

Day 1 of Exercise Stronghold Described As a Success

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Security forces and other stakeholders reviewed plans for CHOGM 26 during Day 1 of Exercise Stronghold on Wednesday

Day 1 of Exercise Stronghold Described As a Success



The first day of the two-day event dubbed “Exercise Stronghold” by the nation’s security apparatus, has been described as ‘successful’ as the exercise concluded with a briefing at the National Performing Arts Centre on High Street on Wednesday.

The exercise was to test the level of security preparedness ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) in November.

Led by the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda, the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force as well as other security agencies, the Exercise involved a ‘soft lockdown’ of the security perimeter dubbed ‘the Red Zone’.

The area that borders Corn Alley on the West, parliament Street on the East, New Street on the South and Upper Newgate Street to Old Parham Road on the north were included in the security zone where vehicular traffic was restricted and where pedestrian movement was prohibited on Upper High Street.

The security team held a briefing with members of the National



CHOGM Task Force and other stakeholders at the top of High Street and explained to those in attendance the significance of the exercise.

Brigadier Telbert Benjamin of the ABDF underscored the value of the

exercise noting that this was a time when those involved must be able to provide answers to questions when asked.

“What we are going to do today is that we are going to walk this through



and we are going to try to address issues relative to everybody. I am going to use a phrase popularized by High Commissioner Karen-Mae Hill; the days for ‘I don’t know’, ‘I am not sure’; those things are gone. We are at the stage in preparation where we either say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. You either say ‘yes’ to the things that you ought to know or ‘no’ if you don’t. This is not an opportunity for guessing, there is no such thing. Secondly, and most importantly, this is an opportunity for us to learn what everyone else is doing and how what we do fits into the overall plan,” he stated.

According to the ABDF Chief, Antigua and Barbuda and the security force are doing an event that is extremely dynamic. “It is beyond anything we have done before, but we have passed the stage when we can say ‘we can’t do it’; we are at the stage where we have to do it,” he declared.

For his part, Commissioner of Police, Everton Jeffers emphasized the importance of key stakeholders attending all such events or exercises to which they were invited. “We have to operate today as how we would operate on Friday (Day 2) or on the actual

day of the event. This means if you are supposed to be here, I expect that you would be here because if you are

here you would know what will happen on the day of the event and would not need to be asking, what’s next?” he remarked.

During the exercise, the security personnel indicated that many of the areas and building surrounding the main venue site will be secured for the ceremony and they urged everyone who is given a time to be there, to be punctual.

The final leg of the exercise was a briefing in the new Creative Arts Centre where the security personnel gave an overview of what is expected to take place on the day of the event.

Day 1 of Exercise Stronghold came to an end at approximately 10:00 am on Wednesday, a full two hours ahead of schedule. The barriers were removed and normal traffic and activities resumed as are normal in St. John’s.




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Prime Minister Gaston Browne Attends 113th ECCB Monetary Council Meeting in Dominica

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Gaston Browne, is in the Commonwealth of Dominica to participate in the 113th Meeting of the Monetary Council of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), where regional Finance Ministers will deliberate on the economic outlook for the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) and chart the next phase of its development.

During the meeting, ECCB Governor Timothy N.J. Antoine will present his report entitled “From Stability to Resilience: The Next Chapter for the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union,” providing an assessment of monetary, credit and financial conditions across the ECCU, together with an update on global economic developments and their implications for the region.

The Monetary Council will also consider the ECCB’s Big Push Agenda, a transformative regional development strategy centered on seven priority areas: Human Capital and Skills Development; Food and Nutrition Security; Energy Resilience; Digital Transformation; Financial Inclusion and Wealth Creation; Tourism; and Trade, Logistics and Connectivity.

In addition, Council Members will receive updates on the implementation of the CARICOM Payments and Settlement System (CAPSS) Pilot and the development of the Fast Payment



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

System, two flagship initiatives designed to modernize regional payment systems, improve financial integration and facilitate faster, more efficient cross-border transactions throughout the Currency Union.

The meeting also marks the conclusion of Antigua and Barbuda’s tenure as Chair of the ECCB Monetary Council. During an official handover ceremony, Prime Minister Browne will formally transfer the chairmanship to the Dr. Irving McIntyre, Finance Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, in keeping with the Council’s annual rotational system.

A highlight of the ceremony will be the unveiling of the new family of EC banknotes and coins, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the EC dollar’s fixed exchange rate to the United States dollar. The redesigned currency reflects the outcome of regional public

consultations and will feature national heroes and nation builders from across the ECCU.

Prime Minister Browne emphasized the significance of the Council’s deliberations at a time of increasing global economic uncertainty.

“The Eastern Caribbean has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of successive global challenges, but resilience alone is not enough. This meeting provides an important opportunity for member states to strengthen our collective economic strategy, deepen regional integration and embrace innovation that will secure sustainable growth for future generations. Initiatives such as digital payments, financial inclusion, food security and energy resilience are no longer optional—they are essential pillars of our region’s long-term prosperity. I am honoured to have served as Chairman of the Monetary Council over the past year and remain confident that the ECCU will continue to advance through collaboration and sound economic stewardship.”

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda remains committed to supporting the work of the ECCB and advancing policies that promote macroeconomic stability, sustainable development and greater prosperity for the people of Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Eastern Caribbean Currency Union.



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Ministry Clarifies Future Direction as PiAngo Fest Enters Its Next Stage of Evolution

The Ministry of Agriculture seeks to provide further clarity on the future of PiAngo Fest and share its vision for the next stage in the festival's evolution as part of plans to establish Antigua and Barbuda's premier National Agricultural Festival.

The Ministry sincerely apologizes for any miscommunication or misunderstanding arising from its previous press release. While the intention was simply to inform the public of changes to this year's PiAngo Fest, we recognize that our broader vision for the festival was not clearly communicated. We appreciate the continued interest and support from the public and our stakeholders and regret any confusion this may have caused.

PiAngo Fest has become an important part of our agricultural calendar, and its success has inspired the Ministry to think even bigger. Rather than hosting PiAngo Fest as a standalone event this year, the Ministry has taken the strategic decision to incorporate it into the planning Twenty Young Footballers to Represent Antigua and Barbuda on Prestigious European Development Tour of a National Agricultural Festival that will celebrate the people, produce, innovation and opportunities that make Antigua and Barbuda's agricultural sector unique.

It is the Ministry's commitment to create a stronger, more meaningful and sustainable national event that can continue to grow and create opportunities for farmers, agro processors, exhibitors, vendors, young people and the wider community for years to come.



Planning for the National Agricultural Festival is already underway,

and the Ministry looks forward to working closely with farmers, partners, sponsors and the public as the event takes shape. More information, including opportunities to participate and support the festival, will be shared as planning progresses.

The Ministry thanks everyone who has supported PiAngo Fest over the years. Your enthusiasm and commitment have helped make the festival a success, and we look forward to building on that strong foundation as PiAngo Fest enters this exciting new chapter.

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Prime Minister Browne Reaffirms Antigua and Barbuda's Commitment to Reparatory Justice

Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Hon. Gaston Browne, has reaffirmed the country's unwavering commitment to advancing the regional reparations agenda, describing the pursuit of reparatory justice as "an issue of justice and of restitution" rather than one of seeking financial assistance.

Addressing the 51st Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, Prime Minister Browne commended the Chair of the CARICOM Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on Reparations, Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados, for her leadership and advocacy in advancing the Community's reparations agenda. He emphasized that CARICOM must maintain its momentum, stating, "We cannot afford to relent. It is an issue of justice and of restitution... our cause is just, and no one should believe that we are going to Europe, cap in hand, seeking handouts. What we're actually asking for is restitution."

Prime Minister Browne underscored that the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery have been recognized internationally by the UN and others as crimes against humanity and argued that the Region's call for reparatory justice should be viewed within that context. He noted that the issue must be pursued through "truthful, respectful, and meaningful" dialogue, while stressing that reparations should remain a central priority for CARICOM and not be regarded as "a side issue."

The Prime Minister also updated Heads of Government on ongoing discussions within the context of the communiqué of the upcoming 2026



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). While noting that the issue of reparations will be addressed in the communiqué, he noted that foreign ministers will continue negotiations aimed at advancing dialogue on restitution and pointed to the inclusion of references to the recent United Nations General Assembly resolution on the trafficking of enslaved Africans.

Prime Minister Browne welcomed the publication of the CARICOM Reparations Commission's new Manifesto, describing it as an important document that clearly outlines the "moral, ethical and legal case for reparations." He encouraged its widespread circulation throughout the Region to improve public understanding of the reparations movement, noting that many people still mistakenly view reparations as a request for aid rather than a legitimate claim for justice.

Looking ahead, Prime Minister

Browne reiterated his support for seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to clarify the legal liability arising from chattel slavery. He explained that such an opinion would not necessarily signal immediate legal proceedings but would strengthen CARICOM's position by affirming that reparations are grounded in legal responsibility rather than charity. "It is important... that when we speak on the issue of reparations, our former enslavers will understand that this is not an issue of charity," he said.

Prime Minister Browne concluded by reaffirming Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to continuing its advocacy for reparatory justice across regional and international fora, while supporting the implementation of CARICOM's Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice through structured dialogue conducted in good faith.



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Genevieve Smith Foundation Awards Four Potters Primary Graduates

The Genevieve Smith Foundation continued its commitment to investing in the nation's youth by awarding four outstanding graduates of Potters Primary School during the school's graduation ceremony held on Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at the Potters Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The 2026 scholarship presentation marked the Foundation's third consecutive year of recognizing deserving students and the first since the passing of the Foundation's founder and inspiration, Genevieve Smith, affectionately known throughout the community as "Teacher Gen." Although she passed away on December 11, 2025, her legacy of service, compassion, and educational excellence continues to shape the lives of young people through the Foundation established in her honour.

Representing the Smith family and the Foundation was Genevieve Smith's granddaughter, J'noure Smith-Kellman, who reflected on her grandmother's extraordinary life of service and the importance of continuing her vision of empowering children through education.

"For more than 50 years, Teacher Gen devoted her life to education, spending many of those years teaching at Potters Primary School. She was known not only for her dedication in the classroom but also for the love, encouragement, and guidance she extended to generations of students. Beyond her role as an educator, she opened her home and her heart to children in need, fostering, nurturing, and raising dozens of young people throughout her lifetime. Her unwavering belief that every child deserved an opportunity to succeed made her one of the community's most respected and beloved



educators," she recalled.

Addressing graduates, parents, teachers, and invited guests, Smith-Kellman said the Foundation remains committed to ensuring that Teacher Gen's legacy continues to inspire future generations.

"This scholarship programme is our family's way of ensuring that my grandmother's legacy lives on. She dedicated her life to serving others, especially children, and she firmly believed that education could transform lives. Although she is no longer with us, her passion for helping young people continues through the work of the Genevieve Smith Foundation."

She noted that this year's presentation was particularly meaningful as it was the first scholarship ceremony following Teacher Gen's passing.

A total of EC\$2,000 was awarded through four scholarships valued

at EC\$500 each, recognizing students who demonstrated academic excellence, perseverance, personal growth, and exceptional character.

The 2026 recipients were:

Top Female Student: **Jerzaria Hamilton**

Top Male Student: **Tayzhoni Murrain**

Most Improved Student: **Zia Roach**
 Exceptional Dedication and Potential Award: **D'hanna Henry**

Smith-Kellman congratulated all graduates and encouraged them to continue striving for success as they transition to secondary school.

She also extended congratulations to the parents, guardians, teachers, and the staff of Potters Primary School for their unwavering support in nurturing the students throughout their primary education.

Directorate of Gender Affairs to Host Access to Finance and Economic Empowerment Fair

The Directorate of Gender Affairs will host its upcoming Access to Finance and Economic Empowerment Fair, which will be held on Thursday, 16 July, at the Multi-Purpose and Cultural Center, as part of its Gender and Private Sector Initiative (GPSI) Programme.

The fair aims to improve access to financial services and economic opportunities by bringing together government agencies, financial institutions, private sector stakeholders and members of the public in one location. Through this initiative, attendees will have the opportunity to engage directly with participating organizations, access valuable information, and learn about the products, services and resources available to support entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and economic empowerment.

Speaking on the upcoming event, Ashlea Ambris, Programme Officer and lead coordinator of the initiative, says “Our goal is to make financial information and services more accessible by bringing key providers together in one location. We invite the public to seize this opportunity to learn, connect and take the next step toward economic empowerment with this unique opportunity of a one-stop approach to access to services.”

Executive Director of the Directorate of Gender Affairs, Jamie Saunders, adds “This will be a unique event, as it fully engages the private sector in relation to exhibiting gender responsive financial products and services, and linking youth, women, men, and a diverse set of people to opportunities designed specific for them and their needs.”



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Members of the public are encouraged to attend and take advantage of this unique opportunity to connect directly with service providers, explore available financial prod-

ucts and services, receive guidance from participating organizations, and learn more about the support available to enhance their economic well-being.

ABEC participates in International Course on Artificial Intelligence and Elections in India

The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) continues to strengthen its institutional capacity and commitment to innovation in electoral management through the participation of two members of staff in an international training programme focused on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in elections.

Assistant to the Human Resource and Training Officer, **Kisher Esprit**, and Data Entry Clerk II, **Joycelyn Peters**, are representing ABEC at the **Certificate Course on Artificial Intelligence, Elections and Democratic Governance**, being held from **July 6th to July 10th, 2026** at the **India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (II-IDEM) Campus in New Delhi, India**.

The programme, organized by II-IDEM, will provide participants with valuable insights into the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence, electoral administration and democratic governance. The course explores key areas including the application of AI technologies in election management, opportunities for improving operational efficiency, data management, the use of emerging technologies, and the challenges posed by misinformation, deepfakes and other threats to electoral integrity.

The participation of Esprit and Peters forms part of ABEC's ongoing commitment to professional development, continuous learning and the adoption of global best practices to enhance the delivery of electoral services in Antigua and Barbuda.

Through exposure to international experiences and innovative approaches in election administration, the officers will contribute to strengthening ABEC's internal processes, particularly in the areas of training, human resource development, data management and the responsible use of technology in electoral operations.



Antigua and Barbuda represented by the Department of Environment in Guatemala

Representatives from the Department of Environment Anik Jarvis, Data Consultant, and Garth Simon, Project Technical Officer, participated in the 2026 CGE Hands-on Training Workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean Region, held from 6–8 July 2026 in Antigua City, Guatemala.

The workshop, held under the theme “Towards Improved BTRs, with a focus on Adaptation: Exchange of Experience, Good Practices and Lesson Learned,” brought together national experts from across Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen technical capacities for the preparation and timely submission of Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs) under the Paris Agreement’s Enhanced Transparency Framework.

The training focused on key areas including reporting on climate change impacts and adaptation, adaptation indicators, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems, loss and damage reporting, flexibility provisions, improvement planning, and participation in the Technical Expert Review and Facilitative Multilateral Consideration of Progress processes.

Antigua and Barbuda’s participation supports ongoing national efforts to strengthen climate transparency, improve adaptation reporting, enhance climate data systems, and build institutional capacity for future BTR submissions.

At the close of the workshop, partic-



ipants received certificates in recognition of their active engagement in the regional training and peer-learning exchange.

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Antigua and Barbuda Attends Defence Ministers of the Americas Meeting



The Minister of Foreign Affairs, E.P. Chet Greene, is representing Antigua and Barbuda at the 17th meeting of Minister Responsible for Defence taking place in Cusco, Peru.

During his remarks, Minister Greene noted that the Conference of Defence Ministers has, over the past three decades, evolved into an indispensable forum for dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding.

“It reminds us that while our nations differ in geography, size and capabilities, we remain united by a common responsibility to safeguard peace, uphold democratic values, and ensure the security and well-being of our peoples,” he suggested.

According to the minister, today, that responsibility has become increasingly complex.

“The security challenges confronting the Americas no longer fit neatly within national borders or traditional definitions of defence. They are transnational, technologically sophisticated and mutually reinforcing. Criminal organizations, cyber actors, illicit financial networks and those who seek to undermine the rule of law exploit the interconnected nature of our societies with unprecedented speed and agility.

“Consequently, our response must be equally interconnected,” he urged.

Minister Greene said that for Antigua and Barbuda, a Small Island Developing State situated at the crossroads

of major maritime routes, security is inseparable from sustainable development. “Our economic resilience depends upon secure sea lines of communication, safe aviation networks, resilient digital infrastructure and stable regional partnerships. Any disruption to these systems carries consequences that extend far beyond national borders,” he revealed.

The Foreign Affairs minister noted that across the Caribbean, transnational criminal organizations continue to exploit porous maritime spaces to facilitate the trafficking of narcotics, illicit firearms, persons and financial

assets. These activities fuel violence, weaken institutions and threaten the social and economic fabric upon which our communities depend.

He said while the Caribbean has not experienced terrorism on the scale witnessed elsewhere, the region recognizes that terrorism continues to evolve in form and method. Violent extremism, cyber-enabled radicalization, illicit financial flows and the exploitation of emerging technologies demand constant vigilance and collective action.

No single nation, irrespective of its resources, possesses the capacity to confront these threats alone.

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School Uniform Programme Commences Next Monday

The 2026 installment of the School Uniform Grant Programme will commence on Monday 13th July at the Multi-Purpose Cultural and Exhibition Centre, Perry Bay.

Administered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the initiative provides eligible students with one set of regular school uniform throughout their primary and secondary school years.

SUGP Coordinator Tanesha James says they are in the final stages of preparation, adding that employees recruited for the programme have undergone training in customer service and data entry.

There are no changes to the requirements for existing and new beneficiaries. According to James, parents and guardians whose names are already in the database are required to present a form of Government-issued identification, along with the third-term report of the child.

For newcomers, the requirements include a government-issued form of



identification for the applicant and child, the third-term report, or a letter of acceptance where the student is admitted. For those entering secondary school following the Grade Six National Assessment, officials at the uniform programme will have in their possession the school assignment information.

Beneficiaries can appear in-person at the Multi-Purpose Cultural and Exhi-

bition Centre to complete the transaction, or the drop box system can be utilised. Also, the application can be completed online through a link which will be provided on the SUGP's Facebook page shortly.

The SUGP is one of the largest welfare programmes for the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and has benefitted hundreds of thousands of students over its 21 years of operation.

"We would have printed over 22,000 vouchers last year," the SUGP Coordinator revealed.

"It is a subsidy by the government, and it helps to remove the stigma of students not having proper uniforms while attending school. We in the department take pride in providing this service to the parents and guardians of Antigua and Barbuda," Tanesha James said.

The 2026 installment of the SUGP will end on 28th August.

Hours of operation will be 9AM-4PM Monday through Thursday, and 9AM to 2PM every Friday.

SLBMC Issues Statement on Circulating Video

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) is aware of the video currently circulating on social media regarding the tragic loss of an infant at our institution.

We recognize that this is an incredibly difficult time for the child's family, and we extend our deepest sympathies to them as they grieve this heartbreaking loss.

We are investigating the circumstances surrounding this matter. However, in order to respect patient confidentiality and ensure the integrity of that process, we are unable to comment on specific clinical details at this time.

We appreciate the public's understanding as we continue to handle this matter with the care, sensitivity, and the professionalism it deserves.



Twenty Young Footballers to Represent Antigua and Barbuda on Prestigious European Development Tour



Twenty of Antigua and Barbuda's brightest young footballers are set to embark on an extraordinary journey this July as they represent the nation on the JETS FC European Development Tour 2026 in Poland.

From 12th to 27th July, the selected athletes will immerse themselves in a professional football environment, competing in six international matches while training under experienced coaches and engaging with clubs and football professionals. The tour has been carefully designed to expose participants to the demands of elite football while fostering personal growth, discipline, leadership, and resilience.

The squad earned its place through a highly competitive Talent Identification and Football Development Programme hosted by JETS FC earlier this year. Conducted by international coaches and football professionals, the four-day programme brought together promising young players from across Antigua and Barbuda before culminating in the selection of twenty athletes who demonstrated exceptional talent, commitment, and potential.

For these young footballers, the tour

represents much more than international competition. It is an opportunity to broaden their horizons, experience different football cultures, challenge themselves against international opposition, and build relationships that could shape their futures both on and off the field. The experience also provides invaluable exposure to professional standards that they will bring back to benefit their clubs, schools, and communities.

The initiative reflects JETS FC's unwavering commitment to youth development and its vision of creating meaningful pathways for young Antiguan and Barbudans through sport. Earlier this year, the club invested approximately US\$20,000 to host the international talent identification programme, reinforcing its dedication to providing local athletes with opportunities typically accessible only beyond the region.

As ambassadors of Antigua and Barbuda, the twenty-member squad will proudly showcase the nation's talent, determination, and sporting potential on the international stage. Their participation highlights the continued

growth of youth football locally and demonstrates what can be achieved through vision, preparation, and opportunity.

The JETS FC European Development Tour also presents an opportunity for the wider community and corporate sector to be part of an initiative that is shaping the next generation of national talent. Partnerships with organizations that share a commitment to youth empowerment and sporting excellence will play an important role in strengthening programmes such as this and expanding opportunities for future generations of athletes.

As the team prepares for departure, excitement continues to build among players, coaches, parents, and supporters, all united by the belief that this experience will leave a lasting impact on the athletes and contribute meaningfully to the continued advancement of football in Antigua and Barbuda.

For more information about the JETS FC European Development Tour 2026 or partnership opportunities, please contact us via Email: jetsfcanu@gmail.com.

Automotive Service Manager - Summary

An automotive dealership in Antigua is seeking a Service Manager who has in depth knowledge of the automotive industry. The successful candidate should have hands on technical experience working with premium brands and be able to efficiently manage a service center. The manager should be able to adapt to the client - centric culture of the company by enhancing customer satisfaction, through the delivery of first-class service.

Essential Duties

- Responsible for managing the service department operations, staff and other resources
- Ensuring the efficient and profitable operation of the department to achieve both high levels of customer satisfaction, retention and profitability
- Controlling resources at a level commensurate with profit requirements and enhanced customer relations
- Monitoring and improvement of internal control procedures and systems
- Overseeing and supervising the work technicians to ensure that customers receive consistent and accurate service.
- Managing customer satisfaction levels by ensuring fix-it-right the first-time policy is adhered to.
- Advise staff on mechanical issues or be able to resolve mechanical issues in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- Motivating and coaching staff members to ensure high levels of productivity
- Keeping track of the status of vehicle repair and notify customer about same
- Managing the work in progress
- Authorizing and managing leave for all service department personnel
- Planning and managing training needs for all departmental personnel by keeping abreast of what is trending globally for each brand.
- Monitor productivity through hours sold on daily basis
- Making sure that hours sold per RO are in-line with benchmark
- Making sure that workshop parts sales are in-line with bench mark
- Making sure that the average labour rate is above the minimum rate
- Carry-out capacity studies for the workshop
- Monitor utilization and efficiency of Technicians (Units reports) and take suitable actions to improve levels
- Ensure the utilization of workshop resources and assets for excellent rates of productivity and efficiency
- Reviewing monthly sales(hours) and profit performance (Net profit vs gross)
- Any other duties assigned

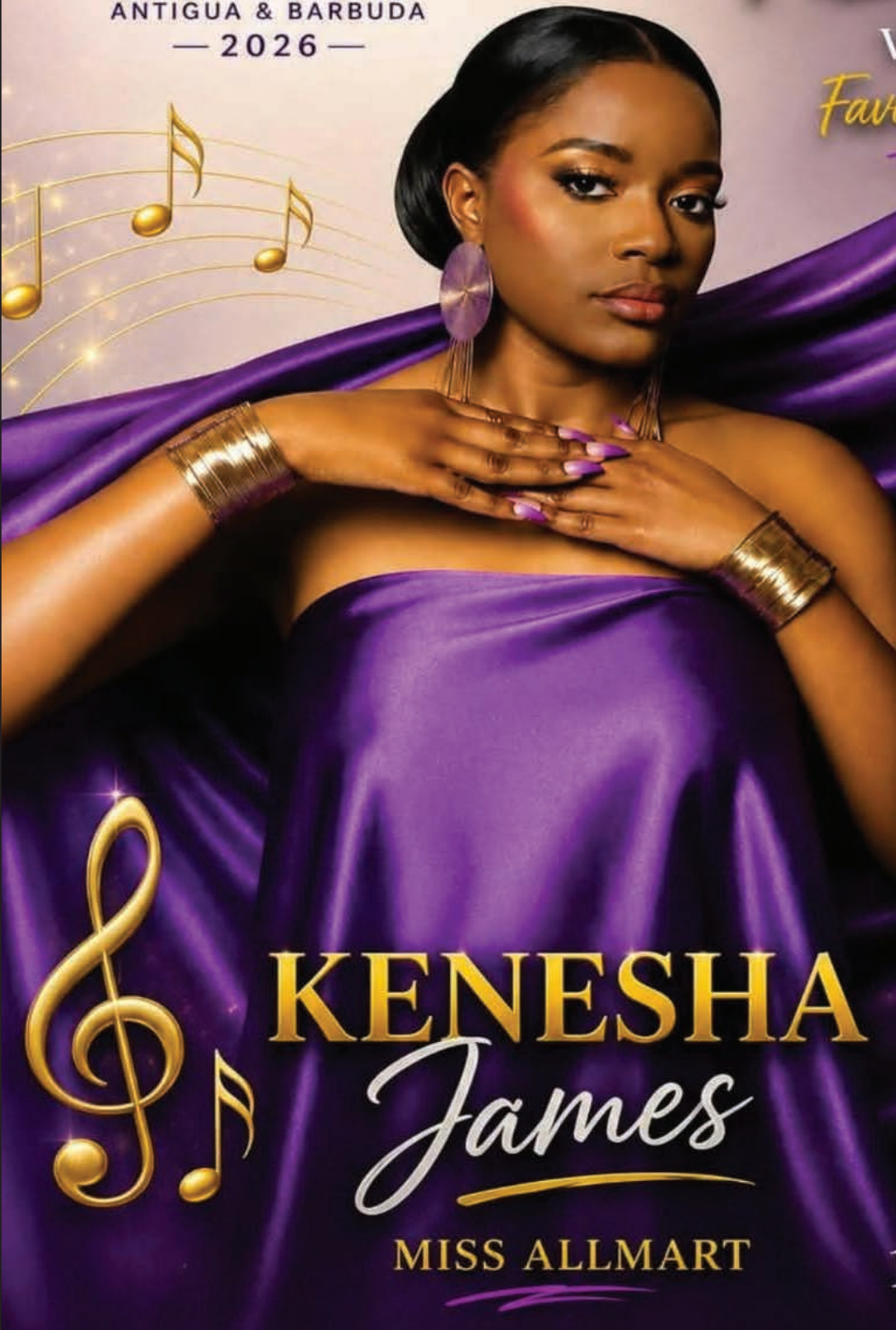
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Great Customer Service Begins Behind the Scenes — Why Operational Excellence Is the Unsung Hero of Business Success



By Garfield Joseph, MBA

Most Antiguans have experienced it.

You arrive at a business ready to make a purchase, only to hear, “The system is down.” You visit an office to complete a transaction and discover you need another document. You place an order and are told the item is out of stock. You make an appointment, but after waiting far beyond the scheduled time, no one can tell you when you will be served.

In many cases, the employee is polite, apologetic, and genuinely eager to help. Yet you leave frustrated.

We often describe these situations as customer service problems. In reality, they are usually operational problems.

This distinction matters because while customer service and operational excellence are both critical pillars of business success, one often receives far more attention than the other. Businesses invest heavily in teaching employees to smile, greet customers warmly, answer phones professionally, and handle complaints effectively. These investments are important and necessary.

However, great customer service does not begin at the front desk, the cashier station, the restaurant table, or the call center.

It begins behind the scenes.

While customer service is the visible face of an organization, operations are its backbone. A company may have the friendliest employees in the world, but if its processes are inefficient, its inventory is unreliable, its technology is inadequate, or its procedures are poorly designed, customers will inevitably be disappointed.

Simply put, customer service is what customers see; operations are what make customer service possible.

The Customer Only Experiences the Outcome

Customers rarely think about a company’s internal operations.

They do not see procurement processes, inventory management systems, workforce scheduling, quality assurance procedures, workflow designs, or performance dashboards.

What customers experience are results.

They notice when a product is unavailable. They notice when a delivery arrives late. They notice when their reservation is lost. They notice when a government service requires multiple visits. They notice when employees seem uncertain about procedures.

The customer may perceive these experiences as poor service, but the underlying cause is often poor execution.

Front-line employees can only provide a great experience when they are supported by systems that consistently enable success.

The Best Customer Service Is Often Invisible

When most people think about customer service, they think about human interaction. While interpersonal skills are important, some of the best customer experiences occur when customers barely need assistance at all.

Think about the businesses you trust most.

Your order arrives exactly when promised. Your hotel room is ready when you check in. Your utility bill is accurate. Your online transaction is seamless. Your appointment begins on time.

Everything simply works.

What appears effortless to customers is usually the result of extraordinary operational discipline behind the scenes.

Operational excellence creates reliability. Reliability creates trust. Trust creates loyalty. And loyalty creates long-term business success.

Consistency Is the True Measure of Excellence

Anyone can deliver excellent service on a good day.

The true test of any organization is whether it can deliver excellent service every day.

Customers return to businesses because they know what to expect. One exceptional experience may create a positive impression, but consistency builds lasting relationships.

A restaurant that serves a fantastic meal once but disappoints customers the next three times will struggle to earn loyalty. A company that responds quickly one week and slowly the next creates uncertainty and frustration.

Great operations create consistency by establishing clear processes, accountability, performance standards, and systems for continuous improvement.

Customers may remember occasional moments of excellence, but they place their trust in organizations that deliver reliably over time.

A Smile Cannot Fix a Broken Process

One of the greatest misconceptions in business is the belief that customer service training alone can solve customer satisfaction challenges.

Feature

It cannot.

A smile cannot compensate for chronic delays. Friendliness cannot overcome a poorly designed process. Courtesy cannot replace reliability.

Employees often find themselves apologizing for failures they did not create.

“I’m sorry, the system is down.” “I’m sorry, we don’t have that item.” “I’m sorry, your request wasn’t processed.” “I’m sorry, I need approval before I can help.”

These are not customer service failures. They are operational failures.

In fact, poor operations often frustrate employees as much as they frustrate customers. When team members lack the tools, resources, information, or authority needed to serve effectively, morale suffers. Productivity declines, employee engagement weakens, and customer dissatisfaction rises.

Organizations that invest in operational excellence empower employees to succeed. They remove obstacles, simplify work, and create environments where great service becomes easier to deliver.

The Competitive Advantage Many Organizations Overlook

For businesses across Antigua and Barbuda, operational excellence may be one of the most underutilized opportunities for improving competitiveness.

Many organizations focus heavily on marketing, advertising, and customer-facing initiatives while paying insufficient attention to process improvement, productivity, technology adoption, workflow design, and performance measurement.

Yet in a small market where reputation matters and word-of-mouth travels quickly, operational excellence can be a powerful competitive advantage.

A business that consistently delivers on its promises earns trust. A hotel that operates efficiently improves both guest satisfaction and profitability. A retailer with reliable inventory management creates a better shopping experience. A government agency that reduces processing times strengthens public confidence.

Operational excellence is not about creating bureaucracy. It is about creating simple, repeatable systems that allow people to do their jobs effectively and consistently.

A National Development Imperative

The importance of operational excellence extends beyond individual businesses.

As Antigua and Barbuda seeks to attract investment, improve public services, and enhance national productivity, operational excellence must become a national priority.

Countries do not become competitive simply by working harder. They

become competitive by designing systems that work better.

The most successful economies are built upon reliable processes, efficient institutions, clear standards, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Whether in government, education, healthcare, banking, or entrepreneurship, operational excellence creates the foundation upon which sustainable growth is built.

A Call to Action

As business leaders, managers, public servants, and entrepreneurs, we must broaden the conversation about service excellence.

Customer service matters immensely. It always will.

But great customer service cannot compensate indefinitely for poor operations.

Organizations should conduct operational reviews with the same seriousness they conduct financial reviews. Leaders should identify bottlenecks, eliminate unnecessary complexity, embrace technology, measure performance, and encourage employees to suggest improvements.

Rather than merely asking, “How can we be friendlier?” organizations should also ask:

Where do customers experience delays? What recurring complaints do we receive? Which processes create frustration? What can be simplified,



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automated, or eliminated? How do we measure operational performance?

These questions move organizations beyond good intentions and toward sustainable excellence.

Building the People Side of Operational Excellence

Operational excellence is not only about systems, processes, and technology—it is also about people. Even the best-designed workflows will fail if the individuals responsible for executing them are disengaged, poorly trained, or misaligned with the organization's values.

To strengthen both customer service and operational reliability, organizations should embrace four essential principles:

Hire for attitude. Skills can be taught, but mindset, work ethic, and personal values are far more difficult to instill. Organizations that prioritize positive attitude, professionalism, and a genuine desire to serve build teams that elevate the entire customer experience.

Train for skill. Once the right people are in place, structured training ensures they have the competence and confidence to execute processes consistently. Continuous learning—supported by clear standards, coaching, and modern tools—creates employees who perform with excellence rather than guesswork.

Build a strong operations culture. Culture is the invisible force that shapes daily behavior. A culture of reliability, discipline, and accountability ensures that processes are followed, problems are solved quickly, and improvements are embraced rather than resisted. When operational excellence becomes “the way we do things here,” consistency becomes natural.

Hold people accountable at all levels. Accountability is not punishment—it is clarity. When expectations are defined, performance is measured, and leaders model the standards they expect, organizations become more dependable. Customers feel the difference immediately.

The Path Forward

Great customer service is not an accident. It is the outcome of intentional hiring, thoughtful training, disciplined operations, and shared accountability. When these elements work together, businesses deliver experiences that feel effortless, reliable, and trustworthy.

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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Ram accuses PPP, APNU of betraying Guyana

Chartered Accountant Christopher Ram has launched one of his strongest attacks yet on the management of Guyana's petroleum sector, accusing successive PPP/C and APNU+AFC administrations of presiding over a "persistent pattern of weak oversight, lax enforcement, poor transparency" that has allowed oil companies to secure virtually every concession they sought.

In his latest Road to First Oil – Every Man, Woman and Child Must Become Oil Minded column, Ram argued that Guyana's problems extend far beyond the controversial 2016 Production Sharing Agreement (PSA), contending that failures in governance, regulation and contract administration stretch back to the original 1999 agreement and continue under the current administration.

"The financial, audit and regulatory weaknesses highlighted in this mini-series make for disturbing reading and raise serious concerns," Ram wrote. "These failures pale in comparison with the absence of adequate contract administration by successive administrations."

The outspoken accountant said governments have consistently failed in their duty as "trustees of the nation's resources," accusing them of neglecting their responsibility to protect the country's oil wealth for present and future generations.

Kaieteur News has repeatedly highlighted concerns over the 2016 ExxonMobil contract, particularly its 2% royalty, the absence of ring-fencing provisions, unlimited cost recovery, tax concessions and other provisions critics say heavily favour the oil companies. Successive governments have also faced criticism over delays in completing cost recovery audits and refusing to renegotiate the agreement despite earlier promises.

Ram argued that while the APNU+AFC administration has attracted much of the criticism for signing the



2016 agreement, "the record shows a chain of failures stretching from the 1999 Agreement signed under President Janet Jagan, through its 2016 revision, and into its ongoing administration."

"These are not isolated errors," Ram stated. "They reflect a persistent pattern of weak oversight, lax enforcement, poor transparency, and an undue deference to foreign oil companies at the expense of the national interest."

He singled out what he described as a series of decisions that ultimately favoured ExxonMobil, pointing to what he called excessive acreage granted under the Janet Jagan administration, the acceptance of force majeure during the Bharrat Jagdeo administration, the licence renewal under the David Granger government and continued concessions under the current PPP/C

administration.

"Exxon has been granted every concession it has sought, undermining the safeguards built into the petroleum legislation, all at the expense of the country," Ram declared.

The chartered accountant also revisited the controversial 2016 renegotiation of the petroleum agreement, arguing that legal issues surrounding the original licence were effectively erased through a Bridging Deed.

According to Ram, "Janet Jagan's 1999 Agreement and David Granger's 2016 Agreement became conjoined twins, politically and legally inseparable," leaving both major political parties tied to what he described as a petroleum regime that disproportionately benefits the operators

Ram further accused the PPP/C of abandoning key campaign promises

after returning to office in 2020.

“After its return to power in 2020, the PPP/C reneged on its repeated commitment to renegotiate the 2016 Agreement and to set up an independent Petroleum Commission,” he wrote.

The Petroleum Commission legislation was originally intended to establish an independent regulator for the sector. However, despite repeated commitments by successive administrations, the body has never been established, leaving the Ministry of Natural Resources to perform both policy-making and regulatory functions.

Ram was equally critical of the ministry’s handling of the sector, saying, “The entire team at the Ministry of Natural Resources appears to lack the commitment, the capacity or the expertise required to oversee the Petroleum Agreement effectively.”

He argued that this has resulted in persistent deficiencies in accounting, reporting, auditing and operational compliance.

Among his strongest criticisms was

government’s handling of petroleum audits.

Listing 18 major failures, Ram said authorities have failed to scrutinise billions of US dollars in pre-contract costs, neglected to enforce ring-fencing protections, refused to publish petroleum reports required under the agreement and failed to complete ministerial audits.

“Not a single ministerial audit has been completed in what has become a circus of reckless incompetence,” Ram wrote. “It is as though the Administration is insensitive to the financial benefits of proper audits.”

He also accused the government of acting alongside oil companies rather than protecting the public interest, pointing to its interventions in court matters involving the petroleum sector.

According to Ram, there has been “a consistent pattern of intervening in litigation on the side of the oil companies rather than maintaining the neutrality expected of a government acting in the public interest.”

He also renewed concerns about the

gas-to-shore project, alleging that government had become “a co-conspirator in non-disclosure” after China’s CNOOC disclosed in its financial statements that it was funding some project expenses, a disclosure he said later disappeared from subsequent reports.

Ram concluded that the greatest danger facing Guyana’s oil future is no longer the controversial petroleum agreement itself but government’s unwillingness to confront its weaknesses.

“To Guyanese, the greatest disappointment has been the Ali Administration’s abandonment of its promise to put Guyana first,” Ram wrote. “Having inherited an Agreement it rightly condemned, it has chosen not only to defend it, but in important respects to sweeten rather than reform it, all favourable of the oil companies.”

He ended with a stark warning: “The Granger Administration surrendered too much; the Ali Administration is on course to surrender what remains.” (Kaieteur News)

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CARICOM head to seek CCJ advice on Secretary-General's reappointment



The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has agreed to refer the contentious reappointment of Secretary-General Dr. Carla Barnett to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) for an advisory opinion, following a formal objection from Trinidad and Tobago over the legality of the process used to grant her a second term.

The compromise was reached during a Heads of Government Retreat held on 6th July, 2026, on the margins of the 51st CARICOM Summit in St. Lucia, chaired by St. Lucian Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre.

The diplomatic rift became public following a detailed 22-page letter sent to regional leaders by Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. In the letter, obtained by the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), Persad-Bissessar stated that Port-of-Spain does not recognise the validity of Dr. Barnett's second term.

She described the objection as "neither personal nor political," writing that her administration "does

not accept the process by which the Secretary General was purportedly reappointed and, consequently, is unable to recognise the validity of the purported second term of the Secretary General." She said her position concerns "the legality of the process adopted, the integrity of our institutions and the faithful observance of the constitutional framework established by the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas," adding: "I wish to be very clear: our position is not held to create division within the community, but to preserve the constitutional order upon which the legitimacy and credibility of CARICOM ultimately depend. Regional unity cannot rest upon expediency and irregular practices masquerading as precedent. It must rest upon adherence to the rules which every member state has freely accepted and undertaken to uphold."

Trinidad and Tobago's challenge rests on procedural grounds under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Persad-Bissessar argued that Article 24 of the Treaty "expressly gives the power to appoint and reappoint the

Secretary General to the Conference, not to a Retreat, caucus or informal gathering of Heads of Government." While a retreat may lawfully facilitate confidential discussion, she wrote, "it cannot replace the constitutional institution designated by the Revised Treaty to exercise the power of appointment."

Because the reappointment decision was made during a Heads-only Retreat in St. Kitts and Nevis rather than by the Conference acting under Articles 11 and 24 of the Revised Treaty, she argued, it was made by a body "lacking the constitutional competence to exercise that power and was therefore inconsistent with the Revised Treaty."

She further contended that a gathering cannot acquire treaty powers simply because its participants overlap with those who ordinarily constitute the treaty organ. Persad-Bissessar noted that the official communiqué issued on 1st March, 2026, made no reference to the Secretary-General's reappointment under that agenda item — an omission she said deprived member states of the chance to prepare for deliberation on a matter affecting one of the Community's highest constitutional offices. "Wrong past practice cannot be used to validate present wrong practice — two wrongs do not make a right," she wrote. She also pointed out that Article 24 establishes a mandatory sequence in which the Community Council must first make a recommendation before the Conference may appoint or reappoint a Secretary-General, and that no such recommendation was sought or obtained in this case.

While the matter is prepared for the CCJ, Trinidad and Tobago pushed for strict interim measures to man-

age potential conflicts of interest. Persad-Bissessar proposed that Dr. Barnett be engaged on a month-to-month basis until the court rules, with any such interim extension explicitly stated to be without prejudice to the legal rights of any member state and not construed as affirming the validity of the disputed reappointment process.

She further demanded that, pending the advisory proceedings, the incumbent Secretary-General fully recuse herself from exercising any authority or making any decision — directly or indirectly — related to those proceedings, and that the General Counsel likewise recuse herself given her primary role as adviser to the Secretary-General.

In an official statement issued after the retreat, CARICOM leaders moved to defuse the tension by agreeing to commence legal proceedings under Article 212 of the Treaty to secure an expedited advisory opinion from the Trinidad-based CCJ, describing this as precisely the role for which the court was created — a treaty interpretation body.

Regional heads agreed that the status quo regarding the Secretary-General’s reappointment will remain in place unless and until the Community considers the CCJ’s advisory opinion.

CARICOM said this approach allows the matter to be resolved amicably, without prejudice to the Community’s ability to conduct its affairs.

Despite the procedural dispute, other regional leaders have strongly backed Dr. Barnett’s leadership. She originally assumed office on 15th August, 2021, becoming the first woman to hold the post

At the summit’s opening ceremony, St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Dr. Terrance Drew praised her stewardship of the Guyana-based Secretariat and of the regional integration

movement as a whole, telling her she had understood the importance of preserving the Secretariat’s impartiality while faithfully implementing the decisions of Heads of Government. “That balance has strengthened this Community, and for this I offer, on behalf of all of us, our sincerest gratitude,” he said.

CARICOM maintained that referring the matter to the CCJ reflects the Community’s commitment to contin-

uous institutional improvement and the highest standards of good governance, and that the process does not impugn the integrity of any member state or individual. The Heads of Government concluded the retreat by reaffirming their commitment to the Community’s ideals and objectives, pledging to continue moving forward in unity to advance the region’s interests amid its current challenges. (Kaieteur News)

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Regional News



Cuba reconnects to power grid after latest island blackout

Cuba fully restored its energy grid early Wednesday after the third nationwide blackout this year, but authorities warned more outages could follow due to fuel shortages.

The Caribbean island is reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades — one made worse by a fuel blockade imposed by US President Donald Trump in January as part of a pressure campaign aimed at ending six decades of communist rule.

Unlike in previous major blackouts, the low fuel supplies have complicated the process of restoring the system after it went offline at noon on Monday, leaving the entire country of 9.6 million without power.

Electricity was restored to large parts of Cuba on Tuesday, and by early Wednesday the national grid was back online across all provinces, according to state electricity company Union Electrica.

But power restoration will not bring



long-term relief to the population as the electricity production shortfall will continue to cause blackouts across much of the country, Felix Estrada, a senior official at the Ministry of Energy and Mines, said on state television.

Deteriorating infrastructure and fuel shortages have led to widespread outages, which have only worsened since Washington imposed its blockade that has starved Cuba's aging power generators of fuel. (AFP)

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Sri Lanka to convert hospital into prison after deadly riot



Sri Lanka plans to open a new prison in a disused hospital building, the justice ministry announced Wednesday after a riot killed 20 inmates and eight guards at an overcrowded jail.

The deadly violence has intensified scrutiny of Sri Lanka's chronically overcrowded jails, with official figures showing prisons were operating at roughly four times their intended capacity.

Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakara issued an order to take over a section of the disused hospital in the island's south to accommodate inmates from other facilities.

"We need to set up security measures and other essentials to start the new prison at Mahamodara in Galle District," a ministry official told AFP, without providing a specific timeline.

The decision comes days after Sri Lanka's deadliest prison riot in years, which saw clashes break out Sunday between rival gangs at Negombo Prison, north of the capital Colombo.

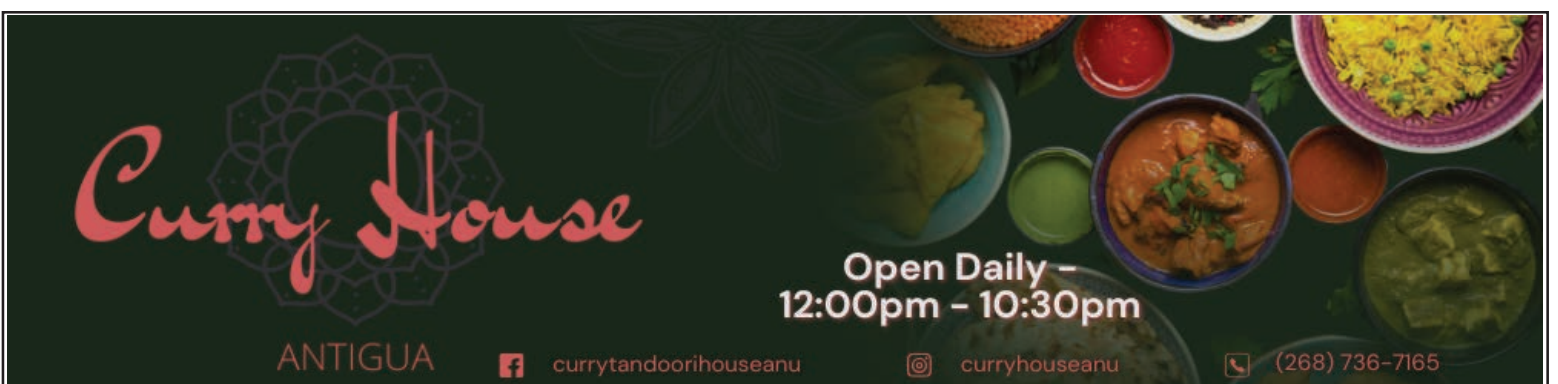
The violence killed 28 people and wounded more than 100 others, some of whom remain in critical condition.

The coffins of slain guards, draped in the national flag, were brought to the

prison department headquarters in Colombo on Wednesday for colleagues to pay their final respects.

A United Nation (UN) statement issued in Colombo following the deadly riot said that "overcrowding, outdated practices and poor conditions in places of detention have long been recognised as critical challenges across prison systems in Sri Lanka."




Rioting at another prison in December 2020 killed 11 inmates and wounded 117 during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading the government to release hundreds of inmates from overcrowded jails. (AFP)



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German doctor jailed for killing 15 of his patients



A German palliative care doctor has been sentenced to life imprisonment for killing 15 of his patients.

A court in Berlin on Wednesday found the 41-year-old man, named only as Johannes M. in line with German privacy rules, guilty of murdering 12 women and three men between September 2021 and July 2024.

The authorities believe these killings could be just the tip of the iceberg. Prosecutors are currently investigating dozens of other incidents involving the doctor.

His victims were between the ages of 25 and 94. The court heard how they were all critically ill, but that their deaths were not imminent.

Prosecutors said that during home visits, the doctor administered a lethal combination of various medicines without his patients' consent.

On several occasions, they said he set fires to cover his tracks.

In July 2024, shortly before his arrest, prosecutors said the doctor killed two patients in a single day - a 75-year-old man at his home in central Berlin and, a few hours later, a 76-year-old woman in a neighbouring district.

They said the doctor tried to set fire to the woman's house, but failed.

For much of the trial, which has gone on for about a year, the doctor said nothing. But last month, he confessed to having "killed people", twelve of his severely ill patients.

He told the court he had convinced himself that he was doing the right thing, sparing them "suffering and infirmity".

"Throughout it all, I thought this was the best thing for everyone," he said.

He said he apologised for all the suffering he had caused.

The authorities suspect him of having killed further patients. Prosecutors are currently investigating 76 other cases.

German media say if the further cases are proven, and he is found guilty, it would be one of the worst cases of serial murder in Germany's history.

The doctor told the court that he would "get involved much earlier in the forthcoming proceedings".

Earlier in the trial, relatives of the victims told the court they still couldn't believe it.

The mother of the youngest victim, a 25-year-old woman who died in 2021, was in tears. "She never said she didn't want to live anymore," she said.

The son of a 72-year-old woman who died in 2024, said his mother had had plans to go to the Baltic Sea with her sister. "My mother wanted to keep on living," he said.

The court ordered that the doctor be put in preventive detention, following his prison sentence. It also imposed a lifetime ban on him practising medicine. (BBC)

Landslide kills eight at refugee school in Bangladesh



Heavy rain in Bangladesh triggered a landslide at the world's largest refugee camp on Wednesday, killing seven children and a teacher during a school class and doubling the death toll from rain-related disasters this week.

Rescuers clawed through liquid earth to drag out the bodies of the children, who drowned in the mud that swamped their school hut as they studied.

More than 1.2 million Rohingya refugees, many who fled Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017, live in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar.

Many refugees live in crowded, ba-

sic shelters on hillsides cleared of forests — making the land unstable when monsoon rains pour down.

Bangladesh Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammed Mizanur Rahman said seven children and their teacher had died.

“Unfortunately, four died at the scene, while four others died in hospital,” Rahman told AFP.

Landslides also killed at least eight people as they slept in three different camps on Monday night.

Bangladesh's Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said torrential rain is likely to continue for four days.

Refugee representative Sayed Ullah, president of the United Council of Rohingya, said that people needed new land in safer locations.

“We don't see proper coordination... over the accommodation of the Rohingya, and that is reflected in these accidents,” he said.

The United Nations calls it “one of the world's largest and most protracted refugee situations”.

The 2017 Myanmar crackdown, when Rohingya villages were burned and civilians killed, is the subject of a genocide case at the UN's top court in The Hague. (AFP)



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U.S. reinstates sanctions on Iranian oil sales after LNG, oil tanker attacks

The United States on Tuesday re-imposed sanctions on Iranian oil, as a U.S. official warned that Iran's attacks on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz were "wholly unacceptable" and would be met with consequences.

Oil prices were up more than 5% following the announcement. The U.S. Treasury had authorized last month Iran oil sales until August 21, as part of the fragile agreement between Tehran and Washington. Tuesday's revocation cuts that wind-down period to an end date of July 17.

The U.S. move came after three tankers reported being struck by unknown projectiles in and near the Strait of Hormuz in recent days, the British navy-affiliated agency UKMTO said in a report. There was no immediate comment from Tehran, or any claim of responsibility.

The U.S. official said negotiators continued to work in good faith toward a final agreement with Iran despite the latest escalation.

The attacks and the U.S. response threaten to put the diplomatic understanding between Washington and Tehran on shaky ground, raising the risk that further retaliation could derail negotiations over a broader agreement.

Another U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said initial indications were that Iran fired at three commercial vessels.

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, is one of the world's most important energy choke points. Roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments passed through the strait each day before the war.

Any prolonged disruption could push up energy prices and increase pressure on consumers and governments already facing higher fuel costs.

Oil exports remain a critical source of revenue for Iran, providing billions of



dollars in hard currency that help fund government spending and support an economy weakened by years of U.S. sanctions.

Despite restrictions, Tehran has managed to expand shipments in recent years, largely to China, making oil sales one of the country's most important economic lifelines.

Oil prices have fallen steeply since the agreement was struck last month. Bob McNally, president of Rapidan Energy Group, said the developments "signal that the ceasefire is not as solid and durable as the oil market has chosen to assume," and added that "the oil market has some risk pricing to do."

While traffic through the strait has picked up in the last week, it remains spotty, ranging between one-third and one-fifth of its pre-war levels.

Washington's decision to pull the license came with a warning to Iran that its actions in the strait were "wholly unacceptable" and would be met with consequences. The White House granted the license in June, easing decades-old sanctions as part of an agreement to reopen the strait.

"This is not a small step by Washing-

ton," said Brett Erickson, managing principal at Obsidian Risk Advisors. The revoked license "was one of the concessions Iran needed to justify lifting its blockade over the Strait of Hormuz."

The U.S. Navy-led Joint Maritime Information Center (JMIC) on Tuesday raised the threat level to transit the strait to "severe" from "substantial" following the attacks, citing deliberate hostile action likely under current conditions, the first time the threat level has been set at that severe status since June 15.

"The recent confirmed incidents highlight that the threat environment remains heightened and warrants extreme vigilance," JMIC said in a note, adding that mariners should expect continued naval presence, congestion along transit routes, and more intense hailing by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

It is unclear whether the attacks will lead to another full-scale interruption of shipping traffic through the strait, which prior to joint U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28, was used to transit about one-fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies.

The Al Rekayyat tanker, loaded with liquefied natural gas, was hit on its port side, one source said, with another briefed on the matter adding the vessel was at risk of exploding due to a fire in its room. The crew were safe and were being evacuated.

Qatar's foreign ministry said Tehran bore full legal responsibility for the attack, and summoned the deputy Iranian ambassador to protest targeting of the tanker.

It is the first time an LNG ship from Qatar, a mediator in talks between the United States and Iran, has been struck since the start of the Iran war on February 28.

Nakilat (QGTS.QA), opens new tab, also known as Qatar Gas Transport Company Ltd, which owns the Al Rekayyat tanker, did not respond to requests for comment, nor did QatarEnergy, Qatar's international media office, and U.S. Central Command.

The Saudi-flagged Wedyan super-tanker was also damaged off Oman's coast while transiting the strait. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry condemned the attacks, saying it holds Iran fully responsible for the damage to the Wedyan, which is owned and managed by Saudi shipping firm Bahri (4030.SE), opens new tab. The firm did not respond to requests for comment.

Commercial vessels using uncoordinated routes with Iran or tampering with the ship's tracking face risks and disrupt Iran's efforts to facilitate safe passage in the Strait, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, adding that the country was working on fulfilling its commitments.

About 16 vessels transited through the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday, the lowest in nearly three weeks, data from ship tracking service Kpler showed.

Traffic through the strait has averaged 25 to 40 ships sailing daily in the last week, far lower than the daily average of 125 sailings before the conflict began.

"The start stop nature of the re-opening of Hormuz is continuing to inject

volatility into Middle Eastern tanker markets since it is leading to the irregular flow of tankers through Hormuz in both directions," ship broker BRS said in a report this week.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attacks. A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said initial indications were that Iran had fired at two commercial vessels.

In another incident later on Tuesday, a tanker was struck by a drone while transiting the strait, sustaining minor damage, but was able to sail to its next port of call, British Navy-affiliated

agency UKMTO said in a report.

Average daily rates to load a ship inside the Gulf reached almost \$300,000 a day, up from below \$200,000 a day last week due to more sailings.

President Donald Trump said Monday the United States would either reach a deal with Iran or "finish the job," renewing his threat of military action as Tehran projects defiance following the funeral.

Talks to reach a final deal won't start if U.S. threats continue, Iran's foreign minister said on Tuesday. (Reuters)

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Successful start for Old Road in Antigua Cup Tournament



Old Road's goal scorers in their opening match against Freetown Far Hill Ballers in the Antigua Cup International Youth Football Tournament at the ABFA Technical Center on Monday, July 6. From left to right: Chase Joseph, Ajabe Rae, and Jermarion Edwards. (Photo courtesy of the Young Warriors FC)

Old Road got off to a winning start in defense of their under-17 division title on the second day of matches during the third edition of the Antigua Cup International Youth Football Tournament at the ABFA Technical Center on Monday.

Ajabe Rae struck a hat trick as Old Road launched their title defense with a 5-0 drubbing of Freetown Far Hill Ballers. The other goals were scored by Jermarion Edwards and Chace Joseph.

Visiting Bath United of Nevis, Villa Lions Soccer Academy, Earthquake, and CPTSA Wings also made winning starts to their campaigns in the under-17 Division.

Romero Hanley scored the only goal of the match to give Bath United a one-nil win over Bassa.

Jahmarey George converted four goals to lead Villa Lions Soccer Academy to an 8-0 drubbing of Urlings. The other goals were scored by Mario Lewis, Shumba Thomas, Kharique Joseph, and Krystian Daley.

Ajay Barthley also recorded a hat trick, scoring all three goals to give Earthquake a 3-0 victory over Jennings/Ebenezer.

The CPTSA Wings snatched a 2-1 victory against Soccer Academy. Amauri Anthony and Kent Pierre were the goal scorers for the CPTSA Wings, while Nafisa Quashie had a conversion for Soccer Academy.

But there were mixed fortunes for joint under-15 champions Lion Cubs and Bath United of Nevis in their respective opening matches.

Colin Jonas scored the only goal of the match to give Lion Cub a one-nil victory over Bassa. But Bath United lost their opening encounter, falling to a one-nil loss to Pigott Bullets.

Tevon Henderson scored the winning and only goal of the match to snatch victory for the Pigotts Bullets.

In other under-15 matches, Freemans Ville pulled off a 4-1 victory against Parham. Dakarie Gore had a double conversion, and the other goals for Freemans Ville were converted by Keaton Kellman and Djarie Gregory. Jahshawn Brown scored a consolation goal for Parham.

Villa Lions Soccer Academy coasted to a 3-0 victory over Earthquake, courtesy of goals by Allan Henry, Mario Lewis, and T'Andre James.

Wile Syde remain winless in New Winthropes football league

Wile Syde FC is still searching for their first win in the New Winthropes Community Football League.

Although their first win remains elusive in three matches, Wile Syde FC picked up their first point by salvaging a 2-2 draw with Strike Force FC in their latest outing at the New Winthropes playing field on Tuesday evening.

Nathon Ferron scored in the 28th minute to give Wile Syde a one-nil lead at halftime. Jayden Martin equalized for Strike Force with a 52nd-minute conversion.

Wile Syde regained the lead when Jahrius Benjamin scored in the 55th minute to give his team a 2-1 advantage. But Strike Force drew level once again via a 70th-minute conversion by Brent Hillaire to salvage the draw.

Strike Force FC has now recorded a win, a draw, and a loss in their three matches, while Wile Syde FC has a draw and two losses in their three encounters.

The league will continue with a double-header at the New Winthropes playing field on Thursday.

Cedar Grove CG will face New Level Unlocked at 5:30 pm, and the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus (UWIFIC) will clash with Enforcers at 7 pm.

The re-birth of the New Winthropes Community Football League is a collaborative venture by Nat Pan My Team and Real Blizzard FC.

Meanwhile, Hothead and Friends and Jennings United have made it two wins in a row in the Gray's Green Community Football League after both teams recorded victories in their latest outings at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.



Hothead and Friends cruised to a 3-0 victory against Earthquake FC, with the goals coming from Joylan Sinclair, Jamarion Edwards, and Jevaughn Joseph. It was the second loss in as many matches for Earthquake FC.

Jason Harris scored the only goal of the match to give Jennings United a 1-0 victory against Wings FC, who suffered their second loss in as many games.

El Guapo rebounded from an opening-game loss to Hothead and Friends to record their first win in two matches by pulling off a 4-1 victory against West Bank Hatton.

Rakeem Joseph, Zaheem Greene, Abraham Barry, and Ricardo Dennis each had a conversion for El Guapo, while Navor Mason scored a consolation goal for West Bank Hatton, who suffered their first defeat in two

games after crushing Earthquake FC 6-0 in their opening encounter.

Xclusive Ballaz remain unbeaten after battling to a goalless draw with West Side FC of Five Islands in their latest outing. Xclusive Ballaz recorded a 2-0 win against Wings FC in their opening encounter.

The result allows West Side FC of Five Islands to pick up their first point after suffering a one-nil loss to FC Hollywood in their opening game.

Twelve teams, divided into three groups, are contesting the Gray's Green Community League, which is organized by the Empire Football Club.

The league is sponsored by the parliamentary representative for St. John's Rural West, Honourable Michael Joseph; Top Speed Construction; and I Love Electrics.

Windies secure first Test series win against Sri Lanka in 23 years

The West Indies ended a 23-year wait for a Test series victory over Sri Lanka, securing a 1-0 triumph in the two-match series following the drawn second Test on the final day at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Tuesday.

Set an improbable 302 runs to win, the match ended in a predictable draw on the fifth and final day, with the West Indies on 109 without loss off 40 overs in their second innings.

Openers John Campbell and Brandon King were both not out on 51 after Sri Lanka had declared their second innings at 251 for nine off 49 overs.

A pair of outstanding batting performances from Justin Greaves and Shai Hope inspired the West Indies to 499 all out in reply to Sri Lanka's first-innings total of 549. It marked the first time since 1995 that the West Indies posted three consecutive first-innings totals of 450 or more in Tests.

The innings also saw the home side surpass 400 after conceding 500 or more in the first innings of a Test for the first time since 2015.

Greaves produced a career-defining innings of 180, displaying remarkable concentration during a marathon stay of more than eight-and-a-half hours at the crease. His knock came from 325 deliveries and included 14 fours and two sixes.

Together with Shai Hope, who scored a composed 112, Greaves shared a record 242-run partnership for the fifth wicket at the venue. Hope's century was the third of his Test career and his second at the ground, following his 115 not out against Bangladesh in November 2024.

Greaves' innings of 180 also ensured the West Indies had three batters score 150 or more in the series; the first time they have achieved the feat since 2005.

He reflected on his contributions where he captured the player of the match and the series awards.

"I think this will be top of the list, contributing to a team win and then contributing to a series win as well," he said.

"For me, first team series win as well in the Test Championship for us was a



West Indies skipper Roston Chase holds the trophy aloft after leading the Caribbean side to a one-nil series win following a draw in the second and final Test against Sri Lanka at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Tuesday, July 7, 2026. (Photo courtesy of CWI Media)

very, very big achievement."

Greaves added that his mindset of team first has elevated his output in recent times, now with his third century in 16 Test matches.

"Always wanting to do better, I think that's the start of it. Always wanting to get really big scores," Greaves shared.

"Always talk about staying hungry in the dressing room. It's just not for yourself; it's just more for the team at the end of the day.

"There are certain times that you might get a hundred or you might get a 90 and it might be good for you, but it's not good enough for the team and it's always team first for me. So, thinking big, thinking big scores really, really help the team."

Captain Roston Chase praised Greaves for his impact with bat and ball throughout the encounter.

"When they asked me about the Man of the Series, he was my first pick, because he played a key role in this series," Chase said.

"Not only in scoring that big hundred but in the first game he bowled a tremendous spell and he got three wickets.

"He's a quality cricketer. He's a guy that I grew up with, he went to school with me. From the first time I saw him I knew that he had great talent and this is something that I expected of him. So, I'm just happy to see that it's come to life right now."

The series win was Chase's first at the helm, and it also broke a streak of 10 Test series without a win since 2023, which filled the skipper with elation.

"Yes, I'm very elated, especially against a team like Sri Lanka, that we struggle to beat even at home and especially when we go away to them - it's very difficult to beat them," Chase expressed.

"So, to come here and to beat them, just not beat them but in a dominating kind of way, is very pleasing. And we haven't won against them in 23 years. It feels great, especially after the year that we had last year, to come and start the year with this series victory, it feels great."

The West Indies Test team's next assignment comes up against Pakistan in another two-Test series in Trinidad from July 25 to August 7.

Egypt depart World Cup with bitter taste despite breaking new ground



Egypt's Mohamed Salah (10) talks with Referee Francois Letexier, of France, during the World Cup round of 16 soccer match between Argentina and Egypt in Atlanta, Tuesday, July 7, 2026. (AP)

ATLANTA (Reuters) - Egypt departed the World Cup feeling hard done by but also paid the price for inviting Lionel Messi to lead an irresistible late charge against them as Argentina fought back to win a thrilling last-16 clash on Tuesday.

Egypt complained bitterly, with coach Hossam Hassan floating conspiracy theories, after their 3-2 defeat, and they did have grounds to feel aggrieved after Mostafa Zico's 62nd-minute strike was called back for a foul in the build-up, and a claim for a foul on Mohamed Salah in the dying minutes was waved away.

Zico's effort -- he did score a legitimate goal five minutes later in almost the same way -- was ruled out after a VAR review on a tug by Marwan Attia on Lisandro Martinez.

There was certainly a push on Martinez, who also had his foot stood on and his jersey tugged, but if Egypt's

complaint is about the consistency of refereeing calls at the World Cup, then they have every right to feel aggrieved because many such similarly physical challenges have been ignored by referees in a conscious effort by FIFA to ensure games flow freely.

Giving a penalty for the foul on Salah would have been termed a soft decision, but what really rankled the Egyptians was that Argentina then went down the other end and won the game.

"Several key incidents raised serious concerns and left profound questions about the consistency and fairness of decisions that directly influenced the course of the game," the Egyptian Football Association said in a statement on Wednesday.

By then, however, Egypt's defences were in tatters, allowing Lautaro Martinez to float in a cross that Enzo Fernandez expertly headed across the goalkeeper and into the corner of the

net to complete a remarkable comeback after Argentina had trailed 2-0 with 11 minutes remaining.

They allowed Argentina to come back at them, sitting dangerously deep after previously having got the right balance of trying to contain Messi while looking to create chances themselves.

Egypt's coach Uto makender Hassan, have been surprisingly defensive, using the outlets of Salah and Omar Marmoush transitional opportunities.

Against Argentina, Hassan switched his game plan, dropping Marmoush and playing a more expansive game, while having his defenders rotate in keeping an eye on Messi, who was stymied in many of his efforts before the floodgates opened.

Egypt will also look back on the first-half injury to midfielder Emam Ashour as a turning point. He suffered what looked like a groin injury and went off at the break.

Overall, though, they can claim a success, winning at the World Cup for the first time in four attempts, getting out of the group phase and as far as the last 16.

"While the result is now part of history, our pride in this team remains unchanged. Their courage, commitment, and fighting spirit throughout the tournament earned respect and reflected the true values of Egyptian football," the EFA said.

Losing start for Antigua in Americas Group IV Davis Cup

Antigua and Barbuda suffered defeat in their opening match in the Americas Group IV Davis Cup team competition, which is taking place on the outdoor clay court at the Rakiura Resort in Luque, Paraguay, from July 8 to 11.

Antigua and Barbuda, which is represented by a four-member team in the seven-team competition, suffered a 3-0 loss against the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) in their first encounter in the four-team Pool B on Wednesday.

Graeme Angus crushed Antiguan Niike Hughes 6-0, 6-1 in the opening singles.

Antigua and Barbuda's Rodain Shaquan Monelle lost the second singles match 1-6, 1-6 to Yared Alfred.

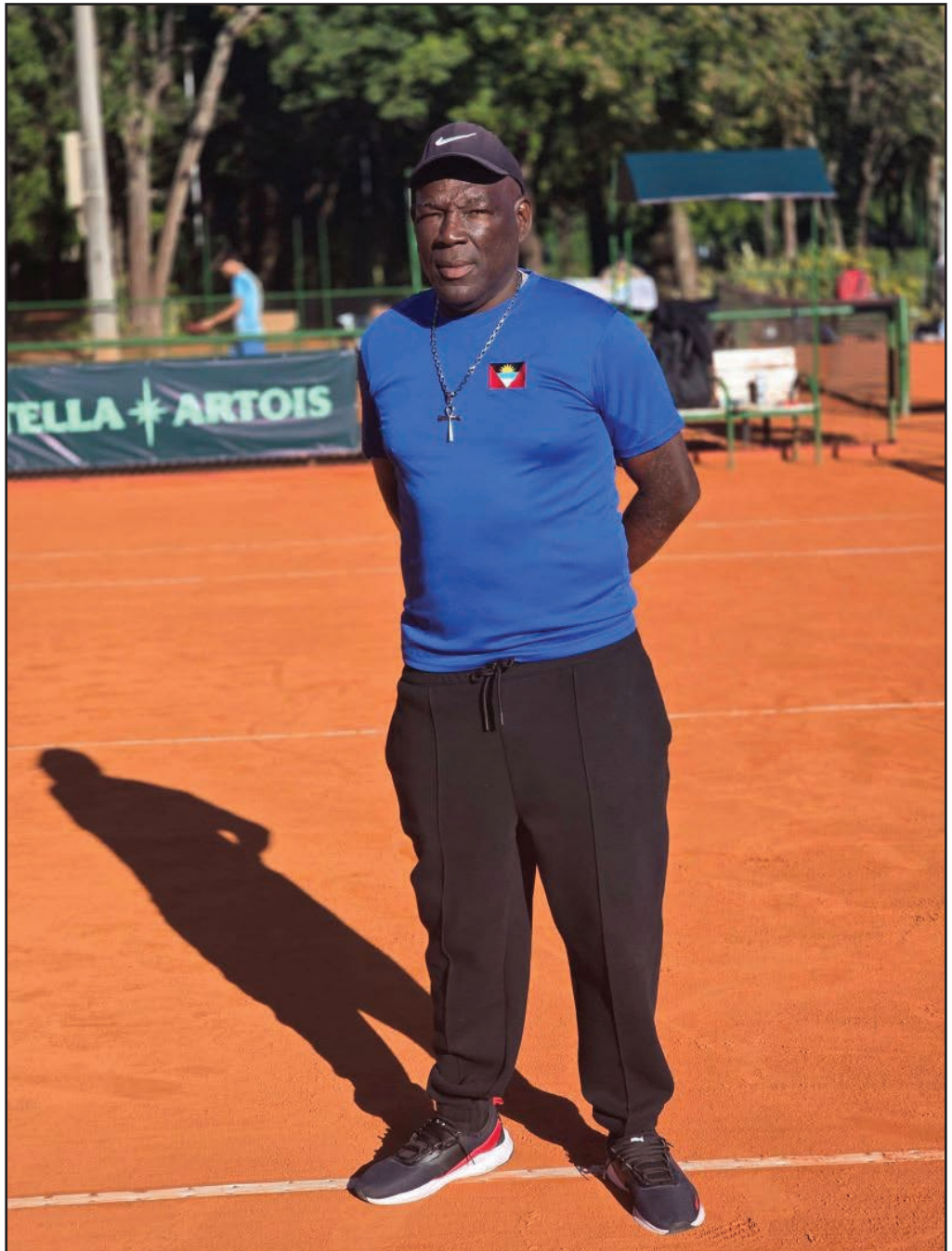
Angus joined forces with Ozzy Odom to wrap up the match by beating the Antiguan pair of Cordell Williams and Davis Williams 6-0, 6-0 in the doubles.

The Antiguan team are competing without their top and only professional player, Jody Maginley. Antigua and Barbuda and the USVI are joined in Group B by Suriname and Aruba.

Aruba launched their campaign by surging to a commanding 3-0 victory over Suriname in their opening encounter on Wednesday.

Competing for top honours in Group A are Honduras, Cuba, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The top two teams in each pool will advance to contest promotion play-offs. The two top teams at the end of the competition will be promoted to compete in Americas Group III in



Coach Cordell Williams, who is also the president of the Antigua and Barbuda Tennis Association, is leading the national team at this year's Americas Group IV Davis Cup competition in Paraguay. (Photo courtesy of the ABTA)

2027.

For the second successive year, Antigua and Barbuda finished in sixth

place in the Americas Group IV Davis Cup competition, which was held among 10 countries in Trinidad and Tobago last year.