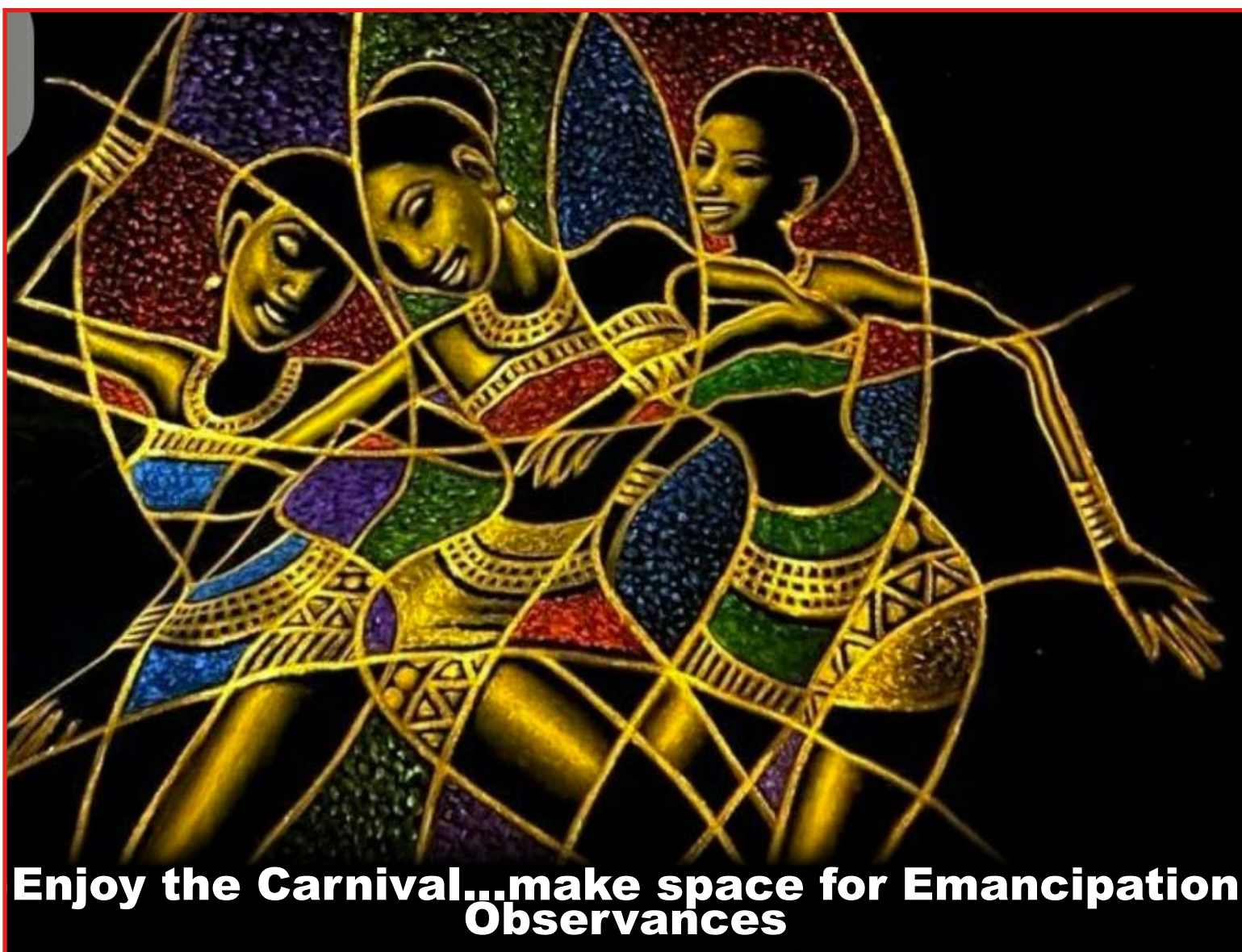


TUESDAY 28TH JULY 2026 | VOLUME 10 ISSUE 03 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

Free Eye Glasses For Those In Need

Story on page 2



**Enjoy the Carnival...make space for Emancipation
Observances**

Local News

Government is Partnering With An International Organisation to Assist People with Vision Issues

The Government is teaming up with an international organization to launch an initiative to assist lower income individuals attain much-needed reading glasses.

The Ministry of Health made the announcement reporting that the government will sign a memorandum of understanding with RestoringVision to provide the service through the initiative dubbed, The Prime Minister's Vision Initiative.

The formal announcement is set for Thursday and beginning July 31, 2026, eligible persons 40 years and older can receive free reading glasses following a vision screening at participating community clinics.

The ministry is asking those wishing to access the programme to bring along a valid national photo ID. The clinic participating in the initiative will be announced at its launch on Thursday.

RestoringVision is a global nonprofit dedicated to providing vision screenings and near-vision eyeglasses to people living on less than \$2 a day, addressing presbyopia and other vision impairments. Their mission focuses on improving health, education, and livelihoods by restoring sight, which the World Health Organization recognizes as one of the most cost-effective health interventions.

Its slogan is: Clear Vision. Better Lives. Stronger Communities. Together, We Can See the Future.

RestoringVision recently signed a similar MOU with the St. Lucia government through which they will provide an estimated 50-thousand pairs of eyeglasses to individuals on that island.



PRIME MINISTER'S VISION INITIATIVE

In collaboration with the **Ministry of Health, Wellness, Environment and Civil Service Affairs** and **RestoringVision**.

JULY 31, 2026 – DECEMBER 15, 2026

MONDAY – FRIDAY 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

FREE DISTRIBUTION OF READING GLASSES TO INDIVIDUALS 40 YEARS AND OVER

CLINIC LOCATION	DURATION	DATES
VILLA POLYCLINIC	(2 WEEKS)	JULY 31, 2026 – AUGUST 14, 2026
GRAY'S FARM CLINIC	(2 WEEKS)	AUGUST 17, 2026 – AUGUST 28, 2026

Please bring a valid national photo ID.

Additional clinic locations will be announced periodically.

Clear Vision. Better Lives. Stronger Communities. | TOGETHER, WE CAN SEE THE FUTURE.



Open Daily - 7:00am - 11:30pm

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SENIOR HOGGS TEQUILA BAR

- Thursdays, 7:30pm - Karaoke
- Saturdays, 8pm - Live Band
- Breakfast served from 7:30am
- Games Night - COMING SOON!

ICT Expert Urges Businesses to Disclose Cyberattacks to Strengthen National Defences

Businesses and financial institutions have been urged to be more transparent when they fall victim to cyberattacks, with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) expert Clement Samuel warning that secrecy only strengthens cybercriminals and weakens collective efforts to combat online fraud.

Speaking at the recently held National Cybersecurity and Fraud Prevention Forum, Samuel said while banks and other organisations routinely advise customers on how to protect themselves from phishing scams and other forms of cyber fraud, many institutions are reluctant to acknowledge when their own systems have been compromised.

According to Samuel, Business Development Manager at Liberty Caribbean, which trades as FLOW, greater openness is essential if governments, businesses and consumers are to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated cybercriminals.

“What I find very interesting is that we are focusing a lot on what the consumer has to do, but we’re still seeing that many businesses, when they suffer these kinds of attacks, there is a little bit of shame, and they do not want to release the information,” Samuel said.

“If we are going to do what is necessary to address the growing problems, and this is something all of us are in together, it means there has to be transparency on all sides.”

Samuel warned that cybercriminals are constantly evolving their tactics, using speed, automation and persistence to exploit vulnerabilities and compromise systems within minutes.

He explained that modern scams often begin with seemingly harmless messages or phone calls through platforms such as WhatsApp, where



Information and Communications Technology (ICT) expert Clement Samuel

victims are encouraged to click malicious links disguised as invitations to Zoom meetings or calendar events.

“Once you do that, they take over your phone, and once they take over your phone, they’re looking for the passwords that you have saved—any information that they can use to intercept one-time passwords from your bank,” he said.

“Once they do that, then say goodbye to the little money that you’ve saved.”

Samuel cautioned that successful cyberattacks can impact hundreds of people in a short period and erode public confidence in digital systems and financial institutions.

He also stressed that cybersecurity cannot be treated as a one-time investment, urging businesses to conduct regular security assessments and continuously update their defences to remain resilient against emerging threats.

“Cybersecurity is an ongoing pro-

cess,” he noted, warning that systems left unattended can quickly become outdated and vulnerable to attack.

The ICT expert also expressed concern that elderly members of society are often overlooked in cybersecurity awareness campaigns despite being among the most vulnerable to online fraud.

“We particularly have to be wary of the older individuals in our society,” Samuel said.

“I think it’s probably a little unrealistic to think that this sector of society will have the same vigilance and know-how as some of the rest of us. We have got to try and build in some safeguards for these persons.”

Samuel’s remarks formed part of wider discussions at the National Cybersecurity and Fraud Prevention Forum, where public and private sector stakeholders examined strategies to strengthen Antigua and Barbuda’s resilience against the growing threat of cybercrime and online fraud.

Government Advances Next Phase of Mental Health Reform with PAHO/WHO Technical Mission



A team from the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) has commenced a five-day technical mission in Antigua and Barbuda as part of the Government's ongoing commitment to strengthening mental health services

Taking place from July 27–31, the mission brings together Ministry officials, mental health professionals, community health representatives and PAHO/WHO technical experts to review progress made over the past year and identify the next steps towards a more modern, people-centered and community-based mental health system. The PAHO/WHO technical team comprises Dr. Soumitra Pathare, Dr. Claudina Cayetano and Ms Sonali Kumar, whose expertise will help guide the review of progress and inform recommendations for the next phase of mental health reform.

The mission forms part of the Ministry's broader Mental Health Service Reorganization Plan, which seeks to improve access to quality mental healthcare while ensuring individuals receive timely support closer to where they live. The re-

organization shifts the focus towards stronger community-based services by improving continuity of care, enhancing crisis response and strengthening links between hospitals, primary health-care providers and community support systems.

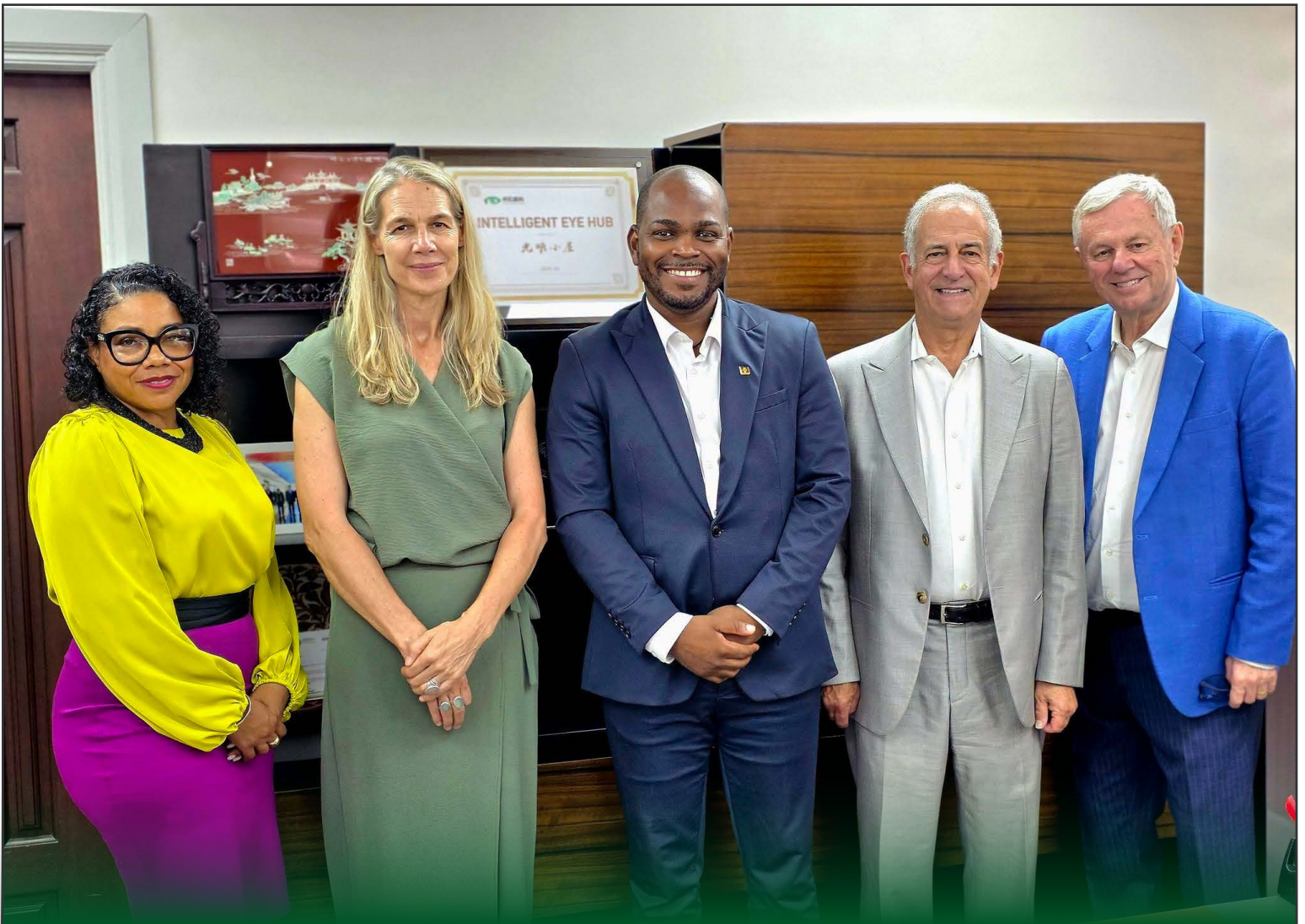
Over the past year, considerable progress has been made through the partnership between the Ministry of Health and PAHO/WHO. Achievements include stronger coordination between hospital and community mental health services, expanded mental health consultations at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, improved referral and discharge planning processes, enhanced documentation systems, and continued work to modernise the country's mental health legislation. Together, these initiatives have established a strong foundation for the next phase of reform.

Throughout the week, participants will engage in strategic meetings, technical workshops and site visits to review existing services, identify practical solutions to current challenges, and develop clear actions to further strengthen mental healthcare. Discussions will also explore

workforce development, community partnerships, crisis intervention, social inclusion and greater collaboration among the health, education and social sectors to ensure more coordinated care for individuals living with mental health conditions.

Minister of Health, Michael Joseph, said the technical mission reflects the Government's continued commitment to strengthening mental health services and advancing long-term reform.

"Mental health is an essential part of overall health and well-being, and strengthening mental health services remains a priority for this Government. We recognise that building a modern mental health system requires more than improving services. It requires a coordinated, people-centred approach and a fundamental shift in how we understand, respond to and support people living with mental health conditions. Through our continued partnership with PAHO/WHO, we are advancing this vision while working to ensure that every individual has access to compassionate, high-quality care."



Antigua and Barbuda Reaffirms Commitment to 30x30 Biodiversity Goals

Antigua and Barbuda has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the global 30x30 biodiversity target, aimed at conserving and effectively managing at least 30% of land and marine areas by 2030.

Today, the Honourable Michael Joseph, Minister responsible for the Environment, and Ruleta Camacho Thomas, Acting Director of the Department of Environment, met with a delegation from the Campaign for Nature comprising Michael David Rann AC CNZM, former Premier and Minister for Climate Change of South Australia and former Australian High Commissioner and Ambassador;

Senator Russ Feingold, former United States Senator and Special Envoy and Chair of the Campaign for Nature Global Steering Committee; and Alice Jay, International Director of the Campaign for Nature.

The Campaign for Nature team commended Antigua and Barbuda's leadership on climate change and issues affecting Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and welcomed the country's continued leadership on global biodiversity action.

Minister Joseph reaffirmed Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to 30x30 while highlighting the growing pressures facing the country's biodiversi-

ty and ecosystems, particularly from climate change. He emphasized the need for long-term, sustainable and programmatic financing to strengthen protected area management and build resilience.

The Minister also stressed that conservation must integrate people with the management of nature and recognize the value that healthy ecosystems provide to local communities, livelihoods and resilient prosperity.

The discussion reinforced Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to an approach to 30x30 that protects nature, builds resilience and delivers lasting benefits for its people.

Local News

Two People Are Remanded to Prison On Firearms Charges

Two people have been remanded to His Majesty's Prison following an appearance in the magistrate's court on charges of firearms and ammunition possession.

The pair – Twini Payne and Juan Diego Garcia – of Collins were arrested last Thursday for possession of one Taurus G2 9mm pistol without being the holder of a licence for such firearm.

They were also found to be in possession of fourteen rounds of 9mm ammunition without having a licence to possess such ammunition. The possession of these items is in contravention of Section 6 (1) of the Firearm Act Chap 171 of the Revised Laws of Antigua and Barbuda.

Payne and Garcia have been remanded to prison until September 23 when the case resumes in the magistrate's court.





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BOLYON BUCKET

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\$59.99



RIDDIM BOX

-2pcs -Biscuit -Drink

\$17.99



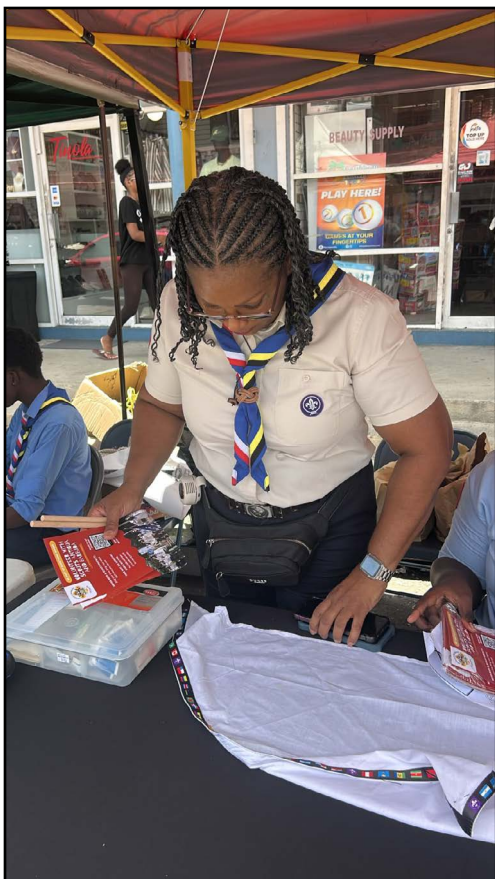


KEEP ANTIGUA CLEAN & GREEN

f @KFCANU



Regional Scouting Initiative Strengthens Foundation for Growth in Antigua and Barbuda



The Antigua and Barbuda Scout Association (ABSA) is building on the momentum generated by its recent Adults in Scouting Engagement Initiative, held from July 16–19, 2026, in partnership with the Interamerican Scout Region of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) under the Strengthening Scouting in the Caribbean Project.

The four-day regional engagement brought together Scout leaders, volunteers, community stakeholders, and regional consultants to develop practical strategies aimed at strengthening volunteer recruitment, enhancing leadership development, expanding community partnerships, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Scouting in Antigua and Barbuda.

As part of the programme, regional consultants Mark Ainsley John and

Julian Nicolás Rairán Henao paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams, Governor General and Chief Scout of Antigua and Barbuda. They were joined by Dr. Fitzmore Burns, Chairperson of the Antigua and Barbuda Scout Association, and Mrs. Patricia Salmon, Chief Commissioner, for discussions focused on the future growth of the Movement and increasing opportunities for young people across the nation.

Reflecting on the engagement, Chief Commissioner Mrs. Patricia Salmon described the visit as a valuable catalyst for the Association's ongoing development.

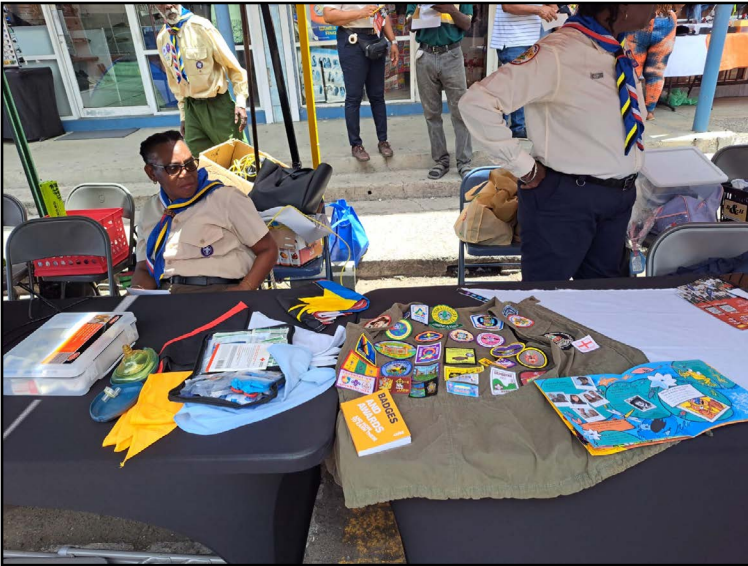
“The engagement with the Interamerican Scout Region provided our Association with practical strategies and renewed energy as we continue to strengthen Scouting in Antigua

and Barbuda. We are already moving forward with plans to increase adult volunteer recruitment, build stronger community partnerships, and further develop the leadership capacity within our Association. The knowledge and support shared during the visit will have a lasting impact on our Movement.”

One of the most visible highlights of the engagement was the Community Recruitment and Outreach Exposition held on Redcliffe Street in St. John's on July 18. Scout Groups from across Antigua showcased Scouting's programmes, values, and opportunities for young people and adult volunteers. The event attracted residents, parents, former Scouts, and prospective volunteers, generating increased public awareness and interest in the Movement.

Throughout the four-day pro-

Local News



gramme, participants also took part in information sessions for prospective volunteers, meetings with representatives from the business community and civic organizations to explore strategic partnerships, and interactive workshops for Commissioners and Scout leaders focused on volunteer recruitment, leadership development, organizational sustainability, and strategic growth.

Chairperson Dr. Fitzmore Burns noted that the engagement has laid the groundwork for the Association's next phase of development.

"The regional initiative reaffirmed that Scouting continues to play a vital role in youth development. We are grateful to the Interamerican Scout Region for its partnership and expertise, and we remain committed to implementing the recommendations that emerged from the engagement as we continue to grow and



strengthen the Movement."

The Antigua and Barbuda Scout Association extends its sincere appreciation to the Interamerican Scout Region facilitation team for their continued commitment to strengthening Scouting throughout the Caribbean.

As the Association moves forward with implementing the outcomes of

the engagement, it continues to welcome former Scouts, parents, educators, professionals, community leaders, and organizations interested in making a positive difference in the lives of young people. Adults with a passion for youth development are encouraged to volunteer with a local Scout Group or partner with the Association in support of its programmes.



**Claim Your Keys.
Secure Your Land.**






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JUNIOR CARNIVAL Postponed to Wednesday 29th July

ST JOHN'S - 1 PM

CARNIVAL CITY - FREE



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RHYTHM
of our children

 Antigua Carnival  @antiguafestivalsofficial



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW



FOR CARNIVAL 2026

VENUE ENTRY

General Admission Entrances:

- **GATE 1** - Independence Drive (Long St.)
- **GATE 2** - Old Parham Road (Roundabout)

VIP Entrance:

- **GATE 6** - Coronation Road (The Red Gate closest to the Fire Station)

PRIVATE SECURED PARKING

(\$5 - \$10)

- T. N. Kirnon School - Past Student Association
- Antigua Grammar School - JCI Antigua
- Archives - Melting Pot Rhythm Room

TICKET AGE GUIDELINES

PAID EVENTS

Children **under 12** enter FREE and must be accompanied by an adult

GATE OPENING

Gates will open **two hours** prior to the start of each event

EXIT GATE

- **GATE 3** - Old Parham Road - the small gate opposite Red Cross

Please note that wrist banding will only take place at the exit gate.

ROAD CLOSURE

The following areas will be affected:

- Cenotaph to the Roundabout
- Coronation Road
- Old Parham Road (from Antigua Grammar School westward to the Roundabout)

TICKET BOOTHS - CARNIVAL CITY

Paid Event Days - Opens at 5 pm

- BOOTH 1: Independence Drive, Roundabout
- BOOTH 2: Independence Drive, Long Street

Important Reminders

Most importantly, please be responsible and help us keep Carnival safe for everyone!

- If you see something, say something.
- Please follow all venue rules and security guidelines.
- No bottles, sharp objects, or prohibited items will be allowed inside the venue.

Let's enjoy Antigua Carnival 2026 safely and responsibly!





ANTIGUA
Carnival
2026



JULY 30TH

8:00PM @ CARNIVAL CITY

EARLY BIRD
GENERAL

\$100

RHYTHM
ROOM

\$350

ticketing

TICKETS AVAILABLE



Grenada Tourism Authority Conducts Sales Mission in Antigua to Boost Regional Travel

The Grenada Tourism Authority (GTA) is currently undertaking a strategic sales mission in Antigua and Barbuda as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen regional travel and increase visitor arrivals from one of its key Caribbean markets.

Leading the initiative on the ground is Marketing Executive, Melinda Telesford, who is engaging with key stakeholders within Antigua and Barbuda's travel trade sector to promote Grenada as a premier tourism destination and encourage greater travel between the two islands.

According to Telesford, Antigua has been identified as an important market for Grenada, particularly as the destination continues to experience growth in visitor arrivals.

"We have seen an increased number of visitor arrivals in Grenada so far for the year, and we are optimistic that Grenada is growing in popularity as a destination of interest among Antiguan," Telesford said.

She explained that the sales mission includes a series of meetings with local travel professionals aimed at strengthening partnerships, increasing destination awareness, and providing stakeholders with updated information about Grenada's tourism offerings.

"During this period, we are conducting a series of meetings with the local travel trade as well as collaborative initiatives with airline partner, LIAT Air," she added.

As part of the mission, the GTA joined forces with LIAT Air over the weekend to participate in the popular Breakfast Inclusive event in Antigua. The partnership provided an opportunity to directly engage with consumers and promote both Grenada's tourism product and the convenient airlift options available through LIAT Air.

Representatives spent the event inter-





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Local News

acting with patrons, highlighting Grenada's attractions, accommodations, cultural experiences, and accessibility from Antigua.

"We are happy to engage with hundreds of patrons at the event, talking about how to get to Grenada and the many exciting things that can be done while in Grenada, especially the highly anticipated Spicemas, which will be happening from August 6 to 13 this year," Telesford said.

Spicemas, Grenada's premier carnival celebration, continues to attract thousands of regional and international visitors annually with its vibrant blend of music, culture, pageantry, and festivities. The festival remains one of the island's most significant tourism drivers and forms a key part of the GTA's promotional push across the Caribbean.

However, Telesford emphasized that Grenada's appeal extends well beyond the carnival season, with a robust year-round calendar of events designed to attract visitors with diverse interests.

"For persons who are not able to travel for Spicemas this year, Grenada offers a healthy events calendar with something exciting to do in almost every month of the year," she said. "Some of these include our Dive and Conservation Festival in October and the Lobster and Lambi Festival in January."

She further revealed that Grenada will be introducing a new event to its cultural and tourism calendar later this year.

"In November this year, we will also be hosting our inaugural Flower Festival, having won 19 Gold Medals at

the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show in London," Telesford stated.

The new festival is expected to showcase Grenada's rich biodiversity, vibrant horticultural heritage and internationally acclaimed floriculture sector, further diversifying the destination's tourism offerings.

The Antigua sales mission forms part of the Grenada Tourism Authority's broader strategy to expand its footprint within the Caribbean market, foster stronger tourism partnerships, and drive increased intra-Caribbean travel through targeted marketing initiatives.

With improved connectivity, growing visitor interest and an expanding events calendar, the GTA remains confident that Grenada will continue to attract more travellers from Antigua and across the region in the months ahead.



PDV Caribe
Antigua and Barbuda Ltd.

THE PDV HOUR

MONDAYS
11AM - 12NOON

MRS. JELLETTE RALPH
(JELLY BEANS)

ABRSC Says Emancipation Is Not Just 'Another' Celebration

Several activities are taking place this week as the Antigua and Barbuda Reparation Support Commission (ABRSC) seeks to highlight the historical, social and cultural significance of the observance of Emancipation Day, Saturday August 1st, 2026.

A spokesman for ABRSC said Emancipation is not just a historical milestone—it is a living, powerful reminder of the courage, resistance, and resilience of our African ancestors.

“It marks 192 years since our ancestors were legally freed from the chains of chattel slavery, but it also reminds us that the work of liberation—mental, cultural, and economic—continues.

Our celebrations are both an act of remembrance and a recommitment to nation-building, unity, and collective pride in our African heritage,” the spokesman noted.

The activities for this year’s commemoration start on Wednesday July 29th with a programme *Uhuru* – which has been described as a *spiritual awakening* featuring fashion display, spoken words, and much more. The programme will be aired on both ABS TV and Point TV.

On Thursday, ABRSC is inviting members of the public, members of the clergy and their congregations to participate in an interfaith gathering facilitated by internationally acclaimed cultural advocate and educator Kim Poole. This will take place in the Mini Conference Room at the Multi-Purpose Cultural Centre at Perry Bay starting at 10 am.

“This gathering is designed to bring together members of the faith community to dialogue on critical issues of emancipation, reparatory justice, reconciliation and healing and will proceed to the opening of the ‘Ukumbusho Exhibition’, which brings the Cultural Reparations Framework into practice through memory, interfaith



healing and the reparations we owe ourselves.

“The main facilitator for the gathering will be Kim Pool, Executive Director of the Teaching Artist Institute (TAI),” the spokesman revealed.

This Friday will see the 18th Annual Watchnight Gathering slated to take place at the Botanical Gardens near the East Bus Station. The spokesman described the **Watchnight Gathering** as a sacred, deeply moving tradition rooted in the historical moment when enslaved Africans waited for the stroke of midnight, symbolizing their freedom.

“Today, we honour that moment with internationally acclaimed performer and educator Kim Poole, and hear a drumming, libation ceremonies, iron band rhythms, spoken word, and cul-

tural expression.

“This year, it takes on even greater significance with an expected powerful message from renowned Caribbean historian, Professor Hillary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies and Chair of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, who is currently leading a CRC delegation to meet with British Parliamentarians, the church, civil society organization in effort to continue our advocacy for reparatory justice,” the spokesman revealed.

On Saturday August First, Emancipation Day, ABRSC is inviting everyone to a church service at the Greenbay Moravian Church starting at 7 o’clock in the morning. Other events are planned throughout the day to mark the historic observance.

PUBLIC ADVISORY - Access to St. John's Cathedral



Due to ongoing restoration work in the southern courtyard of St. John's Cathedral, members of the public attending the funeral service for the late Gladstone Joseph on Tuesday, 28 July, are advised that access to the Cath-

edral will be via the North Gate only.

We kindly ask all attendees to follow the designated entry route and any directions provided.

We apologise for any inconvenience and thank you for your cooperation and understanding.



ANTIGUA
Carnival
2026

Kindy
FABULOUS



JULY 30TH

8:00PM @ CARNIVAL CITY

EARLY BIRD
GENERAL

\$100

RHYTHM
ROOM

\$350



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
REPARATIONS SUPPORT COMMISSION

EMANCIPATION
OBSERVANCES



JULY 24TH
AFRICA DRESS DAY



JULY 29TH
UHURU – TV PROGRAMME
Spiritual awakening



JULY 31ST
WATCHNIGHT GATHERING

"A Night of Reflection, Remembrance and Renewal"



AUGUST 1ST
EMANCIPATION DAY



• EMANCIPATION BREAKFAST SERVICE –
GREENBAY MORAVIAN CHURCH **6:00 AM**



EMANCIPATION VILLAGE –
VC BIRD BUST **10:00 AM – 5:00 PM**



HONOURING OUR PAST • CELEBRATING OUR FREEDOM • BUILDING OUR FUTURE



**SOCA VILLAN - YOUNG VICE - KID FRESH - EMPRESS - MENACE - ZAMONI
ISLAND PRINCE - YOUNG LYRICS - VICIOUS - ARLEN SEATON - NIKKI NOOKS - DMITRIB
DJ QUEST - DJ ALTITUDE**

HOST : IBIS AND SUPA DYMOND

JULY 30TH

8:00PM @ CARNIVAL CITY

EARLY BIRD
GENERAL

\$100

RHYTHM
ROOM

\$350

ticketing
TICKETS AVAILABLE



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA REPARATIONS SUPPORT COMMISSION.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
CELEBRATING 192ND ANNIVERSARY
OF EMANCIPATION.

EMANCIPATION WATCHNIGHT → 2026 ←



PERFORMANCES:

- Nyabinghi Drummers
- Wadadli Vybez Band
- Calypso Renditions
- Antigua Dance Academy
- Da Vibz Steel Band
- Point Iron Band
- spoken word and Anastis storytelling, the Point Iron Band so much more

Experience an unforgettable night
of music... culture... history...
and pride.

Be inspired by internationally
acclaimed performer and
educator Kim Pole and
hear a powerful message
from renowned Caribbean
Historian Professor Hilary
Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of
The University of the
West Indies and Chair of
the CARICOM Reparations



EMANCIPATION WATCHNIGHT 2026

FRIDAY, JULY 31 | 8:00 P.M. | BOTANICAL GARDENS

FREE ADMISSION

Regional News



'AI not the problem' - Artificial intelligence expert warns CXC preparing students for 'a world that no longer exists'

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) is preparing students for "a world that no longer exists", by scrapping traditional School-Based Assessments (SBA) over artificial intelligence, says AI expert Christopher Christie, who argues that the move takes Caribbean education backwards.

For nearly half a century, the SBA has been a cornerstone of Caribbean secondary education, challenging students to research, analyse and apply what they have learnt beyond the confines of an examination room.

Now, facing what it describes as the growing threat posed by generative artificial intelligence (AI), CXC has announced that traditional SBAs in most non-practical Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) subjects will be phased out and replaced by Paper 032, completed under supervised examination conditions.

The changes will begin for CAPE candidates in 2027 and become mandatory for CSEC students a year later.

The decision has ignited one of the most significant debates to confront Caribbean education in years: Should schools attempt to outsmart artificial intelligence, or should they teach students to use it responsibly?

CXC says the answer lies in protecting the credibility of its qualifications.

In announcing the reforms, Registrar and Chief Executive Officer Dr Wayne Wesley stressed that preserving the integrity of CXC certifications remained paramount, describing the move as a necessary response to the rapid growth of generative AI and its potential to undermine confidence in coursework completed outside the classroom.

"The integrity of our qualifications is not negotiable," Wesley said, adding that while CXC recognised the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, it also had a responsibility to ensure that qualifications continued to represent a student's own knowledge,



skills and abilities.

Christie does not dispute that responsibility.

"I understand the concern. Academic integrity matters, and a CXC qualification must remain credible," he wrote in a strongly worded editorial that has added fresh momentum to the regional debate.

His disagreement lies elsewhere.

"The problem is not AI," Christie argues.

"The problem is that our method of assessment has not evolved quickly enough to accommodate AI."

That distinction forms the foundation of his criticism.

Rather than viewing artificial intelligence as something to be shut out of the classroom, Christie believes education systems should recognise that it has already become part of students' everyday reality and redesign assessment to reflect that reality.

"Placing students in more examination rooms, under more controlled conditions, will not prepare them for the world they are entering," he wrote.

"In the real world, our young people will work with artificial intelligence, automation, digital research tools and intelligent systems. Their employers

will not remove the technology, hand them an examination paper and ask them to solve every problem from memory. They will be expected to use technology intelligently."

His argument extends beyond CXC's latest reforms.

It raises a broader question confronting schools, universities and examination bodies across the globe: How do educators preserve academic integrity while preparing students for workplaces increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence?

That conversation is already taking place in Jamaica.

Recent research by University of Technology Professor Paul Golding, previously reported by The Gleaner, found that artificial intelligence has become deeply embedded in learning, with almost all tertiary students surveyed and the overwhelming majority of secondary school students using AI tools to assist with academic tasks.

Golding argued that education itself would inevitably have to change, suggesting that what is taught, how it is taught and the methods used to assess learning can no longer remain static in an AI-driven world.

Christie agrees that assessment must evolve.

Where he parts company with CXC is over how that evolution should happen.

Instead of abolishing the traditional SBA, he proposes transforming it into what he calls an 'AI-Transparent SBA', an assessment model that embraces artificial intelligence while making its use visible, accountable and educationally meaningful.

Under the model, students would openly declare whether they used AI, identify the platform used, and explain exactly how it assisted their work.

Rather than submitting only a polished final assignment, they would also provide evidence of how the project developed through research notes, outlines, early drafts, teacher feedback

Regional News

PAGE 21

and personal reflections.

The completed assignment would then be followed by a brief oral defence during which teachers could question students about their research, reasoning and conclusions.

According to Christie, a student who genuinely understands an assignment can readily explain the decisions made throughout the research process. A student who simply copied and submitted AI-generated material would struggle to do so.

He also proposes supervised classroom activities linked to the assignment, allowing teachers to compare independently completed work with performance under examination conditions.

Together, he believes, these measures would provide a stronger safeguard against academic dishonesty, rather than eliminating coursework altogether.

But Christie goes even further.

Instead of merely allowing AI, he believes students should be assessed on their ability to challenge it.

Imagine a history student being asked not simply to write about the Morant Bay Rebellion, but to analyse an AI-generated account of the event, identify factual inaccuracies or bias, and verify the information using credible historical sources.

An English student could critique and improve an AI-written essay.

A principles of business candidate might evaluate an AI-generated strategy for a Caribbean company, explaining why some recommendations fail to reflect local realities.

Even mathematics, Christie argues, presents opportunities for deeper learning, with students identifying errors in AI-generated solutions before demonstrating the correct method.

"The student who can question that information, verify it and make a sound decision has demonstrated a higher level of ability than the student who simply memorises facts for an examination," he argues.

His position aligns with a growing international conversation about respon-

sible AI use in education.

UNESCO has encouraged education systems to develop students' understanding of artificial intelligence, including its opportunities, limitations, ethics and risks, rather than attempting to exclude it from classrooms altogether.

Christie believes the Caribbean has an opportunity to become a leader in that conversation rather than a follower.

He also cautions against relying heavily on AI-detection software, arguing that such systems can produce false positives and fail to distinguish between genuine student work and AI-generated content.

As an example, he points to a research paper he completed in 2016, years before generative AI became publicly available, which he said was recently identified by modern AI-detection software as being 98 per cent AI-generated.

"The strongest protection is not detection software," Christie wrote.

"It is assessment design."

He acknowledges concerns that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have equal access to artificial intelligence tools.

Rather than abandoning AI-aware assessment, however, he believes governments and schools should provide equitable access to approved platforms, while ensuring teachers receive the training needed to guide responsible use.

"Equity does not mean preventing ev-

ery student from moving forward," he argues.

"It means ensuring that no student is left behind."

Ultimately, Christie is urging CXC to pause the wholesale removal of traditional SBAs and, instead, pilot what he describes as an AI-Transparent SBA across selected CSEC and CAPE subjects before implementing permanent changes.

Such a pilot, he says, should evaluate teacher workload, student performance, academic integrity and the effectiveness of oral defences and supervised checkpoints, while involving educators, universities, employers and technology specialists from across the Caribbean.

His closing message is directed as much to policymakers as to educators.

"We cannot prepare students for 2035 using an assessment philosophy designed for a world that no longer exists."

Whether CXC ultimately revisits its decision remains uncertain.

What is beyond dispute is that artificial intelligence has already transformed the classroom. The challenge now confronting Caribbean education is not whether AI should be part of learning, but how students can be taught to use it responsibly while preserving the integrity of the qualifications that will shape their futures. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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Regional News

COVID relief fraudster caught in Ja, extradited to US

A Jamaican woman who was on the United States (US) Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Most Wanted Fraudster list has been extradited from Jamaica to face charges arising from an alleged scheme to fraudulently obtain more than US\$32 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds.

Forty-one-year-old Elaine Angene Escoe was returned to South Florida on Saturday after being apprehended in Jamaica following a joint investigation by US and Jamaican law-enforcement authorities.

Escoe was indicted in 2025 on charges including conspiracy to commit wire fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and multiple counts of wire fraud and money laundering.

According to US authorities, she failed to appear in court after a federal arrest warrant was issued in May 2025 and fled to Jamaica, where she was later located by the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) acting on intelligence provided by the FBI.

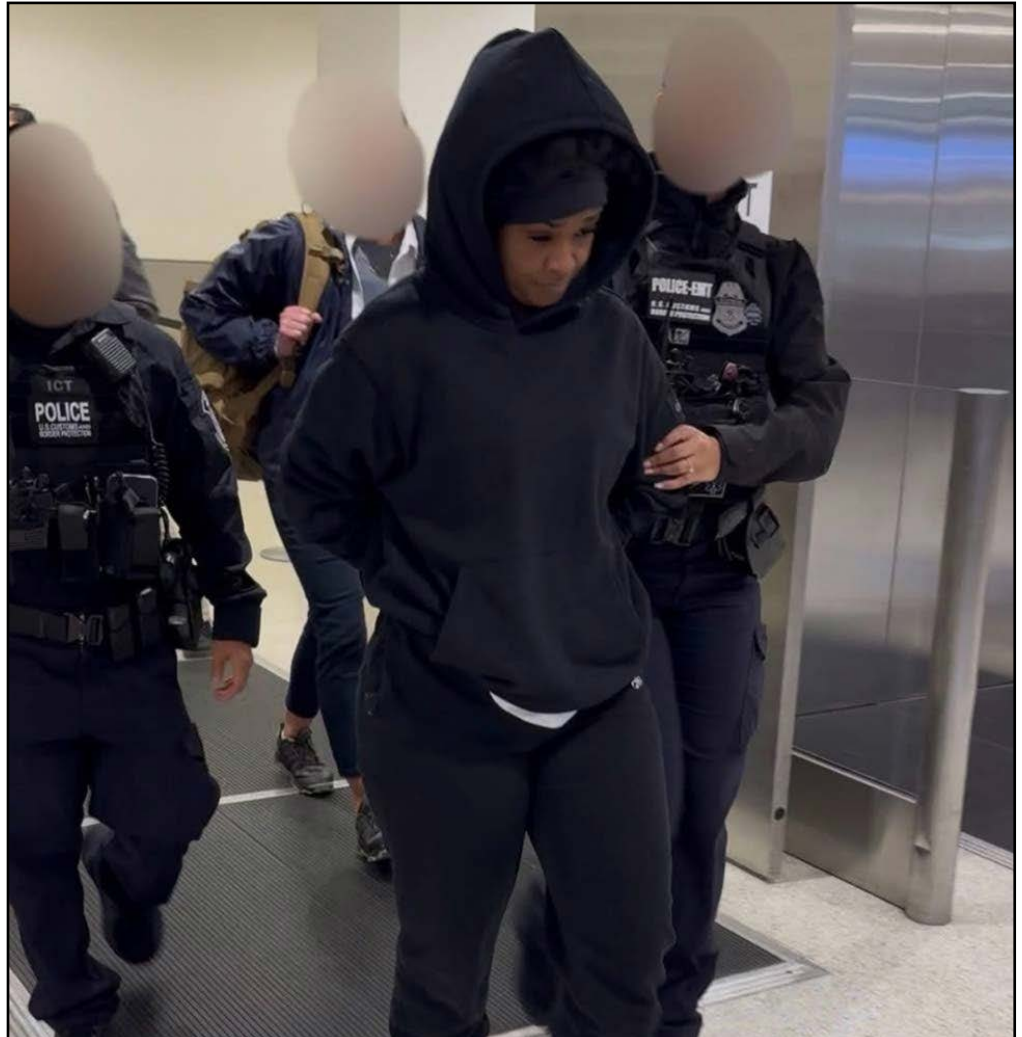
Her return to the US was coordinated by the FBI, the US Marshals Service, the US Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service at the US Embassy in Kingston, the JCF, and the Jamaica Fugitive Apprehension Team.

Acting US Attorney General Todd Blanche said Escoe allegedly stole critical relief funds intended for legitimate businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"She fled the country believing she could escape justice, but ultimately could not. Those who exploit taxpayer-funded programmes will be held accountable ... no matter how long it takes or where they attempt to hide," Blanche said.

Assistant Attorney General Colin McDonald said Escoe's arrest demonstrates that "no one is beyond the reach of American justice".

FBI Director Kash Patel described the arrest as another success for the agency's Most Wanted Fraudster initiative, noting that Escoe was captured in Ja-



maica while allegedly living under the false identity of 'Harley Newman'.

Patel said Escoe is the fourth person on the FBI's Most Wanted Fraudster list to be captured in the past five weeks and one of more than 30 high-value fugitives returned to the US since June.

According to court documents, Escoe and her alleged co-conspirators submitted fraudulent applications seeking more than US\$32 million through several federal pandemic-relief programmes, including the Paycheck Protection Program, Restaurant Revitalization Fund, Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, and Economic Injury Disaster Loan programme.

Prosecutors allege that the applications falsely represented the existence, payrolls, revenues, and operations of businesses in order to qualify for fed-

eral assistance.

Investigators said the group created fake tax returns, fabricated bank records and other fraudulent financial documents to support the applications. Some claims were allegedly submitted for businesses controlled by the conspirators, while others were filed on behalf of third parties in exchange for kickbacks of up to 50 per cent of the loan proceeds.

The authorities allege that the funds were later laundered among members of the conspiracy.

Escoe is the final defendant charged in the case. Five of her alleged co-conspirators have already been convicted or pleaded guilty and are serving prison sentences ranging from 42 months to 235 months. (CMC)

Haitian police search for kidnapped senior gov't official amid election efforts

Haitian police are searching for the country's Chief of Staff to the Minister of National Education, Ecclésiaste Thélémaque, who was kidnapped over the weekend.

Police said that the abduction took place as Thélémaque was returning home on Friday and that so far the kidnappers have not yet made any ransom demand.

Police also said that on Saturday, businessman Clifford Handal and his father escaped being kidnapped in Delmas 33, near the Peace Hospital.

The authorities said that armoured vehicle thwarted an attack by a group of heavily armed individuals with initial reports indicating that the assailants had opened fire repeatedly on the vehicle carrying the two men.

The police have also announced a series of measures taken by the High Command to strengthen security throughout the country where criminal gangs have taken control of a significant portion of the capital, Port au Prince.

The Nippes Departmental Directorate said that it has welcomed 30 new police officers from the 36th graduating class of the Haitian National Police (PNH) and that officials took the opportunity to inform the new officers of their assigned locations, particularly to police stations that need additional personnel.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé has reiterated his government's commitment to strengthening the security, institutional and logistical conditions essential for the success of the electoral process as Haiti prepares to hold elections for the first time since 2016.

The prime minister, who chaired a high-level strategic session dedicated to the implementation of the electoral decree, assured that all necessary



resources would be mobilised to provide the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) with the support required to fulfill its mission in the best interests of the nation.

The event over the weekend was held under the theme, "The Involvement of the Public Administration in the Application of the Electoral Decree", and brought together members of the government, senior officials of the public administration, CEP President Jacques Desrosiers, as well as representatives of the national security forces, and international partners committed to supporting the democratic process.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Haiti, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, participated in this session and reiterated the United Nations' support for the Haitian authorities in organising the elections.

The Government said that the initiative reflects its determination to ensure a coordinated mobilisation of the entire state apparatus, in strict compliance with constitutional and institutional prerogatives, to support the CEP in fulfilling its mission and to create the necessary conditions for holding free, credible, transparent elections that meet democratic requirements.

In his address, Fils-Aimé reaffirmed his government's commitment to supporting the CEP in organising the upcoming general elections in Haiti.

He emphasised that while the organisation of elections falls constitutionally under the purview of the CEP, it is first and foremost a national responsibility that involves all state institutions and the nation's vital forces.

"We understand that organising elections, although entrusted to the CEP, represents a mission of national importance that demands the firm, coordinated and responsible commitment of the entire state.

"Democracy is not built in isolation; it is the collective work of a people and its institutions, united around a common ambition: to rebuild national trust and guarantee the sovereign expression of the Haitian people," Fils-Aimé said.

He urged all stakeholders to seize this historic moment with responsibility, dedication and patriotism, in order to create the necessary conditions for holding free, transparent, inclusive, and credible elections, capable of ushering in a new institutional beginning for the country. (CMC)

Oil price dives as US and Iran pause attacks



The price of oil has fallen sharply on hopes that a pause in attacks between the US and Iran could help lead to a resolution to the conflict.

Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, sank more than 9% to below \$88 a barrel at one point, marking a sharp turnaround from last week when it had risen above \$100.

The fall came after the US ambassador to the UN said attacks on Iran had been halted for a second night in a row to give “talks some space”.

An Iranian army spokesperson said on Sunday that Tehran had halted “retaliatory” attacks in the region in response.

The outbreak of the Iran war triggered a sharp rise in oil prices as the conflict led to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route which usually carries about 20% of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

When Iran and the US signed a memorandum of understanding in June to halt military operations and reopen the strait, the price of oil fell back to pre-war levels of around \$70 a barrel.

However, the collapse of the ceasefire earlier this month reignited fears over global energy supplies and pushed the oil price back up.

Last week it hit \$100 a barrel for the first time since May, with added concerns coming after Houthi militia in Yemen attacked oil tankers in the Red Sea, threatening a key export route that Saudi Arabia had used to bypass the Strait of Hormuz.

A line chart showing how Brent crude oil prices have fluctuated in the month since 29 June 2026. The price rose rapidly from just over \$70 to above \$80 from early July and peaked at just over \$100 towards the end of the month.

The current rate as of 11:30am on 27 Jul 2026 is \$88.95.”

Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club, said markets were remaining “cautious given the twists and turns during this conflict”.

Despite the sharp fall in crude, “there is still significant uncertainty baked into these prices and a reticence about whether negotiations will lead to a lasting breakthrough,” she added.

The conflict between the US and Iran

- and its impact on oil - has pushed up the cost of fuel such as petrol and diesel in many countries.

This often has knock-on effects on other prices, such as food, as businesses pass on the higher costs they are facing to customers, and this can push up the rate of inflation.

Higher inflation raises the possibility that central banks will increase interest rates in an attempt to keep price rises under control.

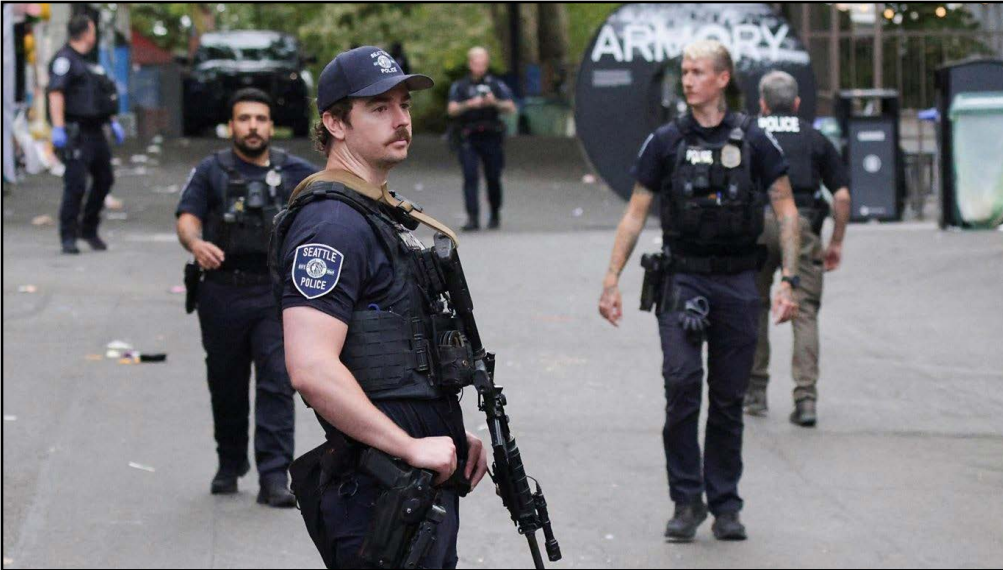
In June, the European Central Bank opted to lift its key interest rate for the eurozone for the first time in almost three years, noting that the conflict was “generating inflation pressures”.

Before the Iran war began, there had been expectations that the Bank of England would cut rates this year.

However, no cuts are now expected and financial markets are currently predicting a rate rise towards the end of the year.

The Bank of England holds its latest interest rate-setting meeting this week, when it is expected to keep its key rate unchanged at 3.75%. (BBC)

Three dead and several injured in shooting at food festival near Seattle's Space Needle



Three people have been killed and several others injured following a shooting at a food festival near the Space Needle in Seattle on Sunday.

Police said there were two suspects who were shooting at each other. One of the suspects is in custody and the other still at large, although officials have said there is no threat to public.

Shots rang out at around 18:00 local time (01:00 GMT) at one of the city's most popular tourist spots and as the annual Bite of Seattle food festival drew even more people to the downtown area.

Two deaths were confirmed at the scene, and one person died later in hospital. Those injured include a two-year-old boy, officials said.

Videos shared online showed people taking shelter inside the city's iconic Space Needle.

People could be seen crouched on

the ground, taking cover behind pillars and shelves of merchandise in the Space Needle's lobby during the shooting.

Faith Adia Hunter told Associated Press that one of the shooters was near her and her friends when they heard the shots, sending them fleeing for shelter in the Seattle Children's Museum.

"We were right next to him when it started so we took off running," she said. "So we took off running too into the building with the crowd."

The Seattle Police Department said an investigation remains ongoing and urged the public to avoid the area.

Mayor Katie Wilson said in a statement that she wanted to "thank the Seattle police officers who responded to the scene and took a suspect into custody".

She had originally announced two suspects had been taken into custody

before updating her statement later on Sunday evening.

Four of the injured were taken to hospital in a stable condition, while a fifth chose not to, the fire department said.

Representatives for Seattle and Washington state have condemned the shooting as an act of "senseless violence".

"My prayers are with the families of the victims, and the responders as they work to keep people safe," Washington Governor Bob Ferguson said on social media.

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, who represents Seattle, added: "Our hearts go out to all those impacted by this senseless violence," she wrote on social media.

"We are in close touch with Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson and Governor Bob Ferguson, and co-ordinating across multiple levels of government to get updates on the situation."

Wilson also condemned the shooting as an "act of horrific violence".

"Impacted families are living through the worst moment of their lives, and an entire community is trying to understand how a gathering built around culture, connection, and joy ended in gunfire."

"Tonight, our attention belongs to the people whose lives were taken, those fighting to recover, and the families beside them," she added.

"Seattle grieves with you, and we will stand with you in the difficult days ahead." (BBC)


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UK funeral director faces jail in bodies scandal



A British funeral director faced prison Monday over a scandal that saw bodies left uncremated while relatives were handed other people's ashes, sparking calls for better regulation of the industry.

Four of the fraud charges involved falsely presenting ashes to women as the remains of their unborn children.

An ex-employee described Robert Bush's funeral parlour as "something from a horror scene", prosecutor Chris Paxton said at the start of a five-day sentencing hearing.

Police who searched his premises after a tip-off found 31 bodies in a cold storage area that should have been cremated months earlier, including a stillborn baby that had been there for almost two years.

They also found more than 100 sets of ashes.

"There were bodies stored on the racks on both sides of the room," the lawyer said at Hull Crown Court in northeast England.

"The vast majority were uncovered and in varying states of decomposition," he added.

The 48-year-old previously pleaded guilty to 67 offences spanning 12 years and affecting hundreds of victims.

Jasmine Beverley, whose son Sunny was stillborn in May 2022, said Bush appeared "lovely" and presented himself as "very respectful".

"It was a shock to learn what had actually been going on behind the closed doors," she told BBC radio, adding Sunny's remains were found in a brown envelope on the floor even though she believed he had been cremated.

"I discovered that he was still in there

almost two years after we'd had the funeral," she said, describing the discovery as "distressing".

Beverley and her husband and a number of other families are campaigning for changes to funeral parlour regulation.

Bush, who ran Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull, was trusted by bereaved families but mistreated them on an "almost industrial scale", Paxton said.

Police began investigating in March 2024 after being contacted by someone over concerns for "the deceased" at the business.

The sentencing hearing is to hear statements from over 100 victims.

Bush has admitted dozens of charges, including preventing lawful and decent burial, theft, and fraud. (AFP)

France says monster fire that forced 220,000 people to flee has stopped growing

Fire crews and planes wrestled Monday to bring a monster wildfire under control in southwest France before a forecast jump in temperatures complicates the massive firefighting effort against a blaze that has burned an area four times the size of Paris.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said the fire had stopped growing, a first glimmer of hope since the inferno forced a staggering 220,000 people to flee in the region around the city of Bordeaux.

But with woodlands still smoldering, the minister cautioned that the battle isn't yet won.

"It hasn't progressed during the night," Nunez said. "We have to remain very concentrated, very determined, to go at any moment."

He spoke after French President Emmanuel Macron held a crisis meeting Monday focused on the blaze in the Gironde region and wildfires that fire crews continue to tackle elsewhere.

The Gironde prefecture said the situation overnight remained "globally stable" — a change from previous days when officials said flames had crept to within 15 kilometers (10 miles) of the outskirts of Bordeaux, a historic city of 268,000 people, and generated self-feeding firestorms with lightning bolts that ignited more blazes.

No new evacuations were announced Monday. But with France about to enter its peak August tourist season, Gironde authorities worked to keep vacationers away, banning holiday camps for children and for people with disabilities. Nunez also urged people to avoid the region, popular for its Atlantic beaches and some of France's largest woodlands.

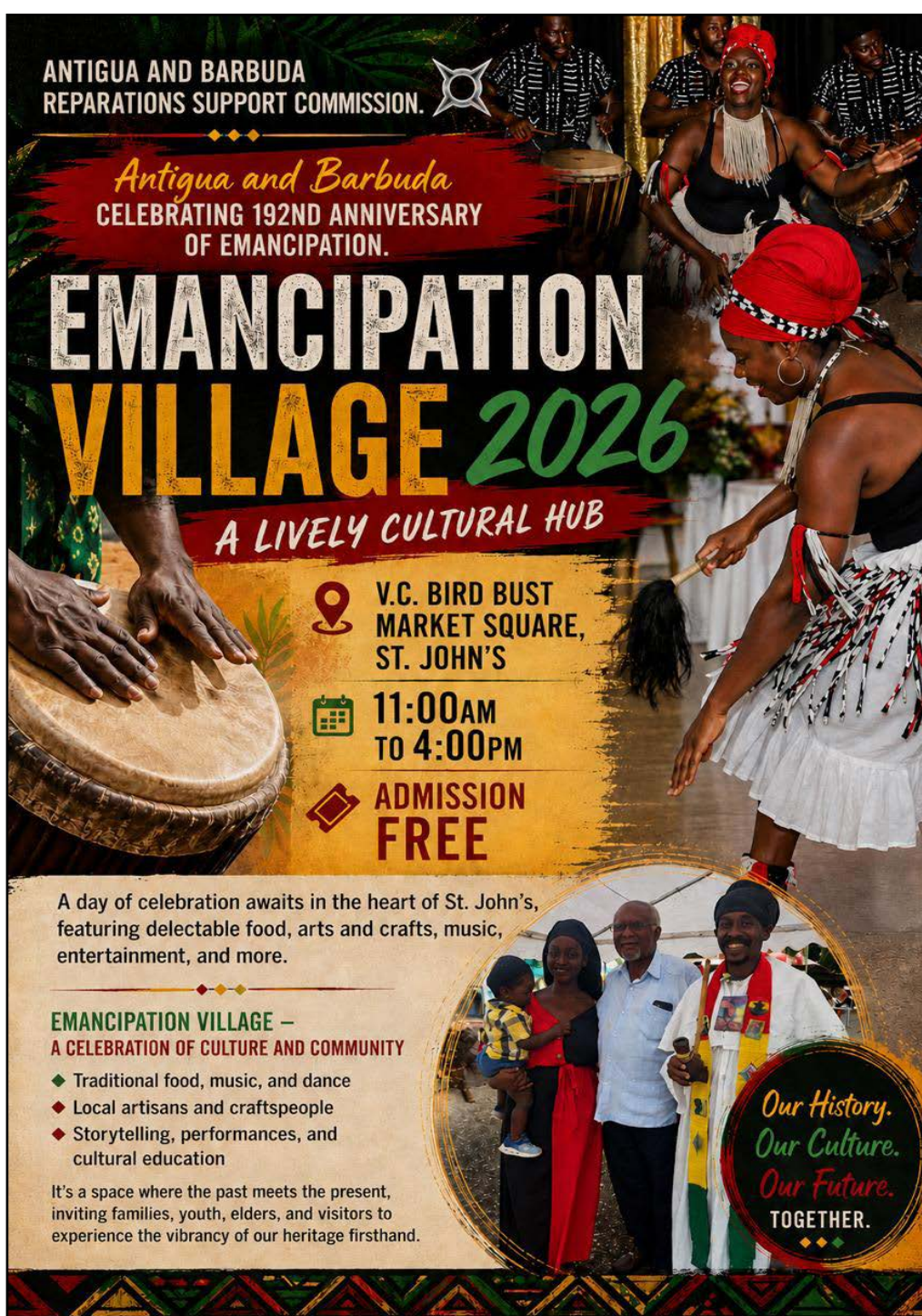
In the adjacent southwestern Landes region, where hundreds of firefighters have been making progress against another virulent but smaller fire, the

prefecture said some rain fell overnight and described the conditions as "favorable" for firefighting but also cautioned that they could change.

With thousands of firefighters on the ground and rotations of water- and retardant-dropping aircraft in the air, it became a race against time before a

forecast surge in temperatures from Tuesday that could make fighting flames more difficult.

"We know temperatures are going to climb again, that we'll enter a phase of intense heat and so we really have to remain very cautious," Nunez said. "As long as the fire isn't contained, the



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situation remains unfavorable.”

Crews using earth movers tore up strips of forest and scrubland to create barren spaces, intended to stop fires from spreading. Farmers were keeping fire crews supplied with water, transporting it to them in tanks.

Around a dozen countries have provided planes, helicopters, firefighters and other assistance to both France and Spain, which is also fighting unprecedented blazes. All told, fires in the two countries have forced more than 330,000 people to flee.

Macron didn't immediately comment after the government crisis meeting he presided over. In a weekend post on X, he pledged long-term support for fire-hit communities, saying: “We will rebuild, we will repair and we will be present for as long as necessary.”

In Spain, wildfires have burned out of control around Madrid and in the Valencia region. Authorities evacuated 76,000 people and confined 30,000 others to their homes.

In both Spain and France, the exceptional scale of the fires — fueled by heat waves that hit especially hard and early this year, making forests and scrubland tinder-dry — are driving calls for stronger action against climate change.

“What we are experiencing is not a series of isolated incidents. It is the consequence of a climate emergency that is making wildfires even more violent, heat waves more frequent,” Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said.

A fire raging in hilly, rural terrain in Ávila, west of Madrid, has become Spain's largest on record, scorching 500 square kilometers (193 square miles), the government said. That's five times the size of Barcelona.

Fires have burned 153 square kilometers (590 square miles) this year in Spain — six times the area scorched by blazes in the first half of 2025, said Sara Aagesen, the ecology minister.

The minister said that another heat wave forecast from Tuesday — which

would be Spain's fourth so far this year — could ratchet up the fire danger.

Evacuees are fretting about what they'll find when they're allowed to return.

“It looked like the apocalypse. You couldn't see anything. Everything was covered in ash,” said Rocío Domínguez, who evacuated with her dog, Simba, from Chapinería, west of Madrid.

“We don't know when we get to the town, if we'll have half the house burned down or we'll have it intact or we won't have a house,” she said. “All the clothes, all the memories, everything.”

A wildfire driven by strong winds broke out on Sunday afternoon near Peschici, in Italy's southern Puglia region, burning pine forest and scrub and forcing the evacuation of about 300 tourists from beaches and campgrounds, authorities said.

The Coast Guard evacuated tourists by sea to nearby Vieste, where authorities opened temporary shelters.

Three Canadair water-bombing planes and fire crews on the ground continued Monday to battle the blaze, which revived memories of devastating wildfires that hit the same coastal area in 2007. (AP)

VACANCY

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Blackhawks capture second Parish League title of the season

The PIC Insurance Liberta Blackhawks have captured their second title in the 2026 Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League domestic season.

The Blackhawks were victorious in their fourth and final Parish League competition of the season by pulling off a commanding 96-run victory over Police in the final of the Dave Joseph limited-overs championship at Ball Beef in Liberta.

Rahkeem “Jimbo” Cornwall slammed a century to power the Blackhawks to an impressive 267 for six off 25 overs.

Cornwall hammered 107, Wilden Cornwall struck 69, and Tyrone Payne chipped in with 30. Off-spinner Shamar Pereira claimed two for 20.

In reply, the Police were restricted to 171 for eight off their allotted 25 overs. Jeron Jones cracked 54, Damon Valentine hit 32, and Vincent Shadrach Jr. chipped in with 30. Ian Gore grabbed three for 27.

The Liberta Blackhawks won their first Parish League title of the season when they dethroned back-to-back winners Rising Sun to become the new champions of the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League

Sir Vivian Richards Thursday League T20 competition.

The Blackhawks recorded a 32-run victory against Rising Sun, who won the contest during the previous two years, in the 2026 final at the Rising Sun playing field in St. John’s on Thursday, July 2.

Police beat the Liberta Blackhawks in the final to win the Curtly Ambrose limited overs title, while Mahico won this year’s Sir Richie Richardson limited overs championship in the other two Parish League competitions this season.



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Infantino accuses World Cup critics of spreading hate in open letter

GENEVA (Reuters) - FIFA President Gianni Infantino has hit back at critics of the World Cup, accusing them of spreading hate and false narratives while defending the tournament as a success that celebrated unity, safety, and inclusion.

In an open letter published on Monday, Infantino, 56, said detractors had overlooked the joy and togetherness experienced by millions of fans around the world who witnessed the tournament, won by Spain and staged across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

“Sorry that you were so consumed by hate and criticism that you missed it all,” the FIFA leader wrote, addressing his comments to “those behind their pens and papers, behind their screens spreading hate and false rumours.”

FIFA and Infantino faced criticism during the World Cup for Iran team officials, a Somali referee and fans being denied entry to the United States of America (USA); alleged political influence by US President Donald Trump in letting Folarin Balogun avoid a ban for a red card; unprecedented high ticket prices and commercialized breaks in play midway through each half of all 104 games.

“Every city was packed with fans from all around the globe,” Infantino wrote. “While they celebrated, you were busy planting seeds of hate.”

“While you hide, we are exploring the streets of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, talking with fans, engaging with people, and ensuring everyone’s safety.”

Infantino has an increasingly tenuous relationship with media during the 11th year of his presidency. His eve-of-tournament news conference in Mexico City was his first with a full gathering of international media since March 2023.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during a news conference at the stadium in Mexico City, Wednesday, June 10, 2026, a day before the opening FIFA World Cup match between Mexico and South Africa. (AP)

The previous such news conference in Rwanda, after his reelection by acclaim from FIFA member federations, saw Infantino ask his audience, “Why are you so mean?”

In Mexico City last month, Infantino suggested critics should “chill, relax.” And he’s coming under scrutiny from some in the US Congress. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, sent Infantino a letter on Sunday seeking documents detailing ties between FIFA and the Trump administration. A representative for FIFA didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter.

Iran’s ability to play at least three games in the USA was a key pretournament issue, and the squad made a late switch to a training camp in Tijuana, Mexico, instead of Tucson, Arizona.

“Iran entered the United States without incident or conflict,” Infantino noted in his statement. “While you spread hatred, we worked tirelessly to unite

two countries at war.”

Fans denied visas to enter the USA included Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, the celebrated statue supporter of Congo which was dealing with an Ebola virus outbreak. He attended one game in Mexico.

“You mentioned the few people denied visas and overlooked the millions who were approved, from all parts of the world,” Infantino wrote. “Countries facing serious health issues or other challenges were granted visas.”

On fallout from the red card for USA forward Balogun, Infantino claimed “subsequent decisions not to ban players in certain situations are routine.”

FIFA did not overturn Balogun’s red card, which does occur in domestic club competitions, but instead took the more unusual step of deferring the one-game ban for a probationary period. FIFA has yet to publish the written verdict of its disciplinary judge.



Lyles eases injury fears after cramp halts 200-meter run

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Noah Lyles gave fans a fright at the USA national championships on Sunday when he pulled up suffering from leg cramps down the final straight of the 200 metres final but the American later played down the issue.

All appeared to be business as usual for world champion Lyles around the turn until he stopped short and grabbed his leg, drawing audible gasps from the crowd at Icahn Stadium.

But he was all smiles as he walked up to reporters after finishing last in 50.88 seconds, explaining that his left hamstring had begun to cramp. Garrett Kaalund won in 20.04 seconds.

Lyles made it to the finish line to congratulate Kaalund, a 22-year-old who won NCAA indoors at the distance earlier this year.

"I'm like, 'Yeah, there's no reason to

keep pushing that'. So I just decided to cut it off. To be honest, it's just a cramp. Just got some electrolytes here, just gonna chug them down," said Lyles.

The 100-meter Olympic champion clocked an eye-watering world lead to win the shorter sprint on Friday in 9.79 seconds, after a wind-aided 9.76 seconds in the semi-final, and said he suspected the workload finally caught up with him.

"Running two nine-sevens in one day is kind of crazy. And I think I underestimated how fast that really was and trying to come back," he told reporters.

"This does show me what it takes to keep going, which, you know, kind of puts a perspective on how kind of great (retired Jamaican sprinter Usain) Bolt was."

This marked only the fourth time Lyles has lost a 200 since he started dominating the distance in 2018, shortly after Usain Bolt left the sport. Two of those losses have come at the last two Olympics.

In the women's race at Icahn Stadium in New York — the site of Usain Bolt's first world record, back in 2008 — reigning world champion Melissa Jefferson-Wooden cruised to her second straight national title in a season-best 21.69 seconds.

There are no world championships this year, though world athletics is introducing the Ultimate Championships, where a US\$150,000 first prize will be on the line in a race expected to feature Jefferson-Wooden, fellow American Gabby Thomas, and St. Lucia's Julien Alfred, who finished runner-up to Thomas at the Paris Games.

Andrea Pirlo out of contention for Italy job

ROME (AP) — Andrea Pirlo is out of contention for the Italy job amid political concerns over a sponsorship deal with a Russian betting firm.

The flap over Pirlo reportedly has Paolo Maldini considering stepping down just 16 days into his new job as the technical director charged with restoring order for the Azzurri.

This after Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti had already turned down offers to coach a national team that has failed to qualify for three straight World Cups.

The crisis surrounding Italy's once-proud squad is expanding to new dimensions four months after the four-time World Cup champion was beaten by Bosnia and Herzegovina in a qualifying playoff.

Pirlo himself confirmed that he was out in an Instagram post Monday, saying he "heard last night that I'm no longer the candidate for the Italy national team job."

Several Italian politicians had raised concerns about Pirlo's contract to be an ambassador for Fonbet, saying the national team coach should not have conflicting views on Italy's support for Ukraine in the war with Russia.

Pirlo, who had been prepared to leave his current job as coach of Dubai United, was an unpopular choice after unsuccessful stints coaching Juventus and Sampdoria — despite having been one of the standout players when Italy last won the World Cup in 2006.

Pirlo said the Fonbet deal was linked to his job in the United Arab Emirates and is "exclusively for commercial and sports" purposes.

"Attributing a political significance to that collaboration means attributing beliefs to me that I have never expressed and don't belong to me,"



Andrea Pirlo

Pirlo added.

"My love for Italy doesn't depend on a job. It's part of my history, my identity, and it will remain forever."

Pirlo was at best a third choice after Brazil coach Ancelotti and former Manchester City manager Guardiola turned down offers from Maldini and special adviser Leonardo.

But Pirlo was preferred by his former AC Milan teammate Maldini ahead of figures like former Italy coaches Roberto Mancini and Antonio Conte because he was seen as someone more willing to adapt to new policies and promote younger players in an attack-minded system.

Gennaro Gattuso, another former Milan player, left as Italy's coach by mutual consent in April after the defeat in Bosnia.

Now Mancini and Conte are back being discussed for the job, while Maldini is reportedly upset that Pirlo was turned down.

The final decision lies with Italian soccer federation president Giovanni Malagò, who was elected in June after leading the Milan Cortina Olympics organizing committee and, previously, the Italian Olympic Committee.

Antiguans sprinters advance to semis at Commonwealth Games

Two of Antigua and Barbuda's top sprinters, Cejhae Greene and Geoly-na Dowdye, have qualified for the semi-finals in the track and field competitions at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, on Monday.

Greene advanced to Tuesday's semi-finals of the men's 100 meters by clocking 10.12 seconds to win Heat 6 comfortably. Eliezer Adjibi of Canada came in second in 10.31 seconds, and Eric Harrison Jr. of Trinidad and Tobago took third place in 10.56 seconds.

Dowdye books her spot into Tuesday's women's 100-meter semi-finals by claiming a second-place finish in Heat 3 in a time of 11.28 seconds.

The race was won by Torrie Lewis of Australia in 11.15 seconds, while Faiqa Riaz of Pakistan claimed third place in 11.64 seconds.

But the other Antiguan sprinters at the Commonwealth Games, Dwayne Fleming and Soniya Jones, missed out on qualifying for the semi-finals.

Fleming, who also contested the men's 100-meter competition, clocked 10.83 seconds to finish fourth in Heat 8, which was won by Cheswil Johnson of South Africa in 10.21 seconds.

Jaleel Croal of the British Virgin Island took second place in 10.29 seconds, while Chamod Yodhasinghege finished third in 10.45 seconds.

Jones finished third in Heat 6 of the women's 100-meter event in a time



Antigua Sprinter Cejhae Greene at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.
(Photo courtesy of the ABAA)

of 11.56 seconds. The race was won by Imani Lansiquot of England in 11.04 seconds, while Michelle-Lee Ahye of Trinidad and Tobago took second place in 11.35 seconds.

Both Antiguan boxers at the Commonwealth Games, Zalaan Jan and Alston Ryan, have also been eliminated.

Zalaan Jan lost 0-5 via a unanimous decision to India's Ankush in the Round of 16 in the men's 80kg contest. Zalaan Jan defeated Malawi's Happy Ngwira in the opening round.

Alston Ryan was eliminated in the first round of the men's 65kg after losing to Malawi's **Elias Bonzo** by a second-round technical knockout.

Antigua swimmer Jadon Wuilliez

failed in his bid to advance to the finals of the men's 50-meter breast-stroke contest. Wuilliez was eliminated after finishing in sixth place with a time of 28.01 seconds in the semi-finals.

Wuilliez advanced to the semi-finals after finishing fourth in Heat 6 in the opening round in a time of 27.69 seconds, which is a new national record.

Meanwhile, the Antiguan beach volleyball men's team of Raenor Sharpe and Miguel Pena-Lugo has also been unsuccessful in their campaign at the current Central American and Caribbean (CAC) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Sharpe and Lugo suffered their second successive loss in Pool D of the beach volleyball competition in a 2-1 loss to Miguel Jahreef and Jerome Morrison of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Antiguan won the opening set 21-17 but suffered defeat in the match by losing the other two sets, 17-21 and 7-15.

Sharpe and Lugo were beaten 2-0 (21-8, 21-10) by Rafael Vargas and Gabriel Vargas of El Salvador in their opening encounter.

The Antiguan team were slated to face Belizean team Edward Broaster and Hauze Francis on Monday and will take on the Cuban team of Damian Gomez and Eblis Veranes in their final Pool D match on Tuesday.