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It's By-Election Day In SPN Constituency

Story on page 2

The victorious Antigua and Barbuda debate team that won the annual Leeward Islands Debate Competition held in Nevis. It's the second year in a row that the Antigua and Barbuda team has won the competition

It's By-Election Day In SPN Constituency

All eyes will be on the St. Philip North constituency today (Monday March 16) for the by-election to fill the vacant seat in the House of Representatives following the resignation of Sir Robin Yearwood last month.

The contest is a clear fight between former customs officer, Randy Baltimore of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party and restauranteur Alex Browne of the United Progressive Party.

The outcome of the election will not affect the balance of power in the parliament as the ABLP will still retain the government, however, Baltimore is widely seen as the heir to Sir Robin's immense political legacy while a win for Browne will amount to a major upset.

The Supervisor of Elections, Ian Hughes said all preparations for the vote have been completed with the ballot papers, the ink and other elections paraphernalia already secured and in place.

Over the past week, the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission

(ABEC) conducted a series of training exercises for those who will work in the booths to assist with the voting process.

Just over 16-hundred persons are eligible to cast ballots in the general elections and for the first time, ABEC has introduced transparent ballot boxes as part of the overall improvements in ensuring a voting process beyond reproach.

The Returning Officer is Avonella

Benjamin and there are seven polling stations established within the constituency. It is anticipated that the counting of the votes will be completed for an announcement of a winner by 10:00 pm.

On Sunday, the final day of campaigning saw candidates making all-out appeals to the electorate seeking their votes. Baltimore and his supporters staged a motorcade throughout the constituency, while Browne has had a more subdued campaign overall.

PM Browne: Minimum Wages Increases Require 'A Balancing Act' By The Government

Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Gaston Browne

The announcement by the government that it intends to accept the recommendation for an increase in the country's Minimum Wage, requires a delicate 'balancing act' by the government as it seeks to protect the interest of all parties that will be affected by the increase.

This analysis comes from Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Gaston Browne when he discussed the proposed hike in minimum wage that was submitted to the Cabinet by the committee appointed to consider the matter.

PM Browne disclosed that any adjustment in the minimum wage will have a ripple effect throughout the economy, especially on the operations of small businesses, many of whom employ persons who are paid minimum wage.

"We have to create the balance to make sure that small businesses, who primarily pay minimum wage, that you don't put these businesses out of business, and, secondly, that you don't provide opportunities for the larger businesses to lay off their staff. For example, a hotel could opportunistically say; 'rather than paying the increase in minimum wage of $13, that hotel may decide to lay off workers as a cost-cutting measure," he explained.

The prime minister gave assurances that there will be an increase, but that this would be influenced by the feedback that the committee receives from the two-week consultation which the government has asked it to undertake.

According to PM Browne most of the persons in the society are employees and therefore see the proposed increases through the lens of employees but as a government, the Cabinet has to consider the overall impact of such an increase on the overall economy, especially a potential impact on inflation.

"As aa government, we have to look at the overall impact to ensure that employees are treated fairly, while at the same time ensure the sustainability of businesses large and small. We cannot be daunted by those who are advocating for immediate increases to $15 per hour or higher," he explained.

Additionally, the prime minister further explained that in situations where there are salary scales, when the minimum wage moves to closer to those at a higher scale, those higher salaries must be increased in order to maintain the percentage difference in the categories.

PM Browne revealed that the proposed increase in the minimum wage will cost the government an additional $11 million annually.

Gas Prices Will Remain Steady....For Now

As the price for oil on the international market continues to increase because of the ongoing war between the United States and Israel against Iran, the government has decided to keep prices at the pump steady at the current $14.50 per gallon of gasoline and $14.25 for diesel.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who is also the country's Finance Minister, made the announcement Saturday on the ***Browne and Browne Show***.

Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Gaston Browne

According to the prime minister the government will reduce its take of consumption tax paid on every gallon of gasoline in order to cushion the shock of higher gas prices from consumers.

"Even at this time with oil prices above US$100.00 per barrel we have absorbed the losses. So what will happen now is that the taxes that we collect, we will take in a lesser amount and if it continues to increase then we will find ourselves in a loss making situation as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas we are trying to cushion our residents from higher gas prices, if the price of oil continues to increase then it may become unsustainable and we would have to return to the people," PM Browne explained.

He recalled that during the pandemic when the government took a decision to absorb the increases in fuel prices, the situation had reached the point that instead of collecting taxes from West Indies Oil Company, the government had to pay the company to make up the shortfall in its revenues.

"What we are trying to do here is to shield our people from the rising prices in oil and its products such as gasoline as well as to protect them from those who may wish to exploit the situation," he added.

Keeping the price of gasoline constant for as long as possible forms part of the government's policy of keeping inflation in check. As a commodity, increases in gasoline/diesel prices affect practically every other sector of the economy as they are key drivers behind energy and transportation prices.

Already, WIOC Chief Executive Officer, Gregory Georges, has confirmed that the Middle East conflict is having an impact on fuel prices as the next shipment of products will reflect the higher prices. He noted that prices for jet-fuel and diesel have seen huge increases with gasoline increasing by a smaller amount.

PM Browne has confirmed that the higher priced shipment has already hit the local market and that is why the government has decided to reduce its consumption tax in order to stabilize fuel prices not just at the pump but throughout the society where such increases will also be felt.

FA Minister Greene: Caribbean and African Leaders Need to Move Beyond 'Talk'

Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene and Nigeria, Dr. Nwachukwu Anakwenze and his delegation

Antigua and Barbuda's Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene is challenging leaders from both the Caribbean and from Africa to move beyond 'talk' and to embrace the opportunities that present themselves for closer relations between 'the Motherland and the Caribbean, (Africa's Sixth Region).

Minister Greene was speaking on Friday during a courtesy call from an African monarch, the Regent of Abagana Kingdom located in Anambra State, Nigeria, Dr. Nwachukwu Anakwenze and his delegation of senior officials.

"For the first time in a long time, real opportunities exist. Our leadership on both sides of the Atlantic needs to take these opportunities seriously," the minister emphasized.

Minister Greene is of the view that the current global situation with realignment taking place, that this is a time for countries of the Caribbean and in Africa to begin to look towards each other for trade and other ties and to reduce their reliance on a global system that seeks to marginalize them.

"The world is now at an inflection point where we are now forced to think outside the box. The comfort zones as we know them are no longer there; are we going to jump at the opportunity or are we going to simply sulk and hope that the political situation in the US changes and things return to 'normal'," he queried.

Minister Greene is of the view that the 'America First' policies of the US, provide the Caribbean and Africa an opportunity to do something for themselves; first with people to people contacts and then to develop trade links between the two regions.

He also highlighted a problem where based on his own personal experiences from travels to Africa, there is not enough knowledge among Africans about the Caribbean and its peoples. This, he suggested, has been part of an orchestrated effort to keep both peoples apart.

Minister Greene wants to see greater efforts made to educate the people of Africa about the Caribbean, its peoples, their culture and their custom.

"We know that there is African tourism; we know that its half the journey to Europe and then to the Caribbean if the flights connect directly from Nigeria to other Western African nations. We should be exploring these opportunities," he recommends.

Regent/High Priest Anakwenze was accompanied by his senior advisor, Dr Amandiebude Mbama and his wife, Claudia-Mae Mbama and Dr. Josephine Uzoamaka Aguoji.

The team is on a tour of the Caribbean and Central American to re-establish ties with the people of these areas who make up the African diaspora in the Americas. The also visited Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Montserrat and Costa Rica as part of the tour of the region.

Global Citizens, Government Discuss CHOGM

The government has announced that it is engaged in discussions with representatives of Global Citizen which has submitted a proposal to the Cabinet to collaborate with both the government and the Commonwealth Secretariat in coordinating and supporting programmes on the margins of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), scheduled to be hosted in Antigua and Barbuda in November 2026.

The Global Citizen delegation explained that their proposal seeks to transform the CHOGM moment into a broader global leadership platform by combining high-level policy dialogue, youth engagement, advocacy, and cultural programming. The initiative would centre around the organisation's "Global Citizen Now" forum and a series of associated events designed to bring together heads of government, private sector leaders, philanthropists, civil society organisations, and youth representatives.

According to the presenters, the Global Citizen Now – Antigua and Barbuda forum would feature a series of high-level panel discussions, fireside conversations, and policy dialogues addressing issues aligned with Commonwealth priorities. These discussions would focus on themes including climate action, youth opportunity, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and private sector innovation.

The Global Citizen team noted that their platform has previously convened prominent international leaders, global CEOs, and development partners. They explained that similar participation could be mobilised in Antigua and Barbuda to complement the official CHOGM agenda and further elevate the country's global profile.

A central component of the proposal is the launch of a "Digital Futures for Youth" initiative aimed at expanding access to digital and artificial intelligence skills for young people across Commonwealth countries. The initiative seeks to support up to two million youth by 2030, with the goal of creating pathways to employment for at least 250,000 young people. Global Citizen indicated that the initiative would aim to mobilise approximately US$50 million in public, philanthropic, and private sector funding, with commitments to be announced during CHOGM-related events.

The proposal also includes the staging of "Global Citizen Nights – Antigua and Barbuda," a cultural and advocacy event designed to engage young people and the wider public through music, advocacy campaigns, and performances by international and regional artists. Participation in the event would encourage global audiences to take advocacy actions in support of youth development and digital empowerment initiatives.

Presenters highlighted that the collaboration would bring significant international visibility to Antigua and Barbuda through Global Citizen's extensive digital and media platforms, which collectively reach millions of people worldwide. They noted that the organisation's global advocacy and media network would help amplify the outcomes of CHOGM and highlight the leadership of Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth on key global issues.

The Global Citizen team further outlined a proposed timeline of engagement leading up to CHOGM, including advocacy events in New York and other international forums to build global awareness and mobilise commitments ahead of the summit.

Cabinet welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the potential value of partnerships that could enhance the visibility, participation, and impact of programmes associated with CHOGM 2026. Members noted that Antigua and Barbuda's hosting of the Commonwealth meeting presents an important opportunity to showcase the nation's leadership while advancing initiatives that benefit youth and sustainable development across the Commonwealth.

DevOps Engineer – AI & Automation

Reporting to: Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Join a forward-looking organization leveraging AI and automation to drive operational excellence. A reputable organization is seeking to recruit a DevOps Engineer – AI & Automation to design, deploy, and maintain secure and scalable automation systems.

The successful candidate will work with modern AI technologies, workflow automation platforms, and cloud-native infrastructure to support operational efficiency and automation across internal processes.

This role requires experience with Kubernetes, workflow automation platforms, and API integrations, as well as the ability to work within secure or restricted environments.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop and implement AI strategies to align with business objectives and automation initiatives.
- Build and maintain AI-driven automation workflows that support operational processes.
- Develop and manage workflow automation using platforms such as n8n or similar tools.
- Integrate AI services and internal systems through secure APIs.
- Deploy and manage containerized services using Kubernetes and DevOps practices.
- Maintain system monitoring, documentation, and operational procedures.
- Ensure systems operate in accordance with security and governance standards.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Software Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, or a related field (or equivalent experience).
- Minimum 3 years' experience in DevOps, software engineering, or AI systems development.
- Hands-on experience with Kubernetes and containerized applications.
- Experience with workflow automation platforms (e.g., n8n, Zapier, Make, or similar).
- Experience integrating AI or LLM APIs into operational systems.
- Strong knowledge of API development, REST services, and system integrations.
- Experience with version control systems (Git) and CI/CD pipelines.

Preferred Skills

- Experience developing AI agents or intelligent automation workflows.
- Familiarity with vector databases and retrieval-augmented generation (RAG).
- Experience building secure systems handling sensitive data.
- Knowledge of data protection frameworks.

Key Competencies

- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills
- Attention to security and operational standards
- Ability to translate operational needs into automation solutions
- Effective documentation and communication skills
- Collaborative approach across technical and operational teams

Selection Process

Shortlisted candidates may be required to present a technical proof of concept demonstrating their ability to design and implement AI-driven automation solutions relevant to the role.

Application Process

Applications should be submitted to hrtalentmanagement268@gmail.com no later than 20th March 2026

ABCAS Announces the Re-Opening of the Atlantic View Restaurant

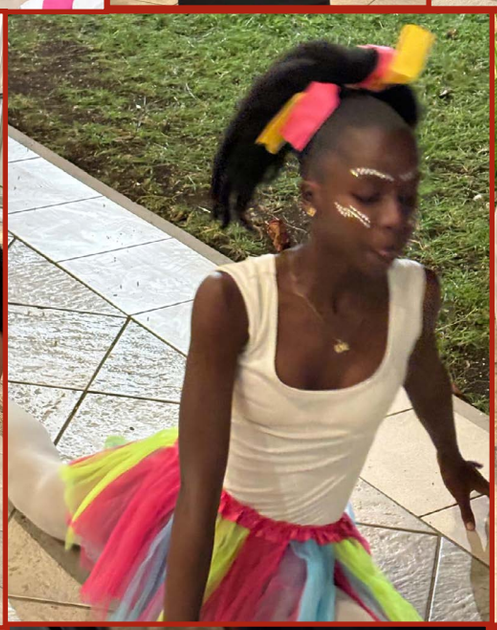
The Atlantic View Restaurant, the teaching food preparation facility that forms part of the Hospitality Training Institute now renamed the Muriel O'Marde Campus of the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) is reopening to the public effective today (Monday March 16).

The re-opening was preceded by a cocktail reception and tasting on Friday night when guests were invited to taste portions of the menu that will be on offer with the opening of the restaurant.

Principal of the institution, Lorren Tonge explained that the restaurant will operate two days weekly; Mondays with lunch and dinner being served in-house (sit-down) and Thursdays with take-out service only. Guests attending the reception were able to sample from starters - a soup or a choice of chicken wings with a variety of sauses - to entrees, which on Friday night was chicken pasta, or desserts that included bread-pudding with rum souse or plantain flavoured ice-cream.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees of ABCAS, Vernon Solomon, said he spent the last two decades working in higher education primarily because he wanted to be in a position to provide opportunities for young people to succeed in whatever path they choose.

"All too often in today's world, there may be obstacles and hurdles. When I was asked to be part of ABCAS, I realized that the mission of ABCAS



was the same as mine; providing those opportunities for young people here in Antigua and Barbuda and abroad. It is important for the young people to know how much we, appreciate them and the work that they are doing and the work that is going on behind the scenes by many of you who are here this evening," he remarked.

According to Chairman Solomon, he has noticed that over the past six months there has been a sense of pride in where ABCAS was and where it is now and he is particularly happy to see at the Muriel O'Marde Campus what the students and the staff have done within a short space of time in transforming the Atlantic View Restaurant so that all of Antigua and Barbuda can now enjoy.

Among those attending the cocktail reception/tasting were the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Ena Dalso-Henry and the Principal of ABCAS, Dr. Jonah Greene and members of her team along with members of the Board of Trustees.

The Atlantic View Restaurant will accept both customers who call and make reservations as well as they who simply 'walk-in'.

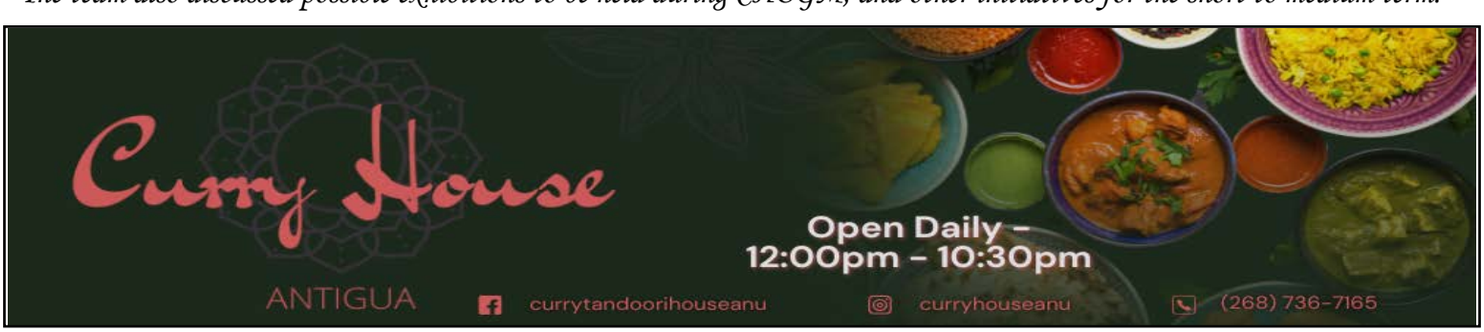
Sir Rodney and Lady Williams hold talks with Royal Drawing School

Photo Caption l - r : Fiona Fox , Partnerships Consultant (RDS); H.E. Sir Rodney Williams, Governor General; H. E. Lady Williams, President and Founder of the Holy Foundation; Harry Parker , Director of RDS and Phoebe Hatton , Artist Residencies and Alumni Manager (RDS).

Governor General Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams recently held talks in London with several institutions and organizations, including the Royal Drawing School (RDS).

Government House said the discussions centered around several areas, including this year 's teaching residency which will be extended to all citizens interested and involved in various aspects of visual arts— a diversion from the annual training offered to primary, secondary and tertiary school students only.

The team also discussed possible exhibitions to be held during CHOGM, and other initiatives for the short to medium term.



Reginaè Morris Secures A Seat on the UWI Cave Hill Guild of Undergraduates

Reginaè Morris, an Antigua and Barbuda student in the Department of Humanities and Education at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill campus is the chairperson-elect of the Guild of Undergraduates' International Affairs Committee.

Morris was successful at the recently concluded Guild elections where she won handsomely by securing 88 percent of the votes cast.

During her campaign, Morris sought the endorsement of Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who agreed to giving her the endorsement with a message targeting the Cave Hill student body.

"I am pleased to offer my full endorsement of Reginaè Morris for International Affairs Committee Chairperson.

"Reginaè is an outstanding young leader who has distinguished herself through dedicated service in the National Youth Parliament and the National Youth Volunteer Corps in Antigua and Barbuda. She has consistently demonstrated integrity, discipline, and a deep commitment to youth advocacy. She has been a strong advocate for regional integration and inclusive representation, championing unity and collaboration across our Caribbean community.

"I am confident that Reginaè Morris has the vision, professionalism, and leadership capacity to serve with excellence. I encourage you to support her and cast your vote in her favour," the Prime Minister message read.

In response, Reginaè thanked the prime minister for his support noting that it significantly helped her in her campaign. "I am confident in my abilities to not only make myself proud, but you and by extension the entire nation off Antigua and Barbuda. This comes with a grateful patriotic heart, especially from someone who is fighting for her country to be recognized in this melting pot of a university. Thank you again, Sir, I will make you proud," she declared.

Reginaè is the daughter of Kate Morris-Charles of English Harbour.

Job Advertisement

The Financial Services Regulatory Commission has the mandate to regulate entities carrying on the business of insurance in Antigua and Barbuda, and for the registration of pensions. To effectively carry out its mandate, the Commission is seeking to recruit a suitably qualified candidate to fill the Position of Director of Insurance and Pensions.

Job Description

Job Purpose

- To ensure efficient registration and exit from the market of insurers and intermediaries and ensure that the provisions of the International Business Corporation Act [International Insurance], Insurance Act [Domestic Insurance], rules, regulations, guidelines, circulars, and other directives from the Commission are enforced to ensure that the interests of policyholders and insurance beneficiaries are sufficiently safeguarded.
- To ensure pension funds are duly registered and meet the requirements of the Insurance Act.

Reporting Line

Works under the general direction of the Chief Regulatory Officer with latitude for the exercise of independent judgment and initiative. As directed by the Chief Regulatory Officer, reports on all matters relating to the Department.

Job Specifications can be accessed from the Commission's website at the following link https://www.fsrc.gov.ag/images/pdf/vacancy/Director_of_Insurance_and_Pensions%20March_5_2026.pdf

Qualifications and Experience

- Bachelor's degree in Statistics, Finance, Insurance, Accounting, Risk Management, Law, Business Administration, Commerce or its equivalent. A master's degree in the disciplines mentioned would be advantageous.
- Six (6) years relevant experience.
- Professional Qualifications in Insurance or Accounting (ACII, FLMI, CPA, ACCA).
- Member of relevant professional body.

Competencies and Skills

- Strong negotiation skills
- Strong communication and presentation skills
- Good mentorship and coaching skills
- Leadership and supervision skills

Method of Application

Terms of Offer: The Commission offers an attractive remuneration package commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position.

Application: Interested applicants **MUST** adhere to the application instructions provided below:

Applicants **MUST** submit their applications enclosing their Curriculum Vitae supported by copies of relevant academic and professional certificates and a copy of a government issued identification. The applicant **MUST** also include telephone number, e-mail address and names and addresses of three (3) referees familiar with the applicant's professional background and experience.

Applications may be submitted electronically to HR@fsrc.gov.ag or hard copy applications addressed to the undersigned, may be mailed or delivered to the Financial Services Regulatory Commission. Please note that these should be sealed, marked "Confidential" and indicate the job reference "DOIP2026".

Human Resources Department & Chief Regulatory Officer
Financial Services Regulatory Commission
P.O. Box 2674
Royal Palm Place, Friar's Hill Road, St. John's,
Antigua and Barbuda

Applications must be received by close of business at **4pm on Thursday, April 2, 2026.**

Antigua and Barbuda Makes It Two in A Row At Regional Debate Competition

Antigua and Barbuda's team at this year's Leeward Islands Debate Competition - Leanna Browne and Janica Adams – emerged victorious during Sunday's LIDC final against Nevis.

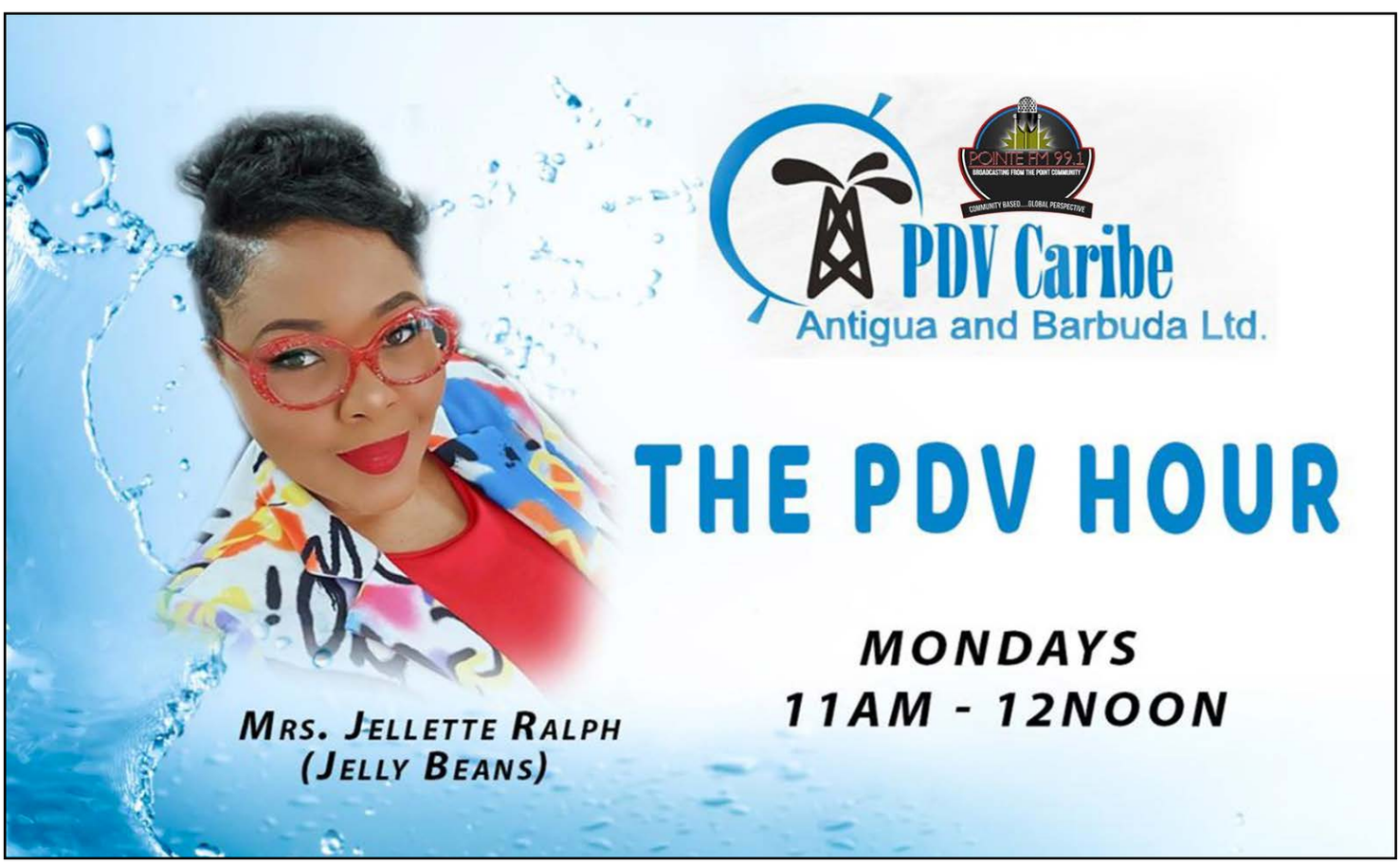
The Antigua and Barbuda team defeated the home team, Nevis, 694 to 639! Second speaker Janica Adams was adjudged best speaker, following her teammate Emya Geness who won it during Saturday night's semifinal encounter.

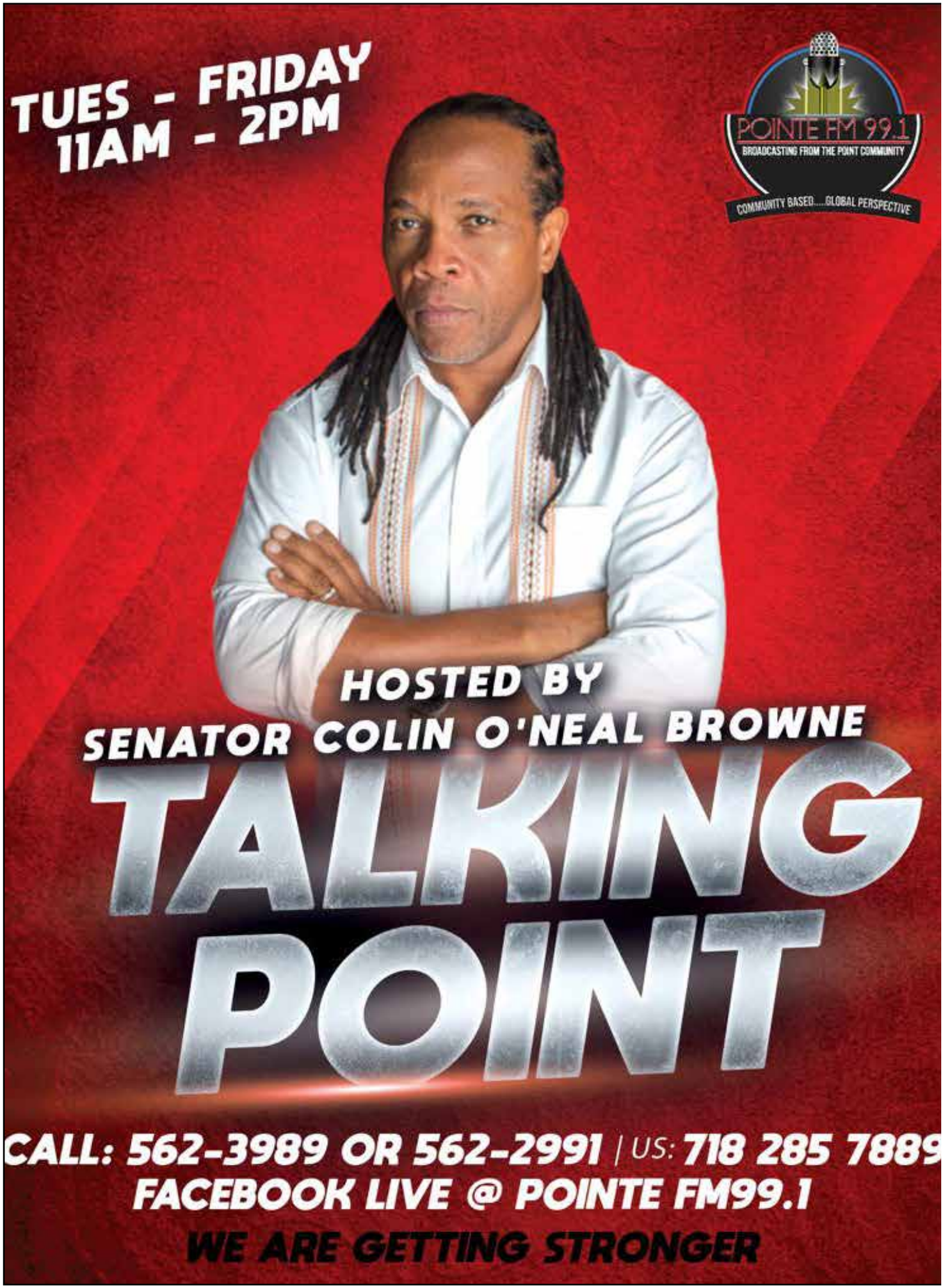
Sunday night's: ***Caribbean governments should provide free tertiary education to citizens up to the undergraduate level***.

The win means that Team Antigua and Barbuda is the back to back LIDC champion.

As reigning champions, Antigua and Barbuda was awarded a bye into the semi-finals where the team came up against the team representing Montserrat. Antigua and Barbuda defeated Montserrat earning a spot in the finals on Sunday.

It was the team's first outing under the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS).

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Request forms via email at info.nof@ab.gov.ag or WhatsApp at (268) 727-9201. For inquiries, call (268) 462-4707.

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Antigua Carnival @antiguafestivalsofficial

Where is the money? Audit exposes millions in unaccounted funds across ministries

AN audit of government ministries and agencies has uncovered millions of dollars in financial irregularities across the public sector, including $23 million in unaccounted funds and more than $185 million in salary overpayments within the education ministry, according to a report tabled in the House of Representatives last Thursday.

The findings are contained in the Government of Jamaica Audit Committees' Annual Report FY2024/25, prepared by the Internal Audit Directorate (IAD) in the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, which provides a snapshot of governance and financial management issues identified across ministries, departments, and agencies during the 2024/2025 financial year.

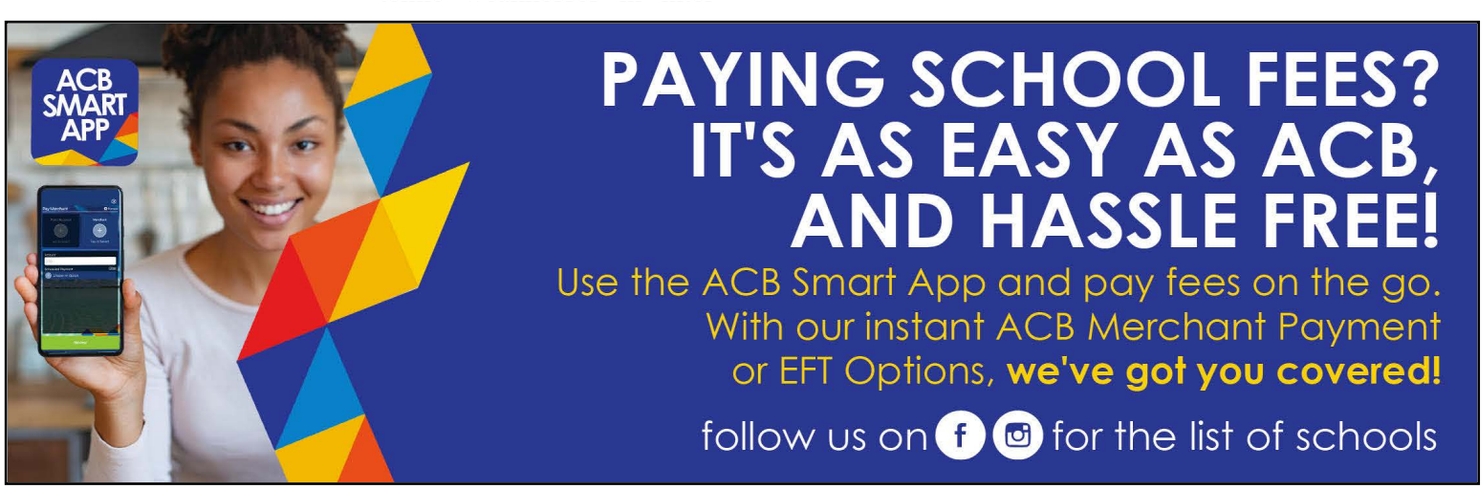
The report highlights significant weaknesses in the Ministry of Education, Youth, Skills, and Information during that year, where internal auditors identified large salary overpayments stemming from payroll and administrative control failures linked to salary restructuring, along with millions of dollars in funds that could not be accounted for.

Additionally, auditors found $21.03 million in payments that were processed without adequate supporting documentation, raising concerns about how financial transactions were being approved and monitored within the ministry's operations.

The audit committees said the problems point to systemic weaknesses in internal controls, particularly in areas such as cash management, procurement procedures, asset management, and supervisory oversight. They recommended that senior management take urgent steps to strengthen these systems and ensure proper monitoring of public funds.

The report also identifies financial management concerns in other government entities.

Within the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, which is now the Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development, auditors reported that $99.28 million in final project expenditure could not be verified, while $50.43 million had been spent on projects that remained incomplete. The report also cited weak



project and contract management, which resulted in project delays, cost overruns, and unexpended project funds exceeding $136 million.

Additionally, the auditors noted that payments totalling $69 million were processed without verification, while reimbursements and training expenses were made without adequate supporting documentation.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance and Public Service was flagged for weaknesses in its management of Government assets. Internal auditors identified $91.9 million in information technology equipment and furniture that had not been properly recorded, with inconsistencies and multiple errors found in manual asset registers.

The report also raised concerns about IT [information technology] disaster recovery and business continuity arrangements, warning that existing storage and backup procedures did not meet global standards and could pose risks to government operations.

Elsewhere, the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport recorded salary overpayments totalling $1.35 million, which auditors said should be recovered.

Similarly, the Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA) was found to have made overpayments amounting to $2.6 million, while also recording short payments totalling $2 million, further highlighting payroll management issues within parts of the public sector.

Government audit committees are a part of Jamaica's public sector accountability system and operate under the Financial Administration and Audit (FAA) Act.

They are established within ministries, departments, and agencies to provide independent oversight of financial management and internal control systems.

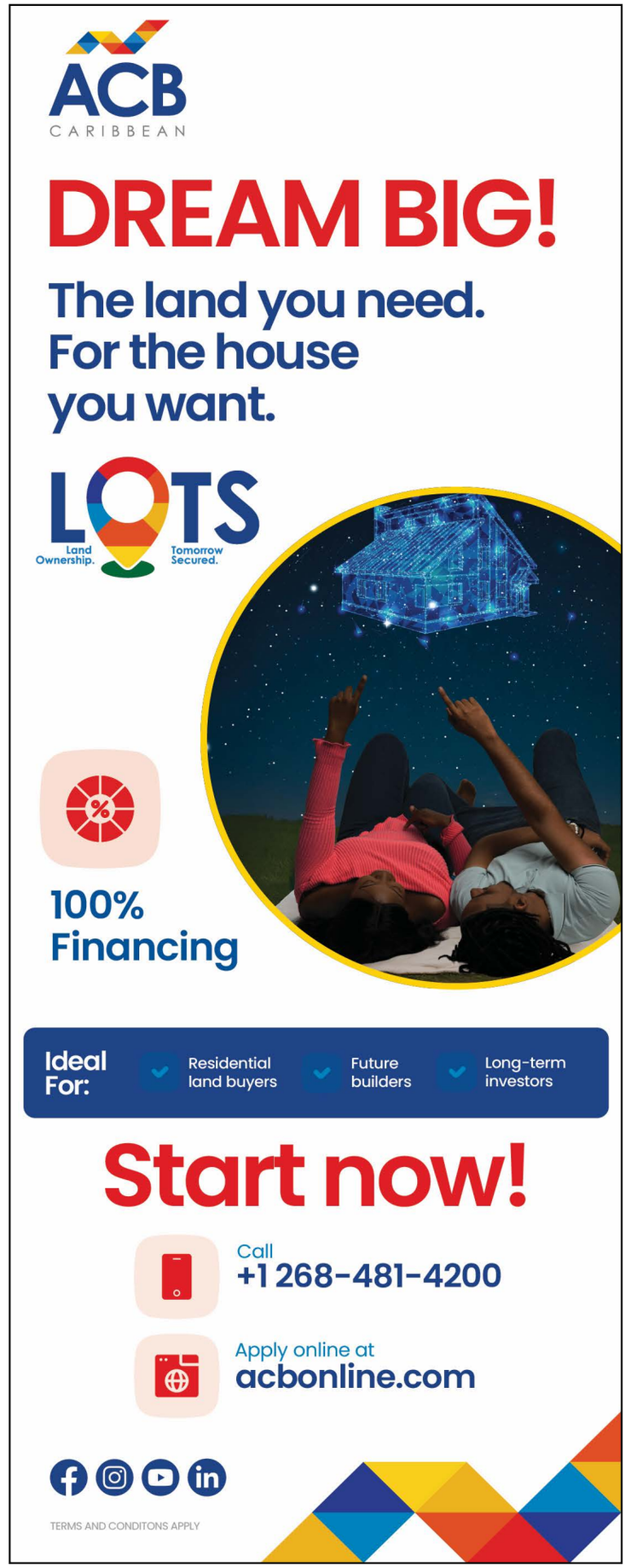
The Internal Audit Directorate, which monitors the committees across government, compiles their findings into an annual report that is submitted to the Ministry of Finance and subsequently tabled in Parliament.

According to the report, the issues identified across multiple ministries underscore ongoing challenges in financial management across the public sector, particularly in relation to payroll administration, project oversight, documentation of financial transactions, and asset tracking.

The ministry paper accompanying the report indicates that the issues identified are part of wider governance weaknesses across several Government entities, noting that internal control breaches and non-compliance with financial guidelines have resulted in salary overpayments exceeding $200 million and project overruns of more than $136 million across ministries, departments, and agencies.

The report also raised concern about how quickly ministries respond to audit findings, noting that the timeliness of management responses declined to 33 per cent in the 2024/2025 financial year, down from 52 per cent the previous year.

The Internal Audit Directorate said continued follow-up with senior management will be necessary to ensure that corrective measures are implemented and weaknesses identified by internal auditors are properly addressed. (Jamaica Observer)



PM Pledges Cultural Revival & Unity at Heroes Day

In his address at the official wreath-laying ceremony for the Right Excellent Joseph Chatoyer, St Vincent Prime Minister Dr. Godwin Friday called for a profound reclaiming of indigenous heritage and announced major policy shifts aimed at integrating Garifuna culture into the national identity.

Speaking at the Dorsetshire Hill Obelisk, the Prime Minister honored the "indomitable spirit" of Chatoyer and the Garifuna warriors who died defending the land against British colonial forces.

Friday challenged the traditional historical narrative, noting that for centuries, the story was told by the "victors" who labeled indigenous resistance as a "problem" rather than a fight for sovereignty. He asserted that since independence, the nation has rightfully placed Chatoyer as a hero defending the dignity of a free people.

A centerpiece of the Friday's address was the commitment to reviving the Garifuna language within St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He announced that his government will move beyond individual initiatives to make the language a central part of the national education system. "If we are to achieve the desirable goal of making it a central part of our culture and national identity, we must teach it in our schools as an essential subject," he declared, noting its status as a UNESCO-recognized cultural heritage.

Addressing the long-standing issue of Balliceaux island where thousands of Garifuna were detained before exile, Friday committed to its legal acquisition and development as a sacred shrine. He envisioned the site as a "prominent beacon for the cause of reparations for native genocide" and a monument of global significance against oppression and cultural genocide. He tasked Minister Shevern John, to lead consultations with stakeholders, including the Garifuna diaspora and the National Trust, to determine the final design of this sacred space.

Beyond cultural preservation, the Prime Minister emphasized the need to end the marginalization of the north, where many indigenous communities reside and outlined a manifesto commitment for infrastructure investment, including roads, healthcare, and agriculture, stating that true "dignity comes from also being able to feed your family".

Friday also used the platform to issue a stern call to the nation's youth, urging them to reject "the dazzle of a criminal lifestyle" and gang activity, which he described as "nasty, brutish, and short". He called on all citizens from teachers and public servants to farmers and business people to emulate the spirit of Chatoyer by providing their best service and engaging in volunteer work to build a stronger community spirit.

The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the over 150 Garifuna descendants who traveled from Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the United States to attend the ceremony.

He described their return to "Yurumei" (St. Vincent) as an act of spiritual healing and expressed his hope for even larger numbers in the coming years. "Our identity as a nation is incomplete without the Garifuna language and culture being an explicit part of it," Friday concluded, calling for unity between those on the island and the diaspora. (St Vincent Times)

The search for UWI's voice

As global politics and international law are being redefined by current developments in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Middle East, the issue of expanding geopolitical hegemony was among the matters raised at The University of the West Indies' (UWI's) Mona campus during presentations to a packed room of social scientists, academics, students, and current and past lecturers last Wednesday.

During the question-and-answer segment of the seminar, held under the theme 'The Political Moment in the Caribbean', a graduate student questioned whether the university had lost its voice for advocacy and sovereignty.

"The University of the West Indies campus here in Mona is known for being home to some of the bravest lecturers and students who have stood up for regionalism and matters concerning Jamaica's own sovereignty. I want to know how serious The University of the West Indies is in today's day and age," she began.

The student also wanted to know what the university could do to assist its students and lecturers in reclaiming that voice, while deepening knowledge of regional issues and strengthening their role in promoting regionalism, preserving identity, and demonstrating the impact of current global activities on their lives.

Dr Louis Moyston, a lecturer in the Department of Government at The UWI, whose presentation focused on the topic 'The Resurgence of United States (US) Imperialism in the Region: Target Cuba', said he, too, had been asking that same question of the student body. He questioned whether the university had lost its voice as a result of fear.

"Each time I attend class, I ask students what's happening in the world, what's happening in the region, and why there are no demonstrations. UWI, especially in the 1960s, played a significant role in trying to redefine the post-colonial state," he argued.

Citing the demonstrations by students and lecturers in 1968 against the government's decision to ban Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney from re-entering Jamaica, Moyston said that, under the leadership of Professor Trevor Munroe, the university displayed militancy through its association with the Workers Liberation League, the University and Allied Workers Union, and the Jamaica Union of Democratic Youth.

Other than the youth organisations of the People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party, he questioned whether there was any other group capable of leading protests against government failures. He added that he had begun to question whether there was a lack of intellectual leadership on the island.

"Or is there a general fear that people have that, if they protest, they are going to find themselves in problems? I know the youth in Africa are being called keyboard warriors. They are using their keyboards to protest against their governments," he said.

He added: "My final point is this: Jamaican youth seem to want to be part of the flesh part of politics. They are not interested in protesting; they are interested in getting on the bandwagon."

Moyston also argued that greater focus should be placed by young people on matters concerning geopolitics and globalisation. He also pointed to what he described as the United States' intent to colonise Cuba and Venezuela, as well as a return to the Ronald Reagan-era Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

The CBI is a 1983 policy introduced under the administration of then US President Ronald Reagan. It was designed to promote economic development and political stability in Central America and the Caribbean by providing duty-free access to the US market for many goods. The initiative aimed to boost foreign investment and diversify local economies, rather than having nations such as Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic rely solely on foreign aid.

Dr Lisa Vasciannie, head of the Department of Government, offered a perspective that differed from Moyston's.

Noting that she and her students may belong to different generations, she said the university was not defined by

its walls but by its people.

Naming several lecturers, she reminded students that The UWI was not just its academic staff.

"The university is also you, and our role here is to help you find your voices. We do this through all the courses we teach and the material we give you, which we hope you will read and analyse for yourselves," she said.

According to Vasciannie, students should interrogate what they are taught.

"It is not about accepting what we say to you, but thinking about the issues we expose our students to, so that you can develop your own voice and advocate for the ideas and the kind of Jamaica and Caribbean that you want. So it is not about us leading you, but about you learning to find your own voice and advocating for yourself through knowledge," she argued.

Her presentation was titled 'Caribbean Ballots in a Geopolitical Age: Beyond Free and Fair Elections'.

Commenting on the widely held view that the current generation may possess less intellectual depth than previous ones, she urged students to make full use of the tools currently available to them, including newspaper articles and artificial intelligence (AI), while doing so ethically.

"I encourage you to do more than you're doing now and to find your own agency, because you are The University of the West Indies as well," she said.

Another presenter, Damion Gordon, also a lecturer in the department, offered a further perspective. He argued that the responsibility for instilling the values of regionalism in the population rests with leadership at the highest levels.

"Since the inception of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), there has been wavering commitment to the ethos and mission of CARICOM. This has been reflected in the official pronouncements of leaders who have repeatedly said to us that "CARICOM does not work" and "CARICOM does not serve our interests". Leadership ought to inspire, and therefore we should embed the values of CARICOM in our system," Gordon argued.

He pointed out that, in the European Union (EU), citizens often see themselves as part of a broader regional identity.

"When you travel to any EU country, citizens hold the concept as part of their value system and mindset. It is deeply embedded, and they see themselves as EU citizens. They don't identify purely on the basis of their nationality; they see themselves as having a common EU identity," he said.

"In the Caribbean, we do not embody regionalism in everything we do. From the inception, we have viewed regionalism with scepticism, suspicion, and distrust. In each country, at least one of the two major political parties is always against it. So there is no national solidarity, consensus, or unity around regionalism, and I think that reflects a leadership deficit," he charged.

Gordon, a public commentator whose voice has contributed to public discourse, said he believes that "the failure of regionalism to a great extent reflects a lack of political commitment from successive administrations".

In his presentation, Gordon also examined the role of CARICOM in responding to recent geopolitical developments affecting the region, and whether those responses represented consistency with or a departure from traditional foreign policy positions.

The forum was also addressed by Munroe, who supported the theme and urged students to add their voices to public discourse.

The seminar was described as timely and thought-provoking, given the rapid changes taking place globally — including developments in the Caribbean and the Middle East, the continuing war between Russia and Ukraine, its impact on Europe, and the ripple effects on small island states with dependent economies, including Jamaica. (Jamaica Gleaner)

Severe flooding kills 62 in Kenya, as heavy rains continue

At least 62 people have died in Kenya over the past week after heavy rains caused widespread flooding, the authorities say.

The previous death toll, released a week ago, was 42.

Overnight, 11 people were rescued after a minibus taxi, known locally as a matatu, got stuck as water rose in the capital Nairobi, according to the Kenya Red Cross, while two children were saved from a flooded house.

The heavy rainfall over the past week has triggered flash floods. Rivers have burst their banks, flooding homes and damaging roads, power- and water-lines.

Some roads have been closed after bridges were damaged in Nairobi, while some schools were also flooded after Saturday's downpour.

The interior ministry warned on Sunday that different parts of the country were continuing to experience heavy rains, increasing the risk of flooding.

The authorities have urged residents in low-lying areas to move to safer ground and more than 2,000 people have had to leave their homes to seek shelter.

Police say that search-and-rescue operations are continuing following the "torrential rain and subsequent devastating flooding affecting various parts of the country".

More than half of those killed - 33 - have been in Nairobi, where poor drainage has been a major factor, along with the obstruction of rivers and waterways caused by unregulated development.

Businessman Kareem Hassan Ali, who lives in the Parklands area of Nairobi, told the BBC that there was about 2m (6.5ft) of water outside his block of flats on Saturday night, although this had now subsided.

His flat was not flooded but cars in the underground parking area were submerged, he said.

Another Parklands resident, auditor Deenesh Patel, said he had spent the night at a friend's house. "I saw the warning and didn't want to take any risks."

Both men called on officials to do more to improve drainage and stop construction that blocked rivers.

"The rain was heavy but this happens each year," said Patel. "Other low-lying areas were not affected because they have the proper infrastructure."

President William Ruto on Sunday said that authorities were working to clear blocked drainage systems but Ali said they had seen no-one and the Parklands Residents Association had cleared up the debris themselves.

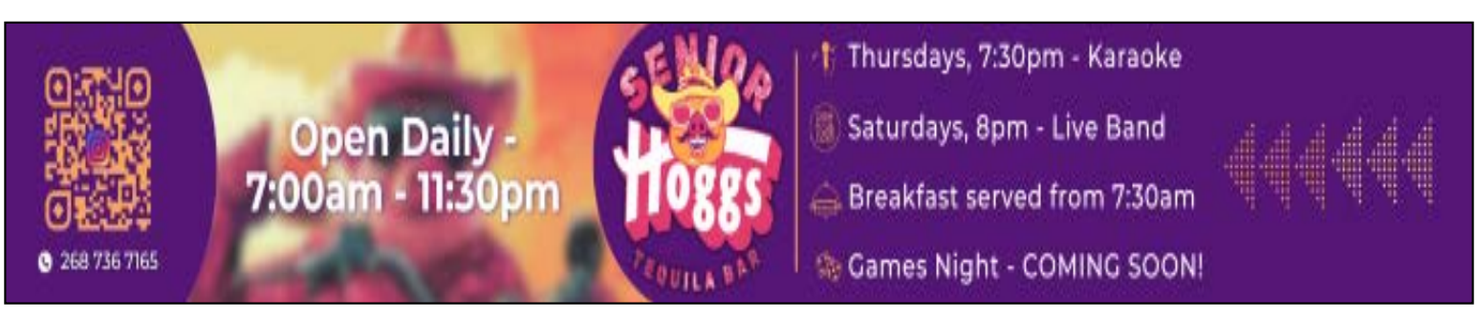
Ruto also said that emergency food supplies and medical assistance were being delivered to those affected.

The flooding has not just affected Kenya.

More than 100 people have been killed in neighbouring Ethiopia following floods and landslides in the south of the country.

Many factors contribute to flooding, but a warming atmosphere caused by climate change makes extreme rainfall more likely.

The world has already warmed by about 1.1C since the industrial era began and temperatures will keep rising unless governments around the world make steep cuts to emissions. (BBC)



Two brothers arrested in France over 'deadly and antisemitic' plot

A 22-year-old engineering student and his 20-year-old brother have been arrested in France over a "deadly and antisemitic" plot, anti-terror prosecutors said on Sunday.

The two brothers, who are of Italian and Moroccan nationality, were arrested on Tuesday in northern France, said the national anti-terror prosecutor's office (PNAT).

The brothers, identified only as Elyasse H and Moad H, were arrested near a prison in the northern town of Longuenesse.

Inside their vehicle, police officers discovered a semi-automatic weapon, a bottle of hydrochloric acid, aluminium foil and a flag of the jihadist Islamic State group stretched across the headrest of the driver's seat.

While in police custody, the brothers admitted that "they had been planning a terror attack in France for which they aspired to martyrdom", the PNAT stated.

The men had been radicalised and exposed to "jihadist propaganda", the statement said.

Prosecutors said that the analysis of the seized materials indicated that the two brothers have been radicalised over the past two years and had taken steps towards committing "a terror plot whose deadly and antisemitic nature appears to be established."

The prosecutors said that the brothers had allegedly plotted to commit a crime in France because it was not possible to travel to Syria or Palestine to "wage jihad".

A video pledging allegiance to the Islamic State group, made by Moad H. earlier this month, was also discovered.

He appears to be "in contact with several individuals who are radicalised or under investigation or convicted of a terrorist offence", the PNAT said.

"Exchanges with various contacts via encrypted messaging services in the days and weeks leading up to their arrests, aimed in particular at sourcing handguns or assault rifles, suggest that a violent act was imminent," the statement added.

The brothers arrived in France with their parents in 2017.

An investigation was opened on Sunday into criminal conspiracy to commit terrorism, as well as the acquisition and carrying of weapons. The prosecutor's office has requested that the two brothers be charged and remanded in custody. (AFP)

Iran warns against wider war as Trump asks allies to escort ships

Iran on Sunday warned countries against getting involved in its war with the United States and Israel, after President Donald Trump urged world powers to escort oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint in the Gulf.

Tehran also sent a stern message to its Arab neighbours, telling them that the Islamic republic has what its foreign minister called "ample evidence" that US bases on their territories were being used to launch attacks.

"This war will end when we are certain that it will not be repeated and that reparations will be paid," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Arabic-language news platform Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

"We experienced this last year: Israel attacked, then the United States," he said, recalling Israel's 14-day air war in June last year, which briefly drew in US forces for a night of strikes on Iranian nuclear sites.

Energy prices have soared across the world since Iran responded to the new US-Israeli campaign by threatening shipping sailing though the Strait of Hormuz, which usually sees passage of 20 percent of global oil and gas exports to the global market.

Trump responded on Saturday by urging "China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others" to send ships to escort tankers, while the US military will continue to pound drone, boat and missile launch sites in Iranian territory north of the strait.

But the countries he listed have given only guarded responses, and Araghchi, in a call with French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot, warned them to "refrain from any action that could lead to escalation and expansion of the conflict".

The UK ministry of defence was non-committal, saying "we are currently discussing with our allies and partners a range of options to ensure the security of shipping in the region".

Britain's minister for energy security, Ed Miliband, told the BBC the "plan now has to be to de-escalate the conflict… We are talking to our allies. There are different ways in which we can make maritime shipping possible."

South Korea said it was monitoring Trump's remarks on social media, while the policy chief of Japan's ruling party, Takayuki Kobayashi, said the bar for sending Japanese navy ships to the region under existing laws was "extremely high".

Global oil prices have surged by 40 percent as Iran has choked off the vital sea passage and attacked energy and shipping industry targets in its Gulf neighbours. The strikes were in retaliation for the US and Israeli air campaign that killed its supreme leader, triggering a war across the Middle East.

As global markets reel, Trump has doubled down, telling NBC News in a weekend interview that he thought Tehran was keen to come to the table but that the US fight on to force better terms.

He said he might, again, bomb targets on Iran's oil hub, Kharg Island, "just for fun".

"Iran wants to make a deal, and I don't want to make it because the terms aren't good

enough yet," Trump told NBC News.

Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, has — in a written statement — vowed to keep Hormuz closed.

But Trump dismissed this and suggested his foe might not even be in control, saying: "I don't know if he's even alive. So far, nobody has been able to show him."

Despite the hardline talk from all sides, residents of Tehran were able to go about their work week in the most normal atmosphere since the start of the war on February 28.

Traffic was busier than last week and some cafes and restaurants had reopened.

One resident whizzed down the street on an electric hoverboard, and more than a third of stalls in the Tajrish bazaar, a popular shopping hub in the north of the capital, had reopened, five days before Nowruz, the Persian New Year.

Some shoppers queued at ATMs to withdraw cash. Online operations at Bank Melli, one of the country's largest, had been paralysed in recent days.

The captain of the Iranian women's football team, which played in the Asian Cup in Australia, has withdrawn her bid for asylum, state media said Sunday.

That made her the fifth member of the delegation to change her mind, leaving just two seeking sanctuary.

The captain, Zahra Ghanbari, was on her way back to Iran via Malaysia, the IRNA news agency said.

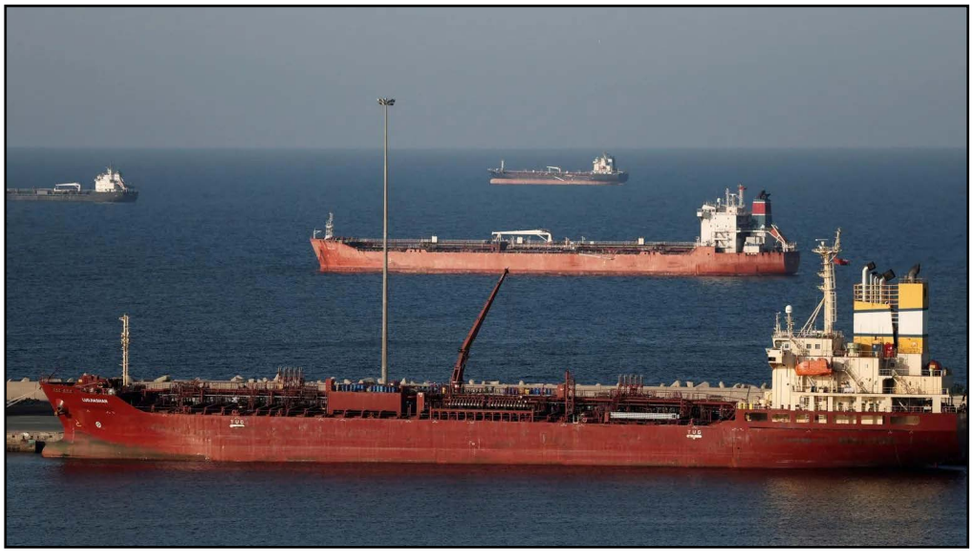
Rights groups have repeatedly accused Iranian authorities of pressuring athletes abroad by threatening relatives or with the seizure of property if they defect or make statements against the Islamic republic.

More than 1,200 people have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to Iranian health ministry figures that could not be independently verified.

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran.

The Pentagon says more than 15,000 targets in Iran have been hit by US and Israeli forces. (AFP)

UK looking at all options to secure Strait of Hormuz, says Miliband



The UK is looking at "any options" - including working with the US and allies - to secure key oil shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz, Ed Miliband has said.

It comes after US President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to open the channel "one way or another" and urged countries including the UK, China, and France to send warships to the waterway.

The energy secretary told the BBC it was "very important" that the strait be made safe for shipping, but refused to give details of options being considered by the government.

Iran's effective blockage of the strait, one of the world's most important shipping channels, has had a catastrophic impact on global supply chains and energy prices.

According to a statement attributed to Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, Iran will continue blocking the strait, as a means of political and economic pressure against the US.

As the US and Israel's war with Iran enters its third week, a number of ships are said to have been attacked as they attempted to navigate the narrow strait - through which about 20% of the world's oil usually passes.

There are also concerns that Iran has placed mines in the passage as part of its attempts to hinder shipping.

Speaking on BBC One's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme, Miliband said it was a "priority" for the strait to be reopened and that there were "different ways we can contribute, including with mine-hunting drones".

Pressed on whether the UK was considering sending drones or ships to the region, Miliband responded: "You can rest assured that any options that can help to get the strait reopened are being looked at in concert with our allies."

Refusing to be drawn into any operational details, Miliband reiterated that "ending the conflict is the best and surest way to get the strait reopened".

Speaking later on the same programme, shadow energy secretary Claire Coutinho said the UK should explore sending ships or drones to the Middle East if it were in the national interest.

She said it was in the UK's interests to re-open international shipping lanes and protect military assets abroad, and added that the Conservative party would have allowed its US allies to use UK military bases more quickly than Labour did.

Meanwhile, Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey argued the UK should not send ships to help secure the strait, and instead focus on "de-escalating" the war.

Hitting out at Trump as "very reckless" in this "illegal and damaging war", Sir Ed said Britain should not be at the beck and call of an American president "who does not seem to know what he is doing".

In 2025, about 20 million barrels of oil passed through the Strait of Hormuz per day, according to estimates from the US Energy Information Administration – nearly $600bn (£447bn) worth of energy trade per year.

It is also a key trading route for other commodities such as helium, the chemical sulphate, and urea, which is used to produce fertiliser.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said the strait remains open to vessels that do not belong to the country's "enemies", while Tehran - which has adopted attacks on energy targets as a key element of its response to US and Israeli strikes - has warned that any tanker bound for the either nation or its partners is a legitimate target.

At least 16 vessels, including a number of tankers, are reported to have been attacked near the shipping lane during the conflict so far, the UK Maritime Trade Operations said in its latest update.

Oil prices have soared since the war began on 28 February, jumping from some $71 a barrel before the conflict to a high of nearly $120 on Monday. Prices have since fallen back but remain elevated.

After initially refusing to allow the US to use UK bases for the offensive against Iran, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer gave permission for "defensive" US action on Iranian missile sites from RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean - while maintaining the UK did not believe in "regime change from the skies".

Trump had branded Sir Keir "no Winston Churchill" over his approach to the war, and just last week said the US did not need the UK to send aircraft carriers to the region - accusing the prime minister of seeking to "join wars after we've already won".

On Sunday, two US B-1 Lancer bombers took off from RAF Fairford - likely carrying powerful "bunker buster" bombs and cruise missiles.

Of the three large strategic US Air Force bombers being used in the war - the other two being the B-52 and B-2 stealth aircraft - the Lancers carry the largest payload of weapons.

The bombers were expected to take some seven or eight hours to reach Iran, for a total mission time of around 15 hours. (BBC)

Red Hawks soar to one-point win over Da Project in Division 1 League

JSC Red Hawks and All Saints Slam recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) First Division League on Saturday evening.

The Red Hawks claimed their fourth win in eight matches by snatching a narrow 73-72 victory over Da Project at the JSC Sports Complex.

Cohen Desouza shot a game-high 29 points and grabbed 12 rebounds; Bryce Smith sank 14 points and snatched 10 rebounds; David Mubagwa had nine points and five rebounds; and Andre Burnett chipped in with eight points, 10 rebounds, 10 assists, and five steals for the JSC Red Hawks.

Terry Dawkins produced 23 points and six rebounds, Cornell Greenwood had 21 points and six rebounds, and T-Shawn Lewis scored 15 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for Da Project, who lost for the fourth time in eight games.

The All Saints Slam recorded their second win in nine games by pulling off an 86-76 victory over the Navigators.

Takeem Martin sank 27 points and claimed eight rebounds; Rolantae Knowles had 24 points and five rebounds; Andrew Daigle scored 14 points and snatched seven rebounds; and Felix Hamilton produced a triple-double with 12 points, 13 rebounds, 10 assists, and five steals for the All Saints Slam.

Christian Wood produced 25 points, seven rebounds, and six assists; Baldwin Anthony sank 11 points and grabbed 20 rebounds; Tyreke Lewis converted 11 points; and Michael Barton scored eight points and snatched 28 rebounds for the Navigators, who remain at the bottom of the eight-team standings after suffering their ninth defeat in as many games.

There were comfortable wins for Daryll Matthew Ottos and Cuties Ovals Ojays in their latest outings.

Ottos notched up their sixth win in eight encounters by cruising to a commanding 98-62 victory over All Saints Slam.

Danny Perez produced 23 points and seven rebounds; Christian Walker provided 18 points, nine rebounds, and six steals; Pindo Drammeh had 15 points and nine rebounds; Lindsay McDonald sank 13 points; and Nick Strawter chipped in with 12 points, eight assists, and six rebounds for Ottos.

Takeem Martin sank 15 points and claimed nine rebounds; Damian Floyd scored 14 points and snatched eight rebounds; Felix Hamilton also converted 14 points and grabbed six rebounds; and Andrew Daigle had 13 points and eight rebounds for the All Saints Slam.

The Ovals Ojays notched up their sixth win in eight encounters with a 126-48 drubbing of the Navigators.

Sam Taylor produced a game-high 36 points, 10 rebounds, five assists, and five steals; Jalen Owens had 19 points, eight rebounds, eight steals, and six assists; and Jabari Smith provided 18 points, nine rebounds, and nine assists as the main performers for the Ovals Ojays.

In support, Kareem Edwards sank 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; Shaheem Omarde converted 12 points and claimed 11 rebounds; Tajahron Davis scored 12 points; and Jayleyle Joseph chipped in with 10 points and 15 rebounds for the Ovals Ojays. Beniah Mark scored 12 points for the Navigators.

Real Blizzard go third in Second Division League

Players of the Real Blizzard football team

Kelton Dalso Real Blizzard have moved into third place after their latest match in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division.

Tian Samuel scored twice as Real Blizzard notched up their 10th win in 15 matches with a 3-0 victory over Earthquakes FC at the Fort Road playing field on Friday.

The result allowed Real Blizzard to remain unbeaten and jump from fourth to third place on goal difference with 35 points, the same as the second-placed Young Lions of Old Road, who have played 14 matches.

Earthquakes FC remains in 16th place with eight points after crashing to their 11th defeat in 15 matches.

There were wins as well for Fort Road FC and the CPTSA Wings FC in their latest matches. Fort Road recorded their ninth win in 15 matches by snatching a 2-1 victory over the North Coast Academy Juniors at Mount Pleasant.

The goals for Fort Road FC came via conversions by Deon Lavonn in the ninth minute and Alren Lewis in the 43rd minute. Mario Lewis scored in the 12th minute for North Coast Academy Juniors.

The result allows Fort Road FC to remain in eighth place by advancing to 28 points, while the North Coast Academy Juniors remain in seventh place with 29 points after suffering their fifth defeat in 16 matches.

The CPTSA Wings recorded their fifth win in 15 matches by pulling off a 2-1 victory over Herberts United FC at Radio Range in Ottos.

A 40th-minute conversion by Travis Austin gave CPTSA Wings a one-nil lead at halftime, and teammate Trymaine Tonge doubled their team's advantage by adding a second with a strike in the 57th minute.

Zenworth Thomas reduced the deficit for Herberts United FC by scoring a consolation goal in the 65th minute.

The result allows the CPTSA Wings to move from 11th to 10th place by advancing to 21 points, while Herberts United FC remains second from the bottom of the 20-team standings with four points after succumbing to their 11th defeat in 13 matches.

Hoppers narrow gap on leaders Five Islands in First Division

Players of the Hoppers football team

Second-placed Greenbay Hoppers have narrowed the gap on leaders Five Islands in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League.

The Greenbay Hoppers moved within a point of Five Islands by recording their 11th win in 16 matches with a 5-1 drubbing of Bendals FC at the ABFA Technical Center on Thursday.

Tyler Anthony struck a second-half hat trick for Hoppers with conversions in the 48th, 79th, and 90th minutes. The other goals for Hoppers were converted by Hakeem Smith in the 43rd minute and Javorn Stevens in the 54th minute. Daren Stevens scored a consolation goal for Bendals FC with a strike in the 65th minute.

The result allows the Greenbay Hoppers to advance to 34 points, one adrift of Five Islands, who have played 18 matches. Bendals FC remains third from the bottom of the 14-team standings on goal difference with 15 points after losing for the 11th time in 18 matches.

Parham stayed in touch with the leaders by recording their ninth win in 17 matches by pulling off a 2-1 victory over English Harbour FC at Parham.

Dale Gardner struck the winner for Parham FC with a 51st-minute conversion. His teammate Trevaughn Harriette scored the equalizer in the 29th minute after Najae Morton put English Harbour ahead with an 11th-minute conversion as both teams reached halftime level at 1-1.

The result allows Parham to move from fourth to third place on goal difference with 31 points. English Harbour FC remains in 10th place with 17 points after slumping to their 10th defeat in 17 matches.

The Freemans Village Scorpions notched up their ninth win in 16 matches by snatching a 2-1 victory against Empire FC.

All the goals came in the first half, with Zakeem Michael scoring both goals for the Freemans Village Scorpions with conversions in the 17th and 27th minutes, while Kamali Looby scored for Empire FC with a strike in the 40th minute.

The result allows the Freemans Village Scorpions to jump from fifth to fourth place on goal difference by advancing to 31 points. Empire FC remains in seventh place with 24 points after slumping to their seventh defeat in 17 matches.

SAP FC lost ground on the front-runners after salvaging a 1-1 draw with neighbours Bolans FC in a round-south derby.

Joel Martin put Bolans FC ahead with a fifth-minute conversion, and teammate Zeke Smith scored an own goal in the 28th minute to equalize for SAP FC.

The result allows SAP FC to move from third to fifth place on goal difference by advancing to 29 points after securing their eighth draw in 17 matches.

Bolans FC remains in 11th place with 16 points after salvaging their seventh draw in 17 matches.

'Finalissima' match in Qatar cancelled amid middle east conflict

The Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar

NYON, Switzerland (AP) — UEFA said Sunday that the game between Argentina and Spain known as Finalissima that was supposed to be held in Qatar has been canceled after the widening Middle East war.

The game between South American champion Argentina and European champion Spain was scheduled to be held in Doha on March 27. It was going to be a marquee matchup between the teams led by Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal before this summer's World Cup in North America.

But the security of the game was put into serious doubt when Iran intensified its attacks on neighbouring countries in retaliation to the aerial attacks by United States and Israel that are now in their third week.

"After much discussion between UEFA and the organizing authorities in Qatar, it is announced today that due to the current political situation in the region, the Finalissima between UEFA EURO 2024 winners Spain and CONMEBOL Copa América 2024 champions Argentina cannot be played as hoped in Qatar on March 27," UEFA said in a statement.

Argentina and Spain were to play at Lusail Stadium, which staged the epic 2022 World Cup final. Argentina won a penalty shootout against France after Messi scored twice and Kylian Mbappé got a hat trick in a thrilling 3-3 draw.

Other venues had reportedly been considered as alternatives to Doha, including Spain's capital. UEFA, however, said all other feasible alternatives it explored "ultimately proved unacceptable to the Argentinian Football Association.

"The first option was to stage the match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on the original date with a 50:50 split of supporters in the stadium," UEFA said.

"This would have provided a world-class setting, befitting of such a prestigious event, but Argentina refused."

The option of staging the event over two legs — one in Madrid on March 27, the other in Buenos Aires before the Euros and Copa America in 2028 — was also rejected. Argentina had proposed to play the match later this year after the World Cup but Spain had no available dates.

South American soccer body Conmebol said in a statement on Sunday that Argentina's soccer federation (AFA) received an offer from UEFA to play the match in Italy on March 27, but the defending World Cup and Copa America champions countered that the game take place on March 31.

"Regrettably, UEFA said the match taking place on the 31st – only four days after their original offer – was not possible, and so the Finalissima was cancelled," the South American confederation said.

"CONMEBOL and AFA regret deeply that, despite all the efforts and the manifested interest in playing the match in a neutral ground since the first moment, it was not possible."

Argentina won the inaugural edition of the Finalissima in 2022 with a 3-0 victory over Italy at Wembley Stadium in London.

The violence in the Middle East, where Iran is hitting the Gulf Arab states with drone and missile attacks, has stranded travelers, upset economic markets and sent oil prices soaring.

It has also impacted the world of international sport beyond the Finalissima.

Formula 1's races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia scheduled for April have been called off due to the war, while President Donald Trump has suggested that Iran not participate in this summer's World Cup that is co-hosted by the USA.

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TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

United extends lead atop of Premier Division League

Defending back-to-back champions All Saints United further strengthened their lead at the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Saturday.

All Saints United moved six points clear of Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades at the top of the Premier League by recording their 14th win in 17 matches with a 1-0 victory against the Aston Villa Lions in the opening game of a double-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Raheem Deterville scored the only goal of the match by converting a free kick in the 43rd minute to snatch the latest victory for All Saints United.

The result allows All Saints United to remain at the top of the 12-team standings with 44 points. The Villa Lions remain in third place with 33 points after slumping to their fifth defeat in 16 matches.

Old Road FC consolidated their position in fourth place by recording their ninth win in 17 matches with a 10-2 drubbing of struggling John Hughes FC in the second game of Saturday's double-header.

Three players, Kevon Lucas, Chantomoi Taylor, and Rakeem Joseph, scored hat tricks for Old Road FC. Lucas achieved his feat by scoring in the 10th, 24th, and 37th minutes to give Old Road FC a three-nil lead at half-time.

Taylor had conversions in the 57th, 83rd, and 85th minutes, while Joseph scored in the 63rd, 82nd, and 90th minutes. The other goal for Old Road FC was scored by Obediah Browne in the 75th minute.

Terrence Thomas scored both goals for John Hughes FC, finding the back of the net with a strike in the 47th minute and converting a penalty kick in the third minute of added time.

The result allows Old Road FC to advance to 32 points, while John Hughes FC remains third from the bottom of the standings with 10 points after losing for the 13th time in 17 matches.

A starting XI of the All Saints United football team

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