

# PM BROWNE CLARIFIES POLICY ON DIVIDENDS FROM STATUTORY ENTITIES

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Preparations for re-opening the Cancer Centre are underway. *Story on page 3.*

## PM Browne clarifies government's policy regarding dividends from statutory entities

Prime Minister Gaston Browne said the government's policy regarding dividend payments to central government from statutory bodies does not apply to

three such entities: the Medical Benefits Scheme, the Social Security Scheme and the Antigua and Barbuda Board of Education.

In fact, the prime minis-

ter explained that the policy made by the Cabinet calls for a minimum of 50 per cent dividend payment to the Consolidated Funds of profits or surplus cash by all

statutory corporations effective from the first of January this year.

“Our government's dividend policy only applies to profitable government-owned trading entities that conduct business with private individuals and entities. It does not apply to Social Security, Medical Benefits or the Education Levy.

“These entities include but are not limited to APUA, Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority, Antigua Port Authority, State Insurance Corporation, ADOMS and the Transport Board,” PM Browne said in a social media post.

He further explained that where these statutory corporations provide services to the government, such as insurance or utility services, the dividends will be set off against the amounts owed by the government.

“The 50 per cent dividend due to the government, will be calculated on profits or surplus cash flow after debt servicing and other similar obligations.

“The remaining profits/surplus will stay with the entities as retained earnings,” he added.

The prime minister was responding to a social media post where the person had included Social Security as one of the statutory bodies that was required to make the dividends payment.



  
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Eastern Caribbean Cancer Centre

## Preparations for re-opening the Cancer Centre move to top gear

Now that negotiations for the purchase of the Eastern Caribbean Cancer Centre on Queen Elizabeth Highway are nearing completion, the company that will take over the operations of the centre is moving with alacrity to get the facility back into operation.

A spokesman for the company disclosed that already an entity that specializes in radio therapy repairs has been contacted and will send a team to Antigua to assess the radio therapy unit at the Cancer Centre.

The team will undertake any repairs that are necessary to return the equipment to full functioning capabilities.

Additionally, the team will conduct training of the staff and may also assist with hiring for the various

positions that will become available.

The spokesman said the emphasis is on reviving the centre to full capabilities in as short a time as possible. He added that there is likely to be a name-change for the facility as the Eastern Caribbean Cancer Centre has been trade-marked. One of the names under consideration is the Cancer Institute (of Antigua and Barbuda).

Prime Minister Gaston Browne announced that as part of the negotiations with the company seeking to purchase the facility, the government wants to ensure that there is a cap placed on the price that nationals/residents pay for cancer care.

He noted that a similar arrangement was in place with the now defunct Cancer Centre.

## Jumby Bay Island

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- Only suitable applications will be considered and acknowledged.

## OECS leaders discussing new regional airline

Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, has confirmed that there are ongoing discussions among leaders of the OECS on the establishment of a new regional airline in the wake of the demise of LIAT (1974) Ltd. The regional airline, the mainstay of intra-regional travel for several decades, will wind up operations later this month.

Antigua and Barbuda has been spearheading efforts to form a new airline – LIAT 2020 – that is expected to service many of the routes previously serviced by LIAT (1974) Ltd.

Speaking on the state-owned DBS radio, PM Skerritt said he had always informed Dominicans that if “LIAT does not fly for one day in the Caribbean we will be in trouble”.

“I always held the view that for

you to have any sustained airline business in the Caribbean among these islands...governments must be involved. Governments must seek to underwrite certain portions of the expenses associated with running these airlines and this is why we invested in LIAT (1974) Ltd., against all the public criticisms which were meted out to me when I took the decision to invest in the airline.

“Dominica is still prepared to invest in any airline outfit that will serve the Caribbean because we believe that it is absolutely important,” he added.

During the presentation of his country's national budget last month, Prime Minister Gaston Browne said his government had embraced the responsibility to restructure and resur-

rect LIAT, with a “vision of returning the airline to the regional skies”.

Browne said then the airline, which has been under administration since July 24, 2020, “has long been an essential thread in the fabric of Caribbean connectivity”.

“In 2023, despite hurdles, including unserviceable aircraft, unresolved issues for former workers, financial constraints, staff attrition, and disruptions caused by the hurricane season; LIAT 1974 Ltd operated a limited schedule, ensuring vital connectivity across destinations with 167 dedicated staff,” Browne said of the airline.

Browne said that the Barbados-based Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) will play a critical role in

*cont'd on pg 5*

### STUDENT SAFETY POLICY



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## Travel advisors predict robust growth for Caribbean tourism

The people who drum up much of the tourism business for destinations in the Caribbean, North American Travel Advisors, are optimistic about the prospect for robust growth in the sector in 2024.

This is one of the outcomes of a recent meeting of board members of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) Chapter Presidents from 50 U.S. states at the Sandals Grande Antigua Resort.

President and CEO of ASTA, Zane Kirby, said the one thing the travel trade has noted is that many millennials who now occupy management positions are prioritizing travel.

“Millennials are the largest age group within the United States over 70 million, and one of the interesting things is that they prioritize travel over almost any other discretionary spend, even over things like housing.”



Kirby added that in spite of the online options, many travelers still turn to travel advisors to help manage their travel experience, and when the advisors have the opportunity to visit destinations like Antigua and Barbuda or other Caribbean islands, then it becomes much easier for them to promote and sell these destinations to clients.

“The vast majority of them (tourists) when they are actually ready to book, they are going to go and find someone who has actual expertise and experience.

That’s the one thing internet search engines don’t have, the actual onsite experience that our members are getting here this week,” he noted.

Noting the increasing competition from other destinations all over the world, Minister of Tourism of Antigua and Barbuda, Charles Henry Fernandez, commended Sandals Resorts for its role in helping to bring regional destinations and the travel trade closer together, thereby ensuring that the Caribbean gets the exposure it needs to allow their clients to choose the region first.

“The US is our most important source market, and ASTA is the group that delivers most of the people out of the US to us, so it’s very important for them to come and be here with us. Our mutual success as a tourism destination along with the success of Sandals, as the region’s premier hospitality brand would not be possible without your support. I commend Sandals for its singular role in not just creating the world’s top hotel brand, but for hosting the ASTA in beautiful Antigua and Barbuda.”

Meantime Gary Sadler, the Executive Vice President of Sales and Industry Relations at Unique Vacations, the exclusive marketing partner for Sandals Resorts, said the company is firmly committed to its relationship with ASTA and travel advisors, who continue to play a vital role in driving Caribbean tourism.

*cont’d from pg 4*

solidifying the arrangement among the governments, adding that this will set the stage for finalising the arrangement with Air Peace, a private Nigerian airline founded in 2013, “so that LIAT 2020 can begin operations, thereby securing a promising future for regional travel.”

Skerrit told radio listeners that “my view is let us come together as governments.

“Okay we need US\$20 million to start the airline, let us have a strategic plan for this airline, let us put in good

management, an executive chairman, good board members, let the governments stay out of the running of the airline.

“Let the board and the management implement the strategy plan. I don’t believe in governments running anything, and this is why we don’t own things in the private sector as a government.

“Anytime we invest in anything, that’s supposed to be in the private sector because there is a gap and I don’t believe in the government running anything. Governments should

not be running anything, leave it to the private sector people to run this airline,” he added.

“So we are having these discussions with some of the islands within the OECS about looking to see how we can work together towards introducing some kind of operations that will alleviate the situation within the Caribbean, but the Caribbean cannot grow to the extent that it wants to grow without addressing intra-regional travel,” Skerrit said.

*Article Published January 15, 2024 on trinidadexpress.com*

## Tamorla Millette is Youth Entrepreneur of the Year 2023

A young enterprising businesswoman, who has made a name for herself based on her business acumen as well as her leadership qualities - Tamorla Millette - has been named Youth Entrepreneur of the Year 2023.

As part of the recognition of her work, Millette was presented with the Prime Minister’s Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP) award.

Millette was among 16 young people presented with various awards at a ceremony organized by the Department of Youth Affairs and held at Casa Palmadita on Saturday. The awardees were

honoured as part of the annual National Youth Awards ceremony, which was coordinated by the Department.

“The Prime Minister’s EDP is dedicated to nurturing and expanding new and existing business ventures, thereby driving economic growth and development in Antigua and Barbuda. This initiative aims at revenue generation, job creation, and fostering innovation among citizens and residents,” explained head of the department, Dr. Jrucilla Samuel.

Millette was nominated by a member of the community, however, according to Dr. Samuel the department



Caleb Gardiner, right, presented the award to Tamorla Millette.

had to review the nomination along with those of other nominees before making the final selection. Based on the criteria, Millette’s business had to be based on sound footing, she was also required to be of good character as well as having displayed social responsibility.

“Millette’s journey to success began with the inception of *Party Perfect Antigua* in January 2018. Her venture, specializing in event planning, decor, and catering services, quickly became a beacon of creativity and service excellence in the community.

“Expanding her entrepreneurial vision, Millette later founded *Boss Ladies Connect*, a networking group for female business owners. This initiative culminated in the groundbreaking *Boss Ladies Brunch*, creating a dynamic platform for female entrepreneurs to network, expand their clientele, and forge significant

business partnerships,” the youth department head further explained.

Executive Secretary of the Entrepreneurial Development Programme, Caleb Gardiner presented the award to Millette, praising her contributions to fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Antigua and Barbuda. “The EDP was conceived to transform innovative ideas into sustainable businesses, and Millette exemplifies this vision with her remarkable achievements,” said Gardiner.

An elated Ms. Millette expressed her gratitude and excitement upon receiving the award. She shared, “My love for uniting people through innovative and fun activities was the spark for my entrepreneurial journey. I am honoured to be recognized for my efforts and will continue striving to inspire and empower young women in our nation and across the Caribbean.”

### AUCTION NOTICE

<u>REGISTRATION SECTION</u>	<u>BLOCK</u>	<u>PARCEL</u>
SOUTH CENTRAL	15 1987B	227

Instructed by **ACB MORTGAGE AND TRUST COMPANY LIMITED**, I shall sell by **PUBLIC AUCTION** on Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> day of January 2024 at 11:00am the above residential property at Buckley’s Heights.

The property is under the ownership of **LOREAN DENISE ROBERTS (aka DENISE LOREAN ROBERTS)**. The land is a 10,890 sq. ft. (0.25 acre) plot with an approximate 3,841 sq. ft., 2-storey with a partial basement reinforced concrete building with 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms.

The property is in a quiet residential area with a commanding view of the surrounding area.

The Auction shall be held on site.

Details of the Auction may be obtained from **Mr. Trevor Santos, Public Auctioneer** at telephone numbers: 464-7653 and 562-7653.

Dated this the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December 2023

Trevor Santos  
Licensed Auctioneer



## ABEC chair and public servant extraordinaire, John Jarvis, has died

John Jarvis, the career public servant who was appointed as Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission in April 2022, has died.

Jarvis served on the Commission from December 21, 2015 and assumed the chairmanship in April 2022. He succeeded former Chair Nathaniel ‘Paddy’ James. The Commission’s Chair is nominated by the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

Prior to his appointment at ABEC, Jarvis served in many positions throughout the public sector in Antigua and Barbuda. He joined the civil service as a member of staff of the Community Development Division within the Ministry of Education which at the time was headed by Ruth Ambrose. His contemporaries within the division at the time included, the late Judy Labadie and Ivor Forde. It was there that he met Faustina Browne, who would later become his wife and life-long partner.

Jarvis was appointed Coordinator of Carnival in 1989 and presided over what has



John Jarvis been described as one of the more productive periods of the national festival. Under his stewardship, the Village Pageant and Picong Competition were introduced as well as the revitalization of the Carnival Parade.

He was also instrumental in the creation of the Carnival Development Committee where the festival was administered by a board, rather than a Steering Committee that pertained previously.

He departed Carnival in 1992 with the belief that he had done all that he could to ensure the longevity of the festival.

Years later, he was appointed Registrar of Cooperatives charged with implementing the Cooperatives Act where he oversaw moves to place all credit unions operating in the country did so based on the law and accept-

able standards.

He has also held the post of permanent secretary in the Ministry of Health.

Prior to his appointment as chairman of ABEC, Jarvis was considered by many as one of the region’s top electoral officers. Importantly, he monitored many elections in the Caribbean and elsewhere. He gained regional recognition for his work as part of a team in helping to resolve an election issue in Guyana in 2020. Jarvis spent eight months ensuring that a recount was done of the votes with a final outcome where the results truly reflected the will of the people

of Guyana.

“His role in averting a crisis in Guyana was phenomenal. His steadfastness helped to ensure that democracy remained alive and well in Guyana,” observed Antigua and Barbuda’s Ambassador to the United States and the OAS, Sir Ron Sanders.

His wife Faustina, said messages of condolences have been pouring since the announcement of his death mid-morning on Monday. She has expressed her thanks and appreciation to all those who called or sent messages of comfort to her and her family.

**NATURALIZATION NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that Miguel Torres Spencer of Gray Hill, St. John’s Antigua and Barbuda is applying to the Minister of Naturalization and that any person who knows any reason why naturalization should not be granted should send a written and signed statement of facts to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

**AUCTION NOTICE**

<u>REGISTRATION SECTION</u>	<u>BLOCK</u>	<u>PARCELS</u>
CEDAR GROVE & CROSBIES	44 1997B	76 and 77

Instructed by **ACB MORTGAGE AND TRUST COMPANY LIMITED**, I shall sell by **PUBLIC AUCTION** on **Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 at 12:00pm** the above residential property at the intersection of Westcott Avenue and Neem Avenue, Crosbies.

The property is under the ownership of **SALEM KHOULY and AIDA MANSOOR** with approximately 8,894 sq. ft. of residential building on a 0.75acre plot of land. The building is two-storey with the ground floor space consisting of living room, dining room, kitchen, playroom/bedroom with ensuite bathroom, guest bedroom with ensuite bathroom and a general bathroom. The upper floor is consisting of a master bedroom with ensuite bathroom, three other bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms and a kitchenette. The property has a two vehicle garage and a standalone one vehicle garage.

On the property is a 26,000 gallon Swimming Pool with Deck, a Pool House and a Basketball Court. The property has a lawn with date palm trees, decorative flowering plants, three fish ponds and a courtyard paved with cut stones.

The Auction shall be held on site.

Details of the Auction can be obtained from **Mr. Trevor Santos, Public Auctioneer** at telephone numbers: **562-7653 and 464-7653**

Dated this the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December 2023

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Trevor Santos  
Licensed Auctioneer



GG Sir Rodney Williams makes a presentation to the Christmas Card competition winner.

## Halo Christmas Art Winner selected

Eight-year-old Savannah Holborough of the St. Nicholas Primary School was selected as the overall winner of the Halo Foundation's Annual Christmas Card Competition 2023.

During the brief prize-giving ceremony held recently at Government House, Governor General Sir Rodney Williams charged the students to continuously hone their skills.

The Island Academy International School was lauded for being the school with the most winning entries.

The winners were provided with gifts of art supplies, cash prizes and trophies.

## ABI Insurance makes donation to the Child Protection Unit's Foster Care Programme

ABI Insurance has made a donation to the Child Protection Unit's Foster Care Programme as a demonstration of its commitment to help those members of society who are in critical need.

The generous donation includes a diverse array of essential items. These include provisions such as food items, school supplies, clothing, diapers, and wipes, to address the multifaceted needs of children in the Foster Care Programme.

This initiative is an embodiment of ABI Insurance's commitment to extending its role beyond the insurance landscape to actively contribute to the welfare of the community it serves.

Recognizing the importance of nurturing the next generation, ABI Insurance is dedicated to supporting initiatives that foster growth, resilience, and well-being among vulnerable children.

"The Family and Social Services Division expresses



sincere appreciation to ABI Insurance for their compassion and dedication to the betterment of the lives of children in the Foster Care Programme.

"This generous donation will significantly enhance the unit's ability to provide a caring and supportive environment for these children to thrive," shared Feona Charles-Richards, Director, Family and Social Services.





# AT&LU Anniversary

## Statement by E. Paul Chet Greene, Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party on the 85th Anniversary of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union

On behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, I am pleased to extend our warmest congratulations to the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (ATLU) on the momentous occasion of its 85th anniversary (January 16, 2024).

The significance of the ATLU in shaping the landscape of labour rights, the enactment of labour laws, and the establishment of industrial order in Antigua and Barbuda cannot be overstated. It is through the unwavering efforts of the ATLU that the working people of our nation have been liberated from exploitative conditions, paving the way for a more just and equitable society.

Over the years, the ATLU has been a stalwart advocate for the rights of workers, playing a pivotal role in establishing frameworks for peaceful negotiations with employers. This commitment has led to improved terms and conditions, resulting in el-



ABLP Chairman E.P. Chet Greene evated earnings and a higher standard of living for all.

The ATLU's dedication to responsible trade unionism has significantly contributed to the stable and progressive industrial environment in Antigua and Barbuda. This stability has not only benefited workers and employers but has also fostered an atmosphere conducive to attracting and sustaining both local and foreign investment. The private sector acknowledges that our country's system is fair to all parties, thanks to the efforts of the ATLU.

We, in the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, recognize and deeply appreciate the pivotal role played by the ATLU in our political movement. The structure of our party stands on the strong pillars built by the ATLU, which seamlessly transitioned the fight for workers' rights from the industrial sphere into the broader political and governance space. There exists a natural familial link between the ATLU and the ABLP, a relationship that has been instrumental in the progressive advancement of our nation and the social and economic betterment of our people.

As we celebrate this milestone, we pay tribute to the ATLU for its significant and indispensable contribution to our national development. Congratulations to the ATLU on 85 years of dedicated service, and may it continue to serve the people of our beloved Antigua and Barbuda for many more years to come.



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# AT&LU Anniversary



## The Antigua Barbuda Trades And Labour Union: Celebrating 85 Years Of Success

By Ambassador Lionel Hurst

### TRACING THE HISTORY BACKWARDS

#### INTRODUCTION

On 16 January 2024, the beloved Antigua Barbuda Trades and Labour Union (the A.T.& L.U.) celebrates 85 years of successfully representing workers in our country, changing the circumstances of work and remuneration following 300 years of exploitation and abuse. The AT&LU created a new Antigua and Barbuda!

This outstanding trade union served as the vehicle that the emancipated people of Antigua and Barbuda established with the objective of riding into the future on a movement to change their circumstances permanently. They succeeded!

That earlier generation, thinking that their children and unborn generations of Antiguan and Barbudans deserved a better life, would sacrifice much in order to make livelihoods and life much better in the unfolding Antigua and Barbuda of 1939. They are a generation that cannot be forgotten.

In the folklore that has emerged in the aftermath of success, they are affectionately called "The 1939ers." Monuments have been built to celebrate their victory, and books have been written to cement their bravery.

Although housed in hovels made from mud and sticks and stalks, and though facing a lifespan of fewer than 40 years, these brave Antigua and Barbuda men and women were prepared "to eat cockles and widi-widi bush" rather than to endure and bequeath to their offspring a country from which to flee at the first opportunity.

They set about to build a new Antigua and Barbuda. Eighty-five years later, the Antigua and Barbuda of 1939 is unrecognizable and but a memory.

In 2024, the average per capita income of the once sugarcane-agricultural economy scaled USD15,000. Tourism dominates the economy. More than one million visitors are expected to land on the country's shores and at its international airport tarmac, in 2024. The construction sector is bustling, with more jobs and greater demand for building supplies than can be reasonably delivered. More new homes and new apartment buildings are being constructed; more multi-storied office complexes, shopping malls and hotels are being built; improved harbours to accommodate bigger and deeper draughts are being dredged; and, more sailing yachts are entering, and massive aircraft are landing to discharge an ever-increasing number of visitors. For 85 years, the people of Antigua and Barbuda prayed for courageous leadership to build a new country, and there is no doubt that the AT&LU satisfied this cry.

Reginald Stevens and Vere Cornwall Bird, the AT&LU's first two Presidents, led this institution at its inception, and they guided the velvet revolution to a stage where the take-off could be clearly witnessed during its first 30 years, or by 1969.

#### THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS:

The AT&LU Executive made a decision to wrest the legislature away from the colonials so that it could change the labour laws, making them more favourable to workers. The Political Committee of the AT&LU was created on the suggestion of Luther George--the first phenotypically black male to be elected to the Legislature. That 1943 proposal would trigger



Ambassador Lionel Hurst the first manifesto of the AT&LU on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1946, when the three-year electoral cycle appeared on the horizon. That organic document contains the basic framework of promises and ambitions for the establishment of a fair Antigua and Barbuda.

The real test of leadership came in 1951 when the sugar workers decided to celebrate Labour Day on 1st May, as was being done by millions of workers worldwide. The Legislature, dominated by unelected officials, refused to make that day a lawful holiday. Two heroines of the Labour Movement were created by the actions of the dominant group. Lucy Ishmael and Averyl Winter showed great courage, followed by the protest modes chosen by the AT&LU that irritated the bosses.

These matters proceeded to Court. The High Court and the Court of Appeals ruled in the owners' favour. The Privy Council in 1960 ruled that the Union had the right to picket and did not need the permission of the Authorities to do so. It was a triumphant day for the AT&LU and workers' organizations in the colonies of Britain, when that ruling came down. Absolute control by the owners of industry in Antigua and Barbuda was coming to an end. The judiciary could see through the complex equation on which the rulers had relied in history to exercise control, and the Court signaled that the

*cont'd on pg 11*

*cont'd from pg 10*

trajectory of history was at an end.

1960 was also the year in which the United Nations adopted Resolution 1514/XV declaring colonialism unlawful. Steps to free the colonized people were to be undertaken by the colonial powers.

Thereafter came a frenzy of new infrastructural projects, and the emergence of a new industry as sugarcane began its rapid decline after 300+ years of dominance, poverty and want among the majority.

A 1965 power plant to meet the needs of a growing demand for electricity was added to the grid. New roads were constructed to connect the new hotels now dotting the island's indented, white-sand shoreline near villages. New potable water-producing and water-storage-plants in 1968 and continuing in 1970, to meet the increased demand for potable water, were constructed. The Potworks Dam, capable of holding 1.2 billion gallons of run-off and rain was performing its function even before the work was complete. It remains, 55 years later, an indispensable source of water when droughts end and torrents of rain fall mercilessly upon Antigua. A new deep-water port was opened on 31st October 1968 at Rat Island, Antigua. After months of dredging and piling, a new harbour was ready to receive both cargo vessels and cruise vessels plying the Caribbean. Antigua and Barbuda was on an incline, steep and rapid.

A former British Governor who fought the trade union, returned for a visit in 1969 following the end of his tenure in 1954. He wrote that he could not imagine what the AT&LU was seeking to achieve back then but he can clearly see where Antigua is going. It was he who sent for 300 soldiers from Jamaica to shoot Vere Bird and the Union leaders if they protested, in 1951, and to put the Union back in its

place by declaring a state of emergency. He failed and the Union succeeded.

On 27th February 1967, a new relationship was established between the metropolitan power and the emancipated people of Antigua and Barbuda. It was called "Statehood in Association with Britain." What a day! The new 7-point Antigua and Barbuda Sun rose over the Union Jack and a new national anthem praising the Almighty for liberation was sung. The Union was leading by way of its President, after 28 years of existence.

The first 30 years were glorious. Vere Bird created the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) on 24 November 1968. He resigned as President of the AT&LU in 1969, bringing a glorious tenure to an end. As the Political Leader of the newly-designated ABLP, commencing in 1969, a twenty-five year period of outstanding performance by the governments which he led, accounted for the modern Antigua and Barbuda that was his vision.

## THE LAST 55 YEARS

The last 55 years of the AT&LU's existence is marked by innovation and RENEWAL. The AT&LU reverted to being an organization for promoting workers' rights, and for ensuring that work provided a feeling of self-fulfillment, not alienation. To enable that outcome, training, skills upgrades, promotions and fairness at work prevailed.

The AT&LU's focus is also upon ensuring that the political party which it spawned, mothered, and nurtured, continues to win the government in successive elections. A wicked plan was put in place to make the two branches of government workers—established and non-established—become one branch. The 1981 Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda compels the Antigua and Barbuda Public Service Association (ABPSA) the bargaining agent for civil servants.

If that happened, the 8,000 workers employed as non-established employees in the Central Government would no longer pay dues to the AT&LU. It would have been the chokehold of a Cobra around the finances of the AT&LU. That was fought successfully. The AT&LU remains as does the bifurcation of the Civil Service. The ABLP supported the AT&LU and caused the Union to succeed in its drive to maintain representation. The AT&LU is more of a workers' organization than it has been ending in 1969 with Vere Bird's departure. Its early history would correctly describe it as a hybrid institution, dedicated to political ends. The country that it once served as a political institution is better off today as a result of its role in displacing the colonials and snatching government, even from those in the population who felt they ought to be the leaders.

Sovereignty and Independence were achieved on 1st November 1981. But the people of Antigua and Barbuda had grown accustomed to their own decision-making after 14 years of Statehood. Looking at the GDP figures for the years 1976 to 1994, when Vere Bird left office as Prime Minister, any objective observer would conclude that the start which the AT&LU provided after 1939 was most propitious in the building of a new Antigua and Barbuda.

Long live the AT&LU! Long live freedom! Long live justice!

*Lionel Hurst*

*Author of Four Publications*

1. *Democracy By Diplomacy* (2007)
2. *Luther George: The Barack Obama of Antigua and Barbuda* (2010)
3. *Vere Cornwall Bird: When Power Failed to Corrupt* (2012)
4. *Lester Bryant Bird: The Comeback Kid.*(2017)

# Technology



## AI to hit 40% of jobs and worsen inequality, IMF says

By Annabelle Liang

Artificial intelligence is set to affect nearly 40% of all jobs, according to a new analysis by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IMF's managing director Kristalina Georgieva says "in most scenarios, AI will likely worsen overall inequality".

Ms Georgieva adds that policymakers should address the "troubling trend" to "prevent the technology from further stoking social tensions".

The proliferation of AI has put its benefits and risks under the spotlight.

The IMF said AI is likely to affect a greater proportion of jobs - put at around 60% - in advanced economies.

In half of these instances, workers can expect to benefit from the integration of AI, which will enhance their productivity.

In other instances, AI will have the ability to perform key tasks that are currently executed by humans.

This could lower demand for labour, affecting wages and even eradicating jobs.

Meanwhile, the IMF projects that the technology will affect just 26% of jobs in low-income countries.



It echoes a report from Goldman Sachs in 2023, which estimated AI could replace the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs - but said there may also be new jobs alongside a boom in productivity.

Ms Georgieva said "many of these countries don't have the infrastructure or skilled workforces to harness the benefits of AI, raising the risk that over time the technology could worsen inequality among nations".

More generally, higher-income and younger workers may see a disproportionate increase in their wages after adopting AI.

Lower-income and older workers could fall behind, the IMF believes.

"It is crucial for countries to establish comprehensive social safety nets and offer retraining programmes for vulnerable workers," Ms Georgieva said.

"In doing so, we can make the AI transition more inclusive, protecting livelihoods and curbing inequality."

The IMF analysis comes as global business and political leaders gather at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

AI is a topic of discussion, following the surge in popularity of applications like ChatGPT.

The technology is facing increased regulation around the world. Last

month, European Union officials reached a provisional deal on the world's first comprehensive laws to regulate the use of AI.

China has introduced some of the world's first national regulations on AI, which include rules concerning how algorithms can be developed and deployed.

In October, President Biden signed an executive order compelling developers to share safety results relating to AI with the US government.

The following month the UK hosted an AI Safety Summit, at which a declaration on the safe development of the technology was signed by multiple countries.

## Oppenheimer tops Critics Choice Awards with eight wins

By Emma Saunders

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* laid down the gauntlet ahead of the Oscars, winning eight Critics Choice Awards on Sunday evening in Los Angeles.

The epic's haul included best picture, best director for Nolan and best supporting actor for Robert Downey Jr.

But it missed out on several other acting prizes, with its star, Cillian Murphy, losing out to *The Holdovers*' Paul Giamatti in the best actor race.

*Barbie* won six prizes, plus the SeeHer award for America Ferrera.

Ferrera, who plays Mattel employee Gloria in Greta Gerwig's blockbuster, gave a powerful speech as she accepted the prize, which is given for advocating for gender equality, portraying characters with authenticity, defying stereotypes and pushing boundaries.

Ferrera said the best use of storytelling is to "hold the truth that we are all worthy of being seen".

"Brown, indigenous, Asian, trans, disabled, any body type, any gender, we are all worthy of having our lives richly and authentically reflected," she said.

"Receiving the SeeHer award for my contributions to more authentic portrayals of women and girls couldn't be more meaningful to me because I grew up as a first



Nolan won best director but Murphy missed out on best actor.

generation Honduran American girl in love with TV, film and theatre, who desperately wanted to be a part of a storytelling legacy that I could not see myself reflected in."

She added that it "seemed impossible" when she began working 20 years ago "that anyone could make a career of portraying fully dimensional Latina characters" but credited creatives "who were daring enough to rewrite outdated stories and to challenge deeply entrenched biases".

Ferrera also thanked Gerwig for proving that "unabashedly telling female stories does not diminish your powers, it expands them".

She signed off her speech saying: "This is for every kid yearning to break in. I see you and you got this."

*Barbie*'s prizes included best comedy, best original screenplay and best original song for Mark Ronson's *I'm Just Ken*, sung by Ryan Gosling.

Emma Stone won best actress for her portrayal of Bella Baxter in Yorgos Lanthimos's *Poor Things*, a young woman who is bizarrely brought back to life by having a baby's brain implanted in her head by an unorthodox scientist.

She said: "Playing Bella was one of the greatest joys in my life and I got to unlearn a lot of things in playing her."

The upcoming Oscar race for best actress is being viewed by many film buffs as a two-horse race between Stone and *Killers of the Flower Moon*'s Lily Gladstone, who picked up best actress in a drama at the

Golden Globes earlier this month.

Giamatti's *Holdovers* co-star, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, won best supporting actress.

There was one more acting prize for *Oppenheimer*, best ensemble.

Wife and husband team Gerwig and Noah Baumbach won best original screenplay for *Barbie*, while Cord Jefferson picked up best adapted screenplay category for his directorial debut *American Fiction*, based on the 2001 novel *Erasure* by Percival Everett.

Indiana Jones star Harrison Ford was also honoured with the career achievement award, and was rewarded with a standing ovation.

*Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* won best animated feature, while French

*cont'd on pg 14*

# Regional News



## Puerto Rican legislator convicted for bribery, and kickback scheme

A Puerto Rican legislator and her husband were convicted by a federal jury on Friday for engaging in a years-long theft, bribery, and kickback conspiracy scheme.

Documents presented by prosecutors in court showed from early 2017 until July 2020, Legislator María Milagros Charbonier-Laureano, also known as Tata, along with her husband, Orlando Montes-Rivera, and her assistant, Frances Acevedo-Ceballos, executed a scheme to defraud the Puerto Rican Government.

Prosecutors showed Charbonier-Laureano inflated Acevedo-Ceballos's salary from \$800 on a bi-weekly, after-tax basis to nearly \$2,900.

"Out of every inflated paycheck, it was agreed that Acevedo-Ceballos would keep a portion, and kick back between \$1,000 and \$1,500 to Charbonier-Laureano and Montes-Rivera," the US Attorney for Puerto Rico, William Stephen Muldrow, said in a statement after the conviction.

Muldrow said when Charbonier-Laureano heard investigators were on her tail, she proceeded to delete evidence such as messages from her WhatsApp and iMessage and the cell-phone's call log.

The jury convicted Charbonier-Laureano and Montes-Rivera of one count of conspiracy; two counts of theft, bribery, and kickbacks concerning programs receiving federal funds; six counts of honest services wire fraud; and two counts of money laundering.



María Milagros Charbonier-Laureano. Photo via Facebook

The jury also convicted Charbonier-Laureano of obstruction of justice for destroying data on her cell phone.

Charbonier-Laureano and Montes-Rivera are scheduled to be sentenced on April 10 and face a maximum penalty of five years in prison on the conspiracy count; a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on each federal funds theft, bribery, and kickbacks count; a maximum penalty of 20 years

in prison on each honest services wire fraud count; and a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on each money laundering count.

Charbonier-Laureano also faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the obstruction of justice count.

Acevedo-Ceballos pleaded guilty on November 7 to federal funds bribery and is scheduled to be sentenced on February 5, 2024.

### cont'd from pg 13

thriller *Anatomy of a Fall* was named best film in a foreign language.

The Critics Choice also honours TV shows and per-

formances, with Netflix's *Beef*, HBO's *Succession* and FX's *The Bear* winning best limited series, drama and comedy series, respectively.

*Succession* also scooped best actor in a drama series (Kieran Culkin) and best actress in a drama series (Sarah Snook).

*The Bear* stars Jeremy

Allen White, Ayo Edebiri and Ebon Ross-Bachrach, and all took home acting prizes, as did *Beef*'s Steve Yeun, Ali Wong and Maria Bello.



The Georgetown Magistrate Court. Photo: Dillon De Shong

## Guyana: Date set for trial in high profile elections fraud case

CMC – A trial into a high-profile elections fraud case in Guyana is expected to commence on March 4, before Senior Magistrate Leron Daly at the Georgetown Magistrates' Court.

Those accused include former government minister, Volda Lawrence; former Returning Officer for District Four, Clairmont Mingo; former Deputy Chief Election Officer, Roxanne Myers; Chief Scrutineer, Carol Smith Joseph and former Chief Elections Officer, Keith Lowenfield.

During a Case Management Conference (CMC), the defendants were served with statements, after which Magistrate Daly scheduled dates for the “taking of evidence” into the case

which has been stalled for years.

The hearing will commence from March 4-8 and in the first week of April and May.

At the last hearing in December, the State provided flash drives containing certified copies of Statements of Poll (SOPs) and Statements of Re-count (SORs), along with video interviews, as part of the evidence.

After Daly requested more organised evidence for easier access, attorney Darshan Ramdhani, KC, who is the special prosecutor in the case, said this would streamline the court proceedings.

It is alleged that the defendants conspired during the March 2, 2020, general and regional elections to de-

fraud the electors of Guyana by declaring a false account of votes cast.

Earlier this month, the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Anil Nandlall, described the slow progression of the high-profile elections fraud cases as a “great travesty” for Guyana, more so since the next General and Regional Elections are just about a year away.

“Thirty odd charges (are) pending in the Magistrates' Court of this country involving some of the very players who misconducted themselves and abused their powers during that electoral process.

“After three years... the trial of those charges has not yet begun,” the Attorney General said.

## Houthi missile hits US-owned container ship in Gulf of Aden

By Lipika Pelham

Houthi rebels have hit a US-owned container ship with a ballistic missile off the coast of Yemen, the US says.

The vessel, Gibraltar Eagle, reported “no injuries or significant damage”, according to the United States military command for the Middle East (Centcom).

The Marshall Islands-flagged vessel is continuing on its journey in the Gulf of Aden.

Iranian-backed Houthis have been attacking ships since November, in protest at Israel’s war against Hamas.

Shipping company Eagle Bulk Shipping said its vessel was carrying steel products and was about 160km (100 miles) offshore in the Gulf of Aden when it was hit.

It said the container “suffered limited damage to a cargo hold but is stable and is heading out of the area”.

Hours earlier Centcom said that another missile, fired in the direction of a US destroyer in the Red Sea, had been intercepted and shot down by a US fighter jet.

The Houthis have been attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea that the group says are linked to Israel, or bound for Israeli ports. It says the attacks are



Container ship in the Red Sea (file image).

a show of support for the Palestinians and Hamas in Gaza, as Israel continues its military campaign there.

The British maritime security firm, Ambrey, says the Gibraltar Eagle was “assessed to not be Israel-affiliated”.

But a senior Houthi official said on Monday that American vessels were also considered targets. “It is enough for ships to be American for us to target them”, Nasr al-Din Amer said.

The Houthi attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea have led many of the world’s biggest shipping companies to change course, thus causing major disruption to global commerce.

In reaction to Monday’s strike, the US Department of Transportation issued

a maritime alert, recommending “that US flag and US-owned commercial vessels” remain clear of specified areas in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

On Monday, the world’s second largest oil company, QatarEnergy, announced its decision to pause shipping via the route while it sought security advice.

Last week, US and the UK forces struck Houthi targets in Yemen in retaliation for attacks on shipping. The joint forces, in coordination with allies, carried out dozens of air and sea strikes on Houthi missile launch sites and air defence systems inside Yemen.

On Monday, the UK’s Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said 13 Houthi launch sites had been destroyed by its military action. Mr Sunak said that while he would

not “speculate on future action”, doing nothing would have weakened regional security.

US intelligence assesses that the joint US-UK airstrikes on the Houthis’ military facilities have destroyed about a quarter of their arsenal.

But the Houthis’ chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdulsalam told Reuters news agency that attacks on Israeli ships or those heading to Israeli ports would continue, in spite of the US-led airstrikes.

Washington has blamed Iran for being behind the Houthi missile capability, which Tehran denies. Iran’s foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, said in a press conference on Monday that the West must stop the war against Yemen immediately.





## Hot air balloon crash kills four and injures one in Arizona desert

By **Brandon Drenon**

Four people have died and one person was critically injured after a hot air balloon crashed into the ground in Arizona on Sunday, authorities have said.

The incident occurred around 07:50 local time (14:50 GMT) in Eloy, a desert area roughly 65 miles (105km) south of Phoenix.

There were five people onboard when the balloon crashed, police said.

The cause of the incident is currently unknown.

The victims were identified by the Eloy Police Department on Monday afternoon.

The four who died were Chayton Wiescholek, 28, Kaitlynn Bartom, 28, Atahan Kiliccote, 24 and 37-year-old Cornelius Van Der Walt, identified as the pilot.

Valerie Stutterheim, 23, was injured and remains in critical condi-

tion, police said.

Jennifer Hubartt, Ms Bartom's mother, told a CNN affiliate early on Monday that her daughter "was a beautiful person".

"She recently became an RN and was making it on her own," she said.

Police in Eloy said they are investigating the incident in conjunction with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration to determine the cause.

"Something catastrophic occurred with the balloon," local police told a CBS affiliate on Sunday.

When the hot air balloon initially took off on Sunday, there were 13 total adults onboard: a balloon operator, four passengers and eight sky divers, Eloy Mayor Micah Powell said at a press conference.

The crash occurred shortly after the skydivers completed their

planned jump, Eloy Police Chief Byron Gwaltney said.

Investigators arrived at the scene shortly after the crash to examine the downed balloon, identified by the NTSB as a Cameron Balloons A160 aircraft, a NTSB spokesperson said.

The exact cause of the accident is still under investigation, the spokesperson said, but the NTSB identified that the balloon had an "unspecified problem with its envelope".

Mayor Powell said Eloy has a "very large skydive community" due to its large "drop zone" - an area where skydivers can land.

The craft will be brought to a secure facility for additional evaluation, officials said.

"While we continue our efforts, we ask for your thoughts and support for the families and loved ones affected during this difficult time," police said.

## Four teams make winning start to ABCA Two-Day contest

Four teams, including defending champions PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks, recorded wins during the opening round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship over the weekend.

The Liberta Black Hawks began their title defense by romping to an innings and 164-run victory against the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles at Bethesda.

Bethesda were bundled out for 48 in 16 overs after losing the toss and being sent in to bat. Teron Payne struck 41, while pacer Elvis Weaver grabbed three for 12 and off-spinner Elroy Francis Jr. took three for 24.

Amahl Nathaniel and Joshua Thomas both hit centuries as Liberta made 384 for seven declared in 78.3 overs. Nathaniel slammed 116 off 114 balls, Thomas struck 103, and Michael Greaves cracked 95. Payne captured five for 118.

Trailing by 336 runs, opener Shacoy Floyd struck a century as Bethesda was dismissed for 172 in 57 overs. Floyd cracked 103, and left-arm spinner Kadeem Phillip bagged four for 74.

Empire Nation, Pigotts Crushers, and New Winthorpes Lions also claimed opening-round victories.

Empire Nation beat the Jennings Tigers by 110 runs at Rising Sun. Empire were sent in to bat and made 166 all out in 36.4 overs, with opener Tyrone Williams Jr. getting 97 off 107 balls.

National left-arm spinner Glenton Williams claimed four for 38, and captain Paul Miller had three for 13. In reply, the Jennings Tigers were all out for 121 in 31.1 overs.



Tyrone Williams Jr.

Cameron Miller top scored with 39, while off-spinner Justin Athanaze grabbed five for 13, and leg-spinner Micah McKenzie claimed three for 24.

After gaining a 45-run first-innings lead, Empire Nation made 149 for seven declared off 37.3 overs in their second innings, with Williams Jr. getting 50.

Set a victory target of 195 runs, the Jennings Tigers crashed to 84 all out in 21.5 overs. McKenzie snatched four for 20, and Athanaze took three for 18.

Pigotts Crushers trounced Combined Schools by 232 runs at Pigotts. Demari Benta hit 123, and his brother Deran Benta struck 41 as the Crushers made 247 for five declared off 51 overs after winning the toss and opting to bat.

Combined School then tumbled to 89 all out in 36.5 overs. Pacer Jawaki Joseph bagged five for 13,



Shacoy Floyd

and Essan Warner took three for 21.

After taking a first innings lead of 158 runs, the Crushers made 107 for two declared off 17 overs in their second innings.

Set 266 to win, Combined Schools were bundled out for 33 in 25.1 overs, with Joseph capturing three wickets for four runs.

The New Winthorpes Lions crushed the Bolans Blasters by an innings and 75 runs in New Winthorpes. Scores in the Match: NW Lions 189 all out in 45.2 overs (Hilroy Andrew 76 and Asher Murray Conelius 63; Dwaine Fordyce four for 38, Earl Waldron three for 28, and Tonya Martin three for 44); Bolans Blasters 37 all out in 22.2 overs (Ian Eusebe five for five), and 77 all out in 37.2 overs.

All Saints Pythons and WES Rising Sun Spartans played to a draw at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

## More success for Villa Lions in Premier Division League

The Villa Lions claimed the only win in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Sunday.

The Villa Lions recorded their fifth win in seven matches by snatching a one-nil victory against the Greenbay Hoppers in the last game of a triple header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Following a goalless first half, Howayne "Head-sly" James of Hoppers scored an own goal in the 79th minute that was sufficient to give the Villa Lions the victory in the keenly contested encounter.

The result ensures that the Villa Lions remained in third place by advancing to 17 points, four adrift of joint leaders Sandals, Inet Jennings Grenades, and Old Road.

The Greenbay Hoppers would also remain in fifth place on 12 points after slumping to their third loss in seven matches.

The other two matches on Sunday ended in 2-2 draws. Akeem Isaac scored twice for the Pigotts Bullets to claim a draw against Willikies in Sunday's opening encounter.

Isaac gave the Bullets the lead when he pounced on the rebound to score after the Willikies goalkeeper had saved his penalty kick in the 14th minute.



Players of the Villa Lions football team

He scored his second via a penalty kick, which he converted in the 90th minute, to snatch the equalizer for the Bullets and denied Willikies their second win of the season.

The result carries Willikies to six points from six games, while Pigotts Bullets advanced to five points after six matches.

Omri Simpson scored in the fourth minute of added

time in the second half to snatch a late equalizer for Garden Stars against SAP in Sunday's second encounter.

Simpson struck in the 94th minute to equalize for the Garden Stars, who scored twice in the second half after Tyrique Tonge's double conversion had given SAP a 2-0 halftime lead.

Tonge converted a penalty kick in the 10th min-

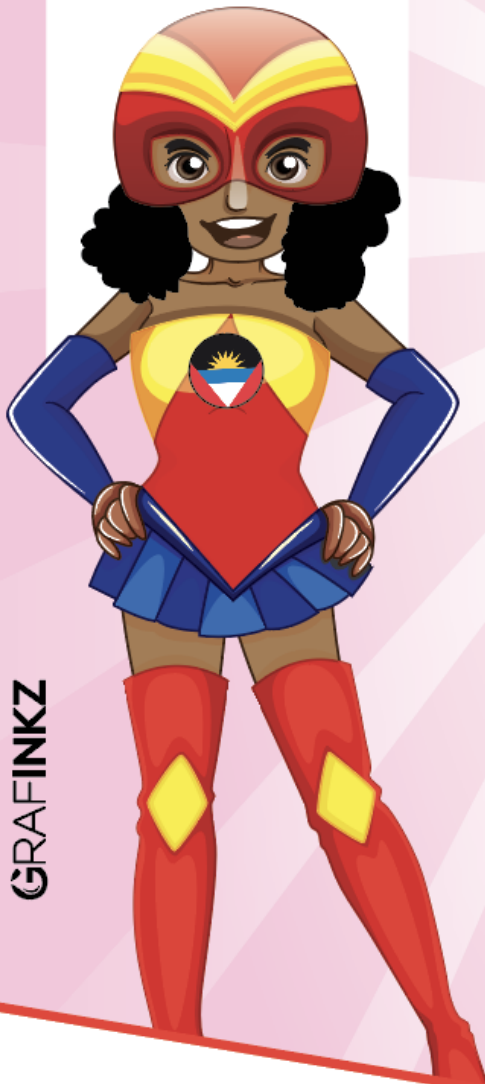
ute and scored in the 36th minute. Sedique Adams reduced the deficit when he scored the first goal for the Garden Stars in the 63rd minute.

The result ended a run of three consecutive wins for the Garden Stars, who advanced to 10 points after securing their first draw in six matches. SAP would move on to nine points from seven games.

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Lamine Camara, center, gestures as he scores his side's second goal past Gambia's goalkeeper Baboucarr Gaye, bottom left, during the African Cup of Nations Group C soccer match between Senegal and Gambia at the Charles Konan Banny stadium in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, Monday, Jan. 15, 2024. (AP)

## Senegal begin title defence in style with 3-0 win over 10-man Gambia

YAMOUSSOUKRO (Reuters) - Senegal began their Africa Cup of Nations title defence with a 3-0 victory over 10-man Gambia helped by Lamine Camara's double in Group C on Monday, bringing an end to a sequence of surprise results at the tournament in the Ivory Coast.

After a shock-filled Sunday where the minnows had the upper hand over heavyweight opponents, Senegal restored faith in the form book as Pape Gueye scored early and Camara added two more to ensure victory in the opening Group C encounter.

Gueye put Senegal ahead in the fourth minute at the Charles Konan Banny Stadium, while 20-year-old Camara, voted Young African Player of the Year in 2023, underlined his prom-

ise with a fine finish seven minutes after the break and a sublime second into the top corner four minutes from time.

Gambia were reduced to 10 men when Ebou Adams was sent off for a needless stamp on Camara in stoppage time at the end of the first half, leaving Gambia on the back foot for the second period.

But they were already up against it after conceding early as Gueye swept the ball home after being teed up by Sadio Mane. Gambia captain Omar Colley's poor clearance found Mane unmarked on the left and he laid the ball back for the oncoming Gueye to score.

Adams caught Camara on his heel long after the ball had gone and initially received a caution. But after a VAR check it was changed to red, leaving the

Cardiff City defender banned for the next two matches.

Two passes from deep in defence led to Senegal doubling the score with some simplicity, as captain Kalidou Koulibaly found Ismaila Sarr in midfield and he, in turn, threaded a defence-splitting pass for Camara to run onto and score.

Iliman Ndiaye's dribbling on the right of the attack set up the third goal with Ndiaye cleverly working his way across the penalty box before passing for Camara to score.

Gambia, who reached the quarter-finals of the last Cup of Nations two years ago in a surprise performance, offered little in attack save for an early shot from Musa Barrow that Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy punched away to safety.



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## Osaka falls at first hurdle in Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Jan 15 (Reuters) - Naomi Osaka did not enjoy the fairytale return she hoped for at the Australian Open as the twice champion lost 6-4, 7-6(2) to French 16th seed Caroline Garcia in the opening round on Monday.

Osaka returned to the tour after 15 months out during which she had her first child and the four-time Grand Slam champion looked rusty at times in her first appearance at a major since 2022 as Garcia capitalized to ease through the first set.

The two players were more evenly matched in the next, but it was Garcia who stepped up a gear in the tiebreak to go through.

Coco Gauff first made a big splash at Melbourne Park in 2020 with an upset of holder Osaka and the 19-year-old American, who claimed her first major at the US Open last year, romped into the second round on a sunny day-two morning.

Fourth-seeded Gauff admitted to making a nervous start in the first match on Rod Laver Arena, but quickly hit her stride to rattle off the last nine games for a convincing 6-3, 6-0 win over Anna Karolina Schmiedlova.

Marketa Vondrousova, another new member of the Grand Slam champions club, made a humbling exit after crashing out to Ukrainian qualifier Dayana Yastremska.

The Czech was the first unseeded player to win the women's trophy at Wimbledon last year, but found the shoe on the other foot as she succumbed to a 6-1 6-2 upset loss.

The 2024 crop of qualifiers have caused a host of problems for top players on the opening two days of the tournament, not least Dino Prizmic's



Naomi Osaka hits a forehand against Caroline Garcia in their first-round match at the Australian Open at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, January 15, 2024. (AP)

defiance of 10-time champion Novak Djokovic over four hours on Sunday night.

Third seed Daniil Medvedev was perhaps fortunate that his opponent, Terence Atmane, retired injured during his opening match on a sunbathed Margaret Court Arena.

The French qualifier, who had taken the first set off the 2021 US Open champion before Medvedev levelled the contest, was holding his own in the third when he began suffering severe cramps in his thigh.

The 22-year-old struggled on for almost an hour, but finally called time on his first Grand Slam main draw match while trailing the Russian 5-7, 6-2, 6-4, 1-0.

Local hopeful Alex De Minaur, who stunned Djokovic at the United Cup in the build-up to the Grand Slam, also went through when his opponent, Milos Raonic, retired injured.

Greek seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas went a set down in his match against lucky loser Zizou Bergs, but

produced a remarkable shot from his opponent's side of the net to help turn the tide before running out a 5-7, 6-1, 6-1, 6-3 winner.

There were emotional scenes on Court 13 where Italian qualifier Flavio Cobolli won his first Grand Slam main draw match with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 upset of Chilean 18th seed Nicolas Jarry.

Stan Wawrinka, the only man apart from Djokovic in the field to have won the title, later took Adrian Mannarino to five sets before bowing out 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-0.

While the 38-year-old Swiss said he hoped to return, Britain's Andy Murray said his 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 loss to Tomas Martin Etcheverry might be his last match at Melbourne Park.

Argentine Etcheverry plays another seasoned campaigner in Gael Monfils next after the Frenchman defeated Yannick Hanfmann 6-4, 6-3, 7-5 to join wife Elina Svitolina, an earlier 6-2, 6-2 winner over Australian Taylah Preston, in the second round.

## TG Welding win MPL softball title

TG Welding played unbeaten throughout the entire competition to capture the title in the Cool and Smooth Mandy Premier League (MPL) Sherma Jackson Business Softball Cricket League.

TG Welding lifted the championship trophy by surging to an emphatic 10-wicket victory over Grill Box in the final at the Powells playing field on Sunday.

Grill Box batted first and were restricted to 58 for seven off their allotted 10 overs, with Mervin Higgins getting 20. Owen Graham and

Richie Thomas each claimed one wicket for eight runs.

TG Welding then achieved victory by racing to 62 without losing a wicket in just 3.4 overs. Player of the Match Essan Warner hit an unbeaten



TG Welding celebrate with their trophy after winning the MPL softball cricket title at the Powells playing field on Sunday, January 14, 2024. (Photos courtesy MPL)



Female MVP of the final TG Welding's Ann Anthony, left, and Most Valuable Player of the preliminary stage Menova Govia of Grill Box.

40, which included five sixes, and fellow opener Deran Benta was not out on 16.

Hanse On Security captured third place. They defeated the Board of Education by seven wickets in the play-off for third place.

The Board of Education made 97 for four off their 10 overs, with Player of the Match Kadeem Henry hitting 73, including eight sixes and three fours. Andra Samuel captured a wicket for 14 runs.

Hanse On Security achieved victory by scoring 102 for three wickets with seven balls to spare. Demetri Lucas struck 54 not out, and Melvin Charles scored 30. Isiah Viville claimed two for 13, and Rayn John had one for 20.

In a brief presentation after the

matches, Essan Warner and Ann Anthony of champions TG Welding claimed the final's male and female Most Valuable Player (MVP), respectively.

Menova Govia of Grill Box captured the MVP Award for the preliminary stage of the eight-team round-robin competition.

Mary Browne of the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force captured the award for the most wickets, while Kadeem Henry of the Board of Education claimed the award for the best catch of the competition.

Demari Benta of TG Welding won an award for hitting six sixes in a six-ball over, while Miss Gardner of the Board of Education claimed the Best Manager Award.