



SHOPPING SURGE

Heavy foot traffic filled Swan Street on Friday as shoppers moved through the capital ahead of the holidays, with steady crowds moving through the city centre and stores. (Photo by Shamar Blunt)



'RED AND READY'

Prime Minister Mia Mottley hints at 2026 general election — Page 3



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Three circular callouts: 'Bursting with Flavor!', 'Pre-Cooked & Ready to Eat!', and 'Juicy & Tender'.

Today's Editorial

Wages, prices, corporate pressure and consumer tolerance

One must expect that the Barbados Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) will represent the interest of the business class, and so it is not surprising its leadership would be concerned about increases in the costs of production.

The chamber's recent comments on the national minimum wage reignited the debate on how we ought to fairly raise workers' wages, while at the same time safeguarding the viability of businesses, especially small enterprises, which constitute the vast majority of the business landscape.

On one side of the argument, is a clear and agreed principle that every working Barbadian should earn enough to meet basic living costs. With rising food prices, housing, utilities and transportation, minimum wage earners are often the most exposed to economic pressures. They are the ones who are spending the bulk of their small incomes on food, rent and transport.

For them, wage increases should bring relief that can determine whether bills are paid on time or sidelined in order to buy groceries. From this perspective, regular adjustments to the minimum wage are seen as a social responsibility and key to reducing poverty levels among the working poor.

However, the BCCI has cautioned that these wage increases do not exist in a vacuum. Speaking at a recent press conference, president Paul Inniss acknowledged support for a liveable wage, but he also warned of the "cascading effect" that can follow across the economy.

When the national minimum wage increases, employees already earning above that level have come to expect similar increases. For businesses, especially those with large workforces, this can lead to a general rise in wage costs that can stretch way beyond minimum wage earners.

These higher costs, the chamber argues, inevitably place pressure on the bottom line of businesses. In sectors such as retail, security services and other labour-intensive industries, operators say their margins are thin and shifts in labour costs have a significant impact.

Feedback from BCCI members suggests that some companies are struggling to absorb the increased wage bills. While there have been no widespread reports of reduced working hours, the cost pressures may be showing up in other ways, including higher prices being passed along to customers.

Chairman of the BCCI's Economic Advisory Committee, Christopher Sambrano, cautioned that if wages continue to increase it will feed into higher prices and the country risks exposure to a cycle in which inflation erodes the gains that were supposed to come from an increased minimum wage.

Importantly, the chamber's position is not simply about opposition to the increase. The local private sector body wants a broader conversation about how wages are structured and how productivity fits into the equation.

One proposal from the chamber is greater use of incentive-based pay systems linked to productivity, performance and business outcomes. In such arrangements, the chamber believes workers would receive a base wage that meets minimum standards, which would be supplemented by bonuses or incentives tied to targets and or profitability.

The danger in this proposal is the complex nature of it and the challenges associated with such flexible pay packages with determining matters such as National Insurance contributions and pension calculations.

Some may argue, too, that workers at the bottom do not enjoy the luxury of being anything other than productive if they wish to maintain their jobs. Additionally, minimum wage earners are the most vulnerable in the workplace hierarchy and are most likely to be exploited by employers even in situations where they are highly productive.

Sambrano and senior vice-president Paul Ashby have pointed to investments in technology, improved systems, better sourcing and even artificial intelligence as ways to offset rising labour costs.

Critics of this approach, however, caution that productivity gains are not always easy to achieve, particularly for small businesses or sectors where output is tied closely to human labour.

The government, for its part, has signalled that minimum wage increases are part of a broader social and economic agenda. Although the BCCI leadership said it was not surprised by the latest adjustment, Inniss acknowledged that the back-to-back nature of recent increases has intensified pressure on businesses.

Ultimately, the debate is not about choosing between workers and businesses, but about finding a sustainable balance.

If businesses cannot pass on higher costs because consumers cannot afford higher prices, they must look elsewhere for savings to remain viable. At the same time, workers need wages that reflect the realities of modern living.

TODAY IN BARBADOS

Several medical services available on Chinese Hospital Ship

Barbadians will be able to access a range of medical services when they visit the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy Hospital Ship from Sunday, December 21, up until **Christmas Day**, Thursday, December 25.

The ship, which will be here on its first humanitarian mission, has several departments, including: Cardiovascular medicine, respiratory medicine, gastroenterology, general surgery, orthopaedics, otolaryngology, ophthalmology, obstetrics and gynaecology, stomatology, paediatrics, dermatology, traditional Chinese medicine, physiotherapy, a special examination room and imaging room.

Some of the surgeries performed on the hospital ship are:

- Gastroenterology: routine or painless gastrointestinal endoscopy
- General surgery: appendectomy, hernia repair, breast lump removal, skin lesion removal, nail extraction
- Orthopaedics: internal fixation of spinal and limb fractures, rib fracture fixation, open limb trauma, treatment of knee injuries, and management of frozen shoulder
- Urology: enlarged scrotum ligation, redundant circumcision

- Obstetrics and gynaecology: normal deliveries, caesarean sections

- Ophthalmology: cataract extraction/treatment for cataract

- Otolaryngology: Common surgeries of the ear, nose, and throat

- Traditional Chinese medicine: cupping, acupuncture

The hospital ship has five medical areas for casualty transfer, triage, outpatient, inpatient, and evacuation, with eight operating rooms. It includes 14 clinical departments and seven auxiliary diagnostic units.

There is a helicopter on board to enhance emergency capacity, and the ship offers over 60 types of medical and surgical procedures, adhering to the principles of safety, efficacy, and technical maturity.

The public is reminded that the hospital ship will be accepting patients for medical services on Sunday, December 21; Monday, December 22; Tuesday, December 23; and Thursday, December 25, between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m., and 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

The ship will be closed to the public on Wednesday, December 24, and Friday, December 26. (BGIS)

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PM teases possibility of heading to the polls next year

By Sheria Brathwaite

Barbadians could be headed to the polls in 2026.

Prime Minister Mia Mottley created a buzz on Thursday night by hinting that elections could be on the horizon in the New Year, and called on her supporters to ready themselves.

While general elections in Barbados are not constitutionally due until 2027, speculation has been rife in recent weeks that Mottley might continue her trend of calling elections a year early.

And Mottley, who led the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) to successive 30-0 victories in the 2018 and 2022 general elections, added fuel to that fire while speaking during her Christmas party at her official residence, Ilaro Court.

"Whilst there is work to be done, there is work for the Barbados Labour Party and its soldiers to do, and we are all turning up for work in 2026. We are all turning up for work in 2026, because if something can be done, it is this Barbados Labour Party that will do it, always, always, always.

"I want you, therefore, to have a restful Christmas, a Merry Christmas, because when I start to call on you I don't want you to tell me that you are tired. And when I start to call on you I don't want you to tell me anything other than 'Prime Minister, we are ready. We are red and ready. We are red, red, red and ready, ready, ready,'" Mottley said to loud applause.

"Merry Christmas and Happy 2026 and may we take this country to newer and higher heights, because we committed as the BLP, always to do our best and to give our best."

If Mottley does indeed call elections next year, it would be the second time she has done so with a year remaining in her term.

It would also follow a recent trend in the Caribbean, with Saint Lucia's Prime Minister, Philip J. Pierre, having done the same earlier this month.

Two days ago in an interview with **Barbados TODAY**, political scientist Peter Wickham said it was highly possible the Prime Minister would send Barbadians to the polls in 2026, citing her history of calling elections before they are due.

His comments came after Mottley announced that around 2 000 public servants were set to receive permanent appointments, along with the reinstatement of term vacation leave for teachers from as early as next year.

Back in October at the BLP's 86th Annual Conference in Queen's Park, Mottley signalled that she would ring the bell once the voters'

list from the Electoral Boundaries Commission was cleaned up.

Since then, longstanding Members of Parliament for St Joseph and St Thomas, Dale Marshall and Cynthia Forde, respectively, announced they would no longer be contesting the next elections.

The BLP hastily took steps to fill those voids with attorney-at-law, Senator Gregory Nicholls named as Forde's replacement, while businessman Ryan Brathwaite took over from Marshall.

Several MPs and candidates for both the BLP and Opposition Democratic Labour Party (DLP) have also been spotted in various constituencies making their rounds.

Last month the EBC announced that more than 8 000 people were being removed from the voters list, with chairman Ramon Alleyne saying the Commission's goal is to produce the cleanest and most accurate register in decades.

He said a clean register should be in place by January 31.

Of the names slated for removal, 4 923 belong to individuals who have been overseas for more than five years, while 3 368 are confirmed deceased.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister framed the Christmas gathering as an opportunity for unity and renewed commitment across the party, bringing together supporters from different constituencies and movements.

"It is my honour to be here and it is only right that we get together, that we gather... for each of us to be able to share fellowship across the ones that we normally see, across constituencies, across all kinds of movements," Mottley told the audience.

"I want to thank you for your continued support, for your prayers, and for all that you continue to do to make our country and our constituencies as strong as they have been. You are the bedrock of this marvelous democracy."

Mottley pointed to sustained economic progress as evidence of what she said was a shared national vision, while acknowledging that challenges remained.

"We have seen it come from the economic doldrums. We have had now 17 straight quarters of growth, we have the lowest unemployment ever in the history of our nation, we no longer go to sleep worrying about foreign reserves; our foreign reserves are the highest they've ever been," she maintained.

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Prime Minister Mia Mottley addressing the Christmas Party at Ilaro Court. (SZB)

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Police association warns of rising risks, mulls new 'risk allowance' request

**BPA
President
Inspector
Wendley
Carter.
(FP)**



Carter also suggested that the government take another look at the challenges now faced by the service in attracting new recruits, particularly relating to pay levels.

"People looking at recruitment; you can't get the numbers. Nobody isn't coming for the jobs, because if I see my friend with a little salary in the police service and I could get a bigger one somewhere else in the private sector, I am not coming into the police service. So, they got to look at that."

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By Emmanuel Joseph

The Barbados Police Association warned that policing is becoming an increasingly hazardous profession and said it was preparing to ask the government for a risk allowance if a current job regrading exercise fails to recognise the dangers officers face.

BPA President Inspector Wendley Carter told **Barbados TODAY** that if the current public service regrading exercise fails to address the situation, it will propose that the Mia Mottley administration pay members of The Barbados Police Service what they now prefer to call a "risk allowance" rather than a "hazard allowance".

He said: "We are looking to ask for it now because we put forward a hazard allowance before — that was under the last president — but I can't say much about whether it was

acknowledged. But we are waiting until after the regrading exercise to put some more things to the government. We are trying to get the members to stay, because we got a lot of people that left and gone to the Central Bank; some gone to The UWI. Because if I left the police service to go to the Central Bank or The UWI, that means I am getting more than what I am getting in the service.

"The young people are looking at what they can get now. They aren't looking at retirement and what they can get at 65 years. They aren't looking down the road. We are trying to move away from 'hazard allowance' because it might be a risk... because there are different types of risks in the police service. We prefer to call it a risk allowance. So, that is one of the things we are thinking of to go forward within the year.

"This allowance would cover the whole police service because there are a lot of risks

involved in this job now. Before, it wasn't that riskful, because you could be off duty, and if a man knows you are a police officer, there is still a risk there. You could be off-duty and an offence happens, you are expected to perform as a police [officer]."

He continued: "In this job, we got a lot of risks. Recently, we had the situation where the police that was going along and got shot at the other day. So, we got a lot of risks. They are doing a regrading exercise now, so we are still looking at things for the uniform section, and also for the CID, and all of the police service.

"If the regrading benefits us, it would stop us from pushing forward certain things; but if it doesn't benefit us, we would have to fight to see what we can get, because you don't want to get less than the regrading. So, the regrading will tell us if we have to go forward with some of the proposals that we have."

BPA dismisses suggestion of unrest in police service

The Barbados Police Association (BPA) has dismissed claims of turmoil within The Barbados Police Service (TBPS) following government's move to pay uniform allowances to detectives.

During debate on the Public Service (Appointments) Bill 2025 in the House of Assembly on Tuesday, Opposition Leader Ralph Thorne sought to make a case for "equal" treatment for uniformed officers.

"The question of allowances paid to detectives, may have created some turmoil within the police service. And I must report this... and it is not any opposition to allowances paid to detectives, but it is to press the case for the uniformed police officers," Thorne declared.

But while BPA President Wendley Carter conceded that some officers had initially complained that detectives in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) were being favoured by the payment of an allowance, a proper explanation was subsequently given for the decision.

"Some people were not happy with it, but I don't think it created any turmoil in that sense. As I said, people wanted to know about allowances for them also, but I don't think it created any turmoil.

"In everything you will have some people who will understand why it happened, and some who are not going to understand," Carter told **Barbados TODAY** in an interview.

"But if you sit down and go through the details, you will say that, 'although we didn't get any allowance, and we would like to get something in the near future, the detectives deserved to get the allowance for the time that they are putting in without the pay.'"

In fact, Carter maintained that while the allowances given to detectives had been a major talking point in months past, that was no longer the case.

"I don't know when was the last time I heard anybody speak about the allowance. The allowance was given ever since... it got confirmed in March this year, and right now,

you are not hearing many people talking about it like before.

"If it was a conflict, it would be continuously being talked about. You might find one person, when he remembers, he would say, 'well, I am not getting the allowance.' I was getting the allowance in February because I was in the CID in February... and I was transferred from the CID in February, so I am not getting the allowance anymore. I don't see any conflict in it," Carter said.

Carter explained why priority was given to detectives, with the uniformed police officers set to be taken care of later.

"We were asking for years for the allowances for the CID, because the CID was underpaid for years. When you calculate what the CID people were getting, it was four dollars and something an hour, which is below the minimum wage in Barbados.

"I worked in the CID for years and had to work with that; but the people were dedicated to the cause. Now they got their allowance. I don't

think there is as much conflict as Mr Thorne is suggesting," Carter noted.

The BPA president said when it was explained to the uniformed officers the meagre pay detectives were receiving compared to their salary, it was recognised they deserved the allowances.

"For instance, if in the CID I worked 12 hours in the past, I was not getting paid any extra time. When I left, I was accustomed to the allowance because it was a lot of money for me because I went to the CID as a young police officer," Carter explained.

But when I got into uniform and I worked extra duty, the same 12 hours which I was working, I was making the allowance which the CID was getting in two weeks.

"And if they asked me to go back to the CID, I would tell them no, because I am making more money here now working in uniform and doing an extra four hours... making more money in two weeks than I was getting in CID allowance in a whole month," he added. (EJ)

26 Special Constables now full rank PCs

Two dozen Special Constables have been formally appointed as full Police Constables in The Barbados Police Service, marking a milestone that Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police Sonia Boyce described as "a recognition of growth" during a ceremony on Friday at the Hastings/Worthing Police Station.

"For many of you, this moment has been a long time in coming," she said. "You are not newcomers to this organisation, nor strangers to the culture, expectations and demands of policing. You have already given several years of faithful service as special constables, standing shoulder to shoulder with your colleagues on the front line, demonstrating loyalty to the service and commitment to the people of Barbados."

DCP Boyce told the 26 new constables that the moment represented more than just a change in title or uniform. "Today, the ceremony is one of symbolism and significance. It represents not merely a change in the title, or in your uniform, but a formal recognition of your growth, your dedication, and your readiness to shoulder the full responsibilities of policing in a democratic society," she said.

She emphasised the solemnity of their oath. "It binds you not only to the laws of the land but also to a moral and ethical standard that guides every action you will take. It is a promise to serve with impartiality, courage and restraint, to act always in the best interests of justice and the well-being of the citizens we are sworn to protect. Each of you affirms a deep personal commitment that you will uphold the dignity of this uniform and represent the service with honour."

DCP Boyce reflected on their achievements. "Your journey from special constable to police constable has required dedication, discipline and perseverance. Over the years, we have responded to incidents, engaged with communities, and supported major operations, demonstrating that you possess the qualities we seek in a modern police officer: integrity, good judgement, empathy and resilience," she said.

She also stressed that policing is about service. "Remember, policing is not simply about enforcement. It is about service. We serve to protect, to reassure, and to preserve peace. Our duty extends beyond responding to incidents. It includes building relationships within our



26 special constables are now full rank police constables. (LG)

communities, listening with empathy, and working collaboratively to prevent harm before it occurs," Boyce said.

The acting deputy commissioner reminded them: "Today, as you take your oath, remember the magnitude of what it represents. You now carry that torch forward with the added weight of your years of prior service and the trust this organisation has placed in you. On behalf of the Commissioner of Police and all members of the Barbados Police Service, heartfelt congratulations on your substantial transition. May your careers be guided by integrity, courage, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to policing. With the consent and cooperation of the public, we serve."

The new constables are expected to begin six

weeks of training in January to complete their integration into the police service.

Acting Assistant Commissioner of Police Stephen Herbert, the high command officer for human resources and administration, told the constables they will be trained in a "variety of subject areas".

He encouraged them to see the experience as an opportunity for growth: "For those who have not yet experienced it, you take it in as much as you can. Again, we want to encourage you to assist one another on the journey so that at the end of the day, we're all successful and the six weeks will be well spent, and you come back to the Barbados Police Service ready to serve the country of Barbados with all you have." (LG)



**BCCI President
Paul Innis.
(SZB)**

Call for national dialogue on productivity amid 'inconsistent service'

The Barbados Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has called for a frank national conversation on productivity, warning that inefficiencies and inconsistent service standards across industries are undermining business performance and raising costs.

BCCI President Paul Innis told reporters on Thursday: "There is a concern in Barbados about productivity that a lot of people don't talk about. And I think we need to be mature enough to talk about it."

Innis stressed that the business community has the capacity to improve overall productivity and service standards.

He said: "We are of the view that we can become a more productive society. There's some work to be done. And one of the thoughts we've been discussing is, one, how do we establish minimum service standards in Barbados within the business community and see how we can actually improve not only productivity, but the standard and quality of service irrespective of where you go in Barbados — whether it's in the hotel industry, manufacturing, financial services, or whether it's where you land at the airport or the seaport."

He noted widespread inefficiencies that affect both time and cost.

"There's a lot of inconsistency in terms of how we deliver service. Why should it take five days to do something that can be done in a day? Why should it take me two weeks to license a vehicle, going to the Barbados Licensing Authority for seven days before I can actually register? Those are real productivity issues, both from the cost side and the value you lose," Innis said.

Innis called on businesses to adopt standards that improve productivity, noting collaboration with the Barbados National Standards Institution. "We've met with the BNSI. They have an interest in working with us and the various stakeholders to see how we can make that a reality," he said.

The January minimum wage increase will see the national rate rise from \$10.50 to \$10.71 per hour — a 21-cent increase — while the sectoral minimum wage for security guards will move from \$11.43 to \$11.66 per hour, a 23-cent increase. Six months ago, the national minimum wage had gone up from \$8.50 to \$10.50, and the rate for security guards from \$9.25 to \$11.43.

Asked whether employers see the latest minimum wage increase as unfair given productivity concerns, Innis responded: "I wouldn't categorise it that way. I think policymakers are trying to solve problems in terms of how do you ensure that people have what they call a livable wage so that we can look after our families and do some basic stuff.

"And the whole idea of linking wages with productivity is one spectrum of it. But productivity also has some other angles that we need to, because, for example, inefficient systems also have productivity that may have nothing to do with the employee. Investing in more modern equipment, better approaches, listening to your employees about a more efficient way of doing things... those are the dynamics of productivity. And that's where the incentive pay type link makes a lot of sense."

(SZB)

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'Slow recruitment' driving away medical specialists, says senator

Newly appointed Independent Senator Dr Kenneth Connell warned on Friday that delays and rigid procedures in the Barbados public service are driving away highly trained medical specialists, calling the situation a waste of taxpayers' money and a threat to the health system.

He raised the issue during Friday's debate in the Senate on the Public Service (Appointments) Bill, arguing that the lack of adequate support for returning specialists trained in critical areas was deeply concerning.

He said the country continues to invest heavily in the education and training of Barbadians, only to lose them because of delays, rigid structures and unattractive terms of service.

"The terms and conditions of service need to be improved. Every year it annoys me because every year there's another example of a colleague who has trained, for which this country has invested in either at the primary, secondary or many of them are Barbados scholars or they've gone off on national development scholarships," Senator Connell said.

He stressed that many of these professionals return not primarily for financial gain, but out of a desire to serve their country.

"They're returning back to give service to this country... let us make no mistake, that service is not because of salary... it is frustrating and annoying to see delays in recruitment," he told

senators.

Senator Connell said the prolonged delays often lead to frustration, pushing specialists to seek opportunities elsewhere in the region or further afield.

"Many times people get frustrated and say: 'You know what, I want warm weather, but clearly I can't return home, I'm going to go to another Caribbean country'," he said, pointing to a current example involving a highly trained colleague.

He explained that the individual was trained here, completed postgraduate training at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, then went on to Canada for specialist and subspecialist training. Upon attempting to return home, the doctor was reportedly told to return to a previous substantive post taken up before study leave.

"To be supervised by... someone who is not even as qualified in that area as that person, so it makes no sense," Senator Connell said, adding that the colleague had since decided to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

"This is a waste of the taxpayers' money... we have invested in these individuals," he stressed.

Senator Connell also challenged the notion that there is a surplus of specialists waiting to be hired locally.

"Let me also say there's no long list of people in specialist areas, [including] specialist nurses, who are lining up to apply to the



Independent
Senator Dr Kenneth
Connell. (BT)

Queen Elizabeth Hospital — that just does not occur," he said.

He added that quality-of-life considerations and salary levels also influence decisions to leave.

"People are looking for a better life, and sometimes they feel that the salary offered... would not afford them that. That's something that we need to consider."

Drawing on his background in education assessment, Senator Connell further criticised the public service's approach to performance evaluation and contract renewals.

"My area of specialty in education is assessment, and it always really disturbs me how the key performance indicators of many employees are not properly assessed," he said.

He argued against automatic contract renewals, suggesting Barbados could learn from international models.

"We shouldn't be just renewing contracts every three years. I think the North has it right... If you don't meet a certain standard by a number of years, you're out of the system — the so-called publish or perish," Senator Connell said.

"In our system, it is possible to continue ad infinitum until 20 years later you get a minor promotion... what does that say about the system?" (SB)

Munro-Knight defends appointments bill as key to fairer public service

As the government moved on Friday to confirm the appointments of more than 2 000 public servants, Senator Dr Shantal Munro-Knight insisted that the Public Service Appointments Bill reflects fairness, empowerment and long-term commitment to building a secure and trusted civil service.

"People do not have to worry that they are going to be unfair," Senator Munro-Knight said on the floor of the Senate as she described the legislation as transformative, arguing that it forms part of a long-term effort to rebuild confidence within the public service.

She said the transformation process began with public service recognition awards, explaining: "That award is part of government's overall public service transformation agenda. Mr President; when we came into government, we found a public service that was demotivated and unrecognised, and reversing that situation requires a long-term transformational agenda that we embarked upon, plank by plank, to rebuild confidence."

Senator Munro-Knight acknowledged that while shortcomings exist, the government recognised deeper structural issues.

"It's important to recognise that even though we point to the faults within the public service, one of the things that the government recognised as well was that there are systemic challenges with how the public service operates that we need to be able to correct," she said.



Senator
Dr Shantal
Munro-Knight.
(BT)

She revealed that the reform process required a comprehensive legislative review, with teams assigned to assess how existing systems functioned and whether they were effective.

"We had one group that was tasked to look across the public service, look across at the legislation that managed the public service and then to see how we could, or what we needed to do in order."

Another group examined performance management, incentives and discipline.

"How could we improve on the current system of

performance review and management? We looked at the disciplinary conduct code that we had within government and said how could we make it easier?"

The assessment, she said, revealed cases where officers had been placed on leave for years without matters being resolved. In response, director generals were introduced across the public service to allow permanent secretaries to focus on day-to-day operations while advancing the transformation agenda.

"If anybody recognises that transformation takes time, and when you are dealing with transformation of a public service that has existed, Mr President, based on a colonial system, that how we reshape that and reform that is not something that can be done easily or overnight. But the commitment of the government to make wrong things right and to right-size."

Senator Munro-Knight noted that in 2020, more than 6 000 public officers were appointed, underscoring the importance of job security and tenure. She said the current batch of officers forms part of the same reform process.

"We want to make systemic changes that over time will become sustainable, which is why, as I said, we're looking at changes even in the legislative framework. Looking even at the Public Service Act 2007 and seeing, again, how do we make sure that we have a public service that, again, is going to be able to fit for purpose going forward," the senator said. (LG)

Opposition senator calls for automatic public service appointments, warns of systemic issues

Opposition Senator Andre Worrell has called for permanent appointments in the public service to be automatic and free from political influence. Speaking in the Senate on Friday, he also highlighted several challenges affecting the efficiency and morale of the civil service.

"Even though there are provisions within the civil service that should make these appointments automatic, we need to get to that stage within the civil service where these appointments become automatic," Senator Worrell said in the debate on the Public Service Appointments Bill, which seeks to regularise thousands of civil servants in January.

He warned against appointments appearing as political favours rather than routine civil service processes.

"These legislations should not have to come to Parliament for a debate to make it seem as though any one particular administration is favouring or granting favour to civil servants, because within the general orders, there are generally rules as to the appointment of civil servants, and we need to get to the stage where we follow and adhere to those rules. There are also rules as to the acting appointment of civil servants and the promotion process as well."

He identified several major challenges affecting the public service.

"We have human resources and staffing issues, we have

compensation and benefit and industrial relations issues, issues with management, governance, and accountability, and in that we see the possibility for political interference as well and for accountability."

He also raised training gaps and inefficiencies in service delivery.

"We also have training issues and capacity skill gaps within the civil service which need to be addressed and looked at, and we also have the bureaucracy and service delivery problems which many Barbadians complain about on a daily basis."

Turning to technology, Senator Worrell criticised delayed digital upgrades, particularly at the Barbados Licensing Authority, citing his personal experience.

"I have no hope, and I don't buy into any of the technology advantages which they're buying into... I have been renewing my driver's licence using the easy pay service. Then I was told, from this year that is no longer available, which resulted in me having to travel to the licensing authority to renew the driver's licence, and after that, you couldn't even get your driver's licence card updated there."

"So I have no hope in any of the technological advances brought by this government because one, they have been proven not to work. Two, they have been proven to be exposed to hacking. And three, well they generally are a complete waste of



Opposition Senator
Andre Worrell. (BT)

time and do not improve the efficiency of the civil service."

He also highlighted legislative and structural constraints, as well as health and safety concerns, which he said have contributed to "brain drain" in the public service.

"One of the reasons for that loss would be brain drain in terms of persons seeking opportunities elsewhere outside of Barbados because of the opportunity to earn better salaries," Senator Worrell said.

He stressed that retaining experienced officers required fair compensation. (LG)



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Deaf advocate calls for greater access to education and interpreters

By **Lourianne Graham**

A disabilities advocate and vice-president of the Barbados Horizon Deaf Charity (BHDC), Scott Williams is calling for greater access to education for the deaf, including more interpreters and the introduction of deaf-led sign language instruction in schools.

Williams, who became deaf as a child, said his early exposure to sign language came from hearing individuals who, while well intentioned, did not fully understand the lived experiences of deaf people. As a result, he is advocating for more deaf educators to teach sign language.

"With a hearing person, who is teaching a language that

is not theirs, how do you know when they are teaching sign language correctly? It is better for a deaf person to teach the language because deaf people, we know our own sign language," Williams told **Barbados TODAY**, while stressing the importance of accuracy and cultural understanding.

He further explained that while learning from hearing people has its place, deaf people should be leading the instruction of their own language.

"We learn English from hearing people and that's fine, it's your language, just like with a deaf person their language is ASL. So yes, we should have ASL taught in schools, but it would be beautiful to have deaf teachers or deaf teacher's assistants, having a deaf person there that can make sure the

language is being taught correctly."

Williams said his advocacy extends beyond children in classrooms, noting that access to education for deaf people at all stages of life remains limited in Barbados.

"Learn sign language. That is not the first time we have said that. Just learn the basics."

He said people who find it difficult to learn sign language can also use gestures to communicate with the deaf.

"Some deaf people can read lips pretty well; some deaf people can talk. Just try to find ways to communicate. Move your hands, use gestures, like you would with a drinking cup or a bag, or telling someone to come here. It's easy. It doesn't have to be complicated..."

Williams explained that education is just one of several challenges facing the deaf community.

"Some of the biggest challenges that we face are communication, education, access to interpreters, employment, and finances," he said.

"At BHDC we recognize they are some of the challenges the deaf community faces, so we are working together trying to create solutions. We don't have government support yet, but we're still figuring it out."

He also sought to dispel common misconceptions about deaf and disabled people, saying stigma often prevents meaningful inclusion.

"Hearing people tend to view us as charity cases, 'oh you poor thing.' They perceive us as if we can't do things. We can't have quality access. We don't need to have that because we're deaf. It's not only deaf people that face this, but I would also say it's people with disabilities. We are one big family," he said.

Williams appealed for broader support to help disabled people achieve their goals, particularly in employment and funding opportunities.

He said the lack of employment opportunities remains a pressing concern for the deaf community.

"If a person with a disability is looking for a job, give them a job. If they need funding, let's support that. Whatever a deaf person or a person with a disability needs. If they have a dream, it should be supported. We don't want any more discrimination."

"There are a lot of deaf people in Barbados who really need access to jobs and right now we don't have that," Williams said.
louriannegraham@barbadostoday.bb

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Vice-president of the Barbados Horizon Deaf Charity **Scott Williams. (GP)**

Govt to 'phase' restoration of historic Carnegie Library

By Lourianne Graham

A long-awaited project to return the National Library Service to the iconic Carnegie building in Bridgetown is finally moving forward, as the minister for culture confirmed phased reconstruction of the century-old landmark after nearly two decades of closure.

Senator Dr Shantal Munro-Knight made the announcement to reporters at the Barbados Museum's Cultural Extravaganza at The Garrison.

The Carnegie Free Library on Coleridge Street, Bridgetown, was built between 1903 and 1906 with a gift by Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. It was the first and largest of the Carnegie libraries built in the English-speaking Caribbean. The building was closed in 2006 for renovation and has remained shuttered ever since while the library's main branch was relocated to Independence Square.

"The Carnegie Library was closed, just basically because it began to run into some level of disrepair," Senator Munro-Knight explained. "Of course, a building that is that old over time you're gonna have issues whether it's in the roof, so we had some problems and stuff that emerged, some loss of integrity in the whole structure of the building."

She acknowledged that progress has been slow due to the age, size and unique architectural features of the building, which make restoration costly and complex. But she said the government has decided to move forward using the resources currently available.

The Ministry of Culture is now working with Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTII) to develop design plans for a

state-of-the-art library, with construction expected to take place in phases.

She said: "We're gonna have to do a whole new roof, when I say repair, I'm just making that point again about destructive integrity and not necessarily wanting to lose that nice old traditional kind of structure. We don't wanna tear it down and then build something completely new."

Senator Munro-Knight said the redesigned library will blend preservation with modern functionality and sustainability.

"We also want to modernize it so the designs that we have for Carnegie Library now are really about looking at the issues of sustainability. Of course we are retaining the structure and integrity, but how do we use the space in a better way, how do we make use of the sunlight and the trees and the whatnot so that we're building in those aspects of sustainability into what will emerge as the new Carnegie Library."

Plans also include creating welcoming public spaces.

She said: "How do we make it to make sure that we have open spaces within the library and around the library that people can sit around and enjoy? We wanna build cafe spaces so that people can come and relax, so the library is open. People feel that they can come into the library and not be intimidated about it."

The minister noted that libraries continue to play an important role in daily life, particularly for people seeking essential services.

"They need to come to reference material, but it's also a safe space, whatever it is going on inside your home or whatever, you can come to the library, for whatever period of time and you have a safe space, that is there."

On funding, Senator Munro-Knight said

approximately \$2 million has been earmarked so far, primarily for design and initial structural work.

"We've earmarked, over a couple of financial years it's about \$2 million which is really a drop in the bucket, for what needs to be done, but we could either choose to say we can't start unless we have all of the funds, and I would say to you that, even though we're still trying to get an estimate of the total cost for the rebuild will be expensive."

Owing to limited resources, construction will be carried out in stages, according to the minister.

"They will start with some of the retention walls so like strengthen the structural integrity of some of the walls, and then with the upcoming financial year then we'll see then what other funds we can get and then we do a different phase as we go on."

Senator Munro-Knight also urged public support for the project, describing the Carnegie Library as a vital part of Barbados' built heritage.

"We've been talking a lot about how we preserve our culture, our traditional spaces, and traditional buildings as well, we call it our built heritage and this is one of those kind of iconic spaces for Barbados."

She added that partnerships and philanthropy will be key to completing the project:

"Philanthropists out there, people who have some funds that they want to be able to put into a project like this, and certainly we'll welcome that investment, we'll welcome partnership with organizations as well, who would be interested in helping us see how we can look to mobilize the necessary resources which would be quite a significant amount I am anticipating in order for us to be able to do this. The government is committed to doing what it has to do to rebuild."

Minister in the Prime Minister's Office with responsibility for Culture Senator Dr Shantal Munro-Knight. (L.G)



She noted that work to create the National Art Gallery at The Garrison is also ongoing in the government's commitment to preserve Barbados' cultural heritage.

Between 1883 and 1929, Carnegie's programme supported the construction of more than 2 500 libraries worldwide, the majority in the US but with significant clusters elsewhere in the Americas, including 125 in Canada and several in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The Coleridge Street building was the largest Carnegie library in the British West Indies, the first of eight built in the region. The steel magnate's grants went to Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Puerto Rico, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and two locations in Trinidad and Tobago. Carnegie's gift to Barbados was worth US\$46 660 in 1906, equivalent to just under \$2 million today.

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Salvation Army halfway to kettle appeal goal as more turn up for festive meal

Divisional Commander Major Robert Pyle. (LE)



ago, \$430 000," he disclosed, adding that the organisation is about six per cent behind where it was at the same time last year.

"Our spirits aren't dampened," he said. "All it takes is one or two or three companies to make up the rest. This is God's business. We just happen to be the hands and feet of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

He noted that while kettle collections end on Christmas Eve, the mail appeal continues into January, giving donors additional time to contribute. "Many Barbadians are giving \$5, \$10, \$100. It does not matter. The money is handy, and it will be used for the less fortunate and most vulnerable in our communities."

"Where there is a need, you'll find the Salvation Army," Major Pyle said. "Once anyone comes to us with a need and we are able to meet it, we will do our part." (LE)

macaroni pie and so forth, extra baked chicken, turkey, ham, everything that makes Christmas what it is."

Opening remarks earlier in the afternoon set a tone of gratitude, faith, and partnership. Attendees were reminded that the luncheon was made possible through the combined efforts of staff, volunteers, and corporate donors. "There are several companies, institutions in Barbados that value you," the audience was told, as contributors such as Cave Shepherd and its associated entities, Fortress, Bubba's, the Boatyard, Lucky Horseshoe Warrens, High Tech Limited, and others were acknowledged.

"On behalf of the Salvation Army and our staff here in Reed Street... we want to wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas," the gathering heard Major Pyle say. "Spend Christmas with the ones that you love... and I pray that peace and joy and success will be yours for the new year."

This year's luncheon saw a strong showing of volunteers. There were 17 volunteers from Cave Shepherd, six from another trust, one

young scout, along with Salvation Army staff, all helping to serve meals and desserts to guests. According to Pyle, volunteerism for the luncheon has increased, particularly through corporate partnerships that extend beyond financial donations.

"They have literally brought that forth by coming in person and lending their hands to this wonderful occasion we call Christmas luncheon," he said, noting that Cave Shepherd remains one of the largest and longest-standing partners. "That shows that they trust us, they believe in the mission that we are in, and they want to give back to the communities."

Pyle pointed out that not all tables were filled last year, but they were already full as service began this year. "It's either the people are hungry, either we were very good in promoting this event and they heard so they got more people coming, or it's an indication of the economic situation in the country that people are responding to, so they're here," he said.

Beyond the luncheon, attention remains fixed on the Salvation Army's annual kettle appeal. While collections are slightly behind last year's pace, Pyle said spirits remain high. "The last figure I had was a couple of days

With just days to go before Christmas, the Salvation Army has raised about half of its \$850 000 target, even as more people than expected turned up to be fed at its annual Christmas luncheon in Bridgetown, on Friday.

By midday, every table inside the Reed Street headquarters was filled, and people were waiting outside the gates to come in. This year, guests were seated and served by staff and volunteers, unlike in previous years when they collected food themselves.

Divisional Commander Major Robert Pyle said that between 350 and 400 people were expected to be served. "This may be the best or the only Christmas meal that many of them will partake of for this season," he said. "This is why the luncheon remains a top priority each year. That's why we offer this luncheon... to help people enjoy a good Christmas."

The menu reflected the occasion, going beyond the Salvation Army's regular daily meals. "It is Christmas, and we have something special in terms of the type of meal and what we prepare here," he said. "The jug jug and the

One Family children enjoy festive celebration

Around 900 children from the Ministry of People Empowerment's One Family programme were treated to a festive celebration on Friday at the Deighton Griffith Secondary School, as the initiative marked a year of progress supporting vulnerable families across the island.

The event, supported by donations from businesses and service organisations, catered to children aged between four and 12 with jumping tents, face painting and a range of games amid a lively atmosphere for families in the programme.

Social Development Project Manager for the One Family Programme, Nicole Daniel, said the event was designed to bring joy and a sense of togetherness to the children while recognising the support of corporate and community partners.

"Today we are here at the One Family Christmas Cheer event for all our kids ages four to 12 in the programme to come and join us for a day of cheer," Daniel said. "We are so glad and excited to be here today, being supported by our good supporters JetBlue for Good, who are doing wonderful things."

Daniel noted that the One Family programme had recorded a successful year, providing assistance to numerous at-risk families across the island through a multi-pronged approach.

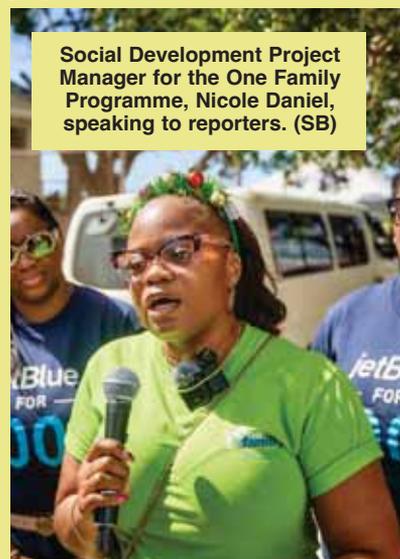
"This programme is grounded on seven different pillars: health, education, family dynamics, employment, income and social benefits, and housing," she explained. "Across these pillars, we have been implementing different initiatives."

Among them, she highlighted the recent launch of mentorship programmes aimed at adolescents.

"For family dynamics, we recently started a mentorship programme for girls called Becoming Her for ages 11 to 13, and we also have a boys' programme called Mentor Him," Daniel said.

Counselling services and housing assistance had resumed, supported through partnerships with the Rural and Urban Development Commission, while employment opportunities were being facilitated through collaborations with private-sector entities, she added.

"In employment, we have partnered with



Social Development Project Manager for the One Family Programme, Nicole Daniel, speaking to reporters. (SB)

Abeds and Wyndham, among others, offering jobs to clients," she said. "Through this, we provide education, training and skills... helping people to help themselves, which is what the programme is all about."

Looking ahead to 2026, Daniel revealed plans to expand the programme's entrepreneurship initiatives.

"We recently completed our entrepreneurship incubator programme, which ended last Saturday with a pitch day similar to a 'Shark Tank'," she said. "We are starting a new cohort and are looking for persons with business investment and entrepreneurial knowledge to come on board. Not just for financial sponsorship, but mentorship as well."

She also expressed gratitude to several organisations that contributed to the success of the initiative.

"I just want to thank Sandy Lane Charitable Trust, Brian's Bakery and the Barbados Public Workers' Cooperative Credit Union Limited for all the support they have given to the programme so far," she added. (SB)

BARBADOS WATER AUTHORITY NOTICE

CONTRACT AWARD NOTICE - SOUTH COAST WATER RECLAMTION PROJECT - (BA-L1063)

The Barbados Water Authority has awarded a contract for the upgrade of the South Coast Sewage Treatment Plant at Graeme Hall, Christ Church. The project will retrofit the existing plant headworks and design and construct a new advanced water treatment facility, converting the current advanced preliminary wastewater treatment system into a tertiary/advanced treatment plant.

On completion, the upgraded facility will produce high-quality reclaimed water suitable for irrigation of edible food crops and/or groundwater recharge within the Christ Church non-potable aquifer.

For further details, please scan the QR code below or visit the Authority's website at www.barbadoswaterauthority.com.





Chairman of InterCaribbean Airways Lyndon Gardiner. (GP)

interCaribbean Airways announces expansion, Barbados Hub strengthened with new routes

interCaribbean Airways is pleased to announce an expansion of its Barbados hub operations, with new nonstop routes and increased frequencies across its network commencing March 8, 2026.

The expansion adds five new nonstop destinations from Barbados, Grantley Adams International Airport (BGI): Tortola, Terrance B. Lettsome International Airport (EIS); Providenciales, Howard Hamilton International Airport (PLS); Port of Spain, Piarco International Airport (POS); Georgetown, Eugene F. Correia International Airport (OGL); and St Maarten, Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM). The airline will operate nonstop service to Tortola three times per week, Providenciales three times per week, Port of Spain four times per week, Georgetown (Ogle) three times per week and St Maarten two times per week.

The new Tortola and Providenciales services connect to Barbados, giving travelers convenient access and onward connections throughout the Southern and Eastern Caribbean. The Trinidad service marks interCaribbean's entry into one of the Caribbean's largest markets. The new nonstop routes generate over 20 new one-stop connecting services through Barbados, all operating multiple times weekly.

interCaribbean is also increasing frequencies on key routes from Barbados. Service to Kingston, Jamaica will increase to four times per week, service to St Kitts will increase to five times per week, services to Antigua will increase to ten times per week while service to Georgetown will increase to 11 times per week in addition to the Ogle flights.

"Barbados is central to regional connectivity in the Caribbean, and we're investing accordingly," said Lyndon Gardiner, Chairman of interCaribbean Airways. "With these additions, we're putting more aircraft and more frequencies into Barbados, giving travelers access to our full Caribbean network, from Guyana to Jamaica to Turks and Caicos, the British Virgin Islands and now to St Maarten and Trinidad."

The expansion is part of interCaribbean's continued network growth, supported by a fleet that now includes 11 ATR turboprop aircraft. The airline currently serves 24 cities across 18 countries in the Caribbean, with Barbados, Tortola and Providenciales operating as key hubs.

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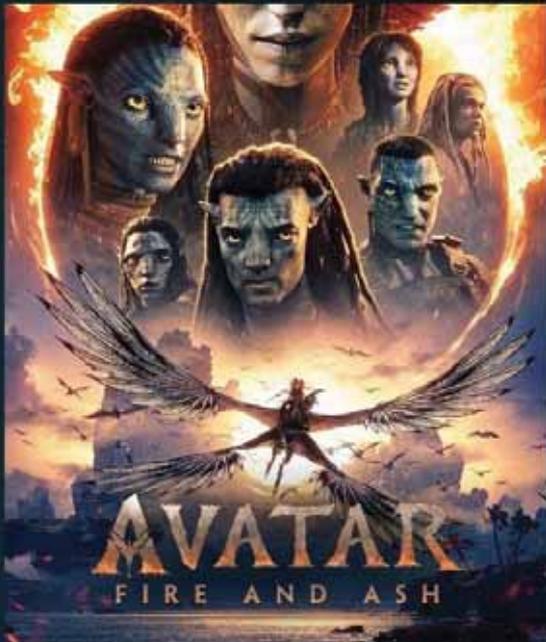
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2025 Christmas messages

A season to embrace peace

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, As we gather to celebrate the glorious birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, I greet you with warm wishes for a Holy and Peaceful Christmas. This sacred season reminds us that Christ came among us as the Prince of Peace, offering the world a love that transforms, heals, and restores. In giving us His Son, God shared with humanity His eternal message of peace — a peace the world cannot give, but one which our hearts deeply long for.

Just as in our own time, Jesus entered a world marked by conflict, uncertainty, and struggle. The conditions surrounding His birth were far from ideal — humble, challenging, and less than perfect. Yet it was into this very imperfection that God chose to reveal His perfect love. Jesus' birth teaches us that hope shines brightest in the midst of difficulty, and

that peace is always possible when God dwells in our hearts.

This Christmas, I invite each of you to open your heart to the Christ Child, the Prince of Peace. Allow Him to shape you into an instrument of His peace. We often speak of our desire for a peaceful world, yet peace begins not with grand gestures, but with our personal actions — the way we speak, forgive, listen, and show compassion.

In our daily interactions, let us choose kindness over judgment, reconciliation over resentment, and patience over anger. Too often we allow conflicts to grow instead of healing them. Let us remember the words so often sung at this time of year: "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me." Family is the cornerstone of society. It is from the family that society develops. We must all create peace



Bishop Neil Scantlebury. (FP)

within our families and surely it will result in a peaceful society.

Here in Barbados, we are confronted with rising violence and troubling acts of cruelty — painful reminders of what happens when peace is absent from hearts and communities. We must not lose hope. Instead, we must give peace a chance by welcoming Christ into our lives and allowing Him to guide our thoughts, decisions, and relationships.

This Christmas, and in 2026 let peace be the gift you nurture within your heart. A peaceful

heart builds peaceful families; peaceful families build peaceful communities; and peaceful communities strengthen our nation. As a people of peace, forgiveness will replace resentment, dialogue will overcome division, and hope will dispel fear.

May the joyous birth of Christ ignite within each of us an unquenchable spirit of peace — a peace that endures, heals, and renews.

I wish you and your families a Holy, Joyful, and Peaceful Christmas and a Blessed New Year.



Guardian Group's Adjusted Business Hours



Guardian Group wishes to advise our valued customers of upcoming changes to our business operations.

On **Wednesday 24 December** and **Wednesday 31 December 2025** the following offices will close at **noon (12:00 p.m.)**:

- Guardian General Insurance Limited
- Guardian Life of The Caribbean Limited

We will be open for business on **Monday 29 December** and **Tuesday 30 December 2025**. On **Friday 2 January 2026**, we will be closed to the public.

Regular business operations will resume on **Monday 5 January 2026**.

We thank you for your continued support and wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable Christmas season.



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Celebrating resilience and renewal

The Barbados Private Sector Association extends warm Season's Greetings to all at this festive time of the year.

For the BPSA, 2025 unfolded against a challenging global backdrop. Slower global economic growth, shaped in part by renewed tariff tensions and ongoing trade disruptions, has had a measurable impact on businesses and on the wider economy. In particular, the application of tariffs on certain Barbadian exports to the United States constrained export performance and contributed to an expansion of the trade deficit.

Despite these challenges, Barbados demonstrated notable economic resilience. The economy continued to expand, supported by record-low unemployment, increased labour-force participation, sustained investment activity, and a significant boom in the construction sector. Strong performance in tourism further underpinned growth, allowing the country to advance in the face of persistent global headwinds.

These outcomes reflect the enduring value of social partnership as well as the resilience and adaptability of Barbadian workers, entrepreneurs, and businesses alike. Nevertheless, this is not a moment for complacency. The holiday season offers an opportunity to pause, rest, and reflect, while renewing our collective resolve to strengthen Barbados' long-term competitiveness. We wish all families peace, good health, and joy.

As we look to 2026, the private sector remains firmly committed to supporting the effective implementation of initiatives

Chairman of the Barbados Private Sector Association James Clarke. (GP)



under Mission Barbados, alongside the continued rollout of reforms at Business Barbados, and improvements at the Bridgetown Port. These efforts are critical to enhancing productivity, reducing the cost of doing business, and enabling Barbadian enterprises to compete more effectively in regional and global markets.

May the New Year be embraced with renewed energy, purpose, and confidence as we work together to build a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous Barbados.

Season's Greetings once again and best wishes for the New Year.

Light & Power Gives Christmas a “Good Energy” Boost



The warmth of Christmas radiated in joyful hearts and glowing faces as The Barbados Light & Power Company Ltd. (Light & Power) took its 2025 “Brighten Your Christmas with Good Energy” give-back initiative on the road last week, lighting up lives and communities.

This campaign continued Light & Power’s long-standing tradition at Christmas and throughout the year, emphasising volunteerism, care, and community. It concluded with a gift-giving road trip on Thursday, December 11th, as the “Good Energy Crew” of staff volunteers delivered thoughtfully prepared gifts to selected customers, Light & Power retirees and charitable organisations.

The crew had been active since October, preparing nearly 200 gift boxes generated through Light & Power’s staff-led Christmas Shoebox Drive. Thursday began at the Customer Experience Centre at Light & Power’s Garrison Headquarters, where festive steel pan music greeted early customers who received tokens of appreciation presented by Dr. Nneka Archer, Director of Transmission & Distribution (T&D).

gifts and carolling for the elderly to the traditional rhythms of cymbals and the talents of Terry ‘Mexican’ Arthur. Blackman underscored Light & Power’s long-standing commitment to providing service. “All year round, day in and day out, our teams are working to provide a secure, safe and reliable service to our customers. This is an opportunity to go beyond that, as we do year after year, proudly supporting causes, strengthening programmes, and sharing care, kindness and connections with the communities where we live and work.”

Throughout the day the “Good Energy Crew” supported by Emera Caribbean, made donations to organisations, including Family CARE Support Group at Ladymeade Gardens, St. Michael; Lifelong Skills Training at the Ann Gill Memorial Methodist Church in Black Rock; and concluded with a tour of the Vauxhall Senior Citizens Village in Christ Church, where residents were treated to gifts, lively conversation, and a joyful medley of Christmas songs and carols led by Biggie Irie, accompanied by Terry “Mexican” Arthur.

Manager of Corporate Communications, Nichole Scantlebury, in summing up the response to the initiative, stated: “The gratitude and good energy that we have been receiving has been truly overwhelming. We give to our community in a myriad of ways throughout the year, and we are delighted to close out the year in such a meaningful way. I encourage other businesses to join us in making a positive difference - spreading good energy in the parts of our community where it is needed most.”

Teresa Hamilton, Assistant Director (Ag.) National Assistance Board, accompanied by Light & Power’s Managing Director, Roger Blackman and his Good Energy Crew, through the Senior Citizens Village, delivering



CXC hailed as pillar of regional progress as education leaders call for reform

Senior education officials urged the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) to keep driving regional reform and innovation, describing the organisation as essential to the Caribbean's social and economic progress in an era of rapid technological change.

Speaking at the Barbados-based council's staff awards on Friday, Deputy Chief Education Officer the Reverend Stephen Scott, who delivered remarks on behalf of Minister of Educational Transformation Chad Blackman, said it was important to recognise excellence within an institution whose influence often goes unseen but is deeply felt across classrooms throughout the region.

"This afternoon is about recognising people whose work often happens quietly behind the scenes, yet whose impact is felt in our classrooms and bears fruit in the form of academic success across the Caribbean," Scott said.

He reminded workers that their efforts directly affect students' futures. "At the conclusion of every examination paper written is a student whose aspirations, confidence and life chances are influenced by what you do," he said.

Scott described CXC as occupying "a unique and powerful place in our region", adding that its systems underpin regional progress. "The reliability, fairness and the credibility of your systems are therefore not merely administrative achievements. They are pillars of regional development," he said.

Against the backdrop of rapid advances in technology, artificial intelligence and the global economy, Scott said education systems must evolve. "This reality demands that institutions like CXC constantly re-examine academic offerings, assessment models and certification pathways to ensure they remain relevant, responsive and future-focused," he said.



Registrar and CEO of CXC Dr Wayne Wesley (left) presenting the Employee of the Year award to Matthew Tull (second left) as other education officials look on. (Photo by SZB)

Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of CXC, Dr Wayne Wesley, paid tribute to staff resilience, particularly those who endured personal loss while maintaining professional standards.

He also took the opportunity to respond to public criticism of the council. "Regardless of what is being said in public, the staff of the Caribbean Examination Council remains resolute in ensuring that we deliver to the Caribbean people what they have asked us to deliver — exams with integrity and with the utmost level of respect and acceptance internationally," he said.

Wesley also highlighted CXC's expanding duty of care, particularly for persons with disabilities, and called on authors and publishers to ensure learning materials are

accessible. "It is important that all of us be given the opportunity to succeed and recognise our full potential," he said.

The event was held at the Accra Beach Hotel, with Barbados-based staff joining their Jamaican counterparts online for a hybrid awards presentation.

Several headquarters employees received top honours. Employee of the Year was awarded to digital communications officer Matthew Tull. Thirty-year awards went to Andrea Callender-Brice and Odette Gonsalves Forde, while 35-year awards were presented to Jackie Niles-Squires and Jacqueline Chase-Marshall. Awards were also given to those who had served the organisation for five, ten and 15 years. (SZB)

Two friends share triumph at Hippocratic Oath ceremony

By Lauryn Escamilla

When Dr Liyee Su heard her name called at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Auditorium on Thursday, disbelief came first, then shock. "I didn't believe it at first when he said that," she recalled. "I was a little shocked that, you know, I topped the region."

By the end of the Hippocratic Oath ceremony, Su, 23, had collected two major awards, best overall performance across all campuses and best performance in the clinical examination; marking a defining moment in a five-year journey that began under the cloud of COVID-19 and ended with her closest friend standing right beside her.

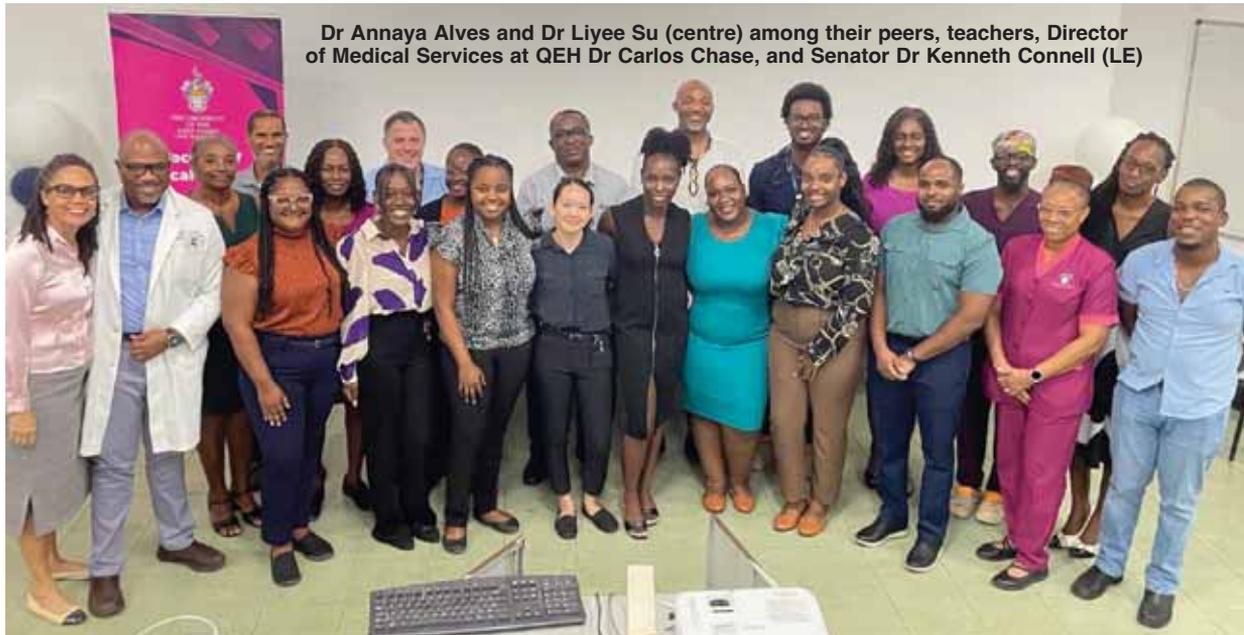
"I thought it would be here, but you know, and then he said my name and then that was a whole shocking moment," she said, laughing as she added that her friend later reminded her: "I told you so."

That friend is Dr Annaya Alves, 24, who graduated alongside Su after a shared path that began long before medical school. Their story is one of late nights, divided notes, shared stress and a bond forged through persistence.

"It's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears that went through it," Su said of the journey which led her to become the first doctor in her family. "I know I had some difficulties in my final year definitely, but with my friends, especially with this final exam, I'm very grateful that I had my friends with me. I don't think I would have done as well without them."

Support also came from home. Su credited her family, particularly her three younger sisters, for helping her sharpen her clinical skills. "They've actually... allowed me to practice on them any minute I can get," she said. "I credit a lot to them, especially for my clinical examination."

Although the dream to become a doctor was not Liyee Su's first passion. She originally wanted to be an artist but with persuasion from her father she switched and had great success in the field of medicine. "I wanted to be an artist originally," she said, explaining that her parents encouraged her to consider medicine. "Slowly but surely... I've come to actually



Dr Annaya Alves and Dr Liyee Su (centre) among their peers, teachers, Director of Medical Services at QEH Dr Carlos Chase, and Senator Dr Kenneth Connell (LE)

enjoy it and I've come to really enjoy learning about all the disease processes."

Su, who attended The St Michael's School before transferring to Queen's College for sixth form said that beginning medical school during the pandemic meant having classes completely online in the first year. "We were in the COVID year, so it was fully online my first year," she said. "Then transitioning into the in-person space was also much different... coming from textbooks and all day long sitting down in front of the computer, now you're in the hospital practicing with patients."

For Alves, the journey into medicine was deeply personal. "I was sick a lot when I was little," she said. "I had very serious allergic reactions... going to the hospital a lot. And seeing the doctors made me want to help people like those who helped me."

She is the first doctor in her family, a milestone that made Thursday's ceremony

especially meaningful. "I always wanted to be a doctor," she said. "The journey just went from there."

Their friendship began at Queen's College, when Su transferred for sixth form. "I literally saw her in the class and I walked up and say, 'hey, what's your name?'" she said. "And then we were just attached from there."

From that moment on, every major step was shared, applying to medical school, rotations, electives and even overseas training. "When we realized that we both wanted to do medicine, the journey was literally to get every step together," Alves said.

Their study strategy became legendary among their peers. "It was easier because I studied one topic, she studied the other, and then we came together and we taught each other," Alves said. "It was like half the workload... I literally could not have done it without her."

When results were released, the first call each made was to the other. "We literally called each other when we found out the results," Alves said.

Now both doctors are looking ahead, cautiously and with excitement. Su is drawn to anaesthesia, surgery and internal medicine and Alves is currently interested in obstetrics and gynecology but remains open.

A third friend remains part of their circle and is set to graduate next year, extending the story of shared ambition. For now, though, the moment belongs to two friends who started together, studied together and stood side by side as they formally entered the medical profession, proof that even the most demanding journeys can be made lighter when walking together with friends.

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PR

Sagicor Bank named Barbados' Best Consumer Digital Bank



George Thomas, CEO of Sagicor Bank (Barbados) Limited displaying the bank's mobile app and ATM. (GP)

Sagicor Bank (Barbados) continues to make major waves in the digital banking space as the island's first digital bank has once again been named the Best Consumer Digital Bank in Barbados by Global Finance, a leading international print financial magazine. This year, the bank took home a grand total of 18 awards, up from last year's 10, including Barbados' Best Digital-Only Bank, Best Digital Payments Strategy, as well as Best in Lending.

The magazine, which is renowned for its thought leadership in the world of finance, has been helping corporate leaders, bankers, and investors chart the course of global business and finance since its inception in 1987. This is the 26th year the publication has awarded the "world's best digital banks" across a variety of categories and regions.

"These awards are truly a testament to the work that the team here at Sagicor Bank has been doing to completely revolutionize the banking sector in Barbados," stated Sagicor Bank CEO, George Thomas. "When we first opened our doors, we committed to offering a better banking experience for Barbadians, and we are heartened to see that commitment pay off."

"We were able to build on the progress we made last year, and by listening to our clients and adapting accordingly, we've made significant progress which has manifested in a sharp increase from 10 to 18 awards this year. Our lending team was

recognized once again for being the 'Best in Lending.'" He went on, "that means we're on the right track and I really want to congratulate our team for their hard work and dedication to our clients. I also want to thank our clients and business partners for their continuous confidence and support."

Founder and editorial director of Global Finance, Joseph Giarraputo was also effusive in his praise for the banks copping awards this year. "As digital banking continues to evolve at a rapid pace, financial institutions around the world are embracing cloud technology, and mobile-first strategies to deliver seamless, secure, and highly personalized experiences," he said. "The winners of Global Finance's 2025 World's Best Digital Bank Awards exemplify the innovation and leadership shaping the future of banking."

The awards for the round one winners of the 2024 World's Best Consumer Digital Bank Awards in Latin America were announced this past August, and will be eligible for further consideration in the subsequent round two. Round Two honorees will include the overall Regional and Global winners, and the Global Sub-category winners, and will be revealed at the first-ever Global Finance World's Best Digital Banks Awards Ceremony on October 7 at London's landmark 8 Northumberland Avenue.

(PR)

Sagicor Brings Christmas Magic to New Orleans and Chapman Lane Communities

Sagicor helped bring the magic of the season to life recently when the company hosted a warm and joy-filled Christmas party for children and families from the New Orleans and Chapman Lane communities in St. Michael.

Just over one hundred and fifty children and parents turned out for the celebration, which was hosted in and around the New Orleans Police Community Outpost, transforming the space into a lively hub of music, excitement, and festive joy.

The event formed part of Sagicor's continued support of the Learning in Harmony Homework Programme. A partnership with the Barbados Police Service that provides lessons, mentorship, and much more for young people in the neighbouring communities.

Coordinator of the Homework Programme Sergeant Wendell Weeks described the turnout and support as deeply inspiring for everyone involved. "The turnout was beyond anything we could have imagined. To see so many children and parents come out with such enthusiasm reminds us why the Learning in Harmony Programme matters. When the community feels supported, when our young people feel encouraged, it creates a ripple effect of positivity. Partnerships

like the one we have with Sagicor help us do far more than we could ever achieve alone."

Executive Vice President and General Manager of Sagicor Life Inc (Barbados) Paul Inniss, said the celebration reflects the company's belief in giving back and building stronger communities. "At its heart, Christmas is about togetherness, generosity and lifting each other up and that is exactly what this party represents. When we invest in our communities, especially in our young people, we're helping to shape brighter futures. Sagicor is honoured to stand with the Barbados Police Service in creating spaces where children feel celebrated, inspired and valued, not just at Christmas, but all year long. This is the true spirit of the season."

From giveaways and rides to entertainment and warm fellowship, the event reinforced the positive impact of the homework initiative and the importance of corporate community partnerships during the holiday season and beyond.

Sagicor remains committed to programmes that empower the youth, strengthen neighbourhood bonds, and create lasting, meaningful change across Barbados.

(PR)

Santa Claus' with some lucky children and Executive Vice President and General Manager of Sagicor Life Inc (Barbados) Paul Inniss at Sagicor's Christmas Magic at the New Orleans Police Community Outpost. (GP)

Digicel becomes Cbean's first to achieve CIPS Ethical Procurement, Supply Kitemark Accreditation



The Digicel Group Procurement team at CIPS Caribbean Conference and Awards 2025. (GP)

Digicel Group has become the first company in the Caribbean to be awarded the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) Corporate Ethical Procurement & Supply Kitemark, joining an elite group of organisations worldwide recognised for excellence in ethical procurement and supply chain integrity. The award was presented last week at the first CIPS Caribbean Conference and Awards at the Hyatt Regency in Trinidad, where Digicel's Procurement team accepted the distinction.

The accreditation highlights Digicel's commitment to ethical sourcing, supplier integrity, and strong governance. It is awarded to organisations that demonstrate consistent ethical practices across their procurement process and is validated through independent audits.

"This accreditation is an important reflection of how we do business," said Arshad Ali, Director of Group Procurement, Supply Chain & Real Estate for Digicel. "It demonstrates the significant progress we have made in embedding ethical, transparent, and accountable procurement practices for the Group and reinforces our commitment to raising the bar for responsible sourcing and supply chain governance in the

region."

For customers and partners, the CIPS Kitemark provides assurance that Digicel operates ethically and responsibly across its supply chain. Procurement decisions are guided not only by commercial value but also by ethical considerations, ensuring every interaction reflects integrity and accountability. Partners can expect fair, transparent engagement, clear ethical standards, and stronger long-term relationships built on trust and compliance, creating a more stable and reliable ecosystem for everyone involved.

"This award highlights Digicel's commitment to ethical practices, along with the continued enhancement of our ethics and compliance programmes. It also gives our customers, suppliers, and partners confidence that Digicel is committed to the highest ethical standards," said Michael Watson, Chief Compliance and Cyber Security Officer for Digicel Group.

This milestone underscores Digicel's ongoing commitment to ethical leadership, responsible growth, and delivering long-term value for the region.

(PR)

SHOPPING SENSE

THE SMART CONSUMER'S GUIDE

Inside Mahalia's Family Traditions

Christmas Planning, Shopping & Hosting the Cummins Way

Holidays That Feel Like Home

Festive Fits for All

Stylish wardrobe upgrades for the season

Smarter Christmas Spending

Easy tools to manage costs without the stress

Rihanna-Inspired Beauty

Kimberley Layne's top Fenty essentials

Value of the Economic Diversification and Growth Fund

It is relatively easy to appreciate the rationale, purpose and value of the proposed Economic Diversification and Growth Fund if one understands that Barbados is currently taxing foreign International Business Companies (IBCs) domiciled in our country at the rate of nine per cent -- significantly up from the mere 2.5 per cent tax rate that was obtained a few years ago. What this means is that Barbados is currently raking in much more tax revenue from these IBCs than we did in the recent past.

Indeed, it is this significant increase in IBC tax revenue that recently permitted our government to pay out a "Solidarity Allowance" of \$300 to every adult Barbadian!

It is also a portion of these increased IBC tax revenues that our government is proposing to invest in appropriate and deserving IBCs -- as well as in relevant Barbadian companies -- to motivate and assist them to either establish brand new business operations or to extend their existing business operations in Barbados; thereby creating additional jobs and economic opportunities for Barbadians, and further augmenting our national stock of corporation tax and foreign exchange reserves.

This seems to me to be an eminently rational and forward-looking economic development and diversification strategy, and I can only envisage Barbados and Barbadians benefiting from the proposed fund.

In fact, I would like to publicly propose to our government one very creative way in which the new fund could be used to facilitate new, high technology, foreign investment in our country.

The proposal I am putting forward is not my original creation. Rather, it is a strategy that the Government of Singapore used to encourage state-of-the art, high tech German and Japanese manufacturing companies to establish operations in Singapore, and it is outlined in

some detail in Lee Kuan Yew's autobiography titled From Third World To First: The Singapore Story.

You see, in the earlier days of Singapore's journey as an independent country, it made an effort to convince some of the most sophisticated, high tech, high value German and Japanese manufacturing companies to shift some of their manufacturing operations to Singapore, but the outreach of the Singapore government was met with scepticism about the quality and capacity of the Singapore work-force.

In response, Singapore came up with a strategy to reassure and convince these prized high quality German and Japanese manufacturing companies about the quality and capacity of the Singapore work-force to carry out the required high technology operations. And the Singapore government did so by "partnering" with the said German and Japanese companies to establish company-run worker training facilities in Singapore.

These joint (Singapore government/foreign company) established and operated training facilities, then set to work training Singaporean workers up to the very high standards required of workers in said companies. And since the management of the company was directly involved in the training programme, they were in a position to satisfy themselves as to the quality and capacity of the workers.

Lee Kuan Yew explained the strategy as follows:-

"I visited (the German company) of Rollei-Werk in Brunswick . . . Together with Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB), Rollei set up a center to train workers in precision mechanics, precision optics, toolmaking and electro-mechanics . . ."

"I proposed to (German Chancellor) Schmidt that he set up a German-Singapore Institute to run courses on advanced manufacturing and information technology, to

Guest Column



by David Comisslong

help German businesses set up in the region. He agreed. The Institute turned out to be of great benefit to German investors who were able to recruit technicians trained to German standards . . ."

In other words, you use funds from the Economic Diversification and Growth Fund to partner with the targeted foreign high tech company, to jointly establish a worker training Centre in Barbados. In this way, you pull the foreign high tech company into a worker training exercise that both parties jointly invest in and operate together; you give them confidence about operating in your country; and you secure and tie down their decision to invest in your country.

This, of course, is not the only way in which we are going to diversify our economy. Indeed, it goes without saying that our primary economic diversification strategy must be focused on our own Barbadian innovators and entrepreneurs. But there is also a very important place and role for high technology foreign investors, and we must pursue both strategies simultaneously.

David Comisslong is Barbados' Ambassador to CARICOM.

Mango Bay Group appoints new group managing director

The Mango Bay Group has appointed Paul Collymore as its new Group Managing Director, effective December 1.

In this new role, Collymore will guide the strategic, operational, and commercial direction of the Group's boutique hotel portfolio, advancing service excellence, brand performance, and long-term stakeholder value.

Collymore joins the Mango Bay Group with an extensive track record in luxury resort management, destination leadership, and organisational transformation. In his over 30 year career he has held senior positions at award-winning properties in Barbados and Saint Lucia, and consistently drove strong financial performance, elevated guest satisfaction, and strengthened operational culture. His tenure as CEO at Landings Resort and Spa in Saint Lucia was marked by multiple industry accolades, including World Travel Awards and repeated AAA Four Diamond distinctions, alongside sustained revenue growth and notable improvements in service quality.

As president of the Saint Lucia Hospitality and Tourism Association, Collymore supported workforce and talent advancement initiatives through the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association -- including its People Development programmes and led airlift negotiations for Saint Lucia with the Saint Lucia Tourism Authority. His mentoring work through the Caribbean Young Leaders Forum further demonstrated his commitment to developing emerging hospitality leaders across the region. He has also contributed significantly to regional tourism development and has worked to help strengthen the competitiveness of Caribbean destinations and informed decision-making at national and regional levels.

"I am honoured to join the Mango Bay Group at such a pivotal moment for the company and for Barbados' tourism sector," said Collymore.

He added, "I look forward to working closely with our

New Mango Bay Group Managing Director Paul Collymore. (GP)



teams to strengthen service quality, continue to enhance workforce/employee development, enhance financial performance, and advance a strategic vision that elevates the group's market position locally and regionally, securing long-term competitiveness across the Caribbean."

"Paul brings a proven record of elevating hospitality assets through disciplined leadership, brand alignment, a deep understanding of Caribbean visitor expectations, a passion for team development and people-centered leadership," explained The Most Honourable Peter Odle, Chairman of the Mango Bay Group. "His strategic vision

and operational expertise will support the next phase of growth for the organisation and our people."

With qualifications from Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, the University of the West Indies, Revans University (IMCA Socrates), and the Barbados Community College, Collymore is currently completing his Executive MBA in Global Hospitality Management at Les Roches in Switzerland, where his course of study includes a focus on hospitality strategy, analytics, sustainability and asset management.

(PR)

A Caribbean Christmas message: The gift we give our children



For our Children

by PAULA-ANNE MOORE

Christmas in Barbados has always been more than gifts, lights, ham, sorrel, great cake, and jug jug. It is a season of gathering, reflection, and recommitment — a moment when we pause long enough to remember who we are as a people and what we owe to the next generation.

Across this island, from the breezy hills of St Thomas to the dramatic beauty of the East Coast, families are preparing for the familiar rituals of the season. Yet beneath the sparkle and celebration lies a deeper truth. The greatest gift we can give our children is not wrapped in paper, but woven into the values we model, the guidance we offer, and the opportunities we protect.

This year, as we look toward a new chapter for our nation, Christmas invites us to see our children clearly — not just their grades or behaviour, but their fears, their talents, their questions, and their dreams. Some children enter the season with joy and security. Others face challenges that are less visible: homes strained by poverty, families navigating instability in the home and community, learning difficulties that make school feel overwhelming, or emotional burdens they cannot yet name. Christmas calls us to widen our circle of care and to remember that Barbados is strongest when we look out for one another.

The shared responsibility of raising a nation

Raising a child is not a private task, it is a community and national project. Christmas should remind us that every adult has a role to play.

Parents carry the sacred duty of nurturing respect, discipline, curiosity, and emotional resilience.

Teachers carry the responsibility of inspiring, guiding, and adapting to each child's needs.

Students must honour the sacrifices behind their education by giving their best effort.

Government must ensure that every family — especially those facing hardship — has the support, communication, and resources needed to help our children succeed.

When these four pillars stand together, no child gets left behind and is much more likely to thrive.

The gift of education: Our island's brightest light

Education remains one of the most powerful gifts Barbados has ever given its people. But its value is realised only when it is truly understood, appreciated, and used well. Traditionally, our national love affair with education is the foundational pillar and greatest asset of our national development — our people.

Individual value of education

- **Personal empowerment:** Education equips children with knowledge, critical thinking, and decision-making skills.
- **Financial security:** Higher levels of education often lead to better-paying jobs and greater stability.
- **Self-reliance:** Education enables independence and the ability to make informed choices.
- **Dream fulfillment:** It provides the tools to pursue ambitions and achieve goals.

Family and community value

- **Breaking cycles of poverty:** Education helps families escape disadvantages across generations.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Educated communities are better informed about nutrition, healthcare, and child welfare.
- **Civic participation:** Education strengthens democratic engagement and accountability.

Education is not simply a line item in a budget. It is the engine of our independence, the foundation of our democracy, and the bridge between a child's present and their future.



Photo credit: Freepik.com

Parents as models: The gift of fearless, respectful confidence

Children learn far more from what we model than from what we say. This Christmas, parents can give their children a gift more valuable than any toy: the gift of fearless, respectful confidence.

This gift is expressed in two powerful ways:

1. Living a life guided by ethical and moral standards — even under pressure

Barbados, like every society, has its share of negative peer pressure, shortcuts, and temptations. Children watch how adults respond. When parents choose honesty over convenience, kindness over anger, and integrity over popularity, children learn that courage is not loud: it is consistent.

A child who sees their parent stand firm in their values learns that:

- Doing the right thing is not weakness
- Morality is not old-fashioned
- Character is a lifelong compass
- This is the foundation of true confidence.

2. Speaking up for their best interests — even when tradition encourages silence

Barbadian culture is warm, respectful, and deeply communal. But it also carries traditions of “hush” “don't answer back”.

These norms, while rooted in respect, can unintentionally teach children to silence themselves — even when they are hurting, confused, or treated unfairly.

Parents can model a different path by:

- Advocating respectfully for their children at school
- Encouraging children to express their feelings
- Teaching them that respectful speech is not disrespect
- Showing them how to disagree without being rude
- Demonstrating that their voice matters

A child who learns to speak up becomes an adult who can navigate conflict, negotiate opportunities, and protect their own wellbeing, and that of their own children. A wonderful cycle of care.

This is the gift of courage.

Government and teachers: Partners in the Christmas promise

Government carries critical responsibility. Beyond funding, it must provide:

- Building a culture of adherence to modern global best

practice principles of excellence in public education.

- Remuneration and conditions of service which attract and retain the best teaching professionals (see Scandinavia and Singaporean education models).
- Targeted communication to help families understand the cost and value of education.
- Support systems for children facing socio-economic or emotional challenges.
- Inclusive policies that ensure no child is left behind.
- Accountability mechanisms — within schools and within the Ministry that build trust.

Teachers are the frontline interpreters of national values.

Their role is not only to teach but to inspire, to adapt, and to ensure that disadvantaged students are not excluded from the promise of education. Their influence is profound, and the best teachers' dedication extends far beyond the classroom.

When government, teachers, parents, and students work together, education becomes a shared act of nation-building.

A Christmas call to community

This Christmas, let us recommit to the values that built Barbados within our core traditions of pride and industry: kindness, responsibility, fairness, and community. Let us check in on the vulnerable neighbour, let us encourage our children, let us thank those teachers who give more than their job description requires and let us support the parents who are doing their best with limited resources.

And let us remind every child — from the smallest infant to the teenager preparing for CSEC or CVQ — that they are loved, valued, and capable of greatness.

A blessing for the season

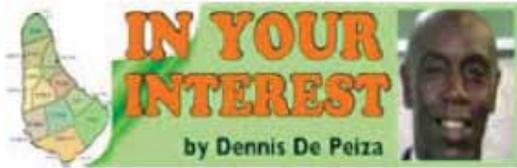
May this Christmas bring peace to every household, strength to every parent, rest to every teacher, courage to every student, and unity to our beloved nation.

May we enter the new year with a renewed commitment to each other and to the children who will shape the Barbados we dream of.

And may we remember that the true spirit of Christmas is not in what we receive, but in what we give — especially to our priceless jewels, our children.

Paula-Anne Moore is the spokesperson and coordinator Caribbean Coalition for Exam Redress Group of Concerned Parents of Barbados.

Shortcomings of trade unions



Those who have reservations about the functioning of trade unions may contend that these organisations tend to concentrate on parochial issues, more so than with national and global developments. Whereas this is debatable, such contention is likely to be dismissed as a matter of conjecture. The silence of trade unions on proposed government policies and measures to be introduced, tend to give credence to the contention.

Within the Caribbean region, knowledge of and information on issues being faced by individual trade unions in the various territories is not often known. It can be argued that those embattled trade unions fail to make their counterparts within their geographical space aware of the issue(s) they are facing. In absence of not reaching out, this makes it difficult for them to garner support and solidarity in a time of need.

This raises questions regarding the level of communication that exists within corridors of the local and regional trade union community. In the quest for support and solidarity, those trade unions which have affiliation with regional or international trade unions organisations, tend to reach out to these bodies for support in times of crisis.

It is unlikely that solidarity will occur where there is the fragmentation of trade unions. This underscores the need for the establishment of communication linkages, if the building of trade union unity and solidarity is to be achieved. It has been established that the sharing of information and experiences go a long way in helping to build confidence within the walls of the membership. Further, it contributes to the strengthening of individual and collective action taken by trade unions.

Some will argue that the local trade unions do not pay attention to their visibility. It ought to be apparent to the leadership of trade unions that they must dictate and promote their agenda in the media. They must direct attention to the suffering and hardships of workers, the trampling of workers' rights, human rights and civil rights.

The promotion of the decent work agenda, addressing the social protection floor and advocating for quality and sustainable jobs, also ought to be paramount. It is also imperative that trade unions speak out as is necessary on political issues and policy decisions, especially where these have implications for workers; whether these are of a social, economic or political nature.

Some may share the opinion that political leaders of the world who have the ears of the media are indirectly addressing matters of interest to labour. It should not be difficult to realise that global political issues are more about the exercise of world political power, authority and control, and not about treating collective bargaining, organizing workers, protecting and promoting the interest of workers.

It is about time that trade union leaders at all levels, internationally, regionally and locally, be more visible and aggressive in their pronouncement of issues regarding the displacement of workers and people such as refugees, the migration of workers, the imprisonment and exile of trade union leaders, the continued acts of forced labour in some parts of the world, and the heinous crime of human trafficking. Other problems that also warrant world attention include equal pay for equal work and the embracing of persons with disabilities within employment. Why should women continue to be marginalised and not paid equally like their male counterparts? Why should persons with disabilities still have to fight to be treated as equals?

What is most disturbing is the fact that many governments across the globe have ratified the eight core ILO Conventions, yet their actions in the treatment of labour are far from what is expected. Trade unions can only blame themselves for the predicament in which they find themselves. They have allowed the political element to embrace them under the guise that as labour parties, they have the interest of working-class people at heart. Even if they are well intended, the evidence points to the fact that their actions often appear not to be consistent with their utterances and the expectations of working-class people.

DENNIS DE PEIZA is a Labour Relations & Employee Relations Consultant at the Regional Management Services Inc. Visit our Website: www.regionalmanagement.service.com



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GRADUATIONS,
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Suspension of US visas — A moment for clarity, calm, and cooperation

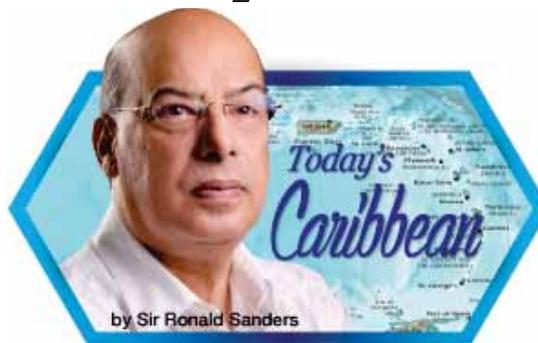
The recent proclamation issued by the Government of the United States, announcing its intention to suspend the entry of nationals of Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica, effective at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2026, has understandably caused concern among citizens of the two Caribbean countries. Since then, it has been learned that nationals of other Caribbean countries, including government ministers, have been denied US visas.

For many in these countries — as in the rest of the Caribbean — access to the United States for family ties, education, medical care, business, and opportunity is deeply valued. Any uncertainty about that access naturally gives rise to anxiety, not only for individuals but also for economies that are closely linked to the United States through trade, tourism, investment, and people-to-people exchange. There is therefore an urgent and legitimate need for clarity about what will apply after January 1, 2026, particularly with respect to existing visas.

From the moment the proclamation was published, Prime Minister Gaston Browne and I have been actively engaged with senior representatives of the United States Government to seek clarity and to work constructively toward resolution. Those efforts are ongoing. It is relevant to note that the proclamation came as an unexpected development, including to officials within the US system responsible for Caribbean affairs.

It would be disingenuous not to acknowledge that it was disappointing for Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica that this proclamation was issued without advance notice to either government. This is especially so given that, for almost a year, representatives of several departments of the United States government and the governments of the five Caribbean countries operating Citizenship by Investment (CBI) programmes have been engaged in sustained and detailed discussions on precisely these issues. That engagement was constructive and undertaken in good faith on all sides.

Moreover, the five countries took collective steps — based on recommendations from US officials — to streamline and strengthen the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing their CBI programmes.



The stated reason for the proclamation, as it applies to Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, is that these countries have historically operated CBI programmes “without residency.” In Antigua and Barbuda’s case, that characterisation does not reflect the full facts. Antigua and Barbuda has always had a residency requirement, and in November of this year Parliament significantly strengthened it as part of a broader package of legislative reforms. Dominica has also enacted extensive reforms. These measures were taken precisely to address concerns raised and to align systems with the highest international standards.

Some surprise has also been expressed that Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica were identified for visa restrictions when three other Caribbean countries operating similar programmes were not included. This, too, is a matter that merits calm clarification through dialogue.

There has inevitably been speculation by commentators and political activists about what they describe as the “real reasons” behind the proclamation. Governments, however, cannot conduct relations on the basis of speculation.

Diplomatic engagement must proceed on the basis of the reasons formally stated by governments themselves. In this instance, those reasons relate to CBI programmes and residency requirements, and that is therefore the issue that must be addressed directly, factually, and constructively.

Antigua and Barbuda fully recognises the sovereign right — and indeed the responsibility — of the United States to protect its citizens from external threats and to ensure that visas are not used for illicit or harmful purposes. We share those objectives. That is why we remain ready to work with the United States to establish and refine all necessary safeguards and guardrails to ensure that the systems we operate present no risk to US security.

For 250 years, Caribbean countries and the United States have shared a tradition of close, cooperative, and mutually beneficial relations — economically, socially, and strategically. That relationship has served all our peoples well. It is that tradition which must now guide us: preserving security while maintaining lawful and legitimate access for citizens to each other’s countries.

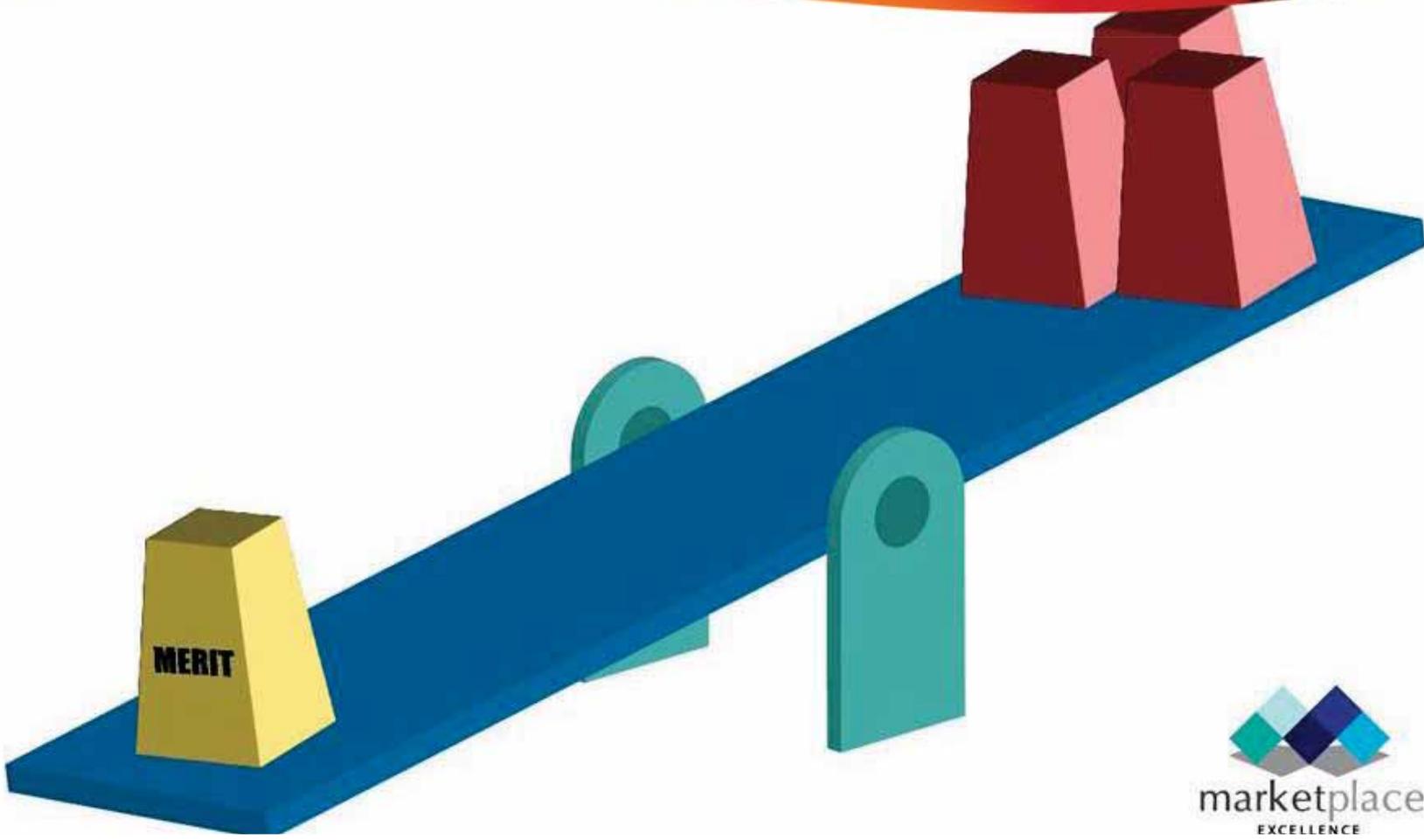
This moment therefore calls not only for calm, but for timely clarity. Prolonged uncertainty benefits no one. For citizens who have already been vetted and issued valid visas by United States authorities, it is reasonable that lawful travel be allowed to continue — subject to any additional checks the United States considers necessary — while longer-term solutions are finalised for new visa applicants.

Antigua and Barbuda approaches this matter in good faith, with respect for the sovereign responsibilities of the United States and confidence in the value of our long-standing relationship. We look to that tradition of dialogue and cooperation to ensure that security is upheld without unintended harm to ordinary people, legitimate commerce, education, and family ties.

That work has already begun, and mechanisms are now being examined by officials of the United States and Antigua and Barbuda with the intention of identifying early and practical solutions.

That balance has been achieved before. It can — and should — be achieved again.

Sir Ronald Sanders is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda and Dean of the Group of Western Hemisphere Ambassadors accredited to the United States.



IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE NATIONAL CULTURAL FOUNDATION

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When merit was enough

"Then Peter began to speak. I now realise how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" – Acts 10:34-35

As I pursue my memoir writing, I find frequent moments for introspection. One such memory takes me back to the late 1960s, when I was a graduate student at Imperial College of Science and Technology in London, working toward a Ph.D. in Statistics and Operations Research. During that period, fate introduced me to Professor Oscar Kempthorne, Chairman of the Statistical Laboratory at Iowa State University, who was visiting my supervisor, Professor Sir David Cox.

Professor Kempthorne, a Caucasian, appeared intrigued — perhaps surprised — that someone like me, a person of color, was pursuing such a demanding doctoral programme at Imperial. That curiosity soon became an opportunity. In 1971, he invited me to spend the summer as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Iowa. I accepted. My wife, Kean, joined me briefly, relieved to take a break from caring for our two young children, Karen and Kevin, who remained in Barbados with family. We were living in Trinidad at the time.

The university housed us in a long, narrow caravan, fully furnished and entirely unfamiliar to us as Caribbean people. After a few weeks, Kean returned home — though not before our third child, Bevan, was conceived.

I moved into a tiny bedsitter where the bed folded into the wall and rented a small refrigerator, permanently stocked with vanilla and chocolate ice cream. By summer's end, the indulgence showed: my family walked

Guest Column



by Dr Basil Springer

past me at the airport, failing to recognise my newly rounded face.

Academically and socially, Iowa was rewarding. I attended seminars, made friends and witnessed Oscar's quiet conviction that scholarly merit should never be overshadowed by race. I bought a 1962 Pontiac Catalina for \$100 which was my local transporter and sold it for the same price when I left. A departmental colleague, an amateur pilot, extended the hospitality of a flight over Iowa to Des Moines and back — an unforgettable experience.

Yet Iowa could feel isolating. To escape the long weekends, I took overnight Greyhound bus trips — 21 hours each way — to New York or Washington, DC, nearly every weekend. I divided the journey into reading, sleeping and conversations with strangers. Those hours brought reflection, connection and perspective. It was another step along a lifelong journey of education — one that continues to inform how I learn, teach and engage with the world.

Season's greetings to you all!

Dr Basil Springer GCM is a corporate governance adviser. His email address is basilgf@marketplaceexcellence.com. His columns may be found at <https://www.nothingbeatsbusiness.com>

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TODAY'S REPLAY

SPORTS

Openers John Campbell (left) and Brandon King (second right) have given the West Indies a solid start in their first innings. (Photo credit: CMC)



GAME ON

WINDIES DEFY MAMMOTH KIWI TOTAL TO KEEP HOPE ALIVE

The West Indies' batters have started strongly chasing New Zealand's mammoth first innings total, to leave the game in the balance at the end of play on the second day here on Friday.

With veteran pacer and leader Kemar Roach unable to take the field because of a hamstring injury sustained on Thursday's opening day, the Windies' bowlers showed great heart but could not stop the home side from piling on the runs, until they eventually declared their first innings at 575 for eight, buoyed by Devon Conway's impressive double century.

However, Brandon King, who finished the day unbeaten on 55 and John Campbell (45 not out), carried the visitors to 110 without loss to set up an intriguing third day of action.

With the pitch offering little assistance to the bowlers, King and Campbell scored at almost five runs an over during their

partnership in the day's final 90 minutes.

King was his usual fluent self from the start of his innings, striking pacer Zak Foulkes for two consecutive boundaries in the seventh over, before giving fast bowler Jacob Duffy the same treatment three overs later.

Campbell brought up the Windies' 50 inside ten overs with a spanking drive down the ground for four off pacer Michael Rae.

King moved into his 40s with another boundary off Foulkes, before reaching his second Test half century off only 63 balls by guiding a delivery from Duffy past backward point for another four.

He has so far faced 78 balls and struck nine boundaries, while Campbell's knock has taken 60 balls, and includes seven fours.

Earlier, the West Indies' bowling attack was dealt a harsh blow at the start of play when it was revealed that Roach would be unable to bowl because of his hamstring injury.

Resuming the day on 334 for one, with Conway unbeaten on 178, nightwatchman Duffy did well to score 17 before edging pacer Jayden Seales behind with 16 runs added to their total.

Conway though, continued to press on, eventually bringing up his second Test double hundred by hitting Jayden Seales for two boundaries.

He added 69 runs with Kane Williamson, before Williamson attempted an expansive drive off pacer Justin Greaves, only to be caught behind by wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach for 31, to leave the score 419 for three.

New Zealand went into the lunch break at 424 for three, but Greaves claimed the prized scalp of Conway shortly after play resumed by trapping him plumb in front for 227.

In all, he spent almost eight and a half hours at the crease and smashed an impressive 31 boundaries from the 367 balls he faced.

Daryl Mitchell only made 11 before he was caught down the leg side by Imlach off the bowling of Roston Chase, and six runs later Seales had Tom Blundell caught behind for four to see the Kiwis reduced to 461 for six.

Ravendra then added 61 runs for the seventh wicket with Glenn Phillips, who made 29, and then shared an unbroken partnership of 39 with Ajaz Patel, before captain Tom Latham declared their innings.

Ravendra faced 106 balls and hit six fours and two sixes during his unbeaten knock, while Patel made a run-a-ball 30, inclusive of three fours and two sixes.

Greaves was the Windies' best bowler, grabbing 2-83, while Seales (2-100) and Phillip (2-154), provided good support.

(CMC)

England face uphill battle to save Ashes series



England's Ben Stokes. (Photo credit: Reuters/Asanka Brendon Ratnayake)

England need to produce "something magical" on day four of the third Ashes test against Australia if they are to have any chance of turning the tide, the visitors' spin bowling coach Jeetan Patel said on Friday.

Travis Head scored his second century of the Ashes to put Australia on the brink of a series triumph at Adelaide Oval, with the hosts needing only a draw to retain the urn.

England, who have suffered 5-0, 4-0 and 4-0 defeats in their last three series Down Under, trail Australia by 356 runs with the hosts on 271-4 in their second innings, but Patel had faith they could still pull off the win.

"I still believe there's an opportunity for us. It won't be easy. We're going to need something magical," he told reporters.

"But I think it's about time we saw something magical from us. It's three games in, we've thrown some [punches] but taken a lot, and I think it's about time now we're backed into a corner to throw some haymakers back.

"I thought some of the plans we chose today, the way we executed at times, was fantastic, but didn't quite go our way. We've just got to hold the belief."

England struggled to remove Australia's batters, with captain Ben Stokes having opted not to bowl in the second innings and part-time spinner Will Jacks hit for 107 runs from 19 overs with just the one wicket as his reward.

The 27-year-old all-rounder conceded 105 runs in the first innings and his performances have brought into question England's decision to leave Shoib Bashir out of the side on the more spin-friendly surface in Adelaide.

"I don't think he has bowled poorly," Patel said. "They've played him very well. They've used the crease, they've got deep, they've run down at him, they've used the off side and the leg side, and they've looked to score.

"Looked to put him under pressure. It's probably what you would do against the spin of Jacks, where it's not his front-line skill as such. I still believe that Bashir is our number one guy and he does a fantastic job for us....

"But in these conditions, we're horses for courses. With all four seamers firing and Jacks backing them up, I think that works very well. But it probably didn't play out as well as I would have liked."

(Reuters)

Queen's Park Oval, Brian Lara Academy to stage 2026 Pakistan Tests

In a throwback to the days when the country hosted multiple matches in one Test series, Trinidad and Tobago cricket fans will be able to watch two matches in the series against Pakistan next year, but this time at two different venues.

The Brian Lara Cricket Academy will stage its first ever Test match in 2026, Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board (TTCB) president Azim Bassarath announced at the Board's TTCB Executive Luncheon recently at the National Cricket Centre in Balmain, Couva. In addition, he said the Queen's Park Oval will also host a Test.

Bassarath linked the move to the island's

recent regional success and the development of domestic facilities.

"On the regional stage, Trinidad and Tobago also made history earlier this year in the inaugural West Indies T20 Breakout League. Our national franchise, the Trinidad and Tobago Legions, emerged victorious as the first-ever champions of that competition," he told the gathering.

Outlining the fixture list for 2026, Bassarath said Trinidad and Tobago will again host the Breakout League from January 24 to February 8 at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, before welcoming Pakistan for a full tour in August. "We will also host,

ladies and gentlemen, the Pakistan tour of the Caribbean from July 15 to August 7, 2026, comprising a four-day warm-up match at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, the first Test match at the Queen's Park Oval, and the second Test at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy," he said.

Bassarath's announcement signals a return of Test cricket to the Oval for the first time since 2024 when the venue staged the first Test between West Indies and South Africa.

In recent years, the BLCA has supplanted the Oval as the principal cricket venue in T&T. Last season, the Tarouba stadium hosted all of the Trinbago Knight Riders franchise's

matches in the Caribbean Premier League.

And speaking about the Tarouba ground's elevation to Test status, Bassarath said: "I am pleased to note that the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, now, will be a fully accredited international venue, capable of hosting matches in all formats."

The development represents another step up for the Academy, which has already hosted high-profile international fixtures. So far, seven ODIs have been played there, plus 15 T20Is, including matches at last year's ICC T20 World Cup.

(Trinidad Express)



Los Angeles Lakers forward/guard Luka Doncic (77) shoots over Utah Jazz forward Ace Bailey (19) during the first quarter at Delta Center. (Mandatory Credit: Chris Nicoll-Imagn Images)

Doncic scores 45 in Lakers victory over Jazz

Luka Doncic scored 45 points, dished out 14 assists, collected 11 rebounds and had five steals to help the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Utah Jazz 143-135 on Thursday night in Salt Lake City.

Doncic earned his 85th career triple-double and his fifth with Los Angeles.

LeBron James tallied 28 points, ten assists and seven rebounds for the Lakers, who beat Utah for the third time this season. Marcus Smart added 17 points and Jaxson Hayes chipped in 16.

Keyonte George led the Jazz with 34 points and dished out eight assists. Isaiah Collier added 18 points and 13 assists off the bench. Ace Bailey chipped in 19 points while Jusuf Nurkic and Brice Sensabaugh added 15 apiece.

Utah played without leading scorer Lauri Markkanen (groin). The Jazz went just 31 of 47 (66%) from the free-throw line.

Utah showcased efficient offense in the first quarter, shooting 70% from the field and having 11 assists on 14 baskets. It helped the Jazz carve out a 41-32 lead after 12 minutes.

Five different players made a three-pointer for Utah in the first quarter, culminating in an outside basket from Kevin Love that put the Jazz up 40-30.

Doncic helped the Lakers stay within striking distance. He totaled 25 points before halftime and scored or assisted on 16 of Los Angeles' 27 baskets during that stretch.

It put Los Angeles in a position to capitalize when Utah's shooting cooled after halftime. The Lakers trailed by nine before chipping away and tying it at 102-102 when Doncic made a layup and a free throw with 1:12 in the third quarter.

Coller and Sensabaugh made back-to-back layups to temporarily put the Jazz back in front before the quarter ended.

Los Angeles opened the fourth quarter with a 15-4 run, ignited by a dunk from James and punctuated by a three-pointer from Smart and took a 117-110 lead with 7:56 left.

Doncic's back-to-back three-pointers gave the Lakers their first double-digit lead at 131-119 with 4:23 remaining.

(Field Level Media/Reuters)



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CARIBBEAN

TRAVEL REPRIEVE

US SUSPENDS ENTRY BAN FOR DOMINICA, ANTIGUA

REGIONAL NEWS



(FP)

Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit Friday thanked the United States government for suspending a proclamation that would have prevented Dominicans from entering the North American country from January 1 next year.

Speaking on the state-owned **DBS Radio**, Skerrit said that following discussions with the United States officials at the embassy in Barbados as well as the State Department in Washington, an agreement had been reached to suspend the proclamation that had been announced on Tuesday by President Donald Trump.

"I would like to thank the United States government itself for understanding the situation and agreeing to set aside for the time being the proclamation... and so this is good news. The anxieties that we all would have should be set aside," Skerrit told radio listeners, adding that Roseau was looking forward to continuing the good relations it has enjoyed with Washington in the past.

Meanwhile, the Antigua and Barbuda

government said it had reached an agreement with the United States, allowing its nationals currently holding valid visas to be allowed entry into the North American country.

"This applies to all visa categories, including B-1, B-2, J, and M visas," said Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States, Sir Ronald Sanders, adding that "for the avoidance of doubt, this includes tourist, business, student, and other valid United States-issued visas."

"Second, there will be no revocation of any existing visas issued to nationals of Antigua and Barbuda prior to 31 December 2025," he said in a statement.

On Tuesday, President Trump in his latest executive order said that apart from Antigua and Barbuda, nationals from Dominica and Haiti would also be affected by the immigration policy.

Trump said some of these countries identified in an earlier proclamation, had offered Citizenship by Investment (CBI) without residency, which poses challenges for screening and vetting purposes.

(CMC)

CARIBBEAN

IMPACS unveils strategic roadmap for ocean sustainability

The Trinidad-based Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) Friday said it has launched a comprehensive report series providing policymakers, enforcement agencies and industry leaders with an essential, actionable roadmap to transition from environmental vulnerability to sustainable blue prosperity.

IMPACS said the initiative was undertaken in collaboration with the US-based Auxilium Worldwide, a non-profit organization focused on fostering global harmony through supporting good governance, sustainable development, environmental stewardship and human security.

It said that comprehensive report and strategic recommendations are under the theme "Fish and

Flags: Supporting Caribbean Countries in Moving from Threatened to Thriving" and that the virtual launch attracted over 125 participants, marking a pivotal step in the collective effort to address the escalating threats facing the Caribbean Sea, the region's vital lifeblood.

"This launch is a powerful demonstration of our collective commitment to regional security, especially as the Caribbean continues to grapple with the emerging and evolving challenges of environmental crime and natural resource exploitation," said Lt. Col. Michael Jones, CARICOM IMPACS's executive director.

He said that CARICOM IMPACS has noticed a rapid acceleration in transnational organised criminal networks exploiting the region's natural resources for profit.

"The fisheries sector is now a prime target. Criminal actors are diversifying their activities far beyond the well-known crimes that law enforcement typically monitors. Organised criminals are evolving and they are leveraging knowledge gaps regarding natural resource and environmental crime to evade detection," he said.

(CMC)

HAITI

Rubio confirms 7 500-strong for gang suppression force

The United States has received pledges of up to 7 500 security personnel for a gang suppression force in Haiti, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Friday.

The UN Security Council agreed at the end of September to more than double the size of a 15-month-old, underfunded and understaffed international security mission combating armed gangs in Haiti and rename it a gang suppression force.

"We were looking for 5 500 forces. We already have pledges of up to 7 500 forces from a variety of

countries. We've seen donors step up to fund that effort," Rubio told reporters.

Gangs — largely armed with illicit weapons from the US — have seized almost all of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince in a conflict that has forced 1.3 million people from their homes, and fueled hunger. UNICEF said in August that they make up an estimated 50 per cent of gang members in the Caribbean country.

The US and Canada hosted a closed-door pledging conference for the gang suppression force at the United Nations on December 9. They said in a statement that 18 entities had pledged personnel, resources and technical support.

The initial, Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission deployed in Haiti in June 2024 but has struggled to make headway in curbing violent armed gangs — some of which Washington has designated as terrorist organisations.

(Reuters)

EUROPE

AID DEAL

EU AGREES €90 BILLION LOAN TO UKRAINE

WORLD NEWS



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (left), European Council President Antonio Costa, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announce the deal at the summit in Brussels. (Photo credit: Reuters)

European Union leaders have struck a late-night deal to lend Ukraine €90bn (£79bn; \$105bn) over the next two years, after failing to agree on using frozen Russian assets.

Ukraine was set to run out of cash by next spring, and European Council chief António Costa said the loan would be paid back only when Russia paid reparations for its full-scale war.

"We committed, we delivered," said Costa, while Ukrainian Prime Minister Yuliya Svyrydenko praised the deal as "a decisive step for economic resilience".

A bid to use €210bn in Russian cash frozen in the EU, mainly in Belgium, ultimately failed as leaders could not convince Belgium's prime minister his country would be protected from Russian retaliation.

The bulk of the cash is held by Brussels-based Euroclear and interest from the frozen assets is already being paid to Ukraine. Russia has already launched legal action against the clearing house.

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused

EU leaders of attempted robbery on Friday and Kirill Dmitriev, his envoy in talks with the US, claimed their failure to agree on using the assets was a "fatal blow".

However, Belgium's Bart De Wever said the deal eventually agreed after almost 17 hours of negotiations was a "victory for Ukraine, a victory for financial stability... and a victory for the EU". EU leaders had avoided "chaos [and] division", he added.

Ukraine needs an estimated €137bn over the next two years to cover both its military and its public services, and the EU plan is to cover two-thirds of that.

The €90bn that the EU will raise on the capital markets as part of the loan deal will be "backed by EU budget headroom" — the margin between actual EU contributions by member states in a year and the maximum the European Commission can spend as part of the budget.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was grateful to European leaders for the "significant support that truly strengthens our resilience".

(BBC)

UNITED STATES

Epstein files released

The United States on Friday pried open one of its most closely guarded case files, as President Donald Trump's administration began releasing a long-suppressed cache of records tied to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Mandated by the Epstein Files Transparency Act, the disclosure forces the Justice Department (DOJ) to confront years of secrecy surrounding the late financier's alleged sex trafficking operation — a case that has become shorthand for accusations of elite protection and systemic failure.

The files are expected to shed light on the disgraced financier's connections with high-profile business executives, celebrities, academics and politicians, including President Donald Trump.

BOLIVIA

Transport strike hits cities amid price hike

The streets of Bolivia's largest cities, La Paz and Santa Cruz, were brought to a standstill on Friday as public transportation workers went on strike against a 100 per cent fuel price increase ordered by the new government in the South American country.

Food and transportation prices soared, and the workers have demanded that officials revoke the fuel increase.

In La Paz, protesters blocked street corners, while in other cities, public transportation was shut down, long lines formed and residents joined the protests with marches.

Protests could spread nationwide in the coming days, if the government doesn't restore subsidies for gasoline and diesel, said

However it is unclear how much Trump's department — which has total control over the release — will allow to see the light of day or even how it is selecting documents.

The huge trove of documents included seven pages listing the names of 254 masseuses are entirely blacked out, alongside the explanation "redacted to protect potential victim information."

The release also included numerous photographs not previously made public — including one depicting a younger-looking former president Bill Clinton reclining in a hot tub, with part of the image obscured by a black rectangle.

Another image depicts Clinton swimming with a dark-haired woman who appears to be Epstein accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell.

Trump's name appears in a contact book found in the files, although it is not clear whom the book belonged to.

(France 24 with AFP)

Edson Valdez, a leader of the transportation union.

"The government has given the people the worst Christmas gift," he said.

"Not only have transportation fares doubled, food prices are through the roof, they've risen again," said Natalia Rodríguez, a homemaker.

People crowded into markets to stock up before prices climb further.

"The decree will not be touched," Presidency Minister José Luis Lupo said. "It is not negotiable."

"It is a painful measure, but it must be done," he said. "We will negotiate public service rates, but there is no other way."

The government delegated to mayors the negotiations over urban fares with drivers.

President Rodrigo Paz, a center-right politician, took office more than a month ago, ending two decades of leftist rule in Bolivia.

(Associated Press)



Olive Eudora Griffith

entered peacefully into rest at age 83.

of Burma Road, Speightstown, St. Peter

Sunrise: 10th September, 1942
Sunset: 9th December, 2025

Retired maid of now defunct Dacosta Manning.

Daughter of the late Olga Williams and Eustice Husbands
Cherished Mother of Major (Ret'd) Wendy Yearwood (Barbados Defence Force), Inspector Glyne Yearwood (Barbados Police Service), Senior Constable Paul Griffith (Barbados Police Service) & Virginia Greaves (Clerical Officer of District F Magistrate Court).
Adoptive Mother of Everton Alleyne, Sophia Denny-Yearwood and Diane Jackman.
Loving Grandmother of Justin Gaskin (Canada), Stefan Greaves (Barbados Revenue Authority), Shamar Greaves, Malique Griffith, Zhanay Griffith and Skye Griffith.

Great-Grandmother of Tiara Greaves, Mateo Greaves and Caelan Gaskin (Canada).

Beloved Sister of Anderson Yearwood (USA),

Eugene Carmichael nee Yearwood, Oscar Williams, Nancy Small (Retired Custom Officer), Cordell Greaves and many others.

Aunt of Sandra, Tyrone, Cathy, Richard, Ron, Michelle, Michael, Olivia (USA), Jeron, Kyle, Kiara, Kirk, Marsha, Trudy, Sharon, Shontell and Andre.

Great-Aunt of many.
Cousin of Grantley Yearwood (Canada) and Margaret Yearwood.

Mother-in-law of Michael Greaves, Sergeant Richard Lavine (BPS) and Camile Grant.

Special friend of Pastor Joel Cumberbatch, Pastor Haynesley Griffith and Delores Griffith, Assistant Commissioner (AG) Adrian Broomes and Mrs. Joy Broomes, Mrs. Marlene Gill JP, BSS, Mrs. Coreen Brathwaite, Sister Letitia Leacock, Lorna Phillips, Sister Barker, Debra Hinds, Glendene Scantlebury, Mrs. Pauline Gittens, Mrs. Glendene Belgrave & staff (Grandene's Bar & Bistro),

Paulette Gibbons, Judy Bishop (care taker) and others too numerous to mention.

Relative of the Yearwood, Griffith, Broomes and Babb families.
Friend of many.

The funeral of the late Olive Eudora Griffith leaves Earl's Funeral Home, Half Moon Fort, St. Lucy on Monday December 22nd, 2025 at 12 noon for Chapel of Mount Pleasant Memorial Gardens, Pleasant Hall, St. Peter where relatives and friends are asked to meet for the Service of Thanksgiving and interment at 2:00 p.m.

Live streaming of the funeral can be viewed via <https://inlovingmemory.online/OliveGriffith>

Floral tributes may be sent to Earl's Funeral Home no later than 11:30 a.m. on Monday.

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Donavan Dacosta Yearwood

entered peacefully into rest at age 47.

also known as Fat man of Sisnette Road, Martindales Road, St. Michael

Owner of Standpipe High, President of Martindales Road Football Club & Sports Event Organizer of the Bragging Rights Football Committee.

Son of Daphne Yearwood and the late Grafton Hall.

Brother of Jackie Yearwood, Curtis King, Myrone Wilkinson, Sonia Hall and many more.

Uncle of Marilyn Gill, Zakari and Zayn Wilkinson, Zafirah Haniff and Donelle Hall.

Cousin of Lenny Yearwood and many more.

Godfather of Rasheed Graham.

Relative of the Yearwood, Wilkinson, Hall and Thomas families.

Friend of Mr. & Mrs. Armstrong, Cranston Kirton, Charles Miller, Allison and Amanda Graham, Bobby Printer, Ellis, Kurt the Barber, and Rodney Muriel, and many many more.

The funeral of the late Donovan Dacosta Yearwood leaves Earl's Funeral Home, Half

Moon Fort, St. Lucy on Saturday December 20th, 2025 at 8:00 a.m. for Westbury Chapel, Westbury Road, St. Michael where relatives and friends are asked to meet for the Service of Thanksgiving and the interment at 10:00 a.m.

NO MOURNING COLORS

The organist are kindly asked to attend.

Floral tributes may be sent to Earl's Funeral Home no later than 7:30 a.m. on Saturday.

Funeral arrangements entrusted to IRG Funerals Incorporated.

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Dr. Rev. Mary Eureka Gill Forde

entered peacefully into rest at age 83 on Friday November 28th, 2025.
also known as "Loretta" of #158 Maycock's Terrace, St. Lucy

Pastor of United Holiness Church of Faith.

Widow of John Gill.

Daughter of the late Irene Bannister and Evelyn Duke.

Mother of Robert Forde (UK).

Adoptive Mother of many.

Grandmother of Monique and Ramazee Forde (UK).

Adoptive Grandmother of many.

Great-Grandmother of two.

Sister of Cynthia, Stephen, Barbara, Bentley, Luther and five others.

Aunt of Cheryl, Alphonso, Jamal, Kenny, Tina, Juliette, Ian, Sandra and nineteen others.

Great-Aunt of Fabian, Jason, Samantha, Kayla, Kendell, Lizzie and ten others.

Friend of Lorna Forde, Maxine and George, MP Peter Phillips, Lowe Family, Wesley, Joan, Overseer Small, Nicky and many others in Barbados, United Kingdom and the United States.

The funeral of the late Dr. Rev. Mary Eureka Gill leaves Earl's Funeral Home,

Half Moon Fort, St. Lucy on Friday December 19th, 2025 at 8:00 a.m. for St. Lucy's Parish Church, Fairfield, St. Lucy where relatives and friends are asked to meet for the Service of Thanksgiving and the interment at 10:00 a.m.

No mourning colors by request.

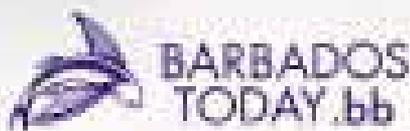
The organist is kindly asked to attend. Live streaming of the funeral can be viewed via <https://inlovingmemory.online/MaryGill>

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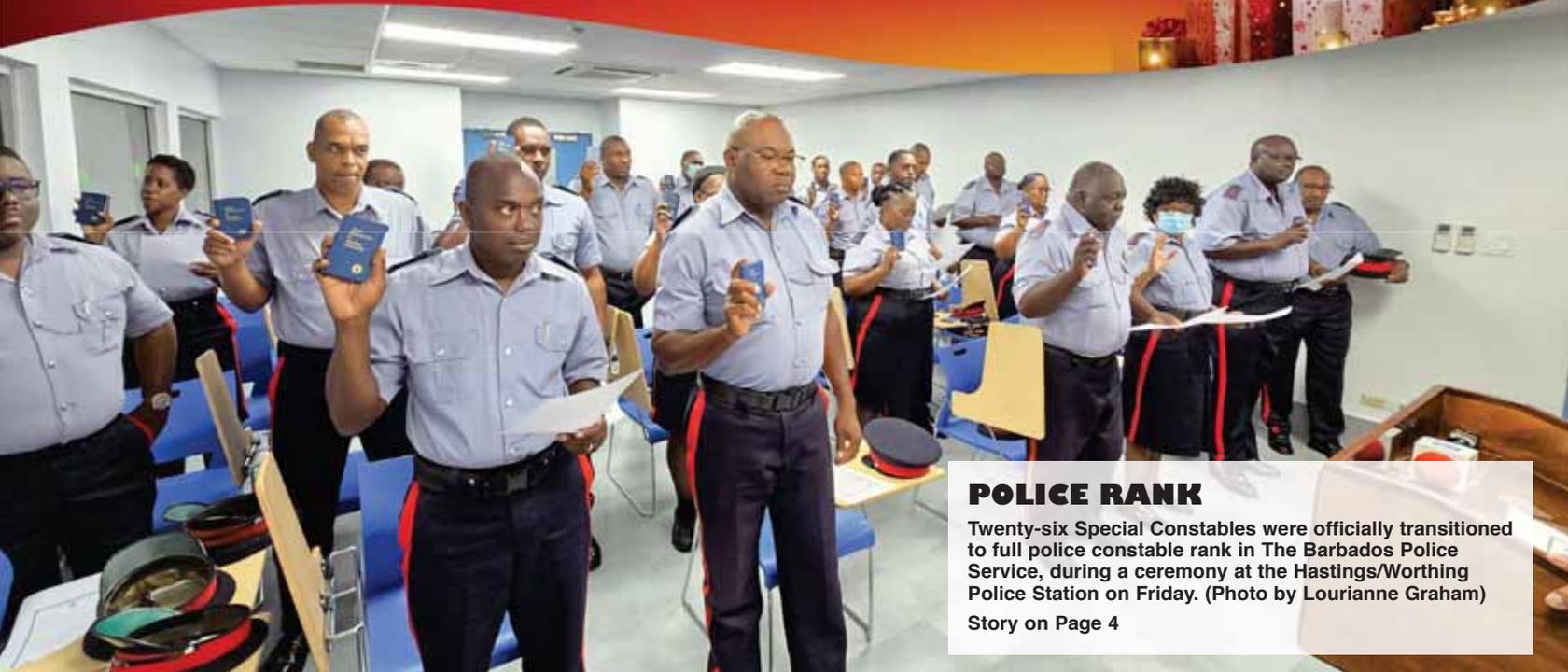


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POLICE RANK

Twenty-six Special Constables were officially transitioned to full police constable rank in The Barbados Police Service, during a ceremony at the Hastings/Worthing Police Station on Friday. (Photo by Lourianne Graham)
Story on Page 4

DOCTOR'S CALL

NATIONAL FLU-SEASON PLAN URGED AS HOLIDAY ILLNESS SURGE LOOMS

By Lauryn Escamilla

Public health specialist and newly appointed Independent Senator Dr Kenneth Connell has warned that Barbados faces a likely surge in respiratory illnesses during the holiday period, and urged government to introduce a coordinated national policy to manage the annual flu season.

Senator Connell, Deputy Dean of Recruitment and Outreach in the UWI Faculty of Medical Sciences, said: "We are definitely somewhere in the first third of the seasonal flu season," noting that influenza is not the only concern.

"Every year there is a flu season, and several respiratory bugs are involved in this, so the flu, the common cold, as well as even COVID-19."

Senator Connell explained that Barbados' status as a major tourist destination adds another layer of vulnerability. With thousands of visitors arriving from temperate countries during the winter months, respiratory viruses circulating abroad often reach local shores shortly after.

"Whatever happens in the United Kingdom and the United States and our main tourist markets, eventually in a few weeks, we'll be here," he said.

While hospitals have taken steps to prepare, he stressed that the most effective defence lies in public health action and individual responsibility.

"The most important intervention is actually public health interventions which involve getting people prepared from a prevention standpoint," he explained.

Simple measures, he added, remain critical. These include mask-wearing in enclosed spaces, frequent handwashing and proper respiratory etiquette. "At the hospital, we've never unmasked really. We continued post-COVID to mandate masks in the clinical setting."

"Be sensible and practise great respiratory etiquette, which is covering your nose if you're coughing into your arm and not into your hand that you're gonna shake with."

While acknowledging improvements since COVID-19, Connell said gaps remain in public education and planning.

"I will never say enough precautions are being taken because it's always a work in progress," he said. "There has been a tsunami of information about protection against respiratory illnesses, and therefore we do a lot

more now than we did pre-COVID."

Still, he believes more visible public messaging is needed.

"I haven't seen any ads out there as yet on the flu and symptoms to look out for," he said.

Senator Connell made a call for a structured national approach to seasonal outbreaks. "At a national level, I would like to see in place a national policy on how we treat the seasonal flu season."

Comparing it to hurricane preparedness, he added: "You know it's going to happen, so there should be a taskforce looking at this so that things are in place and everyone just follows the same script."

Such a framework, he argued, should involve public and private healthcare providers, businesses and institutions — especially those with large workforces — as Barbados moves deeper into the flu season and closer to the peak of holiday activity.

But Senator Connell said national attention must be focused on protecting those most at risk. He highlighted older adults in multi-generational households and people living with non-communicable diseases.

"Granny may be at home living in a multi-generational household where the grandson has picked up the flu or some bug from nursery school, right, and as a result, he may not be that symptomatic or have symptoms, maybe just a little snuffle, but that bug can be quite dangerous for Granny, and so you have to be cautious in the high-risk groups," he said. "People living with diabetes and hypertension and those of you who are obese or overweight are at a higher risk of developing complications from respiratory illnesses."

He also outlined the pressure seasonal illnesses place on healthcare services, especially during the Christmas period. "Every year, you know, health systems are stretched because of the flu virus," said Dr Connell, who explains that many hospitals restrict leave during the holidays to maintain staffing levels. Despite this, illness among staff is unavoidable. "Departments are going to be stretched with people calling in sick legitimately because they're at home."

One of his strongest cautions was directed at people who continue to work while ill. "If you are sick, this is probably the most important one, do not go to work, because then that just makes everyone else sick . . . You don't want to go and infect the entire team."

Addressing recent increases in COVID-19 cases, he said the trend was expected and mirrored patterns seen since the end of the pandemic.

"The spike in COVID numbers is no surprise," he said, pointing to increased social activity during the holiday season. "There will be seasonal spikes in COVID-19 like any other respiratory illness."

To combat the rising numbers of people who need to be treated and to maintain services, hospitals often rely on additional personnel. "Locum doctors and additional staff may have to cover over the holiday season," he added, stressing that these measures are essential to ensure critical departments such as Accident and Emergency and Internal Medicine remain functional.

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Senator Dr Kenneth Connell (LE)