

Tiffany Becomes A Senator... Senator Rayne Gets Promoted

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Tiffany Strann-Peters



Senator Joel Rayne

ABLB Names Tiffany Strann-Peters As A Senator

A woman described by many as a dynamo within the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party has been tipped by Prime Minister Gaston Browne to be a senator in the Upper House of Parliament.

Tiffany Strann-Peters of Bolans, who has served as the Vice-Chair of the St. Mary's South ABLP branch, also performed the role as campaign manager of Minister of Creative Industries, Dwayne George, during the April 30, general elections.

Strann-Peters is a tireless worker and campaigner for the ABLP and in recent years she performed the role of Mistress of Ceremony at the ABLP/AT&LU Labour Day rally at the VC Bird Bust on Lower All Saints Road.

She is a mother of three, a member of the JCI Antigua with strong interests in public speaking and writing. In 2021 she won an essay competition organized by the Chinese government on the topic; *The Chinese Communist Party In My Eyes*.



Tiffany Strann-Peters

For winning the top prize, Strann-Peters was awarded with an all-expenses paid trip to China in December, 2022.

She told *Point Express* newspaper that she was driving in her vehicle on Wednesday afternoon when she received the call informing her of the selection. "I am very happy and pleased with my selection to be a senator. I

am reminded of the words of former Chairman Mao Zedong one of the founders of the People's Republic of China, who stated: *Every generation has its own Long March and they must walk it well,*" she remarked.

She added that she is happy that her many years of hard work for and on behalf of the ABLP are being recognized and rewarded.

Strann-Peters will receive her instruments of appointment in a ceremony at Government House today.

With this selection, Prime Minister Browne has now completed his full slate of appointments to the Upper House. Under the Constitution, the prime minister appoints eleven senators, one of whom must be a senator from Barbuda.

Meanwhile, Senator Joel Rayne will be sworn into office as Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships.



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Joel Rayne To Be Elevated to Parliamentary Secretary



Senator Rayne, a sports broadcast journalist, was previously appointed as Deputy Director of Sports in 2025 following his defeat in the primary to select a candidate for the ABLP in the St. George constituency. He lost to Minister Michael Freeland, who eventually won the seat in the April 30 general elections and who has been

appointed as a Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism, Aviation, and Investment.

Senator Rayne has had to resign from the position of Deputy Director of Sports.

Joel Rayne, who was among the ten individuals appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Gaston Browne last week, is to be elevated to the position of Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships.

Senator Rayne will receive his instruments of appointment at a ceremony at Government House this afternoon (Thursday).

As Parliamentary Secretary, he will assist Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who is the substantive Minister of Finance, in the day-to-day running of the Ministry of Finance.

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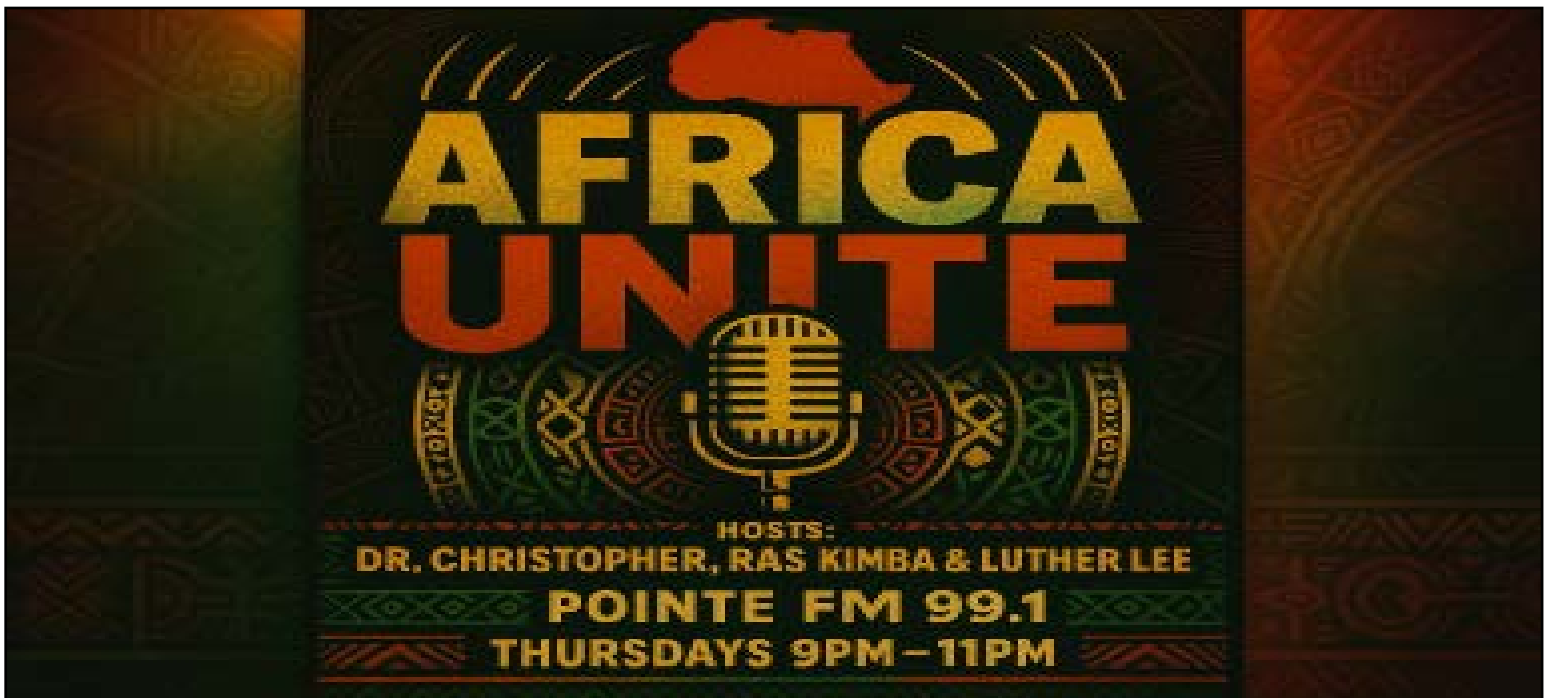
A fault at the Cassada Gardens Sub-station of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority has been blamed for an island-wide power outage on Wednesday afternoon that last into the night in some areas.

A spokesman for the APUA Electricity Business Unit explained that the problem developed with a switching system that cascaded into a system-wide problem plunging the whole of Antigua into a situation of no electricity for several hours in some cases.

The spokesman explained that even as they attempted to re-energise the system, other problems developed that further compounded the outage. Up to early evening on Wednesday, there were many areas where the electricity was off, while other areas the power fluctuated widely.

To help resolve the problem, APUA relied on the Friar's Hill station to assist with re-energising the system while its engineers worked on rectifying the issues at Cassada Gardens.

The APUA spokesman said he anticipated that all consumers on Antigua will have their electricity back on overnight on Wednesday.

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Tourism Surges with Historic First Quarter Performance



Chief Executive Officer of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin James, says the country is experiencing a record-breaking year for tourism, with unprecedented visitor arrivals and major growth across key international markets.

Delivering a destination update at the opening of Caribbean Travel Marketplace in St John’s on Wednesday morning, James said Antigua and Barbuda has emerged from the “starting blocks very strong” in 2026.

“We are having a phenomenal year so far,” James declared.

According to the tourism executive, visitor arrivals for the first quarter

of 2026 increased by seven percent compared to the same period last year, with 110,832 visitors arriving in Antigua and Barbuda between January and March.

James credited the Tourism Authority’s international teams, particularly the United Kingdom office led by Director Cherrie Osborne, for helping drive the strong performance.

“The growth in the US market has been up 14 percent over last year and we have seen a significant boost from all European arrivals,” he said.

Breaking down the figures month by month, James revealed that January 2026 recorded 36,052 visitors,

representing a five percent increase over January 2025 and marking the highest January arrival figure in the nation’s history.

February followed with 36,133 visitors, up six percent over the previous year and also the highest February total ever recorded.

March completed what James described as a “three-peat,” with 38,097 visitors arriving during the month — an eight percent increase and the highest number of visitors ever recorded in any month in Antigua and Barbuda’s history.

He praised stakeholders across the tourism sector, including private sector partners, media affiliates, and Tourism Minister Charles Fernandez, for contributing to the industry’s continued growth.

James also noted a shift in Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism demographics, with Europe now accounting for a larger share of arrivals than in previous years. While the United States remains the country’s largest source market, European arrivals have increased significantly, with Canada accounting for 12 percent of arrivals and the Caribbean region contributing five percent.

The Tourism Authority CEO also pointed to growing interest from Latin America, describing the market as increasingly important for the desti-

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nation.

“Before the numbers were negligible, but now we are seeing that Latin America is indeed becoming an important market,” he said.

The cruise tourism sector is also projected to experience strong growth this year, with cruise arrivals forecast to rise by 22 percent.

James highlighted Antigua and Barbuda’s expanding role as a major homeporting destination in the Eastern Caribbean, noting that Carnival UK is increasing operations in the country. Its sister ship, Iona, is expected to begin homeporting in Antigua during the upcoming winter season.

Cruise ship calls are projected to rise to 483 compared to 388 several years ago.

“We are growing the industry and we are doing it in a sustainable way to ensure that we can manage the numbers and we don’t have the overtourism issue that a lot of countries are experiencing,” James stated.

He also suggested that ongoing global instability and conflicts in parts of the world are contributing to increased interest in Caribbean destinations viewed as safe and stable.

“If you’re looking for an area of the world that’s safe and secure, it’s the Caribbean, and if you’re looking for an island destination that is very safe and very secure, it’s Antigua and Barbuda,” James said.

He noted that for the first time, buyers from Dubai and the United Arab Emirates attended Caribbean Travel Marketplace, a development James said signals changing travel patterns and expanding opportunities for Antigua and Barbuda.

The CEO further outlined several new airlift developments aimed at increasing connectivity and diversifying tourism markets.

LIAT AIR recently launched twice-weekly service between Anti-

gua and Guadeloupe, opening greater access to the French West Indies and mainland France. Sunrise Airways has also introduced service to the Dominican Republic, while Air Peace is scheduled to begin flights from Lagos, Nigeria to Antigua and Barbuda on 25th May, 2026.

“We are expanding our market, we’re expanding our reach, we’re ensuring that we do not have all our eggs in one basket,” James said.

He also credited significant investment in cruise infrastructure, including the recently opened US\$30

million cruise terminal developed by Antigua Cruise Port, for helping strengthen Antigua and Barbuda’s position as a leading regional cruise destination.

“It will position Antigua and Barbuda as a marquee port in the cruise industry within the Caribbean going forward,” James stated.

James emphasised the importance of maintaining strong air, cruise, and yachting sectors as the foundation of the country’s tourism-driven economy.

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Jamilla Kirwan: “Truly Humbled” by Appointment as Independent Senator

Newly appointed Independent Senator Jamilla Kirwan says she feels deeply honoured and humbled to have been entrusted with the responsibility of serving in the Upper House following her swearing-in ceremony at Government House on Tuesday.

Speaking shortly after taking the oath of office, Kirwan described the appointment as both emotional and significant, particularly coming just weeks after the passing of her mother, Lucy Kirwan-Daley.

“I am, besides feeling overwhelmed, truly, truly humbled and truly, truly honored that this huge responsibility has been bestowed upon me,” Kirwan said.

The newly sworn-in senator reflected on the challenges she has faced recently, calling the appointment “a true test of mettle” and strength.

“How do you know that you’re strong unless you are tested?” she remarked.

Kirwan said her previous experience serving briefly in the Senate confirmed her desire to continue contributing to national development and public service.

“I wasn’t there for very long, but for the time that I was there and I made my contribution, I realised that it is something that I truly want to see to fruition.”

She pledged to approach the role with energy and commitment, emphasising that national service requires dedication and accountability.

“To whom much is given, much is required, and so I take it on with full throttle, with everything that is



Senator Jamilla Kirwan

in me,” she stated.

Kirwan also shared concerns about the current political environment in Antigua and Barbuda, saying she believes many citizens, especially young people, have become discouraged by the tone of political debate.

“I didn’t quite like the political landscape,” she admitted. “I think it has become very caustic and very traumatic for any individual, women or men, and particularly our young people who are watching on.”

According to Kirwan, politics should be centred on service rather than conflict and personal attacks.

“They want to see true representation of people. It’s not just about ego, it’s not about the arguments and the shouting, it’s about service,” she said.

Kirwan pointed to her six years as manager of the Calvin Ayre Foundation as evidence of her long-standing commitment to helping vulnerable people and advocating for those who cannot advocate for

themselves.

“It has always been about service — helping people who are unable to help themselves and speaking for the voiceless,” she explained.

She said she hopes her appointment will inspire more women and young people to participate in public life and leadership.

An emotional Kirwan also paid tribute to her late mother, crediting her with shaping her confidence and resilience.

“Lucy has always said to me that I could do anything,” she said. “The kind of strength and resilience that she has imparted in me is inexplicable.”

Kirwan said she plans to honour her mother’s memory by continuing the legacy she built for her family.

“I will reframe the sadness and miss her terribly, but I will continue to walk in the legacy

Jamilla Kirwan said she is eager to begin serving the country and to making meaningful contributions in the Senate.

AT&LU Selects Ten For Professional Training Courses

Ten members of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU) are to pursue specialized professional training through a scholarship programme announced by the union aimed at improving the overall skills-set of its membership.

AT&LU President Bernard deNully said the scholarship recipients were selected in a draw from among those who responded to the union's call for applications for the scholarship programme.

The union held a draw on state television where the winners were selected in a LIVE broadcast. The winners of the AT&LU Scholarship Offer for the Summer Semester 2026 at UWI Global Campus are;

1. Milika Easton - Square Deal Security
2. Monifa Browne - Ministry of Creative Industries
3. Calvin Thornhill - ONDCP
4. Delia Pelle - M&M 24hrs Complex
5. Kessa Lake - Ministry of Tourism
6. Denise Benjamin - National Housing and Urban Development Ltd.



AT&LU SCHOLARSHIP OFFER



The AT&LU remains steadfast and true to our mission of empowering our membership through educational opportunities. Consequently, the Union is pleased to offer **10 (ten)** Scholarships for Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Courses at The University of the West Indies Global Campus Antigua & Barbuda.

7. Nickishia Carr-Ramkellawan - Public Works
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9. Elroy Daley - Ministry of Tourism
10. Kamaule DeFreitas - National Housing and Urban Development Ltd.




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Classic 1893 UK Grand Piano Donated to Government House Museum

A distinguished mahogany grand piano, crafted in 1893 in the United Kingdom, was recently presented to Her Excellency Lady Sandra Williams by Melanie Etherington, enriching Government House’s growing Georgian-era display of furniture and objects. The piano’s lineage traces to the Broadway Company, renowned as the oldest continually operating piano makers in the world, and situates itself within a storied family of instruments that have shaped musical history.

Notably, the Chopin Broadwood concert grand piano, a contemporary member of this lineage, was hired for Chopin’s 1848 British tour, while in 1818 Thomas Broadwood gifted Beethoven a 6-octave grand piano fashioned from Spanish mahogany. Beethoven’s correspondence to Broadwood spoke of the immediate fruits of inspiration inspired by the instrument, underscoring the longstanding bond between instrument makers and composers.

In remarks accompanying the handover, Lady Sandra stated, “We are extremely thankful to thoughtful donors like Ms. Etherington, who help us to build the narrative about what type of period furniture would have populated Government House centuries ago.” Documentation provided by Etherington confirms that the piano, while a functioning and aesthetically refined masterpiece, originated from the world’s leading piano maker and was originally purchased for £110—a considerable amount at the time, reflecting its premium status.



Melanie Etherington and Her Excellency Lady Sandra Williams

The Government House Museum, which recently soft-opened, continues to elevate its richly curated collection within a beautifully renovated historic building, showcasing a growing array of period furniture and related objects.



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Antigua and Barbuda Participates in Regional Workshop on Accessing the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage

Antigua and Barbuda participated in the Caribbean Training Workshop for National Focal Points and Alternates on Accessing the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), held in Bridgetown, Barbados from May 12–13, 2026. The workshop was jointly convened by the FRLD Secretariat and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

Representing Antigua and Barbuda were Mr. Peter Abraham Jr., Director of Debt Management and Climate Finance in the Ministry of Finance and National Focal Point for the FRLD, and Ambassador Ruleta Camacho Thomas, Climate Ambassador and Alternate Focal Point for the FRLD.

The workshop brought together Caribbean countries to strengthen understanding of the FRLD and to support countries in preparing funding requests under the Barbados Implementation Modalities, the Fund's start-up financing mechanism.

Discussions focused on the structure and operations of the Fund, its access modalities, direct budget support mechanisms, country-led implementation approaches, institutional arrangements, and the development of technically sound and investment-ready funding proposals ahead of the June 15, 2026 submission deadline for the first operational funding window.

Participants were advised that the FRLD has launched an initial USD \$250 million grant financing window, with individual funding requests ranging from USD \$5 million to \$20 million and a minimum allocation floor of 50 percent for



Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

The workshop also provided updates on the forthcoming FRLD Country Support System, a dedicated support mechanism intended to assist countries with funding request preparation, institutional strengthening, and the development of systems for direct access to financing. The mechanism is expected to become operational following Board consideration in July 2026 and is anticipated to provide up to USD \$250,000 annually per country for technical and institutional support activities.

Country case studies formed an important part of the workshop, allowing Caribbean countries to exchange experiences and approaches to addressing climate-related loss and damage, including impacts on infrastructure, food and water security, livelihoods, ecosystems, and vulnerable communities.

Ambassador Camacho Thomas noted that the workshop provided important strategic insight into the operationalization of the Fund and reinforced the importance of ensuring that Small Island Developing States can access financing quickly, efficiently, and in a manner that reflects their unique vulnerabilities and national circumstances.

Mr. Abraham emphasized the importance of coordinated national planning and inter-agency collaboration to ensure Antigua and Barbuda is positioned to submit strong proposals aligned with national priorities and development objectives.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to strengthening national resilience systems and advocating for simplified, equitable, and accessible climate finance arrangements for Small Island Developing States.

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Caribbean Tourism Enters A New Strategic Phase, CHTA Report Says



Minister Charles Max Fernandez

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and Amadeus, a global leader in travel technology, on Tuesday unveiled the *2026 Caribbean Travel Trends Report* at the *Caribbean Travel Forum 2026* in Antigua. The report finds that Caribbean tourism is entering a new strategic phase, one defined less by rapid post-pandemic recovery and more by the need to diversify demand, capture higher-value travelers, and unlock growth beyond traditional peak

periods.

Drawing on Amadeus Travel Intelligence data covering air travel, hospitality, and traveler behavior from April 2025 through March 2026, the report shows that overseas demand to the Caribbean grew just 1 percent year over year, a clear moderation from the 21 percent and 8 percent gains recorded in the two prior years. With post-recovery momentum stabilizing, the region's next chapter will be shaped by data-driven targeting,

market diversification, and the ability to convert traveler intent into bookings at the moments that matter most.

What the Data Shows: A Region Re-calibrating for Higher-Value Growth

Latin America emerges as a strategic growth engine. Demand from Latin American source markets grew 24 percent year over year, with premium travel from South America surging 117 percent. Peru posted a 192 percent increase in premium travel and Argentina followed at 164 percent, reinforcing the Caribbean's appeal among the region's most affluent travelers and opening a powerful new diversification channel beyond traditional North American and European markets.

Smaller destinations are driving the region's momentum. While top-tier destinations held flat year over year, second-tier destinations grew 2 percent, signaling that recent growth is increasingly being driven by smaller markets expanding from a lower base. Dominica led the region with 22 percent year-over-year growth, supported by improved air connectivity and rising demand for nature- and adventure-focused travel. Sint Maarten followed at 18 percent, reflecting its dual appeal as a destina-

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The Caribbean leads on accessibility and value. The average economy fare from the U.S. to the Caribbean was \$385, making the region 32 percent more affordable than South America at \$569 and broadly comparable with Central America at \$387. Miami offers the lowest average fare at \$315, well below New York at \$349 and San Francisco at \$545, supporting sustained demand from the region's most important long-haul source markets.

Hotel revenue strengthens at peak, with clear room to grow off-peak. Caribbean hotels delivered RevPAR of \$183 per night during the high season, a 5.2 percent year-over-year increase, while end-of-year holiday RevPAR climbed to \$283. Low-season RevPAR held at \$125, well below peak levels and pointing to clear headroom for destinations that successfully engage shoulder- and off-season travelers.

South American travelers are unlocking year-round demand. Brazil delivered 60 percent growth in low-season arrivals, the fastest among South American source markets,

while Colombia, the region's largest South American source market by share, posted 26 percent low-season growth. Together, these markets are helping Caribbean destinations broaden their seasonal calendars and capture incremental revenue beyond traditional peak windows.

Caribbean culture is driving longer, more meaningful visits. Analysis of CARIFESTA XV 2025 in Barbados shows arrivals climbed 23 percent during the festival period compared with the previous year, with intra-Caribbean travel accounting for 23.3 percent of arrivals, up 3.3 percentage points year over year. Travelers booked more than three months ahead and extended their stays, demonstrating how the region's cultural calendar has become a powerful engine for tourism growth, longer lengths of stay, and deeper economic impact across the region.

A Shared Commitment to Caribbean Growth

CHTA President Sanovnik Destang said the findings reinforce both the opportunity and the discipline required to compete in today's global tourism landscape: "The Caribbean

is entering a more strategic chapter, one where data, diversification, and destination positioning will determine who captures the next wave of growth. Latin American demand is rising fast, premium travelers are choosing the Caribbean in record numbers, and our cultural calendar is proving it can extend stays and drive economic impact across borders. The insights we unveiled with Amadeus at Caribbean Travel Forum give our members the intelligence to compete confidently, capture year-round demand, and translate the Caribbean's unmatched appeal into lasting prosperity for our communities."

Sol Freixa, Vice President, Commercial, Destinations at Amadeus, added: "In a more competitive and choice-rich travel environment, understanding demand is only the first step. The real opportunity for Caribbean destinations lies in using these insights to actively shape traveler perception and capture demand at the moments that matter most. By aligning insight-led targeting with clear destination positioning, destinations can position themselves more clearly, reach the travelers earlier in their planning journey, and convert intent into meaningful growth."

The Dominican Republic Agrees to Take Third Country Refugees From the United States



By James Wagner and Hogla Enecia Pérez

Hogla Enecia Pérez reported from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic said on Tuesday it had agreed to take third-country deportees from the United States, as the Caribbean nation sought to strengthen its ties with the Trump administration and join other Latin American countries that had struck such deals.

The move was an about-face for the country's president, Luis Abinader, who said last year that the Dominican Republic would not accept deportees from other countries — “only Dominicans, who we have the duty and the right to do so.”

The new pact is part of President Trump's efforts to find nations willing to take migrants detained in the United States. Many deportees have come from countries in Africa, Eastern Eu-

rope and Asia, where the U.S. authorities cannot easily send them back. Many migrants also cannot legally be returned to their home countries for fear of persecution or abuse.

The Dominican foreign ministry announced a “nonbinding memorandum of understanding” with the United States to accept third-country deportees without criminal records. They would not include Haitians or unaccompanied minors. It said the deportees would be considered “in transit” through the country. Dominican law doesn't specify a time limit for those in transit.

It was also not immediately clear how many deportees would be sent from the United States. The Dominican government said that it would be a “limited number.”

Bernardo Vega, an economist and former Dominican ambassador to United States, said in a Dominican TV inter-

view that the deal was “bad news” and a sign that the United States was pressuring the Dominican Republic.

In other countries across the region, such as El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama, the U.S. deportation of migrants from other countries has come under heavy scrutiny and legal challenges.

Under Mr. Abinader, the Dominican government has been aggressively deporting Haitians, including unaccompanied children, to violence-torn Haiti, with which it shares an island. Nearly 380,000 Haitians were deported last year, according to Dominican government figures.

It was also not immediately clear how many deportees would be sent from the United States. The Dominican government said that it would be a “limited number.”

The Dominican government said that the U.S. deportations would occur on

a case-by-case basis, and have “financial and operational support from the U.S. government to ensure adequate conditions during temporary stays and facilitate orderly return to countries of origin.”

The Dominican foreign ministry and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to requests for comment regarding the number of deportees or the frequency of deportations.

“Cooperation between the Dominican Republic and the United States is based on mutual respect, shared responsibility and transparency, with the aim of strengthening regional security, combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, fighting terrorism in all its forms, and contributing to the orderly and humane management of migration flows,” the ministry said in a statement.

It was not clear why Mr. Abinader had reversed course. He has maintained a strong relationship with the Trump administration and was among the conservative Latin American leaders invited to an inaugural Shield of

the Americas summit organized by Mr. Trump in Florida in March.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio also praised the Dominican Republic last year as one of the Latin America countries that was “doing it the right way.”

Before Mr. Rubio’s visit to the island in February 2025, Mr. Abinader was asked if his country would join other nations in accepting foreign migrants deported from the United States.

“We do not have, nor will we accept, nor are we obligated to, nor will we accept receiving people from other countries,” he said then.

The U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Leah F. Campos, said in a social media post on Tuesday that the deal allowed the United States to repatriate migrants “more expeditiously” while respecting Dominican law, sovereignty and border procedures.

“The United States is grateful for our friendship with the Dominican Republic as we collaborate to strengthen regional security,” she added.

The Dominican government also announced on Tuesday that it had grant-

ed a temporary extension to the U.S. military to operate inside restricted areas on its part of the island. That deal was originally announced in November. Mr. Abinader said then that the Pentagon could use restricted areas within the San Isidro Air Base and Las Américas International Airport outside the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo, to refuel aircraft and to transport equipment and technical personnel.

The Pentagon has been attacking boats it says are trafficking drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific. The U.S. military has conducted nearly 60 such strikes since September, killing at least 192 people.

In another sign of further alignment with the Trump administration, the Dominican government announced on Tuesday that it had designated Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group, as terrorist organizations.

James Wagner covers news and culture in Latin America for The Times. He is based in Mexico City.



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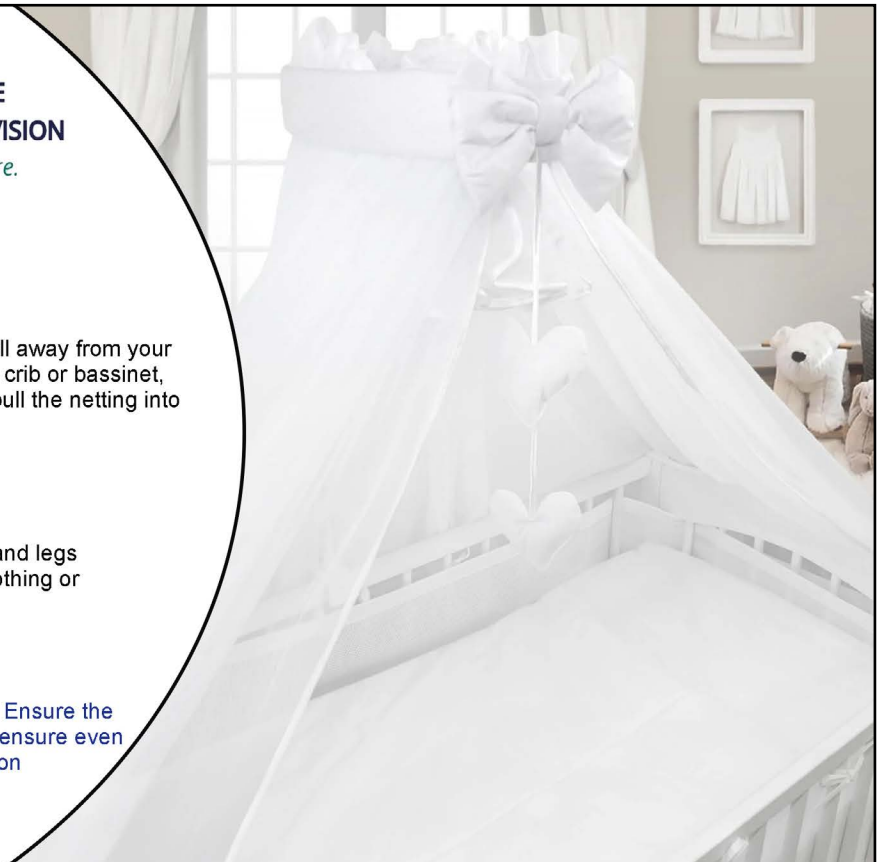
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BEYOND AID - EU signals new era in Jamaica relations; sees country as partner of solutions amid global turmoil

The European Union (EU) is seeking to rebrand its relationship with Jamaica, signalling a shift away from traditional donor-recipient dynamics to a partnership of potential amid a crumbling global order.

Speaking against the backdrop of recovery efforts following the devastation brought on by Hurricane Melissa last October and a US\$12-million EU relief package, EU Ambassador Dr Erja Askola said Jamaica remains a developing country committed to international order, the rule of law, and climate ambition at a time when international norms are increasingly under siege.

She made the declaration at Saturday's Europe Day celebrations at the Office of the Delegation of the EU to Jamaica in Kingston.

"This year's celebration comes at a time of profound global uncertainty. We see growing disrespect for territorial integrity and an increasing disregard for international law. We see wars, conflicts, and political crises, and we see economic volatility. We see increasing natural disasters and climate shocks. In this challenging context, the European Union continues to stand firmly for the rules-based international order, multilateralism, and for partnerships based on equality and respect," said Askola.

"Small states and developing countries must have a voice. International law must matter, and climate commitments must be honoured. There are still countries, leaders and people who remain committed to the same values; to the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. And I am delighted to say that one of these countries is Jamaica," she added.

Calling the Holness administration a "reliable partner", Brussels' top diplomat to the island said the relationship has been strengthened into one based



on trust, shared convictions, and a firm belief that alliances and partnerships make them stronger.

"I am proud of the work that we have carried out with the Government of Jamaica, its institutions, and other stakeholders – international, regional partners, civil society, the private sector, and communities," she said, adding that Jamaica's tireless building of diplomatic relations delivered concrete results in adversity and devastation.

She noted that through this, the international community responded strongly to the needs of Jamaicans following the passage of Hurricane Melissa.

At the same time, she said the EU is partnering with Jamaica to bolster climate resilience by investing in green and digital transitions, sustainable infrastructure, and human capital development.

"And let me say this clearly: we do not see Jamaica only as partner in need. We see Jamaica as a partner of potential, and as a partner of solutions. And we see Jamaica as a key ally, po-

litical ally, that advocates with us for respect of international law, multilateralism, and higher ambition for climate change," said Askola.

"We want to take this partnership to the next level; stronger politically and economically, closer strategically, and deeper between our peoples. This is not only lip service; we are already acting on this promise together," she added.

The ambassador noted that last year, there were several high-level meetings and visits between European and Jamaican leaders and politicians. She said Prime Minister Dr Andrew Holness met (WITH) President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the first bilateral meeting at the highest level.

Added to that, Askola noted that the EU is strengthening its long-term partnership with Jamaica by expanding trade and investment through the Global Gateway and enhancing political cooperation across bilateral, regional, and international levels.

"The European Union, of 450 million people, remains one of the most open markets for Caribbean and Jamaican exports, with zero tariffs and quotas on all Jamaican goods entering the EU market," she said.

Additionally, she pointed to the EU-supported Caribbean Investment Forum in Montego Bay, noting that it achieved a significant milestone with record-breaking participation from European companies and diverse regional stakeholders.

Further, she said the bloc is expanding its people-to-people exchanges by providing an increasing number of Jamaicans with fully funded higher education and professional development opportunities through the Erasmus+ Programme. (Jamaica Gleaner)

OECS Root and Tuber Crop Symposium in Dominica sets course to restore regional food sovereignty



In the face of growing climate pressures and continued global supply chain uncertainty, regional bodies are looking to beloved culinary staples of root and tuber crops, known colloquially as “ground provisions”, as a key part of food sovereignty.

At the helm of what is being termed a “definitive regional intervention” are the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, together with the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The renewed focus would see foods such as dasheen and tania repositioned not only as traditional staples, but as key drivers of climate resilience, economic opportunity, and regional self-reliance.

The initiative was formally advanced at the OECS Root and Tuber Crop Symposium, held from May 7–8, 2026, at the InterContinental Domini-

ca Cabrits Resort & Spa.

Bringing together government officials, farmers, and technical experts, the event sought to align agricultural policy with the broader OECS Food and Agriculture Systems Transformation (FAST) Strategy, outline an OECS release.

It also shared that support for the programme is being provided by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), through the Regional Integration Through Growth Harmonisation and Technology (RIGHT) programme.

The discussions took place against the backdrop of high food import dependence across the region, with some Member States reportedly importing up to 90% of their food needs, reinforcing the urgency of shifting toward food sovereignty and the CARICOM “25 by 2025 + 5” target to reduce food

imports by 25%.

Representing Prime Minister Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit, Hon. Dr. Irving McIntyre, Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Climate Resilience and Social Security, emphasized that resilience must begin with food systems.

He stressed the direct link between agriculture and national stability.

“The Government of Dominica has consistently emphasized the importance of resilience as a central pillar of national development,” claimed Dr. McIntyre. “That vision of resilience extends directly to agriculture, because no country can truly claim resilience while remaining heavily dependent on imported food and vulnerable supply chains”.

He also acknowledged the ongoing

Regional News



contribution of farmers across the region, highlighting their role in sustaining communities despite increasing environmental and economic pressures.

From a regional integration perspective, OECS Director General Dr. Didacus Jules framed the initiative as a return to foundational principles of sustainability and self-reliance.

He described food sovereignty as a matter of dignity and security, placing particular emphasis on the resilience of traditional crops.

“If we cannot feed ourselves, we are not truly secure,” Dr. Jules cautioned.

He described crops like cassava, dasheen, and sweet potato as poetically resilient, noting they grow quietly, steadily, beneath the surface drawing strength from the soil, holding firm against wind and drought.

He further emphasized that the region’s long-term strength will come from strengthening what is locally produced and deeply rooted, rather than continued dependence on imported food systems.

The urgency of this shift was reinforced by recent climate-related impacts in the region.

Hon. Roland Royer, Dominica’s Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Blue and Green Economy, noted that just days before the symposium, flooding and landslides on the island’s east coast had caused significant damage to both crops and infrastructure. He underscored the need to modernize agriculture in response to these realities.

“Agriculture today must be understood as business, innovation, food security and national resilience all working together,” Minister Royer asserted. “If agriculture in the OECS is to survive and grow, then it must become more resilient, more sustainable and more adaptable to the realities of a changing climate”.

Adding to this perspective, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Hon. Fenella Wen-

ham-Sheppard, highlighted both the cultural and economic importance of root and tuber crops across generations. She noted that these crops have historically sustained Caribbean communities through periods of crisis, while also pointing to their future economic potential.

“Root crops must not only feed us fresh from the soil, they must become higher value products that create jobs, expand exports, and empower entrepreneurs,” she noted.

She further highlighted opportunities to transform these staples into value-added products such as flour, purees, and beverages.

The OECS reports that the symposium concluded with several key outcomes aimed at strengthening the sector’s long-term development. These include the operationalisation of an OECS Food Production Technical Working Group and the development of a dedicated OECS Root and Tuber Crop Roadmap.

Member States also agreed to prioritise investment in supporting infrastructure, including solar-powered cold storage facilities and irrigation hubs, with the goal of modernising agriculture and attracting a new generation of farmers across the Eastern Caribbean. (Dominica News Online)

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f y t i d

IMO climate talks end without consensus, Caribbean calls for just and equitable shipping transition



At the conclusion of the recent International Maritime Organization (IMO) meetings in London, Member States wrapped up two weeks of negotiations under the 21st Intersessional Working Group on Greenhouse Gases (ISWG-GHG 21) and the 84th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 84), from April 20–24, and April 27 to May 1, respectively.

The discussions centred on the proposed Net Zero Framework (NZF), a global regulatory package aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping. Governments tackled the issue of how ships will cut emissions in the future—through cleaner fuels, stricter efficiency standards, and potentially a global carbon pricing mechanism.

While technical work progressed, Member States remain divided on its structure—particularly the balance between technical fuel standards and the proposed emissions pricing mechanism, which reflected a lack of consensus under IMO's traditional decision-making approach.

A large coalition of Member States—

including many European Union countries, several Pacific Island States, and countries such as Mexico and Brazil—expressed strong support for adopting the Net Zero Framework in its current form. This group advocated for maintaining both core pillars of the proposal: the technical fuel standard and the greenhouse gas (GHG) pricing mechanism. Their position was that this combined approach is necessary to ensure environmental integrity, global consis-

tency, and alignment with the IMO's 2023 GHG reduction strategy.

In contrast, another grouping led prominently by the United States and Saudi Arabia, along with several aligned delegations, raised significant concerns regarding the proposed economic structure of the framework. This bloc questioned the introduction of a mandatory pricing mechanism for emissions and instead supported either a more limited technical compliance

DOCUMENTARY

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Regional News

approach or alternative frameworks that reduce or remove the proposed financial elements.

A further set of proposals emerged from countries including Liberia, Argentina, and Panama, which advocated for a more flexible, “technical-first” model focused on fuel intensity standards, with limited reliance on global pricing mechanisms. Japan also introduced a modified approach that retained the broader Net Zero Framework concept but proposed adjustments, including a stronger emphasis on direct compliance metrics and revisions to the proposed revenue and fund distribution elements.

Ms. Nafesha Richardson, Project Manager of the University of the West Indies Caribbean Shipping Lanes Project, highlighted the constructive and consistent engagement of Caribbean delegations throughout the process.

According to Ms. Richardson, their approach focused on balancing climate ambition with the economic realities faced by vulnerable states, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

“Caribbean delegations played a constructive role throughout these negotiations, emphasizing that climate ambition and economic realities must be addressed together, particularly for climate-vulnerable Small Island Developing States. UWI-CSL remains committed to continuing its support to the region through technical analysis, strategic guidance, and capacity support aimed at advancing a just and equitable maritime transition,” she asserted.

Within this context, Dominica’s Permanent Representative to the IMO, Ambassador Benoit Bardouille, stressed that any final agreement must be practical and responsive to the operational realities of island states.

He underscored that while environmental ambition is supported, implementation must remain realistic for countries with limited access to alternative fuels and constrained infrastructure. He stated:

“Our support for the advancement of

the Net Zero Framework is contingent on guidelines that reflect the realities of SIDS, such as limited fuel access. While Greenhouse Gas Fuel Intensity (GFI) and lifecycle assessments must be robust, they must remain practical and allow for Just and Equitable Transition eligible awards. A just transition must manage change while allowing our nations to participate in the benefits of the emerging green fuel economy.”

Other Caribbean and international voices echoed similar themes during the negotiations.

Several delegations, including Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda, stressed the importance of a unified global framework to avoid fragmented regional rules and to ensure that climate measures do not disproportionately impact small and vulnerable econo-

mies.

Industry representatives also reinforced the need for clear regulatory signals to guide investment and support an orderly transition, while maintaining focus on equity and implementation support for developing states.

Overall, the meeting did not produce a final adoption of the Net Zero Framework; Member States did not reach final agreement, and further negotiations will now continue later in the year.

To address these outstanding issues, additional intersessional meetings are scheduled for September and November 2026, to narrow differences and advance toward a final agreement expected at MEPC 85 and related sessions later in the year. (Dominica News Online)



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PM Skerrit commiserates with families affected by recent disasters

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit gave his assurance that the Government of Dominica stands firmly with the families and businesses that were affected during the major fire in Roseau on May 6, 2026. The incident marked the second of its kind in the last few months.

This overnight blaze caused severe and extensive destruction, affecting several buildings, leaving families displaced and business owners facing the loss of their livelihoods.

“To the families and businesses affected, the government of Dominica stands firmly with you. We understand the trauma and uncertainty that come with such devastating loss,” Skerrit said at a recent press conference. “The relevant social support agencies are being mobilized to provide immediate assistance, and we will ensure that those impacted receive the support they need during this difficult time.”

He continued, “It would be remiss of me if I did not speak candidly about the deeply troubling pattern we are now witnessing. This is the second significant fire in the city within a very short span of time. That is not something any responsible government can ignore or dismiss. It is a matter that demands urgent and serious attention and investigation.”

Furthermore, he noted that while investigations are already underway, his government will mandate a full and comprehensive investigation into these incidents, including the causes, circumstances, and any factor that may have contributed to them.

“We owe that to the affected families, the business community, and every citizen who calls Roseau home,” Skerrit said.

Moreover, he pointed out that collectively the government must strengthen fire safety measures, improve enforcement, and ensure that every possible step is taken to better protect lives and property in our capital city.



He also commended the Fire and Ambulance Services, who promptly undertook a public education campaign to raise awareness of fire prevention, safety practices, and emergency preparedness among residents and business owners.

“The government remains committed to the safety, security, and well-being of every citizen and resident of this country. And I assure all of you that we will treat this matter [with] the urgency and seriousness it deserves,” the Prime Minister asserted.

Meantime, concerning the people in the East and North East of Dominica who were affected by the recent trough system, Skerrit said his government will stand with every affected family and community until full recovery is achieved. I thank all emergency personnel, volunteers, and public officers for their tireless work since April 27.

He said assessments confirm severe impacts in Atkinson, Antrizle, Salybia, Sineku, Bataka, Crayfish River, St Cyr, Gullet River, Mahaut River, Concord, Marigot, Wesley, Dipax, Tranto, San Sauveur, Petite Soufriere, Morpo, and Concord.

“In regards to the infrastructure, crews have cleared landslides and restored access,” Skerrit revealed.

He added that priority was given to the Calixte Bridge and roads linking

Castle Bruce, San Sauveur, and the Kalinago Territory.

With respect to housing, Skerrit noted that assessments of compromised households in the Atkinson area are being finalized, and support for temporary accommodation and building materials is being coordinated through local government.

“In respect to utilities, DOMLEC and DOWASCO continue restoration work, and I want to commend DOMLEC and DOWASCO for their very, very prompt action,” he stated. “Electricity and water have been restored to most areas with isolated pockets under active repair.”

He went on to state that the Ministry of Agriculture teams are documenting crop and livestock losses in those communities that were affected, and that this will guide relief efforts to farmers.

“Next steps, the Cabinet will review updated assessments and approve additional allocations for recovery,” Skerrit revealed. “Government remains focused on three priorities: restoring safe access, supporting displaced families, and rebuilding resilient infrastructure.”

He said the government urges residents in affected areas to continue exercising caution near waterways and landslide-prone slopes. (Dominica News Online)

Woman isolating on British island in South Pacific after hantavirus contact

A woman is isolating on the Pitcairn Islands, a remote British Overseas Territory in the South Pacific, after travelling on a hantavirus-hit cruise ship.

A local government spokesperson told the BBC the person “had contact with a hantavirus-exposed individual” but was “showing no signs of illness”.

The UK foreign office said it was “aware of an individual from the MV Hondius who has travelled on to the Pitcairn Islands”.

Officials said she was not a suspected case and the risk to the public was low.

The woman had flown from San Francisco on 7 May and travelled through the island of Tahiti and then Mangareva in French Polynesia, the French Polynesian government said.

No details have been released about when and where she left the cruise and travelled to the US.

Three people have died after travelling on the Dutch-flagged MV Hondius ship. Two of them were confirmed virus cases. The third had earlier developed symptoms and is believed to have been the first infected in the outbreak, but died before he could be tested.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the UN global health agency, has since confirmed nine cases, with two others suspected.

On Tuesday, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there was at that time



“no sign” of a larger hantavirus outbreak after the evacuation of the last passengers from the ship a day earlier.

But he warned that “the situation could change” and there could be more confirmed virus cases.

Hantaviruses are usually carried by rodents, but human transmission of the Andes strain - which the WHO believes some of the ship’s passengers contracted in South America - is possible.

Symptoms can include fever, extreme fatigue, muscle aches, stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and shortness of breath.

The woman - who has not been publicly named - was currently isolating on Pitcairn, the only inhabited of the four volcanic islands of the British Overseas Territory.

The British foreign office told the BBC it was coordinating with the local authorities and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) “to manage the risks to the individual and the islanders”.

UKHSA said the length of isolation for close contacts of cases, which those on the

ship are considered to be, is 45 days.

It is not yet clear when the UK government or local authorities were made aware of the case.

Speaking to the BBC, the Pitcairn government spokesman said: “We are working closely with the health authorities and the UK government to manage the situation.

“The wellbeing of our community remains the top priority.”

The Pitcairn Islands has a population of about 50 people and most of the residents are descendants of mutineers from the Royal Navy warship HMS Bounty who settled there in 1790.

Meanwhile, the French Polynesian government said the woman had transited through without notifying “territorial and national authorities”. Authorities held an emergency meeting on Sunday and decided not to allow the woman now isolating on Pitcairn to re-enter French Polynesia.

“Although she is currently completely asymptomatic and therefore not contagious, (she) will not leave Pitcairn

Island to travel through French Polynesia as long as she poses a risk to others,” it said.

French Polynesia said passengers on the same flight as the woman from San Francisco to Tahiti were not considered close contacts and “the risk of infection is considered very low”.

The MV Hondius had been carrying 147 passengers and crew from 23 countries after departing from Ushuaia, southern Argentina, on 1 April.

A 70-year-old Dutch man was the first passenger who died on board the vessel on 11 April.

His 69-year-old wife left the ship on 24 April on the island of St Helena and flew to South Africa. She died two days later in a clinic in Johannesburg.

A German woman died on board the cruise ship on 2 May.

Both women were confirmed cases.

The MV Hondius left Spain’s Tenerife island on Monday, and is expected to arrive to the Dutch city of Rotterdam on 17 May.

British army medics parachuted onto another remote British Overseas Territory, the south Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, to help a British resident with suspected hantavirus who disembarked there on 14 April. (BBC)

More than 1,000 passengers held on cruise after gastrointestinal illness outbreak

More than 1,000 passengers are being held on a UK-operated cruise ship in France after 49 people fell ill from gastrointestinal sickness.

Local health authorities in Bordeaux said three passengers had been isolated in their cabins on the *Ambition*, while other passengers will not be able to disembark in the port.

They added that there was “no reason” to link the outbreak to the hantavirus outbreak on a separate cruise ship.

Ambassador Cruise Line told the BBC a 92-year-old man had passed away onboard on Sunday, but he did not report any related symptoms and his cause of death is yet to be established by a coroner.

The cruise operator added: “We are providing every support to the deceased’s friends and family and extend our most sincere condolences to them at this difficult time.”

Ambassador Cruise Line said in a separate statement that as of 11:00 BST on Wednesday, 48 passengers were displaying symptoms consistent with gastrointestinal illness, as well as one crew member.

The cruise ship set sail from Belfast on 8 May, before heading to Liverpool the next day.

There are currently 1,187 guests and 514 crew members onboard the ship, according to its operator.

In its statement, Ambassador said there was a reported increase in cases after guests boarded in Liverpool.

It said “a number of guests and crew onboard *Ambition* have displayed or are displaying symptoms consistent with gastrointestinal illness”.

Gastrointestinal illness is a common condition that causes diarrhoea and vomiting. Cases in adults are usually caused by norovirus or food poisoning.



David Munster from Dundonald in County Down is on the cruise with his wife. He said that after departing Liverpool they were informed that a number of passengers had “become ill”.

Munster said: “At this stage we don’t know if we will be kept on the ship and just have to sit here until this is dealt with, or whether we’ll be allowed to get off and see Bordeaux, which is obviously what we’d love to do.”

He said passengers were free to use the facilities that were open, but the people who were ill were isolating in their cabins.

Munster hadn’t witnessed people being ill but had seen the “clean-up of people being sick” and said staff had been “very hardworking”.

The cruise line said enhanced sanitation and prevention protocols had been implemented across the ship “in line with established public health procedures following the initial reports of illness”.

Measures introduced since the initial reports of illness included increased cleaning and disinfection in public areas, as well as ongoing guidance to

guests about hand hygiene and reporting symptoms to the onboard medical team.

As part of a scheduled stop at Bordeaux in southwest France, the operator said it had advised French health authorities of the situation.

The regional health agency for Nouvelle-Aquitaine said a medical team had been dispatched on board to assess the situation, with samples currently being taken to the Bordeaux University Hospital.

It added that passenger disembarkations had been suspended “as a precautionary measure due to the contagiousness of gastroenteritis-type illnesses” while tests were being processed.

The cruise operator said the results would take at least six hours to process.

“The health, safety and wellbeing of our guests and crew remains our highest priority, and we are sincerely grateful for the patience, understanding and cooperation shown while these precautionary measures remain in place,” it added. (BBC)

Philippine Senate in lockdown after gunshots fired



The Philippine Senate is in lockdown with military personnel seen entering the building where a senator wanted by the International Criminal Court had sought refuge.

Rounds of gunfire have been heard – it's not clear who fired the shots. Officials say there have been no casualties.

Senator Ronald Dela Rosa said earlier he believed his arrest was imminent and urged Filipinos to prevent it. His whereabouts are currently unclear.

He is accused by the ICC of killing dozens of people when he was police chief during former president Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, in which thousands of alleged dealers were shot and killed. Duterte has been held at The Hague since March 2025.

TV footage showed police commandos in fatigues entering the Senate building in Manila early on Wednesday evening, with anti-riot policemen with shields and helmets surrounding the perimeter.

Protesters outside the Senate demanded Dela Rosa's detention, calling for him to be sent to stand trial with Duterte.

His lawyers have appealed to the Supreme Court to block his extradition.

The senate building has been locked down since the shots, and senators are holed up inside.

Interior secretary Jonvic Remulla

said the president had given "strict instructions" to secure the senators.

He added: "We are not here to arrest

Senator Dela Rosa. In fact, we are here to protect him. Let that be clear. I made that clear to his family."

No one has been arrested for the shooting, Remulla said.

Senate speaker Alan Peter Cayetano asked the public to send "any videos that could help with the investigation".

Duterte has refused to recognise the ICC proceedings, arguing that during his presidency in 2019 the Philippines had pulled out of the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding agreement.

But last month, judges in the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber rejected that argument on the grounds that the alleged crimes had happened between 2011 and 2019 - while the Philippines was still a member of the ICC - paving the way for Duterte to stand trial. (BBC)



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Trump arrives in China for high-stakes meeting with Xi Jinping

US President Donald Trump descended the steps of Air Force One in Beijing on Wednesday evening, greeted with pomp and pageantry ahead of a high-stakes meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

During his two-day visit, the global superpowers are expected to discuss tariffs, competition over tech, the Iran war and the US's relationship with Taiwan.

Trump returns to a more assertive China since his last visit in 2017, as he faces growing scrutiny of his military campaign in the Middle East.

Trump was originally scheduled to make the trip in March, but it was delayed because of the US and Israel's war in Iran, which continues to roil the global economy.

When Trump exited the plane on Wednesday evening, he was greeted by Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng, one of China's top leaders.

The move is being read as a show of respect for the US president from Beijing, after a lower-level leader received Trump on his last visit.

Also spotted at the welcome - as a red carpet was unravelled across the tarmac - was Trump's son Eric Trump, and a slew of US tech industry titans, with Tesla's Elon Musk and Nvidia's Jensen Huang among them.

"I will be asking President Xi, a Leader of extraordinary distinction, to



'open up' China so that these brilliant people can work their magic, and help bring the People's Republic to an even higher level," Trump said in a post on social media ahead of his landing.

Trump said that will be his "very first request" when he meets the Chinese leader.

The war in Iran is expected to dominate the agenda as Trump meets Xi Jinping.

China relies a considerable amount on Iran for oil exports, which have effectively been cut off as ships are unable to navigate the Strait of Hormuz. The country also faces growing pressure from the US to use its economic

and political influence over Iran.

China and Iran have an alliance dating back decades, and Beijing is Tehran's biggest trading partner.

The meeting will also be marked by tensions over Taiwan in the backdrop. The Trump administration has taken a mixed approach with Taipei, approving a massive arms deal while downplaying its willingness to defend the island from Chinese aggression.

As for trade, Trump is expected to push to increase Chinese purchase of US agricultural products, while Beijing looks to pressure the US to reduce its tariffs on Chinese goods. (BBC)



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Wins for Freetown and Police in Curtly Ambrose one-day contest

Freetown and Police have recorded wins during the opening round of matches in the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League Sir Curtly Ambrose Limited Overs Championship.

Freetown launched their campaign with a crushing 158-run victory over Stingray City Seatons.

Jamaul Fernandez slammed an unbeaten century to propel Freetown to 243 without losing any wickets.

Fernandez hammered 136 not out, and fellow opener Akeem Blackman struck 78 not out.

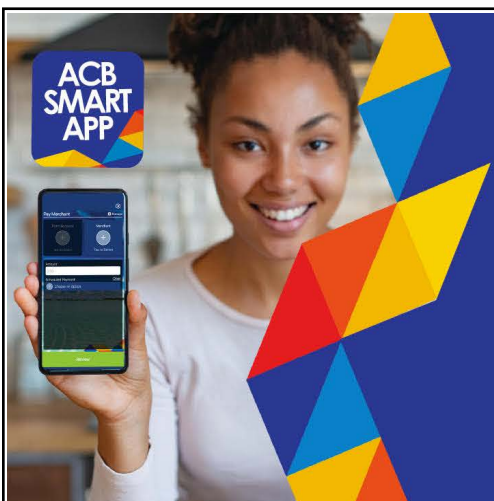
In reply, Seatons crashed to 88 all out in 12.3 overs, with Ivor Joseph getting 26 not out. Dean Williams grabbed five for 30, and Antwon Willock took five for 33.

Police opened their campaign with a 75-run victory over Mahico. Police made 149 for seven after being sent in the bat. Shamar Pereira struck 36, and

Vincent Shadrach scored 17.



Akez Franze picked up two wickets for nine runs, and Michael Cornelius captured two for 26.

In reply, Mahico crashed to 74 all out, with Stephen Fane getting 28. Malique Gerald snapped up four for 30, and off-spinner James Cornelius claimed two wickets for six runs.



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Venus Williams, 45, to play doubles at French Open

PARIS (Reuters) -- Venus Williams will compete in doubles at the French Open later this month, organizers confirmed on Wednesday.

Williams, 45, will partner with Hailey Baptiste, 24, for the clay-court tournament at Roland Garros, which begins on May 24 in Paris.

Williams, however, will not compete in the singles tournament. She was a wild-card entry at the Australian Open, where she lost in three sets during the first round to Serbia's Olga Danilovic.

Williams is a former World No. 1 in both singles and doubles. She has won seven Grand Slam titles in singles and 14 in doubles, including the French Open in doubles in 1999 and 2010.

Meanwhile, tenth-ranked Lorenzo Musetti announced Wednesday that he won't be able to compete at the French Open this month due to a left thigh injury.

Musetti, who reached the semifinals at Roland Garros last year, sustained the injury during his 6-3, 6-1 loss to Casper Ruud of Norway on Tuesday in the fourth round of the Italian Open in Rome.

"After yesterday's match, I underwent medical examinations which revealed a rectus femoris injury, requiring several weeks of rest and recovery," the 24-year-old Italian wrote on Instagram.



Venus Williams

"Unfortunately, this means I won't be able to compete (at an ATP 500 event in Hamburg on May 17-23) and Roland Garros -- news that is incredibly hard to take.

"A huge thank you to the Rome crowd for your incredible support: that's ex-

actly why, despite not being 100%, I chose to step on court and give everything I had in my home tournament. I'll keep you updated."

A leg injury led to him retiring from his French Open semifinal match against Carlos Alcaraz of Spain.



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Sports News



Molineux to lead Australia at T20 World Cup after injury return



All-rounder *Sophie Molineux*

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - All-rounder Sophie Molineux has been declared fit to lead Australia in the women's Twenty20 World Cup in England after struggling with a back injury, Cricket Australia said on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old was forced to play as a specialist batter in the recent T20 series against West Indies, her first full tour as captain after being named the team's all-format skipper in January.

"I've had a good little block of training and everything, and now back bowling and feeling really good, so, (I'm) ready to go," Molineux told reporters.

After defeat in the semi-finals by South Africa in 2024, Australia will eye a record-extending seventh World Cup title at the tournament beginning on June 12 in England and Wales.

"I'm really excited. I think this World Cup has been on our minds for a long time

now, and it feels like it's just around the corner, and we've all got together this week and starting to build some really good momentum," Molineux added.

"Leading a World Cup for the first time, there's going to be some nerves to it, but I think the overall emotion is just pure excitement."

Fast bowler Darcie Brown has been left out of the squad but 19-year-old all-rounder Lucy Hamilton was included. Australia begin their Group A campaign against South Africa on June 13 in Manchester.

Australia Squad: Sophie Molineux (captain), Nicola Carey, Ash Gardner, Kim Garth, Lucy Hamilton, Grace Harris, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Tahlia McGrath, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Voll, and Georgia Wareham. Travelling reserve: Tahlia Wilson.



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Wembanyama leads Spurs past Wolves for 3-2 lead



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) grabs a rebound over Minnesota Timberwolves center Naz Reid (11) during the first half of Game 5 of an NBA basketball second-round playoffs series in Minneapolis, Tuesday, May 12, 2026. (AP)

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Victor Wembanyama atoned for his first career ejection with another huge performance, finishing with 27 points, 17 rebounds, five assists and three blocks as the San Antonio Spurs beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 126-97 on Tuesday night to take a 3-2 lead in their second-round series.

At 22 years old, Wembanyama is the third-youngest player in NBA history to post that stat line in a playoff game, trailing only Magic Johnson (20) and Luka Doncic (21).

“I was fresh, feeling good,” Wembanyama said. “Honestly, it’s hard to tell. It was just Game 5. Obviously, I’m going to be excited (and) to have butterflies. So, excitement is not something abnormal at this point in the playoffs.”

Keldon Johnson had 21 points, De’Aaron Fox added 18 and Stephon Castle had 17 as San Antonio moved a game away from the Western Confer-

ence finals. The Spurs can advance to face Oklahoma City with a victory in Game 6 on Friday in Minneapolis.

Anthony Edwards, who was limited to eight points in the first half, finished with 20 points for Minnesota. Julius Randle and Jaden McDaniels added 17 points apiece.

Wembanyama returned after being ejected early in the second quarter of Minnesota’s 114-109 victory Sunday during Game 4 in Minneapolis. Wembanyama received a Flagrant 2 foul after elbowing Naz Reid in the throat.

Both teams continued to hammer each other, with Reid receiving a technical foul for pushing Wembanyama in the back on a Minnesota free throw with 2:24 left in the first half.

The foul by Reid fired up Wembanyama, not that he needed any additional motivation. Wembanyama was 6 for 8 from the field and 2 for 3 on 3-pointers in scoring 18 points in the opening

quarter.

The Timberwolves opened the third quarter on a 14-2 run to tie the game at 61 after trailing by 18 points in the first half. Minnesota tipped away three attempted alley-oop passes to Wembanyama before they reached the 7-foot-4 post.

The Spurs recaptured a double-digit lead in the third spurred by Johnson’s block on Rudy Gobert’s attempted dunk followed by his short jumper after bodying Edwards under the rim.

“We went away from what was working,” Timberwolves coach Chris Finch said. “Our defense just cratered. We gave up 30 points, I think, in the last six minutes of the third quarter. A lot of it was just ball contain, ball contain stuff.”

San Antonio held its opponent under 100 points for the fifth time in 10 games this postseason.

Stingerz and Ovals advance in ABBA's Playoff Championships



Players of the Lava Smoke Elite Stingerz meet in a huddle during a timeout in an ABBA Division League game at the JSC Sports Complex. (Photo courtesy of the ABBA)

The Lava Smoke Elite Stingerz and Cuties Ovals Ojays 2 advanced to the semi-finals of their respective divisions in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Playoff Championships at the JSC Sports Complex.

Third-seed Elite Stingerz advanced to the semi-finals in the First Division Playoffs by securing a 2-0 win over the sixth-seeded JSC Red Hawks in their best-of-three first-round series with an 83-75 victory in Game 2 on Tuesday evening.

Jaheem James sank 15 points; Alexis Jackson converted 14 points and snatched seven rebounds; Keroi Lee

scored 11 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; Brycen Thomas provided 11 points and eight assists; and Dequan Williams had 11 points and six rebounds for the Stingerz.

Cohen Desouza shot a game-high 24 points and claimed nine rebounds; Bernard Andrew sank 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; Andre Burnet produced 15 points, 10 rebounds, and five assists; and Kymani Powell converted 12 points for the Red Hawks.

The Elite Stingerz will face second-seed Da Project, while top-seed and defending champions EZ Fit Flyers will meet fourth-seed Daryll

Matthew Ottos in the best-of-three Division 1 playoff semi-finals at the JSC Sports Complex on Thursday.

The Elite Stingerz and Da Project will clash again in Game 1 of their series at 6:45 pm, while the Flyers will meet Ottos in their series opener at 8:30 pm.

The Flyers, who won the league title for the third consecutive year last month, gained a bye into the playoffs semi-finals after the eighth-seeded Navigators forfeited their best-of-three first-round series 2-0.

Da Project, who finished second in the round-robin league, gained a bye into the playoffs semi-finals after the seventh-seeded All Saints Slam forfeited their best-of-three first-round series 2-0.

Meanwhile, the second-seeded Ovals Ojays 2 booked their spot in the semi-finals in the Second Division Playoffs by claiming a 2-0 win over the seventh-seeded EZ Fit Flyers 2 in their best-of-three first-round series with a commanding 97-61 victory in Game 2 on Tuesday evening.

Tajahron Davis shot a game-high 39 points and snatched eight rebounds; Yohhan Nicholas sank 26 points and grabbed 12 rebounds; Jaleyle Joseph produced 12 points, nine rebounds, and five blocks; and Orion Seraphine converted 11 points and claimed seven rebounds for Ovals Ojays 2.

Gabriel Desouza sank 17 points and snatched seven rebounds, and Delroy Christopher scored 15 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for Flyers 2.