter from an associate nation to score a hundred at the T20 World Cup.

"I manifested this moment ever since we qualified for the World Cup. Every single day I dreamed about scoring a hundred on this stage," he said.

"To do it here, in my first appearance (in Chennai), and as the youngest player in this World Cup, it's truly a dream come true."

Bajwa made 36 off 39 balls and together with Samra put on 116 for the first wicket.

New Zealand struggled to stem the

flow of runs and felt the absence of captain Mitchell Santner, who was ruled out of the game due to a "dodgy burger" on Monday night, and fast bowler Lockie Ferguson.

Ferguson is on paternity leave but is expected to re-join the team for the Super 8s. Samra was dropped, but not before he had raised his century off 58 deliveries, when the ball burst through the hands of James Neesham at long-off.

His belligerent knock ended in the final over when Phillips caught him at deep backward square leg at the second attempt.

In reply, Glenn Phillips (76 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (59 not out) led New Zealand to victory at 176 for two in 15.1 overs on a perfect batting wicket as the Black Caps claimed their third win in Group D.

Finn Allen and Tim Seifert fell inside four balls in the power play before Phillips and Ravindra shared an electrifying and unbroken 146-run third-wicket partnership in just 12 overs.