

# Art and Artistry Mark Launch of People's Forum

Story on page 2



Family photo at the launch of How to Make a Commonwealth Quilt, a People's Forum event held at the Sir John E St Luce Conference Centre on Tuesday

Photo courtesy: Wayne Mariette

## Art and Artistry Mark Launch of People's Forum



This year's People's Forum which will form part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda (CHOGM 26) staged one of its key preliminary events on Tuesday; the launch of a Commonwealth-wide framework around the theme of 'How to Make a Commonwealth Quilt' with the focus on the creatives of society.

The launch event took place at the John E. St Luce and it involved senior officials of the Antigua and Barbuda government with the Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams in attendance and with addresses by Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Green, CHOGM Task Force Chair, Ambassador Dr. Clarence Pilgrim, CHOGM Focal Point, UK High Commissioner, Karen-Mae Hill, and two representatives of the Commonwealth Foundation, Director General, Razmi Farook and Programme Officer, Madiha Hosein-Jetha.

Prime Minister Browne in his remarks noted that the upcoming CHOGM should be one with a difference as the

Commonwealth seeks to reassert its role on the international sphere. "When one looks at the geopolitical challenges that have taking place today, it is indeed time now for us to come together as a family; a family of Commonwealth nations and to be an example for the rest of the world.

Recognising that Commonwealth countries shared a common 'grandmother' and thus have many things in common, PM Browne expressed the view that the Commonwealth has a role to play in helping to resolve conflicts around the world.

"When you look at the amount of wars taking place globally, I believe that the Commonwealth has a role to play in bringing peace and prosperity to all nations. So we believe that this CHOGM ought to be one with a difference; one in which we will see a renaissance taking place within the Commonwealth of Nations," he remarked.

For Foreign Minister Greene, he sees the theme of the launch "How to Make a Commonwealth Quilt," as being

evocative as it is significant.

"A quilt, by its very nature, is an artefact of collective effort. It is not the product of a single artisan but rather, a tapestry meticulously assembled from diverse fragments, including each piece retaining its distinct character and value. Through the deliberate and patient process of stitching, these individual elements are woven into a cohesive whole, creating a narrative of strength found in unity and beauty in diversity. This metaphor elegantly captures the very essence of the Commonwealth we are all committed to building," he stated.

In his remarks, CHOGM Task Force Chair, Ambassador Pilgrim noted that the People's Forum is a central activity of CHOGM noting that it is not peripheral, but fundamental.

"As we advance toward CHOGM 2026, our focus is execution — structured planning, coordinated action, and measurable results. I commend our National Focal Points and civil society partners for their dedication to deliver-



ing a Forum that is inclusive and impactful.

“For CHOGM 2026, we spotlight Performing Arts, Heritage, and Culture — not as decoration, but as drivers of identity, economic opportunity, diplomacy, and resilience. Creative expression must now evolve into policy influence,” he observed.

People’s Forum Lead, Samantha Marshall noted that previous People’s Forums had focused on a number of issues such as health, freedom of expression and climate justice. However, under the leadership of the Commonwealth Foundation, this year the People’s Forum ‘is emboldened’ to place the creative industries at the centre of the conversation.

“This is a call to artists, writers, performers and creators of every and any

kind: to engage boldly with the world around you, and express your visions through your chosen media. Your work shapes identity, sparks dialogue and opens pathways to new opportunities,” she explained.

In keeping with the theme of focusing on the creative expressing, Marshall penned a poem which she read during her remarks;

**“In every face, a story unfolds,  
A tapestry woven, young and old  
Under one umbrella, we gather wide  
A family of nations, side by side.  
From sun kissed islands to icy seas,  
We stand as one in unity.**

**Cultures blend, and languages play,  
A symphony of hearts, in every way**

**We celebrate our differences, strong and free,**

**United in purpose, the commonwealth a global family! ”**

The highlight of the launch ceremony was a performance by Zara Airall’s drama group performing a piece that combined spoken words with dance choreographed by Tavia Hunte. The performance was an exciting blend of different Caribbean musical genres artfully displayed in words and music showcasing the strength and depth of Caribbean creativity and talent.

During the launch, the husband and wife team Howard and Mitzi Allen of HAMA Films were recognized as their first full-length feature film, *The Sweetest Mango*, that starred the host of the event, Sen. Jamilla Kirwan, as the movie marked its 25th anniversary.

## Government Gets Recognition For Its Commitment To The Arts

The Commonwealth Foundation which is working alongside the government is organizing the People’s Forum is commending the administration for its commitment to the creative industries.

Speaking at the Launch of the ‘How to Build A Commonwealth Quilt, where the focus was on the creatives of society, Director General of the Foundation, Razmi Farook, said during talks with senior leaders of the government, she got a sense that the government is deeply committed to creating spaces where the creatives can thrive and grow.

“I am so pleased to see following my discussions with the Governor General and his wife, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other senior officials, that there is a commitment from Antigua and Barbuda leadership in terms of investing in the creative industries and promoting a creative ecosystem for artists to flourish,” she declared

Farook noted that Antigua and Barbuda will not only set the standards for itself, but for others across the Commonwealth to follow,



demonstrating the vital role artists and creatives can play in boosting the economy.

During the launch, the prime minister announced plans to take legislation to parliament shortly to protect the works of artists and to provide a framework where they will be able to develop their talents and with government’s assistance and or guidance to market their products or themselves to the regional and international markets.

It was also announced that in discussions at Government House, it was revealed that a building has been identified which will be renovated and retrofitted to

create a space where artists can go to hone their skills in their desired specialties.

## St. Philip Homes Get Facelift



A number of homes in the St. Philip North constituency are getting a facelift as the ABLP candidate for the upcoming By-election, Randy Baltimore, teams up with the Social Protection Board Operations to undertake the improvements.

Social Protection Board’s Operation Manager, Mary Baltimore said the initiative is aimed at ensuring that residents experience what she termed ‘real

and visible improvements’ in their living conditions.

“Through this collaboration, we have been actively engaged in the facelift and refurbishment of several homes within the constituency. Our teams have been repainting houses, carrying out much-needed repairs, and in some cases, even constructing new homes for families in need. These efforts are not just about improving structures, but about restoring dignity, pride, and

comfort to the people we serve,” Baltimore reported.

The Operations Manager said she is extremely happy to continue spreading the good work and the joy throughout the community. “This initiative reflects our commitment to HAPI and the Social Protection Board remain dedicated to uplifting households and improving quality of life for the people of St. Philip North,” she remarked.



## New Transparent Ballot Boxes For St. Philip North By-Election



The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) announces the official transition from opaque ballot boxes to transparent ballot boxes for all upcoming electoral processes in Antigua and Barbuda.

This initiative forms part of the Commission’s ongoing commitment to strengthening electoral integrity, enhancing transparency, and building public confidence in the democratic process. Supervisor of Elections, Ian S Hughes, explained that transparent ballot boxes are widely recognized as an international best practice and represent a practical and effective measure to reinforce accountability throughout the voting process.

Hughes explains further that the “transparent ballot boxes enhance public trust, allow visible accountability during voting and ballot handling, reduce concerns about ballot tampering, and further align Antigua and Barbuda with global standards for free and fair elections”.

Under the new policy, all polling stations will utilize transparent ballot boxes in the future. The by-election in St. Philip North on Monday 16th March 2026, will be the first process where the new boxes will be utilized. At the commencement of voting, electors and observers will be able to clearly verify that each ballot box is empty before ballots are cast.

Chairman of the Commission, Ambassador Arthur G.B Thomas, assures the electorate that the secrecy, securi-

ty, and confidentiality of the vote remain fully protected.

“The transparent ballot box does not compromise voter privacy,” Ambassador Thomas emphasized. “It simply allows election officials and observers to confirm that ballots are being collected openly and honestly, not to see

how individuals vote.” In efforts to ensure a smooth transition, ABEC will conduct comprehensive training for electoral staff and observers to guarantee that all procedures are conducted professionally and respectfully.

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## The UWI Five Islands Campus to Make Historic Debut at ICPC Latin America Championship



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LATIN AMERICA RANKINGS  
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The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus (The UWI FIC) will represent Antigua and Barbuda at the International Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) Latin America Championship in Chile taking place from March 3–8, 2026, marking the first-ever in-person appearance from the nation at this level of the world’s premier global programming competition for the world’s universities.

After advancing through two competitive regional elimination rounds, The UWI FIC team “Frostbyte” emerged among the top competitors in the region. The team comprises Ajante Fraser, Silford Moore and Akeem Richards who are students in the School of Science, Computing and Artificial Intelligence (SoSCAI). The team is accompanied by Dr. Ilenius Ildephonc, head of the SoSCAI, who has been instrumental in fostering the campus’s growing strength in competitive programming.

Often called the “Olympics of Coding,” the ICPC challenges teams of three students to solve complex algorithmic problems under intense time pressure, sharpening critical thinking, teamwork and innovative problem-solving skills. The Latin



America Championship serves as the semi-final round, with top teams earning places at the ICPC World Finals in Dubai in November 2026.

“We are immensely proud of Ajante, Silford and Akeem for this historic achievement,” said Professor C. Justin Robinson, Campus Principal of The UWI Five Islands Campus. “This milestone is a testament to the talent and determination of our students and the strength of

our programs. At The UWI FIC, we are invested in ensuring our students are ready not only for competitions like these, but for the real world: whether entering the workforce or launching their own ventures as technology entrepreneurs.”

The campus also extends special thanks to the Antigua and Barbuda Board of Education for supporting the team’s travel to the competition in Chile and for its continued commitment to academic excellence and student development. The Board’s investment in student initiatives like these is expected to have a lasting impact on development in the area of STEM for Antigua and Barbuda.

The ICPC is the oldest, largest and most prestigious programming contest in the world, with tens of thousands of students from hundreds of universities competing annually. A strong performance at the Latin America Championship could propel The UWI FIC team to the ICPC World Finals, where the top programming talent from across the globe will compete.

*Photo Caption: Team Frostbyte from The UWI FIC; (from left to right) Ajante Fraser, Silford Moore and Akeem Richards*

# Police Blotter



## Alex Joseph Pleads Guilty On Ammunition Charges

33-year old Alex Joseph of Golden Grove had pledged guilty to charges that he was found in possession of a magazine belonging to a semi-automatic handgun.

Joseph appeared before the Chief Magistrate on



and other law enforcement agencies.

Following his guilty plea, the Chief Magistrate ordered that he be returned to the court on Thursday when the court will hand down its sentence.

## Jamaican National Remanded to Prison on Possession Charges

A Jamaican male who was caught at the VC Bird International Airport with 60 pounds of cannabis appeared before a St. John's magistrate on Tuesday.

The controlled substance with an estimated street value of EC \$360,000.00 was uncovered during a joint drug interdiction operation at the airport on Sunday.

The operations involved officers attached to the Narcotics Department, along with members of the K-9 Unit and the Customs Enforcement Unit, who conducted the coordinated operation at the airport and seized one black suitcase and one green suitcase with a total of nineteen (19) sealed packages of cannabis.

The accused - 38-year-old Benjamin Isiah Carrington - was subsequently arrested and taken into custody while an investigation ensued. He was charged with the possession of a controlled substance and with possession with intent to transfer.



When Carrington appeared in court on Tuesday he was not represented by counsel. He was remanded to His Majesty's Prison until May 6 when the case will resume. He was advised that he had the right to appeal to the High

Court for Bail.

The magistrate denied bail noting that as a non-belonger, Carrington had no ties to the local community and therefore was considered a flight risk.

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# Commentary

## Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst: A Force in Leadership and Service

By Aneka Lee

On the advent of International Women's Day, which is observed on March 8, we continue our series celebrating phenomenal women in leadership by spotlighting an extraordinary trailblazer whose work is characterized by service, stewardship, and empowerment. Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst stands as a beacon of transformative leadership in Antigua and Barbuda with her contributions in shaping policy and uplifting women along the way.

Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst, who was first appointed to the Senate in 2014, remains a steadfast voice in the Upper House of Antigua and Barbuda. As a Government Senator and the former Leader of Government Business within the Senate, C. Mary Claire Hurst has distinguished herself through thoughtful advocacy and an unwavering commitment to national development, guided by principled decision-making. In a political landscape that demands both strength and diplomacy, she has exceeded expectations and consistently demonstrated the capacity to navigate complex issues while remaining grounded in service to the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

Senator Hurst's presence in the Upper House reflects more than representation; it embodies influence. She brings clarity to national discussions and ensures that the voices of the people are not just heard but considered and respected. Moreover, Senator Hurst ensures that she remains accessible and approachable to all, maintaining a strong connection with the peo-



Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst

ple she serves. Her connection to the people is what sets her and her

leadership style apart.

Senator Hurst's leadership prowess extends beyond the Senate. Tasked with steering vital national infrastructure, Senator Hurst serves as Chairman of the Board of the Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority. Principled in her approach to governance, Senator Hurst was entrusted with a critical institution at the heart of the nation's economic nucleus. The Port Authority stands as a cornerstone of commerce and economic activity. Under her leadership the Port underwent a sig-

### Volunteers Needed

**There is still time to be a part of CHOGM 2026!**

If you have been thinking about volunteering for the historic Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2026), to be hosted in St. John's, 1-4 November 2026, now is your chance!

Antigua and Barbuda's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Barbuda Affairs continues to invite enthusiastic, motivated, and professional individuals aged 18 or older to volunteer for this world-class event. Do not miss your chance! It is a unique opportunity to contribute your time and skills to the event's success, gain experience, and expand your network.

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nificant upgrade that expanded its capacity, strengthening its ability to support growing demand. Additionally, its governance has been reinforced and accountability strengthened.

Her leadership in this role underscores her ability to manage complex operational structures while maintaining strategic vision. It is a testament to the confidence placed in her capabilities and her track record of excellence.

In the political sphere, Senator Hurst also serves as General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party. As the first woman to do so in the Institution's history, Senator Hurst has broken barriers and reshaped expectations. In this pivotal role she functions as the backbone of the party overseeing the party's administrative and organizational machinery.

Notably, she leads an extraordinary team which predominantly comprises women, many of whom she has personally mentored. This is perhaps one of her most enduring legacies: not merely occupying leadership roles, but intentionally creating pathways for other women to rise.

Through her mentorship and guidance, she has nurtured a generation of women leaders who are capable and committed to excellence. Her approach reflects a powerful truth: true leadership is not about standing alone at the top, but about lifting others as you climb.

Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst's leadership is rooted in the development and empowerment of others. She holds true a deep belief in the transformative power of opportunity. Whether in Parliament, in boardrooms, or within party structures, she has consistently championed growth.

On this International Women's Day, her story reminds us that leadership is multifaceted. It is authoritative yet nurturing. Visionary yet grounded. Her example challenges young women and girls to see themselves not only as participants in society, but as architects of its future.

As we celebrate phenomenal women in leadership, Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst's impact continues to unfold. She represents a new era of leadership in Antigua and Barbuda, where women are active partici-

pants in the shaping the policy that guide and define the nation's future.

Senator C. Mary Claire Hurst's leadership is both an inspiration and an invitation. She inspires confidence in people who see themselves in her story to take on leadership roles while inviting them into spaces where they can thrive and contribute to meaningful change.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we honour her service, her strength, and her steadfast commitment to empowering others.

## NOTICE

**TO: Your Worship  
St. John's Magistrate Court  
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**Re: Notice- Application for Bottle Licence**

**I, Alva L D Joseph with a registered business situated at A.R.G St. Johns Antigua and Barbuda, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the Liquor Licensing Court to be held at the Magistrate's Court at High Street, St. John's, Antigua on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2026, next ensuring for a Liquor Licensing Pursuant to section (11) (5) of the Licensing (Intoxication Liquor) Act Cap. 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda 1992 Revised Edition, in respect of premises known as "Big Chief Bar & Grill " situated at Antigua RecreationGround in the parish of St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda.**

**Dated the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2026  
...Alva. Joseph....**

# Commentary

## March 1: Two observances, one reality—Discrimination and Disability in Antigua and Barbuda

**ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY**  
1 March, 2026

- Discrimination in healthcare denies access, delays treatment and costs lives
- Evidence shows inclusive care improves health outcomes
- Equity strengthens communities and public health systems

**Zero discrimination = Zero barriers to health**

- \* a business with steps and no ramp,
- \* a school with no accessible bathroom,
- \* a job interview that ends when someone sees a mobility aid,
- \* a public event with no seating plan for persons with disabilities,
- \* a sidewalk that disappears halfway down the road.

So here’s the question: When we build spaces that exclude, can we really call it “progress”? What March 1 was really saying UNAIDS explains that Zero Discrimination Day (1 March) was a time to celebrate everyone’s right to live a full and productive life with dignity, and to promote inclusion, compassion, and a movement for change. International Wheelchair Day exists for everyone; including for wheelchair users to celebrate the positive impact of wheelchairs, to honour the work of those who provide mobility support, and to acknowledge a global gap—many tens of millions need a wheelchair and cannot access one. But we must say this clearly: a wheelchair is freedom when the environment is accessible. Without access, that freedom gets blocked by a step, a curb, or a “sorry, we can’t.”

By Joshuanette Francis

On March 1, the world marked Zero Discrimination Day and International Wheelchair Day. Different names, same message: people deserve dig-

nity—without barriers, without bias, without being pushed to the margins. Let’s start with truth. Discrimination isn’t always loud. Sometimes it’s quiet, “normal,” even unintentional. It looks like:

Disability is not “someone else’s issue” In Antigua and Barbuda,

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disability is part of our national story—because it’s part of our population. Reporting that references the 2011 population census (Disability and Health) states that over 16,000 people—about 16.75% of the population—were experiencing some form of disability. That’s not a “minority.” That’s a major reality. And disability is not one thing. Data presented on census disability measurement includes categories like seeing, hearing, walking, remembering, self-care, upper body function, and communication, and shows variation by cause (illness, accident, old age and more). So I’m asking: If disability is this common, why do we still treat accessibility like a bonus feature?

This is Sustainable Development in real life. If we want to talk development, we have to talk inclusion. That is literally the point of the SDGs:

- \* SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): discrimination widens gaps; inclusion closes them.
- \* SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities): a city isn’t sustainable if it’s not accessible.
- \* SDG 4 (Quality Education): education must include learners with disabilities—not in theory, but in facilities, services, and attitudes.
- \* SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being): stigma and exclusion harm mental and physical health.

UNESCO reinforces the global framework: the 2030 Agenda pledge to “leave no one behind” means inclusion is essential—not optional. The most practical action this year: participate in the census. Here’s where March 1 became very local and very urgent. Antigua and Barbuda’s 2025 Population and Housing Census is continuing into 2026, and officials have emphasized that the census is central to national planning and decision-making—guiding investments in healthcare, education, housing, employment, transportation, and public infrastructure. The public has been

reminded that participation is required by law, and that responses are protected under confidentiality provisions.

So here’s the real question: How can we demand better policies if we don’t provide the data that proves the need? When disability data is incomplete, services are under-designed. When communities aren’t fully counted, resources can be misallocated. When households avoid the census, entire realities become invisible. The census is how we make sure everyone counts—and everyone gets counted. March 1 challenge: be the standard every day, don’t just “support” inclusion—practice it.

- \* If you own a business, assess access (entrances, counters, bathrooms, signage).
- \* If you run an event, plan for wheelchair users from the start—don’t improvise.
- \* If you manage a team, make disability inclusion part of workplace culture.
- \* If you’re a citizen, participate fully in the census—because your answers shape the Antigua and Barbuda we are building.

Zero discrimination is not a dream. It’s a decision—repeated daily.

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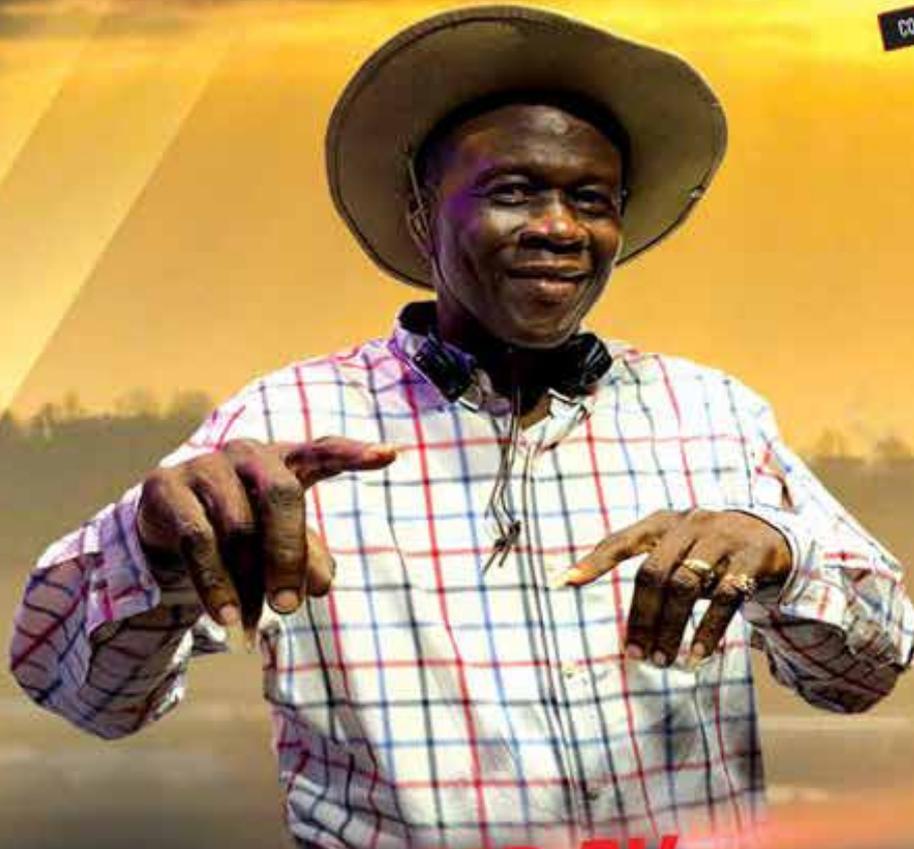
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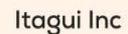
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| <b>Calypso Monarch</b>             | <b>Monday Wear</b>                    |
| <b>Cheerleaders</b>                | <b>Mr. &amp; Miss Teenage Pageant</b> |
| <b>Individual Mas</b>              | <b>Party Monarch</b>                  |
| <b>J'ouvert Tropes Band</b>        | <b>Prince &amp; Princess</b>          |
| <b>Junior Calypso Monarch</b>      | <b>Queen of Carnival</b>              |
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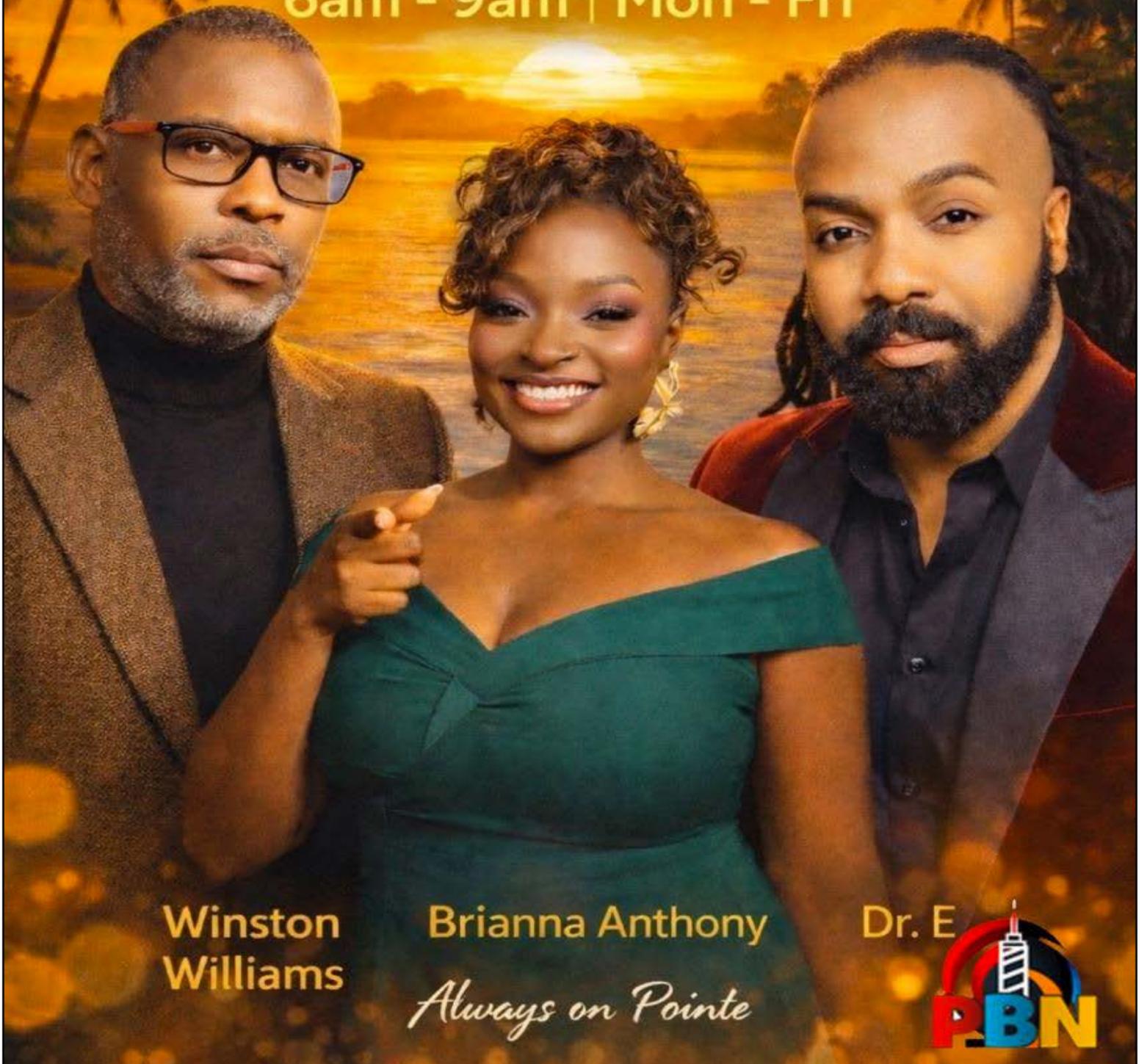
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## RJRGLEANER moves to accelerate corporate integration

The RJRGLEANER Communications Group is streamlining several of its subsidiaries in a move to improve corporate efficiencies.

In a statement, the group noted that the Supreme Court on February 19 sanctioned a scheme of arrangement, involving several of the media operation's subsidiaries, which will take effect when the court order is filed with the Registrar of Companies.

Under the approved scheme, Multimedia Jamaica Limited, Independent Radio Company Limited, Gleaner Online Limited, Reggae Entertainment Television Limited and Jamaica News Network Limited, will be amalgamated into Radio Jamaica Limited (RJL), which will assume their assets, liabilities and operations.

This restructuring forms part of a broader initiative to streamline the group's corporate structure, eliminate duplication, and improve operational alignment across platforms.

"The objective is to build a leaner and more efficient organisation better positioned to compete and grow in a rapidly evolving media environment," RJRGLEANER said in a release.

The court-approved scheme was subject to regulatory approval and, on February 27, the group's primary regulator, the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica (BCJ), advised that, at its most recent meeting, the applicable component of the scheme of arrangements was given favourable consideration by the commission, which will recommend the amendment of the licence of Independent Radio Company, as requested, to the minister of infor-



mation.

In parallel with the corporate restructuring, RJL has further formally engaged the BCJ and the Spectrum Management Authority, requesting temporary suspension of broadcast licences and assigned spectrum related to Power 106FM and HITZ 92FM.

"These steps are intended to allow the Group time and flexibility to address significant transmission and service challenges, including rehabilitation of radio infrastructure following the impact of Hurricane Melissa," RJRGLEANER said.

During this period, RJL said it would focus on optimising the transmission reach and service quality of its two primary stations, Radio Jamaica 94 FM and FAME 95 FM, while assessing the long-term future and structure of HITZ 92 FM and POWER 106 FM, including the possibility of divesting either or both of them.

The company said it would remain

in active consultation with its regulators and would provide updates as appropriate.

Commenting on the restructuring, Joseph M. Matalon, executive chairman of the group, said: "RJL intends to optimise the synergies to be gained from streamlining and more closely integrating the scheme companies' activities into the group's operational processes, and we firmly believe that the proposed restructuring will result in a more efficient RJRGLEANER Communications Group and inure to the benefit of Jamaica's media landscape."

With respect to the streamlining of radio services, Matalon said that "bold and decisive steps are required to guarantee the highest quality of service to stakeholders, and if the assessment of the business tells us that it may be better to divest ourselves of certain aspects of the business, we will do so". (Jamaica Gleaner)

## Another State of Emergency declared as crime surges

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has declared a new State of Public Emergency (SoE), effective Tuesday, March 3, 2026, following what she described as a surge in violent gang-related crime and credible intelligence of planned attacks on members of the protective services.

In a statement issued Monday night, Persad-Bissessar said the National Security Council met at the Diplomatic Centre and received security briefings from Police Commissioner Allister Guevarro, Chief of Defence Staff Don Polo, and Strategic Services Agency head Alicia Henry.

According to the Prime Minister, the Council noted that since the previous SoE ended on January 31, there has been an increase in violent criminal activity across the country, much of it attributed to organised criminal gangs. She said several of the recent incidents involved mass shootings and multiple fatalities, with reprisal attacks threatening to spiral further if left unchecked.

The Council was also advised of intelligence indicating credible threats to attack police officers, prison officers and other members of the security and legal services.

Persad-Bissessar said she had previously warned gang members and recently released detainees that renewed lawlessness would trigger a firm re-



sponse. Reaffirming her position, she declared that individuals engaged in violent gang activity would be returned to prison and that those aiding and abetting criminal enterprises would also face the full force of the law.

“In light of the foregoing and in all the circumstances,” she said, the NSC advised Her Excellency the President on March 2 to declare that a State of Public Emergency exists in Trinidad and Tobago, effective March 3. The President assented that same day.

The Prime Minister framed the mea-

sure as consistent with Government’s “zero-tolerance” approach to crime, citing what she described as successful joint operations by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Armed Forces over the past ten months, along with legislative initiatives and ongoing criminal justice reforms.

Persad-Bissessar maintained that the objective of the renewed SoE is to prevent a reversal of recent gains in reducing murder and violent crime, and to safeguard law-abiding citizens from what she termed escalating gang reprisals. (Trinidad Express)



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## Caribbean officials to attend summit in Canary Islands on climate, energy and development finance

The island of Gran Canaria will serve as the gathering point for the Global Sustainable Islands Summit (GSIS), where leaders from island nations and territories across Europe, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and Latin America will come together from April 20 to April 22.

This assembly aims to enhance collaboration on critical issues such as energy security, climate change resilience, and the transition to sustainable economies, said an Island Innovation press release.

Over the years, the release adds, GSIS has established itself as an international platform where island governments share policy strategies, exchange valuable implementation insights, and explore financing options tailored to their distinct geographic and economic contexts.

The event has previously taken place on islands like Madeira, Prince Edward Island, and St. Kitts & Nevis. The 2026 edition marks an exciting new chapter as Gran Canaria opens its doors to the global island community for this vital exchange of expertise and cooperative efforts.

The 2026 summit reflects an expanding wave of international coordination among island jurisdictions. Confirmed participants include more than ten ministers from various national governments, alongside senior officials from the United Kingdom and Ireland.



Their involvement underscores the increasing strategic importance of island territories within the global sustainability dialogue.

Many island nations are setting ambitious targets for renewable energy and climate adaptation. However, turning these goals into tangible projects remains a significant challenge. Disparate efforts among energy ministries, regulatory agencies, financial institutions, and technical partners often slow down crucial processes like project financing, permitting, and grid integration. GSIS 2026 seeks to bridge these gaps by bringing together these key actors in Gran Canaria to tackle practical barriers head-on.

Among the notable speakers confirmed for the summit are:

- Antonio Morales, President of the Cabildo de Gran Canaria
- Gene Leon, Executive Director of the Development Bank for Resilient Prosperity
- Ambassador Liz Thompson, Deputy President of the Senate of Barbados and

Climate Change & Small Island Developing States Ambassador

- Rajesh Anand Bhagwan, Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management, and Climate Change for Mauritius

- Reuben T. Meade, Premier of Montserrat

- Julian Fraser, Deputy Premier of the British Virgin Islands

- Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Minister for Health, Environment & Sustainability, Cayman Islands

- Konris Maynard, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Energy, Utilities, and Technology, St Kitts and Nevis

- Manolis Koutoulakis, General Secretary for Aegean and Island Policy, Greece

Additional participants include ministers, academics, industry experts, and representatives from organizations dedicated to sustainable development, ocean policy, geothermal innovation, and more.

A central technical theme at GSIS 2026 will be the pathways for island energy transitions, notably exemplified

by Gran Canaria's geothermal exploration project. The island is preparing to drill a 2,700-meter deep well, supported by a €15 million investment from Spain's national energy program (IDAE) and technical guidance from JRG Energy of New Zealand. This initiative highlights both the complex challenges and the promising opportunities of achieving energy independence in island systems. The project promises to deliver valuable insights into financing, scaling, and implementing geothermal solutions in island contexts.

Island nations often operate at the forefront of energy transformation and climate adaptation efforts. Their limited size, heightened exposure to climate impacts, and governance structures necessitate innovative policies and agile institutions—characteristics that larger nations tend to adopt later.

As the world accelerates its debate on climate finance and renewable energy deployment, island jurisdictions are increasingly crafting practical models for renewable energy, adaptation funding, and sustainable tourism. These experiences hold lessons that extend well beyond their immediate regions. GSIS 2026 aims to transform these shared experiences into a coordinated, action-oriented dialogue that moves beyond discussion toward concrete implementation. (Dominica News Online)

## T&T a regional and global laughingstock, says Beckles

Opposition Leader Penelope Beckles has condemned the Government's declaration of a second State of Emergency (SOE) in under a year, accusing Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of failing to address crime and resorting instead to what she described as authoritarian measures.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Beckles said the move "confirms beyond any reasonable doubt that the UNC government has completely failed in its ability to address crime in any meaningful way" and is seeking to "govern the nation under a permanent State of Emergency."

She accused the administration of eroding the rights of law-abiding citizens and said the country had become "a regional and global laughingstock" under its stewardship.

Beckles also referenced statements made by Persad-Bissessar during the 2024 SOE, when the then-opposition leader had criticised the measure as "a shameless political gimmick" and claimed the government at the time had "no real plan to tackle crime."

The Opposition Leader noted that the first SOE was declared on July 18, 2025 and ended, after an extension, on January 31, 2026. She questioned the rationale for imposing another emergency so soon after its conclusion.

"What possibly could be the reason for calling another SOE in such a short space of time?" she asked.

Beckles further alleged that the first emergency powers were used to shield members of the United



National Congress (UNC) from criminal elements following the 2025 General Election, and claimed the new SOE was similarly intended to protect party interests rather than national security.

She also pointed to the recent failure of the Zones of Special Operations (ZOSO) Bill, arguing it collapsed because it lacked human rights safeguards and failed to address the needs of communities. Instead of accepting responsibility, she said, the Prime Minister attacked Independent Senators and the Opposition.

Beckles criticised recent remarks made by Persad-Bissessar at the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting, where the Prime Minister reportedly attributed a 42 per cent reduction in crime to US intervention rather than the first SOE. Beckles described that claim as "misleading" and "an outright lie."

Calling for transparency, she urged the Prime Minister to address the country directly.

"If she holds any respect for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, she will do the right and honourable thing and address us," Beckles said.

The Opposition Leader argued that Trinidad and Tobago requires a comprehensive crime strategy rooted in community engagement, justice reform, education and poverty alleviation, rather than repeated emergency measures.

"A continuous SOE cannot be the answer to crime in our nation," she said, adding that despite having three Ministers of National Security and a Prime Minister, the country once again awoke to an overnight announcement without explanation.

"The second State of Emergency in under a year proves the government has no crime plan, only excuses and authoritarian overreach. T&T deserves real solutions, not rule by emergency," Beckles stated. (Trinidad Express)

## Death toll in 'surprise' attack in South Sudan rises to 178, local official says

The number of people killed in an attack in South Sudan on Sunday when a group of unidentified men launched an assault in the north of the country has risen to 178, a local official has told the BBC.

Describing the attack as carried out by dozens of armed youth, Ruweng Administrative Area's Information Minister James Monyluak Mijok alleged that they came from neighbouring Unity state and were linked to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO).

The SPLA-IO has denied any involvement in the attack, accusing the authorities of politicising the violence.

The UN has repeatedly warned that the country is at risk of sliding back into full-scale civil war.

Medical aid groups have described the scale of casualties as alarming, even for a region that has experienced repeated outbreaks of violence.

A diplomatic source quoted anonymously by the AFP news agency on Monday put the death toll at 70 but said it could increase.

"The dead include 90 children, women and elderly people, as well as 79 members of regional forces, including police," Mijok said, adding that many of them had been buried in a mass grave.

He said 73 people were still in hospital - many of whom were taken to neighbouring Abyei Administrative Area for treatment.

Medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) described the situation in Abyei as extremely challenging.

"It was really difficult to manage the mass casualty situation, but many MSF and Ministry of Health staff came on their day off and from other facilities to support," Abraham Deng Lual Wek, an MSF nurse supervisor, told the BBC on Tuesday.

"For the surgical team, it was a challenge to manage all of the emergency cases between the two operating theatres," he said.

"Our triage area, emergency room and wards were full of patients, so we expanded capacity by using tents and a



meeting space, which also filled quickly."

Mijok told the BBC that the attackers entered Abiemnom county in Ruweng before dawn on Sunday, at around 04:30 local time (02:30 GMT), when people were still sleeping and "surprised them".

He said the government forces on the ground "were outnumbered... The assailants set fire to homes and markets during fighting that lasted between three and four hours." Several senior local officials were killed including the county commissioner and executive director.

Mijok said government forces had since driven the attackers out and that authorities were now in full control.

He also alleged that officials in Unity state "must have had knowledge" of the plan to target Ruweng. The Unity state authorities have not responded to this accusation. It is not clear what may have triggered the attack.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (Unmiss) said about 1,000 civilians began seeking protection near its base in the affected area. The mission said it was alarmed by the surge in violence in the region over the past 48 hours.

"Such violence places civilians at grave risk and must stop immediately," said Anita Kiki Gbeho, officer in charge of Unmiss.

"The mission has enhanced its protective posture and is working with the government of South Sudan to support urgent efforts to restore calm and safe-

guard affected communities," she added.

Peacekeepers are providing emergency medical care to at least 23 people wounded in the clashes. The mission has called on all parties to cease hostilities immediately and engage in dialogue.

A similar incident in Abiemnom county last year left more than 42 civilians dead.

Following clashes in another part of the country - Jonglei state - MSF said 26 of its staff were missing after weeks of escalating violence between government and opposition forces.

The charity has now suspended medical services in two parts of the state - Lankien and Pieri.

Its facility in Lankien was hit by a government air strike on 3 February, it added.

"Many of our staff were forced to flee the violence alongside their families. Several are now displaced, sheltering in remote areas with little access to food, water or basic services," the statement said.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, has been beset by civil war, poverty and corruption since it was formed in 2011.

The UN has warned that an "all-out civil war" could return as a power-sharing deal struck in 2018 between President Salva Kiir and his long-time rival, Riek Machar, has unravelled over the past year. (BBC)

## Mexican drug lord 'El Mencho' buried in golden coffin

Infamous Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as "El Mencho", was buried in a golden casket by his family on Monday.

The cartel leader died after being wounded in a firefight between his bodyguards and Mexican special forces personnel deployed to capture him in late February.

The 59-year-old founder of the feared Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) was the country's most-wanted man, while the US had offered a \$15m (£11.2m) reward for information leading to his arrest.

His death triggered widespread retaliatory violence in which cartel members set fire to vehicles and blockaded roads across 20 Mexican states.

Members of the National Guard were out in force to prevent fresh violence from breaking out during the colourful funeral near Guadalajara in Jalisco state, a stronghold for the cartel.

Large floral tributes were seen being carried into the funeral home ahead of the ceremony, including one shaped like a rooster in a reference to his love of cockfighting.

According to AFP news agency, five lorries were needed to take all the tributes to the cemetery, most of which had been sent anonymously.

The funeral procession was accompanied by a band playing ranchero music and narcocorridos - songs praising drug lords.

The traditional song *El Muchacho Alegre* (The Cheerful Boy) was played as Oseguera's gold-coloured coffin arrived at a chapel located inside the cemetery grounds, local media reported.

After an hour-long ceremony, the mourners - many of whom concealed their identities using face masks - followed the coffin as it was carried to the grave.

Mexican media noted that the plot was relatively plain compared with those of other drug lords, which are often topped by large mausoleums.

Under Oseguera's leadership, the CJNG became a powerful transnational criminal organisation which spread from its stronghold in Jalisco into many other Mexican states, where it engages in drug production and trafficking.

Oseguera's killing by Mexican special forces has been seen as a victory for President Claudia Sheinbaum's government, which has come under increasing pressure by her US counterpart Donald Trump to do more to combat drug trafficking.

But there have been fears that the vacuum left behind by the powerful cartel leader could trigger a surge in violence in the short term, as different factions within the criminal group - which is estimated to have tens of thousands of members - fight for control. (BBC)



## Oil surges, stocks plunge as fears of prolonged Iran war hit markets



U.S. stocks plunged and energy prices soared Tuesday as fears spread through global markets that the Iran war may bring prolonged disruption.

The reaction came as President Donald Trump indicated the U.S.-Israeli operation may last weeks. Iran's retaliatory attacks across the Middle East have hit U.S. embassies and Gulf oil facilities and brought shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global fuel supplies, to a near standstill.

The conflict has also caused huge travel disruptions, with tens of thousands of people and air cargo stranded in popular destinations like Dubai that have been targeted in strikes by Tehran.

A person fishes with offshore oil and gas platform in California.

The S&P 500 slid 2% just minutes after the opening bell, while the Dow plunged 1,000 points. The Nasdaq Composite, which tracks more tech-focused companies, dropped 2%.

Meanwhile, energy prices continued to soar after posting large jump Monday.

U.S. crude oil traded higher by 8%, bringing its total increase since Sunday night to more than 14% and pushing prices to their highest since January 2025.

The international crude oil benchmark

jumped 7.5% to its highest level since July 2024.

Shares of energy companies were some of the best performing stocks in early trading on the prospect of higher profits and margins off the back of higher oil and gas prices.

The soaring price of crude oil has also pushed retail gasoline prices higher. As of early Tuesday, the average U.S. gas price has jumped 16 cents since last week to \$3.088 per gallon.

By the end of the week, GasBuddy analyst Patrick De Haan predicted "we'll likely be closer to \$3.10-\$3.20/gal."

Natural gas prices also continued their rise, jumping more than 6% Tuesday morning. Natural gas futures traded in Europe rose a stunning 40%, after QatarEnergy said it would halt liquified natural gas production Monday and on Tuesday suspended the production of a number of other energy products.

Markets also reacted negatively around the world.

In Italy, the benchmark FTSE MIB index plunged 4.2%. Germany's DAX stock index tumbled 3.8%, while stocks traded on the flagship indexes in France and the United Kingdom declined around 3%.

The Stoxx 600, Europe's answer to the

S&P 500, slid nearly 3%. In Asia, Korea's Kospi average plummeted 7% and Japan's Nikkei 225 slid 3%. Stocks in China, Hong Kong and India also fell more than 1%.

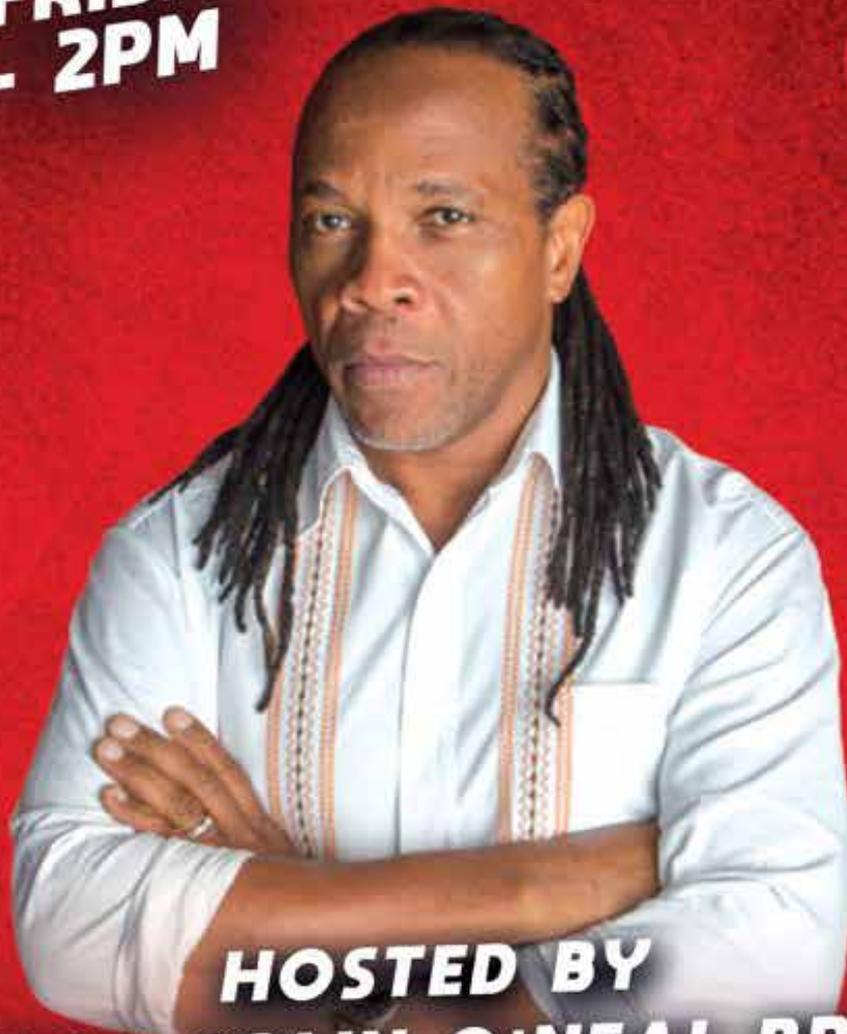
"The negative tone in risk arguably reflects the sense that missile and drone attacks are intensifying and spreading through the Middle East as Iran hit the U.S. embassy in Riyadh and Israel targeted Hizbollah in Lebanon," analysts at Lloyd's Bank said Tuesday.

"Trump equivocating on the potential duration of the war and remaining questions about the precise objective don't help quell market uncertainty either," they added.

U.S. markets finished Monday on a relatively muted note. However, the additional strikes overnight and new comments from Trump seemed to raise alarm among traders, who moved out of more volatile assets like stocks and into bonds.

"The focus will now be on whether Iran can escalate its attacks on the production facilities of the region's key marginal energy suppliers," analysts at ING wrote in a research note Tuesday. (NBC)

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# Sports News

## Wins for Ovals Ojays and Da Project in Division 2 basketball league



The Cuties Ovals Ojays 2 and Da Project 2 won their latest matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division League on Monday.

The Ovals Ojays 2 notched up their fourth win in five encounters with a hard-fought 71-65 victory over EZ Fit Flyers in the second game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Tajahron Davis produced 20 points and six assists; Jaheim Dyette sank 19 points and grabbed 17 rebounds; Jayleyle Joseph converted 16 points and claimed 20 rebounds for Cuties Ovals Ojays 2.

Tyrese White had 14 points and seven rebounds; Hansel Piper produced 12 points and five rebounds; Delroy Christopher sank 10 points and claimed six rebounds; and Elijah Charles chipped in with 10 points and five rebounds for the EZ Fit Flyers 2, who lost for the sixth time in as many games.

Da Project 2 secured their sec-

ond win in five encounters by pulling off a narrow 78-76 victory over Square One Construction United in Monday's opening game.

Nathan Matthew produced 20 points; Michael Jeffers sank 16 points and claimed six rebounds; Donalde Hunte converted 13 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; and Kevin Pimentel scored 13

points for Da Project 2.

Dwayne Samuel shot a game-high 26 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, Tyndale Telemaque converted 18 points, and Pernell Phillip produced 14 points, 20 rebounds, and seven steals for United, who lost for the fourth time in as many games.

## NOTICE

**TO: Your Worship  
St. John`s Magistrate Court  
Gray`s Farm  
St. Johns  
Antigua.**

**TO: The Commissioner of Police  
Police Headquarters  
American Road  
St. Johns  
Antigua.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Notice- Application for Tavern Licence**

**I, Sharilee Williams of Jennings, with a registered business situated at Jennings St. Johns Antigua and Barbuda, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the Liquor Licensing Court to be held at the Magistrate`s Court at High Street, St. John`s, Antigua on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2026, next ensuring for a Liquor Licensing Pursuant to section (11) (5) of the Licensing (Intoxication Liquor) Act Cap. 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda 1992 Revised Edition, in respect of premises known as "Empress Glo Fresh Delight" situated at Jennings in the parish of St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda.**

**Dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2026**

.....SWilliams.....

## PMS crush Jennings in School Basketball League



*Gabriel De Suza, right, and Elijah Charles of PMS*

The Princess Margaret School (PMS) blew out Jennings Secondary School (JSS) by 56 points in the Senior Boys Division of the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League on Monday.

Princess Margaret School secured a commanding 86-30 victory against

Jennings Secondary School at the JSC Sports Complex.

Gabriel De Suza shot a game-high 27 points, Elijah Charles converted 26 points, and Noah Massiah scored 10 points for Princess Margaret School.

Louis Merla scored 20 points for Jennings Secondary School.

There was success as well for the Antigua Grammar School, which prevailed 34-26 over St. Joseph's Academy in their Junior Boys Division affair.

Joshua Joseph sank 12 points for Antigua Grammar School, while Erije Joseph and Jayden Lewis each converted nine points for St. Joseph's Academy.

Meanwhile, Island Academy enjoyed success in the Cool and Smooth JOMA Caribbean Inter-School Volleyball League at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex on Monday.

Island Academy pulled off a 2-0 win against the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) in the boys' division, prevailing 25-16, 25-14.

In the girls' division, Island Academy also notched up a 2-0 victory against the second team of the Antigua Girls High School, winning 25-10, 25-15.

Christ the King High School beat Ottos Comprehensive School 2-0, coasting to a 25-17, 25-15 victory.



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MINISTRY OF SPORTS

## Schools Netball Competition

### Action continues in Inter-Schools' Netball League

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

Sir Novelle Richards Academy prevailed 10-7 over the third team of the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS-3). Goal attack Anna Thompson converted seven of her 13 tries, and goal shooter Santana sank three of her six attempts. Goal attack Deshanna Morgan scored seven of her 15 shots for AGHS-3.

Christ the King High School pulled off an 11-6 victory over Clare Hall Secondary School. Goal shooter Lorianna Douglas converted nine of her 10 shots, and goal attack Ke'Myra Edwards scored two of her four tries for Christ the King High School.

Goal attack Lashante Cochrane sank three of her four attempts, and goal shooter Sashael Lewin scored three of her five shots for Clare Hall Secondary School.

All Saints Secondary School romped to a commanding 11-2 victory over the first team of the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS-1). Goal shooter Aleccandra James

scored 10 of her 21 attempts for All Saints Secondary School.

Christ the King High School also recorded a 9-3 victory over Sir Novelle Richards Academy. Goal shooter Lorianna Douglas converted nine of her 10 attempts for Christ the King High School.

Goal-shooter Amber Santana scored both of her two attempts for Sir Novelle Richards Academy.

Jennings Secondary School prevailed 8-3 over Clare Hall Secondary School. Goal shooter Natalie Salano sank four of her seven shots, and goal attack Philika Haynes scored four of her eight attempts for Jennings Secondary School.

Goal shooter Sashael Lewin converted two of her six attempts for Clare Hall Secondary School.

Princess Margaret School snatched an 8-5 victory against Pares Secondary School. Goal shooter Amalia Wiltshire sank four of her seven shots, and goal attack Jenair Pascal converted four of her nine tries for Princess Margaret School.

Goal shooter Maleah Crawford scored three of her 10 shots, and goal attack Luclean Smith converted two of her six attempts for

Pares Secondary School.

Jennings Secondary School grabbed a 5-4 victory over the second team of the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS-2). Goal attack Phillika Haynes scored three of her eight shots, and goal shooter Natalie Solano converted two of her four attempts for Jennings Secondary School.

Goal attack Jamelia Anglin sank three of her five shots for AGHS-2.

The fourth team of the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS-4) prevailed 6-3 against All Saints Secondary School.

Goal attack Tina Graham sank four of her six attempts, and goal shooter Deancia Lewis scored two of her five shots for AGHS-4. Goal shooter Allyson Hector converted three of her five shots for All Saints Secondary School.

The second team of the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS-2) coasted to a 15-2 victory against Pares Secondary School. Goal attack Jamelia Anglin sank 10 of her 15 shots, and goal shooter Shekira Jones scored five of her nine attempts for AGHS-2.

## World Cup ticket frenzy unfolds amid global unrest

NEW YORK (Reuters) - With 100 days to go until the tournament kicks off, appetite for tickets to the 2026 World Cup in the USA, Mexico, and Canada is reaching fever pitch, despite eye-watering prices that have fans crying foul amid global unrest following the USA attack on Iran.

In addition to the USA-Israeli strikes against Iran, a country scheduled to play its World Cup group stage games in the USA, the heavy-handed crack-downs by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel and the violence that erupted near host city Guadalajara after the death of Mexico's most-wanted cartel leader are causing concern for fans.

"I'm afraid I might not be allowed into the country, I've decided to fly to Canada at most, but not to the USA," German soccer fan Tom Roeder told Reuters.

"I hope that at least the issue of war with Iran does not reach North America. At least not in a way that affects us personally."

FIFA has said nearly two million tickets were sold in the first two sales phases, with demand so intense that World Cup tickets were oversubscribed over 30 times.

"We'll have seven million people in the stadiums ... We had ticket demand for over 500 million tickets, whereby we only have six to seven million tickets for sale," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in a video marking 100 days until the start.

"But, to all the fans, don't worry. We still have and we still keep some tickets for the last sales phase which will start in April (after the playoffs), a kind of a last-minute sales phase."

Political and social tensions surrounding host nations are nothing new for the World Cup.

Mexico President Claudia Shein-

baum said there was "no risk" to fans coming to the country and Adrian Nunez Corte, leader of Unipes, a fans' association in Spain, said it has



not affected willingness to buy tickets.

"Obviously, it is causing concern, but some Spanish fans living in the area have helped to calm things down after the initial hours of alarm," Corte said.

"There is no alarm regarding USA immigration policy but people are taking preparation of the necessary visas seriously to avoid problems, especially since some fans will be travelling between the USA and Mexico due to the match schedule."

The buzz around the tournament in North America is unprecedented.

The demand for the 2026 World Cup in the USA, Canada, and Mexico is the strongest I've ever experienced," said Michael Edgley, director at Australia's Green and Gold Army Travel.

"I think FIFA will make record amounts of money. There's no question. This World Cup will be a massive financial success and the beneficiaries will be the member federations."

But such popularity comes with a price. Geography adds another lay-

er of complexity as the tournament spans 16 host cities across three countries, making it more challenging and expensive for fans wanting to follow their teams.

"The price of tickets has been a major drawback, particularly affecting the number of matches each fan will attend, as well as the distances between venues and the costs involved," said Corte.

The sticker shock is even more pronounced this year, especially with a huge resale market where tickets are sold at above face value, which is legal in the United States and Canada. FIFA defended the secondary market model.

"Unlike the entities behind profit-driven third-party ticket marketplaces, FIFA is a not-for-profit organisation," a spokesperson said.

"Revenue generated from the FIFA World Cup 2026 ticket sales model is reinvested into the global development of football... FIFA expects to reinvest more than 90% of its budgeted investment for the 2023-2026 cycle back into the game."

Mehdi Salem, vice-president of French football fans association Les Baroudeurs du Sport, said they are seeing more than a 200% increase on what they were told in 2018 by the French federation and by FIFA.

The pricing pain is so acute that Salem's association, which boasts around 400 members, will have only 100 attend the tournament - a dramatic drop that he attributes to ticket prices and the political landscape in the United States.

"We feel like this World Cup will not really be a people's World Cup, but rather an elitist World Cup," Salem added.

## Antiguans resume campaign in CONCACAF women's contest

Antigua and Barbuda's senior national team will resume their quest for supremacy in the qualifying round of the 2026 CONCACAF Women's Championship at home on Thursday.

The senior Benna Girls will play their second match at home in Group B of the tournament against Guyana at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium at 6 pm.

The senior Antiguan Benna Girls suffered a 4-0 defeat to Nicaragua at home in their first qualifier in Group B of the tournament, which also serves as the Confederation's qualifier for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup

in Brazil and the 2028 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California.

The Antigua and Barbuda women's team is competing in five-team Group B alongside Jamaica, Guyana, Nicaragua, and Dominica.

Antigua and Barbuda are among 29 CONCACAF member associations—excluding the region's two highest-ranked nations (USA and Canada)—that are competing in six groups in the preliminary stage of the competition, which is being played during the FIFA Women's International Match Windows in November 2025 and

February and April 2026.

The Antiguan team will travel to Kingston to face Jamaica's Reggae Girls in their third encounter on April 10 and will wrap up their qualifying campaign when they tackle Dominica on April 14.

The group winners will qualify for the CONCACAF Women's Championship, which will be played in November 2026, and serve as the Confederation's qualifiers for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil and the 2028 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California.



*The Antigua and Barbuda senior women's national football team.*