

# ABLP Announces A Major Housing Project in Five Islands

Story on page 2



Left to right: Shari Dickerson of WIOC, Omari King of Original Steel Orchestra, Tanya Ambrose of Scrub Care and Jellette Ralph of PDV Caribe

## Antigua and Barbuda Labor Party Announces A Major Housing Project in Five Islands

The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) has announced the commencement of a major housing project in the village of Five Islands.

On Thursday, the ABLP candidate for the St. John's Rural West Constituency and Minister of State in the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment, Michael Joseph, stated that the National Housing Development and Urban Renewal Company Limited, under the experienced oversight of Minister of Social and Urban Transformation, Rawdon Turner, will oversee this transformative development in Rural West Constituency.

"This housing initiative will feature two- and three-bedroom units, constructed using durable, concrete materials to ensure long-term resilience and sustainability. These homes are being built to meet modern climate-resilient standards, reinforcing the government's commitment to safe, secure, and future-ready communities," Joseph declared.

One hundred single family homes designed specifically for first-time homeowners will be made available in phases.

"This project represents more than just housing. It is about opportunity, dignity, and building a better future for our people," said Joseph. "We are creating pathways to homeownership for hardworking families while continuing to transform communities across Antigua and Barbuda," Joseph stated.

The development forms part of



**MICHAEL JOSEPH IS READY TO DELIVER ON THE FIVE ISLANDS HOUSING PROJECT**

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- ✓ PERFECT FOR FIRST TIME OWNERS
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 • VISIBLE, TANGIBLE DEVELOPMENT

the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party's broader national strategy to expand affordable housing, strengthen community infrastructure, and improve the quality of life for low- and middle-income families.

Since taking office in 2014, the Gaston Browne-led ABLP has made available over 5385 parcels of land for home construction and has built over 2395 homes in sev-

eral communities including Paynter's, Olivers, Denfields, Dredge Bay, North Sound, Lightfoot, Follies and Herberts.

"The housing revolution has come to Five Islands, and these will not just be new buildings, but new opportunities for scores of people in this community. We are not just building stronger homes. We are building stronger lives," Joseph stated.

## CHOGM Task Force Convenes ‘Positive’ Engagement With Local Media

An informative and engaging meeting was convened on Thursday by The National Task Force planning Antigua and Barbuda’s hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November (CHOGM 26) and representatives from local media organisations.

Led by the Task Force’s Media and Public Affairs Committee, and supported by the Communications team at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, the meeting provided an opportunity to establish a working relationship with the local media with a commitment to keep them ‘in the loop’ with respect to activities surrounding this major event. The meeting was a hybrid event with some journalists attending in person while others joined online via ZOOM.

CHOGM 26 takes place from November 1 - 4 around the theme; *“Accelerating Partnerships and Investment for a Prosperous Commonwealth”*.

Speaking on behalf of the CHOGM 26 Focal Point, High Commissioner Karen-Mae Hill, who was unavoidably absent, the Director General for Foreign Affairs, Ann Marie Layne noted that this will be the first CHOGM under the leadership of the Honourable Shirley Botchway, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and delivered under the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan, she noted, focuses on three main pillars of work: democratic resilience, economic resilience and environmental resilience with core values including support for small island developing states, youth empowerment and gen-



### Key Dates - Parallel Forums

- 
**COMMONWEALTH WOMEN'S FORUM**  
 2 - 4 November 2026, American University of Antigua
- 
**COMMONWEALTH BUSINESS FORUM**  
 2 - 4 November 2026, Sticky Wicket, Coolidge
- 
**COMMONWEALTH PEOPLE'S FORUM**  
 2 - 4 November 2026, American University of Antigua
- 
**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH FORUM**  
 2 - 4 November 2026, University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus.





der equality as the cross -cutting themes.

DG Layne also underscored the importance of the local media in this enterprise.

“The local media are among our most important partners serving as a source of accurate information sharing and amplification of key messages and themes. Promoting what the Commonwealth is and is not, debunking false perceptions and projecting a positive image of Antigua and

Barbuda as a small but relevant player at this time of global significance,” she remarked.

In his welcome address, Co-Chair of the Media and Public Affairs Committee, Everton Barnes, noted that hosting the conference brings both economic and social benefits to Antigua and Barbuda.

“Hosting CHOGM26 positions Antigua and Barbuda at the centre of global decision-making, driving partnerships, investments

# Local News



and solutions that directly impact the country's economic growth, climate resilience and international influence. For example, there will be many **Economic Opportunities** as this focus on our country attracts international investments, business partnerships and tourism that can create jobs and boost local industries," he observed.

CHOGM 26 spokesman and Director of Communications at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Satinder Bindra, noted this will be the fourth time that CHOGM is coming to the Caribbean adding that Jamaica, the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago have previously hosted the biennial conference. He said the Commonwealth Secretariat stands ready



to offer Antigua and Barbuda any assistance that it can to help make hosting the event a success.

Co-Chair of the Media and Public Affairs Committee, Sharifa George, moderated the question and answer segment where jour-

nalists were invited to pose questions to the Task Force members or the Commonwealth's team any aspect of the planning for CHOGM 26.

The Task Force gave a commitment to follow-up engagements with the media in the future.

## Midweek Deals

TUESDAYS / WEDNESDAYS



-Leg and Thigh  
-Biscuit  
-Medium Drink  
**\$17.99**

-Burger  
-Medium Drink  
**\$19.99**



## National Youth Ambassador Christal Percival delivers compelling national statement at Youth Forum at the United Nations



Antigua and Barbuda's National Youth Ambassador, Christal Percival delivered a compelling intervention during the plenary session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum at the United Nations on Thursday, April 16.

Her contribution highlighted Antigua and Bar-

buda's leadership among Small Island Developing States (SIDS) around the globe and reinforced the urgency of advancing the priorities of sustainable development.

Percival, in addressing a packed forum of delegates at the United Nations headquarters, focused on Sustainable Development

Goal (SDG) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Her message underscored the realities faced by countries confronting

rising sea levels, intensifying weather events, and economic vulnerability.

The youth ambassador pointed out several

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national initiatives that demonstrate Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to inclusive and climate-resilient development.

Among them is the Government's push to remove barriers for young entrepreneurs in agriculture by expanding access to land, financing, and tax incentives. These measures, she noted, are strengthening food security while empowering youth to contribute more to resilient local economies.

Percival also underscored the country's alignment with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), pointing to efforts to enhance health, literacy and in addressing the risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases such as obesity and poor diets.

Energy transition and climate-resilient housing featured prominently in her intervention. She outlined national efforts to expand renewable energy, fortify

vulnerable communities, and implement a housing revolution aimed at delivering climate-resilient homes.


The youth ambassador also emphasized the importance of inclusive governance, noting that Antigua and Barbuda is expanding public participation, strengthening civic education, and creating more accessible platforms for community dialogue.

Throughout her interven-

tion, Percival stressed that sustainable progress for SIDS cannot be achieved in isolation. "It requires steadfast global alliances and sustained investment," she said, calling on the international community to support small island nations as they work to build safer, more resilient cities and communities.



The SDG 11 address during the plenary session follows interventions by two National Youth Ambassadors, Amelia Williams and Kristine Louisa, who too underscored the need for measures that will advance the goals and outcomes of sustainable development.

The seven-member delegation is led by Director of Youth Affairs, Dr. Jrucilla Samuel. Besides Percival the other three National Youth Ambassadors in the delegation are Amelia Williams, Kristine Louisa, and Shacia Albertine. Also in the team are two members of the National Youth Volunteer Corps – Sara Bacchus and Esquire Henry.



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## United Nations JPO Programme



### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Junior Professional Officer (JPO)

**25P305**

#### I. General Information

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Title: JPO in Auditing and Evaluation

Sector of Assignment: Evaluation, Audit, Inspection

Organization/Office: United Nations, Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)

Duty Station: Geneva, Switzerland

#### Duration:

The assignment is intended for a minimum duration of 2 years.

The initial appointment is for 1 year, renewable based on performance and availability of funds.

A reassignment to a different position prior to the conclusion of the second year will not be possible unless expressly indicated in the TORs.

#### II. Supervision

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Title of Supervisor: Executive Secretary

Content and methodology of supervision:

**Establishment of a Work Plan:** The workplan, including a list of deliverables and the learning and development plan, will be discussed and agreed with the JIU Executive Secretary.

**Evaluation:** The United Nations Performance Evaluation System will serve as a primary framework to evaluate performance. It will be complemented by a review conducted after the first six months. The evaluation will be informed by the feed-back received from Inspectors and Evaluation Officers who will have been working on a day-to-day basis with the JPO.

A monthly meeting will also be held between the supervisor and the JPO to assess progress relative to the agreed annual work plan and to discuss any issues that may have arisen from either side.

#### III. Duties, Responsibilities and Output Expectations

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Under the supervision of an Evaluation and Inspection Officer, and in accordance with detailed guidance received from the Inspector(s) concerned, the JPO will:

1. **Assist JIU teams in all phased of JIU reviews, including:**
  - a) Scoping - through interviews and desk-top reviews;
  - b) Drafting terms of reference;
  - c) Data collection - through interviews, questionnaires, surveys and desk reviews of UN and non-UN

- documents;
- d) Data analysis - both quantitative and qualitative, using best practice ICT tools;
  - e) Preparation of tables and graphs, to support the observations in the report;
  - f) Drafting of observations and findings, in a clear and professional manner;
  - g) Drafting of recommendations, ensuring that they address the root causes of the observations and that they are implementable;
  - h) Proof reading of documents - to ensure compliance with UN editorial guidelines;
  - i) Communication with organizations to request information, clarifications or meetings;
  - j) Attending meeting with organizations, both virtual and in person.
2. **Assist in the preparation of JIU communications and outreach products by:**
    - a) Drafting report highlights, web articles and other communication products related to specific reviews or to the work of the JIU in general;
    - b) Participating in the dissemination of such products.
  3. **Assist in the preparation of the annual workplan of the JIU by:**
    - a) Preparing a detailed assessment of potential topics considered for inclusion in the annual workplan, to support evidence-based decision making by the Inspectors.
  4. Other relevant duties, as and when requested by the Executive Secretary.

#### **IV. Qualifications and Experience**

##### **Education:**

Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in economics, social sciences, law, management, auditing, accounting, evaluation or a related field is required.

Professional certification in evaluation, accounting or auditing would be an assets.

##### **Work experience:**

A minimum of 2 years of relevant work experience in the field of research, audit, evaluation, financial management, programme monitoring or a related field, preferably at international level is required.

##### **Languages:**

Fluency in oral and written English is required.

##### **Other skills:**

Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point are required. Knowledge of Microsoft BI, and of advanced qualitative and quantitative data analytics tools would be an advantage.

##### **UN competencies:**

**PROFESSIONALISM:** Shows pride in work and in achievements; Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter; Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results; Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges; Remains calm in stressful situations

**TEAMWORK:** Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others; Places team agenda before personal agenda; Supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect own position; Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings

**PLANNING & ORGANIZING:** Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies; Identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required; Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work; Foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning; Good attention to detail; Monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary; Uses time efficiently

**Workforce Diversity**

The United Nations believes that an inclusive culture attracts the best talent and encourages all qualified applicants, regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, cultural or religious backgrounds, to apply.

**V. Learning Elements**

The JPO will receive on-the-job training in conducting JIU reviews in accordance with the internal working procedures and relevant JIU norms and standards; and will also be encouraged to participate in relevant internal and external training initiatives, including completing all mandatory UN training.

Upon completion of the assignment, the JPO will:

- be familiar with the UN system governance structure, including role and responsibilities of Executive Boards, management and oversight functions;
- be familiar with management, risk, internal controls and accountability frameworks of UN organizations;
- have a better understanding of the different mandates of UN organizations and of the key objectives and of the challenges and opportunities faced by the UN System;
- have enhanced skills in research, audit and evaluation methodologies;
- have enhanced report writing and presentations skills;
- have been exposed to teamwork, in a multi-cultural environment.

**VI. Background Information**

The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was created on an experimental basis under General Assembly resolution 2150 (XXI) of 4 November 1966 and extended thereafter under Assembly resolutions 2735 A (XXV) of 17 December 1970 and 2924 B (XXVII) of 24 November 1972. By its resolution 31/192 of 22 December 1976, the Assembly decided to establish the Joint Inspection Unit as a standing subsidiary organ and approved the statute of the Unit, with effect from 1 January 1978. Under Article 1, paragraph 2 of the statute, the Unit is responsible to the General Assembly of the United Nations and similarly to the competent legislative organs of those specialized agencies and other international organizations with the United Nations system, which have accepted its statute (participating organizations).

As the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations System mandated to conduct evaluation, inspections and investigations system-wide, the Unit aims to:

- assist the legislative organs of the participating organizations in meeting their oversight responsibilities concerning the management of human, financial and other resources;
- help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizations in achieving the legislative mandates and the mission objectives established for the organizations;
- promote greater coordination between the organizations of the United Nations System;
- identify best practices, propose benchmarks and facilitate information-sharing throughout the system.

The Unit is composed of eleven Inspectors appointed by the General Assembly on the basis of their special experience in national or international administrative and financial matters, with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution and reasonable rotation. Inspectors serve in their personal capacity and are appointed for a term of five years, renewable once.

The Unit is assisted by an Executive Secretary and by the staff allocated according to its approved budget. The budget is presented with the regular budget of the United Nations (Jointly financed activities) and its expenditures are shared by the participating organizations.

The Unit is located in the Palais des Nations in Geneva within the United Nations Office at Geneva. JIU review teams are typically led by one or more Inspectors; and comprise an Evaluation and Inspection Officer and Research Assistant.

The annual programme of work of the JIU is decided at the start of each calendar year and published in the Unit's annual report. JIU reviews take an average of 12 months to complete and may involve international travel during the data collection phase.

Additional details on the activities of the JIU, including copies of all of its reports, can be found on the JIU website ([www.unjiu.org](http://www.unjiu.org)).

## Two Corporate Entities Join Hands To Support Local Organisations



Two corporate entities – the West Indies Oil Company and PDV Caribe – have come together to support two local organisations - Scrub Life Care Project and Original Steel Orchestra - with their respective community outreach projects.

A brief presentation ceremony was

held at the WIOC conference room on Thursday where General Manager of PDV Caribe, Jелlette Ralph, and Brand and Commercial Manager for WIOC Shari Dickenson, presented cheques to Tanya Ambrose of Scrub Life Care and Omari King of Original Steel Orchestra.

“We are honoured to serve as silver-tier sponsor of the annual *Grow with the Flo Health Expo*, a cornerstone initiative dedicated to empowering women, girls and youth through health education, advocacy and access to essential resources. As one of the organisation’s largest community efforts, this event brings together individuals and families for a day of meaningful engagements, featuring educational workshops, youth-focused sessions, insightful panel discussions and the distribution of self-care and hygiene supplies,” Ralph revealed.

The *Grow with the Flo Health Fair* takes place at the grounds of the Cana Moravian Church in Swetes on May 23 starting at 10:00 am and finishing at 4:00 pm.

Regarding Original Steel Orchestra, Ralph stated that her organization, PDV Caribe and WIOC, are proud to continue to build on the existing relationship, noting that the steelband’s dedication to youth development and the preservation of the national cultural heritage through steel pan music continues to make a lasting impact in the community.



“Through your programme, young people are given the opportunity to learn discipline, teamwork and creativity while connection with a rich musical tradition that unites genera-

tion,” she observed.

Original Steel Orchestra received \$4,500.00 in cash -\$1,500.00 from WIOC and \$3,000.00 from PDV Ca-

ribe, while Scrub Life Care received \$2,000; \$1,000.00 cash from PDV Caribe and from WIOC, \$1,000.00 worth of products for distribution at the Health Fair in May.



## Antigua & Barbuda Electoral Commission

### REPLACEMENT VOTER ID CARD OFFICIAL REPORT



#	COUNSTITUENCY	Balance from 2025 SUB-TOTAL	Balance from 2025			APRIL 2026					GRAND TOTAL	% Complete	
			JAN	FEB	MAR	1st-4th	5th-11th	12th-18th	19th-25th	26th-30th			TOTAL
1	ST. JOHN'S CITY WEST	758	12	14	234	71	159	109	0	0	339	1357	58%
2	ST. JOHN'S CITY EAST	486	9	13	162	47	122	113	0	0	282	952	60%
3	ST. JOHN'S CITY SOUTH	475	7	10	149	42	100	70	0	0	212	853	58%
4	ST. JOHN'S RURAL WEST	1451	46	25	363	93	280	276	0	0	649	2534	56%
5	ST. JOHN'S RURAL SOUTH	961	24	27	248	62	165	146	0	0	373	1633	56%
6	ST. JOHN'S RURAL EAST	1333	41	35	407	92	274	217	0	0	583	2399	58%
7	ST. JOHN'S RURAL NORTH	1158	24	12	378	96	225	175	0	0	496	2068	61%
8	ST. MARY'S NORTH	1271	38	26	320	91	250	273	0	0	614	2269	55%
9	ST. MARY'S SOUTH	845	14	12	185	59	141	131	0	0	331	1387	65%
10	ALL SAINTS EAST AND ST. LUKE	1195	31	16	297	63	256	210	0	0	529	2068	61%
11	ALL SAINTS WEST	1493	35	34	408	113	293	240	0	0	646	2616	66%
12	ST. GEORGE	1755	22	30	362	103	245	287	0	0	635	2804	62%
13	ST. PETER	2219	7	6	78	33	86	80	0	0	199	2509	88%
14	ST. PHILIP NORTH	695	22	218	197	6	26	20	0	0	52	1184	75%
15	ST. PHILIP SOUTH	417	9	13	134	40	93	44	0	0	177	750	71%
16	ST. PAUL	1088	13	15	231	59	162	139	0	0	360	1707	62%
17	BARBUDA	720	1	2	15	7	17	16	0	0	40	778	76%
<b>Total Weekly Application Count</b>						<b>1077</b>	<b>2894</b>	<b>2546</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			
<b>MONTHLY TOTAL</b>		<b>18320</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>4168</b>					<b>6517</b>	<b>29868</b>		

## Eight Steelbands To Compete In Community-Based Pan Competition

Eight steelbands have signaled their intention to participate in this weekend's Pan Explosion, a community-based pan competition that was created to provide more opportunities for steelbands to perform and to compete.

Pan Explosion came out of an idea by Manager of Original Steel Orchestra, Elvis 'Kenya' Weatherill, who originated the competition back in 2016 as a fundraiser for the steelband, but also to provide an avenue where pan players may be kept engaged throughout the year.

Pan Explosion 2026 takes place at the Simon Bolivar Park on the St. Johnson's Village Main Road on Saturday starting at 7:30 pm.

"We did not want the steelbands to continue to loose players due to inactivity and that is why for the past ten years, except for two years because of COVID-19, we have had the competition. It is now a stable for pan players, especially the younger ones who wish to hone their craft and to become better players," Omari King, spokesman for Original Steel Orchestra revealed.

The eight bands taking part in the competition are; WIOC Gemonites, Panache, Halcyon, Original, Golden Sticks Steel Ensemble (a steelband coming out of the La Chateau D'Or), Pandemonium, West Side Symphony and Rising Stars, a steelband emerging from Hell's Gate Steel Orchestra.

The winning steelband will receive a cash prize of \$4,000.00, second place will receive \$3,000.00 and third place will receive \$1,000.00.

King explained the format indicating that each band will be allowed 15 players and 20-minutes to perform a medley of five songs from any genre. All the bands will be assembled around the grounds and the judges will be seated on a platform that will be wheeled from band to band when their turn to perform is announced.



The list of sponsors for the event includes;

PDV Caribe  
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Flow  
Sunshine Laundry  
Christo's Supermarket  
Workforce Tool and Equipment Rental  
Knowles Trucking

Lingies Lights and Windoors  
Hon. Maria Browne  
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WTP Radio  
ABS TV  
Point TV  
Get it right Waste Disposal  
Wadadli Events

The Original Steel Orchestra  
Present

7:30  
pm



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# PAN EXPLOSION

April  
18th

# 2026

Admission Fee

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12 yrs & under: \$10

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## Scrub Life Cares Named 2026 Applied Practice Experience Site of the Year by Georgia State University School of Public Health

Scrub Life Cares, a public health non-profit organization advancing menstrual equity, reproductive and sexual health education, and community-based public health solutions, has been awarded the 2026 Applied Practice Experience (APE) Site of the Year by the Georgia State University School of Public Health.

The award was formally presented during the School of Public Health's annual Celebrating Student Excellence ceremony, recognizing organizations that provide exceptional, hands-on, and high-impact learning experiences for public health students.

Scrub Life Cares has emerged as a multifaceted public health organization, uniquely positioned at the intersection of community engagement, education, research, and policy-informed practice.

As an Applied Practice Experience site, the organization provides students with immersive, real-world opportunities across key public health areas, including:

- Menstrual equity and period poverty
- Comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education
- Maternal and child health
- Community-based program design and implementation
- Public health research, data collection, and knowledge translation
- Policy brief development, advocacy support, and public health communications Student Contributions to Public Health Research and Global Advocacy

### Student Contributions to Public Health Research and Global Advocacy

Through their Applied Practice Experience placements, students and interns with Scrub Life Cares have contributed to meaningful research and advocacy efforts at both the community and international levels, including work connected to the International Association for Adolescent Health World Congress.



### Notably:

- Students supported research initiatives examining menstrual health inequities and access to reproductive and sexual health education in Antigua and Barbuda, across the Caribbean region, and the Southern United States.
- Students contributed to policy briefs, advocacy materials, and knowledge translation efforts to elevate critical public health issues.
- Their contributions informed a motion that was successfully passed at the World Congress, advancing dialogue and action on adolescent and menstrual health.
- Interns supported conference preparation and participation, engaging in sessions held virtually due to Hurricane Melissa, ensuring continuity of global knowledge exchange.

These experiences reflect Scrub Life Cares' commitment to developing not only practitioners but also researchers, advocates, and thought leaders in public health.

For Founder and CEO Tanya Ambrose, MPH, the recognition carries deep per-

sonal and professional significance.

“Entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia State University to become an Applied Practice Experience site was truly a full circle moment,” said Ambrose. “Scrub Life Cares was birthed during my undergraduate years at Georgia State University, following a study abroad experience in Uganda that opened my eyes to global health inequities.

“To now be recognized by the same institution, through the voices of students we have mentored and supported, is incredibly meaningful. I genuinely find joy in working with students and future public health professionals, giving them opportunities to grow, lead, and contribute in impactful ways.

“Our students are not only supporting community-based programs, but also contributing to research, policy briefs, advocacy materials, and broader public health conversations. That matters because we are helping shape professionals who understand that public health is not just theory, it is people, systems, evidence, and action.”



# EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI): DESIGN & SUPERVISORY SERVICES

for

## New Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Limited Branch Friars Hill, St. John's, Antigua & Barbuda

The Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) invites qualified design consultancy firms to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to participate in a two stage design competition for a new multi-storey consolidated branch at Friars Hill, St. John's, Antigua & Barbuda.

Stage 1 (EOI) will shortlist 3 firms (Joint Ventures permitted) based on experience, team capability, financial capacity and references. Only shortlisted teams will receive a competition brief, site and geotechnical information, program, budget range and sustainability targets and will be asked to submit a standardized concept design package (site plan, concept plans, massing/visuals, sustainability concept, design narrative and preliminary cost strategy). All shortlisted firms will receive an honorarium; the winning team will be awarded the full design commission following evaluation by an expert panel.

### Required Qualifications

- Proven design experience with regards to commercial/financial institution projects.
- Multi disciplinary team coordination and delivery capability.
- Relevant professional registrations and insurance.
- Local/Regional (CARICOM) operational presence.

### EOI Submission

**Submit by email to register interest in submitting and EOI to:**

Sonya Roberts-Carter, Chief Operations Officer, ECAB  
scarter@ecabank.com

**Subject: "EOI: ECAB New Branch Design Services"**

### Copied:

Jerome Jenkins, Project Manager: jeromejenkins@gmail.com  
Colin John Jenkins, Project Manager: colinjenkins@gmail.com

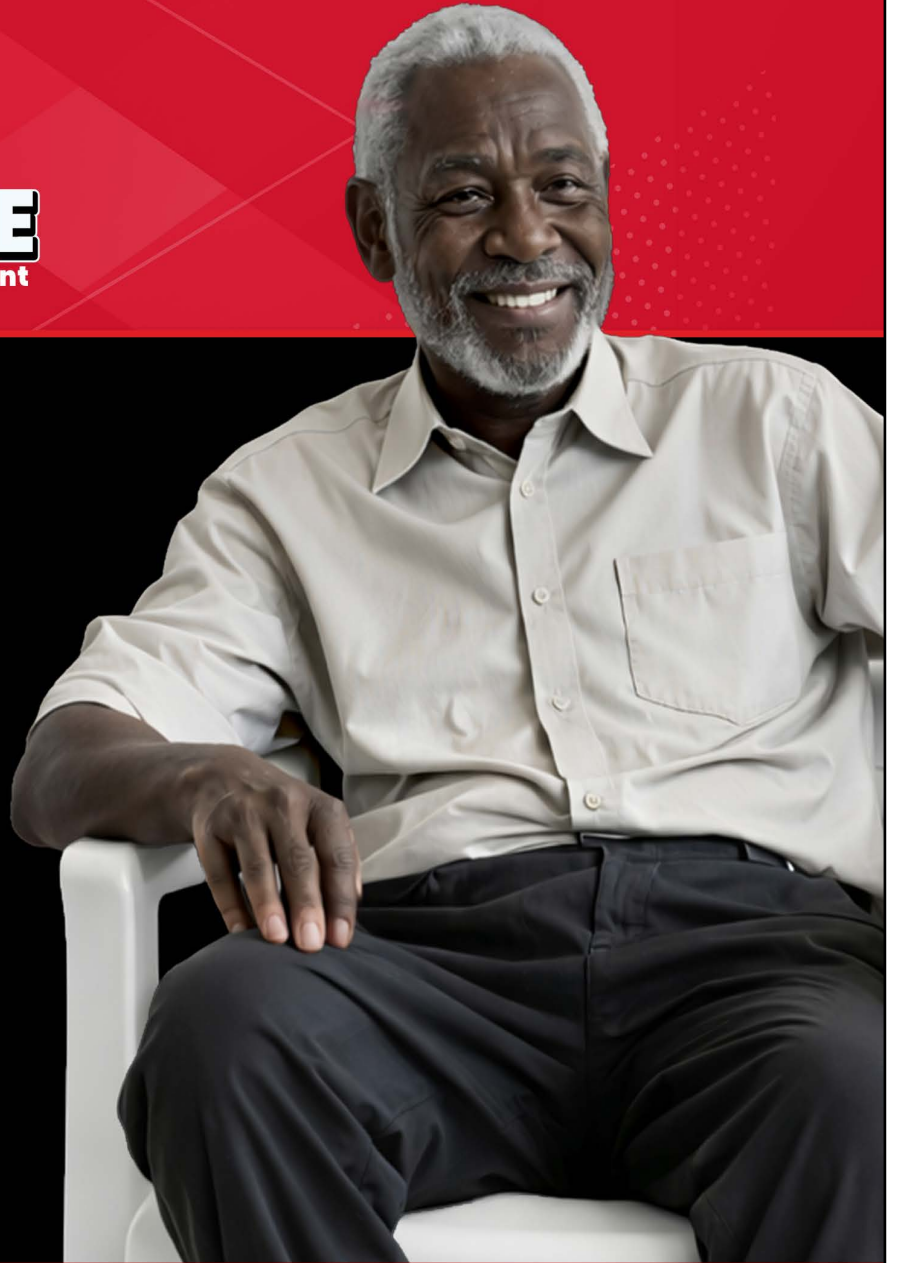
Deadline for registration of Interest:  
April 22, 2026, 17:00 AST

**The Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any submission.**





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of work,  
seniors  
deserve  
respect.**

*That’s why we*

**INCREASED PENSIONS |**

*for our seniors.”*



THE ANTIGUA &  
BARBUDA TRADES  
AND LABOUR UNION  
(AT&LU) PRESENTS

FRIDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2026



# THE ULTIMATE DJ COMPETITION DE-LABOUR MIX 8PM-12AM



HOSTED BY: JESSE FYAH & DJ KAVITY

PARTICIPANTS (LEFT TO RIGHT)

DJ ACE (BARNES HILL & NEW WINTHROPES SECTION) | DJ SHADY (JENNINGS & EBENEZER SECTION)  
DJ KYLE (CMC) | DJ TREBLEBEATZ (APUA) | DJ STRANGER (JENNINGS & EBENEZER SECTION)  
DJ SPARK (CLARE HALL & CASSADA GARDENS SECTION) | DJ STUEY (LIBERTA SECTION)

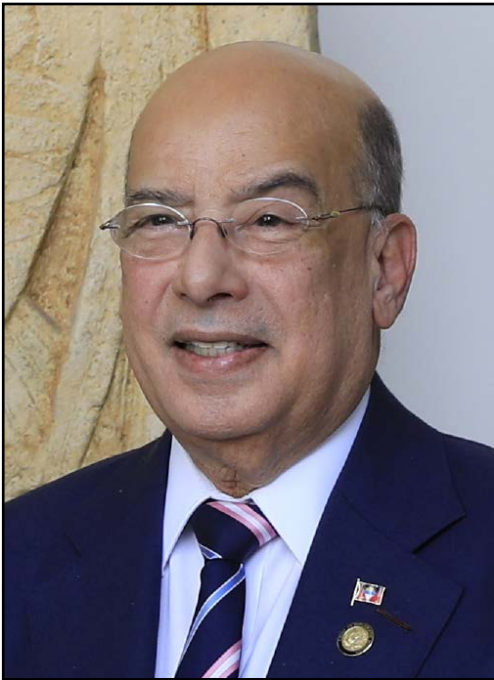
PRIZES: 1<sup>ST</sup> \$1000.00  
2<sup>ND</sup> \$750.00 - 3<sup>RD</sup> \$500.00



AT&LU HEADQUARTERS  
46 NORTH STREET

BINGO WILL BE PLAYED  
BETWEEN THE ROUNDS

## Resolving CARICOM's Leadership Impasse



By Sir Ronald Sanders

As with all my commentaries, this one is strictly in my personal capacity, drawing on more than fifty years of engagement with Caribbean affairs and a lifelong commitment to the cause of regional integration. I do not speak on behalf of any government or institution.

Recent developments concerning the future tenure of Dr Carla Barnett as Secretary-General of CARICOM have brought into focus an issue that goes beyond any individual. It touches the essential requirement of cohesion and mutual confidence among the Heads of Government who guide the Community.

It is now evident that at least one Head of Government of a founding member state, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, does not support a continuation of Dr Barnett's tenure. That reality, in my view, raises a serious question about the practical effectiveness of the office going forward.

The office of Secretary-General depends not only on formal authority, but on the full confidence and coop-

eration of all member governments. Where that confidence is materially in doubt, the capacity of the office to function effectively is inevitably diminished.

In those circumstances, and speaking solely for myself, on April 14, I said in a television interview in Antigua that, were I in Dr Barnett's position, I would consider it untenable to continue in the role in the face of such opposition, particularly from a member state whose engagement is central to the work of the Community. For that reason, were I in Dr Barnett's position, I would withdraw from consideration for a further term. I repeated this position when I was interviewed on April 15 on TV6 television in Trinidad.

My opinion is not a judgment on Dr Barnett's service, which has been carried out with professionalism and dignity. Rather, it is a recognition of a larger principle. No individual, however capable, should become the point around which division among member states coalesces.

I am aware that my view is shared by some other advocates of regional integration. The Gleaner newspaper in Jamaica, in its editorial of April 15, addressed the impasse in CARICOM, stating: "Dr Barnett, on the grounds that she does not wish to become a distraction from CARICOM's need to manage profound internal and external challenges, could announce that, notwithstanding the vote of confidence from heads of government, she will leave the secretariat at the end of her current term in August".

The Gleaner went on to explore legal options that could be pursued. However, CARICOM Heads of Government are not confronted by a legal problem; the issue is political, requiring a political solution. Seeking a legal solution from the Caribbean

Court of Justice amounts to asking the Court to resolve a political problem which is rightly the responsibility of Heads of Government. Should such a legal process be pursued, it would be impossible for the parties involved to conduct business as usual in the Councils of CARICOM. The CARICOM institution, the regional integration movement, and the collective interests of the people of the Community would suffer.

The political solution must start with the withdrawal by Dr Barnett from consideration for another term in office when her present term ends in August. She should withdraw not because she has erred in any way, but because her effectiveness would be severely compromised.

Thereafter, the Heads should establish a transparent system leading to the selection of a new Secretary-General. It should include nominations by member states and a transparent election at which the two candidates with the highest number of votes undergo a run-off. The candidate with the largest number of votes would be declared the winner.

All member states would be bound by the process and the result. During the process, each candidate should have the opportunity to present his or her case for election to all member states. This is the process used in the Organization of American States and the Commonwealth. The essential difference between the two bodies is that, in the OAS, the election process, including the voting, is public and webcast globally. In the Commonwealth, the meeting at which the election is to take place, including its date and venue, is announced to all member states and to the media, but the election itself is conducted behind closed doors by Heads of Government, who elect the candidate

with the greatest number of votes and declare that decision unanimous and binding on all member states.

Such a process, accepted at the outset by all CARICOM member states, as all the independent member states accept in the OAS and in the Commonwealth, would eliminate any doubt about participation, voting, and acceptance of the result in electing the Secretary-General.

However, while this system would improve the present procedures in CARICOM and solve the immediate impasse, major problems still have to be confronted and resolved by our Heads of Government. Division in CARICOM serves the interests of no CARICOM country.

It is worth recalling that in the mid-1970s, CARICOM integration did not merely slow; it stalled. Trinidad and Tobago's leader Eric Williams fell out with Forbes Burnham and Michael Manley, the leaders of Guyana and Jamaica, over the ideological direction of the region. For seven years, there was no meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government and no sustained policy direction for the regional movement, which did not resume until 1982.

In the meantime, the rest of the world had galloped ahead, and CARICOM did not begin to try to catch up again until 1989, when A.N.R. Robinson of Trinidad and Tobago led the Grand Anse Declaration that reset the regional effort, taking another three years for plans to be formulated by the West Indian Commission in 1992. This lesson is not obscure. Another period of paralysis in CARICOM will gravely reverse its fortunes.

CARICOM leaders have to rebuild trust among themselves and in their capacity to act together in their individual and collective interests. But it must start with those, who do so, ending the practice of talking to each other through the press and social

media. There is no substitute for sincere dialogue, careful listening, and a readiness to find joint solutions to shared problems.

This includes recognising the Zone of Peace, declared by all Latin American and Caribbean countries in 2014, while also acknowledging that there is no contradiction between that designation and the sovereign right of individual states to enter into security arrangements with friendly countries. Such arrangements, properly framed, are entirely consistent with the maintenance of peace, particularly where they are directed at safeguarding national territory, reducing terrorist threats, and protecting vital

resources.

At a time of considerable global turbulence and uncertainty, when small states must rely more than ever on unity, coherence, and collective strength, it is essential that the leadership of the Community facilitates that unity. CARICOM should be focused on the greater struggle to build capacity and resilience to grave external factors that are materially affecting our people's lives.

*(The writer is Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the US and OAS and Chancellor of the University of Guyana. The views expressed are entirely his own.)*



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# THE BIG PUSH SERIES

*Five Op-Eds on Economic Sovereignty, Inclusive Growth,  
and the New World Order the Caribbean Must Build*

**By Prof. C. Justin Robinson**

*Pro Vice-Chancellor & Campus Principal  
The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus  
Antigua and Barbuda*

## THE BIG PUSH IN FIVE SENTENCES

1. Doubling GDP means nothing if young men remain outside the formal economy.
2. Sport is not welfare, it is an undeveloped industry cluster worth building.
3. Our culture generates global value. We capture almost none of it. That must end.
4. Energy sovereignty is how the Caribbean stops paying twice, in diesel and in devastation.
5. No one is coming. Civil society must move before the state will follow.

An invitation to conversation for the private sector, civil society, and citizens of the Eastern Caribbean

April 2026

THE BIG PUSH SERIES | OP-ED 1 OF 5

## Growth Is Not Enough. The Caribbean Needs a Push That Reaches Everyone.

By Prof. C. Justin Robinson: Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal of The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus, Antigua and Barbuda

In January 2023, Governor Timothy Antoine of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank stood before the ECCU on the Bank's fortieth anniversary and asked a deceptively simple question, what would it take to double the size of our economies over the next decade? He called it



the Big Push! Two years on, with the ECCB having formalized that ambition into its 2026-2031 Strategic Plan under the banner of Collective Action for Shared Prosperity, the region owes itself an honest answer, not applause, not cynicism, but the clear-eyed reckoning that the moment demands.

This series is offered not as a set of answers but as an invitation to a conversation the Eastern Caribbean must have, urgently, honestly, and with the full breadth of its people in the room. It is written in solidarity with the ECCB's ambition and in a serious refusal to pretend that ambition alone, or growth alone, is sufficient. The Caribbean has known periods of growth before. What it has not yet produced is growth that reaches the young man with no formal employment, the woman navigating an economy not designed for her, the community that watches prosperity arrive and depart without stopping. Growth that does not do those things is not transformation. It

is rearrangement.

The old liberal world order has collapsed. No one in Washington, Brussels, or Beijing is designing its replacement with us in mind. Each will arrive with terms. The question is whether we are rule-setters or rule-takers.

The world has changed and not in our favour

The liberal international order that provided the backdrop for Caribbean development since the end of the Cold War is being dismantled in real time. China is here as a serious development partner; the Gulf states are arriving through sovereign wealth investments in Caribbean assets; the United States operates through security frameworks that condition aid on compliance. No one is coming to save us on our terms. The choice is not between engagement and isolation it is a choice between shaping the terms of engagement and accepting them. In the current context, The Big Push is not merely a development strategy, it is a survival and sovereignty strategy.

Growth is necessary but it is not enough

*Dwayne, 24, in Kingstown, St. Vincent, has completed secondary school and two short vocational courses. He has applied for 47 formal jobs in three years. He received three interviews and zero offers. He now drives a taxi he does not own,*

*earning EC\$150 on a good week, EC\$40 on a bad one. He is not counted as unemployed, the survey classified him as “self-employed, informal.” The official GDP figures include the fare he collects. They do not include the fact that he has no pension, no health insurance, no pathway to credit, and no reason to believe the economy will ever need him. Dwayne is not a statistic, he is the test. If the Big Push cannot change his conditions, it has failed no matter how many decimal points the growth rate adds.*

This series pushes further than the growth target and asks, double for whom? Between 2000 and 2019, the OECS posted growth in most years. Yet male participation in tertiary education fell steadily, youth unemployment remained stubbornly high, and energy import bills drained household budgets. The informal economy expanded not because people preferred informality but because the formal economy offered no serious alternative. Growth without direction is like rain without roots, it runs off before it can nourish.

What the Big Push must target, explicitly and measurably, is growth across four dimensions simultaneously. First, male inclusion in the formal economy, not as a political gesture but as an economic necessity. A region losing a significant portion of one gender to violence, informality, and emigration operates at a fraction of its productive potential. Second, gender equity in access, ownership, and leadership because the evidence is unambiguous that broader participation makes economies grow faster and distribute better. Third, sustainability because an economy built on fossil fuels in a region of intensifying hurricanes and bleaching reefs is not building wealth, it is borrowing against a

future it is simultaneously destroying. Fourth, economic sovereignty, the capacity to make choices about development on our own terms, not the terms of whoever arrives with capital. These four dimensions are not competing priorities they are the same priority viewed from four angles. The three pillars of this series, sports, creative industries, renewable energy, were chosen precisely because each address all four simultaneously.

The question tourism must answer

Any honest conversation about Eastern Caribbean transformation must ask what the dominant industry owes the Big Push. The Eastern Caribbean is one of the cruise capitals of the world. Millions of visitors pass through our waters annually, generating revenue that flows overwhelmingly to foreign-headquartered companies. The linkages to local economies, through food, craft, culture, and professional services, remain thinner than they should be after decades of effort. Can international hotel chains develop genuine career pathways from entry-level to management and ownership for Caribbean people? Can the tourism sector lead the renewable energy transition that would reduce its own costs while relieving the import burden on every household on these islands? These are not rhetorical questions they are the opening of a negotiation the Caribbean has been too deferential to start.

The implementation deficit we must name

There is a pattern in Caribbean development this series would be dishonest to ignore. Excellent frameworks are produced, launched at conferences, endorsed by governments, and filed alongside the previous excellent framework. The gap between Caribbean policy and Caribbean practice is not a gap of

intelligence or ambition, it is a gap of accountability. The Big Push will join that graveyard unless it is accompanied by an accountability architecture as serious as the analytical one: public dashboards tracking metrics quarterly, parliamentary debate requirements, and independent civil society audit mechanisms with the standing to report publicly when implementation falls short. Without them, the conversation ahead will end the same way too many Caribbean conversations have ended, with a communiqué, a commemoration, and very little change.

An invitation, not a verdict

The pieces that follow are not written by someone in possession of all the answers. They are written by someone who believes, on the basis of evidence rather than sentiment, that the conditions producing Caribbean underperformance can be changed. What questions should we be asking that we are not? Which communities are missing from this conversation? What does the tourism sector need to hear, and what does it need to say, for this partnership to become real? These questions cannot be answered by this series alone. They require the churches, the trade unions, the diaspora organizations, the young man on the training ground, and the woman running a mas camp on credit, all of them at the table, and all of them treated as architects, not audiences.

No one is coming to build this for us on our terms. But if we build it together, with the honesty this moment demands, it might finally be built to last. So let us measure carefully and then, together, let us make a big push.

Next in the series: Sport as an industry. Tune into the ECCB’s 10th Annual Growth and Resilience Dialogue — Big Push Conference, April 22–24, 2026.

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YOUR HOST

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7

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# Echoes of the Past

RHYTHM • SOUL • SPIRIT



Jessica Serena Tracey proudly represents St. John's Rural North, carrying with her the vibrant spirit of McKinnons Village and the resilience that defines her journey.

A dynamic entrepreneur, dancer, and youth advocate, Jessica has used every chapter of her life to grow in purpose, leadership, and service. From excelling as a student leader to building businesses and mentoring through dance, she embodies determination, creativity, and faith.

Her passion for youth development, entrepreneurship, and community upliftment continues to inspire those around her. Grounded in service and guided by purpose, Jessica stands as a confident, compassionate, and empowered ambassador for the proud people of St. John's Rural North.



*Jessica Tracey*  
**ST. JOHN'S RURAL NORTH**

# *Echoes of the Past*

RHYTHM • SOUL • SPIRIT



Julissa Stoute proudly represents St. Paul as a vibrant 20-year-old university student whose poise, passion, and purpose set her apart.

She is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Business Management at The University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus, specializing in Tourism and Hospitality Management. A past student of Old Road Primary School and Antigua Girls' High School, Julissa built a strong foundation in leadership, discipline, and creativity.

Her love for the performing arts earned her a Grade One in dramatic presentation. Ambitious and driven, she aspires to make a meaningful impact in tourism and hospitality while proudly showcasing Caribbean culture on the global stage.

*Julissa Stoute*  
**ST. PAUL**



# Echoes of the Past

RHYTHM ◦ SOUL ◦ SPIRIT



Aliyah Andrew, a proud resident of St. John's Rural East and first-year Law student at the University of London, is driven by a passion for justice and national development.

As a Junior Paralegal and active member of JCI Antigua, she is committed to advocacy, youth empowerment, and nation-building. Representing her constituency and the Honourable Maria Browne in the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Queen Pageant 2026, Aliyah returns to the stage with confidence and purpose.

Her platform addresses absentee fatherhood and its impact on child development, as she champions stronger families and brighter futures for every child.

✦ A voice for change. A vision for impact.

*Aliyah Andrew*  
**ST. JOHN'S RURAL EAST**



# Echoes of the Past

RHYTHM ◦ SOUL ◦ SPIRIT



Queenela Williams proudly represents St. Mary's South with creativity, confidence, and cultural pride.

A dynamic performer and dedicated member of the National Youth Theatre, she uses the stage to connect, inspire, and tell meaningful stories. Her artistic journey began at Antigua Girls' High School and has since earned her regional recognition, including awards for acting excellence and appearances at CARIFESTA. Beyond performance, Queenela works in customer service and is a local entrepreneur whose handcrafted earrings celebrate individuality and Caribbean identity.

Deeply committed to service, self-love, and personal growth, she continues to uplift her community while aspiring to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and expand her creative impact.

*Queenela Williams*  
**ST. MARY'S SOUTH**



# Echoes of the Past

RHYTHM • SOUL • SPIRIT

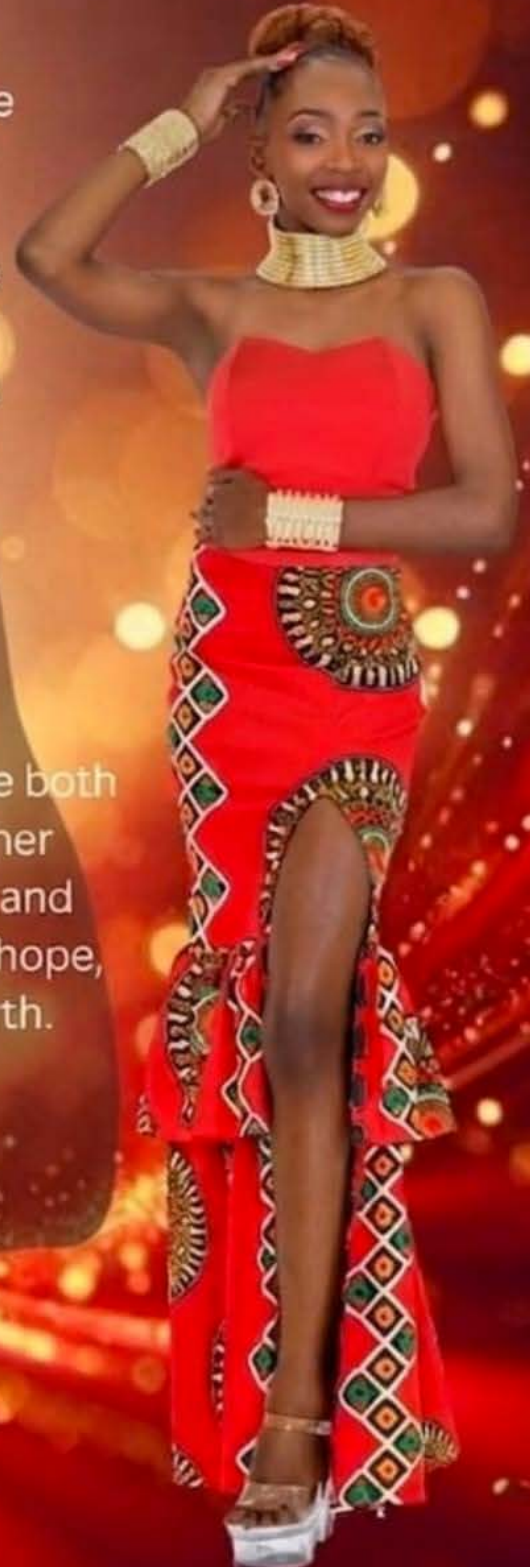


Iszarea Lloyd proudly represents St. Phillip's North as a young woman of purpose, resilience, and quiet strength.

Born on August 30, 2005, she is a proud graduate of Glanvilles Secondary School, where she emerged as Valedictorian, and is currently pursuing Social Sciences at The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus. Though naturally quiet and observant, Iszarea possesses a vibrant spirit and a heart deeply committed to service.

Passionate about cooking, singing, sports, photography, and reading, she aspires to become both an interior designer and photographer. Through her platform, she advocates for youth development and mental health awareness, determined to inspire hope, healing, and a stronger future for St. Phillip's North.

*Iszarea Lloyd*  
**ST. PHILLIPS NORTH**



# Regional News

## Three Dominican writers make it to 2026 Commonwealth Short Story Prize longlist



Three writers from Dominica were recently named to the longlist for the 2026 Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

When the Commonwealth Foundation announced its shortlist on April 14, it also took a moment to highlight a wider pool of standout talent.

Out of an impressive 7,806 entries submitted this year, fewer than 200 stories made it to the longlist stage, as outlined on the Commonwealth Foundation website.

Among those longlisted are Dominican writers Michelle A. Belle for her story "Breakfast Fete," Nadege Roach for "The Names He Carried," and Zephrine Royer for "Witness."

While their stories will not be published as part of the prize, their selection places them firmly among a group of emerging voices that

judges believe are worth watching.

The recognition is significant. The Commonwealth Short Story Prize is one of the most competitive international writing prizes, attracting entries from across the globe.

In sharing the announcement, the Commonwealth Foundation emphasized that the longlisted writers are those whose work sparked discussion amongst the judging panel. Though they did not make the final shortlist, their storytelling stood close to the top tier.

In a Facebook post, the Commonwealth Foundation commended Belle, Roach, and Royer, saying, "We say congratulations to them, and look forward to seeing them grow in their craft and continue making Dominica proud!" (Dominica News Online)



## Mega Mortgage Fair

Homeownership is coming your way in a big way!

The Mega Mortgage Fair is on Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Caribbean Cinemas Parking Lot.

It's everything you need to know about buying or building a home, all in one place. We're showcasing realtors, Development Control Authority, CABL, plus vendors of furniture, tiles, household appliances and so much more.

Bring the whole family to enjoy giveaways, treats, face painting and fun!

Unlock the secrets from expert speakers such as CIBC Caribbean Sales Specialists, lawyers, architects and contractors.



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OP250558 LJ

## CARICOM urged to strengthen regional unity, implement strategy, to mitigate effects of war in Middle East

Amid escalating global uncertainty, Caribbean policymakers are being urged to act decisively and in unison.

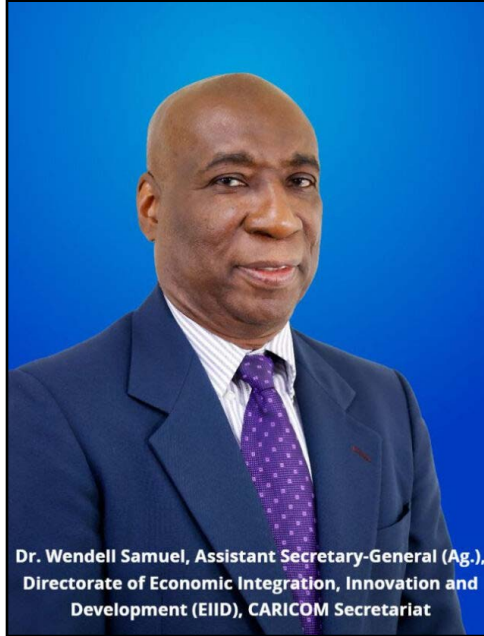
Speaking during a virtual forum on April 10, Dr. Wendell Samuel, Assistant Secretary-General (Ag.) of CARICOM, emphasized the importance of forward-looking strategies and collective action in addressing emerging challenges tied to international conflict.

“This moment calls for strategic thinking and regional solidarity. The decisions we take now will determine not only how CARICOM navigates this crisis, but how prepared we are for future global disruptions. Resilience, cooperation, and shared responsibility must guide our response.”

A CARICOM release shared that the online discussion, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, explored how the ongoing conflict in the Middle East is affecting countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. Particular attention was given to vulnerabilities in food security, agricultural systems, and broader economic stability.

Dr. Samuel, who leads the Economic Integration, Innovation and Development Directorate at the CARICOM Secretariat, disclosed that a preliminary response framework has already been crafted.

According to CARICOM, this draft matrix is intended to help the region manage the expected consequences of the conflict, especially those related to



Dr. Wendell Samuel, Assistant Secretary-General (Ag.), Directorate of Economic Integration, Innovation and Development (EIID), CARICOM Secretariat

food systems. It is set to be reviewed by CARICOM Ministers of Agriculture, who will decide on its adoption and execution.

The proposed matrix serves as a wide-ranging policy tool. It connects external disruptions to specific policy actions, outlines the order and focus of interventions, and balances immediate stabilization efforts with longer-term structural reforms aimed at boosting resilience and lowering risk. It also encourages unified action among member states, as per the release.

In outlining key priorities, Dr. Samuel reportedly pointed to the need for stronger regional collaboration in procurement processes, transportation networks, and the management of strategic reserves.

He also highlighted the urgency of increasing investment in renewable energy and building more resilient food systems, while improving policy coordination to enable faster, collective responses to external pressures.

Strengthening institutions tasked with food security and economic monitoring was also identified as essential.

“While the Region is geographically distant from the conflict, our economies remain highly exposed to global shocks transmitted through energy markets, food systems, and international supply chains,” asserted Dr. Samuel.

The press release also stated that he further drew attention to longstanding structural weaknesses within the region, particularly its reliance on imported food, fuel, fertilizers, and shipping services.

These dependencies, he explained, make Caribbean economies especially susceptible to external geopolitical developments, which can quickly manifest as domestic economic strain.

Dr. Samuel cautioned that rising inflation, the increasing cost of food, and pressures on government finances are not theoretical concerns but pressing issues requiring immediate policy attention.

He stressed the importance of understanding the channels through which global disruptions affect the region and called for practical, coordinated responses to mitigate their impact. (Dominica News Online)




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# Regional News

## 450, Popcaan set to perform in stacked line-up at Barbados Reggae Weekend 2026

Jamaican reggae and dancehall superstars, including 450, Popcaan, Dexta Daps and Sister Nancy, will take the stage along with Bajan and international acts next week for Barbados Reggae Weekend.

The Jamaica Observer will be providing coverage at the event, which will feature more than 20 local, regional and international acts, all set to perform at the country's legendary Kensington Oval from Friday, April 24 to Sunday, April 26.

The lineup, organisers say, is reinforcing the event's growing presence on the island's entertainment calendar.

Reggae icons Barrington Levy, Norris Man, Sister Nancy, Super Cat, JC Lodge and local act Biggie Irie will open the weekend on Friday, April 24 at the Mount Gay Legends of Reggae Show & Dance Powered by Q100.7 FM.

On Saturday, April 25, the focus shifts to dancehall for the Guinness Showdown Powered by 98.1 The One with hit makers Capleton, General Degree, Popcaan, and 450 alongside Bajans Doejay, Weather 40, Brutal Crankstar and Idea the Artist.



The 2026 Barbados Reggae Weekend climaxes on Sunday, April 26 with The Hennessy Reggae in the Gardens Powered by Hott 95.3 FM with Dexta Daps, D'Yani, Fantasia, Kranium, Admiral Tibet and local favourites Spice and Company, DJ Puffy, and Rite Side of Red featuring Buggy Nhakente and Rhesa Garnes.

Barbados Reggae Weekend Sponsorship Manager, Michelle Straughn, explained that in just three years the event has become a key feature on Barbados' entertainment calendar.

“From our first staging in 2024, the goal was to produce a high-quality, three day event that goes beyond just performances. We wanted to deliver a top-tier experience unlike anything being offered and, based on the feedback from our patrons, we have done just that,” she said.

Continued Straughn, “Each year we have expanded the line-up and the offering. Last year we introduced Ghanaian-American artiste Moliy to add something different to the traditional reggae line-up and for

2026 we stepped it up another notch with international superstar Fantasia.”

Noting that the response has all been positive and interest has been strong she said, “We have scores of locals who are anxiously looking forward to the 2026 Barbados Reggae Weekend, as well many visitors travelling to Barbados from as far as Europe and Africa for the shows.”

Tier 2 tickets for the Mount Gay Legends of Reggae Show and Dance on Friday, April 24 will cost \$120 Barbados Dollars (BDS).

General tier 2 tickets for the Guinness Showdown on Saturday, April 25 will cost BDS\$150, while Live The Luxe food-inclusive experience tier 2 tickets will cost BDS\$450.

The final event, the Hennessy Reggae in the Gardens on Sunday, April 26, will cost BDS\$150 for general tier 2 tickets and BDS\$550 for Live The Luxe food-inclusive experience tier two tickets.

Season passes are also available, with tier two general season passes costing BDS\$400 and tier two luxe season passes priced at BDS\$1000.

Tickets are available online at Ticketlinkz.com. (Jamaica Observer)

## Black River police issue high alert for UK child allegedly abducted and brought to Jamaica

St Elizabeth police have activated a high alert for a British six-year-old girl whose mother says she has been abducted by her other parent and taken to Jamaica.

Black River police on Thursday issued an alert for Tau Kleio Rodriguez-Fairplay of Gaywood Road, Walthamstow, London, who they say was reported missing on Thursday, April 9, 2026.

Reports are that Tau Kleio was transported to Jamaica by a relative.

The child's mother, London School of Economics lecturer Samar Rodriguez, has been appealing for her return for several months, speaking to both local and international media.

Rodriguez told United Kingdom (UK) newspaper The Guardian that she believes her ex-partner, Athena Belle-Fairplay, also known as Natalie Bartlett-Foster, with whom the lecturer had a shared custody agreement, has taken the child to Black River in St Elizabeth, Jamaica.

The report said that in February this year, Belle-Fairplay failed to drop off the child at a London train station where she had agreed to meet Rodri-

guez.

The Guardian said UK authorities confirmed that Belle Fairplay flew to Jamaica with the child despite court orders forbidding the child's removal from the country without court permission.

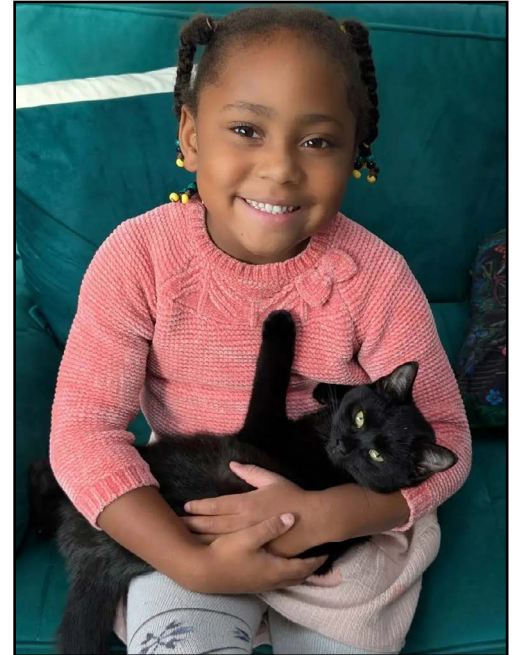
Despite coming to Jamaica and enlisting a private investigator, Rodriguez has been unable to locate either her ex-wife or daughter.

Rodriguez also expressed frustration with the Jamaican Central Authority, which is responsible for facilitating the country's treaty obligations, including the Hague Convention for child abduction.

Local attorneys told The Guardian that "the case has been hampered by delays by the JCA and the authority's insistence that it was Rodriguez's responsibility to locate their ex-spouse and daughter". At the same time, the JCA said in a statement that the case was "heavily hampered by the absence of a proper address to locate the child".

As the child is with her mother, issues with designating the child as missing also reportedly arose, the report said.

Black River police say Tau Kleio



was last seen wearing a pink coat with butterflies, and she is of brown complexion, medium build and about 104 centimetres (three feet six inches) tall.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Tau Kleio Rodriguez-Fairplay is asked to contact the Black River police at 876-965-2232, the police emergency 119 number or the nearest police station. (Jamaica Observer)



**ELECTION DAY**  
**Thursday,**  
**30 April**

*"In times like these, let us keep strong, steady leadership."*





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## US to blockade Iran ports ‘as long as it takes’—Pentagon chief

The United States will blockade Iranian ports for “as long as it takes,” US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Thursday, threatening renewed strikes if Tehran does not make a deal.

“If Iran chooses poorly, then they will have a blockade and bombs dropping on infrastructure, power and energy,” Hegseth told a news conference at the Pentagon.

US forces began blockading Iranian ports at 1400 GMT on Monday after peace talks in Pakistan ended without an agreement the previous day.

General Dan Caine, the top US military officer, said the blockade “applies to all ships, regardless of nationality, heading into or from Iranian ports.”

“If you do not comply with this blockade, we will use force,” Caine said alongside Hegseth.

“So far, 13 ships have made the wise choice of turning around,” Caine added.

Hegseth meanwhile said Iranian forces are attempting to dig out equipment buried during the more than five weeks of US-Israeli strikes against the Islamic republic.

Addressing Iranian leaders directly, he said: “We know what military as-



sets you are moving and where you are moving them to. While you are digging out — which is exactly what you’re doing, digging out of bombed out and devastated facilities — we are only getting stronger.”

“You are digging out your remaining launchers and missiles with no ability to replace them — you have no defense industry, no ability to replenish your offensive or defensive capabilities,” Hegseth said.

Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of US Central Command, which is responsible for American forces in the Middle East, said Washington is using the ceasefire to rearm and adjust.

“We’re rearming, we’re retooling, and we’re adjusting our tactics, techniques and procedures. There’s no military in the world that adjusts like we do, and that’s exactly what we’re doing right now during the ceasefire,” Cooper said. (AFP)



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## Cheaper Doritos and Lays helps PepsiCo win back struggling snackers



Cutting the cost of Doritos and Lays crisps helped PepsiCo win back snackers after a backlash over rising prices.

The food and drinks giant said on Thursday sales had jumped 8.5% in the first three months of the year to \$19.4bn (£14.4bn).

It followed a series of price cuts ahead of the Super Bowl, some worth as much as 15%, on products including Doritos, Lays (known as Walkers in the UK), Tostitos and Cheetos.

PepsiCo chief executive and chairman Ramon Laguarta said the “affordability initiatives” had helped improve the firm’s performance.

The firm had been struggling after angering customers with a series of price hikes in response to its own soaring costs in 2022.

To win back snackers, it launched its latest wave of price cuts to coincide with the Super Bowl on 8 February, one of the most lucrative days of the year for snack makers.

As well as a jump in sales, the company on Thursday said operating profit rose by a quarter to \$3.2bn.

PepsiCo’s shares jumped by 2% in early trading on the results.

The boost also comes as PepsiCo grapples with the rising use of ap-

petite-suppressing weight-loss jabs, which are driving changes in eating habits and portion sizes.

As well as focusing on affordability,

Laguarta has previously said PepsiCo is also “betting a lot on portion control”.

Many users have reported that their spending on food decreased considerably after starting the job, as they felt a lot less hungry.

The snack giant is turning its focus increasingly to multipacks as customers prioritise portion control. More than 70% of its food products in the US are single-serve.

Laguarta is also pinning his hopes on PepsiCo’s sponsorship of this summer’s World Cup, being hosted in the US, Mexico and Canada.

It will launch “fan of the match” promotions for its Lays crisps brand during the tournament. (BBC)



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## Russia launches deadliest aerial attack in months, killing 18 in Ukraine

Russia launched more than 700 drones and missiles at Ukraine in multiple waves overnight, killing at least 18 people in what local officials said was the deadliest attack in months.

Officials said nine people had been killed in the southern port city of Odesa, five in the central city of Dnipro, and four - including a child - in the capital, Kyiv.

In Russia, two people - including a child - were killed in a Ukrainian drone attack in the southern Krasnodar region, Moscow said.

This comes after a brief ceasefire took place over Orthodox Easter last weekend - though both sides accused one another of hundreds of violations.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In Kyiv, warning sirens jolted people awake at 02:30 local time on Thursday (23:30 GMT on Wednesday), followed soon after by the first explosions.

Images posted online by eyewitnesses show bright orange fires and huge plumes of black smoke in central areas of the city. In one video, a drone was filmed slamming straight into the side of an apartment block.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko wrote on Telegram that a 12-year-old boy was among four people killed. Another 45 people were injured.



The mayor added that rescuers had pulled a mother and child from the ruins of a 16-storey residential building that collapsed in the city's central Podil district.

Four emergency medical workers were among those injured in the north of the capital.

In Dnipro, regional head Oleksandr Ganzha said four people were killed and dozen had been injured in the Russian attack - before the city's Mayor Borys Filatov said on Thursday that another body had been found.

In the north-eastern city of Kharkiv, a drone strike injured a 77-year-old woman and a 66-year-old man, an official said.

Two cities in the south, Mykolaiv and Kherson, have been left without power, according to local officials.

Ukraine's air force said on Thursday morning that Russia had launched 659 drones and 44 cruise and ballistic missiles in the prior 24 hours.

It said that 636 drones and

31 missiles had been shot down - but there had been direct hits in 26 locations.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned the attack, writing on X that it proved that US and European sanctions against Russia should not be weakened.

"Russia is betting on war, and that is exactly how the response should be - we must protect lives with all our might and press for peace with all our might as well," he said.

Zelensky warned earlier this week that Ukraine was facing a critical shortage of Patriot air defence missiles, the only means it has of intercepting Russia's ballistic missiles.

Global stocks of the US-made missiles are limited and many have been diverted to the Middle East since the US and Israel began attacking Iran in February.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called the latest Russian attack a "war crime" and urged allies to increase pressure on Moscow and support for Kyiv.

"All decisions required to increase pressure on the aggressor must be unblocked now," Sybiha wrote on X, referring to sanctions.

Ukraine is also anxious for a €90bn (\$106bn; £78bn) EU loan to be released as soon as possible now that the chief opponent of that, Viktor Orbán, has been voted out of power in Hungary.

The money is to be split between Ukraine's defence needs and support for its economy.

In Russia's Krasnodar region, two people - including a 14-year-old girl - were killed in the city of Tuapse in a Ukrainian overnight drone attack, its Governor Veniamin Kondratyev said.

He added that a further five people had been injured.

The war in Ukraine is now in its fifth year and there have been several rounds of peace talks, with the US acting as a mediator.

However, the process has been stalled since US President Donald Trump shifted his focus to the war in the Middle East.

What Ukraine has repeatedly proposed is a full, stable ceasefire as a first step towards negotiating a lasting end to Russia's invasion.

But Moscow insists on agreeing the peace deal first, prompting accusations from Kyiv that Russia is not serious about ending the fighting. (BBC)

## Pope criticises ‘tyrants’ who spend billions on wars after Trump spat

Pope Leo has criticised leaders who spend billions on wars and said the world was “being ravaged by a handful of tyrants” in unusually forceful comments during a visit to Cameroon.

The pontiff blasted those he said had manipulated “the very name of God” for their own gain, while touring a region ravaged by a deadly insurgency.

The remarks come just days after a high-profile spat with US President Donald Trump, who posted a lengthy attack on the Pope, a vocal critic of the US-Israeli military operation in Iran.

The Pope had voiced his concern about Trump’s threat that “a whole civilisation will die” if Iran did not agree to US demands to end the war and open the Strait of Hormuz.

Leo, who last year became the first US-born Pope, has previously also questioned the Trump administration’s approach to immigration.

“Leo should get his act together as Pope,” Trump wrote in a Truth Social post at the time.

The Pope told reporters at the start of his Africa tour that he did not want to get into a debate with Trump but would continue to promote peace.

Speaking in Cameroon, the Pope criticised leaders who “turn a blind eye to the fact that billions of dollars are spent on killing and devastation, yet the resources needed for healing, education and restoration are nowhere to be found”.

“The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet often a lifetime is not enough to rebuild,” he said on Thursday.

The Pope also condemned “an endless cycle of destabilisation and death” in a “bloodstained” region of Cameroon that has been gripped by insurgency for nearly a decade.

“Those who rob your land of its resources generally invest much of the profit in weapons, thus perpetuating an endless cycle of destabilisation



and death,” he told those gathered at a cathedral in the north-western city of Bamenda - the centre of the violence that has left at least 6,000 people dead and displaced many more.

“Peace is not something we must invent: it is something we must embrace by accepting our neighbour as a brother and as our sister,” the Pope said.

Separatist insurgents in Cameroon’s two Anglophone regions have been fighting the predominantly Franco-phone government since 2017.

Following Leo’s address, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, said that she stood with the Pope in his “courageous call for a kingdom of peace”.

The war in Iran has increasingly placed the Pope and the Trump administration at odds.

Soon after the first US and Israeli attacks on Iran, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth recited a highly controversial prayer at a Pentagon worship service that talked of “overwhelming violence” and “justice executed swiftly and without remorse”.

Then, during a Palm Sunday Mass in St Peter’s Square, the Pope said the conflict between Iran, Israel and the US was “atrocious” and that Jesus could not be used to justify war.

“This is our God: Jesus, king of peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war,” he told tens of

thousands of worshippers gathered in Vatican City.

“He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them.”

The pontiff also quoted the Bible passage Isaiah 1:15: “Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.”

Earlier this week, Trump launched a scathing attack on the Pope on social media, in which he described the leader of the Catholic Church as “WEAK on Crime and terrible for Foreign Policy” while portraying himself as a Jesus-like figure.

He later doubled-down on his criticism and refused to apologise - but deleted the AI-generated image of himself.

Asked about the US president’s remarks as he arrived in Algiers, the Pope said he had “no fear” of the Trump administration and that he would continue to speak out against war.

The Catholic leader’s wide-ranging Africa tour will include stops in 11 cities across four countries. It is his second major foreign visit since being elected to the papacy last year, and reflects the importance of Catholicism in Africa.

More than a fifth of the world’s Catholics - some 288 million people - live in Africa, according to figures from 2024. (BBC)

## Young Lions move close to promotion from Second Division



*Players of the Young Lions football team*

The Young Lions of Old Road have enhanced their chances of gaining automatic promotion from the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division to compete in the First Division next season.

With the top two finishers gaining automatic promotion to the First Division at the end of their current campaign, the Young Lions consolidated their runners-up position behind unbeaten leaders Guydadli Jets with a 3-0 drubbing of the CPTSA Wings in their penultimate match of the season at Old Road on Wednesday.

The result allows the CPTSA Wings to finish their campaign in 11th place with 24 points from their quota of matches.

It also allows the Young Lions to move within two points of the Guydadli Jets at the top of the Second Division. Their 14th win in 18 matches carries the Young Lions to 45 points, while Guy-

dadli Jets have 47 points with two matches remaining.

The Young Lions' remaining match is against Sea View Farm in Old Road on Friday (today). Sea View Farm is currently in fourth place with 39 points and has two matches remaining.

Sea View Farm will play their final match against the Guydadli Jets in Sea View Farm on Friday, April 24. However, the Guydadli Jets can clinch the Second Division title on Friday (today) with a win or a draw in their penultimate match against Police at the St. Johnstone Village Stadium.

Third-placed Kelton Dalso Real Blizzard effectively wrapped up their unbeaten campaign in the second division on Wednesday.

Real Blizzard claimed their 13th win in 18 matches after being awarded a 3-0 victory against JSC Progressors, who failed to show up for their encounter at the

St. Johnstone Village Stadium.

The result allows Real Blizzard to advance to 44 points, while the JSC Progressors remain in 17th place with seven points after crashing to their 13th defeat in 17 matches.

The JSC Progressors have one remaining match against the Urlings Golden Stars at the St. Johnstone Village Stadium on Friday, April 24.

Herberts United also claimed a 3-0 victory via default against Belmont FC, who failed to show up for their encounter at Cashew Hill.

It means Belmont FC ended their campaign in 15th place with 14 points after suffering their 12th defeat from their quota of 18 matches.

Herberts United FC remains second from the bottom of the 20-team standings with seven points after recording their second win in 16 matches. Herberts FC has two games remaining.

Some teams have only played a quota of 18 matches, instead of 19, after TAMO FC withdrew from the competition almost midway into the season.

Two other matches are also slated to take place in the Second Division on Friday (today).

Glanvilles FC will meet the Young Warriors at Buckley's, and Point West Ham will face Bethesda at Radio Range. All matches are slated to commence at 4:15 pm.

## More success for Daggers and Phoenix in Division 2 basketball



The Old Road Daggers and Michael Joseph Phoenix recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division League on Wednesday evening.

The Daggers notched up their 10th win in 13 matches by snatching a hard-fought 68-63 victory against Da Project 2 in the second game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Kedar Clare sank 18 points and grabbed 17 rebounds; Gary Harrison converted 14 points and snatched 11 rebounds; Rafiki Harris had 13 points and six rebounds; and Ryan Shepherd scored nine points and claimed 19 rebounds for the Daggers.

Kevin Pimentel produced 22 points, six rebounds, and five steals; Erije Joseph converted 15 points; and Donte Trimmingham sank 14 points and grabbed 20 rebounds for Da Project 2, who slumped to their 10th defeat in 14 games.

The Michael Joseph Phoenix claimed their ninth win in 13

games by soaring to an 86-52 victory over Square One Construction Cristos United in Wednesday's opening encounter.

Shalom Bloodman sank 23 points and grabbed 18 rebounds; Adrian Carnegie produced 18 points, eight assists, seven rebounds, and seven steals; Daysher Samuel converted 11 points; and Shamar Joseph scored 10 points and claimed five rebounds for the

Phoenix.

Dwayne Samuel shot a game-high 24 points and claimed seven rebounds; Bruce Whyte sank 11 points and snatched five rebounds; and Manlight Simmons produced eight points, 16 rebounds, and five steals for Cristos United, who remained at the bottom of the nine-team round-robin League 2 standings after suffering their 14th defeat in as many games.

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## Arnos Vale to host CPL matches as league expands to eight nations

KINGSTOWN, St Vincent – The Caribbean Premier League (CPL) is set to make history this summer, announcing a landmark expansion that will see matches played in a record-equalling eight nations, including a first-ever fixture at Arnos Vale in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The tournament, which has confirmed an August 7 start date, will run until September 20. For the first time, cricket fans in St. Vincent will witness CPL action at Arnos Vale, a venue steeped in Caribbean cricket history.

The ground has previously hosted 36 men's internationals, including five matches during the 2024 T20 World Cup, where spin bowling famously dominated proceedings.

The CPL's footprint now spans Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

As part of the expansion, the league introduced a seventh franchise this year with the Jamaica Kingsmen. Their addition expands the roster of



*An aerial view of the Arnos Vale Cricket Grounds in St. Vincent*

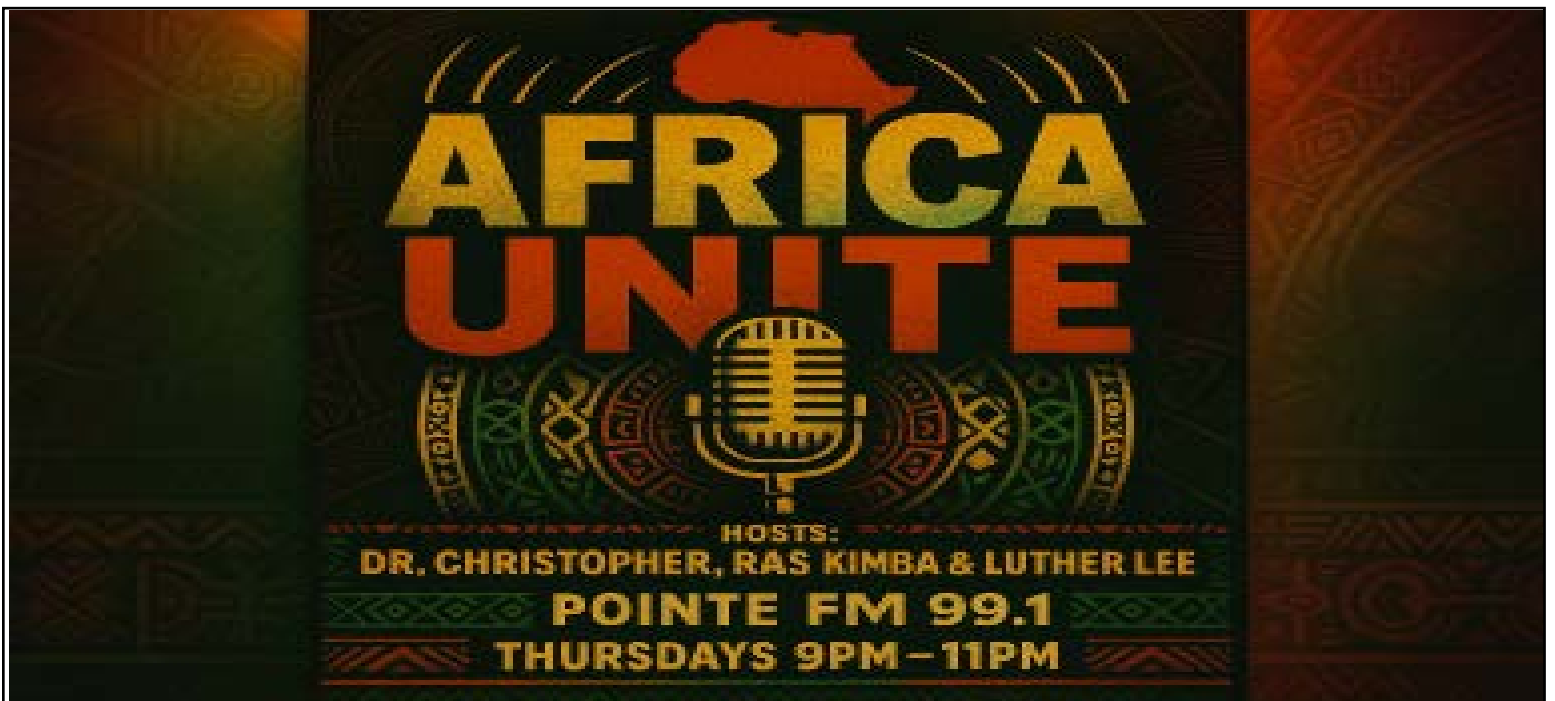
teams, with five different sides set to compete in the three confirmed fixtures at Arnos Vale.

While the CPL has yet to release a full fixture list, the league confirmed that all playoff drama, including the eliminator, two qualifiers, and the championship final, will be staged at the historic Kensington Oval in Barbados from September 16 to 20.

However, the CPL's schedule clash-

es significantly with England's men's Hundred competition. The overlap will directly impact the availability of two of the Caribbean's biggest white-ball stars, Nicholas Pooran and Sherfane Rutherford, who are expected to miss the final stages of MI London's season.

Fans across the region will be eagerly awaiting the full schedule release, with the promise of a truly pan-Caribbean celebration of T20 cricket. (CMC)



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## CWI and NCL Canada Inc. advance strategic partnership



Cricket West Indies (CWI) and NCL Canada Inc. (NCL) have advanced plans to formalize a strategic partnership focused on the development and growth of the Global T20 tournament and its supporting ecosystem in North America and the Caribbean.

The collaborative framework would see CWI take an ownership stake in the league, as well as the acquisition of a franchise within the competition.

The dialogue also encompasses broader commercial collaboration opportunities designed to strengthen cricket's footprint across the region.

Included in the discussions is the proposed integration of the CWI High-Performance Centre to be constructed in Antigua, which would provide opportunities for Canadian player development, training, and high-performance support within the Global T20 structure.

Arun Agarwal, Chairman of NCL GT20 Canada, emphasized the

broader impact in a market where immigrant communities, youth participation, and a rising professional scene have positioned the country as the sport's next great frontier.

“Cricket’s growth in North America is no longer theoretical, it’s happening. By creating opportunities for enhanced competition, opening access to high-performance training in the Caribbean, and building a true development pipeline, we are giving young players something that hasn’t existed here before, a clear, credible path from learning the game to playing it professionally. That’s how you build a sport that lasts.”

Additionally, both organizations are exploring avenues to facilitate the participation of Canadian teams in future CWI tournaments, further enhancing competitive opportunities and cross-regional engagement.

Speaking on the significance of the discussions, CWI President Dr. The Hon. Kishore Shallow stated, “This is a pivotal and forward-looking

moment for West Indies and Canadian cricket. As the only ICC Full Member nation in the hemisphere, this collaboration promises tremendous mutual potential.

“For Cricket Canada, it could very well be a defining moment for their cricket development. Equally important, Canada represents to CWI the kind of market that could have a significant impact on our commercial growth.”

Brijesh Patel, Commissioner of NCL GT20, added, “The future of cricket in North America runs through partnerships like this one. When you connect Canadian talent with West Indies expertise and enhance the competitive opportunities, you’re not just growing a league, you’re building a genuine development pipeline. That’s what turns a growth story into a lasting one.”

Both CWI and NCL GT20 reaffirm their commitment to ongoing dialogue and will provide further updates as discussions progress.

# Sports

FRIDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2026

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## Pares Secondary win schools' under-19 boys two-day title



**Pares Secondary School has captured the title in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools Cricket Under-19 Boys' two-day competition.**

Pares Secondary School has captured the title in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools Cricket Under-19 Boys' two-day competition.

Pares Secondary claimed the title by securing first-innings honours over Princess Margaret School (PMS) in the final, which ended in a draw at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG).

Tyari Tonge slammed a century to guide Pares Secondary School to 227 all out in 37.3 overs. Tyari Tonge hit 135 off 110 balls, including 16 fours and five sixes.

Elijah Miller bagged four for 52, JQuan Athanaze took three for 60, and Akes France claimed two for 13.

In reply, Princess Margaret School reached 173 for four off 52 overs when the match ended. Ondre Peters struck

50, Kerique Mentore scored 33, and Tyran Francis made 22. There was also a contribution of 40 extras. Kyan Goodwin captured two for 36.

Both teams advanced to the final after claiming first-innings honours in their respective semi-finals, which ended in draws.

In the semis, Pares Secondary prevailed against Antigua Grammar School at Antigua Grammar School. Pares made 159 for five in 26 overs, with William Pitman hitting 74 and Joshua Lake cracking 34. Dejaute Spencer bagged two for 29, and Irvin Smith claimed two for 38.

In reply, Antigua Grammar School was restricted to 138 in 33.3 overs. Leonardo Ducreay struck 79. Tayari Tonge bagged three for 13, Kyeno Goodwin claimed three for 36, and

William Pitman captured three for 37.

Princess Margaret School made 194 for nine off 29.4 overs after dismissing Clare Hall Secondary School for 85 in 28.3 overs in the other semi-final at Rising Sun.

Janiel Henry took three wickets for nine runs, Kerique Mentore captured three for 15, and Jariek Francis picked up two for 30 for Princess Margaret School.

Captain JQuan Athanaze led the Princess Margaret School's batting by smashing a century. Athanaze slammed 147 off 105 balls, including 17 fours and six sixes.

Clare Hall's skipper Jayden Charles picked up three for 25, Kiscean Francis took three for 33, and Ajonte Richards captured two wickets for one run.