

PM Browne Urges Unity, Action and Reform as OECS Turns 45

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Members of the OECS Authority pose for a group photo at Sunday's opening ceremony at the Royalton Hotel

PM Browne Urges Unity, Action and Reform as OECS Turns 45



Prime Minister Gaston Browne has called for a bold new era of regional integration and economic transformation as he assumed the chairmanship of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Authority.

Addressing regional leaders, diplomats and officials who gathered at Royalton Antigua on Sunday to mark the OECS's 45th anniversary, Mr. Browne urged member states to embrace what he described as an "OECS renaissance," arguing that the changing global environment requires stronger cooperation, faster implementation of regional initiatives and a renewed commitment to collective action.

Drawing on the legacy of Antigua and Barbuda's late Prime Minister and National Hero Sir Lester Bird,

who served as the first chairman of the OECS Authority in 1981, the incoming Chairman reflected on the vision that led to the organisation's creation. He noted that Bird had championed the concept of independence within a framework of interdependence, a philosophy he said remains relevant today.

The Prime Minister highlighted several achievements of the OECS over the past four and a half decades, including the stability of the Eastern Caribbean dollar, the work of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the unified judicial system provided by the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, collective pharmaceutical procurement and freedom of movement among protocol member states.

"These are not abstract achievements," Browne said. "What we cannot do alone, we accomplish together."

However, he warned that global circumstances have changed significantly since the OECS was founded. Pointing to geopolitical tensions, weakening multilateral institutions, supply chain disruptions and rising living costs, Prime Minister Browne argued that small island states face increasing vulnerabilities if they act independently.

"In a fragmented world, OECS countries acting alone are exposed and vulnerable," he said, adding that deeper integration remains essential for preserving economic resilience and political influence.

As part of his agenda, the Antigua and Barbuda Head of Government



announced plans to pursue reforms within the OECS Commission aimed at improving efficiency, reducing costs and strengthening the institution's ability to deliver results for citizens across the region.

The new chairman also addressed recent restrictions affecting travel by Caribbean nationals to the United States. While acknowledging America's right to determine its immigration policies, he cautioned that barriers to travel could have unintended economic consequences for both sides.

He noted that the Caribbean remains an important market for American goods and services and argued that restrictions on business travel could undermine trade and investment opportunities.

"Our message to Washington is constructive," PM Browne said, stressing the OECS's commitment to security, good governance and cooperation with the United States.

Looking beyond traditional trading

relationships, he called for a more aggressive engagement strategy with Latin America, particularly Panama and Central America, maintaining that expanding trade links and sourcing arrangements in the region could help lower food costs and reduce dependence on established import markets.

The Prime Minister also renewed his proposal for "OECS Air," a dedicated sub-regional airline designed to improve connectivity among member states and strengthen economic integration.

"A region that cannot move its people efficiently cannot integrate commercially," he stated.

On energy and sustainable development, Mr. Browne proposed greater collaboration among OECS governments through joint investments in renewable energy projects. He revealed ongoing discussions involving Antigua and Barbuda's potential participation in geothermal energy development in Nevis, with the long-term goal

of transmitting clean energy between islands through undersea infrastructure.

He also urged member states to capitalise on the region's vast marine resources through a coordinated Blue Economy strategy, noting that OECS countries collectively control approximately 500,000 square kilometres of ocean space.

"For too long, we have had our backs to the ocean," Browne said. "We are not small island developing states — we are large ocean states."

Prime Minister Gaston Browne urged regional leaders to deepen integration rather than retreat into national isolation, arguing that pooled sovereignty offers greater influence and opportunities than fragmented action.

"As our predecessors understood 45 years ago, the sovereignty of a small state exercised in isolation is worth less than the sovereignty of that same state exercised in concert with its neighbours." He concluded.

OECS Director General Underscores The Value of Unity Among Member States

The Director General of the OECS, Dr. Didacus Jules has highlighted the unity among the member states of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States as one of the key strengths of the organization.

Speaking at the 78th Meeting of the OECS Authority at Royalton Hotel on Sunday, Dr. Jules noted that the integration among the member states goes beyond treaties or governments' convergence; rather it is most visible in the culture of cooperation among the countries.

“In the OECS, our people have a name for it. They call it the koudmen (in Kweyol)/ the helping hand/ the lend hand (in English): the day the whole village lays down its own work to raise one family's roof, or bring in one farmer's harvest, in the certain knowledge that when the season turns, the hands will come for them in their turn,” he observed.

According to the Director General, the people of the OECS have found that they speak louder, and more forcefully when they speak with one voice, rather than many voices.

“When larger powers approached our Member States, one by one, on delicate questions cooperation that appeared to leave little room to wriggle, and as geopolitical developments came closer and closer to home in the Caribbean, we discussed and considered their implications and consequences together on the understanding that none of us could dance between the raindrops of that storm alone,” he declared.



The Director General of the OECS, Dr. Didacus Jules

Also speaking at the opening ceremony was the outgoing chairman of the OECS Authority, Dr. Godwin Friday, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who noted that seven months ago he assumed the office of prime minister of his country and at the same time assumed the chairmanship of the authority.

He noted that while some would suggest that there would be a conflict in managing both roles simultaneously, in practice, he found that rather than competing, the roles were complementary of each other.

Things that can only be achieved together, if they are to be achieved at all, he added.

“So, in serving the OECS well, in

dedicating time and effort to meeting that important responsibility, I know that simultaneously I am serving the interests of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This conviction has been a guiding principle for me in the short time that I have been in the position of Chair of the Authority. It will remain so as I continue to work with my colleagues to move forward with the mandate and agenda of the OECS,” he remarked.

The OECS Authority is meeting in Antigua and Barbuda as the organization turns 45 years old. While the treaty provides for twice yearly meetings, Prime Minister Dr. Friday says he favours establishing mechanisms for more frequent meetings to meet challenging global situations as they arise.



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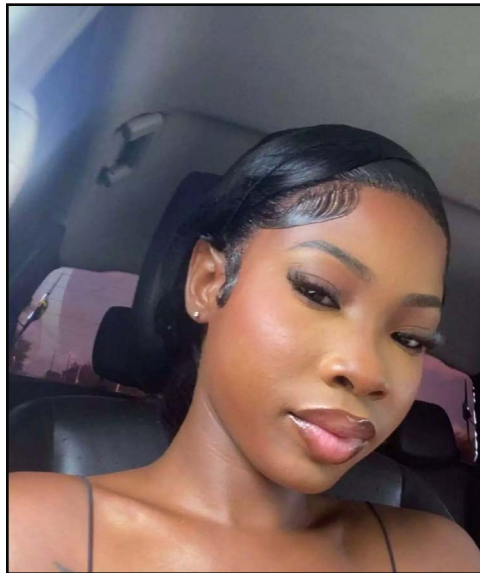
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19-Year Old Female Dies From Suspected Suicide

Residents of Antigua and Barbuda woke up Sunday morning to the horrifying news of the death of a 19-year old female from what authorities are treating as a suspected suicide.

In a statement issued early Sunday morning, the police communications department (STRATCOM) informed the nation that law enforcement is investigating the circumstances surrounding the death of a 19-year-old female whose body was recovered from the waters at Devil's Bridge on Sunday, June 21.

Preliminary reports indicate that the young woman allegedly jumped from Devil's Bridge into the sea sometime late Saturday night. Following the report, police officers, along with members of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard, responded and conducted an extensive search op-



Zowie Tomlinson

eration on both land and sea.

However, due to challenging conditions and other operational factors at the time, the search was temporarily suspended overnight. The operation

resumed early Sunday morning, and the Coast Guard subsequently recovered the body from the water and transported it ashore.

Police investigators remain on the scene conducting further inquiries into the incident.

The Police Administration extends sincere condolences to the family, relatives, and friends of the deceased during this difficult time and asks that their privacy be respected as investigations continue.

The police have not released her identity but other media outlets have named her as Zowie Tomlinson, a student of the Pares Secondary School.

In a video posted on social media, a young woman, who identified herself as the victim's best friend, indicated that she was at the scene when Tomlinson allegedly made the fatal jump.

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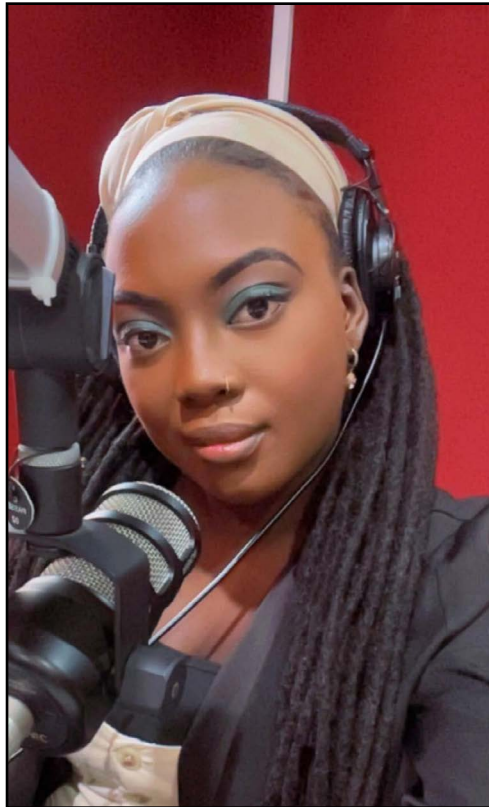
WISH Mourns the Death of 19-Year-Old Zowie Tomlinson and Calls on the Nation to Prioritise Youth Mental Health

Press Statement from WISH

WISH The Wadadli Initiative for Self-care and Healing (WISH) is heartbroken by the confirmed death of 19-year-old Zowie Tomlinson of Parham, whose body was recovered from the waters at Devil’s Bridge on Sunday morning, 21 June 2026, following an overnight search and recovery operation by police and the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard.

We extend our deepest condolences to Ms. Tomlinson’s family, friends, and the Parham community. She was only nineteen years old. Her death is a loss that this nation must sit with, and not look away from.

“We are devastated,” said Chaneil Imhoff, Founder of WISH. “Zowie was somebody’s daughter, somebody’s friend, somebody’s neighbour. Nineteen years is no age to feel that there is no way forward. We grieve with her family today, and we grieve as a country that has not yet done enough to ensure that our young people can access



Chaneil Imhoff

mental health support when they need it most.”

WISH urges the public to exercise care and compassion in how this tragedy is discussed, particularly on social media. Speculation about the circumstances of Ms. Tomlinson’s death, the sharing of graphic content, or commentary that reduces her life to the manner of her passing causes additional harm to those who loved her and to others in the community who may themselves be struggling in silence. The Police Administration has appealed for privacy to be respected as investigations continue, and WISH echoes that call unreservedly.

We also wish to speak directly to anyone who is carrying pain right now: you are not alone, and what you are feeling does not have to be permanent. Please reach out.

WISH will continue to advocate for sustainable, accessible, and culturally grounded mental health services in Antigua and Barbuda. The death of a 19-year-old is more than another tragedy to mourn; it is a call to act.

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Concerns Raised over Traffic Accidents Involving the Nation’s Top Cyclist, EMT Officer

Senior government officials, including Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Health Minister Michael Joseph, are voicing concern over separate traffic accidents Saturday morning, one in which the nation’s top cyclist was struck by a motor vehicle and where and Emergency Medical Technician was injured in another.

In both cases, the drivers reportedly fled the scenes of the accidents.

President of the Cycling Association, Cliff Williams, has confirmed that Tahje Browne, was involved in the traffic accident at approximately 6:30 am as he was traveling towards St. John’s on the Sir Sydney Walling Highway. He reported that the accident happened around the curve at the Transport Board Office on the highway.

He further reported that Browne underwent emergency surgery at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre and that the cycling fraternity is hopeful that he will make a speedy recovery and will be able to return to the sport.

“All the tests showed that there were no broken bones nor internal bleeding. The athlete was struck above his right knee in the quad area and this required the surgery. The driver was allegedly coming around the corner at a high rate of speed and seemingly lost control of the vehicle when it struck Browne. The vehicle crashed into the ditch and the driver ran off in the vicinity of Echo’s facility,” he stated.

Speaking on the Browne and Browne show on Saturday afternoon, PM Browne urged drivers to exercise due care and attention when using the na-



Tahje Browne

tion’s roadways and to be responsible if they are involved in a traffic accident of any kind.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health, extended best wishes to the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) who was involved in a motor vehicle accident Saturday while carrying out her duties.

Minister of Health, Michael Joseph, expressed concern for the EMT and wished her a full and speedy recovery.

“Our EMTs and other frontline healthcare workers play a critical role in serving and protecting our communities, often under challenging circumstances. We are grateful for their dedication and commitment, and our thoughts are with our colleague and

her family at this time,” Minister Joseph stated.

The Ministry also takes this opportunity to remind all motorists to exercise caution and responsibility while using the nation’s roads. Drivers are urged to remain vigilant, obey traffic laws, avoid distractions, and be mindful of emergency and service vehicles operating in the public interest.

Road safety is a shared responsibility, and every effort must be made to protect not only ourselves but also those who work tirelessly to provide essential services to the public.

The Ministry remains hopeful for the EMT’s swift and full recovery and thanks members of the public for keeping her in their thoughts and prayers.



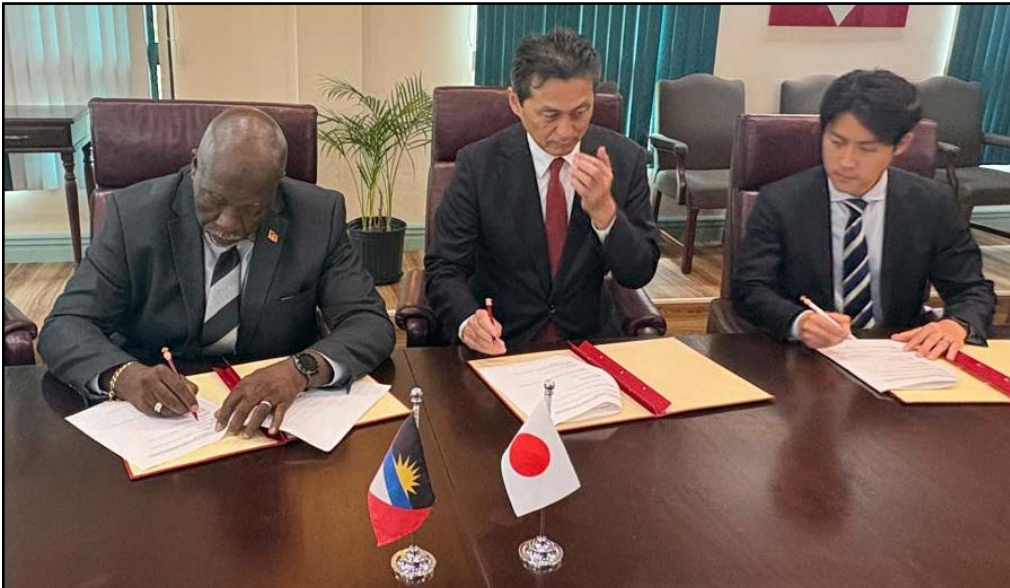
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Government Pens Agreement With Japanese Company For Individual Recycle Water Systems



Antigua and Barbuda and the Japanese company Wata, have signed an agreement through which the company will supply the country with individual water recycle systems for distribution locally.

The agreement was signed last week during a brief ceremony held at the Office of the Prime Minister where Utilities Minister Melford Nicholas initialed the agreement on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda. The Japanese Ambassador Yusuke Miyasaka and a representative of Wata also signed the agreement.

Minister Nicholas noted that the country is currently experiencing a severe drought which has led to increased reliance on sourcing water from the desalination plants in light of reduced capacity from other water sources.

“Water, as we know, is a precious commodity, so whatever we can do in terms of recycling of water and by being conservative with the use of this scarce and most expensive commodity, it is going to be an area which APUA will give much attention. This is where our relationship with Wata is going to be of significant importance,” he observed.



The minister explained that over the past year, Wata has had a productive engagement with APUA engineers and they have all looked at the system which they had brought to the table. “This facility has the ability to recycle water and to produce potable water to WHO standards, which is unique situation as it is able to convert the ‘grey’ water that we produce in each of our homes and to recycle it such that we are able to retain as much as sixty percent of that water,” he explained.

The minister indicated that he is quite impressed with the system as funda-

mentally, it teaches home owners the whole concept of recycling. Minister Nicholas observed that drought conditions currently exist in many other Caribbean states which have led to shortages of water and he is hopeful that the experiences developed here in Antigua and Barbuda will be shared with water officials in neighbouring Caribbean states.

“I anticipate that this system, once it delivers in the matter that we all know it can, there will be opportunities elsewhere in the region for these products and we will see increased demand from around the region,” he indicated.

According to Minister Nicholas, the company has established model units at its facility at Friar’s Hill Road for interested persons to see. Additionally, a unit has been installed at a private home where the experiences of the homeowner are being closely monitored.

Minister Nicholas revealed that he personally tasted the water and he was not able to distinguish the water from other types of water available commercially.

Antigua and Barbuda Reaches Out To Japan For Help In Dealing With Sargassum

Antigua and Barbuda is reaching out to the Japanese government for help in dealing with the perennial problem of the invasion of the sargassum seaweeds on the nation's beaches.

The appeal came from both Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Agriculture Minister, Anthony Smith Jr. during separate courtesy calls by the Japanese Ambassador Yusuke Miyasaka and First Secretary Mr. Ursushitata last week.

“We are making an appeal to our friends, the Japanese government, to help us with equipment or research on how we can effectively deal with the tons of sargassum seaweed that overwhelm our beaches annually. We are hoping that there may be some way that we can harvest the seaweeds and turn them into useful products such as fertilizers etc.,” PM Browne noted.

He explained that attempts to convert the seaweeds into to useful products have so far proven difficult. The prime minister is hopeful that there may be some way for the Japanese to help countries such as Antigua and Barbuda to cope with the annual invasion of the sargassum seaweeds.

A similar appeal was made to the Japanese ambassador by the agriculture minister he met with Ambassador Yusuke Miyasaka during a courtesy call last Thursday.

Additionally, PM Browne is asking the Japanese to assist Antigua and Barbuda to acquire a number of fishing boats so that Antigua and Barbuda nationals may carry out deep sea fishing for the pelagic fishes that earn much higher returns that near-shore fish stock.

“Antigua and Barbuda can be considered as a mid-size nation when it includes our extensive territorial waters. Unfortunately, we have not been able to effectively exploit the resources that come with our territorial waters be-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Agriculture Minister, Japanese Ambassador Yusuke Miyasaka and First Secretary Mr. Ursushitata

cause we do not have the vessels to effectively harvest the pelagic fish stock. If we are able to acquire some boats, between 10 and 15, then we will be able to assist our fisher folks expand their reach to include the off-shore fish stock,” prime minister noted.

According to the prime minister this initiative has two broad goals; firstly, to encourage nationals to eat more fish and to reduce the dependence on imported fish and broadly, to strengthen the country's food security. PM Browne is asking for concessional loans to acquire the fishing vessels.



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Antigua and Barbuda expresses support for BVI's aspirations for greater self determination



Dr. Jeremy

Antigua and Barbuda has reaffirmed its support for the Government and people of the British Virgin Islands in their pursuit of political self-determination.

For years, Antigua and Barbuda has been working through a UN body, the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and

Peoples, in helping to advance the case for political independence for several countries, including the BVI.

The committee recently held a Caribbean Regional Seminar in Nicaragua where BVI Special Envoy Benito Wheatley provided an updated on upcoming constitutional negotiations with the United Kingdom. Representing Antigua and Barbuda at the meeting in the Central American country was Second Officer in the Antigua and Barbuda Permanent Mission in New York, Dr. Jerri-Anne Jeremy.

Dr. Jeremy, in addressing the meeting, said Antigua and Barbuda's support for the BVI is rooted in her country's shared history and cultural and familial ties with its people. She noted that Antigua and Barbuda's own experience as a former colony and the strides it has made since then were crucial factors.

"We continue to regard the decolonization process as one of the United Nations' most important responsibilities and reaffirm our commitment to the objectives of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism," Dr. Jeremy told the meeting.

Against this background, Dr. Jeremy congratulated the BVI government for what has been described as the most comprehensive legislative reform pro-

gramme in the history of the country. "These reforms contributed to the lifting of the Order in Council that previously allowed for the suspension of the Constitution and the imposition of direct rule," she acknowledged.

Dr. Jeremy further noted that Antigua and Barbuda remains a close friend of the United Kingdom, recognizing the importance of continued partnership between the administering power and the BVI government in strengthening governance institutions within the territory.

The BVI is already playing leadership roles in ECLAC, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, the Regional Conference on South-South Cooperation and the BVI-UN Sustainable Development Forum.

"These achievements demonstration the territory's institutional maturity and growing capacity to participate effectively in regional and international affairs," Dr. Jeremy observed.

Antigua and Barbuda has been a part of the UN Committee for around 23 years and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dr. Walton Webson at one time has served as Chair.

Besides the BVI there are five other Caribbean territories that fall under its purview.



“We Need a Seat”: Antigua and Barbuda Calls for Greater Voice for Climate-Vulnerable Nations



Antigua and Barbuda participated in the Berlin Climate Mobility Forum 2026, where global leaders, policymakers, communities, and partners came together to advance solutions to one of the most pressing consequences of the climate crisis: climate mobility.

As part of the Forum, Minister of Health, Michael Joseph, participated in an interview highlighting the unique vulnerabilities of Caribbean Small Island Developing States and the urgent need for climate justice, equitable access to finance, and greater representation in global decision-making.

Minister Joseph emphasized that climate mobility is ultimately about people. Successful relocation and adaptation efforts must be community-led, protect cultural identity and heritage, and ensure that those most affected have a meaningful voice in decisions about their future. Drawing on Antigua and Barbuda’s experience following the devastation of Barbuda by Hurricane Irma, he noted the importance of planning, community engagement, and protecting the rights and dignity of affected populations.

The Minister also underscored that for Small Island Developing States, the preferred option is not relocation but resilience. The newly endorsed Global Principles for Addressing Climate Mobility recognize the importance of

protecting the “right to stay,” while also supporting safe and dignified mobility pathways where necessary.

A central message from Antigua and Barbuda was that climate-vulnerable countries must have a meaningful seat at the table. While Antigua and Barbuda’s contribution to global emissions

is negligible, it remains among those most affected by rising sea levels, stronger storms, and increasing climate impacts.

As Minister Joseph stated, “We’re not asking because we’d like to have a seat. We’re asking because we need a seat.”

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Antigua and Barbuda and Honduras Establish Diplomatic Relations

Panama City, Panama, June 21... Antigua and Barbuda and the Republic of Honduras formally established diplomatic relations today through the signing of a Joint Communiqué during a ceremony held in Panama City on the margins of meetings of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

The agreement was signed by Sir Ronald Sanders, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the OAS, and Ambassador Pamela Handal, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

In remarks following the signing ceremony, both representatives welcomed the formal establishment of diplomatic relations as an important step in strengthening ties between the two countries and creating a framework for closer cooperation on matters of mutual interest.

They noted that, as members of the wider Latin American and Caribbean community, Antigua and Barbuda and Honduras share common concerns regarding global challenges, including the adverse effects of climate change, vulnerability to external economic shocks, and the need for greater access to affordable development financing.

Ambassador Sanders and Vice Minister Handal expressed confidence that the new diplomatic relationship would facilitate enhanced collaboration in regional and international forums, while also promoting exchanges in areas such as trade, investment, tourism, education, culture, and technical cooperation.

Both representatives also emphasized the potential for expanding economic opportunities between their countries in ways that would contribute to the prosperity and well-being of their respective peoples.



Police Seize 34 Pounds of Cannabis During Joint Drug Operation

Police and Customs officials have seized a significant quantity of cannabis during a joint drug operation at the V.C. Bird International Airport.

Around 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, officers attached to the Narcotics Department and Customs Enforcement personnel, carried out the operation at the LIAT Cargo Shed.

During the exercise, law enforcement officers searched a brown cardboard box and discovered thirty-four (34) vacuum-sealed packages containing a bushy substance resembling cannabis.

The packages were seized, and the box along with its contents was transported to Police Headquarters for further examination and investigations.

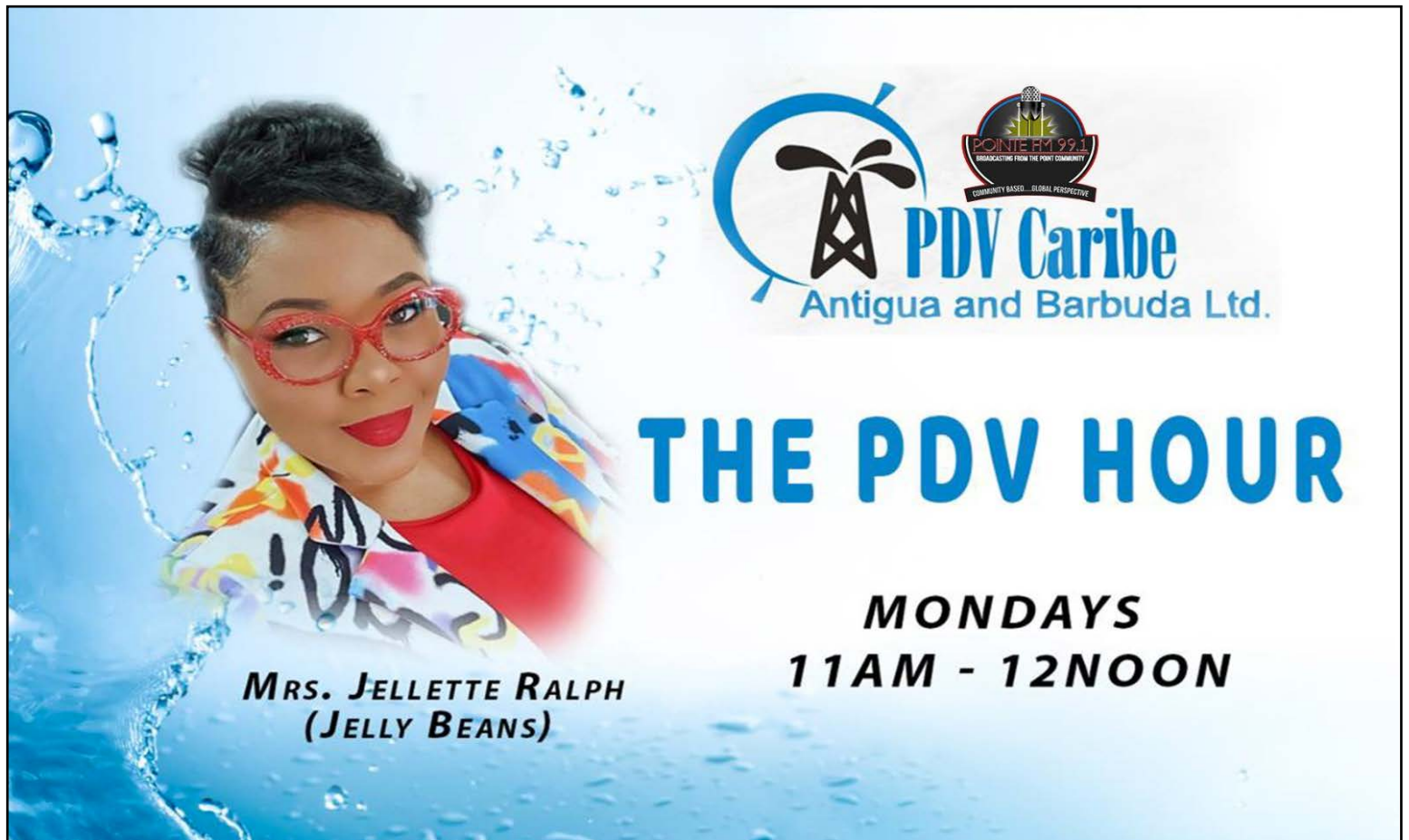
The substance weighed thirty-four (34) pounds, with an estimated street value of EC\$204,000.00. Investigations into the matter are ongoing.



The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to working closely with its local, regional, and international partners to combat the trafficking of illegal drugs and other transnational crimes.

Anyone with information that may

assist the investigation is encouraged to contact the Narcotics Department at Police Headquarters or call the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913/14. Information can also be provided anonymously through Crimestoppers at 800-TIPS (8477).



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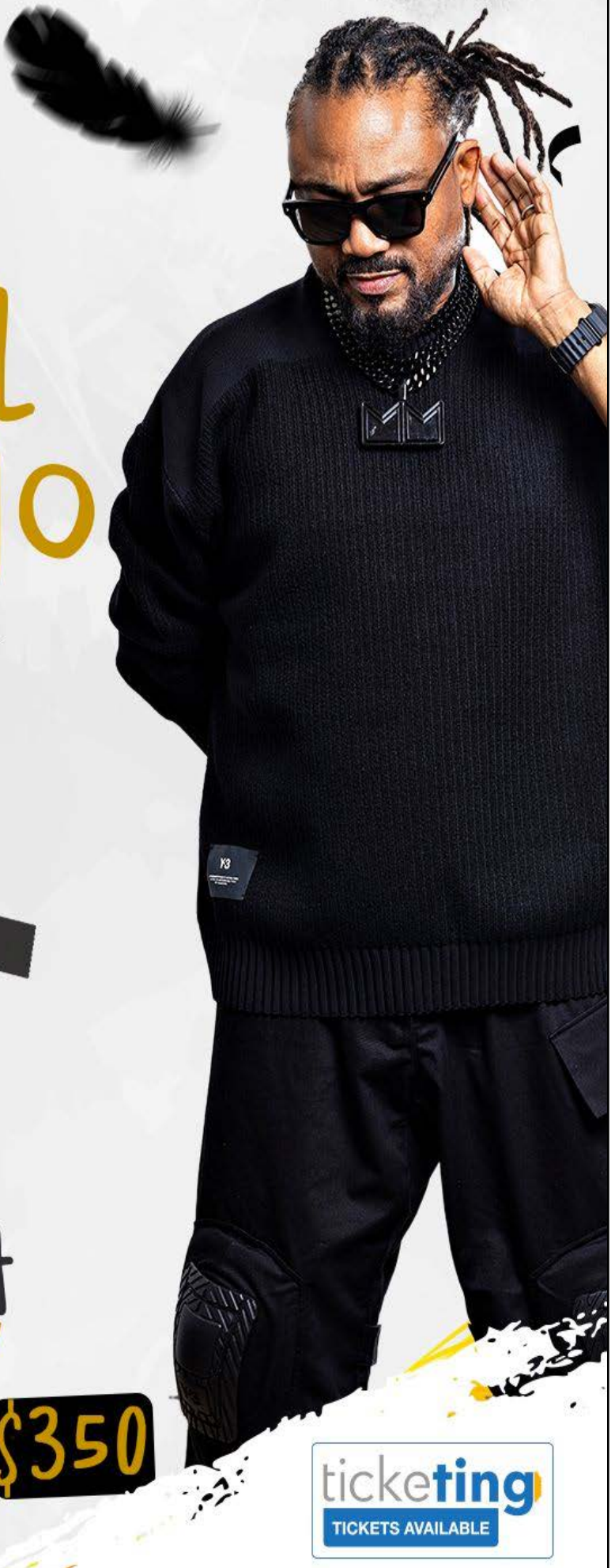
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Feature



Fourteen Contestants Named For The 2026 ECAB Mr. & Miss Teenage Pageant



The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission (ABF) has announced the official launch of the 2026 ECAB Mr. & Miss Teenage Pageant, with Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) returning as title sponsor for

a third consecutive year.

The official contestant launch took place over the weekend, where fourteen exceptional students representing ten secondary schools were introduced under this year's inspiring theme,

“Pulse: Where Today’s Energy Powers the Future.”

The ECAB Mr. & Miss Teenage Pageant continues to be one of Antigua Carnival’s premier youth development programmes, celebrating the intelli-

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gence, creativity, confidence, leadership and talent of the nation's young people. Throughout the competition, contestants will showcase their public speaking abilities, cultural awareness, school pride and personal growth as they compete for the coveted titles of Mr. and Miss Teenage.

Minister of Creative Industries and Carnival, Hon. Dwayne George, applauded ECAB for its unwavering commitment to the nation's youth. "I want to sincerely thank Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) for once again partnering with the Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission as the title sponsor of the ECAB Mr. & Miss Teenage Pageant. ECAB's continued support demonstrates a genuine commitment to investing in our young people and preserving our cultural traditions. Partnerships like these create opportunities for our youth to develop confidence, leadership and lifelong skills.

Chief Executive Officer of ECAB, Michael Spencer, said the bank is

honoured to continue supporting a programme that has positively impacted hundreds of young people. "This marks our third year as a proud sponsor of this incredible event, and with each passing year, our connection to the pageant grows even stronger. We have seen contestants develop confidence, discover their voices and embrace leadership. At ECAB, we believe that investing in young people is one of the most important investments we can make. The future of our nation rests in the hands of individuals who are willing to dream boldly, work diligently and lead with purpose. This pageant provides a platform for exactly that kind of growth and development.

The fourteen contestants competing in the 2026 ECAB Mr. & Miss Teenage Pageant, in performing order, are:

1. Soleil Williams – Antigua Grammar School
2. Michelle Campbell – Princess Margaret School
3. Kallie Guiste – St. Mary's Secondary School
4. Andrisa Thomas – Antigua Girls' High School
5. Douve'rt Burnes – Clare Hall Secondary School
6. Narla Nathaniel – Jennings Secondary School
7. Nickquane Theodore – Princess Margaret School
8. Kareem Amedee – Pares Secondary School
9. Sarah William – Pares Secondary School
10. Kristopher Lee – St. Mary's Secondary School
11. Jahmarly Hunte – Ottos Comprehensive School
12. Brianna Ellis – Christ the King High School
13. Xion Joseph – St. Joseph's Academy
14. Katherine Pimentel – Clare Hall Secondary School



Commentary



SPIRITUAL FOCUS: Father's Day and the Father Who Never Leaves- Happy Father's Day.



By Garfield Joseph, MMA

Father's Day is often a day of joy—children wrapping gifts, families gathering, fathers being honored for their strength and sacrifice. Yet for many, it is also a day of silence. A day when the absence of a father is felt more sharply than ever. The empty chair at the table, the unanswered questions, the longing

for a voice that never came—these are the realities for countless sons and daughters.

But into that silence comes a greater truth: there is a Father who never leaves. The Son of Man, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, steps into the void left by missing fathers. He carries the abandoned, comforts the forgotten, and whispers to every child, You are mine.

This is the story of Father's Day—not only of earthly fathers who give and guide, but of the eternal Father who heals the wounds of absence and redefines what it means to be loved.

The Origin and Purpose of Father's Day

Father's Day began in the early 20th century, first popularized in the United States as a complement to Mother's Day. Its purpose was simple yet profound: to honor the men who shaped lives with patience, courage, and sacri-

fice. Over time, it became a global tradition, reminding us that fatherhood is not merely biological—it is a calling, a responsibility, and a gift.

Here in Antigua and Barbuda, Father's Day is marked by family gatherings, church services, and community celebrations. It is a day to pause and give thanks for the men who have stood as pillars of strength. Yet it is also a day to reflect on the deeper meaning of fatherhood, and to acknowledge those who have felt its absence.

The Pain of Missing Fathers

There are children who grew up with empty chairs at the table, birthdays without a father's voice, milestones without his encouragement. Abandonment leaves scars that are not easily healed. It breeds questions: Why did he leave? Was I not enough? It creates a void that no material gift can fill.

The absence of a father can shape a child's sense of worth, leaving them

AFRICA UNITE

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to wrestle with feelings of rejection and loneliness. Father's Day, for them, is not a celebration but a reminder of what was lost. And yet, even in this pain, there is hope.

Wounded Yet Healed

The Scriptures tell us of one who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. His sacrifice was not only an act of redemption but also the ultimate expression of fatherhood. For what greater love can a father show than to lay down his life for his children?

Unlike earthly fathers who may falter, this Father's love is unbreakable. His scars are not signs of defeat but of victory—victory over sin, despair, and death itself. For those who feel abandoned, He is the Father who never leaves. For those who feel rejected, He is the Father who calls them beloved. For those who feel unworthy, He is the Father who restores dignity.

What a Father He Is

What a Father He is—our great Father! He comforts in sorrow, strength-

ens in weakness, and corrects in love. He is patient when we stumble, merciful when we stray, and joyful when we return. His fatherhood is not bound by time or place; it stretches across generations and nations, binding us together as His children.

He is the Father who sits with the child who wonders why their earthly father left. He is the Father who whispers, You are mine. He is the Father who turns wounds into wisdom, pain into purpose, and loneliness into belonging.

The Narrative Arc of Fatherhood

The story of Father's Day begins with gratitude for earthly fathers. It acknowledges the pain of missing fathers. And it culminates in the revelation of the ultimate Father—the Son of Man—who embodies all that fatherhood was meant to be. His wounds tell the story of love that costs everything yet gives everything. His presence assures us that we are never abandoned. His scepter reminds us that authority is not about distance but about dwelling

with us.

Thus, the arc of fatherhood moves from human to divine, from fragile to eternal, from absence to presence. It is a story that calls us to honor our fathers here on earth while lifting our eyes to the Father above.

Closing: A Call to Honor and Heal

As we celebrate Father's Day, let us honor the men who have stood faithfully in their role. Let us also extend compassion to those who carry the pain of missing fathers. And above all, let us give thanks to our great Father, who fills every void, heals every wound, and calls every child His own.

Tomorrow, when we say "Happy Father's Day," may it be more than a greeting. May it be a balm for the brokenhearted, a reminder to the abandoned, and a song of praise to the Father who never leaves. For in Him, we find the fullness of fatherhood: wounded yet victorious, bruised yet merciful, present yet eternal.

What a Father He is—our great Father.



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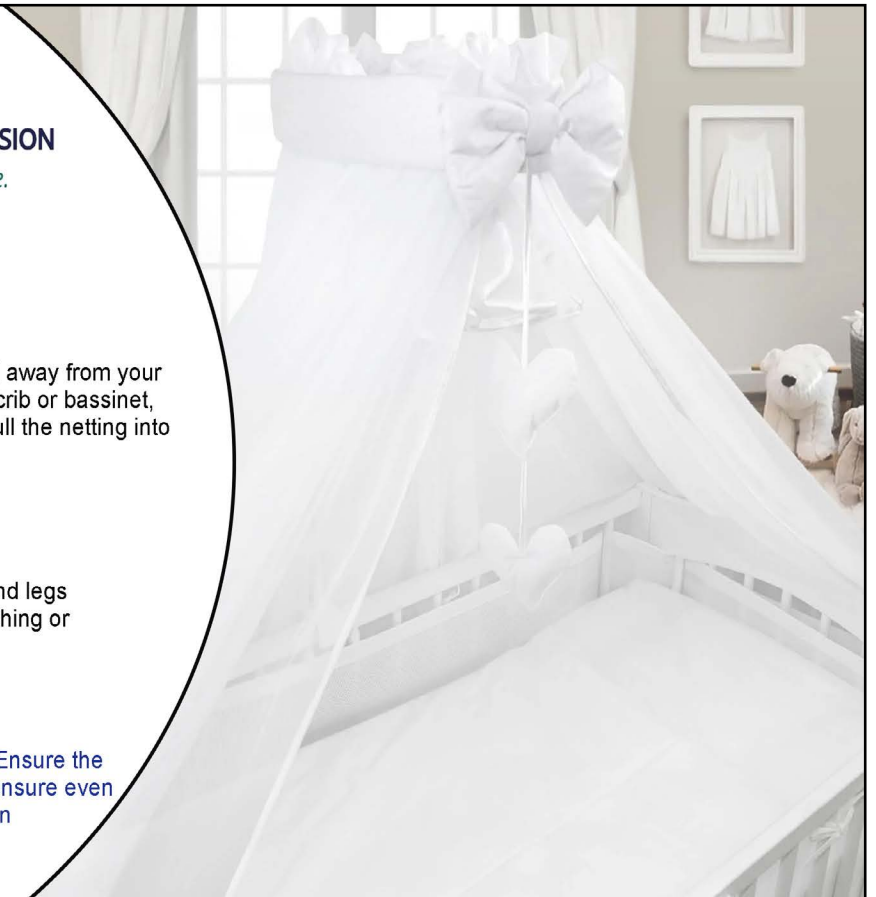
If using a mosquito net, ensure it is securely fitted and kept well away from your baby's face at all times. Avoid loose or hanging nets inside the crib or bassinet, especially once your baby begins to roll or grab, as they may pull the netting into their sleep space.

Safe alternatives

- Installing window or door screens
- Using air conditioning or fans to help keep mosquitoes away
- Dressing babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs
- Using mosquito repellents approved for the baby's age on clothing or surrounding areas — never directly in the sleep space

CONSUMERS BE AWARE

Choose breathable, non-toxic material like polyester or cotton. Ensure the net is flame-resistant with holes of 1.2 mm - 1.5 mm or less to ensure even tiny insects cannot pass through. The World Health Organization recommends at least 156 holes per square inch.



Jamaica reaffirms global reparations commitment

Jamaica has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the global reparations movement, pledging to work in partnership with CARICOM, Ghana and other African nations, and African-descended communities globally to advance the cause of reparatory justice.

Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia Grange, representing Prime Minister, Dr Andrew Holness, at the recent Reparations Conference in Ghana, assured that Jamaica remains committed to shaping a united and strategic approach to addressing the enduring legacy of slavery and colonialism.

She noted that the Prime Minister had accepted an invitation to serve on the High-Level Global Advisory Council on Reparatory Justice, underscoring Jamaica's continued leadership in the international reparations movement.

The Minister underscored the significance of the conference, describing it as part of a broader journey of reconnection between Africa and its diaspora.

Grange commended Ghana for its leadership in achieving international recognition of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery as crimes against humanity, through a landmark United Nations (UN) Resolution.

"We hail the bold and visionary leadership that, together with the support of 123 countries, carried this landmark Resolution into the hallowed halls of the United Nations," she stated.

Addressing the historical impact of slavery and colonialism, the Minister stressed that reparatory justice must go beyond financial compensation to include measures that restore dignity, truth, and equity.

"Our experiences differ. But our purpose is shared... to pursue reparatory justice... recognising differentiated circumstances and needs," she said.

Additionally, Grange affirmed Jamaica's support for a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to reparatory



justice – encompassing truth, formal apology, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, cessation of ongoing harm, guarantees of non-repetition, and reconciliation.

The Minister underscored the importance of recognising the contributions of African peoples and their descendants to global development and civilisation.

She further called for the return of cultural property and the establishment of new frameworks to promote equality and prosperity.

Grange also pledged the nation's support, expertise, and advocacy as global efforts to advance reparatory justice

continue.

"We offer our solidarity as well as our intellectual capital, our experience, our scholarship, and our advocacy," she added.

Meanwhile, Grange expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Ghana for their long-standing solidarity with Jamaica, including the support extended in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa.

"That gesture underscored the strong bond between our nations and the living reality that the Black Star continues to shine as Africa and Africans everywhere unite in solidarity and shared purpose," she remarked. (JIS News)

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SVG govt unveils ambitious suite of digital platforms



As part of a sweeping initiative to modernize its public sector, the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is advancing a comprehensive suite of interconnected digital platforms.

Detailed by Senator the Honorable Lavern King during her keynote address at the Public Service Digital Innovation Forum, these infrastructure upgrades fall under the wider Caribbean Digital Transformation Project and aim to fundamentally re-imagine how citizens and businesses interact with the state.

Here is a look at the major digital platforms currently in development or implementation across the country:

A new tax information management system is currently being readied and is expected to go live next year. This platform will allow citizens to handle transactions—such as paying for licenses—digitally, removing the need to wait in physical lines.

For commerce and international trade,

the government is rapidly advancing VSWift, a customs single window for trade facilitation.

Building on recent major upgrades to the existing customs processing platform, VSWift will eventually connect more than 20 partner government agencies into one unified system to streamline trade operations.

At the foundational level, the government is modernizing its civil registry to build a unique ID system.

This centralized identity layer will allow all other government services to recognize a citizen once, completely eliminating the need for individuals to repeatedly provide the same information to different departments.

Additionally, a unified land information system is currently under development. Once completed, this will serve as the country's first single digital window dedicated to handling land and property transactions.

To facilitate seamless financial interactions, St. Vincent has built a home-

grown government e-payment platform, which is currently in the process of being integrated directly with the local banking sector.

Connecting all of these tools will be a centralized citizens portal featuring a shared authentication layer. This portal is designed to be the main touchpoint for citizens to access various government services.

To ensure these platforms do not operate as disjointed “islands of data,” they are all being built upon a government enterprise architecture and interoperability framework. This vital “institutional plumbing” establishes common data, technical, and security standards across the entire government.

By enforcing this architecture, the tax system, unique ID, customs window, and land information systems will operate as one coherent, interoperable ecosystem, allowing future digital solutions from any ministry to plug into a shared, secure foundation rather than starting from scratch. (St Vincent Times)

PAHO member states agree on key decisions to strengthen Caribbean health

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) says the 178th Session of its Executive Committee has concluded after four days of discussions on the region's "most pressing public health priorities", with member states approving a series of strategies, plans of action and resolutions that will help strengthen health systems, improve preparedness for health emergencies, and expand access to essential health services across the Americas, including the Caribbean.

Throughout the week, delegates reviewed the organisation's technical and financial priorities, and agreed on measures to advance regional cooperation in areas including health emergency preparedness, antimicrobial resistance, arboviral diseases, food safety, and access to vaccines, medicines and other strategic health supplies through PAHO's Regional Revolving Funds.

In total, PAHO said the Executive Committee considered 41 agenda items, approved 13 resolutions, adopted four policy documents, and reviewed seven progress reports and four final reports.

Among the key decisions were the approval of the Strategy for Strengthening Health Emergency and Risk Management for Health Security 2026–2031, the Plan of Action on Antimicrobial Resistance 2027–2031, the Integrated Management Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Arboviral Diseases 2026–2035, the Strategy and Plan of Action on Food Safety 2026–2031, and measures to strengthen and align PAHO's Regional Revolving Funds, PAHO said.

The committee also reviewed the Preliminary End-of-Biennium Assessment of the PAHO Program Budget 2024–2025 and the Final Report on the Implementation of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020–2025, "reflecting on progress made toward improving health across the region while identi-



fying priorities for the years ahead."

Delegates also received updates on the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), the organization's Shared Services Initiative, ethics and internal oversight, human resources management, and efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The committee also discussed an innovative financing mechanism being developed jointly by PAHO and the Inter-American Development Bank to expand countries' access to financing for high-cost medicines through the Regional Revolving Funds, PAHO said.

PAHO Director Dr Jarbas Barbosa thanked Member States for their constructive engagement and commitment throughout the week.

"Members States took full responsibility for their role in this session of the Executive Committee and renewed their commitment to the Pan American Health Organization, and their efforts in reaching agreement in the discussions this week emphasized the trust and value you place on us," he said.

The PAHO director also reiterated the

importance of ensuring PAHO's financial sustainability by urging Member States to make timely payment of their assessed contributions, noting that adequate financing is essential for the organisation to deliver on the priorities established by countries through the Strategic Plan.

Barbosa called on countries to continue working together in the spirit of Pan American solidarity to address the region's shared health challenges.

"Today, as we bid farewell, I respectfully ask that we recommit ourselves to Pan Americanism by ensuring better health for the people of the hemisphere," he said on Thursday. "Once again, I congratulate you all on a job well done."

PAHO said the Executive Committee is one of its governing bodies, and meets twice a year to consider technical and administrative matters and provide guidance to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

The recommendations and decisions adopted during the 178th Session will inform the work of the organisation and contribute to discussions at the 63rd PAHO Directing Council later this year. (CMC)

Immigration upgrades slated for Grenadines airports

Minister of National Security St. Clair Leacock has outlined new plans to modernize border protection by bringing automated, digital immigration checks to the Grenadines.

Addressing the nation's broader border security strategies, Minister Leacock highlighted that the current immigration data capture system for individuals entering through the Grenadines is not digitized.

Currently, the process relies on manual, paper-based forms filled out by travelers, which immigration officers must then periodically transport back to mainland St. Vincent.

To address this gap and achieve real-time data capture, the Ministry of National Security is actively exploring new technological solutions. Leacock recently met with authorities in Mustique to evaluate a potential digital framework.

"Mustique has their own peculiar situation circumstances in which they shared with us their own home-grown digitalized model for data capture for immigration purposes," Leacock explained.

If this digital model proves successful in Mustique, Leacock stated it will be expanded to the other Grenadine islands to become an official instrument for tightening border security.

Furthermore, Leacock noted that several other agencies have approached the government offering affordable, automated, and digitized immigration services, which are currently undergoing an evaluation exercise.

These digital upgrades are a vital component of the country's expanded definition of national security. Leacock emphasized that national



security is no longer just about the police or coast guard, but heavily involves border security—specifically tracking “who gets in,” “how do they get in,” and “why do they get in”.

He noted that immigration procedures across the region are evolving rapidly; traditional paper embarkation and disembarkation (ED) forms on aircraft are disappearing, replaced by advance passenger screening and automated self-check kiosks. (St Vincent Times)

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Spanish judge orders prime minister's wife to face corruption trial and surrender her passport



A judge on Saturday ordered the wife of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to face trial on charges of influence peddling and corruption, and to surrender her passport.

Investigative judge Juan Carlos Peinado issued the ruling, arguing that Begoña Gómez represented a flight risk.

In addition to surrendering her passport, she must also appear before a court every two weeks. A trial date hasn't been set.

The decision touched off a heated political confrontation, with calls from the opposition for Sanchez's Socialist government to resign.

Gómez is accused of using her position to influence government contracts given to a group of technology companies.

The judge also accused her of the misuse of public funds in the hiring of a consultant, and the inappropriate use of software while she was a professor at a public university.

Gómez has denied any wrongdoing. Sánchez has called the case against her part of a smear campaign by conservative political opponents to topple his left-wing government, which has been in power since 2018.

Peinado said that a businessman who allegedly benefited from the government contracts and the consultant that worked for Gómez will also stand trial.

Sánchez, a critic of US President Donald Trump, is facing legal trouble on multiple fronts before a general election due by next year.

Earlier this week, a former Socialist prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, appeared before a different judge in connection with his alleged role in a government airline bailout and to explain the discovery of high-end jewellery during a police raid on his office. He denies wrongdoing.

Government officials sharply criticized Saturday's decision as politically motivated, while the Socialist Party called it "an absolute scandal for de-

mocracy."

"Begoña Gómez is innocent," the party said. "For two years now, she has been the target of a political and judicial witch hunt. Today's development is just the latest escalation."

But Spain's conservative opposition went on the attack, urging the government to call an early election.

"Lawmakers and the architects of our constitution could never have imagined that the threats to our democracy could originate from the Spanish government itself," said Miguel Tellado, secretary-general of the main opposition People's Party.

"Now we see how the government attacks judges, prosecutors and the media while attempting to silence opposition parties," he said. "This is unthinkable in any modern democracy."

The two-year investigation into Gómez was launched following accusations by the pressure group Manos Limpias, or Clean Hands, which has pursued multiple legal cases, many linked to conservative causes. (AP)

Pressure mounts on UK PM Starmer to quit after Burnham's by-election win

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is weighing whether to resign within days, according to media reports, amid mounting pressure from his own Labour Party following a decisive by-election win by his rival, Andy Burnham.

Expectation is growing that Starmer could announce a resignation timetable as soon as Monday, the same day Burnham is sworn in as a lawmaker after winning Thursday's vote by a wide margin – a result that has reportedly emboldened Labour figures, including Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, to call for Starmer to step aside.

A resignation would lead to the United Kingdom's seventh prime minister in a decade, a rapid rate of churn in the country's modern history.

Starmer has been under growing pressure to step down after months of declining popularity, policy missteps and scandals.

In February, the premier came under fire when revelations from the Epstein files about Peter Mandelson, whom Starmer appointed as the UK's ambassador to the US in December 2024, came to light.

Burnham, Greater Manchester mayor since 2017, has made clear he intends to challenge to lead the slumping centre-left party, warning in his by-election victory speech that it had a "final chance to change".

If successful, he would become prime minister by default, given that the governing Labour has a huge parliamentary majority.

Starmer is deeply unpopular with voters, according to polling.

YouGov, a global public opinion and data analytics firm, reports that only 19 percent of British people have a positive opinion of the prime minister, and he ranks as the ninth most popular Labour politician.



Starmer has insisted he will fight any attempt to oust him.

But the emphatic nature of Burnham's win in the Makerfield constituency in northwest England, where he nearly doubled Labour's majority, has increased the internal pressure on Starmer to quit.

Business Secretary Peter Kyle said on Sunday that Starmer was "making time to reflect on the political realities, challenges and opportunities that he finds himself in".

"He has been engaging in conversations with a wide, wide range of people," Kyle told the Sky News broadcaster after having what he said was a "frank" conversation with Starmer on Friday.

The Observer newspaper headlined on its cover on Sunday that Starmer was "expected to resign" the following day, while the Sunday Telegraph also reported he was "ready" to go, citing allies of the embattled British leader.

The Observer said Starmer would

"set out a timetable for his departure", noting he had been holding weekend talks at Chequers, the countryside retreat for prime ministers.

Labour's drubbing in local and regional polls in England, Scotland and Wales last month intensified the pressure on him.

The fallout from the polls saw Makerfield's previous Labour MP resign to allow Burnham to stand there.

Burnham, a former MP and government minister under ex-prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, is due to be sworn back into parliament on Monday.

From the so-called soft-left wing of Labour, he reinforced his reputation as the party's most popular figure by easily beating the hard-right populist Reform UK party's candidate in this week's by-election.

Reform, led by Brexit architect Nigel Farage, had won all of Makerfield's wards in last month's local elections. (Al Jazeera English)

US and Iran begin talks on initial peace deal in Switzerland



US and Iranian officials have started direct talks in Switzerland after signing an initial agreement to end the war last week.

The deal includes a commitment to reach a final agreement within 60 days, as well as an end to fighting on “all fronts” - including in Lebanon - and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

But more clashes between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon prompted Iran to announce it had shut the shipping route on Saturday - though tracking data shows vessels have continued to pass through it.

After talks started, President Donald Trump said on social media that Iran “must immediately stop their highly paid PROXIES in Lebanon from causing trouble”.

He threatened to “hit Iran very hard again” if they did not.

Before the talks began, Vice-Presi-

dent JD Vance had said the US hoped for progress on “the nuclear issue” and Lebanon, while Tehran said it would be “demanding that the other side fulfil its commitments”.

At the Swiss resort of Bürgenstock, Vance said Trump had asked negotiators to “turn over a new leaf”. He added that if Iran’s leadership was willing to give up being a “driver of regional instability” and “nuclear weapons ambitions for the longer term”, then the US “is willing to fundamentally transform our relationship with that country”.

Iran has insisted its nuclear programme is peaceful.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement that negotiations for a final deal were contingent on enforcing existing commitments - including stopping all military operations. Sunday’s talks were focused on implementation, he said.

Vance was joined by Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff.

For the Iranians, parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Switzerland late on Saturday.

The delegations were joined by Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the head of the country’s armed forces, Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Pakistan has acted as a mediator throughout the war, and hosted a previous round of negotiations between the US and Iran.

The US and Iranian presidents signed the initial agreement earlier this week, aiming to end the war with immediate effect.

Under the deal, Iran was to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel through which 20% of

the world's oil and natural gas travels. Its effective closure had driven up fuel prices and disrupted the global economy.

The US also agreed to lift a military blockade on ships going to and from Iranian ports.

The initial deal also included a \$300bn (£224bn) plan for Iran's "reconstruction", and the US terminating "all types of sanctions" on it.

But the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, the main reason stated by the US for the conflict, is still to be negotiated. In Trump's first term, he withdrew the US from an Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran and reimposed economic sanctions.

Under this week's initial deal, fighting was also supposed to stop on all fronts, but deadly conflict continued between Israel and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed group, despite the deal and a ceasefire agreed by the two sides on Friday.

Since the deal was signed, Israeli air strikes have killed at least 67 people, while Hezbollah attacks have killed five Israeli soldiers.

Iran accused the US and Israel of violating the ceasefire, and said it would close the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday in response.

However, some vessels appeared to be entering, exiting and transiting the strait on Sunday, according to location data on the maritime tracking website MarineTraffic.

Four tankers passed through the strait by late afternoon.

Four other vessels, all cargo or carrier ships, appear to be heading eastwards after being stationary on the western approach to the strait since the end of last week. In the other direction, four vessels appear to be heading out of the strait westwards having departed waters off the Iran coast.

Tracking data may not capture all

movements as some vessels may have turned their trackers off.

Israel has insisted that its conflict with Hezbollah is separate from the war on Iran, which it mounted alongside the US on 28 February.

Lebanon was drawn into the war shortly afterwards, when Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel in retaliation for a strike that killed Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded by launching a bombing campaign across Lebanon

and occupying around 5% of the country's territory in the south - hoping to drive back Hezbollah fighters from its northern border - and has said it has no intention of withdrawing.

Since 2 March, 4,057 people have been killed in Lebanon, the country's health ministry says. At least 34 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon, and four civilians in northern Israel, Israeli authorities say. (BBC)

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ABNOC prepares for 2026 Central American and Caribbean Games

The Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC) is preparing to send a 16-member delegation to the 2026 Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Games in the Dominican Republic this summer.

The centennial edition of the CAC Games, the oldest regional multisport competition in the world, is expected to feature more than 6,500 athletes across 40 sports during the event in Santo Domingo from July 24 to August 8.

First VicePresident of the ABNOC Thomas Greenaway will serve as Chef de Mission. Greenaway brings extensive experience managing regional games and will lead the Antiguan team of athletes, who will be competing in track and field, swimming, table tennis, beach volleyball, weightlifting, and sailing.

The 2026 Games will mark Antigua and Barbuda's first appearance in Olympic-style weightlifting competition at the CAC Games, while sailing entries will cover three different disciplines. Table tennis continues to grow as part of the nation's expanding sports programme.

"The CAC Games provide an important platform for our athletes to gain experience against the region's best," said Cliff Williams, ABNOC Secretary General.

"We are proud to send a focused team, including athletes making a historic debut for Antigua and Barbuda, and we look forward to strong performances and continued development across all sports."

This year's CAC Games will coincide with the 2026 Common-

wealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, from July 23 to August 2.

The CAC Games' July and August schedule overlapping with the 2026 Commonwealth Games is creating a significant scheduling challenge for both athletes and organisers.

However, with track and field events at the CAC Games scheduled for August 3 to 8 and the Commonwealth Games' track and field programme taking place from July 27 to August 1, some athletes may be able to contest both events, but careful planning will be required.

ABNOC is working closely with athletes, coaches, and partners to manage logistics, selection, and recovery to ensure the best possible performances in Santo Domingo.

Room leads Curacao to World Cup history



Curacao goalkeeper Eloy Room (1) makes a save during the World Cup Group E soccer match between Ecuador and Curacao in Kansas City, Mo., Saturday, June 20, 2026. (AP)

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (Reuters) - Curacao goalkeeper Eloy Room needed two minutes to make one of the World Cup's most impressive saves so far, stopping Ecuador forward Enner Valencia from close range and setting the tone for a career-defining performance that created history on Saturday.

Room made 15 saves in the 0-0 draw with Ecuador in Group E, the most in a 90-minute match in the tournament's history, hauling the smallest nation ever to play at a World Cup - with a population of about 156,000 - to their first point.

Curacao joined fellow tournament debutants Cape Verde in finding unexpected heroes in goal after the African nation's Vozinha helped hold heavyweights Spain to a 0-0 draw in their opening round match in Group H.

The 37-year-old Room, the oldest player in Curacao's squad, withstood

relentless Ecuadorean pressure, saving shots that included an 18-metre effort from John Yeboah in the 41st minute and a second-half header from Valencia.

Only the United States' Tim Howard has produced more stops in a single World Cup match, with 16 in an extra-time defeat by Belgium in the last 16 at the finals in 2014.

"I was not thinking about that during the game," Room told reporters, though joking that he was annoyed he was not able to reach Howard's mark. He described the draw as a team effort.

Ecuador goalkeeper Hernan Galindez said Room had the game of his life against the South American side. Soccer history is no stranger to the Curacao goalkeeper.

In 2019, Room made more than a dozen saves in his country's first Gold Cup win against Honduras. Shining on

the biggest stage, however, marked an additional landmark for the nation of about 156,000 people - and a personal accomplishment.

Netherlands-born Room told FIFA in an interview earlier this year that the reason he decided to play for Curacao was dreaming as a little kid to make it to the World Cup with the country.

He became eligible to represent Curacao through his father, and said he used to visit the country on vacation in his youth. Patrick Kluivert contacted him to join the team in 2015, when the former Netherlands international managed the side.

Social media also reflected the impact of his performance, with Room's Instagram account jumping to around 700,000 followers from fewer than 100,000 before the game - a boom similar to what happened to Cape Verde's Vozinha.

Born near the German border, the six-foot-three Room plays for Miami FC in the USL Championship, but spent most of his career at Dutch club Vitesse. He has also played for Columbus Crew in the MLS and PSV Eindhoven in the Eredivisie.

Curacao is an autonomous constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the game attracted royalty.

With the Netherlands' King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima in attendance at the match, Room himself became royalty for Curacao. He said the royals' celebrated, dancing with the team after the match, and that the queen even kissed him.



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Eighth place finish for Antigua in Billie Jean King Cup in El Salvador

Antigua and Barbuda finished in eighth place overall among 10 countries in the Americas Group III of the Billie Jean King Cup competition, which was held on the hard court surface in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, from June 15 to 20.

The Antiguan team were beaten 2-0 by Panama in the playoff for eighth place on Saturday. Michelle Agelvis beat Antiguan Ariel Naomi Kelsick 6-0, 6-2, and Anna Louise Bjornestad wrapped up the tie for Panama by coasting to a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jolie George-Alexander in the second singles.

Both teams had secured a fourth-place finish in their respective five team groups in the round-robin preliminary stage.

The Antiguan team were beaten 3-0 by Cuba to finish their campaign in Group A in fourth place with a record of one win and three losses in their four round-robin matches.

Meliza Perez of Cuba won the opening singles by beating Antiguan Brasha Dyer 6-2, 6-3. Maria Eduarda Perez Acosta increased Cuba's advantage by dispatching Antiguan Jolie George-Alexander 6-1, 6-1 in the second singles.

The Cubans completed their clean sweep in the doubles, with the combination of Meliza Perez and Maria Eduarda Perez Acosta recording a 6-1, 6-3 victory over the Antiguan duo of Sibley Charles and Ariel Naomi Kelsick.

Antigua and Barbuda also suffered 3-0 losses to Barbados and host El Salvador and recorded a 3-0 victory over bottom team Suriname.

Panama finished fourth in Group B with a record of one win and three losses.



The Antigua and Barbuda team that contested the Americas Group III Billie Jean King Cup competition in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, from June 15 to 20, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the ABTA)

Meanwhile, Trinidad and Tobago and Costa Rica won the promotional play-offs and gained promotion to compete in the Americas Group II in 2027.

Trinidad and Tobago, who finished second in Group B, beat Group A winners El Salvador 2-1 in the promotional playoffs. Group B winners Costa Rica capped their unbeaten run in the tournament by prevailing 2-1 against Barbados, who finished second in Group A.

In the other playoff matches, Cuba finished in fifth place by pulling off a 2-0 victory against Jamaica. Bermuda clinched ninth place by prevailing 2-1 against Suriname, who failed to win any of their matches in the tournament.

El Salvador, Barbados, Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, and Suriname competed in Group A, while Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Panama, and Bermuda contested Group B.

More success for Swetes/Roman Hill in Village Netball League



The Swetes Roman Hill female netball team

Swetes/Roman Hill extended their unbeaten run in the Antigua and Barbuda Netball Association's (ABNA) Antigua Generators and Cool and Smooth Village League on Saturday evening.

Swetes/Roman Hill notched up their fourth win in as many matches with a 65-8 drubbing of St. John's Talented Youths in the female division at the Willikies Netball Court.

Everdine Parker-Barnard converted 40 of her 47 shots, and Jamila Fitz scored 25 of her 34 attempts for

Swetes/Roman Hill.

Trinecier Greenaway converted seven of her 19 shots for the St. John's United Talented Youths, who suffered their fourth defeat in as many games.

The Under-16 National Team recorded their third win in five matches by pulling off a 28-15 victory over the Pares Net Masters in another female division encounter.

Judith Warrell converted 13 of her 24 shots, Deancia Lewis scored 11 of her 14 attempts, and Tina Graham made four of her eight tries for the Under-16

National Team.

Nyirah Ralph sank eight of her 16 shots, Annika Watson converted five of her eight attempts, and Lucian Smith made two of her four tries for the Pares Net Masters, who slumped to their fourth defeat in five matches.

After losing all three previous encounters, Willikies claimed their first win in four matches in the Mixed Division by snatching a narrow 23-22 victory over Michael Joseph Gray's Green Flyballers.

Carl Kirby scored 15 of his 18 shots, and Summer Buckleys converted eight of her 14 attempts for Willikies.

Krizia Duncan sank 12 of her 15 shots, and Kizzy Hughes scored nine of her 14 attempts for the Gray's Green Flyballers, who lost for the third time in as many matches.

The ABNA Village League will continue with three more matches at the YMCA Sports Complex in St. John's on Monday evening.

In the female division, Potters Stingers will take on St. John's United Talented Youths at 6 pm, and Seatons Eastsiders will meet Willikies at 7 pm.

Lamin Newton's All Saints United will clash with Michael Joseph Gray's Green Flyballers in a mixed division affair at 8 pm.

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and clinched victory by dismissing Scotland for 146 off their 20 overs.

Chasing a victory target of 154, Scotland were on course to spring an upset at 132 for five with two overs left.

Then medium-pacer Aaliyah Alleyne came to the West Indies' rescue by snapping up three for 11. She took all three wickets in the 19th over, including Darcey Carter, who hit a topscore of 59. Scotland required 17 off the last over and were all out on the last ball of the match.

West Indies captain Hayley Matthew helped to curtail Scotland, who made a blistering start to their run chase, by capturing three for 19.

Scotland had the West Indies on the ropes in both innings. Tight bowling and fielding reduced the West Indies to 124 for six after 18 overs. But another veteran, Stafanie Taylor, who missed the West Indies' opening win over defending champions New Zealand, rescued the batting effort.

Taylor's unbeaten 47 off 19 balls, with 34 runs in bound-

aries, lifted the West Indies to a competitive total. Taylor made 26 of the 29 runs that the West Indies scored in their last two overs.

Katherine Fraser starred in the field for Scotland with two wickets for 34 runs, including bowling Hayley Matthews for 14. She also took a leaping catch on the boundary and ran out Shemaine Campbelle for 36.

Fraser, who made 20, and Carter then gave Scotland a brilliant flying start to the chase. But the West Indies fought back with four wickets in 13 balls into the eighth

over, and Scotland's run rate dropped below the required rate for the first time.

Carter injured her leg in the fourth over and was dropped on 19. Struggling to run, she didn't hit a boundary after the fifth over until the 18th. Scotland went nearly five overs without a boundary.

But Scotland stayed in the game, thanks to a quick-fire 33 off 25 balls by Ailsa Lister and poor bowling and fielding by the West Indies. It took Alleyne to provide relief with her three-wicket burst to snatch victory for the Caribbean women.

West Indies edge past Sri Lanka for nervy victory

The West Indies took a big step towards reaching the semifinals of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 with a hard-fought five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in Bristol, England, on Sunday.

Some impressive West Indies bowling dismissed Sri Lanka for 98 in 19.4 overs, as Player of the Match Hayley Matthews grabbed three wickets for 15 runs.

Matthews also led a rapid start to their run chase before Stafanie Taylor hit 27 not out to guide the West Indies to victory at 99 for five in 16.1 overs after Sri Lanka's bowlers put up a stoic fight.

Sri Lanka made a difficult start with the bat, as Matthews ripped through the top order to reduce them to nine for three.

Vishmi Gunarathne fell caught and bowled for one inside the first over, before Matthews claimed both Chamari Athapaththu (2) and Harshitha Samarawickrama (0) in the same over.

Sri Lanka sought to rebuild through Imesha Dulani and Kavisha Dilhari, but Dulani became the fourth victim of the powerplay when she was dismissed for 17 by Chinelle Henry.

Dilhari (21) and Nilakshika Silva dug in to drag Sri Lanka past 50 before Dilhari and Kaushini Nuthyanga (0) fell within three balls to



West Indies captain Hayley Matthews, right, celebrate with teammates after claiming a wicket against Sri Lanka during their ICC Women's T20 World Cup match in Bristol, England, Sunday, June 21, 2026. (CWI Media)

leave them 58 for six.

Silva continued to try to salvage the Sri Lankan innings with a gutsy 30 off 26, while Kawya Kavindi added 17, but it was not enough as wickets continued to fall around them.

Silva eventually fell to Afy Fletcher before Sugandika Kumari (2) was stumped by Shemaine Campbelle off Karishma Ramharack.

Sri Lanka continued to push as they looked to crest three figures, but Mithali Ayodhya (3) was run out before Kavindi was also stumped by the same Campbelle and Ramharack pairing to leave her side all out for 98.

The West Indies began their chase in brisk fashion, as Matthews and Deandra Dottin looked to push their net run rate up by scoring quickly from the outset.

Matthews cracked 17 off 17 balls before she was run out by Silva and Dottin fell for 12 from the final ball of the powerplay to Nimasha Meepage, leaving the West Indies on 36 for two.

Shemaine Campbelle was next to fall, as Athapaththu struck to dismiss her for four, but West Indies comfortably kept ahead of the required run rate through Jahzara Claxton and Stafanie Taylor.

The pair looked well set at the crease until Dilhari struck twice in three balls, claiming the wickets of Claxton (6) and Chinelle Henry (0) to add some extra nerves as the West Indies looked for the 29 runs they needed with eight overs remaining.

But Taylor continued to keep the scoreboard ticking over and combined well with Jannillea Glasgow to edge the West Indies towards their target.

Taylor duly scored the winning run to finish unbeaten, her second not out score in a row, as the West Indies sealed a five-wicket victory with just under 23 balls to spare.

It allows the West Indies to maintain their perfect start to the tournament with three wins from three, leaving them well-placed to qualify from Group B ahead of matches against England and Ireland.

Sri Lanka now face an uphill battle, with one win from their three matches so far.

The West Indies notched up their second win in as many games by snatching a seven-wicket victory over Scotland at Headingley.

The West Indies mostly struggled to reach 153 for six off their 20 overs after being sent in to bat and managed to hold their nerve

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