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MP Kiz Johnson Tells Graduating Class 'Life is not a Straight Line'

Story on page 2



Pictorial from Thursday's graduation ceremony at the UWI FIC's Lifelong Learning Unit

MP Kiz Johnson Tells Graduating Class 'Life is not a Straight Line'





The Lifelong Learning Unit (LLU) at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus held another graduation ceremony on Thursday for students who have completed its short courses that are at the core of its professional development programme.

Many persons in the society have turned to these courses as pathways to charting new career goals and for some it is also used as a springboard for further training and development. It was reported that this year, 605 students participated in its professional development courses. That is a significant achievement for the Unit and a powerful sign of the appetite for lifelong learning in the country.

Delivering the feature address at the at Thursday's graduating exercises, Minister of State, Kiz Johnson told the graduating class that life is not a straight line; that life presents peaks and valleys similar to a heart monitor, noting that when the monitor flat-lines, this means that the person is dead.

"The peaks and valleys remind us that life is filled with movement. There are moments of joy and achievement, but also disappointment, uncertainty and setbacks. A perfectly flat line, a frightening sign of trouble, is certainly not the picture of life we want to see! **A perfectly flat line on a monitor almost always means that you are dead!**

"So, when your plans take an unexpected turn, and there are peaks and valleys, it signals that you are alive and that your journey has not ended. Sometimes the detour becomes the very path that leads you to your purpose," she emphasized.

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Minister of State Johnson used her own story of pursuing a short course at the university at a point when she was experiencing a difficult period in her corporate career. According to the corporate executive, now parliamentarian, that short course opened several doors for her including being a lecture at the LLU, to the Senate as an Independent Senator and now a Member of the House of Representatives.

"When I look back, I see a remarkable thread: a difficult season in corporate life; one short course; new opportunities in marketing; the privilege of teaching at UWI; and the chance to apply those lessons in public service. None of it unfolded exactly as I had planned. But each experience prepared me for the next," she declared.

The Lifelong Learning unit at the UWI FIC is headed by Paula Lee as its Executive Director. Hundreds of Antigua and Barbuda residents have completed a wide range of short courses at the Unit to assist them with their professional development. These include inmates of HM Prison who have successfully participated in a programme designed to equip them with the skills necessary to function in a post-incarceration world.

Prime Minister Browne Makes the Case for Increased Funding for Climate Resilience



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, has met with Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Mafalda Duarte, and members of her team to explore opportunities for increased climate financing to support the country's adaptation, renewable energy and resilience-building priorities.

The meeting, held on the margins of COP31 in Antalya, focused on how Antigua and Barbuda can better leverage GCF resources to address its growing climate vulnerabilities while advancing its transition towards renewable energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Prime Minister Browne highlighted the importance of securing financing for climate-resilient housing, particularly for vulnerable households that are disproportionately exposed to extreme weather events. He emphasised that GCF support could be instrumental in helping to provide safer, more resilient homes for those most at risk.

Coastal erosion was also raised as a major concern, with the Prime Minister seeking assistance to support coastal protection and shoreline restoration initiatives. He further highlighted the need to strengthen the resilience of critical national infrastructure, particularly the country's seaport and airport, which are essential to tourism, trade and economic development.

Discussions also explored opportunities to mobilise additional resources and develop a strategic programme of activities that would enable Antigua and Barbuda to accelerate its adaptation measures, expand renewable energy development and strengthen its overall climate resilience in the face of the overshoot of the 1.5-degree target.

Prime Minister Browne underscored the importance of accessible and sustained climate financing for Small Island Developing States, noting that countries such as Antigua and Barbuda face significant climate-related threats and require meaningful international partnerships and investments to protect our communities, infrastructure and economies.

The engagement forms part of Antigua and Barbuda's participation in COP31 and its continued efforts to secure financing and technical support to advance national climate priorities and build a more resilient and sustainable future.



Antigua and Barbuda Calls for Greater Investment in Early Warning Systems For SIDS



Antigua and Barbuda has called for increased international investment in early warning systems, scientific research and environmental monitoring to strengthen the resilience of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) against the growing threats posed by climate change.

The call was made by Prime Minister, Gaston Browne during his remarks at a high-level engagement on Early Warnings for All, where he underscored the importance of reliable forecasting, timely information and effective disaster preparedness in protecting lives, livelihoods and development gains.

The Prime Minister pointed to the devastating impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, which caused widespread destruction across the Caribbean, including the destruction of much of Barbuda and the evacuation of its entire population. He also referenced the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Melissa on Jamaica and neighbouring countries last year, noting that these experiences demonstrate the critical importance of early warning systems in reducing disaster risks.

With changing El Niño and La Niña conditions presenting additional challenges, PM Browne stressed that accurate forecasting and preparedness must remain a priority for vulnerable island nations.

Antigua and Barbuda, he said, strongly supports the United Nations Secretary-General's commitment to achieving Early Warnings for All by 2027 and is taking concrete steps towards strengthening its national capacity.

The Prime Minister emphasised that effective early warning systems require more than forecasting equipment and communication networks. They depend on reliable data, continuous observation and systematic environmental monitoring.

He highlighted significant gaps in coastal and marine monitoring across SIDS, particularly the lack of sufficient long-term data on storm surges, sea-level rise and changing coastal conditions.

"We cannot adequately prepare for risks that we are not consistently measuring," the Prime Minister stated, stressing that investments in early warning systems must also support sustained scientific research and environmental monitoring.



The Antigua and Barbuda head of government identified regional and international institutions as important partners in addressing these gaps, specifically highlighting the University of the West Indies Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy, as well as the SIDS Centre of Excellence and its Global Data Hub, established under the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

He called for these institutions to receive the necessary investment, technology and sustained operational support to strengthen scientific data collection and regional monitoring capabilities.

The Prime Minister also urged international development partners to move beyond commitments and accelerate the delivery of climate financing to vulnerable countries.

He maintained that financing must be predictable, accessible and primarily grant-based, with resources reaching vulnerable countries before disasters occur. He further stressed that international support must extend beyond the 2027 target to ensure that early warning systems remain operational, effective and accessible to all communities.



Concluding his remarks, Mr. Browne said the success of the global initiative must be measured by its tangible impact on vulnerable populations.



Government Voices Concern Escalating Violence among School Children

The government has expressed serious concern over recent reports of violence involving schoolchildren and confrontations among young people.



Cabinet, the country's highest executive authority, discussed the incidents and pointed to the importance of ensuring that disagreements and disputes among students are resolved through established and peaceful channels rather than through physical confrontation, intimidation or violence.

The Government is therefore appealing to students to exercise restraint, respect one another and observe the rules and procedures established by schools and the wider community for resolving disagreements. Parents and guardians are also being urged to play an active role in guiding their children, reinforcing positive behaviour and discouraging any involvement in violence.

Cabinet emphasised that disagreements should never be allowed to escalate into physical altercations that place the safety and well-being of students and others at risk. Parents are encouraged to engage constructively with school authorities whenever conflicts arise and to support efforts aimed at maintaining safe learning environments.

Cabinet...was advised that the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda will be adopting a firm and uncompromising approach to incidents involving youth violence. Individuals found to have engaged in violent or disruptive conduct will be subject to appropriate enforcement action, including being charged and brought before the courts for offences such as disturbing the peace, where applicable.

The Government wishes to make clear that violence among young people will not be treated as acceptable conduct. While the authorities remain committed to protecting children and supporting their development, those who engage in unlawful behaviour must understand that their actions carry consequences. Cabinet is calling on students, parents, teachers and the wider community to work together to discourage violence, promote peaceful conflict resolution and ensure that schools remain safe environments in which children can learn, develop and achieve their full potential.



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Dual Thresholds: A doorway to Antigua and Barbuda

By Jeremiah Toussaint

Dual thresholds, a door project representing one of the many attractions for ***Art Week 2026*** was officially unveiled at the VC Bird International Airport on Thursday. The initiative features 28 reclaimed doors, repurposed as canvases. Artists transformed each door into original art pieces inspired by culture and heritage.

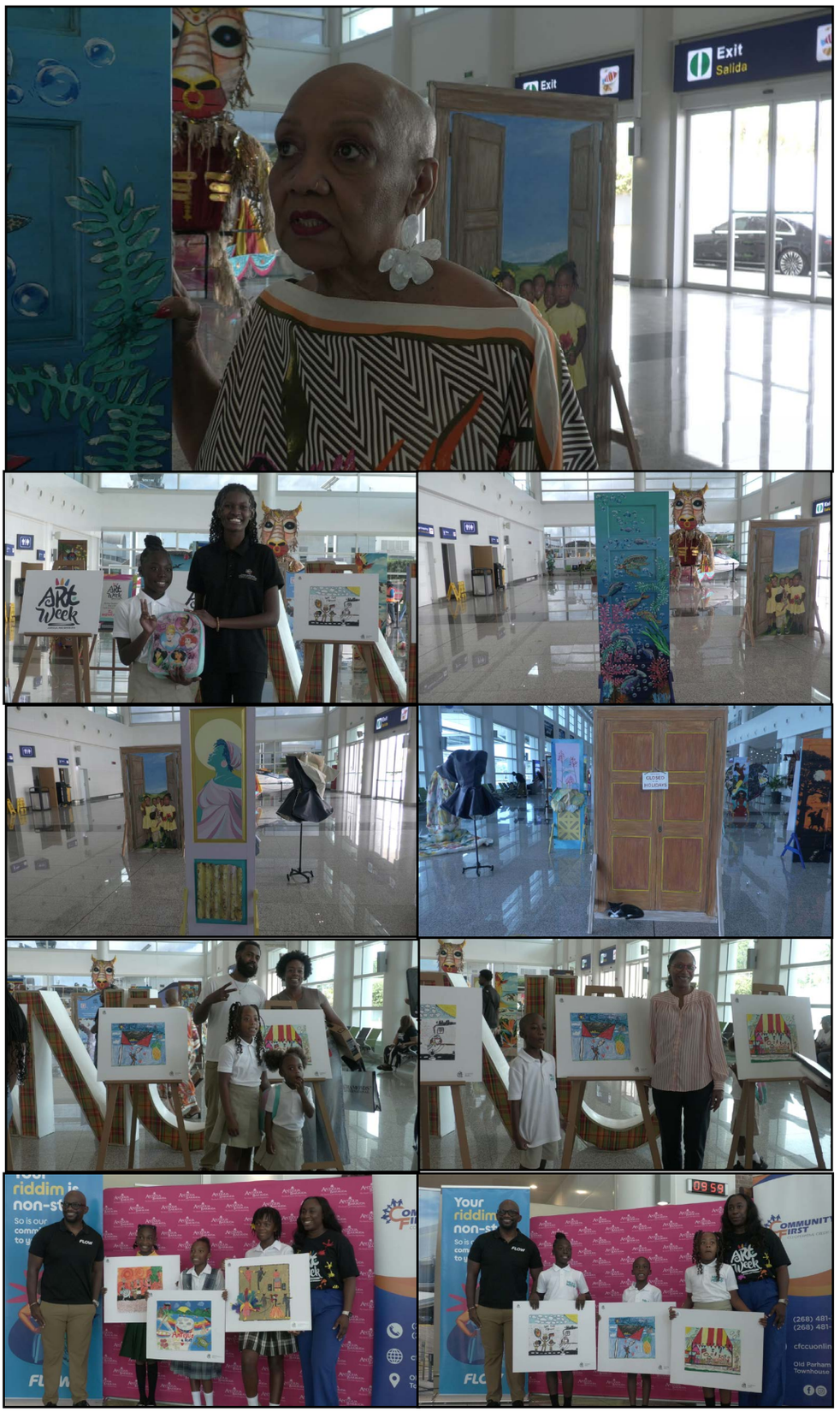
Donielle Bird-Browne, senior development manager at the Tourism Authority stated that the initiative represents a belief that the team behind Art Week upholds to be true; that "showcasing our creative community is an important part of how we share our destination to the world."

Bird-Browne noted that tourism is not just about attracting people to our shores, rather, "it is about given them meaningful experiences where they can make a connection to the people and culture of Antigua and Barbuda."

Artist Heather Doram, one of the pioneers behind the dual threshold initiative expressed elation in seeing it come to fruition. Doram says she has always maintained that anything can be a canvas, further detailing the inspiration behind the name, Dual Thresholds.

"I have always felt that art can be on anything," Doram says, "this exhibit is significant because it is a metaphor." Doors are the thresholds to our homes. The airport is the threshold of Antigua and Barbuda. So, in a manner of speaking, the doors, exhibited here are welcoming visitors into our home Antigua and Barbuda."

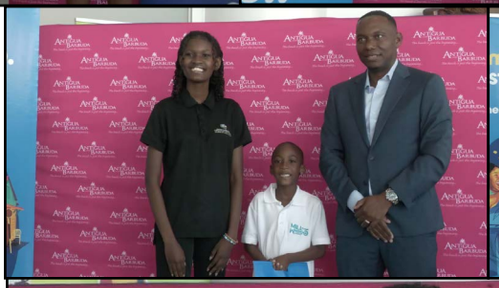
The Dual Threshold Exhibit can be seen and admired by all who arrive in Antigua and Barbuda through the VC Bird International Airport. Many doors each telling their unique stories in a variety of themes, and it is not the only exhibit that will be on display at the VC Bird International airport for the duration of Art Week



Works of Student Artists Displayed at VC Bird International Airport for Antigua and Barbuda Art Week











By Jeremiah Toussaint

Alongside the Dual Threshold Display, at the VC Bird International Airport nine exceptional Works of art can be spotted. Each canvas is an original work by an Antiguan Student as part of the Rising Stars of Art Student Exhibition.

The Initiative, sponsored by Community First Credit Union, and Flow, invited schools to submit original works from their students, under the theme, Rhythm in Colours.

On Thursday, 8 of the 9 students were awarded This initiative is another Key Event for Antigua and Barbuda ***Art Week*** and was sponsored by Flow and Community First Credit Union. The Awards were distributed as follows:

The awardees in the 7-9 are:

- 1st Place - Meghan Goodman: Mills Academy
- 2nd Place - Asher Wright: Mills Academy at
- Kaylee Monroe of the Mill Academy in 3rd place

In the 10 to 12 categories:

- 1st Place - Savanna Hargrove: St Anthony's Secondary
- 2nd Place - Genesis Clark: St John's Catholic
- 3rd Place - Hailey Warner: Post Millenia Academy

And in the 13 to 15

- 1st Place - Zoe Carter: Sir Novel Richards Academy
- 2nd Place - Zender Joseph: St Anthony claimed second
- 3rd Place - Joshua Alexander: Irene B Williams

In a powerful charge to the students, Bird Browne admonished students to persevere, saying, reminding them that their work matters. "Keep experimenting and discovering what you can do," Bird-Browne added "you don't need to know where your talents will take you, just give it room to grow."

ABEMS Congratulates Courtney Kellman on Ellevation to Level 2 Shift Supervisor

The Antigua and Barbuda Emergency Medical Services (ABEMS) has announced that Courtney Kellman has been elevated to Level Two Shift Supervisor.

Kellman, who joined the department in 2016, has consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment, professionalism and dedication to the delivery of emergency medical services. Throughout his time with ABEMS, he has distinguished himself through his strong work ethic, leadership capabilities and commitment to fulfilling his responsibilities.

His elevation to Level Two Shift Supervisor represents an important milestone in his professional development and recognises his continued growth, demonstrated competence and capacity to undertake greater responsibilities within the department.

The advancement also brings an expanded level of supervisory responsibility, including increased oversight and leadership in supporting the coordination of emergency medical personnel and the delivery of efficient, timely and professional emergency medical care.



The management and staff of ABEMS commend Kellman for his achievement and recognise the hard work and dedication that have contributed to this progression. His advancement reflects positively on his professional journey and the department's commitment to recognising growth and encouraging excellence among its personnel.

As he assumes the additional responsibilities associated with this level, ABEMS wishes him continued success and looks forward to his ongoing contributions to the department and the people of Antigua and Barbuda.



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PM Browne Exchanges Greetings With Venezuelan President Rodriguez



As part of COP31, which is being held from November 9-20, 2026 in Antalya, Türkiye, President Delcy Rodriguez held a high-level bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne. Following their speech at the plenary, the two reviewed the cooperation between their countries and assessed new areas of relationship.

Antigua and Barbuda and Venezuela have enjoyed long fraternal relations which have continued even after the removal of President Nicholas Maduro.




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2027
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CARIBBEAN
MUSIC FESTIVAL
ONE PEOPLE ONE LOVE
KEVIN DOWNSWELL
GEN $100
GLORY LOUNGE $250
EARLY BIRD
ANTIGUA RECREATION GROUND
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TICKET LOCATIONS:
EXOTIC ANTIGUA | ROTI KING | COOL & SMOOTH
MENS WORLD, TOWN HOUSE PLAZA
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ONE PEOPLE ONE LOVE
10TH JAN 2027
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GLORY LOUNGE $250
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ONE NATION CARIBBEAN MUSIC FESTIVAL
ONE PEOPLE ONE LOVE
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Caribbean records 13,000 new HIV infections, 4,800 AIDS deaths in 2025



An estimated 340,000 people were living with HIV in the Caribbean in 2025, with the region recording 13,000 new infections and 4,800 AIDS-related deaths, as the United Nations' HIV/AIDS agency warns that declining international funding and unequal access to healthcare threaten efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

The figures were highlighted by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in a press release ahead of World AIDS Day, which will be observed on 1st December, under the theme "Ending AIDS starts with access."

While the Caribbean has made considerable progress in reducing HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths over the past 15 years, UNAIDS cautioned that the region must sustain its investments in prevention, testing and treatment if it is to achieve the 2030 targets. Caribbean records 13,000 new HIV infections, 4,800 AIDS deaths in 2025

Between 2010 and 2025, new HIV infections in the Caribbean declined by 30 per cent, while AIDS-related deaths fell by 65 per cent. The reduction in deaths reflects the expansion of access to life-saving antiretroviral treatment. However, the agency warned that the gains could be reversed unless governments and international partners address persistent inequalities in access to healthcare.

The Caribbean's progress also contrasts with developments in Latin America, where new HIV infections increased by 25 per cent over the same period. UNAIDS identified children as among the groups most affected by gaps in HIV services, noting that only about one in four children living with HIV in the Caribbean has achieved viral suppression.

The regional figures come against a troubling global backdrop. Worldwide, 1.2 million people acquired HIV in 2025, while 570,000 died from AIDS-related illnesses. Although 32.1 million people were receiving life-saving treatment, nearly nine million people living with HIV remained without access to treatment. "The gap is no longer what medicine can do. It is who is able, allowed and supported to reach it. Science only saves lives when it reaches people," UNAIDS stated.

The organisation warned that declining international financing is undermining efforts to provide HIV prevention and treatment, particularly among vulnerable communities.

External financing for HIV programmes fell by 18 per cent in 2025, the largest decline in almost two decades. UNAIDS said community-led organisations, which often provide services to populations that public healthcare systems struggle to reach, were among the first to experience funding cuts.

The consequences were already evident in several countries. In Cameroon, Nigeria and Zambia, the number of people receiving pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), medication taken to prevent HIV infection, declined by more than half between 2024 and 2025. A 2026 survey of 79 community-led organisations across 47 countries also found a 50 per cent decline in PrEP delivery.

Services for gay men and other men who have sex with men declined by 85 per cent, while services for sex workers fell by 82 per cent. UNAIDS said these developments demonstrate the importance of maintaining funding for prevention programmes rather than concentrating resources solely on treatment.

The agency also identified stigma, discrimination and restrictive laws as major obstacles to controlling the epidemic. Across 36 countries, half of adults surveyed held discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV. Among people living with HIV who sought non-HIV-related healthcare across 25 countries, 25 per cent reported experiencing stigma or discrimination, while 12 per cent said they were denied healthcare altogether.

UNAIDS warned that criminalising vulnerable populations drives people away from healthcare facilities and undermines efforts to prevent new infections. It reported that sex work is criminalised in 168 countries, possession of small quantities of drugs in 152 countries, and same-sex sexual acts in 66 countries. The agency noted that

people who inject drugs are 34 times more likely to acquire HIV than the general adult population, while gay men and other men who have sex with men are 18 times more likely.

Despite the challenges, UNAIDS pointed to advances in HIV prevention, particularly lenacapavir, a long-acting injectable medication that can provide protection against HIV with just two injections annually. The drug is not a vaccine, but the organisation described it as one of the most significant advances in HIV prevention. By the end of June 2026, more than 50,000 people in nine sub-Saharan African countries had received the medication. Its price for lower-income countries is expected to fall to US$40 per person annually from 2027.

However, UNAIDS cautioned that access to the breakthrough remains limited, with prices for middle- and upper-income countries still unclear.

It also warned that new prevention technologies were emerging at a time when existing services were being reduced. HIV testing reportedly fell by 22 per cent in high-burden countries under one major bilateral programme, while funding for condoms was cut by more than 90 per cent in some locations.

The agency said governments must ensure that new technologies are integrated into national healthcare systems and made available alongside other prevention options.

In June 2026, United Nations Member States adopted a new Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, committing to an expanded global response. The declaration sets a target of having 40 million people on HIV treatment by 2030, including 38 million who achieve viral suppression, while 20 million people are expected to be using antiretroviral-based prevention.

It also calls for 90 per cent of people in need to have access to effective prevention options and for governments to address stigma, discrimination and punitive laws. The commitments include increasing annual HIV financing to US$21.9 billion by 2030, compared with US$17.6 billion available in 2025.

UNAIDS said that if the commitments are fulfilled, an estimated 3.2 million new HIV infections and 1.3 million AIDS-related deaths could be prevented by 2030. The organisation's Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima, said: "The science has done its part. The system must now do ours." As World AIDS Day approaches, UNAIDS is calling on Caribbean governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, educational institutions and other stakeholders to strengthen their response to HIV/AIDS.

It is also encouraging members of the public to wear the red ribbon, identify gaps in access to HIV services within their communities and support the campaign using the hashtag #WorldAIDSDay. The organisation stressed that ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 remains achievable, but only if access to prevention, treatment, healthcare and protection of human rights becomes a reality for everyone. (Kaieteur News)



Marine Superintendent admits MV Barima had flaws

Revelations before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the July 18, 2026 MV Barima maritime disaster reached an eyebrow-raising peak on Tuesday as Marine Superintendent Bailey conceded under hours of questioning that the ill-fated vessel was unsafe to operate, detailing that the boat lacked safety gear among other deficiencies.

Testifying before the panel of commissioners at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, including Chairperson Godfrey Smith, Commissioner Nyree Alphonso, Commissioner Jasionowski, and Captain Hamada Fouda, Bailey was forced to account for a three-page inspection report he produced in November 2025 after examining the vessel.

The inquiry dissected the findings line by line, exposing a vessel riddled with critical defects that was nevertheless permitted to return to passenger service without verification that a single hazard had been rectified.

Commissioners focused heavily on Bailey's November 2025 report, forcing the Marine Superintendent to confirm a comprehensive list of missing, expired, and non-functional gear on board the MV Barima. Under questioning, Bailey verified the findings, "No crane documentation, no radar, no AIS, no stability data, no EPIRB, none of the required certificates except for two, no distress signal capability, no serviceable life raft, insufficient life rafts, no emergency generator, and no fixed power-driven fire pump."

When asked whether a ship presenting such a profile could be considered fit for service, Bailey initially demurred. "The vessel wasn't operating, so I can't say if it was safe or unsafe," he told the commission. However, Commissioners refused to accept the distinction between a vessel undergoing maintenance and the objective technical profile documented in his official paperwork.



"I'm saying with this kind of information on a report, would you consider this a vessel that's safe to operate?" Commissioner Pritchard pressed. "No, those deficiencies would need to be cleared," Bailey admitted. "So it would be unsafe to operate?"

"Yeah… Yes."

Despite logging these hazards in November 2025, Bailey acknowledged that he wasn't aware a 2024 inspection on the same vessel had yielded identical deficiencies. "Before commencing the inspection, I did not review previous inspection documents," Bailey testified, adding, "I was instructed, it was to do a follow-up inspection on board the vessel." When asked if it would have been prudent to consult prior reports to know what he was following up on, Bailey conceded, "Correct."

Captain Hamada Fouda subjected Bailey to a detailed technical examination regarding the vessel's emergency equipment, exposing staggering mathematical and operational shortfalls in life-saving appliances.

Bailey's report logged six life rafts on board, each with a capacity of 25 persons, providing total accommodation for 150 people. However, based on the vessel's passenger complement and crew total of 12, international maritime standards (SOLAS) require 100 percent life-raft capacity on each side of the vessel to account for listing during a catastrophic emergency,

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requiring total raft capacity for at least 274 persons. "That is mean you have five life rafts missing," Captain Fouda calculated. "If I have six, I need in addition to these six, I need five. Am I correct?"

"Yes, sir," Bailey conceded.

Captain Fouda further pressed Bailey on the total absence of distress signals and proper emergency gear. The inspection report contained completely blank entries for hand flares, parachute flares, smoke signals, and flare guns. Bailey acknowledged that no distress signaling devices were present. The vessel contained five fire extinguishers, two in the wheelhouse and three in the engine room, with zero extinguishers present in passenger accommodation spaces. No fireman's outfits or fire suits were on board, and the main power-driven fire pump was inoperable, replaced by an unapproved portable unit. Regarding life jackets, while 240 adult and 34 child life jackets were present, none were fitted with mandatory location lights. "All life jackets without light," Bailey confirmed. Furthermore, Bailey testified that the jackets were stored in overhead shelves roughly five feet high. When asked if a child or short person could reach them in a sudden crisis, Bailey replied, "No, ma'am." Bailey's report further noted that the ferry was operating with one engine broken down and one running. Captain Fouda challenged the feasibility of navigating a twin-screw vessel on a single engine, noting that asymmetric thrust forces the vessel continuously toward port or starboard. "If the helmsman not professional, he cannot control it," Fouda stated. "That is correct," Bailey agreed.

The inquiry also revealed that Bailey's November 2025 walk-through of the vessel lasted only 45 minutes to an hour, during which he failed to inspect critical structural compartments.

Under questioning, Bailey admitted he visually inspected only one cargo hold forward and entered the engine room, but completely failed to inspect the aft cargo hold or the aft watertight bulkhead. "No, I didn't enter that space," Bailey acknowledged, despite having ticked the report indicating that watertight bulkheads were in satisfactory condition.

Finally, the commission laid bare MARAD's complete failure to enforce rectification measures. Bailey explained that once an inspector logs deficiencies, the report is submitted to the Director of Safety, Captain McDonald, who then transmits the findings to the Transport and Harbours Department (THD). THD is expected to rectify the defects, notify MARAD in writing, and request a re-inspection.

However, Bailey admitted under oath that after filing his November 2025 report containing 16 major safety deficiencies, no follow-up was ever conducted, no written clearance was ever received from THD, and he was never instructed to return to the MV Barima to verify that a single defect had been rectified. "Has any one of the ferries that you inspected, including Barima, ever been re-inspected to check for those deficiencies, rectification measures?" Commissioner Jasionowski asked. "No, sir," Bailey answered. (Kaieteur News)



Holness eyes foreign labour for NaRRA

Prime Minister Dr Andrew Holness has reiterated that the National Reconstruction and Resilience Authority (NaRRA) may have to source some of the skills needed to rebuild western Jamaica from overseas amid a shortage of skilled labour in the construction industry.

Speaking at a National Housing Trust (NHT) ceremony at which 25 young Jamaicans were awarded scholarships under the agency's Construction Scholarship Programme, Holness said it was time for the industry to expand its capacity to meet the country's demands.

Each student is eligible for up to $1 million annually in tuition support.

Holness said there was "dissonance" between businesses' calls for skilled labour and specific skill sets and the complaints of Jamaicans about a lack of job opportunities.

He said private firms and the NHT consistently report severe shortages of skilled construction workers and project managers, even as unemployed young people in rural and urban communities seek employment.

"The volume of projects that we will have will increase significantly, and we must ensure that the productive capacity of the industry keeps apace so that we can manage cost; we can maintain quality; and we can deliver more homes and infrastructure for every dollar invested," said Holness.

"My understanding is that the construction industry has expanded far beyond the labour pool of skills that we have, and it is not just the private firms that complain. The NHT complains as well," he noted.

The prime minister said NHT contractors report high staff turnover, with workers leaving construction sites after just a few days to take up jobs elsewhere, disrupting project schedules.



"I don't think this is an area in which there ought to be a controversial debate. I think we can settle on the fact that we don't have enough skills now, and we certainly will not have enough skills in the future when the National Reconstruction and Resilience Authority actually starts doing infrastructure work," Holness asserted.

He said the Government was taking steps to address the shortage of skills in the construction and engineering sectors to strengthen the country's productive capacity.

He added that, beyond masons, electricians and tilers, Jamaica urgently needs project management expertise and practical leadership to turn capital budgets into completed structures.

Holness pointed out that, of an annual $80-billion capital budget, only about $40 billion is often converted into physical infrastructure, with capacity constraints resulting in unspent funds and stifling national growth and development.

The scholarship recipients were urged by the prime minister not only to seek employment, but also to establish their own contracting firms, capable of executing projects quickly, while maintaining high quality and competitive pricing.

"We need a new generation in the construction industry that will match the budget that the Government has to spend. I can list project after project that is being delayed, not coming on on time, and a lot of it just comes down to management," he said.

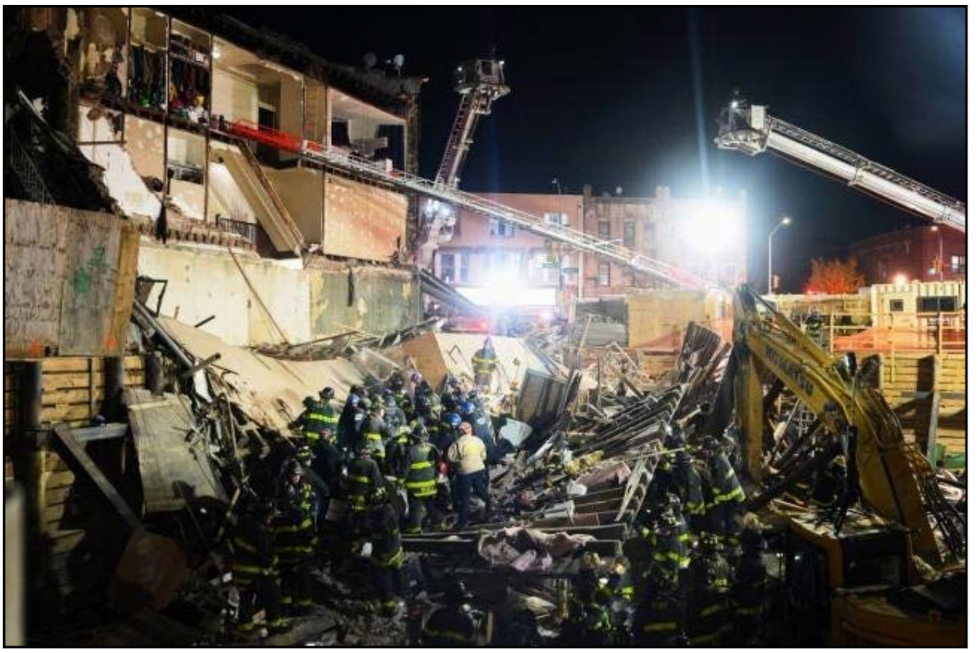
"Jamaica has the best planners. They can tell you everything technical, and oftentimes it comes down to why it can't be done. We have the brightest people with the brightest ideas. They will give you volumes of papers, but you tell them to get it done ... that is what we lack in our society ... ," Holness said.

He called for an end to "small-minded thinking" about the scale of infrastructure projects and challenged the cultural assumption that slower work necessarily produces better quality.

Instead, he advocated faster project delivery to help address Jamaica's long-term housing deficit, estimated at 150,000 housing solutions, compared with the 110,000 to 120,000 built by the NHT over its 50-year history.

"What it is about now, is about getting it done, delivering it, turning capital budget into concrete; and that is where we have fallen short as a country," said Holness. (Jamaica Gleaner)

One dead, several persons trapped after building collapses in New York



Firefighters dug through the rubble of a three-story building in Brooklyn on Wednesday after it collapsed at the edge of a construction site, killing at least one person and trapping others beneath the wreckage.

Firefighters were called to the scene in the borough's Flatbush section around 4:00 pm. News helicopter footage showed dozens of firefighters scouring the debris, clambering over the rubble pile and using their hands and power saws to cut through the ruins.

One person died, and at least four others were rushed to a hospital in critical condition, according to the New York City Fire Department. Six additional people were taken to hospitals with minor injuries.

At around 6:30 pm, firefighters pulled a dust-covered person – still alive and moving – out of a hole they had dug into the rubble pile, hoisting them up on a stretcher and rushing them to a waiting ambulance.

The building that collapsed had been perched at the edge of a lot where another one-story building had been torn down for a construction project. The site was being excavated, and the building that fell down filled the construction pit with bricks and wood.

Another building that shared a wall with the collapsed structure remained standing, but its wall was shorn off, exposing the rooms inside, including a bedroom and closets filled with clothing.

A drone hovered over the site as firefighters dug by hand, tossing chunks of rubble aside. Rescuers also used dogs to sniff for survivors. As darkness fell, firefighters used flashlights to illuminate the area where they worked.

"As emergency operations continue, please join me in holding our neighbors and the members of this community in our hearts," Mayor Zohran Mamdani said in a statement posted on social media.

Phone and email messages seeking comment were left with the architect, property owner and general contractor listed in city records as being associated with the construction project. (AP)

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3 men charged with plotting terror attacks

A man jailed on terrorism charges in New York was able to pass secret messages to Iranian operatives planning an attack on a British air base used by the United States (US) Air Force, according to an indictment unsealed Tuesday.

The new indictment offers fresh insight into an episode shrouded in mystery since September 27, when a group of men were detained on suspected explosives and terrorism offenses after three suspicious vans were spotted traveling toward a British air base where US bombers were stationed.

The new charges accuse Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, a dual Iranian-Iraqi national jailed at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, of a role in plotting to attack the Royal Air Force Base in Fairford, in western England, even though he'd been arrested last spring.

According to prosecutors, al-Saadi used coded language in phone and video calls to his mother and sister in Iraq to pass messages encouraging associates to carry out the air base bombing.

Two other men have been charged in the case, which accuses Iran-backed operatives of plotting nearly 20 terror strikes on Jewish communities in Europe and the US.

Neither of those men, Mohsen Mohajeri, an Iranian national, and Mohammad Ali al-Hassani, an Iraqi national, are in US custody.

"These defendants helped orchestrate a campaign of terror on behalf of terrorist organisations affiliated with Iran that targeted Jewish communities in Europe and the United States, and the British military base, RAF Fairford, housing American service members," said Manhattan US Attorney Jamie McDonald. "The threat presented by Iran and Iran-backed terrorist groups to America and our allies is not hypothetical – it is very real."

Attorney General Todd Blanche said: "Anyone who plans a terrorist plot on a military base housing American service members will be prosecuted by the United States government."

Seven men arrested in the United Kingdom in connection with the incident at the RAF base in Fairford were all released on bail. One of those men was subsequently rearrested on suspicion of assisting Iran's intelligence service and charged, along with another man, under the National Security Act, British authorities said. (AP)





World leaders urge stronger, faster action at UN climate talks



World leaders called for urgent and decisive action on global warming Wednesday as formal talks began at the United Nations (UN) climate conference in Turkey, saying the crisis is disproportionately harming some of the world's most vulnerable countries.

"You might as well bomb us. That might have been easier than watching climate change tear apart our homes piece by piece," said Surangel Whipps Jr, president of the island nation of Palau. "We are at war with a crisis we did not create. A war no peace treaty can end, only urgent action can."

The annual summit follows a year of deadly floods, heat waves and other disasters. Leaders said geopolitical conflicts had diverted attention from climate change.

Earlier this year, the UN said it is inevitable that the world will warm beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels.

Limiting warming to that threshold was a goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement and remains a focus of international negotiations. The UN wants the world to limit how long and how much temperatures shoot past that mark and somehow get back down below it by the end of the century. That's called overshoot.

"The evidence is now in. We did not try hard enough," said Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, who said five years ago that the 1.5-degree threshold was necessary for survival.

"Overshoot is not a new target, it's a debt," she added. "A debt of heat borrowed against our children's future and it must be repaid."

She said every five years of delay increases projected peak warming by a tenth of a degree, "and a tenth of a degree, my friends, is a coral reef. It's a harvest, it's a village, and lives and livelihoods will be affected. Ask Nepal, where more than 1,400 people died in the floods in August, and thousands are still missing".

UN Secretary-General António Guterres outlined a framework for climate negotiations, saying they must prioritise ending fossil fuel reliance, adapting to a warmer world, increasing financial support for poorer countries bearing the brunt of climate change, and promoting cooperation over conflict.

"We know the truth. Now we must act on it because climate action is more than a fight over a number or a thermometer," Guterres said in his opening speech. "We are in the fight for our lives and our children's future.

"We do not need countries to agree on everything. But we do need them to cooperate on the things no country can solve alone."

Addressing climate change has been overshadowed by wars, inflation and geopolitical conflicts, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said. He pledged to protect the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, and urged world leaders to work together for a just, sustainable future.

"Brazil is back to defend the continuity of a healthy planet," said Lula, who recently won reelection.

Micronesian President Wesley Simina said his country is already suffering irreversible losses of coral reefs that "protect our shores, sustain our fisheries, feed our families and carry the stories and traditions of our communities."

He called climate change the "single greatest threat to the security, livelihoods, and well-being of Pacific peoples, but perhaps worse than what we've already experienced is what has yet to come" as temperatures continue to rise.

Both Simina and Mottley called for these climate talks to come to an agreement to slash methane – a short-lived but extra powerful heat-trapping gas – which Mottley said could "buy time to supercharge" technology to help cut longer-lived carbon dioxide. She said cutting methane by about half by 2030 could help avoid almost 0.3 degrees of warming by the 2040s "and save 250,000 lives every year". (AP)

Google, Meta and TikTok sue California over law designed to protect children from social media harms

Google, Meta, and TikTok filed separate lawsuits seeking to block a California law designed to protect children from the risks of social media, arguing that it violates their First Amendment rights.

The law, which is scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 2027, prohibits tech companies from offering addictive feeds, endless scrolling, and autoplayed videos to kids under 16. They must also implement "reasonable measures" to make sure those under 16 are not given access to the addictive features by verifying users' ages. Governor Gavin Newsom signed it into law in September.

The companies each filed their lawsuits in federal courts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Jose, California. In addition to the First Amendment, TikTok, Meta, and Google argue that the law violates Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which shields tech companies from liability for material posted on their sites by third parties.

The lawsuits come as tech companies face increasing scrutiny over their platforms' harms to children, including thousands of lawsuits by schools, governments, and individual plaintiffs.

In August, Meta agreed to pay up to US$18 billion and add stronger child-safety measures to its Facebook and Instagram platforms as part of a landmark legal settlement that ended a trial over teen social media addiction and settled claims filed by nearly every state. The settlement resolved a pivotal case years in the making that sought to hold the tech giant accountable for the role its platforms played in undermining children's mental health. The effort targeted features designed to hook young people's attention. In September, TikTok settled with Alabama over addictive features.

The office of California Attorney General Rob Bonta, the defendant in each of the lawsuits, said Thursday it was reviewing the filings and that it was committed to defending state laws to protect kids online.



TikTok called the law "a blatantly unconstitutional restriction on free expression that erodes the longstanding and protected practice of curating content based on user preferences, which bookstores, TV networks, and streaming services all use."

The company said it has implemented numerous safety measures for kids on its platform, adding that beyond "disregarding real progress in making teens safer online, this law limits free speech and takes away parents' rights to determine what's appropriate for their kids."

Meta said the law violates the First Amendment "by letting the government dictate how ideas are organised, displayed, or shared with Californians."

"Under the law, we would be forced to either remove features that keep teens' experiences age-appropriate or cut thousands of California teens off from family, friends, and their communities," the company said in a statement.

Google said it believes parents are in the best position to make decisions for their families and that it offers a range of parental control tools and protections.

"Overly broad laws like this actually break the systems we've built to help kids find high-quality, age-appropriate videos," said spokesman José Castañeda. (AP)

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POINT EXPRESS ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

North Coast FC maintains perfect start in ABFA's Second Division

North Coast FC maintained a perfect start to their campaign in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Wednesday.

North Coast FC claimed their fourth successive win by snatching a 2-1 victory against Police FC at the Clare Hall playing field.

Following a goalless first half, Shaquan Tonge broke the deadlock by scoring an own goal in the 50th minute to give Police a one-nil lead.

But Jamary Galloway scored twice, slotting home the equalizer with a strike in the 51st minute and snatching the winner via a 79th-minute conversion, to secure victory for North Coast FC.

The result means that Police FC remains on three points after crashing to their second successive defeat in three matches.

Glanvilles FC advanced to nine points after recording their third win in four matches by snatching a 2-1 victory against Herberts FC at the Glanvilles playing field.

Goals by Demaro McKenzie in the 31st minute and Roshaun Martin in the 57th minute gave Glanvilles a two-nil lead. Teammate Ashane Mattison reduced the deficit for Herberts FC by scoring an own goal in the 59th minute.

The result allows Herberts FC to remain on two points after slumping to their third defeat in five matches.

After suffering a 6-1 drubbing from Real Blizzard FC in their season opener, Lion Hill FC notched up their second successive win with a 7-1 drubbing of the Young Warriors at the Golden Grove playing field.

Jevoi Gray achieved a hat trick, and Elreek Francois scored twice for Lion Hill FC. Gray scored in the 30th, 38th, and 56th minutes, while Francois had conversions in the 17th and 69th minutes.

The other goals for Lion Hill FC were scored by Oneil Brown in the 15th minute and Jaquan Joseph in the 27th minute. D'Jarie Gregory scored a consolation goal in the 44th minute for the Young Warriors, who will remain on three points after slumping to their third loss in four matches.

Tryum FC advanced to five points by securing their second win in four matches with a 6-1 drubbing at the Cashew Hill playing field.

Darrie Matthew had a double conversion with strikes in the 31st and 34th minutes. The other goals for Lion Hill FC were scored by Michael Stowe Jr., Chamarley Joseph, Deotcha Moses, and Jahmaya Gilkes.

John Archibald scored a consolation goal in the 81st minute for Wadadli United FC, which remains on one point after slumping to their fourth defeat in five matches.



Quashie continues prolific scoring for AGHS in school girls U-20 league

Forward Nafisa Quashie has continued her prolific scoring form for the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) in the Girls Under-20 Division in the Ministry of Sports Cool and Smooth JOMA Caribbean Schools Football League.

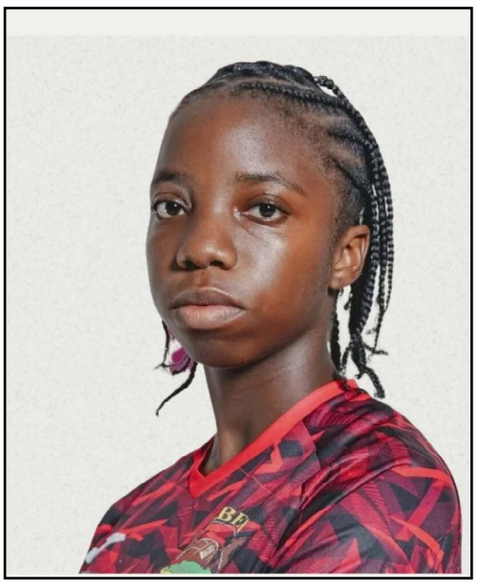
After scoring 13 goals to lead her team to victory in their previous two matches, Quashie scored all five goals to propel the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) to their third win in as many games with a 5-0 drubbing of St. Anthony's Secondary School (SASS) at the St. Anthony's Secondary School's playing field on Wednesday.

Quashie had conversions in the 10th, 37th, 45th, 48th, and 55th minutes for AGHS as St. Anthony's Secondary School remains on four points after crashing to their first defeat in three matches.

Princess Margaret School (PMS) maintained their successful start in defense of their Girls Under-20 Division title.

After launching their campaign with a 2-0 victory over Jennings Secondary School (JSS), Princess Margaret School recorded a 3-0 win against Ottos Comprehensive School in their second encounter at the Clare Hall playing field.

The goals for Princess Margaret School were scored by Jkayla Bellot in the 10th minute, Rolesha Humphreys in the 18th minute, and Gimel Samuel in the 21st minute.



Nafisa Quashie

Ottos Comprehensive School remain winless and without any points after crashing to their second defeat in as many matches.

The Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) also maintained their perfect start, claiming their second win in as many games by snatching a 2-1 victory against Jennings Secondary School at the Freemans Village playing field.

Aliah London scored in the eighth minute, and Sanique Levy had a 54th-minute conversion for ABCAS. Latoya Williams scored in the 57th minute for Jennings Secondary School, which remains on one point after losing for the second time in three matches.

The Clare Hall Secondary School (CHSS) rebounded from a 7-0 drubbing against ABCAS in their season opener to claim their second successive win by snatching a 1-0 victory against St. Mary's Secondary School (SMSS) in their third encounter at the Clare Hall playing field.

Kayra Jordan scored the winner and only goal of the match in the 53rd minute as SMSS tumbled to their third loss in as many encounters.

After suffering a 2-1 loss to St. Anthony's Secondary School in their opening encounter, Pares Secondary School (PSS) rebounded to pick up their first win by surging to a 4-1 victory over All Saints Secondary School (ASSS) at the Freemans Village playing field.

Keitonya Skepple had a double conversion in the 57th and 59th minutes, teammate Kyra Francis converted with a strike in the 46th minute, and Deliah Gore scored an own goal to propel Pares Secondary to victory.

Aaliyah Charles scored a consolation goal in the 22nd minute for All Saints Secondary School, which remains on three points after suffering their second successive loss in three matches.



POINT EXPRESS
TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

Knockout stage to continue with quarter-finals in business football league



The Hermitage Bay Strikers football team

The knockout stage of the 2026 JOMA Caribbean Ministry of Sports Business Football League Championship will resume this weekend with matches in the quarter-finals.

The final eight teams secured their berths in the quarter-finals on Saturday after securing wins during the Round of 16.

The quarter-finalists are defending champions APUA Telecoms, Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHAPA) Warriors, Hermitage Bay Strikers, Galley Bay Ballers, the American University of Antigua FC, the University of the West Indies (UWI) Frigate Bird FC, Jumby Bay Resort, and Cocos Hotel.

In the Round of 16, APUA Telecoms prevailed 2-1 against Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority (ABAA), and the CHAPA Warriors snatched a 3-2 victory against Sandals FC.

Hermitage Bay Strikers hammered the Blue Waters Hotel 4-0, while the Galley Bay Ballers pulled off a 3-1 victory against Public Works Asphalt.

The American University of Antigua FC prevailed 3-1 against Immigration Department, and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Frigate Bird FC defeated Royalton Chic 3-0.

The Jumby Bay Resort clinched a 4-2 victory over Central Marketing Corporation (CMC), and Cocos Hotel also prevailed 4-2 against Keyonna Beach Resort.

The quarter-final matches will take place with double-headers at two venues, with the games slated for 6:15 pm and 7:30 pm.

At the Radio Range playing field in Ottos, Cocos Hotel will meet the University of the West Indies Frigate Bird FC in the first encounter, and Jumby Bay Resort will face Hermitage Bay Strikers in the second match.

The CHAPA Warriors will take on the American University of Antigua, and the Galley Bay Ballers will clash with APUA Telecoms at the Golden Grove playing field.

The winners in the quarter-finals will advance to the semi-final stage of the competition.

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Sports News

England Lions win ODI series over West Indies A team



Players of the England Lions

An unbeaten century by Dan Lawrence overshadowed Jyd Goolie's fantastic ton and ushered England Lions to a comprehensive six-wicket win over West Indies 'A' to claim the One Day International series with two matches remaining in St. Kitts on Wednesday.

Lawrence slammed an even, unbeaten 100 off 93 balls, as England easily chased down the home side's total of 273 for nine, finishing on 274 for four in 44.3 overs at Warner Park.

It gave the visitors an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series, and left West Indies 'A' still searching for their first win of the white-ball tour.

The Windies got off to a nightmare start after electing to bat when Naavya Sharma bowled Mikyle Louis for a duck with the fourth ball of the match.

When medium pacer Ekansh Singh claimed the wickets of the two in-form batters, captain Keacy Carty and Kirk McKenzie for 13 and 30 respectively, the Windies were in a spot of bother at 55 for three after 10 overs.

Alick Athanaze and Goolie added 48 runs for the fourth wicket, before pacer Adam Finch dismissed the former for 21 and then bowled Jewel Andrew for one, to leave the home side stuttering at 107 for five.

But Goolie, who struck 119 off 104 balls with 12 fours and four sixes, together with Rivaldo Clarke who made 57, ensured the Windies got up to a decent total during a 130-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

Just as they were looking to accelerate, leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed accounted for both wickets in quick succession to stifle any hopes of a spectacular finish to the innings.

Ahmed was the best bowler with three for 55, while Singh (two for 33), Finch (two for 39) and Sharma (two for 56) took two wickets apiece.

Jediah Blades gave West Indies hope of defending their total when he dismissed Thomas Rew for 13 with 31 runs on the board.

However, England strung together partnerships thereafter with all of their batters making meaningful contributions.

Ben McKinney and Ahmed both scored 37, before falling to Goolie and left-arm wrist spinner Vitel Lawes respectively, to leave England 129 for three in the 22nd over.

Lawrence and James Rew then took the game away from the Windies during a partnership of 65 that put them in the driver's seat at 194 for three in the 30th over.

When Athanaze bowled Rew with his part-time off spin for 31, Lawrence and Ben Mayes, who scored 43 not out, shared an unbroken stand of 80 runs to carry their side to victory with 33 deliveries remaining.

Lawrence hit eight fours and three sixes in his knock, while Mayes struck two fours and one six in his 47-ball innings.

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BOE captures double Business Basketball League crowns with playoff title



The Board of Education team celebrate with their trophies after winning the playoff championship in the Business Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday, November 11, 2026. (Photo courtesy of the ABBA)

The Board of Education (BOE) captured back-to-back double crowns by winning the playoff title in the 2026 Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Cool and Smooth Business Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Wednesday night.

After securing this year's round-robin league crown by winning 11 of their 12 matches, the top-seeded Board of Education maintained their successful run to retain the playoff championship by prevailing 57-45 in the decisive Game 5 to clinch their best-of-five finals 3-2 against second-seed and 2022 champions Richie's Shooterz.

Xavier "X-Man" Meade shot a game-high 23 points, Daniel Perez sank 11 points, and his brother Danny Perez converted 10 points for the Board of Education, who beat Richie's Shooterz for the second successive year in the playoff finals.

Cohen Desouza scored 10 points for Richie's Shooterz, who also finished in the runners-up spot behind the BOE in the round-robin league with identical records of 11 wins and one defeat from their quota of 12 games.

The Board of Education came from behind twice in this year's finals to level the series before successfully retaining their playoff title.

Richie's Shooterz took the early advantage with a 68-61 win in Game 1, and the Board of Education surged to a 76-59 victory in Game 2 to level the final series 1-1.

The defending champions were able to tie the series 2-2 by securing a 56-48 victory in Game 4 after Richie's Shooterz took a 2-1 advantage by snatching a narrow 66-63 victory over the Board of Education in Game 3.

Xavier Meade of BOE won the Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the playoffs, while Chet Jacobs of the BOE claimed the Coach of the Year Award for the second successive year.

The Board of Education made a clean sweep of all individual awards in the playoffs.

Adonis Humphreys claimed the award for the most blocks; Daniel Perez won the accolade for the most rebounds; Warren Bogle claimed the prize for the most steals; and Danny Perez took the award for the most assists.

Former champions, the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board, finished third in the round-robin league, in which Xavier Meade of the BOE also claimed the Most Valuable Player Award.

Daniel Perez of the BOE claimed the awards for the most outstanding player and most points in the league.

Newcomers, the Philippines, won the award for the most disciplined team during their debut appearance in the competition.

Webster Baptista of newcomers, Curtain Bluff Resort, took home the award for scoring the most points in a game. Steven Matthew of Richie's Shooterz won the accolade for converting the most three-point shots in a game.

His Richie's Shooterz teammate Kwame Brathwaite captured the award for the best dunk.

The Board of Education also won an inaugural knockout competition, which was introduced as part of the All-Stars Night festivities in this year's business basketball league.

Kevin Pimental of the BOE captured the Most Valuable Player Award in the Business Basketball League Knockout Competition.

Thirteen (13) teams, one less than last year, participated in the 2026 business basketball league.

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