

Health Officials Welcome the Opening of New Mortuary

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The government on Monday formally opened the country's new Autopsy Suite and Mortuary, which according to health officials the need for such a facility had been identified as far back as 1980.

Permanent Secretary Stacey Gregg-Paige revealed that a World Bank Development Report conducted in 1980 identified deficiencies in the mortuary at Holberton Hospital which included damage to the building by the 1974 earthquake.

"The report identified the need for improved accommodation, equipment and refrigerated storage. That was 46 years ago. Since then our health care system has undergone consideration transformation, including the open-

ing of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre in 2009. Nevertheless, the need for appropriate mortuary and post mortem facilities remained," she explained.

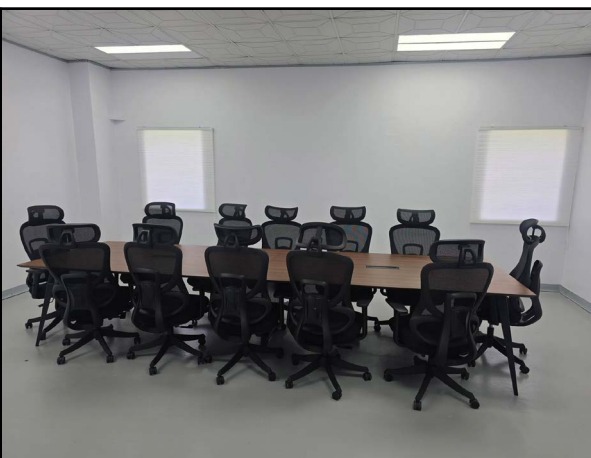
She noted that throughout the intervening years, the staff at the pathology department carried out their duties with dedication and professionalism, notwithstanding the limitation of the facilities available to them.

For his part, Health Minister Michael Joseph said the ceremony not only marked the opening of a building, but that it marked the completion of a long-awaited undertaking and the delivery of a facility that responds to a real need within the healthcare system.

"Projects of this nature do not always receive the public attention they deserve. They may not be as visible as a new hospital wing or a newly commissioned piece of medical equipment. Yet their importance to the effective functioning of our healthcare services, the administration of justice, and the dignity of our people cannot be overstated," he remarked.

He acknowledged that the building that served as mortuary had been in use for many years and that it had long since been recognized that a new modern facility was needed as a critical element in the health delivery system.

Minister Joseph recalled that over



time, the workers had expressed their concerns about the conditions under which they were required to carry out their duties. He added that those concerns deserved to be heard, and the need for a more appropriate working environment deserved to be addressed.

Against this backdrop, the minister said he is pleased to see that progress has been made.

“This facility has been renovated to serve a specialised purpose with the

intention of providing an environment that is more appropriate to the sensitive and demanding work undertaken here, and more consistent with contemporary expectations for autopsy and mortuary facilities,” he declared.

With the new facility handed over to the ministry, the minister is making an appeal to the staff to care the surroundings as it is counter-productive to ask for new facilities and then not to take care of it to ensure that it lasts

for a long time.

The new suite incorporates a range of spaces to support its operations. These include an autopsy room, a morgue, offices, a conference room, storage facilities, an IT closet, a security office, a kitchen, and bathrooms and showers for staff.

Importantly, the facility also includes a designated waiting area for families who come to view their loved ones.

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Local News

The UWI Five Islands graduates first Master of Public Health class



Eight health professionals are the first graduates of the Master of Public Health programme at The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus on Saturday 10 October 2026, when the campus held its second ceremony for graduates including those from the School of Health & Behavioural Sciences.

The graduates who completed the programme in two years are seven registered nurse-midwives and one medical doctor. Fifteen students are initially enrolled at the start 2024/205 academic year.

Professor C. Justin Robinson, Pro Vice-chancellor and campus principal of The UWI Five Islands Campus,

said: 'We congratulate the inaugural cohort of MPH Graduates. As we confront the Triple C Crisis in our region, equipping our health professionals with the knowledge and practice to help build and strengthen the infrastructure in our twin island state and across the sub-region is critical.' He noted that the programme is part of the wider strategy to help build capacity in key areas in the OECS such as the health sector.

The graduates are Tanasha Roberts, Chelle Thomas-Humphrey, Miasha John-Carr, Roselia Carriere-Joseph, Elaine Davis, Joyann Richardson-Fiedtkou, Nollareen Andrew-Richards and Dr. Jonathan McComie. Seven of the graduates received

scholarships from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda along with support from the Ministry of Health.

Former health minister Sir Molwyn Joseph attended the ceremony and said the Ministry's support for the programme, and the discussions that led to its addition to the offerings at The UWI Five Islands Campus during his tenure, were part of capacity building in the health sector.

Graduates began their postgraduate studies in September 2024. At the time, they were already serving their communities as nurse-midwives and as a medical officer. Many described fitting coursework around shifts, long hours and the demands of patient care. Several were raising children while studying late at night, early in the morning or on weekends. The graduates stated that illness, exhaustion and self-doubt tested their group at times, and that they leaned on one another through demanding semesters, tight deadlines and the research project.

The School of Health and Behavioural Sciences continues to expand its postgraduate offerings at The UWI Five Islands. It also offers the Master of Science in Non-Communicable Disease Management. These programmes are designed to help meet the needs of the region and build capacity in key areas.

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Minister Kiz Johnson Selected to Serve on OECS Disability Steering Committee

Minister of State in the Ministry of Social and Urban Transformation, Kiz Johnson, has been selected to serve on an OECS disability steering committee, a role she says will help bring the needs of persons with disabilities in Antigua and Barbuda to the forefront of regional discussions.

The decision was taken at the recent OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development meeting she attended in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Minister Johnson said she was asked to serve alongside other ministers on the committee, which is expected to be formed soon.

“I have been asked to represent and to serve on that committee,” she said, describing her selection as a significant outcome of her participation in the meeting. For Johnson, the priority is ensuring that regional discussions and policy commitments lead to practical improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities.

She said the role would put persons with disabilities in Antigua and Barbuda “more on the forefront” so they can receive “the care, the support that they need”.

The Minister stressed the importance of translating policies into services and support, describing the task as making policy documents “living” instruments that respond to people’s needs.

Her selection followed her contri-



butions to discussions at the regional meeting, where she advocated stronger, more responsive social protection systems.

The minister said she approaches overseas engagements with a clear responsibility to represent Antigua and Barbuda and secure opportunities that

benefit its people.

She expressed enthusiasm about advancing her disability portfolio and said her participation in the committee would provide another avenue to advocate for persons with disabilities through cooperation across the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.


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Antigua and Barbuda Earmarked to Host OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development in 2027



Antigua and Barbuda has been earmarked to host the OECS Council of Ministers for Human and Social Development in 2027, providing an opportunity to advance regional cooperation on social protection and support for vulnerable populations.

The proposed hosting follows the council's tenth meeting, held in St Vincent and the Grenadines on October 7 and 8 under the theme "Advancing Social Protection in the OECS: Policy, Practice and Learning."

Minister of State in the Ministry of Social and Urban Transformation, Kiz Johnson, represented Antigua and Barbuda at the meeting, where she emphasised the need to translate policy commitments into effective services for the people of the region.

"It is time for action. We want robust systems that are responsive, effective and meet the needs of our people who need to benefit from

such services," Minister Johnson said.

The discussions focused on strengthening support for children, older persons, persons with disabilities, caregivers and other vulnerable groups. Ministers underscored the importance of ensuring that social services are accessible, understandable and available when needed.

Key priorities included closer coordination among education, health and social development ministries; investment in affordable childcare; support for caregivers; disability inclusion; children's rights; and retirement protection

for informal workers.

The council also examined the role of disaster risk financing in enabling timely assistance to vulnerable households following emergencies. Adequate funding for human and social development portfolios was highlighted as essential to addressing increasingly complex social challenges.

As the prospective host of the 2027 meeting, Antigua and Barbuda would provide a forum for ministers and senior officials to build on these discussions and advance practical approaches to strengthening social protection across the OECS.



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Antigua and Barbuda Named Caribbean's Leading Wedding Destination 2026



Antigua and Barbuda has been named the Caribbean's Leading Wedding Destination 2026 at the World Travel Awards, adding another prestigious accolade to the destination's growing list of international tourism honours and reinforcing its reputation as a top choice for destination weddings and romantic escapes.

The recognition underscores Antigua and Barbuda's status as a destination where couples can celebrate life's most meaningful milestones amid natural beauty and distinctive island experiences. From destination weddings and honeymoons to anniversaries, vow renewals and proposals, the destination's tourism professionals offer tailored experiences that bring each couple's vision to life, creating cele-

brations as unique as their love story.

"Being named the Caribbean's Leading Wedding Destination 2026 is a tremendous honour for Antigua and Barbuda and a reflection of the strength of our romance tourism offering," said Colin C. James, CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority.

"Couples are looking for more than a beautiful location. They want a destination where their celebration feels special from the moment they arrive, where their families and friends can create memories together and where the details are handled with care. Antigua and Barbuda delivers that experience through the talent, creativity and dedication of our tourism partners. This award belongs to the entire

industry that continues to make our destination a favourite for love, celebration and unforgettable moments", said James.

Antigua and Barbuda makes planning a destination wedding effortless, with no residency requirement and no waiting period for a marriage license for couples wishing to marry on the islands. From breathtaking beachfront settings to experienced wedding professionals and tailored services, the destination combines convenience with exceptional Caribbean charm.

The World Travel Awards are widely recognized as one of the leading accolades in the global travel and tourism industry, celebrating excellence across destinations and tourism sectors.



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45 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

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INDEPENDENCE *Church Service*



SUNDAY
18
OCTOBER 2026



PRECISION
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4:00 PM



NATIONAL
EVENTS
DEPARTMENT
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Ministry Applauds Dennis Thomas for Supporting Top 100 Students



The Ministry of Education extends profound gratitude to Dennis Thomas for funding and hosting a gala dinner at Dennis Beach Bar and Restaurant on Sunday, October 11, in honour of the 2026 Top 100 Grade Six National Assessment students.

In July, following the release of the 2026 Grade Six National Assessment results, Thomas approached the Min-

istry of Education and expressed his desire to reward the students for their outstanding efforts. The event was well received, and many attendees expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate the students' achievements.

The Ministry applauds Thomas's generous contribution and commends him for his unwavering commitment

to investing in education.

It is deeply appreciative of his philanthropy and welcomes the continued support and investment of corporate Antigua as partners in education. Such support helps recognise student excellence and invest in the promise and potential of our nation's young people.



Provision of a Universal Health Coverage Programme Gains Traction



“At its heart, Universal Health Coverage is about people. It means ensuring that every Antiguan and Barbudan can obtain appropriate, quality health-care without facing financial hardship. That principle must guide our work,” the Minister stated.

Minister Joseph emphasised that Universal Health Coverage extends beyond the financing of healthcare and requires a broader transformation in how services are organised, funded and delivered. He noted that while the Government has expanded healthcare services, strengthened institutions and invested in medical professionals, gaps remain in access to services, financial protection and the system’s ability to respond to the changing needs of the

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has recommenced work on the development of its Universal Health Coverage (UHC) framework, with National Health Insurance (NHI) identified as a principal mechanism for ensuring that residents can access essential healthcare services without facing financial hardship.

The Ministry of Health convened a working meeting of the Steering Committee on Monday, 12 October 2026, at the John E. St. Luce Finance & Conference Centre. The meeting marked the relaunch of the programme and focused on confirming the Steering Committee’s membership and mandate, establishing the technical sub-committees, and advancing the preparatory work required to guide the programme’s development and implementation.

In attendance were the Michael Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness, Environment and Civil Service Affairs; Ambassador Sir Lionel Hurst, Chairman of the Medical Benefits Board; Kevin Silston, Chief Executive Officer of the Medical Benefits Scheme; and Hildred Simpson, Per-



manent Secretary in the Ministry of Health as well as other Senior Technical Officers within the Ministry and the MBS.

Addressing the meeting, Minister Joseph underscored the Government’s commitment to making quality health-care more accessible, equitable and financially sustainable for the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

population.

He also clarified the distinction between Universal Health Coverage and National Health Insurance, noting that UHC is the overarching objective, while NHI is one of the principal mechanisms through which the Government intends to achieve it.

The proposed transition of the Med-



ical Benefits Scheme towards a National Health Insurance Programme is intended to strengthen access to essential healthcare, reduce out-of-pocket medical expenses and improve financial protection for households, particularly vulnerable groups.

The Minister stressed that the programme must be designed to meet the country's needs while remaining financially responsible, administratively workable and sustainable over the long term. He acknowledged the technical work already undertaken by the Health Economics Unit of The University of the West Indies, describing it as a foundation upon which the current process can build. The committee's task will include reviewing the existing work against current national circumstances, identifying gaps and developing practical recommen-



dations.

Minister Joseph further emphasised the importance of stakeholder partici-

ipation, noting that the programme's development must draw on the expertise of healthcare professionals, institutional managers and technical specialists, while also taking account of the views of patients, communities, employers and workers.

Three central questions will guide the process: what essential services should everyone be able to access; how those services can be financed fairly and sustainably; and how vulnerable persons can be protected while ensuring quality and accountability.

The Government is targeting completion of the programme's design and preparatory work by the end of 2027, with implementation expected to begin in January 2028. The Steering Committee will consolidate the recommendations into a national framework for the Government's consideration,

while the Ministry will support the policy decisions, approvals and preparations required for implementation.



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Local News

The Employers' Federation Celebrates 75 Years of Existence



The Employers' Federation, an organization formed to represent the views of employers in the country, is marking its 75th anniversary of existence this year.

Labour Minister, Sir Steadroy Benjamin addressed members of the Federation on Saturday night at a dinner to mark the 75th anniversary of the organization.

Formed back in 1950, but was registered in 1951, the Federation came into being at what has been described as 'a very important period in our country's social and economic history'.

"It was a period of profound social, political and economic change. At that time, the labour movement was asserting itself;

workers were demanding recognition, dignity and a greater voice.

"Employers were seeking to organize and protect their interests.

The political landscape was changing.

And the foundations of the modern Antigua and Barbuda were beginning to take shape," he emphasised.

According to Minister Benjamin, the Employers' Federation itself acknowledges that it was established to provide an organized voice for employers at a time when the Antigua Trades and Labour Union represented a powerful and increasingly influential workers' movement.

That historical context is important;

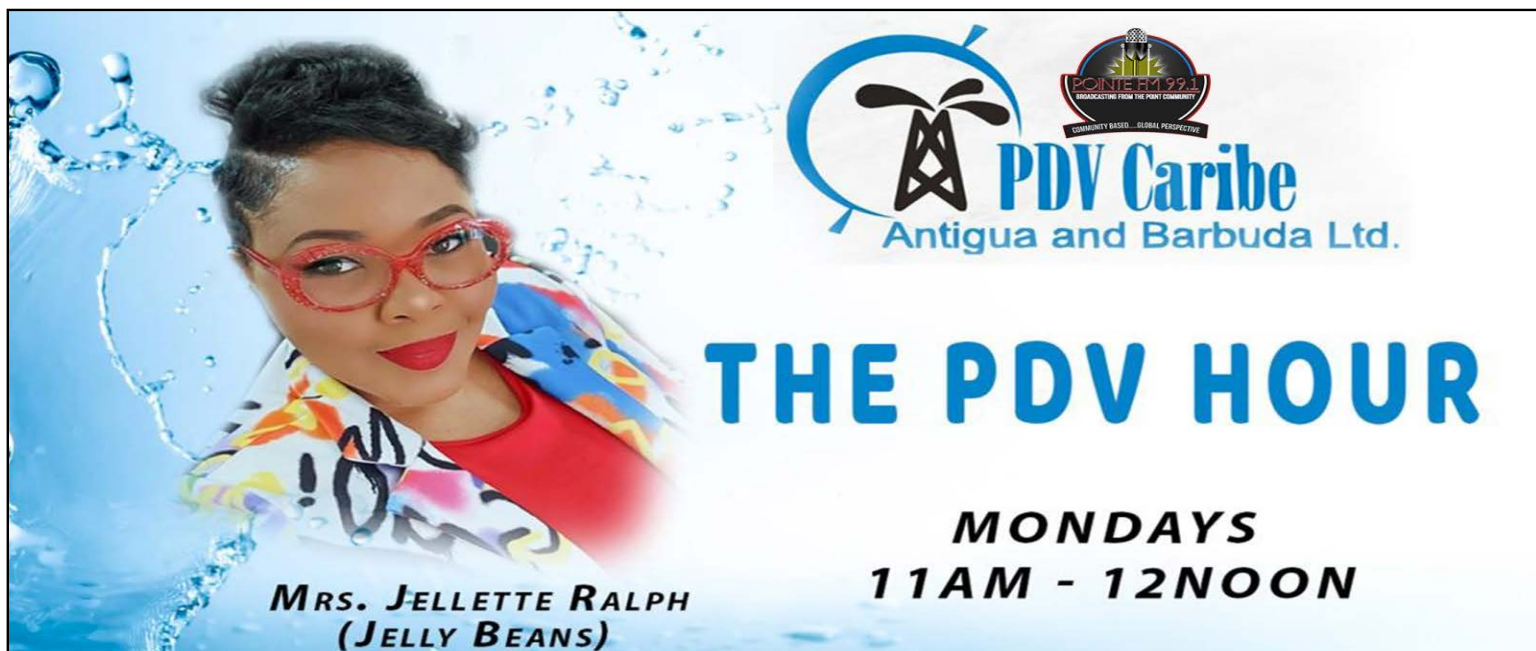
because our industrial relations system was not born out of tranquility.

Sir Steadroy explained that while both the union and the Federation were formed out of different circumstances and therefore were serving competing interests, they had to find a way to co-exist peacefully.

"That principle remains true today. As a matter of fact, I state categorically that it is even more important today; because in the modern economy, the prosperity of the employer and the prosperity of the worker are ultimately interconnected. We are all aware, aren't we, that a business that cannot compete, cannot sustain employment," he stated.

"We moved from a largely agricultural economy to a service-based economy dominated by tourism and other modern sectors; this is our story and the Employers' Federation has existed throughout much of that transformation," he contended.

During the dinner, held on Saturday night at Sandals Resort, a number of business persons were presented with awards in recognition of many years of service to the organization.



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THURSDAY
22
OCTOBER 2026



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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



MINISTRY OF
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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA 45TH INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SUNDAY
18
OCTOBER

Independence Church Service

Precision Center

4:00 PM

THURSDAY
22
OCTOBER

National Youth Rally, Special Drills and Cheerleading Competition

Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

8:30 AM

SUNDAY
25
OCTOBER

National Food Fair

Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

10:00 AM

National Schools' Panorama

Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

6:00 PM

MONDAY
26
OCTOBER

National Heroes Day Wreath Laying Ceremony

Heroes Park – Sir Sydney Walling Highway

10:00 AM

National Independence Business Decor Competition

Starts: October 26 Ends: October 29

TUESDAY
27
OCTOBER

Voices in Harmony - Festival of Choirs

St. Anthony's Secondary School

8:00 PM

WEDNESDAY
28
OCTOBER

Schools' Independence Programs

Schools Across the State

Island Treasures Gala - Golden Age

Casa Palmadita

THURSDAY
29
OCTOBER

Barbuda Day Activities

Evening of Theatre

St. Anthony's Secondary School

7:00 PM

FRIDAY
30
OCTOBER

Independence Calypso Competition

Green Lounge – Cedar Valley

8:00 PM

National Dress and Flag Day

SUNDAY
1
NOVEMBER

Independence Flag Ceremony

Barbuda

7:00 AM

Independence Ceremonial Parade

Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

5:45 PM



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- Submissions must include the final logo in PNG and PDF formats—in both full-color and black-and-white (monochrome) versions—along with the editable source file.
- Include a short description explaining your design concept and how it reflects the theme *Bring our culture, Shape our identity*

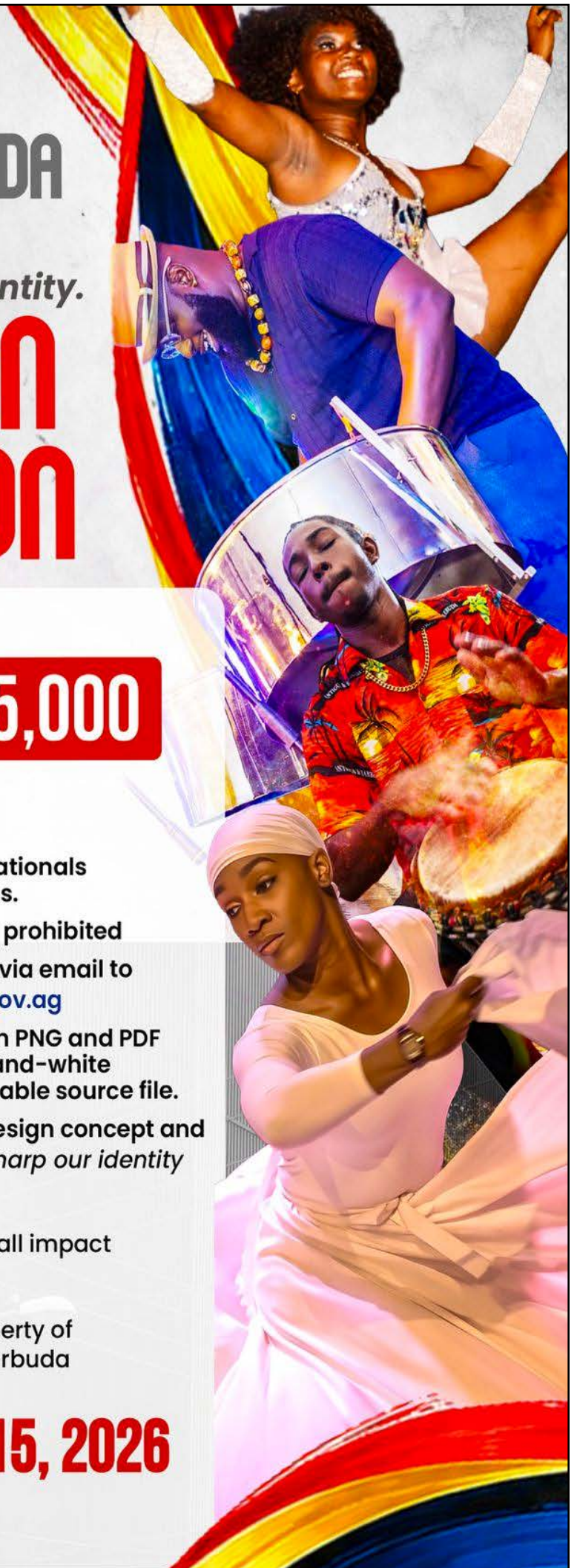
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Regional News

Premier Wheatley defends charter fees amid dispute with USVI



Premier Dr Natalio Wheatley has defended increased charter fees that have drawn complaints from operators in the neighbouring US Virgin Islands (USVI), saying the charges apply to commercial activity and are not aimed specifically at USVI vessels.

Speaking on the government's Virgin Islands Voice programme, Wheatley said recreational vessels travelling between the territories without conducting charters are not subject to the commercial licensing fees.

"What we're doing is we're charging a fee for a licence, for conducting commercial activity within the Virgin Islands," he said.

USVI charter operators have complained about the economic impact of reduced access to British Virgin Islands (BVI) waters following the fee increases.

Wheatley said the charges apply to all foreign vessels conducting charter operations and that fees for BVI-based operators had also risen substantially.

He said local operators pay lower rates because they contribute more directly to the territory's economy through provisioning, boat repairs and marina rentals.

The premier also said responsibility for the local matters underlying the

dispute rests with the elected BVI government, responding to suggestions that US federal officials would ultimately need to negotiate with Britain.

He said relations with the USVI are devolved to the BVI government, which has authority to regulate the territory's waters. The US federal government retains responsibility for some matters on the USVI side, he added.

Wheatley pointed to the Inter-Virgin Islands Council as the existing mechanism for addressing issues between the neighbouring territories.

He said the council was intended to allow the territories to resolve their own disputes without relying on their administering powers, although British involvement would be necessary if the United States intervened on behalf of the USVI. (CMC)



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People turn to free community pharmacies as medicines grow scarce

Every Thursday and Sunday at noon, dozens of people gather outside an apartment building in Havana's Vedado neighbourhood. Laura Mendoza comes downstairs, checks their names against a list, and hands out medicine they requested through WhatsApp.

Antihistamines, diuretics, eye drops and antibiotics are among the drugs she distributes. She charges nothing.

Projects like Mendoza's, called "Medicine Is Not for Sale", have become a lifeline for Cubans struggling to find increasingly scarce medications as the country's economic crisis deepens, compounded by US energy and financial restrictions imposed since January.

Online sellers, street vendors, and WhatsApp and Telegram groups have also stepped in to fill gaps left by state pharmacies, which for decades were the main source of subsidised medicines.

The shortages have become so severe that Cuban authorities issued regulations in July allowing private pharmacies to operate – a historic change to the country's state-run health system and part of broader economic reforms.

Until those pharmacies open, projects like Mendoza's provide a lifeline.

"We have five WhatsApp groups in Havana and recently added one in Guanabo," said Mendoza, who estimates that about 100 similar community projects operate in Havana.

Working with the Catholic charity Caritas, her initiative receives more than 13 kilograms (29 pounds) of medi-



cine each week from humanitarian groups in Canada and the United States, travellers carrying donations and local residents.

"People don't just rely on this main pharmacy. They help each other," Mendoza said, standing beside shelves of medicine in her apartment.

Volunteers sometimes deliver medicine to patients who cannot collect it themselves. But drugs requiring refrigeration, including some diabetes medications, and cancer treatments are particularly difficult to obtain. Patients also seek gauze, syringes and anaesthetics for use in poorly supplied hospitals.

"Six or seven years ago, it was relatively easy to find medicines at state pharmacies," said Cristina Díaz, a 27-year-old physics teacher who came to Mendoza's project seeking clonazepam for a relative.

As shortages worsened, "medicines became much harder to find", she said.

Cuba's health ministry lists 603 medicines in its basic drug programme, but only slightly more than one-third are currently available. About 400 are produced by Cuban

laboratories using imported raw materials.

Mayda Mauri Pérez, president of the state pharmaceutical company BioCubaFarma, said in June that about 300 of the 395 medicines the company was expected to supply had not been produced because of shortages of imported materials.

The situation is particularly acute in the central province of Ciego de Ávila, where authorities recently acknowledged that state pharmacies had only about 10 per cent of the medicines on the basic list. Officials blamed supply and logistical problems, including fuel shortages.

"Cuba has a medical-pharmaceutical industry that we consider strong," María Fernández Martínez, head of the province's pharmacy company, told the official newspaper Granma. But without supplies, "not even the most capable factory can complete the cycle."

The government also struggles to obtain packaging such as blister packs and bottles, and says US financial sanctions complicate payments for imports. Cuban authorities say shipments of medi-

cal supplies have also been stranded in third countries because shipping companies fear US penalties for calling at Cuban ports.

Allowing private pharmacies is part of a package of 176 economic measures approved by Cuba's Parliament in June to expand private enterprise and help address the country's economic crisis.

The government hopes entrepreneurs can import medicines, as private businesses already do with food and fuel. Authorities say they are reviewing about 36 proposals to open private pharmacies, while state pharmacies will continue to operate.

Private pharmacies will be regulated by the government and barred from selling hospital-only drugs and certain controlled substances. Imports will have to go through state companies, while medicines will require regulatory approval and proper storage.

The Cuban government did not respond to a request for comment.

For many Cubans, however, another question remains unanswered: Will they be able to afford the medicine?

Sara Márquez, 69, takes medication to control her blood pressure. She said a blister pack once cost 0.30 Cuban pesos at state-run pharmacies. In recent months, informal sellers have charged as much as 1,000 pesos (US\$1.50) for the same amount – more than 30 per cent of her monthly pension.

"At what price will they sell the medicine? ... It will depend on people's purchasing power. I can't afford it." (AP)

Jamaica, Guyana forge tourism partnership

Jamaica and Guyana have signed a tourism cooperation agreement that could open new opportunities for investment, air connectivity and multi-destination travel, as the South American nation accelerates the development of its tourism industry.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU), signed by Jamaica's Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett and his Guyanese counterpart, Susan Rodrigues, during the Caribbean Tourism Organization's (CTO) State of the Tourism Industry Conference (SOTIC) in Georgetown, establishes a framework for collaboration in hospitality training, tourism resilience, investment and sustainable development.

The agreement comes as Guyana records unprecedented tourism growth, supported by new international airlines, major hotel investments and a government strategy to diversify an economy experiencing significant transformation.

According to Rodrigues, Guyana welcomed a record 453,489 visitors in 2025, while another 360,623 arrivals were recorded during the first nine months of 2026.

Since 2020, she said, the country has attracted 12 additional airlines, expanding connections with North America, Europe, the Caribbean and South America.

Nine internationally branded hotels have also entered the market, strengthening the country's accommodation capacity and its appeal to business and leisure travellers.

Guyana has hosted more than 18 conferences and major business events this year, further establishing itself as an emerging destination for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.

But Rodrigues made it clear that Guyana's ambitions extend beyond increasing tourist arrivals.

"Our objective is not simply to count more arrivals," she told delegates during the conference which ended last Friday, explaining that the government wants tourism to generate opportunities for farmers, fishermen, drivers, artisans, guides and small entrepreneurs.



She said tourism was becoming an increasingly important pillar of President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali's economic diversification strategy.

For Jamaica, which has spent decades developing its international tourism industry, the agreement presents opportunities to share expertise in destination management, hospitality training and tourism resilience while exploring new regional partnerships.

Bartlett described Guyana's natural heritage as valuable elements of regional offerings.

"Guyana is adding much more to the Caribbean tourism experience, with its forests, hidden valleys and rich natural heritage," he said.

"We want to build the capacity of our people to respond to the demands of prosperity and ensure that we retain greater value from tourism for our people."

Rodrigues also challenged Caribbean destinations to rethink their traditional approach to tourism competition, arguing that regional cooperation would be essential to future growth.

"We are not here simply to compete with one another for the same visitor," she declared.

"The bigger question is: How do we collaborate better?"

She identified improved regional air connectivity, shared tourism intelligence, stronger destination linkages and

joint marketing as priorities for the Caribbean.

Guyana's vast rainforests, biodiversity, rivers, wildlife and Indigenous heritage offer a tourism product distinct from Jamaica's established resort, cultural and entertainment offerings, creating potential for complementary travel experiences.

Rodrigues stressed, however, that environmental protection must remain central to Guyana's development.

"We cannot separate the prosperity of our tourism industry from protecting the natural and cultural assets on which that industry depends," she said.

The agreement also provides for cooperation in education and training, investment promotion, sustainable tourism and the development of multi-destination travel opportunities.

Rodrigues welcomed the partnership, saying it would allow both countries to exchange expertise and strengthen relationships among tourism stakeholders.

"This partnership allows us to learn from each other's experiences, build stronger connections between our tourism stakeholders and create opportunities that benefit our people and the wider Caribbean," she said.

While the agreement outlines broad areas of cooperation, specific joint projects, implementation timelines and financial commitments were not detailed in the announcement. (Jamaica Gleaner)

'One year now, still in darkness'



St James councillors are calling for the Jamaica Public Service (JPS) to be held accountable for the failing to repair or replace several streetlights that were damaged during the passage of Hurricane Melissa a year ago.

Speaking during last week's St James Municipal Corporation (StJMC) meeting, Montego Bay Mayor Richard Vernon urged councillors whose divisions lost streetlights during the hurricane to collect the relevant information for a unified application to have them replaced.

"The JPS should be taking the direction on these things directly from the council, because we have to deal with these things on a daily basis," said Vernon. "I am going to ask all councillors to identify all the posts across the divisions, whether they were impacted by Melissa or if they were not but are without a light, to retrieve the relevant forms to fill out from the corporation's chief executive officer's office, and then we will make a collective request for street lights for St James."

He said the request would be sent to the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development for them to

have dialogue with the JPS "because I believe JPS is culpable in the restoration process".

The mayor was responding to a complaint from Martin Kellier, councillor for the Welcome Hall Division, that roughly 200 streetlights in his division were destroyed during the Category 5 hurricane, and are yet to be replaced.

"I have gotten reports up to last night that all of Welcome Hall is in total darkness, and this is one year now, and the area is still in darkness. The schools especially are in darkness, and the complaints are mounting every day about streetlights," Kellier said

last Thursday. "Why are we paying the JPS for all of these lights that are down? It is one year now since Melissa, and we have been paying for lights that are not working ..."

Meanwhile, Kerry Thomas, councillor for the Mount Salem division, noted that the presence of streetlights is a matter of community safety that cannot be ignored, pointing to a \$24-billion loan the Government approved for the JPS to accelerate the restoration of the power grid post-Melissa.

"... We should not have to come here for a safety and security function such as streetlights in our communities and be bawling for lights here and there. JPS has a responsibility to go out there and ensure that all the communities are properly lit and that lights are placed where they should be," said Thomas.

In March this year, Local Government Minister Desmond McKenzie announced that the JPS would resume its streetlight installation and repair programme, which was disrupted by the passage of Hurricane Melissa.

During his 2025-26 Sectoral Debate presentation, McKenzie had announced that an additional 22,800 streetlights would be installed across the country over the next two years, and that each of Jamaica's 228 municipal divisions would receive 50 new streetlights annually. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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What is Indigenous Peoples Day? A day of celebration, protest and reclaiming history



Native Americans celebrate their centuries-long history of resilience with ceremonies, dances and speeches.

Former President Joe Biden officially commemorated Indigenous Peoples Day in 2021. An increasing number of states and cities have also recognized it — pivoting from a day long rooted in the celebration of explorer Christopher Columbus to one focused on the people whose lives and culture were forever changed by colonialism.

Indigenous Peoples Day has been recognized for decades in different forms and under a variety of names to celebrate Native Americans' history and culture and to recognize the challenges they continue to face.

Biden had said in a statement that the day is meant to “honor America’s first inhabitants and the Tribal Nations that continue to thrive today.

It is typically observed on the second Monday in October, the same day as Columbus Day, a federal holiday established decades ago to recognize Columbus’ sighting in 1492 of what came to be known as the Americas.

The day is often marked by protests

against memorials to Christopher Columbus, for environmental justice, for the return of Indigenous lands and in honor of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

President Donald Trump has said he will not follow his predecessor’s practice of recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day alongside Columbus Day in October.

Although it is not a federal holiday, some states, as well as Washington, D.C., have holidays honoring Native Americans, some of which are on the second Monday in October. Indigenous Peoples Day is typically paired with Columbus Day or replaces the federal holiday altogether. A number of cities and school systems observe

Indigenous Peoples Day as well.

“For generations, federal policies systematically sought to assimilate and displace Native people and eradicate Native cultures,” Biden wrote in the Indigenous Peoples’ Day proclamation.

“Today, we recognize Indigenous peoples’ resilience and strength as well as the immeasurable positive impact that they have made on every aspect of American society.”

In a separate proclamation on Columbus Day, Biden praised the role of Italian Americans in U.S. society, but also referenced the violence and harm Columbus and other explorers of the age brought about on the Americas.

Landing in what is now the Bahamas on Oct. 12, 1492, Columbus, an Italian, was the first of a wave of European explorers in the Americas pursuing quests for gold and other wealth, including people to enslave. In the course of that quest, Native populations were decimated.

“Today, we also acknowledge the painful history of wrongs and atrocities that many European explorers inflicted on Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities,” Biden wrote. “It is a measure of our greatness as a Nation that we do not seek to bury these shameful episodes of our past — that we face them honestly, we bring them to the light, and we do all we can to address them.” (AP)

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Trump sticks with tariffs even as US voters turn against them

Maybe President Donald Trump really does believe that “tariff” is the most beautiful word in the dictionary.

Despite higher prices, criticism from trade experts and displeasure among voters, Trump holds fast to his belief that imposing the highest import duties on US trading partners since the Great Depression is a winner.

A recent poll suggests that that is a big gamble with less than a month before the November 3 midterms. Most US adults disapprove of his trade policies, with more than 64 per cent saying he has gone too far with his latest tariffs, compared with 58 per cent in January.

The United States has set taxes on imports from most countries in the low double digits, although the rates have gone up and down because of legal setbacks, as well as Trump’s habit of changing them seemingly on a whim.

In the biggest round last year, Trump levied what he called “reciprocal” tariffs and other duties on dozens of countries. He cited a 1977 law that he said allowed him to act without congressional approval in an economic emergency.

After the Supreme Court struck that down in February, Trump turned to an array of other trade laws to accomplish his goals.

The primary one he is using now, Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, allows



him to impose tariffs on countries that he believes are engaging in unfair trade practices, such as not adequately enforcing a ban on forced labour. The new duties range from 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent on imports from 60 economies, including major US trading partners such as the European Union, India, Japan, Canada and Mexico.

Trump is taking a sledgehammer to a relatively open global trading system that many mainstream economists think has benefited the US enormously. It has helped boost growth, keep prices low, and make US businesses more competitive and often dominant in global industries.

The US is the world’s second-largest exporter, after China. It exported US\$3.4 trillion in goods and services last year, far ahead of third-place Germany’s US\$2.3 trillion.

Although Trump claims foreign exporters are paying tariffs, it is mostly Americans who are footing the bill. Studies, including ones

from the New York Fed and Harvard, have shown that overseas companies have largely not lowered their prices to offset the tariffs that US businesses pay at the border. Those businesses are absorbing the added costs or passing them along to consumers through higher prices.

The White House responds that the factory boom is already under way, and points to statistics showing that manufacturing jobs, after falling last year, are on the upswing and work in certain non-residential construction trades is rising, too.

“Factory construction jobs of today mean more manufacturing jobs down the road, once those factories come online,” said White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers.

In the four years after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, nearly three million US manufacturing jobs were lost, accelerating a shift away from factory work. Even global trade enthusiasts recognise the damage. Many US com-

panies struggled to compete with an influx of discounted products from China, which has suppressed consumption to encourage exports.

It also is true that some countries have higher tariffs than the US, manipulate their currencies downward to make their exports to the US cheaper, and support industries with subsidies.

But tariffs among the US’ major trading partners are low, often comparable to US rates and sometimes lower.

Before the trade war, the US rate averaged 1.47 per cent for goods from the European Union, slightly above the average 1.35 per cent imposed by the EU on American products, according to the Brussels think tank Bruegel. Europeans are major buyers of what America wants to sell. About 30 per cent of European imports are from US-owned companies, according to the European Central Bank.

The relationship with Canada, America’s major trading partner to the north, was also similar before trade talks broke down this summer. Canada’s effective tariff rate on US imports was about 2.4 per cent, less than half the 5 per cent that the US imposed on Canadian imports, according to calculations by Oxford Economics.

Now the countries are mired in a tit-for-tat dispute, with both countries escalating tariffs on each other. (AP)

Indian opposition leaders march to top court to demand election chief resign



India's opposition parties are marching to the Supreme Court in Delhi to demand the resignation of the election chief over alleged voter fraud.

This will be the latest in a series of demonstrations in Delhi, with thousands of security forces deployed and roads barricaded in the capital.

Attempts to hold a protest by the Cockroach Janata Party pressure group over the weekend led to thousands of demonstrators being detained.

Opposition parties allege that under Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, India's voter rolls are being manipulated to benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Both the Election Commission and the BJP have rejected the charge.

The opposition lawmakers want to submit a memorandum to Chief Justice Surya Kant, but he has told reporters he declined the meeting citing "certain reasons".

He did not provide the reasons, but media reports citing the letter have said that he pointed out that some

of the issues the opposition wanted to raise with him were also pending before the court. The BBC has not seen the letter.

"Every Indian citizen has the right to approach the court, and we will hear their concerns and grant whatever is due under the law," he told reporters.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, meanwhile, has called "all opposition parties, civil society groups [and] all those who believe in democracy" to join Monday's march.

In a press conference on Monday, he shared a letter that he and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge had written to the Chief Justice, laying out their concerns with Kumar's alleged conduct and with the contentious electoral roll revision.

He said that Kant had asked them to file a petition, which they would do at the end of their march.

Authorities in Delhi have announced heavy restrictions on traffic and on entry and exit at some key metro stations. There is also heavy security deployment in central Delhi and along the route of the march.

Thousands of people were on Barakhamba road, where the march began, as a bus carrying Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders arrived just before 15:30 local time. Supporters waved flags and chanted his name as the Congress MP and others waved through the windows. Seated a few rows behind Rahul was Neha Bora, a leftist student leader who has gained prominence for participating in the protests.

A few kilometres on, in a place called Mandi House, the bus stopped and Rahul Gandhi and a few others climbed on top of the vehicle to wave at supporters lining up the street in the thousands. Many protesters climbed on to other buses parked here, while some waved flags and chanted anti-government slogans to the sound of drums and lots of cheering.

Over the past week, top opposition leaders, including Gandhi, have been briefly detained several times while leading protests in central Delhi.

On Sunday, the CJP - which is not a registered political party - said it would continue protesting until Kumar stepped down.

The CJP, which successfully led a protest over the summer that culminated in India's federal education minister's resignation, had called for a march on Saturday to Jantar Mantar - the best-known protest site in Delhi where the last set of sit-in demonstrations had also happened.

But authorities in Delhi imposed overarching restrictions that made it almost impossible for protesters to travel and reach Jantar Mantar - trains were cancelled, dozens of metro stations were shut down

and tens of thousands of police and paramilitary personnel were on the roads to detain protesters.

The CJP leaders - founder Abhijeet Dipke and co-convenors Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka - were dramatically detained from a plane as they landed in Delhi to join the protest.

They were only released a day later - while Dipke has returned home to attend his grandmother's funeral, Das and Ranka held a press conference where they said the protests would continue. Both leaders, however, did not join the protests on Sunday but have said they will seek a new protest date from the police.

Over the weekend, the police detained and released thousands of people, including several journalists. Some videos and photos from the protest show police dragging people, including women, by force and pushing them into buses.

The BBC also captured visuals of a policeman slapping a detained protester inside a bus. The Delhi Police did not respond to questions about the use of violence against protesters.

In a statement, Reporters Without Borders condemned the detention of at least 16 Indian journalists.

"Covering events of public interest is not a crime. It is their job. The police's actions against the press are unacceptable," it said.

Congress leader Gandhi said that young Indians who had come to peacefully protest with "love in their hearts, not hatred or anger" had been beaten up.

BJP President Nitin Nabin accused opposition parties and the CJP of trying to destabilise India "at the behest of foreign forces" without elaborating on who the forces were. (BBC)



French police detain student suspected of shooting the principal and a teacher at his school

French police detained a 14-year-old suspected of opening fire Monday on his middle school principal and a teacher with a shotgun that he hid in a guitar case, wounding both in a rare school shooting, prosecutors said.

A staff member at the Joseph Lakanal middle school in Aubagne, east of Marseille, disarmed the boy after he fired multiple shots while roaming on two floors of the school, prosecutors said. Police then took him into custody. Aubagne is about 15 kilometers (9 miles) east of the Mediterranean port city of Marseille.

Gun violence perpetrated by pupils in schools is rare in France.

Marseille prosecutor Nicolas Besone said in a statement that the pupil fired once or twice on the first floor, wounding the principal and the teacher in the legs. They were hit with pellets used in 12-gauge shotguns, according to Marseille deputy prosecutor Audrey Jouaneton and police. They were transported to a hospital with injuries that weren't life threatening.

The boy's motives were unknown, Jouaneton said.

"We still don't have sufficiently precise evidence to say that he wanted to target the teaching staff — this principal and the teacher — but they were in any case hit by the shots," she said.

The boy then went to the second floor and opened fire again, twice — the first at the floor in front of a teacher and the second in a classroom, hitting the teaching board. The shots didn't hit any teachers or the pupils in the classroom but they were "very shocked," Bessone said.

The boy was then intercepted by a staff member in a stairwell, with what Jouaneton praised as "extreme courage."



Mental health counseling was offered to pupils.

There was no immediate information to suggest that the shooting was in any way connected to protests by high school pupils demanding better-resourced schools that have been shaking France for several weeks.

The middle school wasn't impacted on Monday by the protests, police said.

In a post on X, Education Minister Édouard Geffray said: "This unacceptable act once again highlights the rise of unbridled violence in our society, against which we must all mobilize. In words as well as deeds."

Still, such events remain uncommon. In 2017, a 16-year-old student armed with a rifle, pistols and a small grenade opened fire at a high school in southern France, wounding three students and the principal.

Stabbings by pupils in schools are also unusual. Last year, a middle school employee in eastern France was stabbed to death by a 14-year-old student during a bag check.

Also in 2025, a 15-year-old student stabbed four other students at a high school in western France, killing one and wounding three others before he was arrested. (AP)

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BOE return to winning form in business basketball league



The Board of Education basketball team

Cup-holders, the Board of Education (BOE), returned to winning form in defense of their title in the 2026 Cool and Smooth Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League on Sunday evening.

After their perfect run was ended in their first and only loss during a 70-72 defeat to newcomers Curtain Bluff Resort in the previous outing, the Board of Education rebounded to claim their ninth win in 10 matches with an 84-58 drubbing of Anjo Wholesale in the opening game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Daniel Perez shot a game-high 24 points, Adonis Humphreys sank 20 points, Kevin Pimental converted 12 points, and Warren Bogle scored 10 points for the Board of Education.

Gabriel Desuza converted 17 points for Anjo Wholesale, who slumped to

their fifth defeat in 10 games.

CTM Auto Spa wrapped up their campaign in the 13-team round robin league, recording their sixth win from their quota of 12 games with a 98-52 drubbing of fellow newcomers the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers (ABUT) in Sunday's second encounter.

Lucaso Brumant shot a game-high

27 points, Lincoln Weekes sank 19 points, Michael Barton converted 13 points, and Rhonde Davis scored 11 points for CTM Auto Spa.

Henry Dorsette converted 20 points, and Lena Mills scored 10 points for the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers, who wrapped up their league campaign with a record of two wins and 10 losses.

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Financial, mental health issues pushing women towards early retirement



OL Lyonnais' Tarciane, right, plays the ball in front of Servette FC Chenois's Magdalena Sobal during a UEFA Women's Champions League soccer match in Geneva, Switzerland, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026. (AP)

MANCHESTER, England (Reuters) - Nearly half of women's footballers are considering leaving the game early, with financial pressures and mental health struggles the main reasons, according to a FIFPRO report highlighting the gulf between the sport's rapid growth and conditions for most players.

The 2026 FIFPRO Global Employment Report "Working Conditions in Women's Football," billed by the global players' union as the most extensive review of working conditions in the women's game in a decade, interviewed 800 players worldwide and found stark disparities.

Some 49% of players surveyed said they were considering leaving football earlier than planned. Of those, 59% cited their financial situation as a reason and 46% pointed

to psychological stress.

"The women's football industry has come a long way," FIFPRO Director of Women's Football Alex Culvin said. "(But) for 95% (of players), the rest of the industry, there is a hell of a long way to go."

While inflation-adjusted average monthly club wages have tripled since FIFPRO's previous global study in 2017 to US\$2,601, the median is substantially lower at US\$1,669, illustrating what the report describes as "uneven and fragmented" growth.

In 10 Eastern European countries analysed, average salaries remain below the national minimum wage. Even in Western Europe and Asia/Oceania, which include some of the game's bigger markets, average pay is not significantly higher than na-

tional minimum wages, according to FIFPRO.

"The professionalisation of women's football is accelerating in some parts of the world and revenues are increasing, however, the progress and benefits are not evenly distributed among players across the world," Culvin said.

The report found only 56% of players have an employment contract, while 13% receive a club pension and 47% said their clubs do not have sufficient staff.

Average contract length has risen from 12 months in 2017 to 19 months, while the proportion of players with agents has climbed sharply from 14% to 41%.

"Whether a player has a written contract, a pension, medical cover or parental leave often depends less on her ability" than the country she lives in and the club she plays for, according to the report.

Culvin said conditions have improved dramatically for a small group of about 5% at the top, but many players are being asked to meet professional demands without being given professional environments in which to work.

Mental health emerged as another significant concern, with 57% of players saying they had struggled with their mental health. Half those players had not been provided with support by their clubs.

Carlos Alcaraz stunned by Zizou Bergs at the Shanghai Masters



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz speaks holding the trophy after winning the men's singles final against Czechia's Jiri Lehecka at the Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo, Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2026. (AP)

SHANGHAI (AP) — Zizou Bergs stunned second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz 7-5, 7-6 (4) to advance to the fourth round of the Shanghai Masters on Monday.

Bergs converted his first match point with a ninth ace to beat the tournament favorite in the biggest win of his career. It was second encounter on the tour between the pair and a first victory for Bergs.

After the match Bergs said he has “too much respect for (top players), which is part of my culture and I’m proud of that. But it gets a little bit in the way when you have to play them.”

He added this result can help him change that. He hit 24 winners on the

way to victory, compared to 16 of his opponent at their round of 32 match in the ATP 1,000 tennis event.

Next, Bergs will face Tommy Paul after the American knocked out defending champion Valentin Vacherot 6-4, 6-2. The loss for Alcaraz means that Alexander Zverev will complete the year as the No. 1.

Breaking Alcaraz for the second time to take a 6-5 lead in the opening set, Bergs used his fourth set point to serve it out after Alcaraz hit the net.

The 39th-ranked Belgian broke Alcaraz for a 6-5 lead in the second set but failed to serve out the match with the Spaniard breaking back to force the tiebreaker.

Alcaraz, who won last week’s Japan Open, fought back from 4-2 down to tie it at 4 but Bergs then recovered to build two match points. The Belgian only needed one.

Also, fifth-seeded Daniil Medvedev eased past Dalibor Svrčina 6-2, 6-3. In his second straight victory since being disqualified at the China Open for hitting a spectator in the eye with a ball, Medvedev converted his fourth match point when his Czech opponent sent a backhand volley wide.

Fourth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime eliminated Pablo Carreno Busta 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 and Stefanos Tsitsipas came from a set down to knock out 11th-seeded Taylor Fritz 3-6, 7-5, 6-3.



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Scandal-hit Man City returns to Champions League hosting PSG



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring his side's opening goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Manchester City in Liverpool, England, Sunday, Oct. 11, 2026. (AP)

GENEVA (AP) — The soccer schedule gods had a sense of humour making Manchester City's return to the Champions League after a devastating verdict of financial rule-breaking a game against Paris Saint-Germain.

Man City hosts title holder PSG on Wednesday in a standout meeting of Middle East state-backed clubs who were on parallel narratives for much of the past 15 years that now have wildly diverged.

Barcelona is still Europe's best team this season, five weeks after the opening round of Champions League games and takes a run of nine straight wins to Galatasaray on Tuesday.

Arsenal hosts Lille on Tuesday looking for a 14th straight win in the league phase across all three seasons of the current format.

Bayern Munich also plays Tuesday, at Norwegian champion Viking, and Real Madrid has a Wednesday visit to

one of coach José Mourinho's former clubs, Roma.

Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain had much in common before combining to win three of the past four Champions League titles. They had won none in the previous 67 seasons of the marquee competition.

They were underachieving big city clubs transformed by soccer's new wave of petrostate wealth: Man City in 2008 backed by Abu Dhabi's royal family and a Qatari takeover of PSG in 2011.

Ambitious investment with sponsors from home created issues complying with UEFA's new Financial Fair Play rules and both were fined 20 million euros (US\$22.4 million) in 2014.

Each lost their first Champions League final — PSG to Bayern in 2020 and Man City the next year to Chelsea — then broke through in title games against Inter Milan led by

coaches who previously won it with Barcelona. Man City won in 2023 and PSG in 2025.

Under Luis Enrique, PSG is playing widely admired soccer chasing a hat trick of European titles.

Just months after Pep Guardiola left, Man City risks becoming a pariah after long-held suspicion about the club's financial success was proven last month by a Premier League tribunal. The pending sanctions could force years of Champions League exile for the club, which is appealing.

Shakhtar Donetsk is making the first of four treks to play home games in London when it hosts AEK Athens at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge.

Shakhtar has not played in Donetsk since the first Russian incursion there in 2014, and cannot play UEFA competition games in Ukraine during the full military invasion which began in February 2022.

The Ukrainian champion is among three teams playing in borrowed home stadiums this week.

The Real Betis stadium is being renovated and so Porto will be hosted Wednesday at La Cartuja stadium in Seville. That was used at the European Championship played in 2021 and likely will be a venue at the 2030 World Cup.

Sabah plays Slavia Prague on Tuesday in Baku, at the 69,000-seat Olympic Stadium, because its home in the city of Masazir does not meet UEFA standards.

Grenades off to winning start in defense of Premier Division title

Cup-holders Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades made a successful start in defense of their title in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division on Sunday.

The Jennings Grenades launched their title defense with a 3-0 victory over promoted Freemans Village Scorpions during an opening-day Premier League double-header at the Antigua Recreation Ground (ARG).

The goals were scored by Obafemi Poyotte in the 28th minute, Barrington Blake in the 74th minute, and Tony Sanchez in the sixth minute of added time.

Garden Stars also got off to a winning start in their Premier League cam-

paign by snatching a 2-1 victory over the Pigotts Bullets in the first match of Sunday's double-header.

All the goals came after the interval after both teams finished deadlocked at 0-0 at halftime.

Kenja Benjamin broke the deadlock with a conversion in the 50th minute, and teammate Nadre Thomas gave Garden Stars a two-nil lead with a strike in the 58th minute.

Akeem Isaac reduced the deficit by scoring for the Pigotts Bullets with a 60th-minute conversion.

Sunday's encounters marked the return of Premier Division matches at the Antigua Recreation Ground.

Premier Division matches at the ARG in the 2019-20 season were suspended on **March 12, 2020**, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The return of Premier League matches to kick-off the 2026-27 ABFA domestic league season was delayed by a day to complete preparations at the ARG.

It forces the postponement of the initial opening-day double-header at the ARG on Saturday, October 10.

FC Aston Villa Lions were scheduled to take on Green City FC, and former champions All Saints United FC was slated to meet promoted Greenbay Hoppers FC.



Players of the Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades and Freemans Village Scorpions compete during their Premier Division match at the Antigua Recreation Ground on Sunday, October 11, 2026. (ABFA)