

P.M. Browne Discusses CHOGM 2026 Preparations

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Prime Minister Gaston Browne (right) with Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchway (left)

Prime Minister Browne Discusses CHOGM 2026 Preparations With the Commonwealth Secretary-General

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, met with Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey and senior members of the Commonwealth Secretariat's technical team to discuss preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

The meeting provided an opportunity for Prime Minister Browne to receive an update on the extensive work being undertaken jointly by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth Secretariat ahead of the 1st to 4th November meeting.

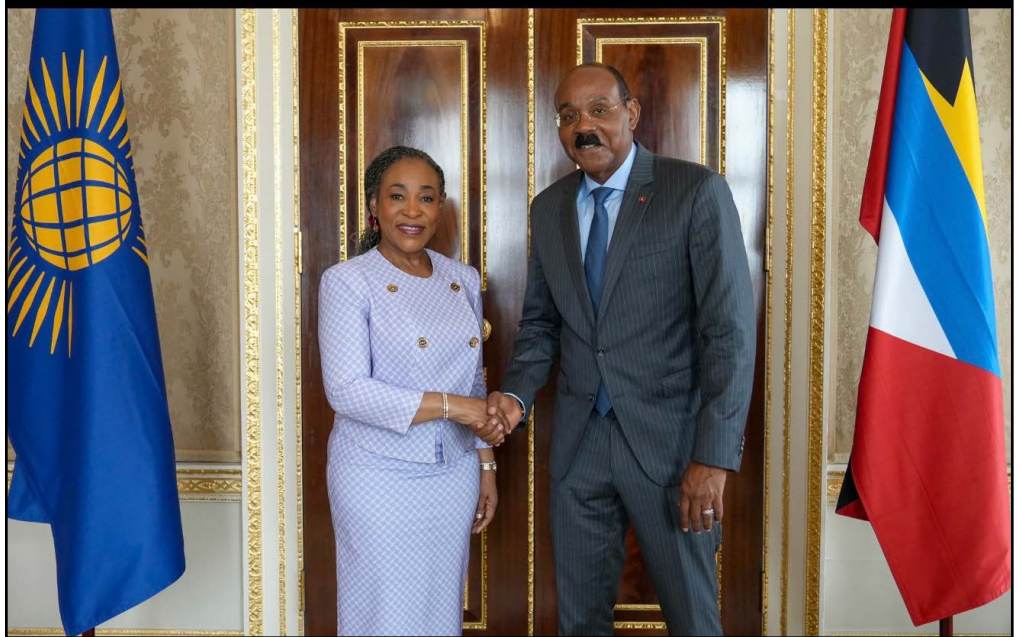
Discussions covered key operational and programme areas, including arrangements for Heads of Government and delegations, venues, accreditation, security, transport, the Commonwealth Forums and other official and associated events forming part of CHOGM Week.

Prime Minister Browne welcomed the progress achieved to date and reiterated his Government's commitment to delivering a successful and memorable CHOGM that reflects both the values of the Commonwealth and the warmth and hospitality of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation to Secretary-General Botchwey and the Commonwealth Secretariat for their continued partnership and technical support throughout the planning process.

"We deeply appreciate the support of the Secretary-General and her team. The hosting of CHOGM is a major undertaking for Antigua and Barbuda, and the close collaboration between our national teams and the Commonwealth Secretariat has been invaluable as we move into the final stages of preparation," Prime Minister Browne said.

He noted that Antigua and Barbuda views CHOGM 2026 not only as an opportunity to welcome the Commonwealth family to its shores, but also as a platform to promote practical part-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne (right) with Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey (left)

nerships, investment and collective action on the issues affecting member states, particularly Small Island Developing States.

With less than two months remaining before Commonwealth leaders gather in St John's, preparations continue

across Government and the national CHOGM Task Force to ensure the meeting's successful delivery.

CHOGM 2026 will be held under the theme "Accelerating Partnerships and Investment for a Prosperous Commonwealth."



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Young Antiguan Artist Annia Matthews Shines at CHOGM Cricket Match Launch in London

Young Antiguan artist, Annia Matthews made a strong impression at the recent launch of the CHOGM 2026 Cricket Match in London, where she performed as a specially invited musical guest.

Matthews captivated guests with a confident and powerful performance of her original song, “Keep On”, earning warm applause and praise for her vocal ability, stage presence and representation of Antigua and Barbuda. The song captured a powerful message about mental health and earned her an invitation from the Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey to co-host a roundtable on Youth Mental Health to mark World Suicide Prevention Day.

During the event, she met Antiguan and Barbudan cricket legend Sir Vivian Richards, who commended her talent and praised how she continues to represent the country. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration, Hon. E. P. Chet Greene, also praised Matthews’ performance and confirmed that she is expected to feature in activities surrounding CHOGM 2026, providing further opportunities to showcase Antiguan and Barbudan talent on the international stage.

Annia noted, “I felt truly honoured to perform at the launch of the CHOGM cricket match and to be in a room filled with so many people who have made, and continue to make, an impact across the Commonwealth. There was a real sense of connection in the room, and I felt emotionally connected to the significance of the moment”.

She added that, “Seeing Sir Vivian Richards take part in the passing-on-the-bat ceremony was especially



inspirational for me. As an Antiguan artist, I felt the weight of responsibility in that moment, standing between his generation and mine, and recognising the importance of carrying our culture, stories and legacy forward”.

Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill, High Commissioner of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Kingdom, has strongly encouraged the inclusion of emerging Antiguan and Barbudan creatives in the High Commission’s diplomatic and cultural engagements. The approach reflects a



broader effort to use international platforms to showcase the country’s cultural talent and give young nationals meaningful exposure.

Currently in the United Kingdom, developing her craft following an invitation to perform at the annual Wings of Charity Gala in June, hosted by Their Excellencies, Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams, Annia continues to build her international experience while proudly representing the creativity and cultural excellence of Antigua and Barbuda.

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Local News



APC Generator Fault Leads to System Wide Electricity Outage

The system-wide electricity outage experienced earlier this afternoon originated at Antigua Power Company (APC), where cables connected to the No. 5 generator developed a fault and subsequently caught fire. Electricity service has since been fully restored to all customers.

The No. 5 generator provides approximately 15 MW of power to the electricity system. The sudden loss of this generation caused a significant disruption to the system, resulting in the widespread outage.

Antigua Power Company is the power generation company that supplies electricity to APUA for distribution to customers across Antigua. Throughout the incident, APUA remained in close communication and coordination with APC as its team assessed and ad-



ressed the generation issue.

APC subsequently provided alternative generation from its LNG plant, allowing electricity supply to be progressively restored across the network.

This was an unforeseen incident, and both APUA and APC regret the inconvenience caused. We thank our customers for their patience and understanding throughout the outage and restoration process.

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Police Charge 18-year Old With Murder of Freemansville Shop Keeper



David McDonald

The police have arrested and charged 18-year-old David McDonald of Golden Grove in connection with the murder of 60-year-old Mordecai Eleazer Francis of Swetes.

Francis was fatally shot at Risk Takers Supermarket in Freeman's Village on Thursday, July 23, 2026.

At approximately 8:30 a.m., police received a report of a shooting at the supermarket and responded to the scene. Francis, who was the owner of the establishment, was found unresponsive inside the business with apparent gunshot wounds.

Investigations into the incident were subsequently conducted by the Serious Crimes Unit and other members of the Criminal Investigations Department.

As a result of those investigations, McDonald was arrested and formally charged with murder.

He is expected to appear before the court sometime this week.

The Police Administration expresses appreciation to members of the public for their continued cooperation and assistance.



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Antigua and Barbuda XI Showcase Emerging Talent with Match Against Bede's at CHOGM 2026 Cricket Launch

An Antigua and Barbuda XI featuring some of the nation's promising young cricketers secured a 31-run victory over Bede's Senior School in a special exhibition match staged in London following the official CHOGM 2026 cricket launch on 9th September in London.

The Antigua and Barbuda team brought together several young Antiguan and Barbudan cricketers currently developing their game in the United Kingdom, including Xaveek Toppin, Jaylen Francis, Malique Walsh, Hilroy Andrew, Mekaili Tonge and Demari Benta. The team also included Naequan Carr, a young Antiguan and Barbudan residing in the United Kingdom, and Matthew Miller, the Leeward Islands Under 19 captain, currently attending Bede's Senior School.

Batting first, the Antigua and Barbuda XI amassed an impressive 259 for seven from 30 overs, before restricting the Bede's XI to 228 for eight from their allotted overs.

Demari Benta led the Antigua and Barbuda batting effort with an outstanding 86 from 69 deliveries, striking seven fours and five sixes at a strike rate of 125.64. Hilroy Andrew made a valuable contribution of 64 from 53 balls, while Jaylen Francis added 27 and Matthew Miller contributed 22.

With the ball, Mekaili Tonge led the Antigua and Barbuda attack, claiming two wickets for 21 runs from four overs, while Hilroy Andrew completed a strong all-round performance with figures of two for 22. The side was coached by young Antiguan coach Dion Sam-



uels, who is presently in the United Kingdom pursuing further coaching qualifications.

Beyond the result, the exhibition match demonstrated the growing sporting relationship between Antigua and Barbuda and Bede's Senior School and showcased the work of the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission's annual Cricket Exchange Programme, which has operated for the past eight years to provide young players with international exposure and development opportunities.

The partnership with Bede's is set to deepen further when the school undertakes a cricket tour of Antigua and Barbuda in February 2027, providing another opportunity to strengthen sporting, educational and people-to-people links.

The match was attended by the Hon. E.P. Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Barbu-

da Affairs; CHOGM 2026 Envoy and West Indies cricket legend Sir Vivian Richards; Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill, High Commissioner of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Kingdom; CHOGM 2026 Business Forum Lead Celia Roberts-Morgan; Second Secretary Brent Scotland; and Third Secretary Caleb Gardiner. The High Commission extends thanks to Ambassador Theon Ali, Ambassador to the State of Qatar, for his support in sponsoring the participation of the Antigua and Barbuda players in this fixture.

As Antigua and Barbuda advances its final preparations for November, initiatives of this nature will continue to complement the substantive CHOGM agenda and reinforce the country's commitment to a Commonwealth that delivers meaningful opportunities for its young people.

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MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER

**16 September 2026**

Ten years ago, the world added a new chapter to one of its greatest environmental success stories. Building on the Montreal Protocol, which put the ozone layer on the path to recovery, nations adopted the Kigali Amendment to tackle a new threat: hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – potent greenhouse gases used for cooling.

This year's theme, "Global action for a cooler planet", highlights a defining climate challenge. As temperatures rise and extreme heat becomes more common, access to efficient cooling saves lives. We must meet that need fairly and sustainably.

Fully implemented, the Kigali Amendment alone could avoid up to 0.5 degrees Celsius of global warming by the end of the century – and twice as much when paired with energy-efficient cooling. This is essential for health, food security, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

On this World Ozone Day, I urge all countries to ratify and implement the Kigali Amendment, accelerate the shift to sustainable cooling, and protect people and planet.

The National Parents Teachers Association Presents Annual Awards

The National Parents Teachers Association (NPTA) recently held its third annual awards ceremony at the Christian Assembly Ministries, Paynters.

The NPTA sees the need to recognize teachers – in both private and public schools – as well as students who performed exceptionally well in the Grade VI National Assessment and Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exams.

This year's winners were:

Parent of the Year

- ▶ Anesta Augustin-Edwards - Seventh Day Adventist Primary (Private)
- ▶ Claudette Browne - T. N. Kirnon Primary (Public/Primary)
- ▶ Damian Tonge - Irene B. Williams Secondary (Public/Secondary)
- ▶ Ady Byrne – St. Joseph's Academy Secondary (Private)

Student of the Year

- ▶ Caleb Jeremiah – Seventh Day Adventist Primary (Private)
- ▶ Olivia Nicholas – Old Road Primary (Public/Primary)
- ▶ Jahlisha Michael – Irene B. Williams Secondary (Public/Secondary)
- ▶ Amari Cornelius – St. Joseph's Academy Secondary (Private)

Teacher of the Year



- ▶ Ms. Bernadette Atkin – New Beth-el SDA Primary (Private)
- ▶ Mr. Kevin Scott – Golden Grove Primary (Public/Primary)
- ▶ Mr. Tijah Myers – Irene B. Williams Secondary (Public/Secondary)
- ▶ Mr. Ellis Southwell – St. Joseph's Academy Secondary (Private)

President, Alister Thomas, welcomed invited guests as well as awardees to the evening's proceedings. During his address he urged for greater collaboration between schools' administration, Ministry of Education and the NPTA to advance the business of education in Antigua and Barbuda. He also in-

formed the gathering that the NPTA Awards was the first of its kind in the Caribbean.

The charge was delivered by Mrs. Rita Phillip-Harris, who incidentally was the winner of the Parent of the Year (Private Secondary School 2025).

The NPTA is cognizant that such an event would not be possible without the generous support of corporate Antigua and Barbuda, as well as concerned parents, and of course, members of the NPTA.

Claudette Browne (left), and Alister Thomas (right)

Rita Phillip-Harris



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Local News



Khalique Harris Represents Antigua and Barbuda In Engineering Workshop

Khalique Harris a former St. Joseph's Academy student and current International Baccalaureate Diploma Program Student at Island Academy International, recently attended a five-week residential program in Trinidad.

Harris was among 18 students who were selected for the 2026 Student Program for Innovation and Science and Engineering (SPISE), which is run by the Caribbean Science Foundation.

Harris said that his interest in electrical engineering and architecture developed during CSEC studies. "I started CSEC Electrical & Amp; Electronics Technology in 5th Form, and it was one of the longest syllabuses at CSEC."

He explained: "The subject is very practical, so I enjoyed the problem-solving and engineering, the SBA



from scratch." He admitted that tech-

nical drawing and AutoCAD came naturally to him, leading him to combine both interests.

Harris said that the course for SPISE has been demanding. "The courses are very condensed and fast; most courses cover one topic per class. It has been a struggle to keep up with learning a new topic every day."

He said that attending optional office hours and teaching himself material have reinforced the importance of time management and discipline. Khalique's long-term vision is to establish an engineering firm in Antigua and Barbuda specializing in green, sustainable and renewable energy solutions.

Khalique is the son of Catchet Harris formerly of Willikies, and his wife Rita Phillip-Harris.

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Antigua's 2026 Groovy Soca King supports more than 100 students with back-to-school supplies



Antigua's reigning 2026 Groovy Soca King, Lennard "Young Lyrics" Henry and his team have given back to the school that helped shape his early years by donating school supplies and essential items to more than 100 students at Seaview Farm Primary School as they settle into the new academic year.

The gesture reflects Young Lyrics' desire to use his growing platform to support young people, encourage education and give back to the community that helped shape his own journey.

For the soca artiste, the visit was also a meaningful opportunity to reconnect with his alma mater, spend time with students and remind them of the importance of believing in themselves and pursuing their goals.

Young Lyrics said, "It means a lot to me to come back to Seaview Farm Primary School and give back to the students. I know first-hand how important it is to have people in your corner who believe in you and encourage you to keep pushing. These students are our future, and if I can play even a small part in helping them have a good start to the school year, then I am happy to do it."

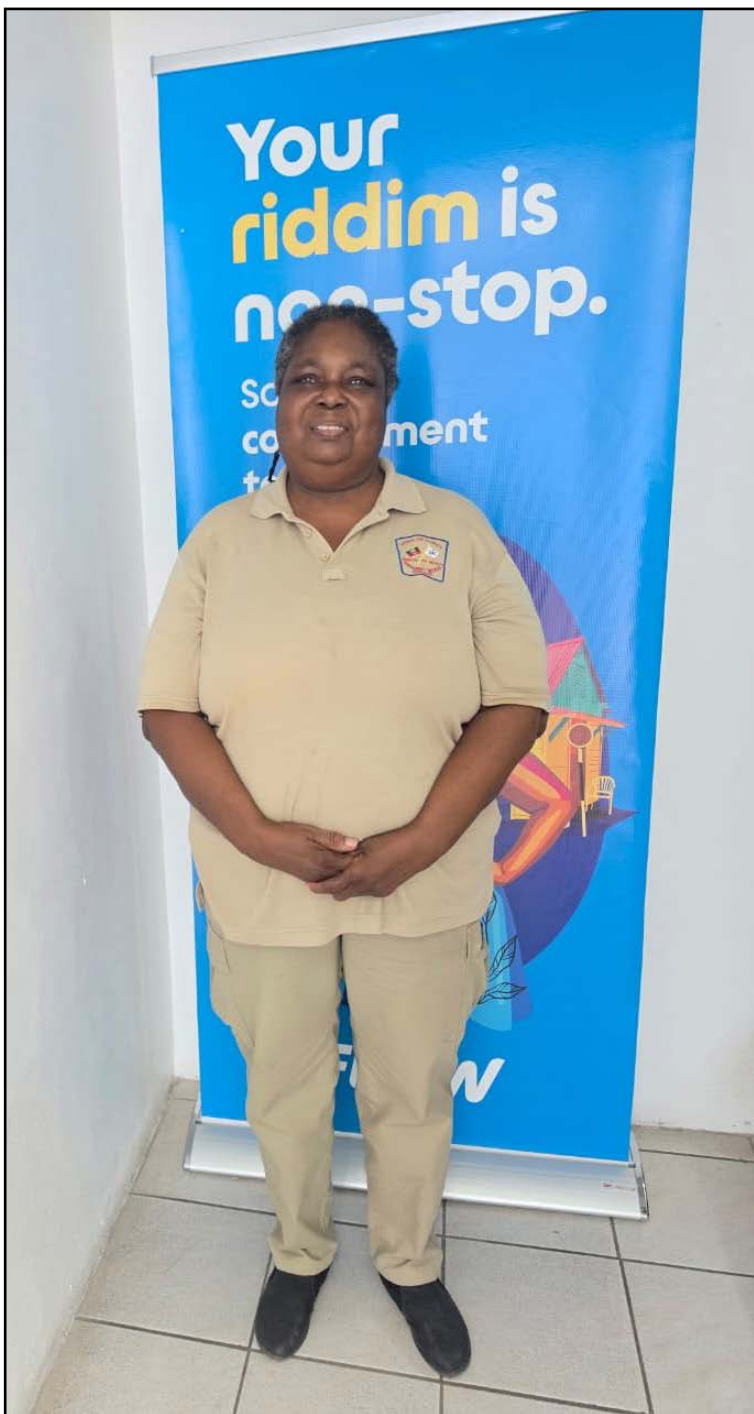
Principal of Seaview Farm Primary School, Sonilda Burton, welcomed the initiative, noting the value of former students returning to support and inspire the next generation. Burton said, "We are extremely grateful to Young Lyrics for remembering Seaview Farm Primary School and for thinking about our students. This donation will make a meaningful difference to our students and their fam-

ilies. It is also inspiring for our young people to see someone who once sat in these classrooms return as a successful artiste and use his platform to give back."

The donation was met with enthusiasm from the students, who not only received school supplies and other essentials but were also treated to a special performance by the recording artiste.

Young Lyrics brought his signature energy to the school, giving students an opportunity to see the reigning Groovy Soca King in a different setting not just as an entertainer on the Carnival stage, but as a former Seaview Farm student who has returned to encourage and inspire the next generation.

Flow's Prize Winner Wins All Expenses Paid Trip to CPL Finals



Rose Joseph is the grand prize winner of Flow's We Live for This Summer promotion.

Rose and her guest won a trip for two to the CPL Finals in Barbados as the grand prize of the promotion, which rewarded customers throughout the CPL season with exciting prizes and memorable experiences. The prize covers all her expenses including airfare, accommodations and tickets to the cricket match.

Rose Joseph, grand prize winner of Flow's We Live for This Summer promotion, is pictured with her guest before departing for the CPL Finals in Barbados. The promotion rewarded customers throughout the CPL season with exciting prizes and unforgettable cricket experiences, culminating in a trip for two to the tournament's biggest match.

CARICOM IMPACS Training Targets Stronger Human Trafficking Prosecutions



Court of Justice, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Customs and Excise Department, Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy (OND-CP), Antigua and Barbuda Immigration Department and Antigua and Barbuda Forensic Services.

The workshop was arranged through the co-operation of the **Trafficking in Persons Prevention Unit**.

Antigua and Barbuda is strengthening its capacity to investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases through a five-day regional training programme currently underway and facilitated by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS).

The **Advanced Multi-Disciplinary Trafficking in Persons Investigation, Prosecution and Adjudication Training, which commenced on Monday, brings** together investigators, prosecutors, magistrates and judges with the aim of improving coordination throughout the criminal justice process, from the initial investigation through to prosecution and adjudication.

CARICOM IMPACS and regional subject matter experts are delivering the workshop, which is designed to strengthen the country's ability to deal with complex trafficking in persons cases.

Human trafficking involves the

exploitation of individuals through forced labour, sexual exploitation and other forms of coercion. Participants are expected to strengthen their ability to identify victims, gather and preserve evidence, investigate trafficking networks and build cases capable of supporting successful prosecutions.

A key focus of the training is the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to trafficking investigations.

Such cases can require cooperation among police, immigration officials, prosecutors, forensic specialists and members of the judiciary. Greater collaboration among these agencies can improve information sharing, support victim-centred investigations and strengthen the preparation and adjudication of cases.

Representatives from several key agencies are participating in the workshop, including the **Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda, Antigua and Barbuda High**

The training follows a recommendation contained in the **United States Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report**, highlighting the importance of continued investment in Antigua and Barbuda's ability to combat human trafficking.

The initiative is expected to contribute to the country's broader efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims and ensure that offenders are brought before the courts.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening inter-agency cooperation and advancing measures to combat human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

The regional training also provides an opportunity for criminal justice professionals to build relationships and share expertise that can strengthen the response to trafficking cases both in Antigua and Barbuda and across the wider Caribbean.

Today I Respond To Eli Fuller Eli, Let's Cut Through The Noise



By Hon. E.P Chet Greene

You have made a career of commenting on Antigua and Barbuda's affairs. Some of it has been constructive but on the question of our foreign policy and our relationship with China, you have crossed from scrutiny into something that does this country no favours.

The notion that our Citizenship by Investment Programme, our off-shore financial services sector, or any other policy position we have adopted poses a threat to United States security is, frankly, a fabrication.

If you believe otherwise, bring irrefutable facts. Not insinuation. Not guilt by association. Not the comfortable echo chamber of your known animosity toward this administration. Facts. You have been invited repeatedly to present them.

The Prime Minister himself issued an open invitation to you to engage on these issues in a serious forum

and when you appeared on Pointe FM you simply could not sustain your off-air posturing. Why? You have never pointed to a single instance, not one, when Antigua and Barbuda's relationship with China, through any policy, any programme announcement, or any implementation, drew open criticism from Washington or was averse to our own development interest. Not one. That is because it does not exist.

What exists is a partnership that has delivered concrete benefits to Antiguan and Barbudans: agricultural training that is already reshaping our food security, infrastructure that modernises our island and a diplomatic relationship built on mutual respect that stretches back to 1982, when the Father of the Nation had the vision to recognise an emerging China when others did not.

This is not about choosing sides. Prime Minister Browne has said it plainly, "We are friends of all; enemies of none." Antigua and Barbuda maintains strong ties with the United States. Our soldiers train with SOUTHCOM, our security is bolstered by the U.S Coast Guard and the U.S is our number one trading partner. We have never been asked to choose and we will not be manoeuvred into choosing. Our foreign policy serves Antigua and Barbuda's national interests. Full stop. The geopolitical posturing you seem eager to amplify is not our fight. Secretary Rubio says "this is our hemisphere" and President Trump says those who "destabilise it and threaten the United States will face consequences". That is their doctrine, their framing,

their strategic posture. Antigua and Barbuda is not a base of operations for anyone and so those comments do not include us. We are a small island state trying to build a sustainable future for our people.

If Washington has concerns, the proper channel is diplomatic engagement. That is why we have and maintain an embassy in the U.S capital, staffed with experienced diplomats. Your public commentary does not strengthen our position. It weakens it by lending credibility to narratives that paint us as something we are not. China has been a reliable developmental partner to Antigua and Barbuda for over four decades. When others offered words, China offered roads, ports, training and opportunity.

The Father of the Nation understood in 1982 what some still refuse to acknowledge today: that small states must cultivate relationships with all who are willing to respect our sovereignty and contribute to our development. Ingratitude is not a foreign policy. It is a character flaw. So here is my challenge to you, Eli. Stop salaciously going into overdrive to tarnish Antigua and Barbuda's good name. Stop dressing up personal animus as national concern. Bring facts, irrefutable, documented, verifiable facts or bring silence. This country deserves better than uninformed and irresponsible commentary from someone who has never had to sit in the chair and make the hard decisions that sovereignty demands.

I implore you to promote, protect and defend Antigua and Barbuda. That is the posture of a patriot. Anything else is noise.



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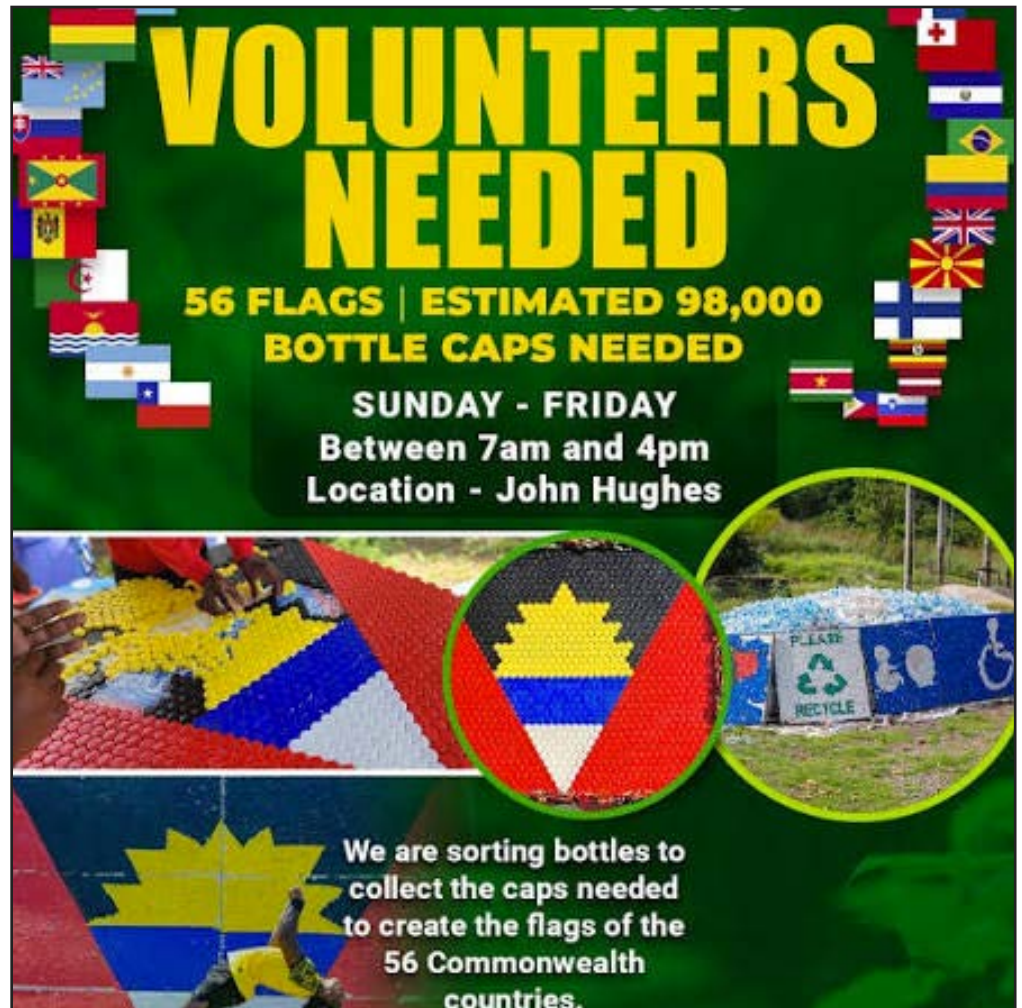
At Good Humans 268 Inc., our work is bigger than recycling. We want to do two things: help change legislation that improves opportunities for persons with disabilities and create jobs for persons with disabilities. At the same time, we are working to move more than 2 million recyclable items from John Hughes and show what is possible when waste is treated as a resource instead of simply being discarded.

Watch this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/MOu-F8RrKibk> Now, ahead of CHOGM 2026, we are taking that mission even further with 56 Flags, One Mission.

Beginning 21 September 2026, we will embark on a national school tour engaging students around recycling, the Commonwealth and environmental responsibility. This will lead into a dedicated week where students and volunteers will create 56 Commonwealth flags using recycled bottle caps.

We are inviting businesses, organizations and brands across Antigua and Barbuda to partner with us. Support does NOT have to be monetary. We need:

- Transportation and school buses
- Media, photography and videography
- Printing and educational materials
- Tents
- 32 plyboards
- Flag frames
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- Labour/workman services
- Bottle-cap washing and sorting assistance
- Volunteer support/stipends
- Trucks
- Drinking water and meals
- Travel, accommodation and transportation in Barbuda



• Financial contributions

Partnership levels range from EC\$1,000+ to EC\$20,000+, and in-kind contributions of equivalent value can also qualify. Supporting brands can be featured throughout the school tour, flag-making week, social media content, photos, videos and the completed CHOGM display.

This is bigger than a one-day event. We want these flags to continue telling the story of recycling, youth participation, disability inclusion and what can happen when businesses and communities work together.

Whether you can provide one bus, one tent, materials, water, transportation, professional services, staff time or financial support, it all moves the mission forward. And when that final truck eventually leaves John Hughes, I know the tears will come — not sad tears, but the kind that say, “We fought the good fight, and we finished what we started.” If you or your organization would like to support 56 Flags, One Mission, simply reply to this message and let us know how you would like to contribute. Good Humans 268 Inc. Necessary for some, useful for all.

Scrub Life Cares Team Selected for 2026–27 Black Futures Policy Institute Fellowship

Scrub Life Cares

South Carolina



Tanya Ambrose

My Black future is one where Black communities move from being asked to survive broken systems to having the power to redesign them.



Shaterica Neal

My Black future looks like tangible policy change created by us that provides decision making power, money, resources, and information to develop sustainable



Kennedi Outland

My Black future is one where our communities have the resources, opportunities, and support to live healthy, empowered lives.

Scrub Life Cares is proud to announce that three team members have been selected for the **2026–27 Black Futures Policy Institute Fellowship**, an initiative of Black Futures Lab focused on strengthening policy, advocacy, leadership, and organizing capacity in support of Black communities.

Representing Scrub Life Cares in the fellowship are Founder and CEO Tanya Ambrose, Shaterica Neal, a political social worker and grassroots community organizer, and Kennedi Outland, a public health professional and Scrub Life Cares intern.

The team was selected following a competitive application process. After submitting its policy proposal and organizational materials, the Scrub Life Cares team advanced to the interview stage, where members met with Black Futures Policy Institute leadership to discuss their

policy goals, organizational capacity, and readiness for the fellowship. Following that process, the team was officially selected for the 2026–27 cohort.

Scrub Life Cares will serve as the Sponsoring Organization for the fellowship team, providing the organizational support and structure needed for the fellows to participate fully in the Institute's year-long training, mentorship, policy development, and campaign-building activities.

“This is an exciting milestone for Scrub Life Cares because it reflects the direction our work has been moving for some time,” said Ambrose. “We have spent years working directly with communities, providing education and resources, conducting research, and listening closely to the barriers people continue to face. This fellowship gives us the opportunity to build the pol-

icy skills needed to address those barriers at a deeper, systems level.”

Through the fellowship, the team will strengthen its skills in areas including legislative strategy, coalition-building, power mapping, policy advocacy, campaign development, and leadership.

A major area of the team's policy work is connected to South Carolina, where Scrub Life Cares has provided menstrual health education and resources in underserved communities and has increasingly examined how school policies shape access to menstrual products and accurate health education.

In 2025, Scrub Life Cares signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia State University's School of Public Health and welcomed its first cohort of public health interns through the university's Applied Practice Experience programme. One of those interns,

Kennedi Outland, became instrumental in helping the organization deepen its research and policy work.

In 2026, that partnership supported the development of a policy analysis examining menstrual education and equity in South Carolina schools. The project helped Scrub Life Cares connect years of direct-service experience with formal public health research and policy development, strengthening the organization's ability to move from identifying community-level gaps to exploring systems-level solutions.

The policy proposal brought forward to the Black Futures Policy Institute focuses on strengthening menstrual product access and advancing more consistent, age-appropriate menstrual health education in schools, with particular attention to rural, under-resourced, and majority-Black communities.

For Scrub Life Cares, the fellowship represents more than one policy project. It is also an opportunity to strengthen the organization's long-term capacity to participate more effectively in policy conversations and systems-level advocacy.

"As public health practitioners, we understand that many of the challenges we respond to at the community level are shaped by policy," Ambrose said. "Whether we are talking about menstrual health, reproductive health, maternal health, youth wellbeing, education, or safeguarding, the systems around people matter. We want to be able to serve communities today while also helping to shape the policies that affect their health and wellbeing tomorrow."

The milestone also reflects Scrub Life Cares' growing footprint



across both the United States and the Caribbean. In Antigua and Barbuda, the organization continues to expand its work through school and community health education, menstrual health programming, the annual **Grow With The Flo Health Expo**, youth-centered initiatives, product distribution, partnerships, research, and advocacy.

Ambrose said the fellowship represents a natural progression in both her public health journey and the evolution of Scrub Life Cares.

"Our work has always started with community," she said. "But over

time, it has become increasingly clear that direct service alone cannot change the systems that continue to create the same gaps. Community work showed us the problem, research helped us better understand it, and now we are building the policy knowledge and strategy needed to help create lasting change."

For Scrub Life Cares, the selection reflects a clear next step in its growth:

From direct service, to research, to policy, to systems change.

Olive Garden owner targets Jamaica for expansion

Darden Restaurants, the American company behind Olive Garden and Ruth's Chris Steak House, holds franchise agreements covering Jamaica, according to its latest annual filing with United States regulators.

The company has not named which of its brands it intends for the island.

The Orlando-based group said it holds agreements "with unaffiliated operators to develop and operate" seven of its brands, which include Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Yard House, Ruth's Chris Steak House, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen, The Capital Grille and Bahama Breeze.

Jamaica sits alongside Aruba, The Bahamas and Barbados on the 2026 list. The Cayman Islands, named in the 2025 filing, no longer appears. Darden gave no explanation for the change.

"We have a development, franchise, and/or license agreements in place with unaffiliated operators to develop and operate ... restaurants," stated the shareholder letter issued this month.

The Caribbean currently accounts for two of the company's 167 franchised restaurants worldwide – one Olive Garden and one Ruth's Chris Steak House. Latin America holds 36; Asia, 23; and Canada, 14. Darden operated a further 2,202 restaurants of its own in the United States as at May 2026, taking the group total to 2,373.

Darden has retrenched elsewhere in the wider region, closing the sale of eight Olive Garden restaurants in Canada to Recipe Unlimited Corporation in July 2025.

The Financial Gleaner sent queries to Darden for comment but did not get a response by press time.

Its biggest brands are Olive Garden, LongHorn and Yard House. Darden's total sales rose 9.4 per cent to US\$13.2 billion in fiscal 2026, helped by an extra week of operations, blended same-restaurant sales up 4.5 per cent,



and 43 net new restaurants.

"It was an especially strong year for our three largest brands," stated the group.

Olive Garden, described as the largest Italian restaurant operator in the United States, opened its first location in 1982. The brand delivered 4.0 per cent same-restaurant sales growth for the year, which the company attributed to strong execution, menu innovation and initiatives that gave guests more choice and value, including the systemwide roll-out of a lighter portions menu.

LongHorn Steakhouse is an American Western style "full-service" restaurant brand with locations primarily in the eastern United States. It delivered 7.2 per cent same-restaurant sales growth for the year, which the company credited to a strategy rooted in food quality, simplicity and culture.

Yard House is known for its food, classic rock, and over 100 draft beer

offerings. It delivered 5.6 per cent same-restaurant sales growth and grew total sales by US\$95 million.

"Together, Olive Garden, LongHorn, and Yard House have now delivered positive same-restaurant sales for five consecutive years," stated the company.

Darden also stated in its shareholder letter that it would wind down its Bahama Breeze restaurants, converting about half of the remaining 28 locations to other brands over 12 to 18 months and permanently closing the rest. Bahama Breeze was described as offering the feel of a Caribbean escape built on island-inspired seafood, chicken and steaks. All locations are in the United States.

"We believe the locations that we expect to convert are strong sites that can benefit several brands in our portfolio," stated the company. (Jamaica Observer)

Jamaican Government welcomes UK Privy Council decision to scrap visa fees for Commonwealth citizens

The Jamaican government has praised a UK Privy Council decision to scrap visa fees for Commonwealth citizens, marking a significant relief for Jamaicans seeking justice at the country's highest appellate body.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) this morning announced a free streamlined process for visa applications for appellants, respondents and legal teams appearing in London.

In a release on Thursday, Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Kamina Johnson Smith described the measure "as a practical step in facilitating access to justice for Jamaicans whose matters reach the Privy Council".

"We have been advocating for full removal of the visa requirement, but still welcome the removal of the cost of the visa for this category of Jamaicans, and the establishment of a clearer process. This can only be viewed as positive with respect to access to our final court of appeal," Johnson Smith said.

The Foreign Minister further explained that the visa cost associated with travel to the UK has been a practical consideration for members of Jamaica's legal profession and their clients for more than two decades.

According to Johnson Smith, "the matter has formed part of discussions over several years with British authorities during visits to the UK, as well as official visits here (Jamaica)."

She asserted that the development would clearly be felt directly by Jamaica's legal and justice fraternity, who have largely recognised or absorbed the cost of visa fees as a routine part of representing clients before the Privy Council.

Under the new arrangement, once a hearing date is confirmed, appellants intending to appear in-person will advise the JCPC Registry through its case-management portal that a visa is



required.

The Court will provide an invitation letter in support of the application, which will be automatically flagged to the UK Supreme Court and Home Of-

fice for processing.

Applicants will remain subject to the usual checks and may be asked to provide additional information where required. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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Regional News

Court to rule on 'abuse of process' application in MV Barima disaster



Magistrate Ravindra Mohabir is scheduled to deliver his ruling on October 19 regarding an “abuse of process” application submitted by the defense following full disclosure of evidence by state prosecutors in the catastrophic July 18 MV Barima disaster case.

The three accused, vessel Captain Kevin Price, 40; Chief Mate Rondell Dwayne Roberts, 42; and Goods Superintendent Delon Granderson, 33, appeared virtually before the Suddie Magistrate’s Court facing murder charges stemming from the tragedy. All three men were further remanded to prison.

Defense attorneys, including Everton Lammy, representing Roberts, and Dr. Dexter Todd, representing Granderson and Price, contend that state authorities bypassed mandatory statutory procedures prior to instituting criminal charges.

Speaking during the court proceedings, Dr. Todd informed the

magistrate that the Shipping Act strictly mandates a formal marine accident investigation before any criminal investigation by the Guyana Police Force can lawfully take place. “Procedurally, none of it has been followed,” Dr. Todd argued. “If the vessel goes down as a result of some act... through the investigation or omissions, it is only after an investigation by the authorities in relation to marine casualty investigations that you get to the issue of the police.”

Dr. Todd explained that criminal police investigations without prior maritime inquiries are intended strictly for exceptional crimes aboard a vessel, such as a mass shooting or an assault on a passenger, rather than a maritime sinking event. “It is important that we seek the court’s protection in having the men who are before it protected under the law, as opposed to bypassing the legislation and getting straight to the issues of a criminal

investigation without clearly following the various steps,” Todd stated, committing to detailing the specific sections of the Shipping Act in written submissions.

Magistrate Mohabir set September 28 as the deadline for defense counsel to file their written submissions on the abuse of process application. State Prosecutor Moore was granted until October 12 to submit a response before the court rules on October 19. The court previously fixed November 16 for the official commencement of paper committal proceedings.

The severe charges arise from the catastrophic sinking of the MV Barima on July 18, which claimed the lives of 73 people, left 30 individuals unaccounted for, and saw 76 survivors rescued. Police previously confirmed that murder charges were instituted following formal legal advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). (Kaieteur News)

St Lucia increases prices for petroleum products amid higher international oil costs

The St Lucia government says that while it will continue to provide subsidies on petroleum products to cushion the impact of higher international prices on consumers, it has no choice but to adjust the retail price of these products for citizens.

In a statement, the Office of the Prime Minister said that the price changes take effect from September 14, 2026, and will apply for the three-week period ending October 4, 2026

“The public is hereby notified that, in keeping with changes in international oil prices and the Government’s application of the modified market pass-through petroleum pricing mechanism, the retail prices of gasoline, diesel and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) have been adjusted,” it said, noting that the retail price of kerosene remains unchanged.

But the price of gasoline has increased from EC\$16.75 to EC\$17.25 per imperial gallon, while diesel increased from EC\$16.75 to EC\$17.25 per imperial gallon.

The Government said that a 20-pound LPG cylinder increased from EC\$34.00 to EC\$36.00 per cylinder, a 22-pound LPG cylinder increased from EC\$38.00 to EC\$40.00, while a 100-pound LPG cylinder increased from EC\$288.50 to EC\$314.88 per cylinder.

It said bulk LPG increased from \$2.76 to \$3.02 per pound.

The Government said it will continue to provide subsidies on petroleum products to cushion the impact of higher international prices on consumers.

“For the period September 14 to October 4, 2026, subsidies will continue to apply to diesel, kerosene and all LPG products.

“The adjustments reflect movements



in international crude oil and refined petroleum product prices during the reference period from August 17 to September 6, 2026. During that period, the average price of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil increased by 6.7 per cent to US\$86.08 per barrel,” the Government statement said. (CMC)



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All applications must be submitted to the Admin Office by Friday 18th September 2026.



Regional News

Ex-Google worker adds to AI alarm, warns of 'potential to kill us all'

A former Google DeepMind employee warned that rapidly advancing artificial intelligence could become uncontrollable and has "the potential to kill us all," adding to a growing list of industry insiders sounding the alarm.

Monday's comments from Bilal Chughtai, a research engineer who left Google DeepMind in July, echoed a warning issued last week by Jacob Coxon, who resigned from Anthropic and is a former OpenAI employee.

Coxon's statement ignited a renewed focus on AI safety that has prompted top tech CEOs and even President Donald Trump to weigh in.

"I earnestly believe that AI has the potential to kill us all, and that we might be running out of time to avoid this outcome," wrote Chughtai, who has joined BlueDot Impact, a non-profit organisation dedicated to training on artificial intelligence.

He cited the much-discussed July incident at OpenAI, which saw experimental AI models break out of their supposedly confined testing environment to venture onto the internet and hack into the Hugging Face platform.

For him, the episode demonstrated that AI can now "escape our control and take dangerous actions that may result in the permanent disempowerment or death of humanity."

"We are not on track to solve alignment in time," Chughtai said, referring to the process of developing AI that behaves in accordance with humanity's interests.

"Frontier AI capabilities are improving much faster than our understanding of AI alignment," said Chughtai, a mathematician by training.



The incident cited by Chughtai as well as the advent of autonomous recursive improvement (ARI), a process by which AI improves itself without human intervention, have prompted a number of prominent tech leaders to speak out.

On Saturday, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei called for a slowdown in the pace of AI development, a sentiment that OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Google DeepMind President Demis Hassabis and Elon Musk all supported.

US President Donald Trump has

however, dismissed warnings about the risks of AI as "hoaxes."

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has also pushed back.

"The confluence of these words and then the prediction is alarming and troubling and it shouldn't be done. It's irresponsible," Huang said Monday at a conference in Los Angeles where Trump called him while he was on stage.

The dire outlook that AI could destroy humanity "is not grounded on science," Huang said. (AFP)

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South African police race to solve killings of seven women amid serial killer fears



South African police are racing to crack the killings of at least seven women whose bodies have been found east of Johannesburg in two months, the latest on Tuesday.

The country has one of the world's highest homicide rates, but the discovery of the women's bodies, partially naked and battered, has sparked fresh anxiety and raised fears that a serial killer or group of killers may be operating in the area.

Five bodies were recovered in just one week in the Ekurhuleni municipality, police said.

"We are still investigating whether we are dealing with one perpetrator or a group of men that are behind the murders of these women," police spokeswoman Athlenda Mathe said, describing the discoveries as "concerning".

Gender-based violence is endemic in South Africa, where one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence during her lifetime, according to the United Nations.

The first victim, a 37-year-old woman, was found naked and bound with cable ties on July 15, police said. A suspect was arrested two days later.

A second woman, 32, was found partially clothed on August 24, while a third was discovered naked and in an advanced state of decomposition on September 10.

The fourth victim, 38-year-old Elizabeth Moselakgomo, left her eight-year-old daughter at home to go for a jog and never returned. Her body was found on September 12 behind a hotel, police said.

Moselakgomo's disappearance drew public attention after fellow runners launched a social media campaign to find her, which led to the discovery of more bodies.

President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday said "no stone will be left unturned" to solve the killings, acknowledging "these incidents are causing fear and uncertainty in our communities, and especially among women".

Acting police minister Firoz Cachalia described the discovery of the bodies as "deeply disturbing".

Amnesty International South Africa said the discovery of the bodies was "just another horrific reminder that women in South Africa are not safe".

South Africa, a nation of 62 million people, has some of the highest rates of violence against women and children in the world, according to UN Women.

At least 60 people are killed each day in South Africa, many linked to turf battles between gangs involved in drugs and illegal mining. (AFP)

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Maduro ally pleads guilty to US money laundering charges



Former Venezuelan minister and ally of ousted president Nicolas Maduro, Alex Saab, pleaded guilty on Tuesday to money laundering under a deal with US prosecutors, according to a Miami court order.

His case is closely linked to that of Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, whose case on drug trafficking charges is being heard in a New York court following their capture in Caracas on January 3 by US armed forces.

Saab, who was extradited in May this year, initially pleaded not guilty before a judge on July 24 but has now changed his plea to guilty, agreeing to cooperate in exchange for a reduced sentence.

“The Defendant agrees to plead guilty to the sole count of the indictment, which charges the Defendant with Conspiracy to Launder Monetary Instruments,” the order from the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida stated.

The agreement provides for the forfeiture of \$195 million, a sum prosecutors believe is linked to an alleged years-long scheme involving corruption and the diversion of funds from Venezuela’s CLAP food aid program.

Saab could face about 20 years in prison on the money laundering charge, though both the final forfeiture amount and his final sentence depend on the extent of his cooperation with authorities. (AFP)



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More than 100,000 people in Japan are now aged 100 or older



The number of people aged 100 or more in Japan has exceeded 100,000 for the first time, according to the health ministry.

Figures show Japan is now home to 107,677 centenarians, the highest number in the world, of whom 88% are women. The oldest woman is Kishimoto Fuyo, a 114-year-old from Kyoto City and the oldest man is Kato Hikaru, a 112-year-old from Kumamoto.

Health Minister Kenichiro Ueno said he was “delighted that so many people are living long, healthy and active lives”, citing progress in medicine and technology.

But Kenichiro also warned of the challenge the country faces in maintaining a sustainable social security system.

Experts put the long lives of the Japanese down to several factors, including a healthy diet and an active lifestyle.

The island nation’s cuisine predominantly consists of fish, vegetables, and rice - and less saturated fat than many Western diets.

Older people also regularly walk,

use public transport, cycle and stretch.

Japan has been aging for years and sales of adult nappies have been higher than those for babies for more than a decade.

Companies have also developed new products for the older population, including a powered exoskeleton to support moving various parts of the body and eyewear that automatically adjusts its focus.

For a population to replace itself, each woman needs to give birth to 2.1 children on average. Last year Japan’s total fertility rate dropped to a record low of 1.14.

The total population is estimated to drop to 87 million by 2070, representing a 30% decline from its peak of 128 million in 2008, according to data from the National Institute of Population and Social Security research.

Residents aged 65 and older currently make up around 30% of the population and are expected to make up nearly 40% by 2070.

Japanese authorities have called the trend an “existential crisis” with

Prime Minister Sanae Takichi describing the decline as a “quiet emergency”.

In 2025 Japan’s total population decreased in all 47 prefectures but two, and the rate of decline is accelerating.

The government’s many programmes and subsidies to encourage young people to have more children do not appear to be boosting birth rates.

Experts say the reasons are complex, ranging from lower marriage rates and more women joining the workforce to the increased costs of raising children.

While immigration has risen in previous years, foreigners only make up around 3% of the population and opposition to accepting more has grown.

The most recent figures were released ahead of Japan’s annual “Respect for the Aged” public holiday, on which the government honours those turning 100 with a personal letter and traditional sake cup.

Studies have previously cast doubt on the validity of global centenarian numbers, suggesting data errors, unreliable public records and missing birth certificates may account for elevated figures.

A government audit of family registries in Japan in 2010 uncovered more than 230,000 people listed as being aged 100 or older who were unaccounted for, some having died decades previously.

The miscounting was attributed to patchy record-keeping and suspicions that some families may have tried to hide the deaths of elderly relatives in order to claim their pensions. (BBC)

Sports News

Winning start for BOE in defense of Business Basketball League title



The Board of Education team that won the 2025 Cool and Smooth ABBA Business Basketball League title. (File photo)

The Board of Education (BOE) made a winning start in defense of their title in the 2026 Cool and Smooth Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League on Monday evening.

The Board of Education launched their campaign with a commanding 90-53 drubbing of former champions, the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board (ABTB), in the last game of a triple-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Daniel Perez shot a game-high 28 points, his brother Danny Perez supported with 15 points, and Beniah Mark scored 14 points for the Board of Education.

Veteran Ishaan Peets sank 18 points, and Elijah Charles converted 15 points

for the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board.

A winning start as well for Richie's Shooterz, who finished in second place behind the BOE last year. Richie's Shooterz shot their way to an emphatic 116-45 victory over the newcomers Philippines in Monday's opening game.

Steven Matthew shot a game-high 30 points, Jaheem James sank 24 points, point-guard Tavarus Benta had 23 points, and Sean Nicholas scored 16 points for Richie's Shooterz. JP Sajol converted 10 points for the Philippines, who were making their debut in the tournament.

Sandals rebounded from a narrow 42-45 loss to newcomers CTM Auto Spa in their opening game to claim their

first win with a 50-35 victory against newcomers Christos in Monday's second encounter.

Selassie Brathwaite sank 15 points, and Keaddy Martin scored 10 points for Sandals. Kwame Huntley produced a game-high 14 points for Christos, who were also making their debut in this year's tournament.

The business basketball league will continue with another triple-header at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday evening.

The Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board will take on Sir Lester Bird Medical Center (SLBMC) at 6:30 pm, Christos will face APCMOL at 7:30 pm, and the Board of Education will meet the Sledge'O Ballers at 8:30 pm.

ABFA committee completes CONCACAF Executive Mentorship Programme



Members of the ABFA and CONCACAF officials that participated in the recent CONCACAF Executive Mentorship Programme. (ABFA)

The Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) hosted the regional governing body, the Confederation of North, Central America, and Caribbean Association of Football (CONCACAF) Executive Mentorship Programme (EMP), on September 12 and 13.

According to an ABFA media release, the full ABFA Executive Committee and every Head of Department attended the sessions on both days over the weekend.

The EMP is a One CONCACAF Initiative developed under the confederation's governance evolution agenda.

It extends best-practice sharing beyond presidents and general secretaries to entire executive councils across CONCACAF's 41 member associations and is delivered on-site at the host association.

The two-day curriculum covered leadership and governance, the role

of the executive committee and the separation of powers, administration, the conduct of executive meetings and congresses, strategic and financial planning, crisis and risk management, and ethics and integrity.

Delivery was led by a senior CONCACAF team, which included Horace Reid, Director of the CONCACAF Caribbean Office; Howard McIntosh, Director of Caribbean Member Associations Affairs; Camara David, Facilitator; and Mikael Brann, Facilitator, who led the sessions on association communications.

"I am satisfied that our executive council has had the opportunity to see CONCACAF at work at close quarters," said ABFA President Ickford 'Nyah' Roberts.

"What that gives us is exposure to the football ecosystem and an appreciation of the synergy required between the executive council and the

secretariat of the association to run as a well-oiled machinery. Governance is not an abstraction. It is the discipline that allows every other part of our football to function."

Attendance by all executive committee members is a requirement of the programme. The ABFA extended the requirement to all heads of departments, ensuring that the administrative staff responsible for implementing its executive decisions received the same instruction as the officials who take them.

"The value of this programme is not in the two days. It is in what follows," said ABFA General Secretary Zorol Barthley.

"We now develop our action plan, and we take this training to our stakeholders. That is how governance becomes practice rather than paperwork."

Kawhi Leonard's return to Toronto is official



Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard warms up before an NBA basketball game in Portland, Oregon, on April 10, 2026. (AP)

The trade sending Kawhi Leonard back to Toronto is finally complete, with the Raptors and Los Angeles Clippers getting league approval on Monday to close the deal that was agreed to earlier this summer.

In the end, the deal was the same as what was agreed to 2 1/2 months ago: Leonard returns to the Raptors, with the Clippers getting Brandon Ingram, Grady Dick, two first-round draft picks, two second-round picks and a pick swap.

"We're thrilled to welcome Kawhi back to Toronto," Raptors general manager and executive vice president Bobby Webster said.

"His impact on our organization, our city, and our country is undeniable, and he embodies the competitiveness and championship mindset that we value. We believe his leadership, experience and talent will help us as

we continue building toward our next championship."

It's a huge move for Toronto, which won the 2019 NBA title with Leonard leading the way and is expecting to contend in the Eastern Conference. But the sides put the agreement on hold in early July pending any resolution of NBA's investigation into whether the Clippers circumvented salary cap rules with regard to Leonard's compensation.

The NBA hit the Clippers earlier this month with massive penalties as a result of that probe, suspending owner Steve Ballmer for one year, fining the team US\$30 million and forcing it to forfeit five first-round draft picks, among other sanctions.

Leonard, a two-time NBA Finals MVP, was hit with a US\$700,000 penalty as a result of that investigation. But he was not suspended and his con-

tract was not voided, and the Raptors evidently are certain that his status will not be affected.

Leonard, 35, spent one season in Toronto — and led the Raptors to their lone title. He is coming off the highest-scoring season of his career, averaging 27.9 points for the Clippers in 65 games.

Leonard is a seven-time All-Star, seven-time All-NBA selection, a two-time NBA champion (also winning in 2014 with San Antonio) and is considered one of the game's top defensive players. He is expected to sign an extension with the Raptors once the trade is finalized.

Toronto visits the Clippers on Nov. 2 and hosts the Clippers on Jan. 1. The teams are also scheduled to meet at Vancouver in a preseason game on Oct. 10.

James Rodríguez ends 15-year Colombia career at 35



Colombia's James Rodríguez celebrates after defeating Costa Rica at the end of a friendly soccer match in Bogota, Colombia, Monday, June 1, 2026. (AP)

BOGOTÁ, Colombia (AP) — James Rodríguez, one of the most talented midfielders in Colombian soccer history, announced the end of his 15-year international career on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Rodríguez recently signed with Atlético Nacional — concluding a long stint playing abroad—and has now decided to step aside from the national team.

“After many years, matches, moments of joy, and tough times. I feel the moment has come to close a chapter of my life; my journey with the Colombian national team,” Rodríguez said in a video posted to his social media channels. “Wearing the jersey was a dream, but also an enormous responsibility.”

Rodríguez made his senior national team debut in October 2011 in a victory over Bolivia in La Paz. His crowning achievement came three years later at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, where he scored six goals in five matches to

win the Golden Boot.

“I was fortunate enough to experience moments I never imagined — World Cups, goals, and unforgettable nights; victories that made us believe and defeats that made us stronger,” Rodríguez said.

“From the moment I joined the national team, I wanted to leave the jersey in a stronger position when I eventually moved on, and looking back at the journey, I feel I achieved that.”

That breakout performance in Brazil earned him a move to Spanish powerhouse Real Madrid, where he spent six seasons and collected two La Liga titles. His club career also included stints with Bayern Munich and Everton.

Since 2022, he has bounced around with stints with Olympiakos in Greece, Sao Paulo in Brazil, Rayo Vallecano in Spain, Club León in Mexico and Minnesota United in the MLS, where he played just six matches.

“I had the honour of wearing the number 10 jersey and the captain’s armband; I tried to do so with respect, responsibility, and an awareness of what Colombia represents,” he added.

“I had good days and difficult ones, but I never stopped feeling proud of these colours.”

Internationally, Rodríguez also played in the 2018 World Cup and the 2026 edition, matching Carlos Valderrama and Freddy Rincón for the most tournament appearances by a Colombian player.

He also captained Colombia to the 2024 Copa América final — the country’s first appearance in the title match in 23 years. He finishes his international career with 31 goals in 131 appearances.

“I leave with peace of mind because I know I gave absolutely everything; thank you for every memory, every hug, and every moment,” added Rodríguez.

ABFA to stage knockout cup pre-season competition

Following a three-season absence, the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) will be staging a pre-season knockout tournament to kick-start its 2026/27 domestic competition programme.

The ABFA Pre-Season Knockout Cup, which was last held in the 2022-23 season, will return with the staging of the preliminary round that will feature all second division teams on September 17 and 18.

Three matches will be played on Thursday, September 17. In a double-header at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park, Point West Ham FC will face Wadadli United at 5pm, and North Coast FC will meet Lion Hill FC at 7 pm.

Fort Road FC will clash with Glanvilles FC at the Fort Road playing field at 5:30 pm.

On Friday, September 18, Urlings Golden Stars will tackle the Liberta Blackhawks at Golden Grove at 5:30 pm, and CPTSA Wings SC will take on Bethesda FC at New Winthorpes at 5:30 pm.

Nine teams have opted out of contesting the tournament, while 27 teams have gained byes into the Round of 32. The winners of the five matches in the preliminary round will join the 27 teams in the Round of 32.

The 27 teams that gained byes into the Round of 32 included several teams that were among the top finishers in last season's second division, as well as the first and premier



Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades won the ABFA Pre-Season Cup in 2022/23. (Photo courtesy of the Jennings Grenades FC)

division clubs.

The winners of the five matches in the preliminary stage will kick off competition in the Round of 32.

Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades, which won the last ABFA Pre-Season Knockout Cup, will begin their defense of their title against the winner of the preliminary round match between CPTSA Wings and Bethesda at Golden Grove on Tuesday, September 22, at 5 pm.

The Jennings Grenades will enter this year's tournament as the top-seeded team. Second-seed Aston Villa Lions will launch their campaign against the winner of the preliminary stage match between Urlings Golden Stars at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park on Tuesday, September 22, at 5:30 pm.

Third-seed Pigotts Bullets FC will kick off their campaign against the winner of the preliminary stage

match between Fort Road FC and Glanvilles FC at Pigotts on Tuesday, September 22, at 5:30 pm.

Fourth-seed Old Road FC will open their campaign against the winner of the preliminary stage match between North Coast FC and Lion Hill FC at Golden Grove on Tuesday, September 22, at 7 pm.

Fifth-seed Garden Stars FC will start their campaign against the winner of the preliminary stage match between Point West Ham and Wadadli United at New Winthorpes on Thursday, September 24, at 5:30 pm.

The winners of matches in the Round of 32 will advance to the Round of 16. The ABFA Pre-Season Knockout Cup will continue with matches in the quarter-finals and semi-finals.

It will conclude with the staging of the final on Sunday, December 20.