

Magistracy Boosted with Two New Appointments

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Several members of the Antigua and Barbuda Falcons returned home on Monday evening from Barbados after winning the Caribbean Premier League 2026.

Permanent Secretary Dr. Clarence Pilgrim of the Ministry of Sports and Creative Industries welcomed home Sir Curtly Ambrose (Team Mentor and Bowling Coach), Wilden Cornwall (Assistant Coach), along with cricketers Rakeem Cornwall and Karima Gore.

Magistracy Boosted with Two New Appointments

The Magistracy of Antigua and Barbuda has been strengthened with the appointment of **Cherissa Roberts-Thomas** as a **Magistrate in the Family Division** and the elevation of **Veronica E. Thomas** to **Senior Magistrate**.

A statement from the Ministry of Legal Affairs outlined that Roberts-Thomas assumed her new judicial role on 1st July 2026, bringing more than two decades of experience in the legal profession to the Bench.

She holds an Upper Second-Class Honours Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Wolverhampton and a Legal Education Certificate from the Norman Manley Law School in Jamaica. She was admitted to the Bar of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court in Antigua and Barbuda in 2002.

After spending eight years in private practice, Roberts-Thomas established **C. Roberts Thomas & Associates** in 2010, where she served as founder and managing attorney.

She has also played an active role in the Antigua and Barbuda Bar Association, serving in several leadership capacities, including as president from 2022 to 2025.

Her professional background includes court-certified mediation, with experience in family mediation, as well as involvement in community and non-profit initiatives focused on community development and social advancement.

Her appointment to the family division of the Magistrates' Court brings extensive legal, mediation and professional leadership experience to a division responsible for matters affecting families and children.



Cherissa Roberts-Thomas

Meanwhile, Veronica E. Thomas has been elevated to **Senior Magistrate**, effective 14th November 2025 and assumed the position at St. John's Magistrates' Court on 1st July 2026.

Senior Magistrate Thomas was called to the Bar of Antigua and Barbuda in October 1998 and has served on the Bench since 2012. She was the first magistrate assigned to the Family Court Division in Antigua and Barbuda.

Before joining the Magistracy, she served as Crown Counsel and Assistant Registrar of the High Court and later entered private legal practice.

Thomas has also contributed to committees of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Association of Women Judges. She is trained in both civil and family law mediation.



Veronica E. Thomas

In her new capacity, Senior Magistrate Thomas has been assigned to the **Criminal and Civil Divisions of the Magistrates' Court in Districts A, B and C**.

Attorney General **Sir Steadroy C. Benjamin** welcomed the appointments, saying the strengthened Magistracy is expected to increase the Court's capacity, assist in reducing delays and enhance access to justice for citizens.

He congratulated both judicial officers on their new roles and wished them continued success as they contribute to the administration of justice in Antigua and Barbuda.

The appointments form part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the country's judicial system and ensure that matters before the Magistrates' Court are handled efficiently and fairly.

Minister Greene takes helm of OECS Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers at challenging period for region



Antigua and Barbuda's Minister of Foreign Affairs, EP Chet Greene has been formally handed the Chair of the OECS Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers, coming at a time when the sub-region is facing one of the most testing and difficult periods in its history.

The chairmanship was handed over to Minister Greene during the 10th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which took place at the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations in New York on Sunday 21st September.

The meeting was chaired by Director General of the OECS Dr Didacus Jules and brought sharp focus and attention to the common and unique set of challenges that are threatening the future survival of the small states of the OECS.

In handing over the chairmanship, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dwight Bramble acknowledged the grave and profound realities ahead for the region.

"The Minister's assumption of the Chairmanship comes at a moment when the established certainties of the international system are increasingly being tested, reinforcing the need for a more cohesive and strategically aligned OECS," Minister Bramble stated.

In his response Minister Greene was quick to acknowledge the rapidly shifting international order and the heightened vulnerability of small states. He said it was imperative for the OECS to respond with collective action, outlining a multi-faceted approach to navigating the uncertain future.

As part of his five-point initiative, he

offered that trade in goods and services within the region need to be expanded. The region, he also suggested, needs to make every effort to build more shared institutions and services, a model that has been serving the OECS well for decades.

"We need stronger air links among our islands, regular sea transport for people



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and cargo, and new connections to nearby markets in Central and South America. Governments can create the policy framework, but carriers, ports, exporters, importers, financial institutions and investors must help design, finance and manage viable services,” noted Minister Greene.

“Colleagues, foreign policy must become an instrument of this programme. I propose that we agree on a limited set of core OECS foreign-policy objectives, with rotating priorities that can be pursued intensively rather than a long

list that exceeds our capacity,” he further suggested.

Among others, he said, these should include the protection of the Economic Union’s development interests, fair treatment of citizenship by investment and international financial services, climate finance and vulnerability-based access to development resources, the coordinated diplomatic action to secure reliable and affordable air and maritime links within the OECS and with alternative markets and defence of multilateralism and international law.

Against this background, Minister Greene is calling for a re-imagined OECS Commission, that establishes an implementation mechanism composed of qualified diplomats and the necessary technical specialists.

“It should translate ministerial decisions into work plans, assign responsibility, set deadlines, coordinate our missions and report regularly on results. Foreign Ministers should provide political direction and review performance. We are small enough and close enough to make this machinery agile and effective,” Minister Greene proposed.

Also in attendance at the meeting and giving support to Minister Greene were Antigua and Barbuda’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Walton Webson and First Secretary Asha Challenger.

The Foreign Affairs Minister is also in New York for the United Nations General Assembly, arriving ahead of Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne who will be leading the country’s delegation. Also joining the Ministerial team at the UN will be Minister of Health, Michael Joseph.

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UWI Five Islands Principal Hails Free Education as 'Bold and Visionary'

Principal of The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus Professor C. Justin Robinson has applauded the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for introducing universal free education.

Free university education at UWI FIC took effect at the commencement of the new academic year earlier this month and the measure forms part of the government's broader effort to expand access to education by removing financial barriers for Antiguan and Barbudan students.

Addressing UWI FIC's Matriculation and Welcome Ceremony 2026, Professor Robinson described the government's free education initiative, which includes paying for students' CSEC and CAPE examinations as 'visionary'.

"Let me say in my opinion, this is bold, this is visionary. It is rare and I want to use the moment to commend the government on this move," he said.

Last Thursday, The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus officially welcomed 587 new students, its largest intake since the campus' first enrolment in September of 2019.

Professor Robinson admonished those present at the ceremony to



West Indies Five Islands Campus Professor C. Justin Robinson

persevere in pursuit of their goals. He acknowledged that achieving higher education will not be the end to life's challenges. However, the Pro Vice-Chancellor stated that it is an important component towards achieving success.

"A government can choose to do many things with the public purse than commit to the education of its own people. And the young, old, middle-aged among us today can choose to do many worse things with three years of their lives than spend it here.

So, I suggest to you the country has done its part for you to be here. Your parents and guardians and those in the room I commend you, they have done their part. What remains here is largely up to you."

Importantly, the new students were told the question should not be what they will study as students of The UWI FIC, but rather, what they will become during the years spent there. According to Professor C. Justin Robinson, the university is more than an expensive training centre that produces qualified people.

"University rests on a set of values, the honest pursuit of truth, the discipline of evidence, the freedom to disagree without malice and the conviction that everybody who walks into our doors is owed dignity. "These values are not empty phrases, they are the point of this university and at this moment, I would suggest that they matter more in human history than for the last 200 years," the senior UWI official stated.

Told that the region is short on people who can get the work done, the new students at UWI FIC were urged to become builders and problem solvers, instead of merely commentators.



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Warri Games Night Sparks Interest in London



The Antigua and Barbuda National Association UK (ABNA UK), together with Karen-Mae High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda, hosted a sold-out Warri Games Night in London recently, bringing together the Antigua and Barbuda diaspora across generations to celebrate and preserve one of Antigua and Barbuda's enduring cultural traditions.

The evening was dedicated to the art of Warri, with children learning the game for the first time and elders

reconnecting with the national board game of Antigua and Barbuda and sharing their knowledge with a new generation.

International Warri Grandmaster Trevor Simon of Antigua and Barbuda attended as the evening's special guest and provided one-to-one tuition and guidance to players. He was joined by Seth Bonti Asamoah of Ghana, President of the World Oware Federation, and Augusto Basheer of Nigeria, Manager of the Nigerian Warri Team,

who also supported participants with practical instruction throughout the evening.

The three arrived in London directly following the VI World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan, where Antigua and Barbuda competed in Warri. Their participation also highlighted Warri's deeper African heritage. Warri belongs to a wider family of mancala games with longstanding roots in West Africa. These traditions crossed the Atlantic with enslaved Africans and became embedded in Caribbean cultural life, including in Antigua and Barbuda.

The event was also attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs, E.P Chet Greene and Sir Vivian Richards, alongside members of ABNA UK and the High Commissioner's Office.

During the evening, ABNA UK pledged to sponsor seven children to become members of the Warri Academy, supporting the continued teaching and preservation of the game in Antigua and Barbuda. One child will be selected by the Warri Academy from each of Antigua's six parishes, togeth-

er with one child from Barbuda.

The initiative is intended to help ensure that knowledge of Warri is passed to future generations at home, while ABNA UK plans to continue creating opportunities for the game to be learned and played by the diaspora in the United Kingdom through future Games Night events.

Lyndia Bowers, President of ABNA UK, said:

“Warri is more than a game. It is part of the story, heritage and identity that connects generations of Antiguans and Barbudans. Seeing children in the UK learning to play for the first time, while our elders reconnected with the game and shared their knowledge, showed exactly why traditions like this must be kept alive.

Karen-Mae Hill, High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda, commented:

“Warri is a living expression of our history and identity, and it is especially encouraging to see it bringing generations together here in the United Kingdom. The High Commission is proud to support ABNA UK in creating opportunities for our diaspora to learn, celebrate and pass on this important part of Antigua and Barbuda’s cultural heritage.

E.P. Chet Greene, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, noted:

“The preservation of Warri is part of the preservation of who we are as a people. This event demonstrates the important role our diaspora plays in keeping our traditions strong and sharing them with future generations.

Trevor Simon, International Warri Grandmaster for Antigua and Barbuda, said:

“I was happy to be part of the successful Warri Games Night hosted by ABNA UK and, KarenMae Hill, continuing our quest to teach, preserve and pass on our heritage game from generation to generation. It was refreshing to observe the camaraderie that was on show.”



NOTICE

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Dated the 18th day of September, 2026
Othis Ambrose
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Sir Rodney and Lady Williams join RCS Global Meeting



Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams represented Antigua and Barbuda at the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) Global Meeting held in Alberta, Canada, earlier this month. The conference was organized with the invaluable assistance of Edmonton RCS President Ian Havin and team.

As Patron and President of the Antigua and Barbuda RCS respectively, Sir Rodney and Lady Williams participated in the 4-day conference which covered a vast array of topics, including the strengthening of the international branch of the organization. Participation in the event was primarily self-funded.

Sir Rodney expanded on the topic of the upcoming CHOGM to be held in

Antigua from November 1-4, as most of the participants who were present had already applied for accreditation and are making plans to be in attendance.

The Caribbean RCS team commenced its regional planning and organization during the Alberta meeting, and President Lady Williams was thanked for her initiative and assistance by the Chairperson of the RCS UK branch, Janet Cooper, who joined the meeting remotely.

Lady Williams mentioned, "There are clear synergies amongst the activities of the Caribbean nations, and moving forward, we will be working closely together to achieve our goals. Dame Sandra Mason (President) and Cheryll Belle (Vice President) of the Barbados

RCS are quite easily the most experienced, as well as the longest serving executives in the Caribbean. Our plans to strengthen both the benefits and outreach of our regional branch, which are now in the initial stages of formation, will soon be publicly articulated. We look forward to being of greater service to our nations".

The RCS Antigua and Barbuda branch had chosen to focus primarily on the environment, and will continue to perform in this vein, while extending more emphatically into other areas of operation.

Lady Williams revealed that in partnership with the Hong Kong Branch, the RCS global executive will be networking soon again at a cocktail party to be hosted at the Galley Bay Hotel in



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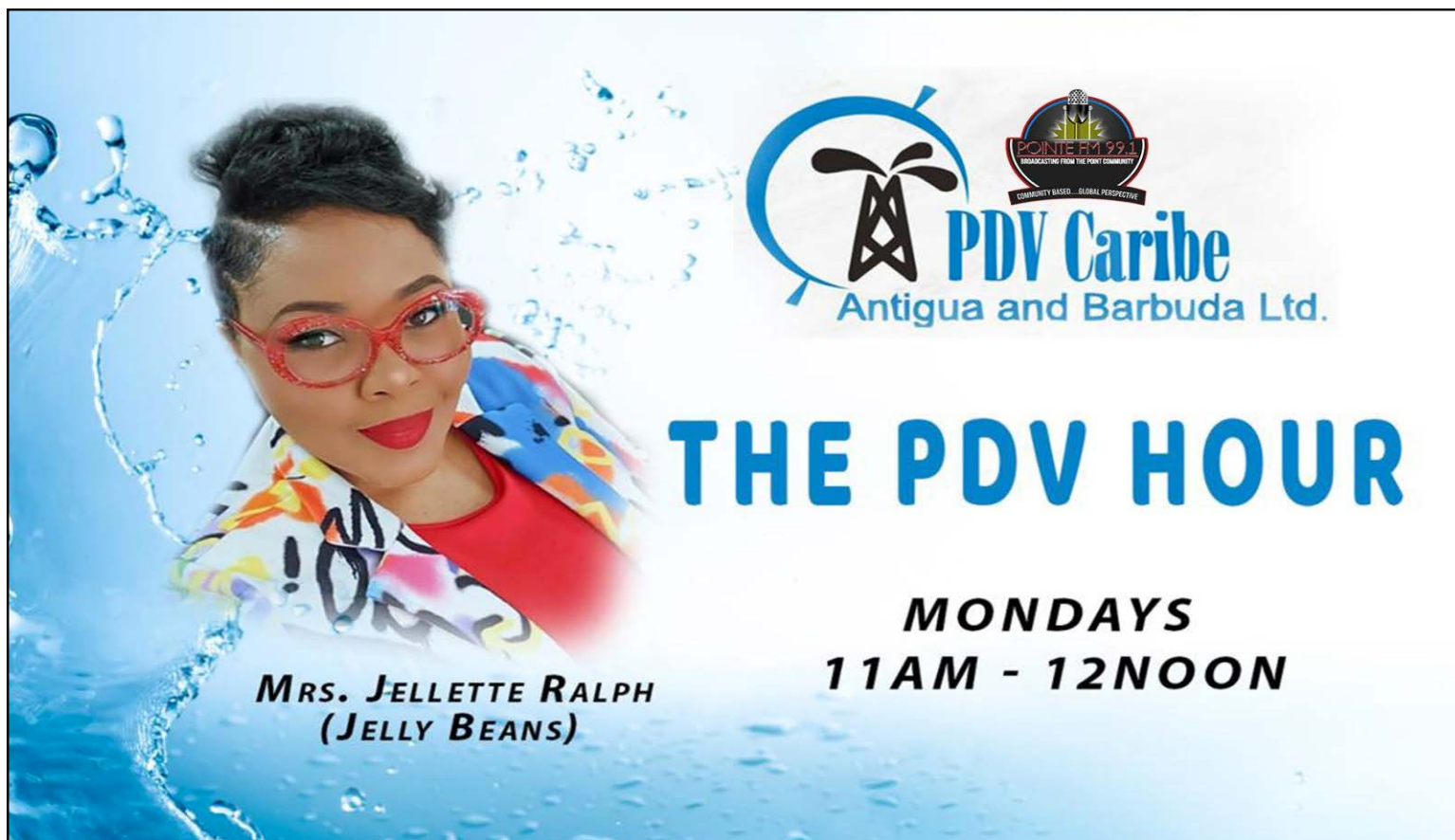
early November. “It is quite a boost for Antigua and Barbuda “, she continued. “Many of the delegates will be staying in local family owned modest accommodation. So it can be only good news financially for the population “.

While in Alberta, Sir Rodney and

Lady Williams were invited to have tea and discussions with RCS Alberta Patron Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani and her husband Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, a prominent cardiologist.

The Patron of the RCS (Global) is

King Charles III, while the Patron of the annual Queen’s Essay Competition is Queen Camilla. Prizes include trips to London for students who enter and win the competition.



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Why That Big Talk in New York Matters



When leaders climb into black cars in Manhattan while onions cost a fortune back home, it looks like political escapism. Here is why the UN General Assembly is actually our front line.

Walk through Cheapside Market in Bridgetown, Coronation Market in Kingston, or the roadside stalls in Belmopan on a Saturday morning, and not a single soul is debating the United Nations.

People are checking the price of sweet peppers, grimacing at the cost of a bag of onions, and trying to figure out how the electricity bill climbed again this month. So when the evening news shows our Caribbean prime ministers and presidents putting on dark suits, gliding through Manhattan in police motorcades, and talking into microphones in an echoing green hall, the reaction from the woman shelling peas or the man gutting fish is completely understandable: What does all that high-sounding speech-

ifying in America have to do with the change in my pocket? The answer is simple: far more than you think. Look closely at the speaking list for the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. On Thursday morning, 24 September, Guyana's president walks onto the green marble stage. That very afternoon, Venezuela steps up to the exact same podium.

Why does that matter to an everyday Caribbean citizen? Because Venezuela continues to assert claim to the Esse-

quibo, which makes up roughly two-thirds of Guyana. Two days later, on Saturday morning, Belize takes the rostrum, facing its own unresolved territorial claim with Guatemala, which speaks earlier in the week.

None of our Caribbean nations possess aircraft carriers, tank divisions, or massive military budgets to fight off neighbours twenty times our size. When you do not have gunboats, the rule of law is your primary artillery, and that microphone in New York is your loudest defensive weapon. When

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our leaders stand up there before nearly two hundred nations, they are laying down a marker on the global record: These borders are settled, this land is ours, leave our territory alone. If we do not show up to tell the world who we are, the bully writes the narrative for us.

Then there is the direct connection to your grocery bill. Every time a storm rips the roof off a primary school, washes out an essential bridge, or drowns a farmer's crops, where does the recovery money come from? Governments have to borrow it. But because international banks in Washington and Europe use outdated mathematical formulas that look at our small populations and label us "middle income," they charge us heavy commercial interest rates.

By the time the treasury pays back foreign lenders, there is precious little cash left over to fix rural roads, supply parish clinics, or cushion rising food costs. When Caribbean leaders take that stage together, they are demanding an overhaul of the global lending rules. If they win better disaster financing, it shields national budgets, protects social services, and helps prevent everyday living costs from spiraling out of control.

"A single small territory crying out in New York is easily dismissed as background noise. But fourteen votes moving as a disciplined, unified caucus represent an indispensable bloc."

The real tragedy is not the journey to New York. The real danger is when our leaders get to Manhattan and sing from fourteen different sheets of music.

External powers know our weakness. They routinely use bilateral aid packages and diplomatic handshakes to divide our vote, peeling one country away from the collective group. It is the exact same dynamic every market vendor understands instinctively.

If one vendor walks into a wholesaler's office alone to protest the price of a sack of flour, the manager laughs and points to the door. But if all fourteen vendors stand together at the gate and refuse to buy until the terms are fair, the supplier has to sit down and negotiate.

When you see our Caribbean leaders step up to that famous UN rostrum this week, do not dismiss it as mere political theatre. That microphone is where we defend our borders, negotiate our financial survival, and demand respect for our sovereignty. Our leaders only need the domestic discipline and collective courage to stand as one family, because in a world fracturing into raw geopolitical power, nobody is going to protect our stall if we do not defend it together.

Caribbean Bridges by Julian Rogers
julian@caribbeanbridges.com
 #UNGA81 #CARICOM #Guyana
 #Belize #CaribbeanPeople #CostOf-Living
 #Diplomacy #Sovereignty

The UNGA 2026 Roll Call: CAR-ICOM Schedule

From the official provisional speaker list for the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly General Debate (22 to 28 September 2026):

► **Tuesday, 22 September:**

- Morning: Trinidad and Tobago
- Afternoon (3:00 pm – 9:00 pm): **Suriname** (No. 3, Head of State), **Dominica** (No. 8, Head of State)

► **Thursday, 24 September:**

- Morning (9:00 am – 2:45 pm): **Guyana** (No. 6, Head of State)
- Afternoon (3:00 pm – 9:00 pm): **Barbados** (No. 6, Head of Government)

► **Friday, 25 September:**

- Morning (9:00 am – 2:45 pm): **Saint Lucia** (No. 16, Head of Government)
- Afternoon (3:00 pm – 9:00 pm): **Antigua and Barbuda** (No. 5, Head of Government), **Saint Kitts and Nevis** (No. 6, Head of Government), **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** (No. 7, Head of Government), **The Bahamas** (No. 8, Head of Government), **Haiti** (No. 11, Head of Government)

► **Saturday, 26 September:**

- Morning (9:00 am – 2:45 pm): **Belize** (No. 3, Head of Government)
- Afternoon (3:00 pm – 7:00 pm): **Grenada** (No. 12, Minister)

► **Monday, 28 September:**

- Morning (9:00 am – 2:45 pm): **Jamaica** (No. 16, Minister)



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The poster features a vibrant background image of three Antigua Carnival dancers in elaborate costumes with large, colorful feathered headdresses. The central dancer is a woman in a gold and blue outfit, flanked by two men in similar attire. They are all smiling and dancing. The background is a mix of bright colors and abstract geometric shapes.

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Regional News

18 suspects accused in July 2021 killing of Haiti's president being extradited from Haiti to US

Eighteen suspects who were arrested in the July 2021 killing of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse were being extradited to the United States on Sunday, marking the end of a drawn-out judicial process in Haiti for a killing that shocked the troubled Caribbean country.

The suspects will face justice in Florida, according to Jason Reding Quiñones, US Attorney for the Southern District of Florida.

"Today marks the next major phase in our pursuit of accountability for the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse," he wrote on X.

"We will follow the evidence wherever it leads, to those who financed it, facilitated it, supported it or committed crimes to make it possible. Five years later, we are still bringing defendants before American courts, and we are not finished."

Quiñones did not identify the suspects, and a spokesperson for the US Department of Justice did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Sunday.

The suspects who remained in Haiti awaiting trial included 17 Colombian soldiers and Joseph Badio, a former Haiti Ministry of Justice employee who was part of an anti-corruption unit.

Badio, considered a key suspect, was arrested in Haiti in October 2023 after being on the run for more than two years.

Defence attorneys in the US for other suspects have asserted Badio was the mastermind behind a plan to use the president's arrest to assassinate Moïse.

Authorities have said some of the suspects envisioned a coup, not an assassination, and the Colombian soldiers have testified in Haiti that they



were beaten, threatened with death and forced to sign documents in a language they don't understand.

Quiñones said that 30 people have been indicted in Moïse's killing, with FBI Special Agent in Charge Brett Skiles noting that there were multiple arrests in the US and abroad on Sunday.

He said that the FBI and others "remain steadfast in ensuring that all individuals who allegedly sought profit from the assassination of a head of state are held fully accountable."

Haiti's Ministry of Justice and Public Security said in a statement that it

surrendered the suspects "to allow for their trial."

"In order to bring to a successful conclusion the judicial proceedings... the Haitian government has decided to strengthen its cooperation with the American judicial authorities," it said, noting that the proceedings in Haiti "continue to face significant difficulties."

The wife of one of the suspects, Diana Marcela Arbeláez Llano, said in a phone interview Sunday from Colombia that the extradition caught her and the relatives of the other suspects by surprise.

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Regional News

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“We never imagined that the United States would have taken them so suddenly,” she said, adding that she hopes they have the opportunity to prove their innocence.

Arbeláez said all the detained Colombians are very sick given the notoriously inhumane conditions in Haitian prisons, and that while she hopes their health will improve in the US, she remains worried.

“I don’t know why the United States would have taken them,” she said. “It’s a state of total uncertainty.”

Relatives of the Colombian suspects had previously complained about the repeated delays in the Haitian judicial process following their arrest in 2021, with the investigation stalled by gang violence, death threats and a crumbling judicial system.

In October 2025, justice officials in Haiti asked the US and Canada for help after a local court of appeals ordered a new investigation into Moïse’s killing, the third inquiry of its kind since he was shot 12 times at his private residence in July 2021 in

an attack that also injured his wife.

The previous investigations were stalled because Haitian judges kept resigning from the case, fearing for their lives, and gangs seized control of the downtown Port-au-Prince courthouse where the judges were interrogating suspects.

The extraditions come as the US continues to prosecute and sentence multiple other suspects in the case.

In May, a jury in Florida convicted four men in the killing, and at least five others have pleaded guilty and are serving life sentences.

Those recently convicted include Arcángel Pretel Ortiz, Antonio Intriago, Walter Veintemilla and James Solages, all of whom pleaded not guilty.

A jury found them guilty of conspiring to kill or kidnap Haiti’s elected leader and providing material support for the plot.

Still awaiting trial is Christian Sannon, a Haitian-American citizen whom authorities said was initially picked by the alleged conspirators to

replace Moïse.

Once in power, the plan was for him to award contracts to a company known as CTU for infrastructure projects, security forces and military equipment.

Ortiz and Intriago were principals for CTU, which stood for Counter Terrorist Unit Federal Academy and Counter Terrorist Unit Security. Meanwhile, Veintemilla was a principal of Worldwide Capital Lending Group. Both companies were based in South Florida.

Suspects who previously pleaded guilty in US federal court include a retired Colombian army officer and a Haitian-Chilean businessman who was once an informant for the US government.

Authorities said that key fugitives in the case include Dimitri Hérard, ex-head of security at Haiti’s National Palace, who escaped two years ago after a powerful gang federation stormed Haiti’s two biggest prisons. (AP)

Cabbies and residents protest in Westmoreland over poor roads, demerit system

Taxi operators along with residents mounted roadblocks Monday in sections of Westmoreland, including Shrewsbury, Bullet Tree and Harford, in protest of poor road conditions and the new demerit point system.

A resident told Observer Online that the protest began sometime after 6 am.

“They are protesting poor road conditions and based on the new rules that come in. They said that the police not asking any questions, they just see you on the road and when they stop you they just give you the ticket and when you ask them what is it for, they say ask the government,” the resident added.

The new demerit point system, which



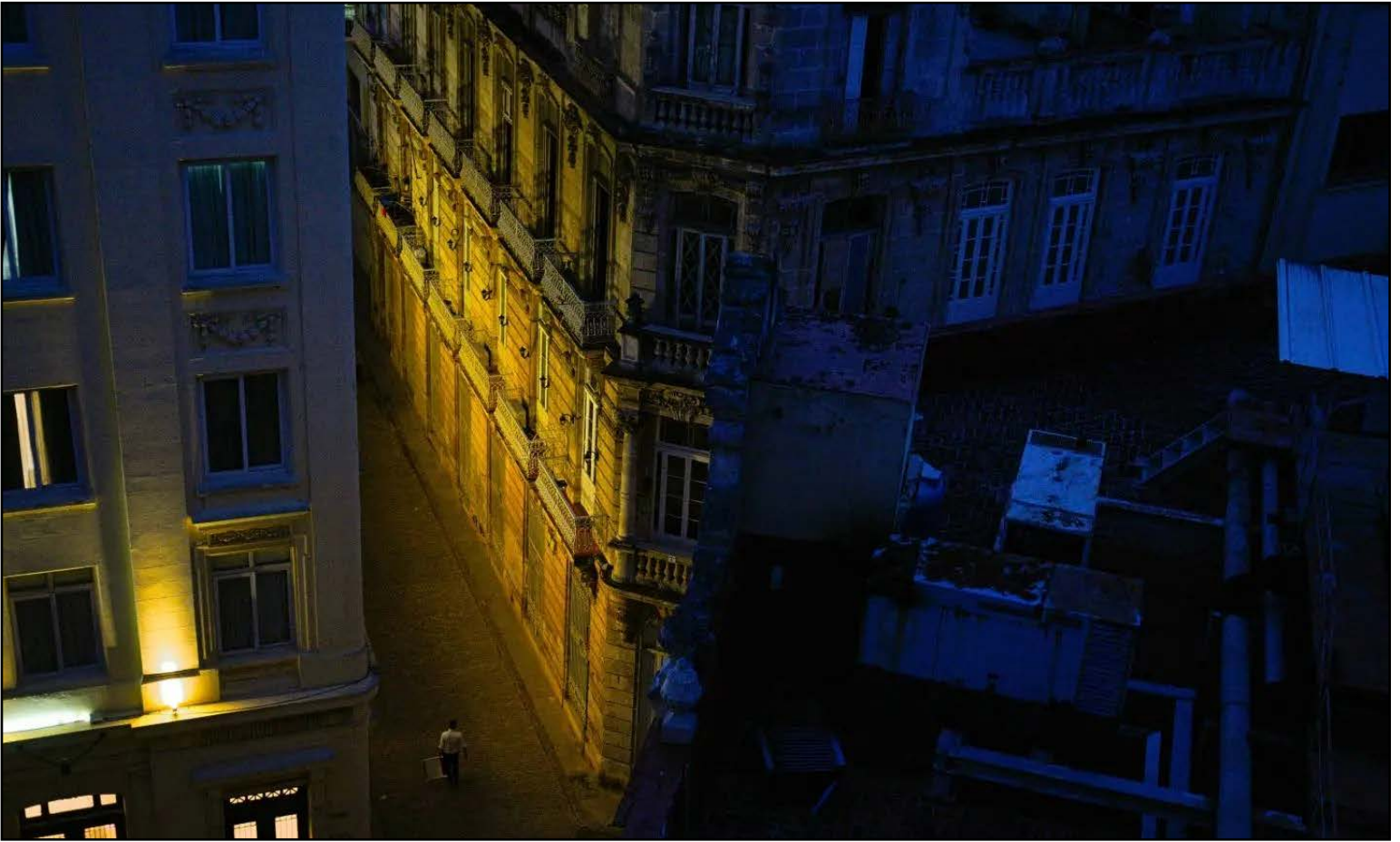
was set to take effect on October 1, 2026, has been delayed following a consensus reached by the Public Transport Operators Steering Committee and transport stakeholders until a full revision is completed.

The revision is expected to incorporate recommendations from the committee as well as the roll out of an education programme.

Under the demerit system, every driver begins with zero points. Demerit points are added to a driver’s traffic record when specified offences are committed, and a driver’s licence is automatically suspended once the accumulated points reach the prescribed thresholds. (Jamaica Observer)

Regional News

Cuba works to restore power after another blackout



Cuba worked Saturday to restore power after its seventh major blackout of the year, as the communist-run island grappled with woes triggered by a United States (US) fuel blockade.

This latest nationwide outage, the 12th since late 2024, occurred after a failure in transmission lines paired with “unstable weather conditions,” state-run utility UNE said Friday.

The blackout first hit five provinces in eastern Cuba, including Havana, and then spread to the rest of the country.

UNE said 48 per cent of its customers in Havana had regained power on Saturday.

The island of over nine million people endures constant power cuts due to the poor state of its aging thermoelectric plants.

But the situation has worsened significantly since January, when Washington imposed a de facto energy blockade on the island in a bid to pressure

Havana’s communist government.

A severe lack of fuel makes it difficult to supply Cuba’s power plants and backup generators, which typically run on imported diesel.

“It’s one thing after another: no water, no gas for cooking, no electricity,” schoolteacher Lidia Fernandez, who was just finishing up her workday, told AFP on Friday.

“Honestly, I don’t know how we haven’t gone crazy,” the visibly irritated 36-year-old added.

In recent weeks, blackouts have lasted more than 30 hours in the capital, while in outlying provinces, they have sometimes stretched past 60 hours.

The cuts have also affected the island’s water supply and mobile phone network, and general living conditions are extremely tough for residents.

Havana blames the crisis on an array of US-imposed punitive measures,

while Washington attributes the hardship to poor internal management.

An economic crisis has engulfed the Caribbean island, where 66 per cent of the population lives in poverty, according to an independent study released this week.

That is compared to 45 per cent in mid-2025, with rising food costs behind the sharp increase in poverty, the research by the Christian Center for Reflection and Dialogue (CCRD) suggests.

The findings give “an indicative picture that the problem is growing,” study coordinator Mayra Espina told AFP.

Another retiree, Zunilda Garcia, took the latest blackout in stride, stepping outside to charge a small lamp with solar energy.

“We have to wait and stay calm,” Garcia, 60, said. “We can’t lose hope.” (AFP)

Guyana says trade with China exceeded US\$1 billion last year

Prime Minister Mark Phillips says Guyana's trade with China reached approximately US\$1.8 billion in 2025, while the country's exports to the Asian market climbing to a record US\$501 million.

"In 2025, two-way trade between Guyana and China reached approximately US\$1.8 billion, and Guyana's exports to China grew to US\$501 million, our strongest performance in trade to date, which raised China to the eighth spot as our largest export destination," Phillips told a reception marking the 77th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Phillips said the figure represents a significant expansion in the trading relationship, with China also remaining one of Guyana's major sources of imports.

Guyana's Bureau of Statistics recorded US\$1.287 billion in imports from China in 2025, making it the country's third-largest source of imports, behind Singapore and the United States.

Chinese imports accounted for 12.6 per cent of Guyana's total imports for the year with the official figures putting the two-way merchandise trade at an estimated US\$1.79 billion.

The Chinese Embassy has separately cited a higher US\$2.89 billion figure for bilateral trade in 2025.

Guyana's overall exports continue to be dominated by oil, which accounted for 88.4 per cent of the country's US\$20.14 billion in exports in 2025, according to the Bureau of Statistics.

Phillips said Guyana's growing economy was creating further opportunities for commerce with China, as the government seeks to diversify the economy beyond oil while expanding infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and other sectors.



The Prime Minister also pointed to areas where Guyana and China could deepen cooperation, including renewable energy, smart infrastructure, modern transportation and urban development.

Chinese Ambassador Yang Yang said Chinese companies had accumulated around US\$13 billion in investment in Guyana by the end of 2025, citing

projects including the Demerara River Bridge, six regional hospitals and the Aurora Solar Farm.

Chinese state-owned energy company CNOOC also holds a 25 per cent interest in the Stabroek Block, giving China a direct commercial stake in Guyana's largest oil-producing asset. (CMC)

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US refuses visas for Iran UN delegation members

The United States has refused to issue visas for members of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's delegation, including his communications team, for this week's trip to the UN General Assembly, Iranian state media reported Monday.

Pezeshkian will be the highest-ranking Iranian official to enter the United States since the Middle East war began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February.

"In an unprecedented hostile move by the US government, (US President Donald) Trump has denied US visas to certain members of the president's high-level delegation, including members of his communications team," state news agency IRNA reported.

The Mehr news agency also carried the story, citing a spokesperson for the Iranian presidency, and added that Pezeshkian will address the UN General Assembly on Wednesday.

The US has authorised the Iranian delegation to travel for the UN General Assembly but will, like last year, put restrictions in place.



Iran's delegation will not, for instance, be allowed to purchase luxury goods or other items, the State Department said on Thursday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, part of the delegation to the UN, left Iran on Sunday evening for a stopover in Qatar.

Iran says it has conveyed to the US, via Qatar as mediator, conditions for reopening the strategic Strait of Hormuz oil and gas shipping route, which it has choked off since the war began.

The United States, in turn, is imposing a counterblockade of Iranian ports. (AFP)



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CNN, MS NOW and Politico to file lawsuit against Trump's White House ban



CNN, Politico and MS NOW have said they will sue the Trump administration after the three US media outlets were barred from the White House.

President Donald Trump announced the ban on Friday, accusing the organisations of writing “fiction or lies” about his team. The companies said their reporters were denied access to the building on Saturday.

In a joint statement on Monday, they said they were pursuing legal action to “protect our First Amendment rights and defend the principle that the government does not decide what the press reports”.

Posting on Truth Social shortly afterwards, Trump said the White House was not “instituting an assault on the Free Press” and he was targeting “FAKE NEWS”.

The First Amendment forbids the government from “abridging” the freedom of the press - language that courts have traditionally interpreted as preventing the government from discriminating against the media based

on the content of their coverage.

A statement from CNN, Politico and MS NOW continued: “Without notice or process, the White House revoked our journalists’ credentials because it objected to our reporting.

“Left unchallenged, this threatens press freedom and the public’s right to independent journalism free from government interference.”

BBC News has asked the White House for comment.

Announcing the ban last week, Trump did not mention specific stories or reporting that prompted the move, but later said “it’s really just cumulative stories over the last few years”.

The US president added that there “may be others to join them”.

When later asked by a reporter what he meant by this, Trump responded: “Others to come in terms of fake news? Well, you know, the New York Times is fake news, the Washington Post is fake news.”

CNN - one of only five US news out-

lets in the White House press pool for live television - was originally due to cover Trump’s trip to the UN General Assembly in New York on Monday and Tuesday.

But the pool slot has remained vacant and instead the staunchly conservative TV outlet, Real America’s Voice, was listed as “secondary” crew on the trip.

The pool acts as a representative for the media, sharing material with other outlets to save on finance and space when covering presidential events.

In February, the White House announced it was taking control of the press pool which has access to Trump and had for more than a century been managed by the White House Correspondents’ Association.

The same month, the administration moved to bar Associated Press (AP) reporters and photographers from spaces where access is limited, such as the Oval Office or Air Force One, because of the outlet’s usage of the term “Gulf of Mexico” instead of “Gulf of America”. AP filed a lawsuit and the case remains ongoing.

Trump has been frequently critical of news organisations and his administration has launched legal action against a series of outlets, including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the BBC.

Some of the lawsuits have resulted in media organisations agreeing to pay multimillion dollar settlements. Trump’s lawsuit against the BBC is ongoing. (BBC)

Seven Ethiopian rebel groups form new alliance

Several of the rebel groups which have been fighting the Ethiopian authorities in different parts of the country have announced they have formed an alliance to remove the government in Addis Ababa.

The alliance brings together the Fano militia in Amhara, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and four other smaller groupings in a coalition named Alliance for Survival.

The seven groups accuse Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government of presiding over "war, genocide, mass destruction, and utter poverty", claiming Ethiopia is at risk of disintegration.

The BBC has asked the government for comment.

Ethiopia has faced years of armed conflict in Oromia and Amhara, the most populous states in the country.

There have also been renewed tensions in the northern Tigray region, where a two-year civil war left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced millions.

An African-Union peace deal ended that war in 2022, but there have been fears of a return to a full-scale conflict, with both sides accusing each other of violating that agreement.

Besides Oromia, Amhara and Tigray, the new alliance also includes groups based in three other regions - Somali, Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz - making up a half of Ethiopia's 12 regional states.

The states are structured largely based on their dominant ethnic groups - a system of ethnic federalism that gives some autonomy to the states, but which can present social and political challenges for the country which has more than 80 ethnic groups.

Some of the rebel groups in the new alliance have previously fought against



each other but they say they will now work together against their common enemy.

Abdikadir Addaani Hirmooge, the spokesman for the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), which is part of the alliance, told the BBC that the government had not respected a peace deal signed in 2018 to end the conflict in the Somali region.

Addaani accused Abiy's Prosperity Party of being an "obstacle to the people" and "unleashing" wars and many deaths.

"Ethnic conflict, insecurity, and mutual oppression and pushing each other aside have not been eradicated, resulting in a need that has affected every ethnic group," he said.

Addaani said the groups in the new coalition were working to bring together communities that have been divided against one another.

"Our objective is for the communities to have democracy and to exercise their right to self-determination, to genuinely govern themselves," he said.

Amhara's Fano group fought alongside federal forces against the TPLF during the Tigray war.

It however turned against the federal government in an armed insurgency less than a year after the war ended, after refusing government orders to disarm.

The government has been fighting the OLA since 2018.

The announcement of the Alliance for Survival coalition comes months after reports of an alleged alliance between TPLF and neighbouring Eritrea.

Abiy responded by saying he had faith in Ethiopia's "defensive capabilities".

"Even if others were added, we do not have an iota of fear regarding Ethiopia's sovereignty," he told lawmakers in July.

The country held a general election in June, with Abiy's Prosperity Party retaining its overwhelming parliamentary majority, despite the poll being overshadowed by conflict, accusations of repression and little participation by opposition parties.

The Fano and OLA rebel groups rejected the election and its results.

The Tigray region and its six million inhabitants were completely excluded from the poll. (BBC)

Central Colombia forest fire threatens tourist town of Villa de Leyva



A massive wildfire has broken out in central Colombia, threatening the popular tourist town of Villa de Leyva, according to local officials.

The forest fire is near the Andean town in the Boyaca department, with flames engulfing the San Marcos hillside above the colonial architecture and cobblestone streets that attract more than a million visitors annually.

The blaze has already consumed 40 hectares of native forest, sending massive plumes of smoke that are visible from the town's central square, according to Colombian authorities.

On Saturday night, Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella posted on X that "Villa de Leyva is not alone", pledging to mobilise all state resources to fight the fire and protect "this historical jewel" and "beautiful city that is the pride of Colombia".

To combat the flames, the Boyaca department government said it is dispatching two aircraft. A military heli-

copter will also join the effort, along with firefighters from the capital, Bogota, Interior Minister Rodrigo Lara said.

The mayor of Bogota, Carlos Fernando Galan, will be sending a team of firefighters to join local crews from Tunja and Boyaca, reinforcing containment efforts and securing the urban centre, Lara said.

In the equatorial Andes, forest fires peak during the dry season, but this year they are fuelled by a severe El Nino weather pattern. Record high temperatures and lack of moisture have turned vast expanses of the Andean vegetation into tinderboxes. That has intensified a crisis that has already started 18 active wildfires across the country, according to the latest official data from Colombia's National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD).

The impacts of El Nino, a natural weather pattern, are felt globally and

do not affect the entire South American continent in the same way, inducing extreme droughts in some regions and torrential flooding in others. This year, it comes supercharged by the effects of climate change, which is worrying many scientists, governments and aid workers.

The warming of the adjacent Pacific has triggered catastrophic flash floods and landslides in countries such as Peru and Ecuador.

Unlike in the southern part of the continent, where countries including Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have been ex-

pecting unseasonably heavy rainfall, El Nino has the opposite effect in the northern part of the continent. A significant reduction in rainfall leads to severe drought conditions which can suppress cloud formation and displace normal rain patterns, driving average temperatures well above normal.

The soaring heat rapidly evaporates moisture from the ground and water basins, leaving countries such as Colombia with extended periods of drought and critically low precipitation.

"El Nino can bring devastating climate extremes on its own, but it's unfolding today on a much warmer planet, increasing the likelihood that heat, drought, floods and fires will push communities and ecosystems beyond anything they have experienced before," said Stephanie Roe, lead climate scientist with the World Wildlife Fund. (Al Jazeera English)



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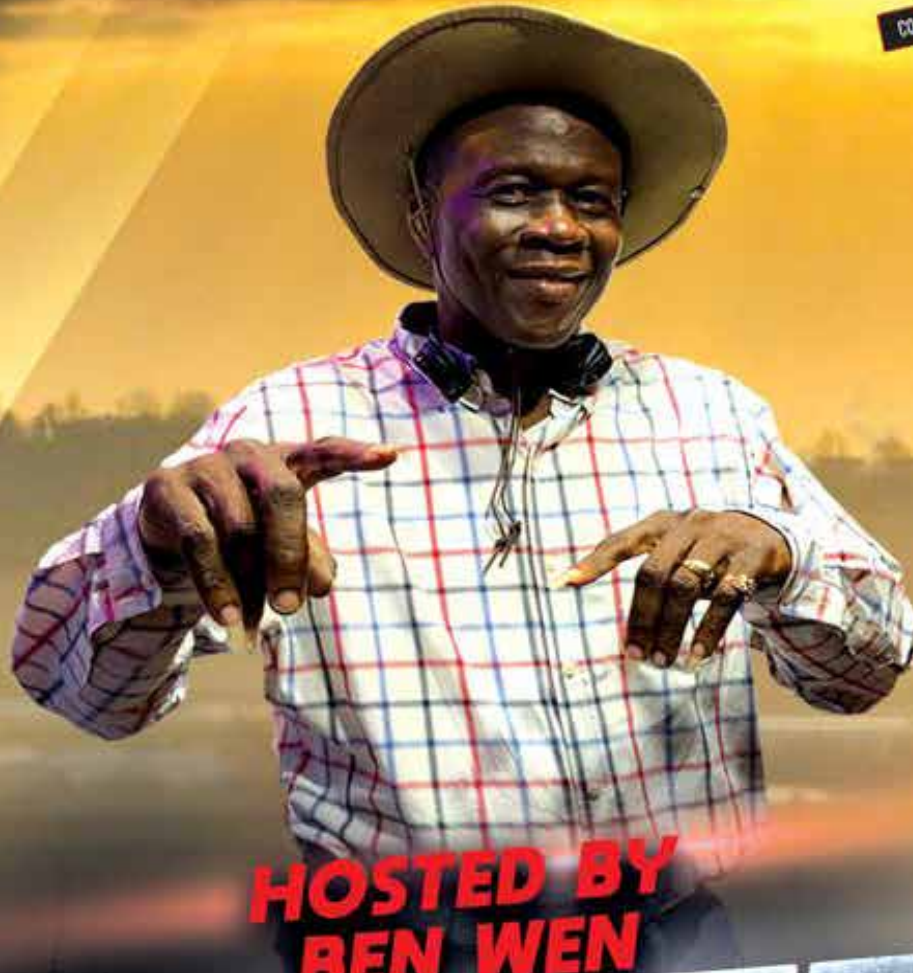
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Sports News

Sandals end Anjo Wholesale's perfect run in Business Basketball League



The Sandals basketball team

Sandals have ended the perfect start of Anjo Wholesale in the 2026 Cool and Smooth Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League.

Sandals claimed their fourth win in five matches by pulling off a 71-57 victory over Anjo Wholesale in the second of four games at the JSC Sports Complex on Sunday evening.

Keroi Lee shot a game-high 27 points, and John Rolland sank 16 points for Sandals. Yohan Nicholas converted 13 points for Anjo Wholesale, who suffered their first loss after winning all three previous matches.

After losing all previous matches, Sir Lester Bird Medical Center (SLBMC) recorded their first win with a 59-41 victory over the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers (ABUT) in the third game on Sunday.

Malique Ward shot a game-high 20 points, and Ricky Willock sank 16 points for SLBMC. Nyke Watkins scored 15 points, and Israel Clarke converted 10 points for the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers, who lost for the fourth time in five games.

Last year's losing finalists, Richie's Shooterz, continued their winning start to their campaign, securing their second win in as many matches with a 93-77 victory over newcomers Curtain Bluff Hotel in Sunday's final encounter.

Steven Matthew produced a game-high 29 points, Nickon McGregor sank 17 points, Jaheem James had 16 points, and Tavarus Benta and Sean Nicholas each contributed 10 points for Richie's Shooterz.

Shalom Bloodman sank 20 points, Javonte Daley converted 19 points,

and Webster Baptista scored 11 points for Curtain Bluff Hotel, who slumped to their third loss in four games.

Former champions Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board (ABTB) rebounded from an opening game loss to cup-holders Board of Education to claim their first win with a 116-65 drubbing of newcomers Christos in Sunday's opener.

Lindsay McDonald shot a team-high 30 points, Orion Seraphine sank 28, and Elijah Charles sank 18 points for the ABTB. In support, Ishaan Peets produced 16 points, Marlon "Buju" Charles had 13 points, and Raheem Alexander scored 10 points for the ABTB.

Bruce White shot a game-high 31 points, and Whitfield Joshua converted 13 points for Christos, who crashed to their third defeat in as many games.

Antiguans to battle in Group AA at FIFA U-15 World Cup & Festival



Members of the national under-15 boys training squad participate in a session at the ABFA Technical Center on Thursday, September 3, 2026. (ABFA)

Antigua and Barbuda will compete in Group AA at the inaugural 2026 FIFA Under-15 World Cup & Festival in Baku, Azerbaijan, from October 22 to 31.

FIFA released the official schedule for the 8v8 team tournament on September 16. It places Antigua and Barbuda in Group AA alongside Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Lebanon, New Caledonia, and Northern Ireland.

Antigua and Barbuda will open their FIFA Under-15 World Cup & Festival campaign against Burkina Faso at the Hovsan Competition Complex in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Saturday, October 24.

The young Antiguan players will play twice on Sunday, October 25. Antigua and Barbuda will take on Lebanon in their second encounter before meeting Northern Ireland in their third match of the tournament.

Antigua and Barbuda will also play their two other Group AA matches on Monday, October 26. The young Anti-

guans will meet Eritrea in their penultimate group match and will clash with New Caledonia in their final encounter.

Round-robin matches in the group stage will take place from October 22 to 26. Teams will get a rest day on October 27, and the final stage of the tournament will take place from October 28 to 30.

The Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) has reduced its 33-member national under-15 training squad to 23 players.

The training sessions officially got underway at the ABFA Technical Center on Thursday, September 3. The training squad will be trimmed to a final team of 14 players, which will be announced by the ABFA on Friday, October 2.

The inaugural FIFA World Cup and 8V8 Festival will involve each eight-member team playing 10 40-minute matches.

The Antigua and Barbuda training squad includes several players of the national team that recently participated in the 2026 Caribbean Football Union (CFU) Boy's Under-14 Challenge Series in the Dominican Republic.

Coach Auchland "Pin Up" Jarvis, who guided Antigua and Barbuda to the semi-finals at this year's CFU Boy's Under-14 Challenge Series, has been chosen as head coach and is overseeing the national Under-15 team's preparation for the FIFA tournament.

The national under-15 players are taking part in weekly training sessions on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at the ABFA Technical Center.

The inaugural FIFA Under-15 World Cup and Festival is open to boys' youth national teams representing all 211 FIFA member associations.

The second edition in 2027 will be dedicated exclusively to women's teams. The World Cups will be fully funded by FIFA.

Coach Mancini seeks to win back angry Italian fans



Italy's new national soccer team coach Roberto Mancini pose during a news conference in Rome, July 29, 2026. (AP)

MILAN (AP) — New Italy coach Roberto Mancini is hoping to win back the fans who are still upset with him for bolting on the national team three years ago, as he prepares for his first matches back in charge.

Mancini was reappointed in July and again tasked with revitalizing an Italy team in crisis, after the Azzurri missed out on the World Cup for a third successive time.

Mancini led Italy to the European Championship title in 2021 but shockingly resigned as Italy coach in August 2023, taking over Saudi Arabia's national team two weeks later.

"I'm not in credit (because of the trophy) because that's in the past, it doesn't count for anything," Mancini said on Monday.

"I think that when a fan feels betrayed, he has the right to be upset, and you have to accept it. I think to

win them back, we must do things well and bring the national team back to where it belongs so things will settle."

First up for Mancini is four Nations League matches. Italy starts at home to Belgium on Friday before playing Turkey three days later, then France on Oct. 2 and Turkey again on Oct. 5.

Mancini has called up 34 players and his squad includes a mix of experienced players — some of who were part of the Euro 2020 winning run — and eight potential debutants.

Two of those experienced players have already withdrawn from the squad, with Federico Dimarco and Bryan Cristante being replaced by Matteo Ruggeri and Samuele Ricci.

"I think it's right to have young players so we can get to know them directly, because that's the most important thing to have a very strong squad in

the future," Mancini said.

"So we have to be quick to understand who could be the players that could be with us for the next four years. I want a team that dominates, that plays well, a team that manages to always give the maximum. You can't always win, obviously, but we will try to start with doing this, that's how you win. We are all very positive."

While Mancini expects the more experienced players to help the youngsters settle in, he hopes the youths will bring a bit of "carefreeness" and "do things on the field that when you're older you don't do because you think too much."

And he admits there's another bonus to the new faces: that they don't have the shadow of failure hanging over them from the World Cup qualifiers.

"There are many young players who weren't there, who are here for the first time," Mancini said.

"They are very happy to be here and want to give their all for the national team. I know we'll bring something home over the next four years. I'm sure of that because I know something about soccer players, so I see they have talent and they just need to be given the opportunity to play."

The Nations League Finals take place next June, a year before the European Championship. The Euro 2028 final will be held at Wembley in London, where Mancini and Italy triumphed in 2021.

Fourth-place finish for Willock at OECS draughts tournament in St. Lucia

Antigua and Barbuda's top player Bernard "Premier" Willock clinched a fourth-place finish at a draughts tournament in St. Lucia on Sunday.

Willock had to settle for fourth place in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Elite Individual Draughts Tournament at the Human Resource Development Center in Gros Islet, St. Lucia.

Players from Grenada made a clean sweep of the top three positions in the tournament.

Adam Handall won the title, Marvin Frederick took second place, and



Bernard 'Premier' Willock

Dwight Clarke finished in third place.

A total of 19 players from Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Lucia participated in the competition.

Players from all three countries will also be contesting the OECS Team Draughts Tournament, which was slated to commence at the same venue in St. Lucia on Monday evening.

The Antiguan players are accompanied by manager Trevor Cranstan, who is the President of the Antigua and Barbuda Draughts Association (ABDA).

Con.t from page 30

Most Valuable Player of the tournament, leg-spinner Shadab Khan, then joined the party by dismissing Romaine Morris without scoring, before Moqim claimed his third wicket by removing Hassan Khan for one.

The Kingsmen suddenly found themselves in deep trouble, losing four wickets for just three runs in the space of 12 deliveries.

But the Kingsmen refused to surrender, and with Sadaqat still at the crease, their innings remained alive. The right-hander once again took center stage, powering to his second century of the season with a sensational display of 360-degree hitting.

He reached the first century in a CPL final from just 49 balls, adding another 14 runs before falling on the penultimate delivery of the innings after hitting nine sixes and eight fours.

The Falcons' reply got off to a flying start, with Rahkeem Cornwall smashing 20 runs from the first over before being bowled by Saim Ayub with the final delivery.

Cornwall's explosive start allowed opener Evin Lewis, who made 38 off 26 balls, and Amir Jangoo to balance aggression with caution during the Power Play. Lewis survived a second chance when Andre Russell overstepped, and he responded by shifting through the gears.

The final over of the Power Play produced 17 runs as the Falcons raced to 76 for one after six overs.

The Kingsmen soon found a breakthrough when Lewis chopped on to his stumps off right-arm wrist-Vitel Lawes, but the wicket only seemed to inspire Jangoo.

An unbeaten 89-run third-wicket partnership between Amir Jangoo and

Hasan Nawaz completed the Falcons' historic triumph with 20 balls to spare.

Jangoo struck four fours and three sixes, while Nawaz hammered three sixes and three fours during a composed and dominant partnership that kept the Falcons comfortably ahead of the required rate, which sat just above a run a ball.

Jangoo brought up his half-century with the partnership already past 50, leaving the Falcons firmly in control heading into the final five overs.

With the target within touching distance, Nawaz put the finishing touch on a commanding Falcons team performance.

Nawaz struck the winning runs with a six, sending his Falcons teammates sprinting onto the field in celebration of the team's first CPL title in the three-year history of the Antigua and Barbuda franchise.



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Falcons complete dream flight to maiden CPL title



The Antigua and Barbuda Falcons celebrate after winning the CPL title at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Sunday, September 20, 2026. (CPLT20)

The Antigua & Barbuda Falcons were crowned Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) champions for the first time after defeating the Jamaica Kingsmen by eight wickets in the final at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Sunday night.

Player of the final, left-arm wrist-spinner Sufyan Moqim, grabbed four for 14 to restrict the Jamaica Kingsmen for 170 for nine off their 20 overs, with opener Maaz Sadaqat hitting a century, smashing 114 off 58 balls.

Amir Jangoo hit an unbeaten half century, cracking 57 not out off 34

balls, and Hasan Nawaz struck 47 not out off 35 balls to guide Antigua and Barbuda Falcons to victory at 173 for two in 16.4 overs.

Sent in to bat, the Kingsmen immediately signalled their intent in the Power Play, with Sadaqat hitting a six off the very first ball from fast bowler Jayden Seales.

Seales struck back at the end of the over by dismissing opener Kirk McKenzie without scoring. Fast bowler Alzarri Joseph, who picked up two for 27, removed Keacy Carty for nine to reduce the Jamaica Kingsmen to

30 for two. The Kingsmen ended the Power Play on 59 for two.

Sadaqat continued his sensational play-off form, racing to his half-century from just 27 balls. He shared in an 80-run third-wicket partnership with Saim Ayub, who made 29 off 22 balls.

But the introduction of Sufyan Moqim by the Antigua Falcons turned the game on its head.

The left-arm spinner struck immediately, removing Ayub and Kingsmen's captain Rovman Powell for a duck in his first over.

Con.t on page 29