

# New National Shelter Planned for Vulnerable Women and Children

Story on page 2



**Governor General Sir Rodney Williams (extreme left) officiates at the ceremony at Government House where Senator Tiffany Strann-Peters and Parliamentary Secretary Senator Joel Rayne (both seated in the front row) formally received their instruments of appointment**

## New National Shelter Planned for Vulnerable Women and Children

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has approved the establishment of a national Safe Haven designed to provide protection and support for abused and neglected women and children, following growing concerns over the number of cases being reported weekly to social services authorities.

The facility, which will operate under the Ministry of Social and Urban Transformation, is intended to provide emergency shelter, counselling, therapeutic care, family support services, and reintegration programmes for individuals facing abuse and other vulnerable situations.

Speaking during Thursday's Post-Cabinet Press Briefing, Director General of Communications Maurice Merchant said Cabinet was deeply troubled by the statistics presented by the responsible minister Rawdon Turner, regarding child abuse and domestic violence cases across the country.

According to Merchant, more than 50 weekly interventions involving abused or neglected children are currently being handled by the Ministry. He added that numerous women also continue to seek help because of abusive domestic situations.

"The weekly reports are cause for serious concern by the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda," Merchant said, noting that the Government considered the issue urgent enough to immediately allocate EC\$500,000 toward the project.

The government's contribution will support land identification, site preparation, regulatory approvals, and initial construction work. Com-



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

bined with external support, the total initial funding package for the project now stands at EC\$850,000.

Among the key contributors is Team Antigua Island Girls, which has committed EC\$350,000 toward construction and capital development after several years of fundraising efforts, including their rowing expeditions on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

An Alabama-based church partnership has also pledged volunteer labour, development assistance, furnishings, and community support services for the facility.

Merchant revealed that the location identified for the Safe Haven is within the vicinity of the Denis Bowers Rehabilitation Center, formerly known as the Boys' Training School. He emphasised that security and confidentiality would remain top priorities in the operation of the facility.

Access to the facility would be tightly controlled once it becomes operational.

Officials say the Safe Haven will serve as a national protection mech-

anism jointly managed by the Family and Social Services Division and the Directorate of Gender Affairs. A dedicated steering committee will oversee operations to ensure accountability and coordinated service delivery.

Cabinet has also approved the execution of Memoranda of Understanding with supporting partners, while the Attorney General's Chambers has been directed to provide the legal framework necessary to move the initiative forward.

Merchant disclosed that additional legislation aimed at strengthening laws relating to child abuse and violence against women is also being prepared.

"The Attorney General indicated to Cabinet that he will be bringing legislation to deal with issues of child abuse and abuse on women, strengthening the current laws that are on the books," he said.

The government is also preparing legislation to address the issue of vagrancy, another growing concern being handled by the Ministry.

It was revealed that officials are witnessing an increase in the number of children entering foster care arrangements. Addressing reporters yesterday, Maurice Merchant attributed part of the problem to younger parents lacking adequate preparation for raising children, as well as single mothers struggling to care for large families on their own.

Phase One of the Safe Haven project is expected to begin within the next two weeks, allowing for the mobilisation of funding, site development, and operational planning.

## Spanish Officially Recognised as Antigua and Barbuda's Second Language

Spanish is set to become Antigua and Barbuda's official second language following the approval of a major policy initiative by Cabinet aimed at strengthening multilingual education and expanding regional integration.

The policy will see Spanish introduced as a core subject throughout the education system, with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology directed to restructure the curriculum at the pre-school, primary, and secondary school levels.

Speaking during Thursday's Post-Cabinet Press Briefing, Director General of Communications Maurice Merchant said the decision places Spanish alongside English and Mathematics as one of the country's core subjects.

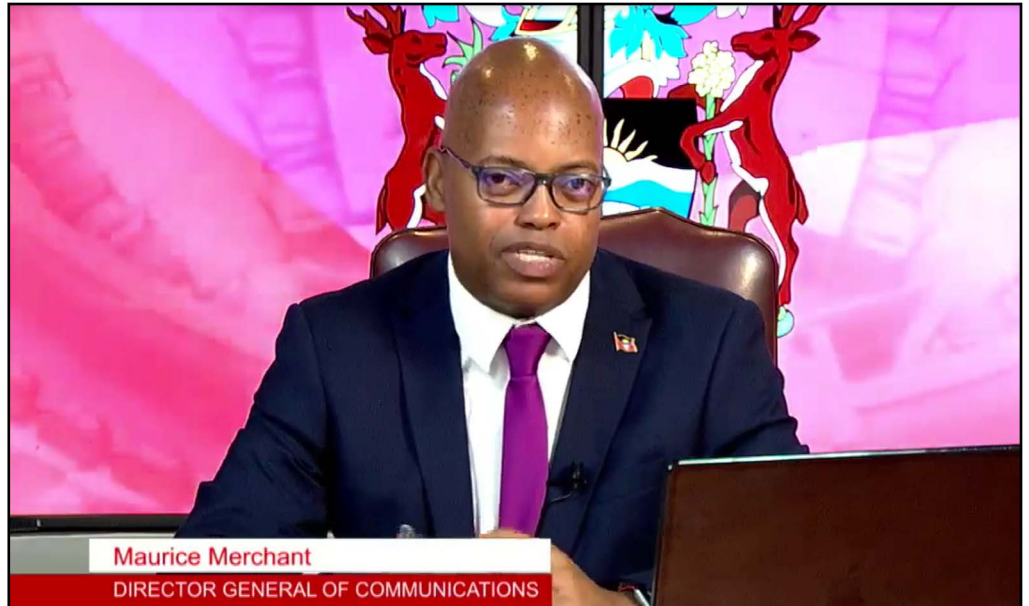
Merchant noted that the government expects Spanish to be taught at all educational levels as the policy is rolled out.

Cabinet said the initiative reflects Antigua and Barbuda's growing engagement within the region and internationally, while recognising the importance of equipping citizens with language skills that can improve educational, professional, diplomatic, and economic opportunities.

Merchant said the successful implementation of the policy will require additional resources, including more educators to teach the subject.

"You cannot effectively implement a policy if you do not have the tools to operate that policy," he stated.

According to Merchant, the Ministry of Education will seek to recruit additional Spanish teachers.



"It definitely will be seeking to employ additional Spanish teachers whether or not it's from our local community or by placing requests in the regional and international community for these teachers," he said.

Officials also highlighted the long-standing relationship between Antigua and Barbuda and the Dominican Republic as an important factor behind the decision. Cabinet has acknowledged the contribution of the Dominican community to national development and the close cultural and historical links shared by both countries.

The government believes stronger Spanish language competency among citizens and residents will improve communication, trade, tourism, workforce competitiveness, and diplomatic engagement with Spanish-speaking countries across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Cabinet also approved the Dominican Republic Integration Programme (DRIP), which is intended to strengthen economic, institution-

al, and cultural ties between Antigua and Barbuda and the Dominican Republic.

The programme is expected to facilitate increased trade and investment opportunities, improve cooperation in tourism and education, and provide structured support for Dominican nationals residing in Antigua and Barbuda.

In another move aimed at improving communication and support for the Spanish-speaking community, Cabinet approved the creation of a Spanish Desk within the Office of the Prime Minister.

The Spanish Desk will serve as a direct point of engagement for Spanish-speaking residents, helping to improve access to government services and promote greater community integration.

Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to policies that promote education, inclusion, regional cooperation, and national development as Antigua and Barbuda positions itself to thrive in an increasingly interconnected global environment.

## Prime Minister Browne to Advance Climate, Energy and Global Justice Agenda During High-Level Engagements in New York

Prime Minister Gaston Browne departed Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday for a series of high-level international engagements in New York City focused on climate resilience, renewable energy transition, sustainable development financing, democracy, human rights and reparatory justice.

The Prime Minister's engagements form part of the Global Citizen NOW initiative and will position Antigua and Barbuda at the center of several major international discussions leading into the hosting of the 2026 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Prime Minister Browne participated as a featured speaker in the panel discussion entitled "Bridging the Gap – The Frontlines of the Climate Crisis", held yesterday (Thursday) at Spring Studios in New York City. The panel examined the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable countries and communities and the urgent need for greater equity in global climate financing.

The Prime Minister joined an international panel that featured Alok Sharma and Brazilian indigenous filmmaker and climate advocate Priscila Tapajowara. The discussion was moderated by environmental journalist Oliver Milman.

Prime Minister Browne was expected to use the platform to highlight the existential threats climate change poses to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including increasingly severe hurricanes, rising sea levels, economic vulnerability and escalating adaptation costs. He also advocated for urgent reforms to the international financial architecture to improve access to concessional financing and climate adaptation resources for vulnerable nations.

In addition to the panel engagement, the Prime Minister will hold a series of strategic bilateral meetings with



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

global philanthropic, clean energy and policy leaders aimed at advancing Antigua and Barbuda's climate and sustainable development agenda ahead of CHOGM 2026.

Among the key discussions will be a proposed strategic partnership with the Bezos Earth Fund to support a multi-country Caribbean and Commonwealth climate initiative anchored in Antigua and Barbuda. The proposal seeks to position Antigua and Barbuda as a launch-pad for a broader regional climate and clean energy agenda involving Commonwealth nations and Caribbean Small Island Developing States.

The Prime Minister will advocate for a three-pillar climate partnership involving a Climate and Clean Energy Leaders' Segment during Global



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Citizen NOW: Antigua and Barbuda, a Caribbean Climate Action Initiative focused on renewable energy and marine protection, and the establishment of a Commonwealth Climate Compact aimed at mobilizing commitments on renewable energy, biodiversity and ocean protection among Commonwealth member states.

Prime Minister Browne is also scheduled to meet with Zosia North-Bond to explore the establishment of a Caribbean-focused clean energy investment and deployment platform known as the “Power Caribbean Initiative”. The initiative would seek to replicate successful renewable energy financing models implemented in Africa and adapt them for the Caribbean region.

The proposed initiative would support investments in solar energy, battery storage, grid resilience and community-owned renewable energy projects across Caribbean states, with Antigua and Barbuda serving as the pilot and demonstration hub for regional expansion. Discussions will also

examine opportunities for innovative community energy ownership models, localized energy pricing systems and climate-resilient energy infrastructure for hospitals, schools and other critical facilities.

The Prime Minister further engaged with senior representatives of the Open Society Foundations on opportunities to partner with Antigua and Barbuda in shaping a modern Commonwealth agenda centered on democracy, human rights accountability and reparatory justice.

These discussions were expected to focus on strengthening democratic resilience, protecting civic space, advancing accountability mechanisms for human rights commitments and elevating reparatory justice as a major international policy issue during CHOGM 2026 and Global Citizen NOW: Antigua and Barbuda.

Prime Minister Browne also extended an invitation for senior global leaders and advocates to participate in the Antigua and Barbuda-hosted engage-

ments leading into CHOGM 2026, which is expected to convene leaders from all 56 Commonwealth nations. The Government views the upcoming Commonwealth summit as a transformative opportunity to position Antigua and Barbuda as a global convening center for climate action, justice, sustainable development and multilateral cooperation.

The Prime Minister has consistently advocated for stronger international action on climate change and greater fairness in the global financial system for vulnerable developing countries. His participation in the New York engagements forms part of the Government’s broader strategy to strengthen international partnerships, attract sustainable investment and advance Antigua and Barbuda’s leadership role on issues affecting Small Island Developing States and the wider Global South.

Prime Minister Browne is expected to return to Antigua and Barbuda today (Friday) following the conclusion of the engagements.

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# Senior Police Officer Tops Regional Law Enforcement Award



Assistant Superintendent of Police Frankie Thomas of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda has captured the prestigious Amalgamated Security Services Limited (ASSL) Top Caribbean Community Policing Award.

ASP Thomas was presented with the award during an official ceremony hosted by the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) and Amalgamated Security Services Limited in Paramaribo, Suriname, on Tuesday, May 12.

Speaking following the presentation, ASP Thomas said he was deeply honoured by the recognition.

“I am elated, yet extremely humbled to be nominated for this high honour. I accept this in honour of my mom, who was my greatest supporter, and all those who have been supporting me throughout my career as a police officer,” he stated.

ASP Thomas further expressed his commitment to continue strengthening the partnership between the police and the public. He also encouraged his fellow officers within the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda,

and throughout the region, to embrace police/public partnerships as a critical component in improving public safety and community trust.

During his acceptance speech, ASP Thomas gave thanks to Almighty God for His divine favour and expressed profound gratitude to Amalgamated Security Services Limited and the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police for selecting him for the prestigious award.

He also acknowledged former Commissioner of Police, Mr. Atlee Rodney, now Deputy Director of the Regional Security System (RSS), for his support and encouragement throughout the years.

Additionally, he thanked the Police Administration, along with his staff and colleagues, for their continued support and encouragement.

The ASSL/ACCP Regional Recognition Awards Program was established in 2015 through a partnership between the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police and Amalgamated Security Services Limited. The initiative recognizes outstanding Caribbean law enforcement officers for

excellence in policing, public safety, and community engagement.

The program features three award categories:

Top Caribbean Community Policing Officer, which focuses on improving relationships between police and community members;

Top Caribbean Crime Fighter, which recognizes officers for exceptional crime detection and investigative successes; and

Top Caribbean Career Move, which honours significant professional achievements and career advancement within law enforcement.

Meanwhile, Commissioner of Police Everton Jeffers has extended heartfelt congratulations to ASP Thomas on his outstanding achievement and commended him for bringing regional recognition to the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Police Administration further applauds ASP Thomas for his dedication, professionalism, and commitment to community policing, and wishes him continued success in his future endeavours.

## ESFN Launches Summer Internship Program for Youths in Antigua

The EcoShores Sustainable Futures Network (ESFN) has announced its Summer Internship Program 2026 for youths in Antigua, an initiative designed to equip participants with practical skills in environmental sustainability, digital media, communication, and youth leadership.

The internship will take place over six (6) to eight (8) weeks during the summer and will be delivered through a hybrid model, combining virtual training sessions with scheduled in-person activities and field-based experiences. Interns will gain hands-on exposure to real-world projects focused on environmental awareness, community engagement, and youth development across Antigua and Barbuda.

Participants will be placed across five (5) structured focus areas:

- **Media & Digital Communication:**

For participants interested in creativity, design, social media, and visual storytelling. This area includes graphic design, visual communication, social media content creation, and multimedia storytelling through photography and video production.

- **Journalism & Communication:**

For participants who enjoy writing, research, and storytelling that informs



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and inspires. This includes environmental reporting, newsletter and article writing, and interview-based storytelling that highlights community voices and environmental issues.

- **Environment & Conservation:**

For participants interested in geography, biodiversity, and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems. This track includes environmental learning and fieldwork, introduction to GIS and mapping, waste management and sustainability initiatives, and biodiversity conservation with a focus

on wetlands, mangroves, and coastal environments.

- **Finance & Programme Support:**

For participants interested in business, organization, and supporting projects behind the scenes. This includes financial literacy exposure, administrative support, and assistance with fundraising and sponsorship coordination.

- **Public Health & Community Wellness:**

For participants interested in health, community outreach, and the link between environment and well-being.

This includes community engagement activities, research and data collection, and youth-focused wellness initiatives.

A key feature of the program is a youth public speaking and leadership opportunity inspired by the TED Talk model. Interns will have the opportunity to develop, refine, and present their own ideas and youth-led initiatives, focusing on communication, confidence-building, and project development. This opportunity is supported through collaborative learning influences connected to southern international youth development and resilience-based approaches.

As part of the internship experience, participants will also engage in ESFN's Community Swim Program, which emphasizes water safety, confidence-building, and marine awareness. This component will also include data collection and engagement activities that connect swimming with environmental education, strengthening the link between personal development and conservation.

Registration is now open via the ESFN Summer Internship Program application form. Applicants are required to complete a short written or video submission as part of the application process. Selected candidates will be contacted directly.

## Shipment Delays Trigger A Temporary Slowdown Of Asphalt And Concrete Road Works

The Ministry of Works wishes to advise the general public of a temporary slowdown in the pace of ongoing road upgrade projects. This disruption has been triggered by unforeseen delays in the shipment of aggregates required for both asphalt and concrete works.

The regular pace of roadworks will resume by Monday, May 25, 2026.

The Ministry says it regrets any inconvenience caused to commuters, residents, and business owners. It added that it remains committed to delivering high-quality infrastructure and appreciate the public's continued patience and cooperation as it works to improve the national road network.



## Statement from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla

For the first time the US government publicly formalizes, through a communiqué from the Department of State, an offer of aid to Cuba valued at 100 million dollars.

It remains unclear whether the aid will be in cash or material, and whether it will be directed toward the people's most urgent needs at this time, such as fuel, food, and medicine.

However, in light of the inconsistency of such apparent generosity—coming from those who engage in economic warfare against the Cuban people—the Cuban government does not reject foreign aid offered in



good faith for genuine bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

Nor does it have any objection to working with the Catholic Church, with which it has a long and posi-

tive history of collaboration.

We are willing to hear the details of the offer and how it would be implemented.

We hope it will be free of political maneuvering and

attempts to exploit the hardships and suffering of a people under siege.

The best assistance the U.S. government could provide to the noble Cuban people at this time—and at any time—is to de-escalate the measures of the energy, economic, commercial, and financial blockade, which has intensified as never before in recent months, severely affecting all sectors of the Cuban economy and society.

Issued by the Cuban Embassy,

St John's

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## Rotary Club Donates Renovated Classroom To Youth Intervention Unit

The Rotary Club of Antigua has officially handed over a newly renovated classroom facility to the Youth Intervention Unit of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda.

The partnership project forms part of Rotary's continued commitment to youth development and community service in Antigua and Barbuda.

Valued at approximately EC\$28,000, the project involved extensive refurbishment works, including repairs to the roof and ceiling, upgrades to lighting and bathroom facilities, repainting, and general restoration of the building. The classroom was first renovated by the Rotary Club in 2016.

Speaking at the handing-over ceremony, Rotary Club President Elisa Graham said the organization recognizes the importance of the Youth Intervention Unit in assisting vulnerable young people through rehabilitation, education, and personal development opportunities.

Former President Paul Ryan also reaffirmed the Rotary Club's commitment to ensuring that young people are not left behind, but continue to receive the support, guidance, and opportunities



needed to succeed.

Commissioner of Police Everton Jeffers welcomed the partnership and praised the Rotary Club for its meaningful investment in the nation's youth. He emphasized that policing is not solely about enforcement, but also about prevention, mentorship, and helping young people find positive alternatives.

Commissioner Jeffers further encour-

aged greater community involvement in supporting the Youth Intervention Unit through mentorship, training, counselling, and other forms of assistance for at-risk youth.

He also commended the efforts and contributions of Inspector Claudina Nathaniel-Morgan, retired Sergeant Randy Christopher, the contractors, Rotary members, and all others who helped to ensure the successful completion of the project.



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## New Minister of Health Pays Visit to Barbuda



Minister of Health, Michael Joseph, recently led a high-level delegation to Barbuda as part of ongoing efforts to assess and strengthen healthcare delivery and public health infrastructure on the sister island.

The visit forms part of the Government's broader commitment to ensuring that no aspect of the healthcare system is overlooked, including the needs and priorities of Barbuda. Minister Joseph emphasized that a comprehensive three-month assessment will be undertaken in its entirety before implementation measures are introduced, thereby allowing for a detailed evaluation of the health sector and the development of a strategic and inclusive national healthcare framework.

During the visit, the delegation toured the Hanna Thomas Hospital, the Barbuda Health and Wellness Centre, and the dental department, where discussions were held with healthcare personnel regarding existing operations, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The Minister reiterated that Barbuda remains integral to the overall build-out of the nation's health sector and long-term healthcare strategy.



The delegation also discussed the need to strengthen emergency response capabilities on the island, including provisions for an ambulance for Barbuda.

In addition to the healthcare facilities, the Minister and delegation visited the Barbuda landfill site as part of the Ministry's continued focus on environmental health, sanitation, and public wellness.

Members of the delegation included Permanent Secretary within the Ministry, Stacey Gregg-Paige; Senator Kendra Beazer; Chairman of the Health Committee, Devon Warner; Deputy Chairman of the Health Committee, Wayde Burton; Secretary/CEO, O. Shari Cannegieter; Head of the Health Department, Karie Williams-Cephas; Resident Doctor, Dr. Jeremy Deazle; and Public Health Nurse, Nurse Jenita Cuffy.

The Ministry of Health remains



committed to advancing equitable healthcare access and improving the quality of health services for all residents of Antigua and Barbuda.

## Creative Artists Tour New National Theatre as Government Pushes Toward CHOGM Deadline



Officials, performers, choreographers and members of Antigua and Barbuda's creative community walked through the nearly completed National Performing Arts Centre on Wednesday as government officials sought direct feedback from the arts sector ahead of the venue's planned debut for the opening ceremony of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

The former Deluxe Cinema in St. John's is being transformed into an 850-seat national theatre and is expected to be handed over by September 30, with construction crews currently working two daily shifts to keep the project on schedule ahead of CHOGM in November.

Leading the walkthrough, Minister of Social and Urban Transformation Rawdon Turner said the consultation with creatives was intentional and necessary to ensure the facility properly serves the country's long-term artistic needs beyond CHOGM.

Turner revealed that another meeting is already planned for next week when a professional stage and production company from the United States and the United Kingdom arrives on island to further assess technical requirements for the theatre.

Among the immediate concerns

raised during the tour were issues surrounding the stage surface, particularly for dancers and theatrical productions requiring specialized flooring.

The minister confirmed that government is now considering installing a wooden stage floor tailored to the specifications recommended by members of the dance community, along with several additional modifications highlighted during the walkthrough.

Construction on the project is currently being carried out in two shifts daily — from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. — as officials push to complete the venue in time for CHOGM's opening showcase.

Director of Culture Khan Cordice, who is also serving as one of the creative directors for the CHOGM opening ceremony, said the consultation process demonstrated the importance of continued collaboration between government and the local creative sector.

Cordice noted that for years, the lack of a proper performance venue limited the scale and ambition of productions that local artists could realistically pursue.

Choreographer Tavia Hunt, who is working alongside artistic director Zahra Airall on the CHOGM production, described the engagement pro-



cess as a significant shift from past approaches where creatives were often excluded from infrastructure planning decisions affecting the arts.

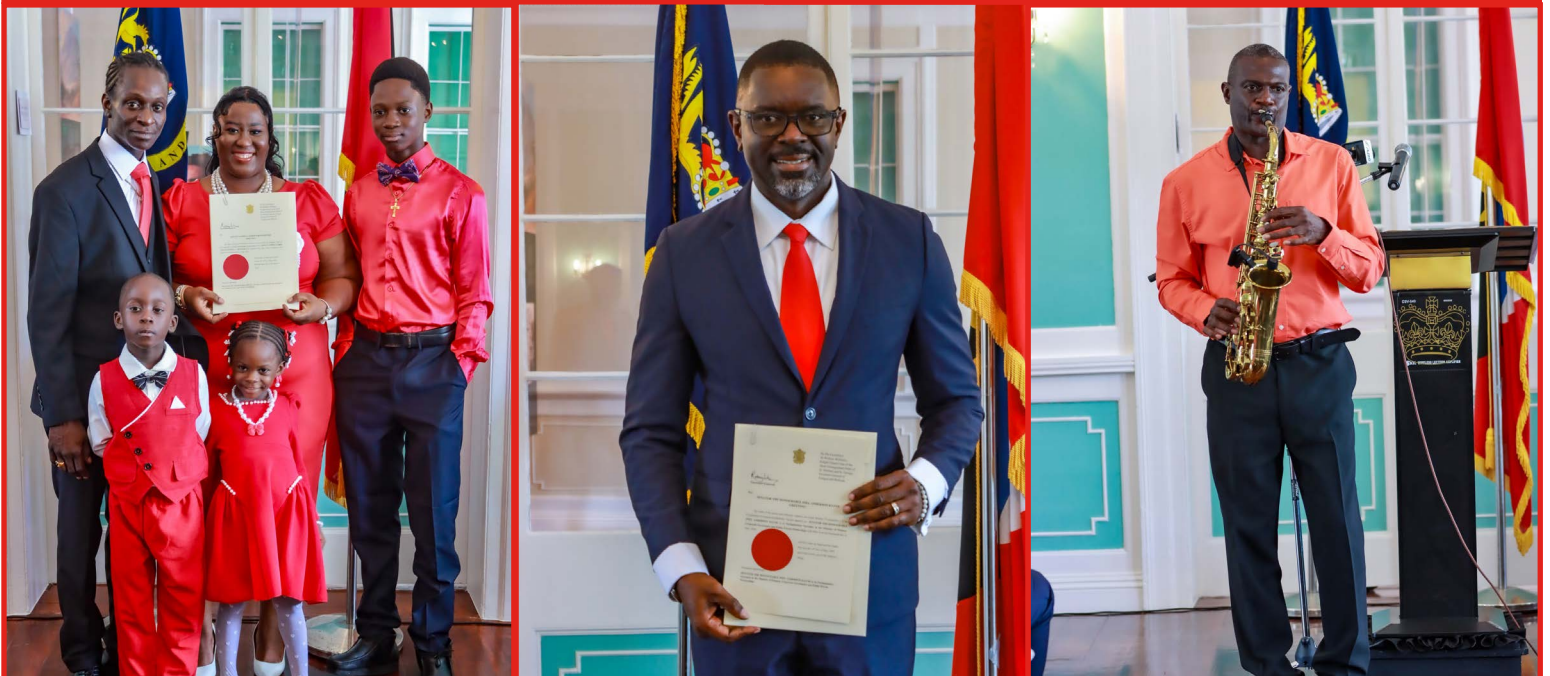
Beyond the theatre itself, officials also outlined plans for the adjoining building to eventually become a multi-purpose creative hub after CHOGM, including a fully operational recording studio on the upper floor.

Airall said the project represents more than a temporary summit venue, noting that many within the artistic community are already looking toward the long-term opportunities the facility could create for theatre, music, dance and cultural development in Antigua and Barbuda.

# Photo Essay



# Photo Essay

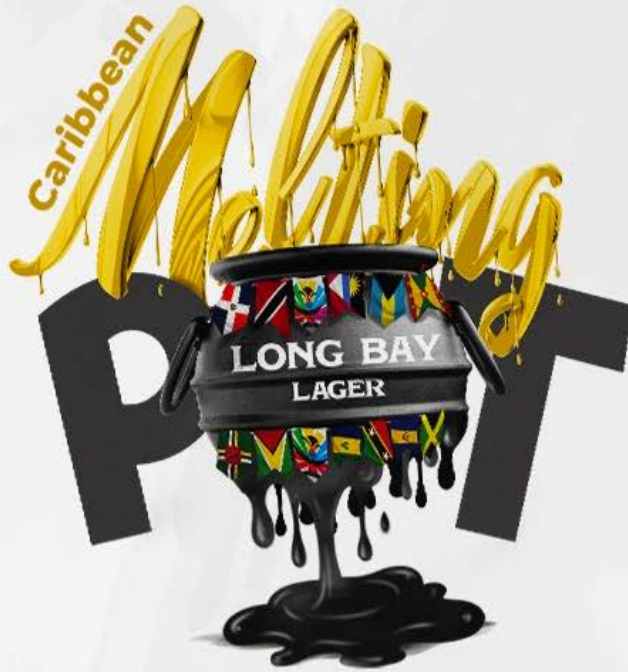




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- 10AM-5PM | SPRITZ & SUN - SEAFOOD FEST - AND-  
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EVENT SCHEDULE



# The OAS Faces a Moral Test in Panama



*By Sir Ronald Sanders*

An attempt is now being made by a few member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), using procedural manoeuvres, to prevent a proposed “Declaration on the Rights of Persons and Peoples of African Descent” from proceeding to the OAS General Assembly scheduled to be held in Panama next month.

Debate on this fundamentally important declaration should have been near its end by now, leaving the way clear for consideration and adoption by the General Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the OAS.

Normally, the positions expressed in my weekly commentary reflect my own views. I am pleased to say that this commentary has the full support of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, whose Prime Minis-

ter, Gaston Browne, instructed that “We stand on the principles of justice, truth and right... We should never cower in defending these principles”.

The proposed Declaration is the product of a negotiating process of a Working Group of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) of the OAS, led principally by Brazil and Colombia, and involving numerous member states across the hemisphere, including Antigua and Barbuda.

Yet, some countries are now seeking to block the Declaration from proceeding, advancing arguments that ring hollow. Among them is the claim that “more time” is needed. But the evidence of history is not obscure. The denial of rights to peoples of African descent in the Americas is not a recent discovery. It is written into centuries of slavery, colonial exploitation, racial discrimination, exclusion, and dispossession. To say now that more time is required risks appearing less as a procedural concern than as an effort to avoid acknowledging truths that have long been plain.

The countries of CARICOM, with majority or significant populations of African descent, are among the few places in the hemisphere where those systems have been most consciously challenged. They have done the most to dismantle the structures built on that history.

The draft Declaration seeks to affirm, within the Inter-American system, principles relating to equality before the law, protection against racial discrimination, access to justice, political participation, education, development, cultural identity, economic and social inclusion, and recognition of the continuing effects of slavery and colonialism upon peoples of African descent in the hemisphere.

The draft also addresses matters such as the preservation of cultural heritage, the pursuit of reparatory justice, the collection of disaggregated data to expose racial inequality, fair access to education and employment, protection against racial profiling and discrimination in the administration of justice, and measures aimed at improving participation and representation in public life.

In several respects, the Declaration seeks to encourage member states to confront enduring structural inequalities affecting peoples of African descent and to adopt public policies directed toward equality, inclusion, dignity, and opportunity.

Antigua and Barbuda has long played a constructive leadership role within the Inter-American system in confronting racism and discrimination. Our country served as Chair of the OAS Working Group to draft Legally Binding Instruments Against Racism, Discrimination and All Forms of Intolerance, a process that helped

to usher in the adoption of two important Inter-American instruments addressing racism and all forms of discrimination in the hemisphere.

CARICOM countries were significantly shaped by the forced labour, suffering, endurance, and resilience of their ancestors. The prosperity of colonial powers was built in significant measure upon that exploitation. The freedom and dignity that the peoples of CARICOM countries now enjoy were won through generations of resistance, sacrifice, and struggle by those who came before us, including the indentured labourers from India and Madeira. Their descendants, too, joined the wider struggle for African liberation everywhere.

The names of those struggles, from slavery to the end of colonial rule, still echo across the Caribbean: Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines of Haiti; Nanny and Marcus Garvey of Jamaica; Bussa and Barrow of Barbados; Cuffy, Jagan and Burnham of Guyana; Prince Klaas, V.C. Bird and Tim Hector of Antigua.

These men and women were asserting the humanity, equality, and dignity of African peoples in societies designed to deny all three.

Therefore, CARICOM nations would be untrue to their own history, untrue to the memory of their ancestors, and untrue to all those who fought against racism and colonial domination if they do not support a serious hemispheric declaration affirming the rights, dignity, equality, and historical experience of peoples of African descent.

That support does not mean that every word of the current draft is settled or agreed; like many multilateral texts, it contains provisions still under discussion and consultation among states. That is the normal process of multilateral negotiation.

However, what must not happen is the prevention of the Declaration from proceeding at all to the OAS General Assembly in Panama. The General Assembly is precisely the forum where governments should demonstrate their individual dedication and the commitment of the OAS, as an institution, to more rights for more people, as former Secretary General, Luis Almagro, so often proclaimed. To prevent consideration altogether would be contrary to the spirit of dialogue and multilateral engagement that the OAS is intended to uphold.

There is no justifiable reason for

this issue to become a source of unnecessary confrontation within the hemisphere. The rights and dignity of peoples of African descent should not be viewed as a partisan or ideological matter. They are matters of history, justice, equality, inclusion, and human rights.

We would like all OAS member states to join Colombia, Brazil and the 14 CARICOM members in support of this Declaration, which is entirely consistent with the history, values, and constitutional democracies that fashioned the OAS and its many declarations, resolutions and statements of commitment to human dignity and equality for all peoples.

OAS member states should also remember that the General Assembly is being held in Panama, where the Canal that enriched world commerce and transformed global shipping was built largely by the labour, sacrifice, suffering, and deaths of thousands of African descendants from the Caribbean. The moral question could not be clearer.

(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States. He is also the Chancellor of the University of Guyana)



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## Antigua and Barbuda Launches US\$12.3 Million National Initiative to Boost Disaster Preparedness with Early Warnings for All

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on Thursday officially launched a comprehensive five-year project to overhaul the nation's disaster preparedness and weather forecasting capabilities. The National Inception Workshop, held at the Trade Winds Hotel, marks the start of the 'Early Warnings for All (EW4ALL) – Antigua and Barbuda' Project, funded by a US\$12.3 million grant from the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

The workshop brought together senior government officials, disaster management experts, and representatives from several United Nations agencies. The gathering served to synchronize the technical roadmaps and legal frameworks required to ensure every resident, regardless of their location or physical ability, receives and can act upon life-saving information before disaster strikes.

Transformation, the Hon. Kiz Johnson, emphasized that the project is designed to reach the most isolated corners of the twin-island state. "We are here to ensure that information lives and breathes at the last mile," Minister Johnson stated. "Whether it is a fisherman in Barbuda or a family in a remote rural community, this system must reach them in a language they understand and through channels they trust."

Antigua and Barbuda currently ranks fifth on the World Risk Index, a position that underscores the necessity of moving beyond reactive disaster response. The EW4ALL project addresses this by modernizing the national Disaster Management Act and upgrading the monitoring equipment and infrastructure of the Antigua and Barbuda Meteorolog-



ical Service (ABMS). The project is part of a wider UNDP-led programme advancing Early Warnings for All across seven climate-vulnerable countries, backed by a US\$103 million investment from the Green Climate Fund.

Kristin Lang, the Green Climate Fund's Regional Director of Latin America and the Caribbean said, "Across the Caribbean, communities are facing stronger hurricanes, flash floods and prolonged drought.

Early warning systems are therefore essential for protecting lives, livelihoods, and development gains. Through the Early Warnings for All project, the Green Climate Fund will help to strengthen the institutions and information systems needed so people can anticipate climate risks and respond before disaster strikes. This is the kind of country-driven, practical resilience-building that the Caribbean needs as climate impacts intensify."

A key feature of the initiative is the deep collaboration between the UN pillar lead agencies for Early Warnings for All – including the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Stephanie Ziebell, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, noted during the workshop opening ceremony that the project represents a significant shift in how international partners and local agencies deliver climate resilience. “By bridging the specialized expertise of our sister agencies with the local knowledge of national stakeholders, we are building a proactive shield for these islands,” Ms. Ziebell said. In Antigua and Barbuda, UNDP will work closely with the National Office of Disaster Services (NODS) to implement the EW4ALL project.


The first day of the workshop focused on the technical baseline for forecasting improvements, including specialized monitoring for flash floods and storm surges. On the second day, the delegation will conduct site visits to Community Emergency Response Units (CERUs) and the Crabbs Search and Rescue Training Area to observe firsthand how technical data is translated into community-level action. The event will conclude with the first meeting of the Project Board to review the initial year of implementation.

As climate patterns grow more unpredictable, the EW4ALL project stands as a national priority to safeguard livelihoods and ensure that no citizen is left behind when a hazard approaches the horizon.



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## Ambassador Theon Ali discusses Antigua's landslide election and the future of UAE relations

When the ballots were counted in St. John's on April 30, the result was clear. The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party secured a commanding landslide victory, and Prime Minister Gaston Browne won a fourth consecutive term. In the Caribbean, where political shifts frequently reshape administrations, the result signalled continuity at the highest level of government.

### A Relationship Built on Patient Diplomacy

Relations between the UAE and Antigua and Barbuda have expanded steadily through diplomatic engagement, investment discussions, and broader cooperation surrounding climate resilience, tourism, and financial services. Antigua has increasingly positioned itself as a regional voice on sustainability and economic diversification within CARICOM, while the UAE continues strengthening ties across emerging international markets.

### Connectivity Discussions Continue

As Ambassador Theon Ali put it, "The UAE and Antigua have long been working on establishing direct air links between our two countries. This is not a new ambition or a hopeful paragraph in a feasibility study. It is an active file, one that has required navigating complex air service agreements, route economics, and the operational realities of longhaul travel to a small island market. This is the invisible infrastructure of international partnership – unglamorous, slow, and



*Ambassador Theon Ali*

essential."

Direct flights could strengthen tourism flows between the regions while also supporting business travel, educational exchanges, and broader economic engagement. Antigua continues attracting luxury tourism interest through its beaches, yachting sector, and hospitality industry, areas that align with growing outbound travel demand from Gulf travellers.

### Technology And AI Cooperation Expands

Antigua and Barbuda has also increased attention toward digital trans-

formation initiatives, including e-governance systems, AI-assisted logistics programmes, and data-driven tourism infrastructure. Regional policymakers continue exploring partnerships capable of supporting technical implementation and digital capacity-building.

The UAE's rapid expansion in artificial intelligence infrastructure and smart government services has positioned the country as a potential technical partner for Caribbean states seeking digital modernization. Developments tied to Masdar City, government AI deployment initiatives, and partnerships involving firms such as



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G42 have increasingly drawn international attention in recent years.

Caribbean markets may offer Gulf firms opportunities to test and adapt digital governance systems in smaller regulatory environments while expanding regional influence in sectors historically dominated by North American and European firms.

### Climate And Energy Cooperation

Climate vulnerability remains one of the defining issues for Caribbean nations, particularly following increasingly destructive hurricane seasons across the region. Barbuda experienced severe devastation during Hurricane Irma in 2017, when approximately 95 percent of the island sustained damage.

In March 2024, the Green Barbuda project was inaugurated through the UAE-Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund. The hybrid solar facility combines 720 kilowatts of solar PV capacity with battery storage and diesel backup systems designed to withstand hurricane-force winds reaching 265 kilometres per hour.

According to project data, the facility reduces annual diesel consumption

by approximately 406,000 litres while lowering carbon dioxide emissions by more than one million kilograms annually. The UAE-Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund, launched in 2017, now supports projects across 16 Caribbean countries. Looking ahead, the Green Barbuda project may serve as a model for future renewable energy expansion across Antigua and the wider Caribbean region as governments continue seeking alternatives to diesel dependency.

### Finance And Investment Discussions

Financial cooperation between Antigua and Gulf investors has historically included activity tied to Antigua and Barbuda's Citizenship by Investment programme. However, future cooperation could evolve toward broader institutional and financial agreements between both sides.

Among the proposals frequently discussed within regional financial circles is the possibility of a double taxation agreement between the UAE and Antigua and Barbuda. Such an agreement could reduce barriers for businesses operating between both jurisdictions while potentially supporting future fi-

nancial cooperation, including Islamic finance structures and cross-border investment activity.

### Continued Bilateral Momentum

What separates productive bilateral relationships from symbolic ones is the willingness to move past discussion. Antigua and the UAE have already demonstrated that capacity – with the Green Barbuda plant operating, aviation talks at an advanced stage, and digital cooperation moving toward technical agreements. The election removes any uncertainty about political direction. The only remaining question is one of pace.

On that question, the ambassador is clear: “The UAE and Antigua and Barbuda are writing a different kind of partnership story, not one of grand gestures, but of patient, practical work that delivers for our people, from renewable energy that withstands hurricanes to digital infrastructure that opens new markets. The foundation is strong. Now we build.”

Reprinted from: *Gulf Today* 12 May, 2026



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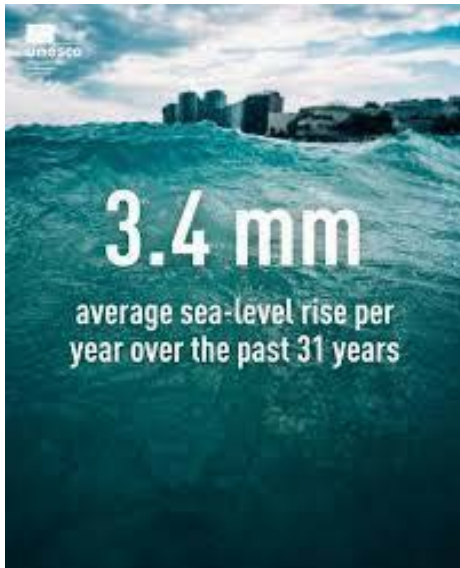
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# CLIMATE CONSCIOUS

RHYME AND RESOLVE: CLIMATE CALLS

Good Humans  
268 Inc

Climate Conscious: We All Have a Part to Play



The climate is changing, the warning is clear,  
 The oceans are rising a little each year.  
 The heat waves grow stronger, the storms  
 grow more wild,  
 And nature keeps calling to every grown and  
 child.

From forests once green to beaches once  
 bright,  
 We are now witnessing a difficult fight.  
 But while the challenge may seem far away,  
 The truth is: we all have a part to play.

The smoke from the factories up into the  
 sky,  
 The mountains of garbage that endlessly pile  
 high,

The plastic in rivers that drift out to sea,  
 Are all part of a problem affecting you and  
 me.

Climate change is not only ice melting afar,  
 It is droughts and floods where communities  
 are.  
 It is farmers losing crops from too little rain,  
 It is families rebuilding again and again.

It is hotter school days and unbearable heat,  
 It is fire and hurricanes no one can defeat.  
 It is coral reefs fading, fish swimming away,  
 And still we are reminded: we all have a part  
 to play.

"But what can  
 I do, I am  
 just one  
 person"  
 said 7 billion  
 people..

Some say, "I'm only one person, what can I  
 do?"  
 But change starts with me, and it also starts  
 with you.

A bottle recycled, a tree planted right,  
Can help push the future toward something  
more bright.

Turning off lights when they are not in use,  
Reducing our waste instead of abuse,  
Walking more often instead of a ride,  
Can help protect the Earth we all share  
worldwide.



Communities matter, the young and the old,  
The quietest voices and the brave and bold.  
Because climate action is bigger than fame,  
It is people together creating real change.

Businesses too have a role they must face,  
To reduce pollution and waste in every  
place.  
Governments must listen and make stronger  
laws,  
To protect the environment and support the  
cause.

Schools can teach children the value of care,  
How protecting the planet is something we  
share.  
Teach them recycling, compost, and sea,  
Teach them the power of responsibility.

Because the children of today will soon lead  
tomorrow,  
And inherit the beauty—or inherit the  
sorrow.  
The choices we make and the paths that we  
pave,  
Will determine the future we choose to save.

The Sustainable Goals give us direction and  
light,  
Showing the world how to make things  
right.

Climate Action, Clean Water, Life Below  
Sea,  
A roadmap toward what our future can be.

And persons with disabilities must not be  
left behind,  
In climate conversations that shape  
humankind.

Because disasters affect everyone in  
different ways,  
And inclusion must guide all future days.

A ramp can save lives during storms and  
rain,  
Accessible shelters can reduce fear and pain.  
Climate justice means fairness for all,  
Ensuring no community is forgotten when  
disasters call.



There is beauty in action, beauty in care,  
Beauty in people choosing to repair.  
From beach cleanups to gardens growing  
food,  
Small actions together can greatly improve.

The future is not hopeless, the future can  
shine,  
If we protect the Earth one step at a time.  
No effort is wasted, no action too small,  
Because climate change affects us all.



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# Regional News



## Jamaica to roll out 95 new greenhouses in climate resilience drive



Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining Minister Floyd Green says the Government has allocated \$800 million to construct 95 greenhouses across four parishes before the end of 2026.

Of the 95 greenhouses, 40 will be established in Mocho, Clarendon; 20 in Water Valley and 15 in Black Stone Edge in St. Ann; 10 in Lancaster, Manchester, and 10 in Damhead, St Catherine.

In his Sectoral Debate presentation on Wednesday, Green noted that protected agriculture is critical in building resilience in the climate-vulnerable sector, and as such, the Government has embarked on the “largest outlay of protected agriculture structures in our history”.

Additionally, the greenhouse cluster in Content, Manchester, will be transformed into a protected agricultural zone complete with storage and a new farm road, the Green said.

He noted that under the US\$50-mil-

lion Green Climate Fund (GCF) ADAPT Jamaica project, a series of greenhouses will be designed and built to withstand Category Five hurricanes.

“It’s one of the hallmarks of the project. We’re going to be designing greenhouses fit for purpose for our reality, and we’re going to be spending over \$1.5 billion over the next five years to roll out those greenhouses,” he pointed out.

The aim of the GCF project is to enhance climate resilience for approximately 700,000 vulnerable farmers across central parishes over the next five years. (JIS NEWS)



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## PAHO announces regional agreement to secure pandemic influenza vaccines for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Pan American Health Organization has entered into a new arrangement with CSL Seqirus designed to improve access to pandemic influenza vaccines for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean during any future influenza emergency.

A PAHO press release said the agreement sets up a pre-arranged allocation system in which a defined share of CSL Seqirus' global production of pandemic influenza vaccines will be set aside for participating PAHO member states. Countries involved will be able to draw from an initial reserved pool of doses if a pandemic occurs.

PAHO described the initiative as part of efforts to strengthen regional readiness, shaped by lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The system is intended to reduce uncertainty and improve vaccine availability when global demand spikes.

"This agreement is a direct response to the hard lessons of COVID-19 and a major step forward in strengthening health security and pandemic preparedness across the Americas," said PAHO Director Jarbas Barbosa.

He added: "Through our Regional Revolving Funds, countries are joining forces to secure a reserved share of vaccine production, helping protect those at risk when it matters most."

Under the terms of the agreement, CSL Seqirus will take responsibility for advancing pandemic influenza vaccine development while also supporting technology



transfer activities, drawing on its long-standing experience in influenza science and large-scale vaccine manufacturing.

Reportedly, production will also be partially carried out in Argentina through collaboration with Sinergium Biotech. PAHO noted that this element of the agreement is intended to strengthen regional production capacity and make supply chains more resilient, reflecting key lessons from the COVID-19 crisis.

David Ross, Executive Vice President and General Manager at CSL Seqirus, said: "This agreement puts pandemic preparedness best practices into action, bringing together reserved doses, regional manufacturing capability, and a long-term public-private commitment. We're proud to establish this kind of partnership in Latin America and the Caribbean for the first time."

Officials highlighted that the arrangement builds on earlier influenza vaccine cooperation between PAHO and CSL Seqirus, as well as sustained demand supported through

PAHO's Regional Revolving Funds. It is also expected to help further expand manufacturing capabilities within the region over time.

Sinergium Biotech President and CEO Alejandro Gil said: "This agreement builds on a long-standing collaborative relationship we have maintained with PAHO since 2021 and with CSL Seqirus since 2010. The infrastructure and human resource capacities developed at Sinergium over the past 15 years now enable us to guarantee countries in the region access to quality products to respond to future pandemics, in line with the regional strategies defined by PAHO. For Sinergium, it is a source of pride to be able to contribute in such a significant way to public health in the region," said Gil.

PAHO said the deal followed an international competitive procurement process and roughly a year of negotiations. It is intended to shorten the time required to secure vaccines during health emergencies, when global supply is limited and competition among countries intensifies.

The organization also noted that middle-income countries have often faced structural disadvantages in accessing vaccines during global health crises. By pooling demand through its Regional Revolving Funds, PAHO aims to help participating countries negotiate more favorable conditions and improve equitable access in the global market.

Allocation of the reserved vaccine supply will be based on epidemiological data and risk assessments, with priority given to populations considered most vulnerable. PAHO explained that this approach allows the region to shift from reacting during crises to planning ahead with secured supply mechanisms in place.

PAHO Director Barbosa added: "For the first time, countries of the Americas are positioning themselves on more equal footing in a future global health emergency—not as individual markets, but as a region." He further stated: "This agreement shows what is possible when we act together to leverage the power of pooled procurement."

The organization emphasized that preparedness remains essential as avian influenza and other zoonotic viruses continue to circulate globally. It noted that influenza viruses, particularly those originating in animals, remain among the most likely pathogens to trigger future pandemics. (Dominica News Online)

## Saint-Martin proposes regional Caribbean network for film and audiovisual industries

Saint-Martin has unveiled a proposal aimed at strengthening collaboration across the Caribbean's film and audiovisual industries through the creation of a regional knowledge network under the framework of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

The proposal was presented by Cyrielle Cuirassier during the 49th Meeting of the OECS Commission on April 30, 2026. Addressing the full Commission, Cuirassier outlined an initiative championed by Saint-Martin President Louis Mussington and First Vice President Alain Richardson to establish a Caribbean knowledge network dedicated specifically to the film and audiovisual sectors.

Using recent figures from UNESCO, World Intellectual Property Organization, and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Cuirassier emphasized the growing importance of cultural and creative industries worldwide. A joint press release said she noted that the sector is now among the fastest expanding in the global economy, surpassing annual growth rates recorded in long-established industries, including automotive manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, both internationally and within France.

“The Caribbean has extraordinary cultural rich-



ness and creative potential. Film and audiovisual industries are powerful drivers of economic development, local employment, and cultural identity. It is time our region built the coordinated institutional architecture to fully capitalize on this opportunity,” she asserted.

During her presentation, Cuirassier reportedly advocated for a regional benchmarking exercise that would identify existing resources, institutional frameworks, and major stakeholders involved in film and audiovisual production throughout OECS member territories. She also requested that com-

missioners provide direct institutional contacts as an initial move toward broader consultations on the initiative.

The Saint-Martin representative also held discussions with OECS Director General Didacus Jules and members of his leadership team regarding the organisation's creative industries study conducted in August 2025. She explained that Saint-Martin's proposal is specifically focused on the audiovisual and film sector and is intended to complement the wider OECS creative industries agenda already underway.

According to the release,

the initiative forms part of Saint-Martin's broader strategy to position itself as a Caribbean hub for film and audiovisual industries. Officials said the proposal is expected to take the form of a network cooperation agreement that would be formally introduced through OECS institutional channels after consultations with interested member states.

Saint-Martin, which officially became an Associate Member of the OECS in March 2025, used the meeting to reaffirm its commitment to active regional participation and the development of initiatives designed to deliver both economic and cultural benefits across the Caribbean.

“Caribbean creative industries lack the critical mass to compete on the international stage individually. Together, we can change that and the OECS is the natural framework to make it happen.”

The 49th Meeting of the OECS Commission was attended by Director General Dr. Jules, senior members of the organisation's leadership team, and commissioners representing member governments at ambassadorial level. The session followed the 3rd Meeting of OECS Associate Members held on March 31, 2026, which Cuirassier also attended. (Dominica News Online)

## CDB and EU approve new funding to strengthen flood early warning systems in Suriname

The Caribbean Development Bank has announced a new US\$698,700 grant to help strengthen Suriname's ability to respond to climate-related flooding, according to a press release issued by the Bank.

The funding, provided by the European Union, will support the Strengthening Flood Early Warning Systems in Suriname Project, which is being implemented through a partnership between the CDB, the EU and the Government of Suriname.

In its release, the CDB said the initiative is intended to improve preparedness and emergency response capabilities in areas vulnerable to extreme rainfall and flooding, while helping to protect lives, livelihoods and economic infrastructure.

L. O'Reilly Lewis said the financing will help address weaknesses in the country's flood warning systems.

"This new investment will close critical gaps by upgrading hydrometeorological monitoring, strengthening forecasting capacity, improving inter-agency coordination, and ensuring that warnings are timely, accurate and actionable at both national and community levels."

According to the release, the project is financed through the Caribbean Action for Resilience Enhancement (CARE) Programme, which is funded by the EU under the Intra-African Caribbean Pacific European Union Disaster Risk Reduction Programme.

The CDB noted that the project will modernise flood early warning systems in several low-lying and flood-prone communities, including Brokopondo, Sipaliwini, parts of Paramaribo, the Boven-Suriname watershed and vulnerable coastal areas. These regions have faced repeated disruptions to transportation, agriculture, housing and public services due to flooding caused by heavy rainfall, river system activity and geographic conditions.

Fiona Ramsey highlighted the importance of strengthening weather forecasting and climate monitoring systems throughout the region.



"This initiative reflects the European Union's continued commitment to strengthening climate resilience in the Caribbean, under our renewed partnership with the region on Disaster Risk Management. By advancing weather forecasting capabilities and enhancing early warning systems, we are helping countries like Suriname better anticipate and respond to extreme weather events. Investing in reliable, science-based forecasting and timely alerts is essential to protecting lives, livelihoods and infrastructure, and to supporting sustainable development in the face of a changing climate."

The press release stated that the project will include 3D hazard and flood-risk mapping, expanded meteorological and hydrological monitoring networks, improved data systems and the implementation of a Common Alerting Protocol designed to improve the dissemination of emergency warnings.

The Bank also said public education and community engagement activities will be carried out to ensure residents, particularly those in remote and vulnerable communities, understand and respond effectively to flood alerts.

The project is expected to reduce flood-related losses, strengthen food security, protect infrastructure and jobs, lower disaster-related fiscal pressures

and support investor confidence.

Implementation will be led by Suriname's Ministry of Public Works and Spatial Planning through the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service, using what the CDB described as a coordinated multi-agency approach.

Stephen Tsang welcomed the support from the CDB and the EU.

"The Government of Suriname welcomes this timely support from the CDB and the EU. Strengthening our flood early warning systems is a critical step in protecting our communities, infrastructure, and economy against the increasing impacts of climate variability. This initiative will enhance our national capacity to anticipate and respond to extreme weather events, while reinforcing our commitment to building a safer, more resilient and sustainable future for all Surinamese."

The CDB stated that the financing aligns with its Strategic Plan 2026–2035, which focuses on strengthening social, economic and environmental resilience throughout the Caribbean. The Bank added that the initiative reflects its broader mission to reduce poverty and improve lives through resilient, inclusive and sustainable development. (Dominica News Online)

## UK health secretary resigns and is expected to challenge Starmer's leadership



Efforts to unseat British Prime Minister Keir Starmer broke out into open rebellion Thursday, with one potential rival resigning from the Cabinet and another clearing the way for her to enter any future leadership contest.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting became the first senior minister to quit Starmer's Cabinet on Thursday in what is expected to be a precursor to challenging his leadership.

Starmer is facing growing pressure to step down after his Labour Party's disastrous results last week in local and regional elections.

"You have shown courage and statesmanship on the world stage — not least in keeping Britain out of the war in Iran," Streeting wrote in a letter. "But where we need vision, we have a vacuum. Where we need direction, we have drift."

"It is now clear that you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election," he added.

Streeting, whose political ambitions have long been known, is considered one of a handful of people who could try to unseat Starmer.

Another likely challenger, former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Ray-

ner, said Thursday that she had reached an agreement with tax authorities to clear up questions about her taxes that forced her to leave the Cabinet last September.

Rayner told the Guardian newspaper that Starmer should "reflect on" his position, adding that she was ready to "play my part" in any leadership election if Streeting were to trigger a contest.

Pressure for Starmer to step aside has intensified since Labour suffered disastrous losses in local and regional elections last week, underscoring voter frustration with a government that has failed to deliver on pledges to boost economic growth and improve living standards for working people.



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A stagnant economy and stubbornly high consumer price inflation have made it difficult for Starmer's government to deliver on its promises after winning a landslide election victory less than two years ago.

Starmer has vowed to remain in office, warning lawmakers that any leadership contest would plunge the government into "chaos" at a time it should be focused on issues like the cost of living crisis and war in the Middle East.

His effort to fight off a leadership challenge was bolstered Thursday morning by a rare bit of positive economic news.

Gross domestic product, a broad measure of economic activity, grew 0.6% in the first three months of the year, compared with 0.2% in the previous quarter, the Office for National Statistics said.

Treasury chief Rachel Reeves said the figures showed that her policies were working and that renewed economic growth would allow the government to put more money into public services and programs to support those hit by the high cost of living.

"But that is only possible because of the economic stability that we have brought back to our economy," she told the BBC. "And we shouldn't put that at risk by plunging the country in chaos at a time when there is conflict in the world."

There was also positive news from the National Health Service. Waiting lines for NHS appointments — one of Streeting's signature priorities — had fallen for the fifth straight month, boosting any potential candidacy.

Streeting comes from the moderate wing of the left-leaning Labour Party, as does Starmer. Rayner is a favorite of many more left-wing voters, calling on the party to do more to boost the minimum wage and raise taxes on the rich.

Under Labour Party rules, any potential challenger to the prime minister would have to have the backing of 81 of the party's 403 members in the House of Commons. More than that

number have publicly called on Starmer to quit in recent days.

But other potential candidates may enter any race for the leadership.

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham is widely seen as a potential candidate, though he would have to find a way back into Parliament before he could run. Allies have suggested a sitting member of the House of Commons could resign to make way for Burnham to run in a special election.

Burnham canceled his regular Thursday appearance on a local BBC radio program this week to "prioritize discussions arising from last week's elections."

While the opposition Conservative Party has a history of deposing prime ministers while in office, Labour does not, said Jonathan Tonge, a professor of politics at the University of Liverpool.

"Labour's political history has been

about losing quite a lot of general elections, but they don't do ruthless on their leader," he said. "They don't tend to depose their leader. The Conservatives, they readily do ruthless."

While there is a chance that the current efforts to unseat Starmer will fizzle out, that would probably just delay the crisis for a few months given the level of fragmentation in British politics, Tonge added.

If "a civil war opens up within a Labour Party that's supposed to be governing us at present, it's an extraordinary state of affairs given it's less than two years since Keir Starmer won one of Labor's greatest election victories ever," Tonge said.

"He's got a huge parliamentary majority, he's got more than 400 MPs, and yet his prime ministership may be on the brink of disintegration," he added. (AP)

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## Former Nigerian minister sentenced to 75 years in rare corruption verdict

Saleh Mamman, a former Nigerian power minister, has been sentenced to 75 years in prison for laundering 33.8bn naira (\$24.7m; £18.5m), a rare conviction against corrupt officials in the West African nation.

Last week, Mamman was found guilty of 12 counts, including using private firms to funnel money linked to government-funded power plants.

The 68-year-old was sentenced in absentia on Wednesday - according to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mamman has been “out of circulation” and “without trace” since his conviction.

On Monday, the high court in the capital Abuja issued an arrest warrant for Mamman, who was power minister from 2015 to 2021.

Mamman, who led the ministry of power under then President Muhammadu Buhari, has not publicly commented on his conviction.

However just weeks before he was sentenced, the former minister announced plans to run for Taraba State governor in the 2027 elections, on behalf of Nigeria’s ruling party.

“Today marks a defining moment in my journey of service to our dear state. With a deep sense of responsibility and unwavering commitment, I have officially obtained the Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms under the All Progressives Congress (APC) to contest for the governorship of Taraba State,” he wrote on social media.

Mamman led the ministry of power at a time when President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration had promised to tackle corruption.

Mamman was eventually sacked by Buhari in a cabinet reshuffle, after what the president called an “independent and critical self-review”.

During Mamman’s sentencing on Wednesday, the high court ordered him to repay 22bn naira (\$16m; £12m).

The case is part of a wider anti-corruption drive targeting former government officials.

Other high-profile investigations by the EFCC have involved former Justice Minister Abubakar Malami and former Humanitarian Affairs Minister Sadiya Umar Farouq, who was recently declared wanted by the agency. They have both denied the allegations.

Mamman’s conviction has reignited public anger over Nigeria’s long-running electricity crisis – especially as the former minister had promised he would improve matters.

Despite being one of Africa’s largest energy producers, Nigeria continues to face chronic power shortages, with frequent blackouts affecting homes and businesses across the country.

Many households and companies rely on fuel-powered generators for electricity, while rising fuel prices have left millions struggling. (BBC)



## Warning of record global temperatures as chance of very strong El Niño grows



New forecasts show increasing confidence that the developing El Niño in the tropical Pacific Ocean could be one of the strongest on record with warnings of record global temperatures and huge humanitarian impacts.

Parts of the Pacific have been warming rapidly with data this week showing sea surface temperatures around 0.5C above normal - one threshold used to suggest the onset of El Niño, a natural warming of the Pacific.

It is expected to strengthen over the next few months, peaking potentially as a very strong - or so-called super El Niño - in the autumn.

Scientists are concerned about the consequences it could have on global weather patterns, including the likelihood of 2027 being the warmest year on record.

In their latest outlook, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) suggest El Niño will begin within the month.

They have increased the confidence

to a two-in-three chance that it will be strong or even very strong by this winter.

The rate of warming seen in the tropical Pacific over the last few weeks has been rapid.

Nathanial Johnson, a meteorologist at NOAA described it as a “rare occurrence” should it continue at the current pace - going from the La Niña (a similar cooling pattern) we saw in winter to a potentially strong El Niño, within a year.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) in Australia also forecasts El Niño using a slightly stricter criterion where sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific must exceed 0.8C above average.

They also look for indications that the trade winds in the western Pacific have reversed; signalling that the warming ocean is beginning to influence the atmosphere.

Spring forecasts of El Niño have historically been quite poor, but forecast-

ers have been much more confident than normal this year.

While El Niño forms across the tropical Pacific, forecasters look at one region in particular called the Niño3.4, monitoring a three-monthly average of the sea surface temperature compared to the long-term average.

A strong or ‘super El Niño’ is when that goes above 1.5C.

Forecasts from the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), NOAA and BoM are all pretty much aligned in their outcomes.

In the latest prediction from the ECMWF, more than half of their forecast models suggest a temperature of over 2.5C by the autumn.

Anything over 2.5C would be a “historically strong event,” said Johnson.

BoM forecasts are also confidently showing the possibility of a very strong El Niño to develop later this year.

Some forecast data is even suggest-

# International

AROUND THE WORLD



ing the temperature could exceed 3C, surpassing the current known peak of 2.7C recorded in 1877.

It should be noted this was a very different era with limited observations and so there remains a lot of uncertainty in the reported temperature.

That El Niño lasted around 18 months which triggered a catastrophic global climate event, causing extreme drought and widespread famine across Asia, Brazil, and Africa which killed millions, while producing severe flooding in other regions like Peru.

The last 'very strong' El Niño occurred in 2015-2016 when the average three-monthly (November, December, January) Niño3.4 temperature reached 2.4C.

With the extra heat in the eastern Pacific, the biggest impact of El Niño is boosting global average temperature, typically by 0.2C.

Liz Stephens, professor of climate risk and resilience at the University of Reading told the BBC that we're "probably be looking at record global temperatures next year, especially if this is a very strong El Niño event".

Following the 2023/24 El Niño we saw the hottest year on record.

While you might see more direct weather impacts around the Pacific, every El Niño is unique in terms of its strength and how far reaching its disruption is to global weather patterns.

Flooding in northern Peru and southern Ecuador is common but also potentially in East Africa, central Asia and southern portions of North America.

It also suppresses Atlantic tropical storms. Forecasters are already suggesting this year's Atlantic hurricane season is going to be quieter than average.

"While that sounds like a good thing, for Central America that leads to a lot less rainfall and potentially drought conditions," according to Prof Stephens.

There is also a greater chance of

drought and wildfires in parts of Australia, Indonesia and the north of South America, leading to a decline in agriculture and global food stocks.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz is already disrupting the distribution of fertiliser with its price increased. This will impact harvests in the months to come with a reduced food supply and higher prices.

"You've got more people that are living in poverty already and if you get a reduction in crop yields because of

drought or flooding [from El Niño] then that drives prices even higher.

"So we're looking at potentially quite huge humanitarian impacts this year, especially if the crisis in the Middle East continues," said Prof Stephens.

Whilst the direct impacts on the UK weather are less certain, climate scientists at the Met Office suggest that El Niño years are one factor that can increase the risk of colder winters in the UK. (BBC)



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## Flattery and fanfare as Trump welcomed to China - but thorny issues remain

Xi Jinping threw a grand welcome for Donald Trump on the first day of a visit that could reset ties between the rival superpowers.

The military honour guard lined up outside the Great Hall of the People to welcome Trump, complete with a gun salute and a band playing the US national anthem. The president paused twice to say hello to schoolchildren cheering with Chinese and American flags.

As he shook hands with Xi, he leaned in to pat him on the arm in what appeared to be a gesture of warmth. And he lavished praise on his host.

“You’re a great leader. I say it to everybody,” he declared in what appeared to be unscripted remarks. Later, on his tour of the 15th Century Temple of Heaven, he remarked to reporters that China was beautiful. At the banquet this evening, he called the talks a “cherished” opportunity.

It was a remarkable day given Trump built up his political brand by talking tough on China.

“We can’t continue to allow China to rape our country, and that’s what they’re doing,” he told a campaign rally in 2016.

In 2020, he claimed China has “ripped off the United States like no one has ever done before”, and described the Covid-19 pandemic as the “Chinese virus”. Before returning to power, he vowed to “make China pay”.

At the height of the trade war last year, the two sides had levied tariffs that crossed 100% on each other. A fragile truce followed but one of the main questions hanging over this visit is whether that will last, and what deal would take its place?

The others are around Iran - can Beijing help broker a deal? – and Taiwan, the US ally and self-governed island that China claims as its territory.



Beijing put on a spectacle designed to flatter Trump ahead of any deal to prove China’s door is open to guests. However, soon after talks began, state media published comments from Xi making clear that tensions over Taiwan could prove challenging.

But the meticulous choreography was not just for the benefit of Trump and the 30 CEOs who accompanied him. It was also a show of strength, which Beijing knows will be beamed live across the US and the world.

“We are witnessing a historical change,” says John Delury, a senior fellow from the Centre on US-China Relations at the Asia Society.

“I hesitate to put too much on this specific summit, but the inexorable rise of China to a place where it is legitimately rivalling the U.S. - that is now happening before our eyes. Beijing is now the second world capital.”

President Xi has been eager to portray himself as a stable global leader in contrast to a mercurial US president. Given the size of China’s economy, a number of world leaders, including those from US allies such as Canada, the UK and Germany, have turned up, eager to do a deal with Beijing.

China’s trade with the rest of the

world has expanded since Trump’s first term as it braced for exactly what he warned of: more tariffs.

Last year, it flexed its economic and diplomatic muscle, responding to Trump with tit-for-tat tariffs and restricting the export of rare earth minerals essential for advanced manufacturing. Washington came to the table and tariffs were lowered.

Xi will believe he has shown the US and the world just how dependent they are on Chinese manufacturing and technology. China now makes a third of the world’s goods, processes more than 90% of its rare earth minerals and produces around 60 to 80% of all solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicles.

While concerns about its record on human rights, and its relationships with regimes like Moscow and Pyongyang persist, they seem to have been overshadowed as Trump shakes up the world order.

Some would see this as a sign that the balance of power is shifting in China’s direction.

China will surely feel it has the upper hand in these talks as Xi faces a Trump weakened by the war on Iran. The blocked Strait of Hormuz has rat-

# International

AROUND THE WORLD



tled the global economy and Trump is expected to seek Beijing's help to open up the shipping corridor.

Beijing and Tehran have a relationship dating back decades and China is Iran's biggest trading partner. If Xi helps nudge Tehran towards the negotiating table, it may give him even more leverage.

"It's in their interest to resolve this," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Fox News before the trip. "And we hope to convince them to play a more active role."

But China will want something in return.

Xi has already warned Trump during their talks that the issue of Taiwan could bring the two countries into conflict, according to Chinese state media.

He could pressure the US to delay or stop arms sales to Taiwan, although Washington is legally bound to provide the island with the means to defend itself. Still, officials in Taipei will be watching this summit nervously.

When reporters asked the two leaders at the Temple of Heaven if they had discussed Taiwan, neither responded to the question.

Unlike the last time, when Melania Trump accompanied her husband, this is a very different visit. It appears the focus is on the business delegation, which included Elon Musk, Tim Cook and chipmaker Nvidia's boss Jensen Huang. They were all present at the banquet as well.

Trump will want this delegation to take centre-stage as he calls for China to open its doors to more US firms.

What all this amounts in terms of a deal is still unclear because no details have been released. The White House statement only said that the two sides "discussed ways to enhance economic cooperation", including expanding US firms' access to the Chinese market and Chinese investment in US industries.

On Iran, it added that "both countries agreed that Iran can never have a nu-

clear weapon" and "the Strait of Hormuz must remain open to support the free flow of energy".

Friday, when the two leaders will meet again, could yield more details.

Trump will want a win to sell back home as his approval ratings continue to fall.

Xi has said that the two sides should expand exchanges and co-operation in areas such as trade and agriculture - a signal perhaps that China is ready to buy more American soybeans, beef and Boeing aircraft.

The two leaders have also agreed to frame their relationship as "constructive, strategic and stable" in a new positioning that will guide ties for the next three years.

China is grappling with serious economic challenges from rising unem-

ployment, uneven growth, a real estate crisis and sky-high levels of local government debt.

So Beijing may not want a world with Washington at the centre of global power, but it needs to find a way to get along with the US.

And that was the message both leaders seemed to be sending tonight at the banquet.

Basking in the "magnificent welcome like no other" that he had received, Trump invited Xi to the White House in September.

Xi went further, saying "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and "Make America great again" can go hand in hand.

He ended his speech with a toast to the future of both America and China: "Cheers." (BBC)



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## Daggers advance to semi-finals in ABBA's Division 2 Playoffs



*The Old Road Daggers basketball team*

The third-seeded Old Road Daggers have advanced to the semi-finals in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division Playoff Championship.

The Daggers booked their spot in the semis by securing a 2-1 win over the sixth-seeded Da Project in their best-of-three first-round series with a 78-53 victory in the deciding Game 3 at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday evening.

Kelvin Simon shot a game-high 23 points and claimed eight rebounds; Devea Aaron provided 13 points, 11 rebounds, and seven assists; Rafiki "Ras-I" Harris produced nine points, five rebounds, and five assists; and Craig Thomas had nine points and nine rebounds for the Old Road Daggers.

Bryan "Hollywood" Matthew sank 18 points and grabbed 14 rebounds; his son Nathan Matthew

converted 17 points and claimed seven rebounds; Donte Trimmingham scored 15 points and snatched 15 rebounds; and Kevin Pimentel chipped in with 12 points for Da Project 2.

Da Project 2 snatched a narrow 84-83 victory over third seed Old Road Daggers in Game 2 to level their best-of-three first-round series at 1-1 and force a deciding Game 3.

Former national small forward Bryan "Hollywood" Matthew scored a game-winning buzzer-beating basket in the second encounter to give Da Project 2 their one-point victory over the Daggers, who prevailed 77-63 in the opening game of the series.

The Daggers' series-clinching win completes the semi-final line-up for the Division 2 playoff championship.

The Daggers will face off against

second-seed Cuties Ovals Ojays 2, while top-seed and league champions Cedar Grove Gunners will clash with fourth-seed Michael Joseph Phoenix in the best-of-three Division 2 semi-finals.

The Cedar Grove Gunners beat eight-seed Navigators 2-0; the Ovals Ojays 2 ousted seventh-seed EZ Fit Flyers 2-0; and the Phoenix also prevailed 2-0 over fifth-seed Ramco Pharmacy Fearless Crew in their respective first-round Division 2 playoff series.

The semi-finals of the Second Division playoff series will commence with the opening games during a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex on Saturday.

The Gunners will face the Phoenix at 6:45 pm, while the Daggers will tackle the Ovals Ojays 2 at 8:30 pm. The teams will clash in the second game of their respective series at the same venue on Monday, May 18.

## OCS and SNRA advance to Under-15 schools' cricket final

The Ottos Comprehensive School (OCS) and the Sir Novelle Richards Academy (SNRA) have advanced to the final in the Ministry of Sports Inter-School Under-15 Competition.

Both teams secured their spots in the championship decider by recording victories in their respective semi-finals on Wednesday.

The Ottos Comprehensive School snatched an 11-run victory over Antigua Grammar School at the Antigua Grammar School's playing field in a keenly contested semi-final affair.

The Ottos Comprehensive School made 175 for eight. Ondre Peters hit 44, Jaden Murray struck 26, Akez France scored 22, and Hershun Ross made 19. Irvin Smith claimed two for 24, and Marc Crawford captured two for 33.

In reply, Antigua Grammar School fought hard but fell short on 165 for eight. Isaiah Harris hit 39, Dante' Oldum cracked 31, and Tiandre Charles scored 17.

Ondre Peters snapped up four wickets for seven runs, Akez France took two for 33, and Ian Jeremiah cap-

tured one for 38.

The Sir Novelle Richards Academy pulled off a five-wicket victory over Pares Secondary School at the Factory Grounds.

Pares won the toss and batted first, posting 92 all out in 19.1 overs. Endsworth Floyd smashed 35, Deno Jarvis struck 14, and Israel John scored 12.

Kevon Charles grabbed five wickets for 16 runs; Ayden Bazil claimed two wickets for nine runs, while Clayton Joseph, Sherwin Martin, and Rohan John each picked up a wicket.

In reply, Sir Novelle Richards Academy achieved victory by scoring 95 for five in 17.3 overs.

Alister Kirnon hit 32 not out, and Rohan John made 10. Deno Jarvis took two wickets for 12 runs, Ja-vaughn Freeland claimed two wickets for 27 runs, and Endsworth Floyd captured one wicket for 16 runs.

The Ottos Comprehensive School and the Sir Novelle Richards Academy will clash in the final at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) on Friday at 1 pm.

## Storming Lions lead men's Division 1 volleyball club league

Cool and Smooth/JOMA Caribbean Da Storming Lions have become the new leaders in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association (ABAVA) Men's Division 1 Championship.

Da Storming Lions leapfrogged defending champions Zamine Shipping and ABI Insurance Pytonz in the men's top league by claiming their sixth win in seven games with a 3-0 victory over the University of the West Indies (UWI) FIC at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex on Wednesday evening.

It took Da Storming Lions an hour and 14 minutes to prevail 25-10, 30-28, and 25-21 against the UWI men, who remain in third place after suffering their third defeat in seven encounters.

Gwava and N18 Construction Invaders consolidated their position in fourth place by securing their third win in seven games with a hard-fought 3-2 victory over the Renegades in their latest men's Division 1 affair.



Da Storming Lions men's volleyball team

It took the Invaders two hours and 16 minutes to prevail 24-26, 25-16, 25-14, 25-27, and 22-20 against the Renegades, who remain second from the bottom of the eight-team standings after losing for the fifth time in six matches.

Sharks recorded their first win in the Men's Division 2 Development

League by snatching a 2-1 victory over Schools in a bottom-of-the-table clash.

The Sharks secured their first win in four matches, taking an hour and 14 minutes to prevail 26-24, 8-25, and 16-14 against Schools, who remain winless and in the cellar of the five-team round-robin league after suffering their third defeat in as many games.

## CPTSA Wings to stage annual Youth Basketball Festival



**11th Wings Youth Basketball Festival**

**WINGS Youth Basketball Festival**

U-10yrs  
U-13yrs  
U-15yrs  
U-18yrs  
Boys & Girls

May 16, 2026, JSC  
9:00AM - 4:00PM  
Tel: 788-8783 / 781-8312

Registration: \$10.00EC per player

The CPTSA Wings Sports Club will host the 11th edition of its Youth Basketball Festival at the JSC Sports Complex on Saturday, starting at 9 am.

The festival will feature contests in various skills such as Teams Speed Dribble, Teams Shoot-Out, and Right & Left Hand Layups as well as games in each category.

Registration to participate in the festival is EC\$10 per player. Teams should have at least seven players but no more than 10. Competitions will be held in under-10, under-13, under-15, and

under-18 age groups in both boys' and girls' categories.

Medals, trophies, and other prizes will be awarded to their winners.

All players should register by 8:30 am on Saturday. Teams should come in uniforms with numbers. The Wings Youth Basketball Festival is scheduled to end by 4:30 pm.

All parents and the general public are invited to support the event, in which drinks, burgers, hotdogs, and other refreshments will be on sale.

## Supa Sonyx to launch Domino Academy



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The Supa Sonyx Domino Club is embarking on a mission to teach the game to young players.

The club will be launching its Domino Junior Academy at its location in the old Catholic School on Church Street in St. John's on Saturday, June 6.

Youngsters between the ages of seven and 18 are eligible to join the academy, where they will be given the opportunity to learn the basics of playing dominoes

like a professional.

President of Supa Sonyx Domino Club Carol-Faye Bynoe said the launch of the academy will be the fulfillment of a dream to teach young players the game of dominoes.

Participants are required to pay a registration fee of EC\$25 and a monthly fee of EC\$20. Interested persons can contact Telephone Number 785-9958 to register and get more information.

## Scorpions gain promotion to contest Premier Division next season

The Freemans Village Scorpions have officially gained automatic promotion from the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division and will return to compete in the Premier Division 1234 qwert6780-+n League for the 2026–2027 season.

The Scorpions ensured they would finish as o

ne of the top two sides that would gain automatic promotion to the Premier Division at the end of the season by securing a 3-1 victory against Parham FC in their penultimate match of the current 2025-2026 First Division at Freemans Village on Wednesday.

Romar Gidersingh had a double conversion with strikes in the 37th and 79th minutes, and teammate Zakeem Michael scored the other goal for the Freemans Village Scorpions in the 11th minute.

Andy Daniel scored a consolation goal for Parham FC with a the 22nd-minute conversion. It means Parham FC finished their First Division campaign in seventh place with 40 points after losing for the eighth time during their quota of 26 matches.

Their 17th win in 25 matches allows the Scorpions to clinch their automatic promotion spot by remaining in second place on goal difference.

With one game remaining, the Scorpions have advanced to 56 points, the same as First Division leaders Greenbay Hoppers, who have already clinched the other automatic promotion spot to compete in the Premier Division next season.



**Players of the Freemans Village Scorpions celebrate after scoring one of their three goals against Parham in their First Division affair at Freemans Village on Wednesday, May 13, 2026.**

The Greenbay Hoppers will clash with Empire FC in a Gray's Green derby in their final match during a double-header at the ABFA Technical Center on Saturday at 8 pm.

The Swetes Vipers, who are currently in third place with 51 points from 25 matches, will wrap up their campaign against fourth-placed SAP FC in both teams' final outing in Saturday's opening game at 6 pm.

The First Division will conclude with the Freemans Village Scorpions facing Five Islands FC at the ABFA Technical Center on Sunday at 5 pm.

The third and fourth place finishers in the First Division will meet in a playoff with Green City FC in a three-team round-robin playoff. The winner of the playoffs will compete in the Premier Division next season.

Tenth-place finishers English Harbour will compete in a three-team round-robin playoff with the third

and fourth-place finishers in the Second Division. The winners of the playoffs will compete in the First Division next season.

Kelton Dalso Real Blizzard and Police FC finished in third and fourth places, respectively, in the Second Division, which was won by Guydadli Jets, and the Young Lions of Old Road claimed the runners-up spot.

The Guydadli Jets and the Young Lions gained automatic promotion to compete in the first division next season.

The four teams that finish at the bottom of the 14-team standings in the current First Division have been automatically relegated to compete in the Second Division next season.

They are Bendals FC, the Cedar Grove Blue Jays, Bolans FC, and FC Masters Ballers.