

# Government Approves Anti-Inflation Measures

Story on page 2



WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY  
**LOTS OF SOCKS**

SIR LESTER BIRD  
MEDICAL CENTRE



World Down Syndrome Day observed in Antigua and Barbuda on March 20, 2026

## Government Approves Anti-Inflation Measures

The Antigua and Barbuda government has approved a series of measures aimed at easing the cost of living and strengthening the economic well-being of citizens in keeping with commitments made during the December 2025 Budget presentation. Government spokesman, Communications Director, Maurice Merchant said these decisions come against the backdrop of ongoing global geopolitical developments—including rising fuel and food prices—which continue to impact small island developing states.

According to Merchant the Government, led by Prime Minister Gaston Browne, is taking what he termed ‘proactive steps’ to cushion the effects of these external pressures on households and workers. As outlined in the National Budget, the government is moving ahead with the planned reduction in ABST for two days during April, but the scope of the goods that will be covered has been narrowed. “Cabinet confirmed that the previously announced reduction of the Antigua and Barbuda Sales Tax (ABST) to 0% on food items and school supplies will be implemented over April 10–11, 2026, the weekend preceding the reopening of schools following the Easter break. This measure is intended to provide direct financial relief to families preparing for the new school term,” he explained. But the measures go beyond the ABST reduction to include an immediate increase in the in National Minimum Wage. Last week, the government announced that it had accepted in principle



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

a recommendation from the Minimum Wage Committee which proposed that the minimum wage should be raised from the current \$9.00 to \$13.00 per hour. At the time, the government asked the committee to carry out further consultation and to make recommendations on how the proposal should be implemented.

But following this week’s Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Merchant announced that the Cabinet has agreed to increase the national minimum wage from \$9.00 to \$11.50 per hour, effective April 1, 2026. “Cabinet further noted that this adjustment forms part of a phased approach toward the previously announced target of \$13.00 per hour, with additional increases to be implemented over time. The measure is designed to improve income security for low-wage

earners and ensure a fairer distribution of economic gains,” the Communications Director further explained. Workers in the public sector are also in line to benefit from the measures aimed at helping to cope with the expected rise in cost of living occasioned by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. “In keeping with the Government’s commitment to public sector workers, Cabinet also approved an interim salary increase of 5% for all public servants, effective end of March 2026. This adjustment is intended to provide immediate relief while negotiations on a broader compensation package continue,” Merchant announced. He revealed that the Cabinet has emphasized that this increase does not indicate the final total of the increase and is subject to ongoing negotiations, with the expectation that a comprehensive agreement will be reached in due course. “Cabinet reiterated that these measures reflect the Government’s continued commitment to protecting citizens from global economic shocks while advancing national development goals. Antigua and Barbuda’s economic policies in recent years have focused on resilience, social protection, and sustainable growth, particularly in response to external challenges affecting small economies,” he indicated. He noted that the Government will continue to monitor global developments and stands ready to implement additional measures where necessary to safeguard the well-being of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.



## Government Assures No Strain on Treasury as Salary Increase Approved

The Government has assured citizens and residents that its decision to implement a five percent interim salary increase for public servants will not place undue strain on the national purse, as the measure takes effect at the end of March.

The reassurance came following Cabinet’s approval of the pay adjustment, which is intended to provide immediate financial relief to public sector workers while negotiations on a broader compensation package continue.

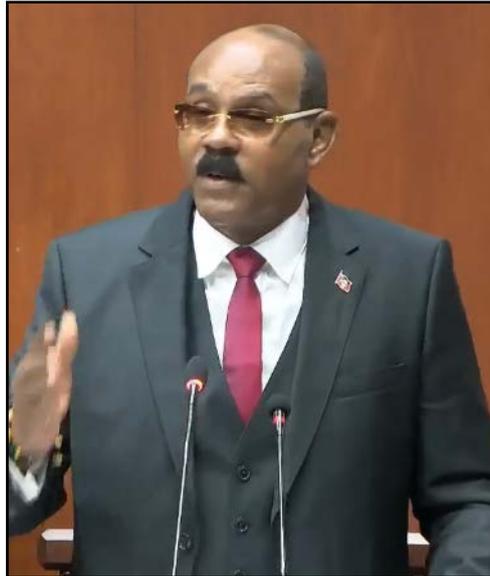
During Thursday’s Post-Cabinet Press Briefing, Director General of Communications Maurice Merchant emphasized that the increase had already been accounted for in the Government’s financial planning.

“You would recognize that this is not new. There were budgetary allocations as the increase was announced in the Prime Minister’s 2025 Budget Presentation for this year, and so it was expected,” Merchant explained.

He noted that treasury officials had been placed on notice well in advance, ensuring a smooth process when the increase is applied to the wages and salaries of government employees.

“It was coming and it is here now, and so the treasury officials have been placed on notice, and persons will see the reflection of this increase in their salaries at the end of this month,” he added.

Cabinet underscored that the five percent increase is an interim measure and does not represent the final outcome of ongoing discussions. Talks aimed at arriving at a comprehensive compensation package



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

are still underway, with officials expressing confidence that an agreement will be reached in due course.

The Government maintains that the move reflects its continued commitment to supporting public sector workers, particularly in the face of global economic challenges that have impacted small island states.

In outlining its broader economic approach, Cabinet highlighted a continued focus on resilience, social protection, and sustainable growth, noting that these priorities have guided policy decisions in recent years.

Officials also indicated that the administration will continue to monitor global developments and remains prepared to implement further measures if necessary to safeguard the well-being of citizens.

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## Government Moves to Regularise Informal Settlements, Expand Land Ownership

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has reaffirmed its commitment to empowering long-term occupants of Crown Lands, announcing renewed emphasis on a policy that allows qualifying residents to purchase the lands they have occupied and developed for years.

Persons who have resided on Crown Lands for more than ten years will now become eligible to purchase up to a quarter of an acre at a concessional rate of EC\$1.00 per square foot. The initiative forms part of a broader push to promote homeownership, security of tenure, and economic inclusion across the country.

Cabinet stated the policy is designed to provide relief and opportunity for citizens who, due to economic hardship, may have settled on government-owned lands and over time transformed them into stable homes for their families. By granting legal ownership, the Government aims to recognize that investment while open-

ing doors for wealth creation and improved living standards. Further, it was stressed that the measure also seeks to bring structure to informal settlements, with officials noting the communities will allow for better national planning, infrastructure upgrades, and community development initiatives, ensuring that residents benefit from essential services while contributing to orderly growth.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne and members of Cabinet underscored that the initiative reflects a continued commitment to expanding access to land ownership, particularly for citizens with long-standing ties to the lands they occupy.

Director General of Communications, Maurice Merchant, addressed concerns that the policy could be perceived as encouraging squatting. He explained that the programme specifically targets individuals who, due to economic circumstances, settled on Crown lands and have since developed

and maintained them over a significant period.

“Persons, for one reason or another, would have occupied government lands due to their economic conditions,” Merchant said. “They have developed those lands and made them their homes for ten years or more. Why not give them the opportunity to own that piece of the rock legally and officially?”

Merchant further clarified that the policy is not new but has been part of the Government’s framework for some time. However, recent public interest and inquiries prompted Cabinet to re-emphasize its availability and encourage eligible occupants to take advantage of the opportunity.

The Government maintains that the initiative aligns with its broader agenda of social equity and sustainable development, providing a pathway for vulnerable citizens to secure legal ownership while strengthening communities nationwide.



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## Wanted: Emergency Medical Technicians

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is hiring! An announcement coming out of Wednesday’s Cabinet said the Ministry of Health will hire new Emergency Medical Technicians with immediate effect.

According to the announcement this forms part of a national recruitment drive for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) to strengthen emergency response capacity across the country. A government spokesman noted that this initiative comes amid continued investments in the nation’s healthcare infrastructure, including the opening of a new pharmacy at the Glanville’s Polyclinic and planned upgrades to other clinics. These developments are expected to significantly enhance access to care, particularly in rural and underserved communities. The recruitment drive is also informed by a steady increase in emergency calls managed by the Antigua and Barbuda Emergency Medical Services (ABEMS). Data indicates that call volumes rose from 14,318 in 2022 to 16,311 in 2024, with sustained high demand continuing into 2025. Additionally, the ABEMS Paratransit Unit assisted over 1,100 patients in 2025 alone, providing essential transportation for dialysis and physical therapy services,” the spokesman reported.

He indicated that the Ministry has received Cabinet approval for the creation of six (6) new EMT positions to support expanding operations, including the establishment of a 24-hour ABEMS outpost at the Glanville’s Polyclinic. These additional personnel will also help meet the growing demand for emergency coverage at national events, sporting activities, and increased requests for Basic Life Support (BLS) training across both public and private sectors. Minister for Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, emphasized that this recruitment effort is part of a broader strategy to modernize emergency medical services and ensure timely, high-quality care for all.

“The expansion of our healthcare facil-



ities must be matched by strengthening our human resources. This recruitment drive ensures that we are prepared to meet the growing needs of our population while maintaining the highest standards

of emergency care,” the Minister stated. The Ministry encourages qualified individuals to apply and be part of a critical national effort to enhance emergency response and save lives.

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## Randy Baltimore To Formally Take Parliamentary Seat On Monday

The newest member of the House of Representatives – Randy Baltimore – will formally take his seat when the House meets on Monday.

He will be administered the oath as a member of the lower house of parliament at the meeting where several bills are on the Order Paper for debate. These include the Immigration and Passport Amendment Bill, the Magistrate's Code of Procedure Amendment Bill and the Advanced Passenger Information and Processing Record Amendment Bill.

The Immigration and Passport Amendment Bill seeks to fulfill a commitment made by the government to institute a period of amnesty where those who are in the country illegally can come forward and have their individual status rectified.

Prior to the debate Baltimore will swear the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath as a member of the House of Representative.

On Monday, Baltimore convincingly defeated Alex Browne of the opposition United Progressive Party in a by-election to fill the St. Philip North constituency seat that became vacant following the resignation of Sir Robin Yearwood, who served the constituency for 50 unbroken years, a record not just for Antigua and Barbuda but for the entire Commonwealth.

On Wednesday, Baltimore was invited to meet with the Cabinet where he was warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Gaston Browne and the other members of the Cabinet.

During the meeting, discussions focused on key areas of development, including housing, infrastructure, and community enhancement initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for residents.



Randy Baltimore

Prime Minister Browne congratulated Baltimore on his victory and advised that formal announcements regarding his appointments will be made within the coming week. In the interim, Baltimore has been appointed Chairman of the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHAPA) and continues to serve as Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board.

Reports are that the prime minister was particularly impressed with Baltimore's victory as it signaled that the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party is on the ascendency, while the fortunes of the UPP are on the decline.



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- 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.
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- Knowledge of data protection frameworks.

### **Key Competencies**

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- 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

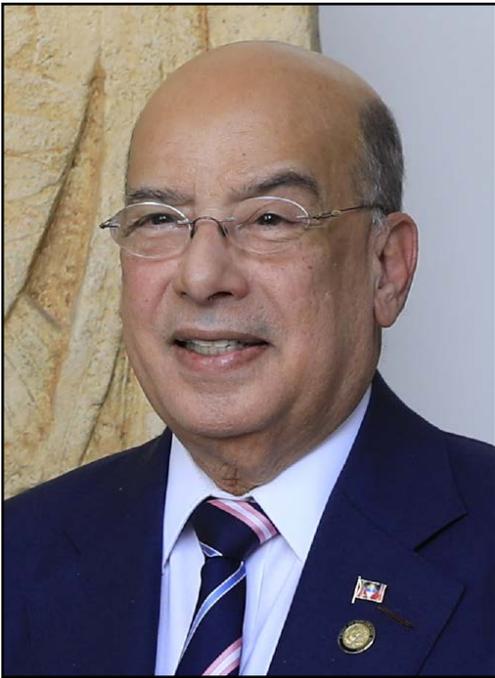
### **Selection Process**

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](mailto:hrtalentmanagement268@gmail.com) no later than 20th March 2026

## War in Iran, Pain in the Caribbean



*By Sir Ronald Sanders*

The war in Iran is already at Caribbean doors. The attacks in Iran and the Gulf are being justified by some on the grounds that Iran's record on terrorism, nuclear ambition, and regional meddling leaves the "free world" with no choice but to act militarily. The Caribbean has every reason to take that record seriously. But for small, import-dependent states in this hemisphere, an additional set of questions demands urgent attention: who is paying the economic and social price for this war, and what is it doing to the rules that are meant to protect small states?

### **A war fought there, a bill paid here**

The conflict has already pushed up oil prices, freight rates, and insurance premiums for shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical corridors for oil and liquefied natural gas. For Caribbean countries that import most of what they consume, every additional dollar on a barrel of oil, and every extra cent on a container or tanker, quickly appears on electricity bills, food prices, and public transport fares.

Many states in this hemisphere im-

port a large share of their goods from the United States. As American producers face higher fuel, fertiliser, logistics, and financing costs, those increases are passed on in the prices of exports to the Caribbean. Our region is therefore not only directly exposed to world oil and freight markets; it is also importing US embedded costs in the form of more expensive food, manufactured goods, and inputs.

For most countries in the Western Hemisphere, including the US itself, the war has meant tighter supply chains, higher shipping and warrisk insurance costs. Only a narrow group of oil and gas exporters have enjoyed a shortterm windfall from elevated prices. In our own region, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago are among the few that see higher hydrocarbon revenues, but even they remain exposed to volatility, shipping risk, and the broader slowdown that higher energy prices can bring.

### **Security narratives and international law**

Public argument over this war has been dominated by two types of narratives. One focuses on sovereignty and international law: whether one or two powerful nations may bomb another sovereign state on the basis that it might develop nuclear weapons that could one day be used against them, even without an imminent attack or a mandate from the UN Security Council. The other is increasingly cast in ethnic and religious terms, with social media flooded by Islamophobic and sectarian rhetoric that reduces complex realities to a clash of civilisations and obscures sober discussion of law and proportionality.

The Caribbean should not turn a blind eye to Iran's conduct. The regime's longstanding repression at home, including the grave violations of the rights of women and dissenters, and its support for armed groups and destabi-

lising activities abroad, are matters of legitimate concern to all states, including ours. Nor should any country's aggression against its neighbours be excused or ignored. At the same time, arguments in some quarters, which catalogue Iran's support for Hezbollah, Hamas and other networks in the Middle East and Latin America and then treat this as sufficient justification for opened military action, raise profound concerns.

Similarly, Israel's declared aims require scrutiny. By his own account, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not seek only to neutralise discrete threats. He has spoken of "crushing" and "weakening" Iran's regime, of delivering "crushing blows" to its security apparatus, and of creating "optimal conditions" for a future toppling of the regime, even as he acknowledges that actual regime change would depend on the Iranian people. These statements point not just to self defence, but toward an effort to leave Iran a substantially weakened state, with longterm implications for regional balance and for the principle that one or two powers should not decide, by force, the political future of others.

Accepting the seriousness of Iran's record, and recognising the genuine security concerns of other states, does not mean accepting that powerful states may unilaterally wage preventive war outside clear selfdefence or Security Council authorisation. For small countries, the restraints in the UN Charter on the use of force are vital; they are the first line of protection.

### **Fractured global and regional leadership**

Institutions that should help guide global opinion have done so only partially. The UN Security Council has managed to condemn specific Iranian attacks in the Gulf and to call for an immediate halt to hostilities and the protection of civilians. But deep divi-

sions among its permanent members exist. Some are simultaneously profiting from higher oil prices and from easing of sanctions related to their own past violations of international law.

Regional organisations in the Americas have likewise fallen short. The Organisation of American States (OAS) has not even discussed a memberstate-negotiated position on this war. There is no collective view of the Organisation. Likewise, although CARICOM had issued earlier statements on Middle East escalation and some governments have spoken nationally on the latest developments, there is no unified Caribbean position on the present conflict equivalent to a clear, common line adopted by Heads of Government.

In practice, public opinion in the Caribbean is being shaped less by regional guidance than by global cable news and polarised social media feeds.

## Where does this leave the Caribbean?

Caribbean countries, individually and collectively, have virtually no military leverage and limited economic power, yet they are deeply exposed to the conflict's fallout. Tourism-dependent economies face higher jetfuel costs, potential softening of travel demand, and tighter airline margins. Import-dependent economies confront rising energy and food prices, more expensive US-sourced goods, and growing fiscal pressure as governments try to protect households from inflation while servicing already heavy debt burdens. For many, the war has arrived as higher bills, fragile supply chains, and renewed threats to growth and social

stability.

Ideally, CARICOM should respond by speaking clearly and collectively. A unified Caribbean stance could defend deescalation and immediate ceasefire; insist on respect for the UN Charter's rules on sovereignty and the use of force; call for the protection and re-opening of critical sea lanes; and draw attention to the disproportionate economic burden the war places on small, vulnerable states that had no say in the decision to fight.

In practice, such unity is unlikely. Recent developments have exposed divisions within CARICOM. Some member states see the United States as their principal security partner and a crucial economic lifeline in trade, investment, remittances, and tourism. Smaller states are acutely aware of how shifts in US visa policy, travel restrictions, and migration enforcement can affect their societies, and recent episodes of visa and travel pressure have reinforced the perception that foreign-policy choices can carry real costs. In this environment, many governments will hesitate to support any collective position.

## A measured Caribbean stance

But, even without full regional consensus, Caribbean states can still exercise leadership by articulating a firm stance grounded in their own interests and values. Such a stance would rest on a clear defence of international law and sovereignty, opposing unlawful uses of force by any country, and insisting that concerns about security, nuclear proliferation, or terrorism be addressed, as far as possible, within the

framework of the UN Charter. It would maintain a consistent call for deescalation and diplomacy, prioritising ceasefire, restraint, and the resumption of negotiations on nuclear issues and regional security, while underlining the urgent need to keep vital shipping lanes open and safe. It would insist on economic justice for vulnerable economies, showing how the war's consequences - such as energy price spikes, freight costs, imported inflation, and potential recessions in tourism origin markets - are hurting societies that had no voice in the decision to fight, and pressing for tailored financial support and shock-absorbing mechanisms. And it would reject ethnic and religious polarisation, acknowledging human-rights abuses and security threats without embracing narratives that stigmatise entire peoples or faiths, drawing on the Caribbean's own history to advocate for a discourse rooted in rights, law, and shared humanity.

For small states in this hemisphere, the path forward lies in principled, measured diplomacy: engaging all major actors, avoiding gratuitous offence, but speaking clearly about the need for deescalation, respect for the Charter, and protection of societies that are otherwise left to bear the war's distant but very real costs. To say nothing protects no one.

*(The author is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the OAS, and Chancellor of the University of Guyana. The views expressed are entirely his own. Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronaldsanders.com](http://www.sirronaldsanders.com))*



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# GLOBAL RECYCLING DAY 2026 – A FLAG, A MOVEMENT, A MESSAGE

On March 18, 2026, Antigua and Barbuda did more than celebrate Global Recycling Day—it made history. At the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Good Humans 268 Inc. hosted its second annual Guinness World Record attempt, bringing together students, educators, partners, and volunteers in a powerful demonstration of what happens when purpose meets action. This year's ambitious goal: to create the largest plastic bottle-cap sculpture, forming a massive Antigua and Barbuda flag constructed entirely from recycled materials.

But this was never just about breaking records. It was about changing mindsets. Over 15 schools participated in the day's activities, with hundreds of students stepping into a space where education came alive. The stadium was transformed into an interactive learning environment featuring 12 engaging activity stations. From crossword puzzles and poster creation to recycling-themed TikToks and bottle pong, every corner of the venue was designed to show that sustainability can be fun, creative, and deeply impactful.

Students explored the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through hands-on activities, contributed to community message boards, and pieced together jigsaw puzzles that reinforced environmental awareness. They also had the opportunity to view existing bottle-cap sculptures created by Good Humans 268, sparking inspiration and imagination for what is possible when waste is reimaged.

At the heart of the day was the Mega Antigua and Barbuda Flag—a symbol of unity, creativity, and climate action. The process of creating the flag was intentionally designed as a learning experience. Students engaged in a three-step system: 1. Sorting bottle caps by color 2. Washing and preparing the materials 3. Placing each cap





carefully onto the flag

Through this process, students didn't just observe recycling—they experienced it firsthand. One of the most powerful aspects of the day was the participation of 31 students from Irene B. Williams Secondary School (IB-WSS), who are part of the UNESCO Youth Impact Programme. Their presence added an international dimension to the event, reinforcing that the work being done in Antigua and Barbuda is connected to a global movement for sustainability and youth leadership. As UNESCO reminds us:

“Education is the most powerful tool we have to transform our world.” This belief was evident in every smile, every conversation, and every bottle cap placed on that flag.

The event also served as a critical stepping stone toward an even larger vision—the creation of 56 Commonwealth flags made entirely from recycled bottle caps, leading up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) celebrations. What began as a single national flag is now expanding into a global statement of unity, sustainability, and inclusion. Beyond the activities, beyond the record attempt, beyond the numbers—what truly defined the day was the energy. There was laughter. There was curiosity.



### *There was pride.*

Students left not just with knowledge, but with a sense of responsibility. They became ambassadors for recycling in their schools, homes, and communities. Good Humans 268 continues to demonstrate that waste is not waste—it is opportunity. Opportunity to educate. Opportunity to create. Opportunity to include. Opportunity to build a future where individuals with disabilities are not just participants, but leaders in climate action.

Global Recycling Day 2026 was not the end of an event. It was the beginning of a deeper movement. A movement where every bottle cap tells a

story. A movement where every student becomes a changemaker.

A movement where Antigua and Barbuda leads by example.

Joshuanette Francis

Founder and President, Good Humans 268 Inc.

Mobile: +1 (268) 789 GOOD (4663)

Website: <https://goodhumans268.org/>

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— Malcolm X



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| <b>Individual Mas</b>              | <b>Party Monarch</b>                  |
| <b>J'ouvert Tropes Band</b>        | <b>Prince &amp; Princess</b>          |
| <b>Junior Calypso Monarch</b>      | <b>Queen of Carnival</b>              |
| <b>Junior Carnival Private Mas</b> | <b>Road March</b>                     |
| <b>Junior Carnival School Mas</b>  | <b>T-Shirt Mas</b>                    |
| <b>Junior Party Monarch</b>        | <b>Vendors</b>                        |

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# Regional News

## St Kitts and Nevis PM: Country united with region on humanitarian aid for Cuba, soon to see fruition

Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Terrance Drew of St. Kitts and Nevis, and current Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Chair, has reaffirmed his country's dedication to regional solidarity regarding assisting Cuba.

During an appearance on Freedom FM's Issues programme on March 17, he announced that St. Kitts and Nevis will soon make a significant humanitarian contribution to the country, currently under economic blockade by the U.S., joining efforts alongside Dominica and other CARICOM partners in a coordinated regional initiative.

Speaking about the importance of collective action, the Prime Minister emphasized that CARICOM was united in its decision to support Cuba from a humanitarian perspective. "The Cuba matter, I want to say that CARICOM was here, and we took the decision to support Cuba from a humanitarian standpoint," he stated.

St Kitts and Nevis Information Service indicated that Dr. Drew further revealed that the Federation has already established the necessary framework for this aid in collaboration with regional and international partners.

He shared that preparations are underway for the upcoming contribu-



tion. "Working with the Mexicans, we have put the framework in place and St. Kitts... within the next two weeks, will be doing its first major contribution from a humanitarian standpoint, to Cuba," he explained.

According to the Prime Minister, this initiative underscores St. Kitts and Nevis's longstanding commitment to humanitarian values, regional cooperation, and mutual support among Ca-

ribbean nations.

He also noted that his government maintains strong and ethical partnerships with Cuban professionals working within the Federation. Additionally, he assured that appropriate systems are in place to ensure transparency and adherence to international standards throughout this aid effort. (Dominica News Online)



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## Caribbean Development Bank initiates program to enhance educational results in Haiti



The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), in partnership with the Government of Haiti, has officially launched the Quality Enhancement in Public Education II (QEPE II) Project, a significant initiative aimed at boosting access to quality education and improving learning outcomes throughout the country, especially for children in impoverished and vulnerable communities.

The project will be financed through a \$13 million grant from CDB's Special Development Fund, complemented by \$1.7 million in counterpart funding from the Haitian government, indicated a press release from the Bank.

Building upon the successes of the initial QEPE project, the release explained that QEPE II is set to directly benefit approximately 16,000 students and 700 educators through a broad range of interventions. These include school feeding and nutrition programs, tuition waivers, gender-responsive support initiatives, ICT equipment,

instructional materials, and professional development opportunities for teachers and school administrators. An important component of the project is the support for the development and operationalization of an e-learning platform for secondary students, ensuring continued access to education even amid socio-political disruptions.

During the launch event, Dr. Martin Baptiste, Division Chief of the Social Sector Division at CDB, underscored the importance of the project.

"Education remains one of the most powerful tools for resilience, social stability, and long-term development. QEPE II is a critical investment in Haiti's future, helping to ensure that children – regardless of their circumstances – have access to safe, supportive, and high-quality learning environments," he stated.

Yves Roblin, Director General of Haiti's Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training

(MENFP), expressed appreciation for the support, emphasizing the project's timely impact.

"Amid challenges faced by our country, QEPE II provides vital support to keep our schools functioning and to uphold the right to education for all Haitian children. This partnership with CDB strengthens our capacity, improves resources in our classrooms, and helps us deliver better outcomes for students across the nation," he remarked.

The initiative aligns closely with the Haitian government's Decennial Education Sector Plan (2022–2032) and advances key national priorities such as school health and nutrition, expanded access, and enhanced governance.

It also supports CDB's Country Engagement Strategy for Haiti (2023–2025), which highlights human capital development—particularly education quality and access—as essential components for sustainable growth.

The release also states that in line with CDB's broader mission to foster social resilience through transformative education, the project contributes to overarching goals of poverty reduction, gender equality, and inclusive development.

CDB says it remains committed to supporting Haiti's long-term development ambitions, with a focus on expanding educational opportunities for the country's youth and strengthening the foundation for future growth. (Dominica News Online)

# Regional News

## Former Dominican ambassador faces trademark law suit in Sint Maarten

The glamorous casino scene of Sint Maarten has been thrust into the spotlight for reasons far removed from roulette wheels and poker tables.

French luxury brand Louis Vuitton has filed a lawsuit against Francesco Corallo's Vegas Casino, officially registered as Corlac Games NV, accusing the operator of unlawfully using its logos and monograms throughout the property.

A local court has already frozen \$350,000 in the casino's accounts while litigation proceeds, marking a rare case where intellectual property enforcement directly impacts a casino's finances.

Louis Vuitton alleges that the casino replicated its trademarked designs in wall décor, carpeting, and staff uniforms, despite repeated demands to stop.

The company's legal team, represented by Curaçao attorney Wiek Herben, argues that the infringement was intentional, exploiting the brand's reputation to elevate the casino's image.

The lawsuit seeks damages, destruction of counterfeit uniforms, and a permanent injunction against further violations. The seizure of funds underscores the seriousness of trademark enforcement in Sint Maarten and highlights the reputational risks for operators who clash with global corporations.

Francesco Corallo, the Italian-Dutch gambling magnate behind the casino, is no stranger to controversy. Known



as Italy's "King of Slots," he has faced investigations into tax fraud, money laundering, and alleged ties to organized crime. While not all allegations have led to convictions, his reputation remains shadowed by suspicion.

The Louis Vuitton case adds another layer to his complex legacy, but it also revives memories of his controversial ties to Dominica.

In 2011, Corallo was appointed by Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit as Dominica's ambassador to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), granting him diplomatic status.

The appointment later drew criticism when Corallo was arrested in Sint Maarten in 2016 at Italy's request, accused of tax evasion, bribery, and money laundering. After an eight-month legal battle, he was extradited to Italy in 2017.

The episode sparked debate in Dominica about the government's vetting process for diplomatic appointments, with opposition figures accusing the administration of granting prestige and immunity to wealthy foreign businessmen.

Prime Minister Skerrit defended the decision, insisting Corallo had been vetted at the time, but the government eventually distanced itself from him, stressing that his legal troubles were unrelated to his brief diplomatic role. Still, the controversy left lingering questions about transparency in Dominica's foreign service and the risks of granting diplomatic privileges to individuals later implicated in corruption.

The case serves as a reminder to regional operators that they must tread carefully when navigating international intellectual property laws. (Dominica News Online)



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## Florida hospital sues to evict a patient who won't leave room 5 months after discharge

Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare earlier this month sued the patient, saying she has refused to depart her hospital room since being discharged last October.

The hospital also has asked a state judge in Tallahassee for an injunction ordering the patient to vacate the hospital room and authorizing the county sheriff's office to assist if necessary.

The hospital said that resources have been diverted from helping other patients because of her occupation of the room.

"Defendant's continued occupancy prevents use of the bed for patients needing acute care," the hospital said in the lawsuit.

According to the lawsuit, the woman was admitted to the hospital for medical treatment and a formal discharge order was issued Oct. 6 after it was determined that she no longer needed acute care services. The hospital has repeatedly made efforts to coordinate her departure with family members and offered transportation to obtain necessary identification, the lawsuit said.

Rachel Givens, an attorney for the hospital, said Wednesday that the hospital had no comment. Hospital spokeswoman Macy Layton said Wednesday that the hospital couldn't discuss active legal matters, in response to emailed questions, including



about what type of identification the patient needed. The lawsuit doesn't say what the patient was treated for, what her hospital bill was or how she was able to stay at the hospital for more than five months despite being discharged.

No attorney was listed for the patient, who is representing herself. Phones numbers listed in an online database for the patient were disconnected. No one answered the phone when a call was put through to her room at the hospital.

An online court hearing on the lawsuit is scheduled for the end of the month.

Under the federal Emergency Medi-

cal Treatment and Labor Act, hospitals that receive Medicare funds must provide treatment that stabilizes anyone coming to an emergency department with an emergency medical condition, even if the patient doesn't have insurance or the ability to pay. Hospitals can be investigated by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for violations.

The patient can be discharged when the clinicians have determined that any further care can be provided as an outpatient, "provided the individual is given a plan for appropriate follow-up care as part of the discharge instructions," the federal agency said in an operations manual. (NBC)

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## Japan PM to hold ‘difficult’ talks with Trump as Iran conflict looms large

Japan’s Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is on her way to what she expects will be a “very difficult” meeting with US leader Donald Trump, days after his calls for allies to help secure the war-stricken Strait of Hormuz went largely unanswered.

Takaichi told parliament hours before her departure that she would “do everything to maximise [Japan’s] national interest”.

The three-day visit to Washington was a chance to talk trade and deepen the US-Japan alliance ahead of Trump’s diplomatic trip to China, which has now been postponed because of the war.

But now it is the topic of the war that will likely overshadow the meeting, which is shaping up to be a test of Takaichi’s friendship with Trump.

The trip was scheduled back in October, a week after Takaichi took office,

when Tokyo rolled out the red carpet for Trump and the two leaders heaped compliments on each other, heralding a new “golden age” in bilateral ties.

As of a few weeks ago, the upcoming meeting looked set to be a success, with Takaichi “fresh off a dominant election victory and with a new round of investment projects in the US”, Emma Chanlett-Avery, director for political and security affairs at the Asia Society Policy Institute, told the BBC.

But while Takaichi “had intended to build on the warmth of her first meeting with Trump and press upon him Japan’s concerns about Chinese aggression ahead of Trump’s [then scheduled] meeting with Xi”, recent events have complicated things, said Chanlett-Avery.

Earlier this week, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform a call for some countries to help secure the vital

strait.

He had pointed to Japan’s and other Asian economies’ dependence on fuel from the Middle East as reason for them to get involved.

“We get less than 1% of our oil from the [Strait of Hormuz] and some countries get much more... We want them to come and help us,” he wrote.

But after receiving a lukewarm response, he retracted his request, saying in a later post that the US did “NOT NEED THE HELP OF ANYONE!”.

Takaichi had acknowledged the challenges she faced with a trip to the White House at this time.

“I want to engage in substantial discussions based on Japan’s point of view and our way of thinking,” she told reporters on Wednesday. “The top priority is the early de-escalation of the situation.” (BBC)



## Chad warns Sudan it will retaliate after drone strike on mourners kills 17

Chad's president has ordered the military to retaliate against future attacks from Sudan following a drone attack that killed at least 17 people and injured several other people attending a funeral.

Wearing military uniform, President Idris Mahamat Déby convened an emergency security meeting on Wednesday evening, where he ordered the military to be on high alert. He also ordered a "total closure" of the border with Sudan.

He described the attack targeting the border town of Tiné as "outrageous and a blatant aggression" against Chad's territorial integrity.

He said that it had happened despite warnings to the two sides battling each other in Sudan and a previous closure of the border.

Last month, Chad closed its border with Sudan "until further notice" to stop repeated incursions by Sudanese armed groups.

It however allowed "exceptional exemptions" on humanitarian grounds, with prior authorisation from relevant authorities.

Residents of Tiné said the victims of Wednesday's attack were mourners, with one quoted by the Reuters news agency as saying they had gathered at a house for a funeral ceremony that involved reading the Koran.

The attack drew condemnation from several quarters, including from the



National Assembly and MPs from the ruling party.

"The government bows with deep dismay to the memory of the victims and extends its deepest condolences to the bereaved families," a statement by the government spokesman said.

The spokesman said Chad had now "strengthened the posture of its defence and security forces" and was ready to pursue its rights inside Sudanese territory "in strict compliance with the rules of international law".

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which controls most of the western Darfur region bordering Chad, is suspected of carrying out the attack. It denies any involvement and blames Sudan's army, which has blamed the RSF.

The Sudanese government has often accused Chad of supporting the RSF with weapons and mercenaries, claims which N'Djamena denies.

Sudan has been plagued by a civil war that broke out in April 2023 following a vicious power struggle between its army and the RSF.

The ongoing war has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced more than 13 million people, nearly one million of them to Chad, according to the UN.

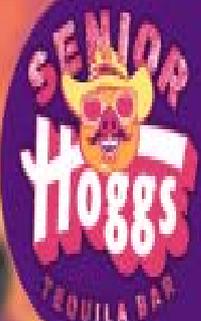
Chad shares a 1,400km-long (870 miles) border with Sudan that is porous and often difficult to control.

Its order to retaliate against future attacks from Sudan raises fears of a possible escalation of the violence in the region. (BBC)



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## Wins for Pares and Clare Hall in Secondary Schools Cricket

Pares and Clare Hall recorded wins in the latest round of matches in the Under-19 Boys Division in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools Cricket Championship.

Pares Secondary School crushed Jennings Secondary School by an innings and nine runs at Rising Sun playing field.

Pares Secondary School were dismissed for 50 in their first innings. William Pitman snapped up four wickets for 11 runs, and Keno Goodwin claimed two for 14.

In reply, Pares Secondary School declare their first innings at 89 for nine. William Pitman slammed 47, and Keno Goodwin scored 19. Estan Hill grabbed five for 19, and Hershum Ross picked up two wickets without conceding any runs.

Facing a deficit of 49 runs, Jennings Secondary School tumbled to 30 all

out in their second innings. William Pitman bagged four for 10, and Keno Goodwin claimed two for 13.

Clare Hall Secondary School prevailed by an innings and 47 runs against All Saints Secondary School at the Factory Grounds.

All Saints Secondary crashed to 30 all out after winning the toss and opting to bat. Shyquan Christian scored 16. Dale Johashen picked up five wickets, and Kiscean Francis captured two wickets.

In reply, Clare Hall Secondary School declared their first innings at 123 for six. Andre Clarke struck 28, captain Jayden Charles hit 26, and Glenroy Richards cracked 18. Nasari Brookes and Demique Allen each picked up two wickets.

Facing a deficit of 93 runs, All Saints Secondary School was dismissed for 46 in their second innings. Nasari

Brookes hit 22 not out. J. Francis captured four wickets, and Kiscean Francis picked up three wickets.

But the match between Sir Novellette Richards Academy and Princess Margaret School at Antigua Grammar School was abandoned.

Sir Novellette Richards Academy made 172 all out off 27 overs after winning the toss and electing to bat. Captain Shaun Balgobin hammered 82 off 72 balls, including 14 fours and two sixes.

Ayden Bazil struck 36 off 33 balls, including six fours and a six. Kerique Mentore claimed three for 31, Ondre Peters took three for 44, and JQuan Athanaze captured two for 50.

In reply, Princess Margaret School reached 28 for one off two overs when rain came and caused the match to be abandoned. JQuan Athanaze made 18 off eight balls, with three fours and a six.



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## ABCAS and AGS advance to school basketball Night of Champions

The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) and Antigua Grammar School secured berths into the Night of Champions finals in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball Championships on Wednesday.

The Night of Champions, which will feature the finals in six divisions, will take place at the JSC Sports Complex on Sunday, March 29, starting at 3 pm.

ABCAS played unbeaten to book their spot in the final of the Senior Girls Division by prevailing 57-20 against Princess Margaret School at the JSC Sports Complex.

Jodaliah Constant shot a game-high 28 points for ABCAS, while Lena Mills scored 16 points for Princess Margaret School.

The Antigua Grammar School advanced to the final of the Junior Boys Division by pulling off a commanding 55-19 victory against Princess Margaret School.

Dajon George sank 15 points, and Derick Perez and Jovan Gordon each converted 10 points for Antigua Grammar School. Elijah Charles scored 15 points for Princess Margaret School.

Antigua Grammar School will face Clare Hall Secondary School in their Junior Boys Division final during the Night of Champions.

St. Anthony's Secondary School also romped to an emphatic 54-15 victory against Jennings Secondary School in the Senior Boys Division.

Israel Clarke sank 11 points for St. Anthony's Secondary School, while Jahmoy Jeremy scored eight points for Jennings Secondary School.



*ABCAS Senior irls Team*



*Antigua Grammar School Junior Boys team*

## Winning start for Chargers Eagles and Stoneville in ABAVA league

Chargers Eagles 1 and Stoneville got off to successful starts in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Domestic League on Wednesday evening.

Spectators were treated to two high-energy matches, featuring strong rallies, momentum swings, and determined performances from the teams in the encounters at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex.

Chargers Eagles 1 prevailed 3-1 over Starz 1 in the Women's Division 1 League in a matchup that delivered a competitive battle, especially in the early stages.

Chargers Eagles 1 edged a close first set 25-22, but Starz 1 responded with resilience to take the second 25-23.

However, Eagles regrouped, showing better control, communication, and attacking efficiency to close out the match in four sets by winning the next two sets 25-20 and 25-20.

Stoneville also launched their campaign in the Men's Division 1 League with a 3-1 victory against Chargers Velocity.

Stoneville came out strong, taking the first two sets 25-19 and 25-14 with disciplined play and consistent offense.

Chargers Velocity showed great fight to win the third set 25-22, extending the match with improved defense and execution. The fourth set was closely contested, but Stoneville held their composure in the crucial moments to prevail 25-23 and secure the victory.

The national volleyball league will continue with a triple header at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex on Saturday.

Dynasty will face Starz 2 in a Women's Division 2 affair at 5:30 pm. Jets will take on UWI in the Women's Division 1 League at 7 pm, and High Flyers and Invaders will clash in a Men's Division 1 encounter at 9 pm.



*Chargers Eagles women's volleyball team*



*Stoneville men's volleyball team*

## Contrasting wins for Daggers and Flyers in Division 2 basketball



The Old Road Daggers and the EZ Fit Flyers 2 claimed contrasting wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division League on Wednesday evening.

The Old Road Daggers notched up their seventh win in nine matches by snatching a 76-75 victory against Michael Joseph Phoenix in the second game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Kelvin Simon shot a game-high 25 points and grabbed 12 rebounds; Kedar Clarke sank 14 points and snatched 11 rebounds; Craig Thomas had nine points and eight rebounds; and Devea Aaron chipped in with 11 rebounds, seven points, and six assists for the Old Road Daggers.

Adrian Carnegie produced 24 points, seven rebounds, and six assists; Gary Harrison sank 17 points and grabbed 14 rebounds; and Shalom Bloodman converted eight points and snatched 13 rebounds for the Phoenix, who suffered their fourth loss in 10 games.

The EZ Fit Flyers 2 got their second win in 10 games via default

after last night's opening matchup against Square One Construction Cristos United ended prematurely.

The Flyers 2 were leading 18-5 with eight minutes and 47 seconds remaining in the second quarter when tensions boiled over. Several players lost composure, arguing calls, which escalated into unacceptable behaviour.

According to reports, lead referee

Carl "Bowlie" Knight stepped in and made the decisive call to end the game, awarding the match to the Flyers 2 after what could only be described as a breakdown in sportsmanship.

The result left Cristos United, who remain winless, at the bottom of the nine-team standings after losing for the ninth time in as many games.

## NOTICE

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**Dated the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2026  
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## Guydadli Jets move closer to securing Second Division League title



**The Guydadli Jets football team**

Leaders Guydadli Jets maintained their unbeaten run to move closer to winning the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Wednesday.

The Guydadli Jets notched up their 14th win in 16 matches with a 4-1 victory against Bethesda at St. Johnstone's Village Stadium.

Keyondre Hewlett struck twice with strikes in the 29th and 38th minutes, and Michael Peters scored in the 40th minute to give the Guydadli Jets a three-nil lead at halftime.

Chunsae Martin reduced the defi-

cit for Bethesda with a 60th-minute conversion, but Imani Joyce scored a fourth and final goal in the 85th minute to seal victory for the Guydadli Jets.

The result allows the Guydadli Jets to maintain their six-point lead at the top of the Second Division by advancing to 44 points. Bethesda FC remains in ninth place with 23 points after crashing to their sixth defeat in 15 matches.

The Young Lions of Old Road stayed in second place and within six points of the Guydadli Jets by recording their 12th win in 15 matches with a 3-0 victory via default against the Young Warriors at the Old Road playing field.

The result allows the Young Lions of Old Road to move on to 38 points, while the Young Warriors remain third from the bottom of the standings with six points after losing for the ninth time in 11 matches.

Meanwhile, Empire FC consolidated their position in seventh place in the ABFA's First Division League by recording their eighth win in 18 matches with a 4-1 victory against Bendals FC at the ABFA Technical Center.

Kamali Looby struck twice with conversions in the 16th and 78th minutes, while the other

goals for Empire FC were scored by Nickado Lindsay in the 29th minute and Lee Nicholas in the 66th minute.

Te'Andre Elliot scored a consolation goal for Bendals FC with a strike in the first minute of added time in the first half.

The result allows Empire FC to advance to 27 points, while Bendals FC remains third from the bottom of the 14-team standings on goal difference with 15 points after losing for the 12th time in 19 matches.