

Government Announces A Hike in the Passenger Head Tax

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Prime Minister Gaston Browne (centre in dark suit) and other officials at the launch of the initiative designed to help young people cope with mental health issues

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Government Announces A Hike in the Passenger Head Tax

International passengers traveling to Antigua and Barbuda will see an increase in the Passenger Head Tax that they must pay, according to an announcement from the Cabinet on Thursday.

Spokesman, Maurice Merchant said Cabinet has approved an increase in the Passenger Head Tax on international travellers coming into and departing Antigua and Barbuda. The tax will increase from US\$40 to US\$50 per passenger, as part of the Government's ongoing efforts to ensure the sustainable financing of critical regional institutions that provide essential services to Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Eastern Caribbean.

Merchant reported that Cabinet was advised that the additional revenue generated from the adjustment will be earmarked to assist in meeting the country's financial obligations to important regional agencies, including the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC). These institutions play indispensable roles in maintaining aviation safety and oversight across the region and ensuring the effective administration of justice through the Eastern Caribbean judicial system.

In approving the measure, Cabinet noted that Antigua and Barbuda continues to benefit significantly from the services provided by these institutions and must therefore contribute its fair share towards their operation and sustainability. The Government emphasized that maintaining strong and adequately funded regional institutions is essential to safeguarding the interests of citizens, supporting economic growth, and preserving regional integration.

Cabinet further determined that travel within the CARICOM region will remain exempt from the increase



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

in keeping with the Government's commitment to promoting regional movement, strengthening economic and social ties among CARICOM

member states, and advancing the goals of Caribbean integration.

The Government expects that the revised Passenger Head Tax will provide a reliable source of funding to meet outstanding and future commitments while minimizing the impact on residents and visitors. Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to prudent fiscal management and to ensuring that Antigua and Barbuda continues to honour its regional obligations while maintaining the high standards of service and institutional support upon which the nation depends. The increase will take effect following the completion of the necessary legislative and administrative processes, details of which will be announced in due course.



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Another Significant Step In Plans To Redevelop the Fort James Area



The government is taking another decisive step in its plans to undertake a comprehensive re-development of the Fort James area that is earmarked for the Fort James Renaissance Park.

A government statement said the Cabinet has approved the engagement of Smith Warner International Limited (SWI) to undertake a comprehensive Baseline Coastal Assessment and Preliminary Engineering Design for Fort James Beach, marking another significant step in the Government's vision to transform the area into the Fort James Renaissance Park.

The approval follows the Government's recent announcement of a EC\$5 million investment towards the redevelopment of Fort James, a project aimed at restoring one of Antigua and Barbuda's most historic and iconic coastal areas while creating a world-class recreational, tourism and cultural destination for residents and visitors alike.

Cabinet was advised that Fort James Beach has experienced varying degrees of coastal erosion over several years, making it essential that any redevelopment be guided by sound scientific analysis and engineering expertise. The assessment will provide the Government with critical information regard-

ing shoreline stability, erosion patterns, sediment movement, wave and current conditions, climate resilience, and the long-term sustainability of proposed interventions.

Under the approved proposal, Smith Warner International will serve as the lead coastal engineering consultant and will be responsible for the technical direction, coastal process assessment, numerical modelling, options analysis, preliminary engineering design, and preparation of recommendations for beach restoration and stabilization. The consultancy team will work closely with regional and international experts as well as local stakeholders to ensure that the proposed solutions are environmentally responsible, technically sound, and appropriate for Antigua and Barbuda's unique coastal conditions.

The study will seek to identify the primary causes of erosion at Fort James Beach, determine the most suitable restoration and stabilization measures, evaluate the availability of suitable sand resources, assess drainage and water-quality impacts, and recommend engineering solutions that preserve public access, recreational use, swimming safety, and environmental integrity.

Cabinet noted that the consultancy

will be conducted in phases, beginning with the collection and analysis of coastal data and historical shoreline information. Subsequent stages will involve the development and testing of engineering options, followed by the preparation of preliminary designs and implementation recommendations. This phased approach will ensure that future investments in Fort James are informed by evidence-based decision-making and are capable of withstanding the impacts of storms, sea-level rise, and climate change.

The Government further emphasized that the Fort James Renaissance Park Project is intended to be far more than a beach enhancement initiative. The broader redevelopment vision includes the revitalization of the area as a premier public space that celebrates Antigua and Barbuda's heritage while supporting tourism, recreation, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. The coastal assessment is therefore a critical foundation upon which future development plans will be built.

Cabinet expressed confidence that the work undertaken by Smith Warner International will provide the technical roadmap necessary to protect and restore Fort James Beach while ensuring that future investments deliver long-term economic, environmental, and social benefits. The Government remains committed to preserving Antigua and Barbuda's coastal assets and advancing projects that contribute to national development, environmental sustainability, and the ongoing renaissance of communities across the country.

The approval of this consultancy represents the first major technical milestone in the realization of the Fort James Renaissance Park and underscores the Government's determination to transform the historic area into a resilient, attractive and internationally competitive destination for generations to come.

Venezuelan Ambassador's Apartment Building Damaged By Earthquake



The building in Caracas that houses the apartment belonging to the Venezuelan Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Carmen Velasquez, was among those that sustained damage from Wednesday's massive back-to-back earthquakes that rocked that South American Nation.

The photograph of the building shows the exterior of the building damaged, with several large cracks, the collapse of several of the balconies attached to the apartments and fallen debris at the entrance of the building. The ambassador did not indicate whether or not her apartment had sustained any damage.

Just after 6:00 pm on Wednesday, Venezuela was rocked by a 7.2 earthquake

to be followed less than a minute after by another quake measuring 7.5 on the Richter Scale.

In an address early on Thursday, Jorge Rodriguez addressed the nation as President of the National Assembly. He reported;

- Specialized rescue teams from various countries are expected to arrive soon.
- 250 buildings damaged, primarily in La Guaira State
- 138 aftershocks
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Antigua and Barbuda and France Commit To A Range Of Security Matters

Antigua and Barbuda and France have agreed on a wide range of security issues as they both commit to strengthening cooperation in these areas.

This comes as Foreign Minister, E.P Chet Greene on Thursday welcomed Justice Emmanuelle Doffe, France's Liaison Judge to the Caribbean, to St. John's. He reaffirmed Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to strengthening cooperation with France in matters relating to justice, security, and the rule of law.

The Minister expressed Antigua and Barbuda's interest in exploring the possibility of negotiating a bilateral agreement with France to strengthen cooperation in combating transnational organized crime, particularly illicit drug trafficking and related criminal activities.

The Minister further observed that cybercrime continues to present a growing challenge for Antigua and Barbuda. He indicated that enhanced cooperation with France in this area would be beneficial and suggested the establishment of joint investigative teams, where appropriate, to strengthen cross-border criminal investigations and intelligence-sharing. Justice Doffe advised that France is exploring the establishment of bilateral agreements on extradition and cooperation in criminal matters with Caribbean states. She noted that Saint Lucia and Dominica have already concluded such arrangements and highlighted their value in facilitating judicial cooperation.

Justice Doffe indicated that France is willing to support capacity-building initiatives through Memoranda of Understanding and specialized training program in areas related to criminal investigations, judicial cooperation, financial crime, cybercrime, and



Foreign Minister, E.P Chet Greene and Justice Emmanuelle Doffe, France's Liaison Judge to the Caribbean

other law enforcement disciplines. She undertook to convey these proposals to the relevant authorities within the French Ministry of Justice. Justice Emmanuelle Doffe is undertaking an official visit to Antigua and Barbuda to strengthen judicial and law enforcement cooperation between France and Caribbean jurisdictions. Her visit is primarily technical in nature and focuses on enhancing

collaboration among judicial authorities, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and institutions responsible for combating transnational crime. Unlike a traditional diplomatic visit, Justice Doffe's mandate centers on facilitating practical cooperation in criminal justice matters and supporting coordination between French and Caribbean authorities.

U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Pays Tribute to Sir Aziz Hadeed



The United States Embassy's celebration of America's 250th anniversary in Antigua and Barbuda became more than a commemoration of American independence this week, as Chargé d'Affaires Karin Sullivan opened the evening by paying heartfelt tribute to the late Sir Aziz Faraz Hadeed.

Hosted at The Hut at Little Jumby, the celebration brought together Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Gaston Browne, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, business leaders and friends

of the United States. Among those in attendance were members of the Hadeed Family, representatives of the business community, many of whom were visibly moved by the recognition afforded to the late businessman and philanthropist.

Before commencing the evening's celebrations, Sullivan reflected on Sir Aziz's remarkable legacy, stating: "Before we begin tonight's celebration, I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of Sir Aziz Faraz Hadeed. His contributions to Antigua and Barbuda's business,

community, civic life and national development left a lasting mark on this nation. Sir Aziz was a longtime friend of the U.S. Embassy and someone who understood the importance of partnership, community and public service. He is deeply missed by many across Antigua and Barbuda and beyond."

The tribute underscored the deep respect Sir Aziz earned not only within Antigua and Barbuda but among international partners who worked alongside him throughout his distinguished career.

Sullivan went on to emphasize the enduring relationship between the United States and Antigua and Barbuda, describing it as a partnership built on shared values and practical cooperation. She highlighted ongoing collaboration in border security, maritime safety, energy resilience, transnational crime prevention and economic development, noting that these initiatives continue to strengthen prosperity and security for both nations.

Particular emphasis was placed on energy cooperation, with Sullivan identifying the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project at Crabbes Peninsula as one of the clearest examples of the growing commercial partnership between the two countries.



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Chinese Company To Donate Eye Care Equipment to Antigua and Barbuda



The Antigua and Barbuda government through the Ministry of Health, has formalized an agreement with China's He Vision Group for the donation of eye care equipment that will support efforts to strengthen ophthalmic services in the country.

The development was confirmed during a meeting involving Minister of Health, Michael Joseph; Dr. He Wei, Founder of He Vision Group; Ms. Helen Yan, Assistant to the President of He Vision Group and Director of the Social Responsibility Department; H.E. Clement Antonio, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to China; and H.E. Ian Marshall, Grenada's Ambassador to China.

The equipment, which is currently being prepared for shipment to Antigua

and Barbuda, is expected to enhance the country's capacity to provide specialized eye care services and improve access to diagnostic and treatment options for patients.

Minister Joseph welcomed the partnership and expressed appreciation to He Vision Group for its commitment to supporting healthcare development in Antigua and Barbuda.

"This partnership represents an important step in strengthening eye care services within our healthcare system. We are grateful to He Vision Group for this generous contribution and look forward to the arrival of the equipment, which will support improved eye health outcomes for the people of Antigua and Barbuda," Minister Joseph said.

In addition to formalizing the donation, discussions explored opportunities for future collaboration in ophthalmology, blindness prevention, medical training, and the expansion of specialized eye care services.

He Vision Group is internationally recognized for its work in ophthalmology, medical education, blindness prevention, and eye care innovation through its network of hospitals, research institutions, and training programmes.

The Ministry of Health looks forward to continued engagement with He Vision Group as both parties work toward advancing eye health services and improving access to quality healthcare for residents of Antigua and Barbuda.

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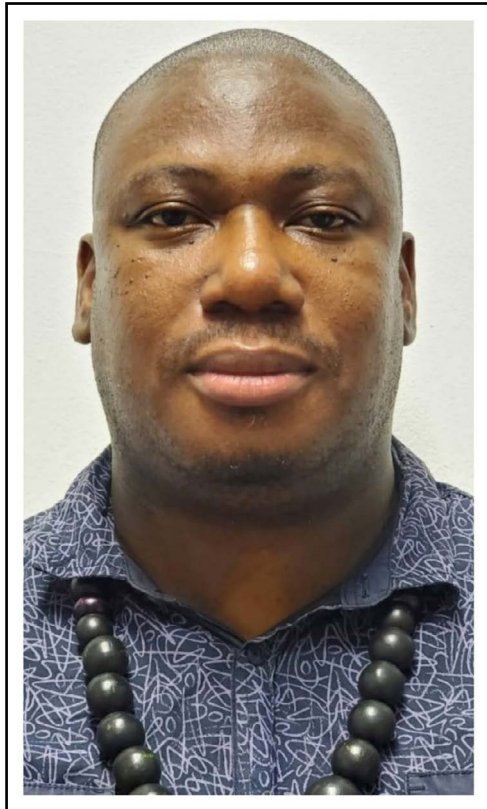
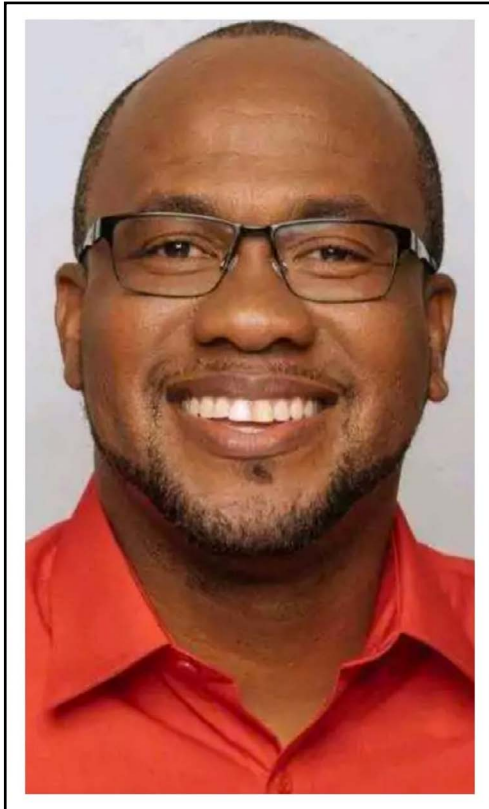
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CDEMA's Regional Meeting Attracts Antigua and Barbuda Participation



Minister of Social and Urban Transformation, Rawdon Turner, and Director of the National Office of Disaster Services (NODS), Sherrod James

Two Antigua and Barbuda officials are in Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the Council of Ministers Meeting of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

Minister of Social and Urban Transformation, Rawdon Turner, and Director of the National Office of Disaster

Services (NODS), Sherrod James, traveled to Trinidad and Tobago on Thursday for the meeting.

The meeting brings together ministers responsible for disaster risk management from across the Caribbean to review regional priorities and make key policy decisions to strengthen

disaster preparedness and resilience throughout the region.

The Council of Ministers serves as the policy-making body of CDEMA. It considers recommendations emerging from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which comprises the directors and heads of national disaster management offices from participating member states.

Earlier this year, the Technical Advisory Committee met in the British Virgin Islands to examine challenges facing the region's disaster management systems and to develop recommendations on the way forward. Those recommendations will now be considered by ministers during the council meeting in Trinidad and Tobago.

The discussions are expected to focus on enhancing regional cooperation, strengthening disaster response mechanisms, and advancing policies that improve the Caribbean's capacity to prepare for and respond to natural hazards and other emergencies.

Antigua and Barbuda's participation underscores the country's continued commitment to regional collaboration and the development of effective strategies to safeguard lives, livelihoods, and critical infrastructure from the impacts of disasters.



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BACKGROUND

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JOB SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

The Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) is the executive accountable for ECAB's people strategy, organisational culture, talent capability, and administrative operations. Reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer and serving as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the CHRO ensures the Bank has the people, capabilities, culture, and organisational design required to achieve its strategic objectives and long-term growth ambitions.

The CHRO acts as a strategic advisor to the CEO, Executive HR Committee and Board on all matters related to human capital, including workforce planning, executive and management talent, compensation governance, employee relations, industrial relations, people-technology leadership and organisational change. The role is equally accountable for the Bank's administrative operations, ensuring that physical, facilities, and administrative services are delivered efficiently and in support of business performance.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. People Strategy and Organisational Design
2. Talent Acquisition, Development, and Performance
3. Culture, Employee Experience and Change Leadership
4. Compensation, Benefits, and Total Rewards
5. Industrial Relations and External Stakeholder Management
6. Digital HR and Workforce Analytics
7. Health, Safety, and Administration
8. Strategic Risk, Governance, and Regulatory Compliance

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

- Master's degree in Human Resources Management, Business Administration, Organisational Psychology, or a related field.
- Professional accreditation in human resource management is preferred e.g., SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), CIPD or equivalent international HR professional designation.
- Certification in change management (e.g. PROSCI, ACMP or equivalent) desired.
- Minimum of 10 years of senior HR leadership experience with at least 5 years at senior management or executive level in financial services, banking, or a similarly regulated environment.
- Demonstrated experience leading collective bargaining negotiations and managing industrial relations in a unionised workforce environment.
- Proven track record of designing and executing enterprise-wide people strategy, including talent management, performance frameworks, and culture transformation.
- Experience presenting to and advising Board-level committees including HR, and Audit and Risk Committees on people strategy, talent risk, and HR governance.
- Demonstrated technology leadership experience, including working knowledge of Generative AI applications in HR, advanced workforce analytics, and HR technology architecture.
- Demonstrated ability to lead HR transformation and digitisation programmes, including HRIS implementation and HR analytics capability development.
- Proven experience in total rewards design, compensation benchmarking, and executive remuneration governance.
- Comprehensive knowledge of applicable labour legislation, employment law, and industrial relations practice.
- Familiarity with banking regulatory expectations relating to people risk, conduct risk, and senior manager accountability.
- Understanding of data protection legislation as it applies to the management of employee personal information.

APPLICATIONS

If you meet the requirements outlined above and you are seeking a senior human resources leadership role with a major corporate entity in the banking and financial services sector, please email your Cover Letter and CV or Resume to apply@profilescaribbean.com with the caption **CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER**.

Closing date for applications is July 6, 2026

Whereas we appreciate your interest, and in particular your applications, and we thank all applicants, please note that only those candidates selected for shortlisting will be acknowledged.

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Antigua and Barbuda Among 14 Caribbean Nations in New Saudi Maritime Project

Saudi Arabia has launched the “Caribbean Maritime Transport Sustainability” project to support 14 Caribbean countries.

The initiative, launched in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), was announced during the Fifth Regional Meeting of Directors and Heads of Maritime Administrations in Georgetown, Guyana.

The project aims to strengthen maritime legislation and regulatory frameworks across the Caribbean region. Beneficiary countries include Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Spanning two years, the project seeks to enhance policy alignment and institutional capacity in participating states, enabling them to ratify and effectively implement priority IMO instruments within their national legal systems.

It will also support the drafting of maritime legislation and the development of national maritime policy strategies in coordination with the IMO Regional Office.

Speaking at the meeting, Saudi Arabia’s Permanent Representative to the IMO, Kamal Al-Junaidi, highlighted the central role of the sea in the Caribbean, saying it is “not merely an aspect of life, but life itself.” He added that the Kingdom understands this reality through its own experience.

Al-Junaidi emphasized that the prosperity of Caribbean nations is closely tied to the safety, security, and sustainability of their seas, stressing the shared responsibility to keep these waters safe, clean, and accessible for future generations.

He noted that the project is built on the belief that international agreements can only achieve meaningful impact when translated into enforceable national legislation.

Al-Junaidi also expressed hope that the initiative would deliver tangible results,



including stronger laws, more effective institutions, and higher levels of compliance, enabling Caribbean states to play a greater role in global maritime governance.”.

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Antigua and Barbuda Nominated For Coveted Culinary Awards



A celebration of Antigua and Barbuda's cuisine takes place each May, during Culinary Month (Photos courtesy of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority)

Antigua and Barbuda has once again secured international recognition, earning a nomination as the 'Caribbean's Best Emerging Culinary City Destination 2026', in the World Culinary Awards.

This follows Antigua and Barbuda's successful win in the same category in 2025 and further solidifies Antigua and Barbuda's position as a culinary hotspot to watch.

The 'Caribbean's Best Emerging Culinary City Destination 2026' nomination places Antigua and Barbuda among destinations recognised by the World Culinary Awards for their growing culinary appeal and their commitment to

culinary excellence, innovation, and authentic food experiences. It highlights locations that are successfully using food as a key driver of tourism, attracting global travellers who seek unique and culturally rich dining experiences.

Antigua and Barbuda Culinary Month Lead, within the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority Shermain Jeremey said, "As Antigua and Barbuda continues to elevate its culinary tourism product, this nomination reinforces Antigua and Barbuda's position as a must-visit destination for food lovers worldwide."

"To win this award for a second year would signal that the destination is not only offering high-quality cuisine but is

also developing a strong culinary identity rooted in local culture, traditions, and creativity, she added"

Antigua and Barbuda Tourism officials are encouraging residents, and visitors to support the destination by casting their votes for Antigua and Barbuda as the Caribbean's Best Emerging Culinary City Destination 2026, through the official World Culinary Awards website: [Caribbean's Best Emerging Culinary City Destination 2026 « World Culinary Awards](#).

Voting officially opened on June 25 and will run until August 14, 2026.

Body of Missing Man Recovered at Pigeon Point

The body of a man who was reported missing while swimming at Pigeon Point Beach has been recovered.

The body was discovered floating in the water by members of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard at approximately 6:55 a.m. on Thursday, June 25.

He has been identified as 56-year-old Terry Tonge of Swetes.

Mr. Tonge was officially pronounced dead at approximately 8:22 a.m. by a medical doctor.

Investigations into the circumstances surrounding the incident are ongoing.

The police extend sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of the deceased during this difficult time.



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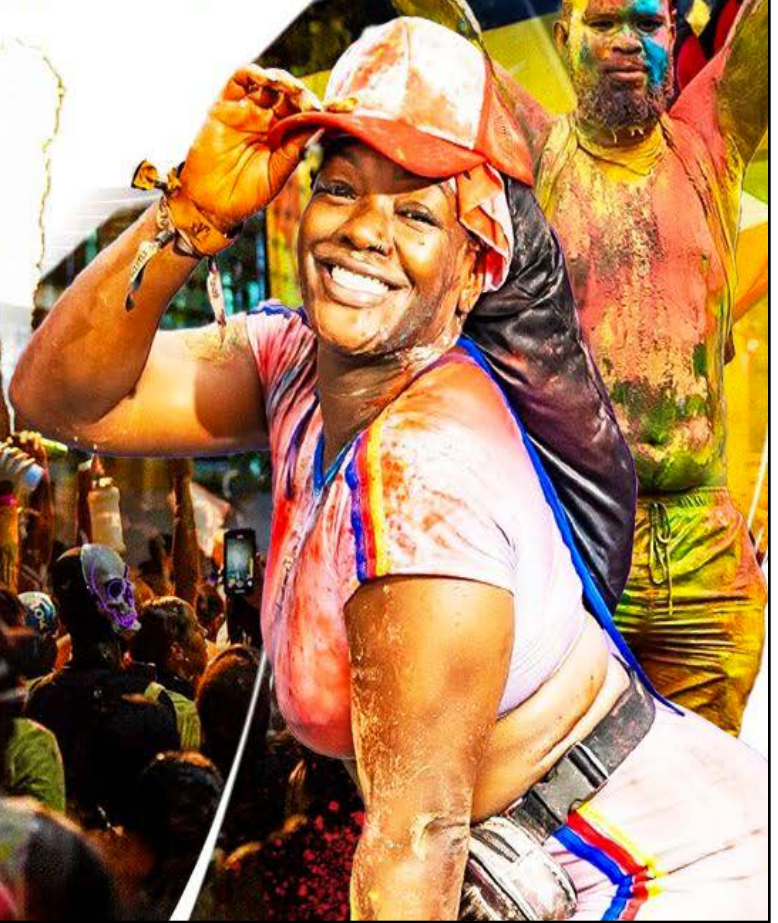
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Antigua and Barbuda Launches OECS' First Anonymous Youth Mental Health Chatline & Survey Report



The Government of Antigua and Barbuda, in partnership with UNICEF, the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and Zenith Centre, on Thursday launched the Young Caribbean Minds (YCM) Chatline—the OECS' first free, anonymous, text-based mental health and child protection support service for children and young people.

The launch follows the largest youth consultation on mental health legislation ever undertaken in the Eastern Caribbean, with more than 1,000 children and young people helping to shape both the future of mental health care in Antigua and Barbuda and the development of the Young Caribbean Minds Chatline.

Launched alongside the Chatline, the Youth Voices: Mental Health Care Bill Survey Report captures the perspectives of young people aged 10 to 19 through surveys, focus groups and a national consultative process. It marks the first documented youth consultation to inform mental health legislation in the Caribbean and will help shape Antigua and Barbuda's proposed Mental Health Care Bill 2026,

demonstrating how children's voices can meaningfully influence national policy.

The report found that stigma remains the greatest barrier preventing young people from seeking mental health support, with 34.2 per cent of respondents saying they fear being judged if they ask for help. More than half called for stronger protections within the legislation, while nearly 90 per cent supported the Bill's proposed rights-based provisions. Privacy emerged as the single most important factor in building trust in mental health services, with online chat support ranking as the second most preferred way for young people to access help.

These findings directly informed the development of the Young Caribbean Minds Chatline.

Designed to remove many of the barriers identified by young people themselves, the Chatline provides free, real-time psychosocial support through UWI-trained volunteers under the supervision of qualified psychologists. Young people can access support anonymously, without providing personal information, while an integrated child protection referral system

ensures that children at risk can be connected to appropriate safeguarding services when needed.

Prime Minister the Honourable Gaston Browne described mental health as a fundamental right and reflected on his long-standing advocacy for improved mental health services across Antigua and Barbuda and the wider region.

"I have been an advocate of mental health care for everyone as a fundamental right," he said. "I've advocated here in Antigua and Barbuda, within the region, the OECS and the United Nations, and I'm very happy to be participating in this programme, which has mental health at its epicentre."

The Prime Minister also spoke candidly about his personal connection to the issue, underscoring the importance of breaking the stigma surrounding mental health.

"Unfortunately, the issue of mental health has been stigmatized globally," he said. "The reason why I'm so committed to this issue is personal. Many of you may not be aware that I grew up in a single-parent home with a mentally ill mother... many times there was a crisis that could not work, which



made it very difficult for me and my siblings.”

For UNICEF, the launch represents an important milestone in ensuring that children and young people have access to safe, confidential and youth-friendly mental health support.

“Today we reaffirm our commitment to every young person in the Caribbean: your voice matters, your feelings matter, and help is available,” said Maryam Abdu, UNICEF Representative a.i. for the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office. “The Young Caribbean Minds Chatline provides a free, confidential and accessible space so no child has to struggle alone.”

She said the initiative demonstrates the region’s commitment to listening to young people and responding with practical solutions.

“Our region has shown the courage to listen—now we are responding,” Abdu said. “By expanding this Chatline across Eastern Caribbean member states and offering bilingual support, we are ensuring that support is truly inclusive and reaches the young people who need it most.”

Describing the broader vision behind the initiative, she added: “Young Caribbean Minds is more than a ser-

vice—it is a promise. Built with young people’s voices and guided by local partnerships, this initiative strengthens resilience, protects children and gives families and communities the tools to help every child thrive.”

Dr Camille Samuel, Registrar at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus, highlighted the University’s role in preparing the next generation of volunteer mental health supporters.

“Seeing our Five Islands students step forward as volunteer chat supporters fills me with pride,” she said. “Their year-long training will build a community of empathetic, skilled peers who can change lives.”

The Young Caribbean Minds Chatline builds on a successful five-month pilot, during which more than 1,000 support sessions were delivered and 88 per cent of users indicated they would use the service again. The initiative has also received international recognition, including being identified as a best practice at the Global Conference on Child and Adolescent Mental Health in South Africa and being named among the Top Three finalists in the UNICEF Global INSPIRE Awards from more than 300 submis-

sions worldwide.

Thursday’s launch brought together Prime Minister Browne; Minister of Health, Michael Joseph; Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Transformation, Kiz Johnson; senior government officials; development partners; civil society organisations; and youth representatives. Members of the National Student Council and the National Youth Parliament Association of Antigua and Barbuda also delivered a youth response, welcoming the Government’s commitment to mental health and calling for continued youth participation in shaping policies that affect their lives.

The Young Caribbean Minds Chatline was endorsed by Ministers of Health at the OECS Health Policy Forum in April 2025 and is being developed as a regional service for all nine OECS Member States. Following Thursday’s soft launch in Antigua and Barbuda, volunteer training and system strengthening will continue ahead of a phased national and regional rollout. The initiative will also be discussed at the Second OECS Council of Ministers on Youth and Sports, to be held in Antigua and Barbuda on 12–13 August 2026.

Tourism 3.0 and the Caribbean Moment: Why Jamaica's Reform Push Should Matter to Us All



By Garfield Joseph, MBA

Tourism has long been the lifeblood of Caribbean economies. Yet for decades, much of the region has quietly wrestled with a difficult truth: while visitor arrivals have grown, real economic transformation has often lagged in many countries. That is, too much of the wealth generated by tourism still leaks out of our economies, leaving limited benefits for local entrepreneurs, farmers, creatives, and small businesses.

It is against this backdrop that recent pronouncements by Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, deserve serious regional attention. His proposal to overhaul Jamaica's tourism governance framework—replacing the decades-old Tourist Board Act with a new Tourism Authority Act—signals more than legislative reform. It represents a fundamental rethink of how tourism should function in small island developing states (SIDS).

Bartlett's message is clear: the old model is no longer sufficient. Jamaica's tourism framework, built over 70 years ago, cannot adequately support a modern industry that has become more complex, more global, and more central to national development.

Beyond the legislative language lies a deeper strategic shift—one that could

reshape how we think about tourism across the Caribbean.

Moving from “Tourism Industry” to “Tourism Economy”

At the heart of Bartlett's vision is what he calls “Tourism 3.0.” This is not simply a branding exercise. It is an attempt to redefine tourism as a fully integrated economic system rather than a standalone sector.

Traditionally, tourism success has been measured by arrivals, occupancy rates, and new hotel developments. While important, these indicators mask a more important question: how much of that value stays within the country?

Bartlett is challenging this model by emphasizing that tourism must be “for the people” first, with stronger linkages to local production and enterprise. His focus is on ensuring that agriculture, manufacturing, entertainment, and small businesses all benefit directly from the sector's growth.

This is a critical shift. It reframes tourism—from attracting visitors to building a fully integrated economic ecosystem.

Fixing the Architecture: Why Governance Matters

Perhaps the most important, yet often overlooked, element of Bartlett's proposal is governance reform. Currently, tourism functions in Jamaica—such as marketing, licensing, regulation, compliance, and destination assurance—are spread across multiple agencies.

The result is a fragmented system that can slow decision-making, create inefficiencies, and dilute accountability.

The proposed Tourism Authority aims to address this by becoming the “institutional backbone” of the sector, bringing coherence and coordination to its management.

For many Caribbean countries, this will sound familiar. We too have inherited governance structures that evolved incrementally over decades, often without a cohesive design. The

lesson here is simple but profound: **strategy without institutional alignment rarely delivers results.**

If Jamaica succeeds in creating a modern, integrated tourism authority, it could set a new regional benchmark for how tourism should be governed.

The Persistent Challenge: Economic Leakage

One of the most compelling aspects of Bartlett's argument is his focus on the “supply side” of tourism. He has pointed out that Jamaica imports a significant share of the goods and services required by the industry, limiting the amount of income retained locally.

Across the region, tourism leakage can exceed 50% in some cases, meaning that a significant share of visitor spending never enters the domestic economy.

This is not a uniquely Jamaican problem. It is a regional challenge.

Across the region, we have built world-class hotels and attracted millions of visitors, yet many of the inputs—food, furnishings, technology, even services—are sourced externally. The result is an economic model that generates activity without maximizing value.

Bartlett's emphasis on building local supply capacity, supported by financing and policy reform, is therefore critical. It moves the conversation from attracting investment to embedding value within the domestic economy.

Why This Matters for Small Island Developing States

For SIDS like Antigua and Barbuda, the implications are significant.

Our economies are highly dependent on tourism, vulnerable to external shocks, and constrained in terms of scale and diversification. Climate change, global economic volatility, and shifting travel trends only add to these challenges.

In this context, the idea of “more tourism” is no longer enough. What we need is **better tourism**—tourism

that:

- ▶ Builds local industries
- ▶ Creates opportunities for entrepreneurs
- ▶ Strengthens resilience to external shocks
- ▶ Retains a greater share of earnings domestically

Bartlett’s framework speaks directly to these imperatives. By redefining tourism as a driver of national development, rather than simply a revenue source, it aligns closely with the strategic needs of SIDS.

A Regional Inflection Point

The Caribbean now stands at a genuine inflection point. The traditional tourism model—sun, sand, and sea, driven by external capital and supply chains—has delivered growth, but not always transformation.

What Jamaica is proposing is a shift toward a more mature model:

- One that emphasizes **value over volume**
- Coordination over fragmentation**
- Local participation over external**

dependence

If implemented effectively, it could become a blueprint for the region.

The Real Test: Execution

Of course, bold ideas are not enough. The true challenge lies in execution.

Institutional reform is difficult. It requires political will, stakeholder alignment, technical expertise, and sustained focus. There are risks of bureaucratic overlap, slow implementation, or reform fatigue.

But the cost of inaction may be even greater.

Without reform, Caribbean tourism risks remaining a high-volume, low-retention industry—one that generates activity but falls short of its transformative potential.

A Call to Think Bigger

For policymakers, business leaders, and citizens across the Caribbean, Bartlett’s initiative offers a timely opportunity for reflection.

What if we reimagined tourism not as an end in itself, but as a platform for building resilient, inclusive econ-

omies?

What if every visitor arrival translated into stronger local industries, more thriving small businesses, and greater economic independence?

That is the promise of Tourism 3.0.

And for small island developing states like ours, it is not just an option—it is an imperative.

About the Author

Garfield Joseph is the Executive Director of a public sector organization in Antigua and Barbuda, where he is responsible for translating government policy and national objectives into operational action. His work spans strategic execution, financial oversight, and stakeholder engagement. He has also served as an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus, teaching Business Strategy and Policy and Business, Government and Society. He writes regularly on investment, entrepreneurship, and long-term decision-making

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Every can that we recover,
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Shows that hope is everywhere.

Who sorts the plastics after they're thrown?
Who ensures recyclable materials are known?
Who records the data that tells the tale
Of what we recycle—and where we fail?

Behind every project, every collection day,
Someone is quietly leading the way.
Not everyone wears gloves beneath the sun;

Some organize the work until it's done.

Some answer emails with patience and pride.
Some keep important records safely inside.
Some create graphics that capture your eye.
Some tell stories that inspire us to try.

So what is climate action?
Is it simply cleaning the beach?
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Millions of recyclable items have found another chance,
Simply because people chose action instead of circumstance.

But here's another question to think about today:
Who will continue this important pathway?

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Who will help sustainable businesses thrive?
Who will build campaigns that communities embrace?
Who will ensure disability inclusion always has a place?

Could that person be reading today?
Could this internship help show the way?

Administration keeps ideas alive.
Operations help projects thrive.
Marketing gives every mission a voice,
Showing our nation that change is a choice.

The climate belongs to me and you.
Its future depends on what we do.
Not someday far beyond our sight,
But every morning, every night.

When floods arrive or droughts appear,
Will we say, "Someone else will volunteer"?
Or will we stand with heart and hands,
Protecting our homes and island lands?

Because every action, great or small,
Can inspire another after all.
One student becomes ten more.
Ten become hundreds at the door.
Hundreds become a movement strong,
Proving together we all belong.

So don't just spend another break
Watching opportunities pass and fade.
Spend your summer learning why
Communities flourish when people try.

Learn to organize.
Learn to create.
Learn to communicate.
Learn to innovate.

Because the greatest resource we possess
Isn't simply what we can compress.
It's not the bottles, cans, or paper we reclaim.
It's people willing to change the game.

So here's one final question before we part:
What if the biggest climate solution starts...
Not with a machine.
Not with a law.
Not with technology we never saw.

But with one student...
One internship...
One opportunity...
One decision to care.

Because when young people rise together with passion
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and one remarkable young person at a time.

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80,000 tourism workers back on the job after Melissa

Jamaica's tourism sector is expected to recover more than 80 per cent of its hotel room capacity by this summer, as the industry continues its rebound from the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, making his contribution to the 2026-2027 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, said approximately 5,648 hotel rooms are scheduled to return to inventory during 2026, while more than 80,000 hotel workers have already resumed employment as properties reopen across the island.

"And while capacity constraints remain real, the recovery is moving with purpose," Bartlett said, noting that hotel capacity was projected to recover to more than 80 per cent by summer 2026.

The minister said the return of hotel rooms was significant not only for the industry but also for thousands of families whose livelihoods depend on tourism.

"Rooms came back into inventory, but more importantly, jobs came back into Jamaican households," he said.

Hurricane Melissa, which struck the island on October 28, 2025, disrupted what Bartlett described as a period of strong growth for the tourism industry.

Before the storm, visitor arrivals were tracking approximately two per cent ahead of projections, while tourism earnings were running about five per cent above expectations.

Despite the setback, Bartlett argued that the hurricane demonstrated the resilience of Jamaica's tourism sector, which officially reopened on December 15, 2025.

"That date was more than a reopening. It was a signal to the world: Jamaica was ready. Jamaica was resilient. Jamaica was rising again," he said.

Bartlett paid tribute to tourism work-



ers, hotel operators and industry partners who he said helped to restore the sector following the storm.

"I am especially moved by the selflessness of tourism workers who restored hotels, shops and attractions, even as their own homes suffered damage," Bartlett said.

He noted that hotels across the island accommodated displaced workers, emergency personnel and relief teams while also providing grants, building materials and other support to affected employees.

Bartlett said recovery efforts were coordinated through the Tourism Recovery Task Force and the Jamaica Tourism Cares Committee, which mobilised more than 500 pallets of relief supplies and approximately US\$15 million in in-kind assistance.

The Government also launched the J\$2-billion Tourism Housing Assistance Recovery Programme (THARP) to assist tourism workers whose homes were damaged or destroyed by the

hurricane. The programme provides non-repayable grants of J\$100,000 along with building materials to eligible beneficiaries.

Bartlett's update came days after Opposition Spokesman on Tourism Andrea Purkiss questioned the effectiveness of the THARP, arguing during her sectoral presentation that many affected tourism workers were still awaiting assistance months after Hurricane Melissa.

In response, Bartlett disclosed that 1,500 tourism workers had already received vouchers under the J\$2-billion programme, while hundreds of additional applications remained under review.

He said the sector's recovery underscored tourism's importance to the wider economy, describing it as a platform for jobs, entrepreneurship, foreign exchange earnings and community development. (Jamaica Gleaner)

SVG govt sued after brutal police attacks on mentally ill man



Formal legal proceedings have been initiated against the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines following a series of alleged unprovoked and “vicious” attacks by members of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) against Kenton Harris, a vulnerable man suffering from chronic psychiatric challenges.

During a press briefing held today, attorney Carlos James announced that a formal notice of intended civil proceedings has been served to the Attorney General’s chambers. James, representing Harris through his mother and litigation friend, Anesta Harris Robinson, described the case as one of the “worst cases of abuse of power” seen in the country.

The legal claim details three separate incidents occurring within a three-month period in 2026:

March 11, 2026: Harris was allegedly attacked by officers upon arriving at the Kingstown Central Police

Station, resulting in a fractured left arm. No formal investigation was launched into this incident at the time.

May 21, 2026: A video went viral across social media showing police officers physically attacking and abusing Harris outside Coreas Road while he was in a state of vulnerability.

May 24, 2026: Following another arrest, Harris was allegedly abused while in a police holding cell and again while being transported to the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital.

James noted that after these encounters, Harris’s physical and mental state “degenerated catastrophically,” requiring him to be admitted to a mental health facility and subsequently treated for emergency orthopedic injuries.

The lawsuit, filed under the Crown Proceedings Act, seeks damages for several causes of action, including assault and battery, negligence, and misfeasance in public office. The claim also

highlights blatant breaches of constitutional rights, specifically the right to protection from inhumane and degrading treatment.

“Mr. Harris is a highly vulnerable person. He is legally incapable of managing his own affairs, rendering the state’s custodial duties absolute and non-delegable,” James stated during the briefing. The legal team is seeking compensation for pain and suffering, medical expenses, and future rehabilitation costs, as well as aggravated and exemplary damages due to the “high-handed and arbitrary nature” of the officers’ conduct.

As part of the pre-action protocol, the state has been requested to preserve and produce evidence, including:

Station custody records and holding cell logs from March and May 2026.

Surveillance footage from the Kingstown Central Police Station.

Statements from five

named officers and duty officers involved in the incidents.

Speaking briefly at the conference, Kenton’s mother, Anesta Harris Robinson, expressed her pain, stating, “I would like to see justice for my son because when the police are to him, they didn’t have the right to do it. They is very wrong”.

While James acknowledged that many police officers serve with distinction, he emphasized that the “few rotten eggs” must be held accountable to prevent staining the reputation of the entire force. He further called for a radical shift in how the RSVGPF handles citizens with mental health issues, arguing that the current lack of specialized training for dealing with vulnerable persons is a “grave national importance” that must be addressed.

“A society is viewed based on how they treat their most vulnerable citizens, not to abuse them,” James concluded.

The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Commissioner of Police have also been placed on notice, with the legal team demanding a rigorous criminal investigation into the March 11 incident, which had previously gone uninvestigated. If no settlement proposal is reached within the statutory timeframe, the matter will proceed to the High Court of Justice. (St Vincent Times)

Man shot by police at Hospital in SVG while seeking help

Attorney Carlos James has initiated formal legal proceedings against the state following what he describes as a “shocking and alarming” incident where a citizen, Lowie Mercury, was shot multiple times by a police officer on hospital grounds.

At a press briefing held on June 24, 2026, James revealed that Mercury, a resident of Redemption Sharpes, was shot between seven and eight times at close range by a uniformed officer of the Special Services Unit (SSU) while seeking medical attention.

The shooting occurred on the evening of March 29, 2026, around 8:00 p.m.. According to James, Mercury had visited the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital (MCMH) to seek urgent treatment for injuries sustained in a prior incident in Vermont.

While in a corridor of one of the hospital wards, Mercury was approached by a security officer and told to leave. Mercury reportedly refused, stating he would not depart until he received medical care. The security guard then enlisted the help of an SSU officer stationed at the facility. James alleges that the officer approached Mercury, “cranked his firearm,” and discharged several rounds into Mercury’s body.

The attorney emphasized that Mercury posed no threat to life and did not resist the officer, characterizing the event as a “highly reckless use of lethal force”.

The physical toll on Mercury has been severe. He sustained gunshot wounds to both his upper and lower limbs. Following the shooting, he underwent emergency life-saving orthopedic surgery and remained hospitalized for five weeks until his discharge on May 5, 2026.

Mercury appeared at the press briefing in a wheelchair, unable to walk or use his right arm. James noted that



a bullet remains lodged in Mercury’s right leg and that he requires further corrective surgeries to regain mobility.

Speaking briefly at the briefing, Mercury expressed his distress, saying, “I want justice for what happened to me. I’m feeling like my rights being affected like I don’t have none no rights”. He also made a public plea for blood donations to facilitate his upcoming surgeries.

On June 24, 2026, James dispatched a formal statutory notice of intended civil proceedings to the Attorney General. The planned lawsuit will seek damages for:

Assault and battery through the disproportionate use of lethal force.

Negligence regarding the discharge of a firearm in a public medical facility.

James also raised serious concerns regarding the transparency of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF). He claimed that when Mercury’s family attempted to lodge a formal complaint at the Police Public Relations and Complaints Department, they were turned away. An officer allegedly told the family a

statement could not be taken because the matter had already been mentioned to a senior ranking official.

“We have to ask the question, are members of the [police force] hiding this matter from the public?” James asked, noting that the shooting was not widely known and had received no prior media coverage.

In addition to the civil suit, James has filed a formal criminal complaint with the Commissioner of Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions. He is demanding a rigorous investigation and the preservation of all evidence, including CCTV footage from the hospital and police firearm discharge reports.

James concluded by questioning the proportionality of the officer’s actions. “What will possess a right-thinking trained experienced police officer at close range... to unleash not just one or even two shots... but at least 7 to eight bullets across the body of a citizen?”. He maintained that while most officers serve well, “bad eggs” must be rooted out to ensure public safety. (St Vincent Times)

T&TEC threatens to sue Scotland, Kydd-Hannibal



THE Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) has threatened legal action against Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South Keith Scotland, SC, and attorney Keisha Kydd-Hannibal, alleging their handling of a debt recovery case caused the loss of more than \$2.39 million in public funds.

In a pre-action protocol letter issued yesterday by attorneys from Freedom Law Chambers, led by Senior Counsel Anand Ramlogan, T&TEC signalled

its intention to sue both attorneys for professional negligence, breach of contract, fraudulent and/or negligent misstatement, and deceit.

The proposed claim arises from efforts to recover \$2,392,220.11 in unpaid electricity charges from Flavorite Foods Ltd.

According to the letter, T&TEC will seek damages equivalent to the value of the debt, together with interest, legal costs and other losses allegedly

incurred as a result of the failed litigation.

The utility also indicated it intends to pursue aggravated and exemplary damages.

The issue first entered the public arena earlier this month when Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar raised the matter in Parliament, accusing Scotland of mishandling T&TEC's attempts to recover the debt and announcing that legal action would be pursued.

The Prime Minister also indicated that the matter would be referred to the Fraud Squad and that disciplinary proceedings before the Law Association could be considered.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament afterwards, Scotland denied any wrongdoing and challenged Persad-Bissessar to repeat the allegations outside the protection of parliamentary privilege.

"I invite the Prime Minister to make these claims outside of the Parliament," Scotland said.

He maintained that proceedings had been filed against Flavorite and pro-

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Regional News

duced court documents which he said supported his position. Scotland had also rejected suggestions of any improper relationship between himself and Flavorite chairman Louis André Monteil, describing allegations of collusion as serious and unfounded.

Contacted yesterday for comment in response to the pre-action protocol letter, Scotland said: "I will respond to this in its entirety through my attorneys-at-law."

The letter, which was written by attorney Ganesh Saroop, centres on three separate lawsuits filed between 2022 and 2024 against Flavorite, none of which resulted in a judgment.

In the letter, T&TEC alleges the first two claims were never properly prosecuted and were eventually struck out, while a third claim was filed without the utility's knowledge or authority and without the court's permission.

"What followed was very different," the letter states. "Three claims were commenced, and not one was brought to judgment," it added.

T&TEC alleges it was repeatedly assured that applications for default judgment had been filed and were awaiting action by court officials.

However, the utility claims subsequent enquiries revealed no such applications had ever been filed.

"The court records, and the Registrar's own confirmations, establish that no request or application for default judgment was ever filed in either the 2022 or the 2023 claim," the letter states.

"T&TEC was thus led to believe that the delay lay with the administration of the Court, when its true cause was the failure of its own attorneys to take the most basic procedural steps." The utility contends that because of those failures, the debt is now irrecoverable.

The letter traces the matter back to October 2022, when T&TEC retained Scotland, then practising through Virtus Chambers, to recover the debt after a pre-action protocol letter sent to Flavorite went unanswered.

According to T&TEC, Kydd-

Hannibal handled most of the correspondence and litigation management, while Scotland remained involved as counsel and adviser on strategy.

T&TEC alleges the first claim, filed in December 2022, was never properly served and automatically expired. A second claim, filed in October 2023, allegedly suffered a similar fate.

The utility claims that throughout 2024 it received repeated assurances from Kydd-Hannibal that a default judgment application had been filed and was awaiting action by the Registrar.

Among the quoted communications is a January 2024 response in which Kydd-Hannibal allegedly stated: "Yes it was, the Clerk is following up with the counter."

Another update reportedly advised that the application was "before the Registrar for consideration".

T&TEC contends those statements were false because no default judgment application existed.

The utility further alleges that on October 22, 2024, a third claim was filed in its name without authorisation from its corporate secretary or board.

Particular criticism was directed at Scotland's alleged continuing involvement in the matter after his appointment to Cabinet in July 2024.

T&TEC says it intends to rely on allegations that Scotland advised on litigation strategy, recommended withdrawing and refileing an application and was reported to have communicated with a Registrar concerning the matter.

Both attorneys have been given 28 days to respond, indicating whether liability is admitted or denied, and addressing the allegations contained in the letter.

T&TEC warns that if a satisfactory response is not received, legal proceedings will be commenced without further notice and disciplinary complaints may also be pursued. (Trinidad Express)



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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration invites Antiguans and Barbudans to volunteer for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2026, taking place 1–4 November 2026.

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Philippines bans video game played by alleged high school shooter



The Philippines has temporarily blocked gaming app Gorebox after an initial investigation found that a teenage suspect in a rare school shooting had been playing the game.

Three students were killed and 20 others wounded after two suspects - aged 15 and 14 - allegedly fired handguns inside a classroom in Tacloban, south-east of Manila, on Monday.

Police said the 14-year-old was a player of Gorebox, a game where players can “obliterate anything [they] desire” and “engage in brutal combat with an extensive arsenal of weapons and explosives”, according to its Google Play listing.

“We cannot ignore possible online influences that may have contributed to this tragic incident,” the country’s cyber-security agency said.

“Temporarily blocking the game will allow authorities to conduct a thorough assessment into whether the platform played any role in the actions of the suspects,” said Aboy Paraiso, an undersecretary at the Cybercrime Investigation and Co-ordinating Centre.

BBC News has contacted Gorebox’s maker, Germany’s F2Games, for comment. Scientific studies have not found a direct link between video games and violent behaviour.

Gorebox is a first-person shooter video game that can be played as solo or online multiplayer. The International Age

Rating Coalition gave it an R18 rating due to extremely violent, explicit, and unrestrictive gameplay.

Mass shootings are rare in the Philippines, though gun-related crimes are not uncommon and the most sensational cases are staples of early evening newscasts.

What was unusual this time round was that the suspects were minors.

Akbayan party-list congressman Chel Diokno called for stiffer penalties for those who allow minors access to firearms.

The worst mass shooting in recent Philippine history happened in November 2009, when a town mayor in the southern province of Maguindanao shot dead 58 people, mostly journalists, who were travelling with the convoy of a political rival.

Late on Tuesday, police filed murder charges against the 15-year-old suspect.

The 14-year-old suspect who allegedly played Gorebox is too young to be charged under Philippine law.

He appeared to have been “heavily influenced” by online content, said Allan Rae Co, spokesman of the Philippine National Police.

The boy had also been posting violent content online, he added.

Police said the 9mm pistol the 14-year-old is alleged to have fired belonged to his aunt, a policewoman who was suspended from duty after the shooting.

The 15-year-old’s .38 was registered to his grandfather’s security agency.

According to the preliminary investigation, the suspects claimed they were bullied in school.

Before Monday’s shooting at the San Jose National High School, Co said the two boys had holed themselves up in the bathroom.

“All indications point to the fact that it was planned,” Co said.

A friend of the 15-year-old suspect, who spoke to the BBC on condition of anonymity, described the boy as uptight, who got into fights with his bullies because he refused to let insults pass.

“I would tell him to be the bigger person if there are misunderstandings, or say sorry if he gets into fights, but he won’t listen. He won’t allow anyone to offend him.

“You’ll notice his hairstyle and outfits, like he’s someone from the army. I think he was influenced by his grandfather to be very disciplined,” the friend said. “I couldn’t think that someone could do such a heinous thing.”

The friend said the boy appeared to “know everything” about guns.

In response to the Tacloban shooting, Philippine senators will continue a previous investigation into the effects of violence in online platforms on children.

Sen Risa Hontiveros said platforms had become “nests for brainwashing and radicalising our youth”.

“If the internet is being used to victimise children, we will not wait for the next victim before we act.”

Joy Belmonte, mayor of densely populated Quezon City, said a review of security protocols was needed.

In Tacloban, “some were shocked, some were shouting, running. We need to have drills and simulations so that children will know what to do,” she told reporters.

Education minister Sonny Angara said the government was “very concerned”, adding: “We don’t want a situation seen in the United States, where there have been concerns about copycat incidents.” (BBC)

Oil price falls back to pre-Iran war levels

The price of oil has fallen to levels not seen since before the Iran war as traffic through the key Strait of Hormuz shipping route gradually resumes.

Global benchmark Brent crude briefly fell below \$72.48 (£55) a barrel, the price it was at the day before the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on 28 February, before edging up to \$73.23.

Energy prices have been on a wild ride since Iran responded to the strikes by effectively closing the strait, a critical waterway for oil and gas shipments.

The cost of crude has been moving sharply lower since the US and Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 17 June which set out a 60-day period for negotiations on Tehran's nuclear programme and other measures to end the war.

Representatives from the two sides met in Switzerland last weekend for talks to end the war, which resulted in the US partially lifting sanctions on Iranian oil exports.

The number of vessels crossing the Strait of Hormuz has risen significantly since the MOU was signed, according to maritime intelligence firm Kpler.

Its latest data suggests 284 vessels have made the transit from 18 June, the day after the deal was signed, although that is still well below the pre-conflict average of some 138 crossings each day.

The ships passing through the waterway in recent days include those carrying crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), fertiliser and other goods, Kpler told the BBC.

The US and Iran had also formed a "communication line" to prevent misunderstandings "with the aim of safe passage for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz", mediators Qatar and Pakistan said in a joint statement on Monday.

There has been a "tremendous shift" with far more ships using the strait in recent days, said Dimitris Maniatis,



the chief executive of Marisks, a maritime risk advisory firm working with ships stuck in the region.

A limited number of ships can cross a northern passageway with the permission of Iranian authorities, he said.

The US navy has also provided guidance for vessels to travel through a southern route that is safe from mines and other obstacles that has been laid out since the war, Maniatis said.

But the number of ships crossing the strait is still below levels seen before the war, when it was used by more than 100 ships a day.

Hundreds of ships still appear to be waiting in the Gulf.

A line chart showing how Brent crude oil prices have fluctuated since the USA and Israel attacked Iran on February 28th. The price rose rapidly above \$80 from early March and peaked at just below \$120 in April. The current rate as of 25 Jun 2026 is back down to below \$80, similar to before the Iran war began.

Fuel prices at the pump rose sharply when the Iran war began, and now the focus is on how quickly they will fall.

"On the back of the lowest oil price since before the Iran war started, drivers should see the average price of petrol fall below 150p [a litre] in the next week or so," said Simon Williams, head of policy at UK motoring group

the RAC. He added the price of diesel "ought to go back under 160p.

Petrol peaked at 159.53p a litre on 28 May, according to the RAC, while diesel has fallen from a high of 191.54p on 15 April.

The average price of regular gasoline in the US has dropped to around \$3.93 a gallon after reaching \$4 a gallon in April, its highest since 2022, but is still well above pre-war levels.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday ordered an investigation into major energy companies, accusing Shell, ExxonMobil and other firms of "gouging" drivers by not reducing fuel prices even as oil costs fell.

"Oil prices have come down so much and we are not seeing anything at the pump by comparison the way they should be," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

The American Petroleum Institute, which represents the oil and gas industry in the US, said fuel prices "don't move in lockstep with crude oil".

British energy firms have faced similar accusations of unfairly hiking petrol prices since the Iran war.

The UK competition watchdog said last month that there was no widespread evidence of this, adding that average profit margins were "broadly unchanged" between February and March. (BBC)

Europe's heatwave shifts east as France raises health alert to highest level



Heatwave conditions that have left Spain, France and the UK sweltering for days are set to shift to the east, with forecasters in Germany and the Czech Republic warning of extreme conditions.

Temperatures in Germany could hit 40C in some western and south-western areas on Thursday, and across the country on Friday. An extreme weather warning is now in place in much of the Czech Republic.

In France, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu announced the health alert level is being raised to its highest, to boost hospital staffing and protect the vulnerable.

Health Minister Stéphanie Rist said they were now seeing deaths linked to the extreme temperatures among “young people who suffer cardiac arrests”, as well as the elderly.

United Nations climate change chief Simon Stiell has said “Europe’s savage heatwave has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it”, and he has called for “a faster shift to renewables, protecting forests and boosting climate resilience”.

After France recorded its hottest day on Wednesday for the second day in a row, records continue to be broken.

Météo-France said the average minimum temperature reached 22C on Wednesday night. Nantes saw 27.2C in the north-west.

Paris mayor Emmanuel Grégoire said the mortality rate was on the rise in Paris, where temperatures have been high for several days.

“We must not believe ourselves to be invulnerable,” he told French TV. “I am thinking especially about the youth... At about 19:30 last night... I saw 100 or so joggers on the street. Frankly, that’s irresponsible.”

“It’s fine to take a couple of days off from exercising,” he added.

Meanwhile, a three-year-old child has been found dead in a car in the Paris region, days after two young children were found dead in the family’s car in the southern town of Carpentras.

In the north-western city of Rennes, the head of the Accident and Emergency department Professor Louis Soulas linked the deaths of five or six people in their homes in the region to the extreme temperatures.

Emergency services had gone to check in on them after they had failed to pick up their phones during welfare calls, said Soulas: “It’s not just the

very elderly; it’s people aged 60 and up.”

Rennes saw a record 40.6C on Monday, only for that to be broken by 41C the following day. The previous record dated back to 2022.

The region’s intensive care units were “saturated,” he warned. “We are truly at a peak of activity.”

Sébastien Lecornu said France’s Orsan health emergency plan was now moving to level three so the health system could “withstand the strain over time and protect the most vulnerable”.

French teachers’ unions are calling for a strike in response to “unacceptable working conditions” in the heat. They said that despite having called for mitigation measures to be taken “nothing was done” and the “health of staff, students and their working conditions are being jeopardised”.

Three nuclear plants in France have gone offline due to the heat.

Some western regions in France are now bracing for huge thunderstorms from Thursday afternoon onwards.

Gusts of up to 110km/h (68mph) are expected on France’s Atlantic coast, and the first day of the Garorock festival has been cancelled in the Lot-et-Garonne region - where temperatures could reach 42C.

Climate change is driving up temperatures around the world - but particularly in Europe. It is the fastest warming content, heating up twice as fast as the global average, according to the Copernicus climate service.

This is causing increased summer heatwaves, greater pressure on Europe’s water supply, and more intense wildfires. Last year, more than 1 million hectares burnt across Europe - a record level - with Spain particularly affected.

Although temperatures in Spain are

International

AROUND THE WORLD



set to peak at 38-39C in some areas on Thursday, forecasters say a cooler mass of Atlantic air is coming in, after the highest June temperatures were recorded this week, with 45.1C in the southern town of Andújar on Monday.

In Germany, overnight temperatures in the southwestern town of Bad Bergzabern did not fall below 26.2C on Wednesday night, equalling a national heat record set in 2019.

Germany's DWD weather service said large areas of the country were experiencing "heat stress" and DWD meteorologist Oliver Reuter said it was "quite likely" the heatwave would ultimately be seen as historic.

Luxembourg recorded its highest June temperature of 38.3C in Wormeldingen on Wednesday. A red alert level for "extreme thermal stress" has been extended in the grand duchy until Saturday night.

In Germany, Hamburg's half marathon has been cancelled on Sunday

and national train operator Deutsche Bahn is offering free ticket cancellations over the next few days for anyone not wishing to travel because of the extreme heat. Czech Railways have told passengers they should consider postponing their trips if they do not have to travel.

Much of northern and southern Switzerland was put on maximum weather alert by MeteoSuisse, which warned of a "significant drought situation".

Temperatures across the Czech Republic were well into the 30s on Thursday and the ČHMÚ Hydrometeorological Institute said the heat would intensify on Friday with temperatures climbing up to 40C at the weekend.

Weekend temperatures could also hit 40C in the Austrian capital Vienna.

The UK's Met Office has extended its red extreme temperatures warning until Friday evening, for parts of London and south-eastern England.

In Italy, Florence's Uffizi museum has halted ticket sales until 28 June, and only those with a previous booking will be allowed in.

Management said the air conditioning system could not cope with the high flow of visitors and the extreme temperatures, which reached 32C inside the museum on Wednesday.

Italians have been experiencing high temperatures since the start of this week - but the peak of the heat is expected for Monday, when 40C are expected in various northern regions.

Night-time temperatures in those areas might not drop below 29C.

"Gone are last century's June days of 32C daytime temperatures and cool 17C nights," forecaster Lorenzo Tedici told Italian media.

"We have become so accustomed to excess that, paradoxically, today we welcome a forecast of 34C as good news." (BBC)

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FEATURING



**WARM
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**HIGH-ENERGY
SOCAROBICS
SESSION**



**COOL
DOWN &
STRETCH**

**SUNSET
SOCAROBICS**

**WITH
DANCERBOYSHAN**

**MUSIC BY
DJ KAVITY**



MACHEL MONTANO

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TRIPLE-K - TIZZY

JULY 30TH

8:00PM @ CARNIVAL CITY

EARLY BIRD
GENERAL

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RHYTHM
ROOM

\$350





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COOL & SMOOTH LOWER ALL SAINTS ROAD

APUA INET OLD PARHAM ROAD

EXOTIC ANTIGUA REDCLIFFE QUAY

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CASHLESS PAYMENTS AVAILABLE CARNIVAL CITY



Wins for Stingers, Flyballers, and United in Village Netball League

The Potters Stingers, Michael Joseph Gray's Green Flyballers, and Lamin Newton's All Saints United recorded wins in the female division of the Antigua and Barbuda Netball Association's (ABNA) Antigua Generators and Cool and Smooth Village League on Wednesday evening.

The Potters Stingers maintained their unbeaten run, surging to their fifth win in as many matches with a 40-3 drubbing of the Under-16 National Team in their female division encounter at the YMCA Sports Complex in St. John's.

Tashana Bloomfield scored 22 of her 28 shots, Tanya Greene made 11 of her 15 tries, and Adina Andre sank seven of her eight attempts for the Potters Stingers.

Leannie Darroux, Deancia Lewis, and Tina Graham each converted their only attempt for the Under-16 National Team, who lost for the third time in six matches.

The Gray's Green Flyballers notched up their fourth win in five female division matches with a commanding 51-10 victory against the Pares Net Masters.

Krizia Duncan scored 43 of her 54 attempts, and Kizzy Hughes sank eight of her 12 shots for the Gray's Green Flyballers.

Annika Watson converted five of her seven attempts, and Andrea Benjamin made four of her nine tries for the Pares Net Masters, who slumped to their sixth defeat in seven matches.

After losing their first two matches, Lamin Newton's All Saints



The Gray's Green Flyballers female netball team

United recorded their second successive win in the female division by prevailing in a 52-41 victory against the Seatons Eastsiders.

Rayana Regis sank 34 of her 43 tries, Zhanira Pereira scored 15 of her 22 shots, and Karol Carlton made both of her two attempts for All Saints United.

Amey Lake sank 23 of her 35 attempts, and Christina Lloyd converted 18 of her 27 shots for the Seatons Eastsiders.

It was only the second defeat in

eight matches for the Seatons Eastsiders, who have a record of five wins and one tie in their other encounters.

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

St. John's Talented Youths will take on Newfield at 6 pm. Wilkies will face Pares Net Master at 7 pm, and Lamin Newton's All Saints United and Swetes/Roman Hill will clash at 8 pm.

England reach Women's T20 World Cup semis with win over Windies



Chinelle Henry, left, found the boundary towards the end of the West Indies innings against England in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup at Lord's in London, England, on Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (Getty Images)

England romped into the semi-finals of the Women's T20 World Cup with a 38-run win over West Indies as Danni Wyatt-Hodge's 65 from 42 balls preceded a largely excellent team bowling display at a sweltering Lord's on Wednesday evening.

England's fourth victory from four, which ended West Indies' own 100 per cent record, was underpinned by Wyatt-Hodge's 22nd T20I fifty and her second knock of note in the tournament after her sublime century against Sri Lanka at Edgbaston on the opening night.

Wyatt-Hodge's stands of 66 from 50 balls with Alice Capsey (28 off 23) and 40 off 24 with Heather Knight (43 off 26) helped England post 186 for seven after losing the toss and being put in to bat by a West Indies side playing their first game at this famous ground.

The West Indies' failed chase featured an eventful powerplay with captain Hayley Matthews (14) furious to be given out caught behind off left-arm spinner Linsey Smith.

There was a spike on UltraEdge but a gap between bat and ball, and Deandra Dottin (19 off 11) struck off-spinner Charlie Dean (2-31) for three boundaries before holing out three balls later.

England then squeezed the run-rate, Sophie Ecclestone taking one for 22 and Lauren Bell bagging one for 20.

But some late-innings dropped catches and loose bowling allowed Chinelle Henry to hit 51 not out off 30 balls, and Jahzara Claxton to crack 21 off 34 balls during a fifth-wicket-stand of 63 from 53 balls, as West Indies finished on 148 for five after being reduced to 69 for four in 10.1 overs.

Dean captained England for the second consecutive match with usual skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt (calf) sitting out again and the latter will also miss her country's final group game against New Zealand on Saturday, across London at The Kia Oval.

England will guarantee top spot in Group 2, and likely swerve six-time champions Australia in the semi-finals, if they beat New Zealand, although that position could already be rubberstamped if West Indies slip up against Ireland in their final group match in Bristol on Saturday.

A win for the Caribbean outfit over Ireland would secure their own progression to the last four.

The West Indies will want to improve their fielding against Ireland as blunders in that aspect versus England cost

them dear, with Knight a chief beneficiary and Matthews one of the principal culprits.

Knight, who played pleasing drives and sweeps before being run out in the penultimate over, could have been run out by Matthews early in her innings, while she was inexplicably dropped by the Bajan at cover when on 14.

Dottin was also unable to cling on to a leaping half-chance at point when Wyatt-Hodge, in the teens at the time, carved away one of her eight boundaries prior to being run out.

That opportunity for Dottin came in the final over of a powerplay England ended on 57 for two, having lost Amy Jones (8) in the first over, caught on the drive after back-to-back pulled boundaries, and then Sophia Dunkley (14) lbw on the sweep.

England looted 14 runs from Ashmini Munisar's final over, with Dean (9 not out) nailing successive reverse-swept boundaries and Ecclestone (4 not out) sweeping an orthodox four off the final ball of the innings, the first delivery she faced.

England fielded sharply to start with, exorcising some of the demons from their defeat to the same opponents in the 2024 T20 World Cup in the UAE that led to them being dumped out in the group stage after a host of shelled catches.

Dani Gibson saved a boundary with some athletic work in the deep in the first over of the run chase, bowled by Bell, while Capsey's catch at long-on to get rid of the dynamic Dottin was slick.

However, a clutch of late blemishes put a little dampener on things, with Smith and Jones grassing chances in the 14th over, Claxton profiting on both occasions, before Gibson shelled Henry in the 17th.

Smith then dropped a sharp caught-and-bowled in a final over which featured two booming Henry sixes. Those blunders did not cost England, though.

Mexico win all 3 World Cup group-stage matches for 1st time



Mexico's Julian Quiñones celebrates scoring his side's second goal against Czechia during a World Cup Group A soccer match in Mexico City, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP)

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Javier Aguirre has been saying for a while now that the key to the Mexican team's success at the World Cup is that they are a family. This family, it seems, is on a historic journey.

Mateo Chávez and Julián Quiñones scored in a six-minute span early in the second half, and Mexico beat the Czech Republic 3-0 on Wednesday to complete wins in all three of their World Cup group-stage matches for the first time.

The 22-year-old Chávez, in his first World Cup, opened the scoring in the 55th minute and Quiñones scored his second goal of the tournament in the 61st. Alvaro Fidalgo added a goal in stoppage time.

"It was something very beautiful, and I'll take it with me to the grave," Chávez said of his goal. "I imagined it

many times; I dreamed of this."

Mexico's previous best group-stage performance was two wins and one draw, done in 1986 and 2002 and both featuring Javier Aguirre, the first as a midfielder and the second as El Tri's coach. Aguirre is back as coach this year, his third stint leading the national team.

After topping Group A, Mexico will play again at Estadio Azteca on Tuesday in a round-of-32 match against an opponent to be determined.

"Now comes the knockout stage; statistics and data don't matter. We're achieving things, but what lies ahead is what counts," Aguirre said. "Neither the players nor I dwell on what we've just done; we're thinking about what's next."

Mexico are undefeated at nine World Cup matches at the massive stadium,

which was packed with 80,824 fans on Wednesday. El Tri has only two losses at Azteca, most recently in World Cup qualifying against Honduras on Sept. 6, 2013.

The match Wednesday included nods to Mexico's past and future. Gilberto Mora, at 17, became the youngest Mexico player to start in a World Cup. And 40-year-old goalkeeper Guillermo "Memo" Ochoa entered in the 77th minute, joining Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to appear in

six World Cups.

Mexico's triumph was marred, however, by the return of a homophobic chant by fans that has previously led to fines and other sanctions against its soccer federation. The chant, a one-word slur, was heard near the end of the first half when Czech goalkeeper Matej Kovar took a goal kick.

The Czech Republic was eliminated, finishing with one point in three games. Mexico are unbeaten in 11 games dating to a friendly loss against Panama last November. And Aguirre has made the most of his roster, using 25 of 26 players in the tournament. Chávez was one of five starters Wednesday who didn't start in the previous win over South Korea.

Players to limit media access at Wimbledon in protest over prize money



Italy's Jannik Sinner returns to Carlos Alcaraz of Spain in the men's singles final at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Sunday, July 13, 2025. (AP)

LONDON (AP) — Top tennis players at Wimbledon will extend their protest over prize money by limiting their media appearances at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament next week.

The decision means the players will only talk to media for 15 minutes after each match during the first week of the tournament.

The protest began at this year's French Open where players complained that the total prize money only made up 14.3% of the clay-court tournament's revenue.

Wimbledon responded by hiking its total prize money by 20 percent this year — with the singles champions to get 3.6 million pounds (US\$4.75 million) each.

However, a statement put out Wednesday by an advisory firm representing the players said the “direct action protest” will continue during the first

week at the All England Club.

“Players will limit their contractual media commitments at the tournament to 15 minutes — reflecting that Wimbledon currently pays slightly below 15% of revenues to players as prize money — for the duration of the first week of the Championships,” the statement said.

“Following detailed consultation with players across both tours, player representatives have written to Wimbledon's leadership to inform them of the planned action, while acknowledging the welcome recent 20% increase in prize money compared to last year's Championships.”

The statement said the players' share of Wimbledon's projected revenues this year is 14.4%, which would be below the 14.9% share they received 10 years ago.

The players had written a proposal

last year asking for 16% of revenues. The statement did not specify which players would take part in the protest.

At the French Open, No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, Coco Gauff and Iga Swiatek were among the top-10 ranked women who limited their media appearances, as did men's No. 1 Jannik Sinner. However, Novak Djokovic did not take part in the protest.

In announcing Wimbledon's 20-percent increase in prize money two weeks ago, All England Club chair Deborah Jevans said she hoped it would satisfy the players.

“We've demonstrated that we've looked at every round, including qualifying,” Jevans said at the time.

“My hope is that the players do recognize what a significant increase that this is.”

New Winthorpes and Bendals win Primary School Cup titles



Director of Sports Heather Samuel-Daley, second right (front row), presents the Girls' Primary School Cup champions trophy to the 2026 winners, Bendals Primary School team, at the Antigua Recreation Grounds on Wednesday, June 24, 2026.

New Winthorpes and Bendals are the champions of the 2026 Ministry of Sports Cool & Smooth/JOMA Caribbean Primary School Football Cup Championships.

Both teams claimed the titles by recording wins in their respective finals at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) on Wednesday.

New Winthorpes Primary captured the Boys' Primary School Cup title by pulling off a 3-1 victory against Five Islands in the final.

Damarie Barton, who was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the boys' competition, converted twice, and teammate Elijah Auguiste scored the other goal for New Winthorpes Primary School.

Zylen Francis scored a consolation goal for Five Islands Primary, who last won the ti-

tle in 2024.

Dre'Den Henry of Five Islands Primary won the Best Goalkeeper Award. But the Golden Boot or Most Goals Award was shared by J'Den Gordon and Chantz Farrel of J.T. Ambrose Primary School. Both players from the J.T. Ambrose Primary scored 15 goals apiece.

New Winthorpes and Five Islands booked their spots in the championship final by securing commanding wins in their respective semi-finals at the ARG.

Zylen Francis struck a hat trick as Five Islands dispatched J.T. Ambrose Primary 4-1.

New Winthorpes Primary maintained their unbeaten run in this year's tournament by coasting to a 3-1 victory over T.N. Kirnon Primary in the other semi-final.



Director of Sports Heather Samuel-Daley, left, presents the Boys' Primary School Cup champions trophy to the 2026 winners, New Winthorpes Primary School team, at the Antigua Recreation Grounds on Wednesday, June 24, 2026. Coach Justin 'Trini' Pereira, right (back row) looks on in celebration. (Photos courtesy of the Ministry of Sports)

Bendals Primary captured the Girls' Primary School Cup title by securing a 2-0 victory over New Winthorpes Primary in the final.

Both goals were scored by Corniah Jean Pierre, who won the Golden Boot Award with a total of 12 goals in the girls' competition. Her double-conversion in the final allowed Jean Pierre to clinch the Golden Boot Award ahead of teammate Iresha Mason, who finished with 11 goals.

However, Mason was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the girls' competition. Rhonella Jean Jacques of Bendals also captured the Best Goalkeeper Award.

Bendals and New Winthorpes booked their spots in the championship final by securing contrasting wins in their respective semi-finals at the ARG.

Bendals Primary pulled off a 4-0 drubbing of JT Ambrose Primary, while New Winthorpes Primary secured their spot in the final by snatching a 2-1 win against Buckley's Primary in a penalty shootout.

The keenly contested semi-final was forced to be decided via the penalty shootout after both teams fought to a goalless draw at the end of regulation.