

# ONE YEAR REPORT CARD: *More water, more tourists and expanding economy*

Story on Page 2



Tourism officials were on hand at the Heritage Quay Pier to welcome Valiant Lady to Antigua and Barbuda. *Story on page 6.*

# One year report card: More water, more tourists and expanding economy

It's been one year since the Gaston Browne Administration was returned to office for a third consecutive term...and while he declined to be drawn into grading the government's performance, Information Minister Melford Nicholas said much has been achieved over the past twelve months.

"One of the challenges we faced going into the last general election (January 18, 2023) was the issue of water; and if I was to state the situation without being boastful, I would say that we have brought some level of calmness to the production of water. It continues to be an issue but I believe we have been able to increase production to a level where we are not yet out of



Information Minister Melford Nicholas

the woods, but we are able to meet, if not the daily, then the weekly supply of water to each and every community. There are some exceptions and when brought to our attention, we have been able to respond to those,"

he outlined in Thursday's post-Cabinet briefing.

Going forward, Nicholas said the government is actively negotiating with two separate entities to outsource the production of water into private hands.

One such negotiation, with Seven Seas, is likely to be concluded by the middle of February.

He said there's a dual-track approach with behind-the-scenes activities taking place to ensure that by the end of the first quarter there will be the additional plants in production making more water available for the southern corridor and from Barnacle Point.

Nicholas said he is satisfied that by the time the drier months of summer roll around and some of the water resources now available have become depleted, there will be enough reverse osmosis production capacity to meet the demands.

"We are not done; we

*cont'd on pg 3*

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## Government blames issues with GBC for hold-up regarding funds donated to Barbuda

An amount of US\$1 million will be made available immediately by the government for a housing development in Barbuda as a short-term measure to deal with a similar amount donated by a benefactor following the passage of Hurricane Irma.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who is also the Minister of Finance, said the government is taking this action in an effort to jumpstart the project earmarked for Luis Hill on Barbuda.

In a media post, PM Browne explained that the benefactor, Steve Morgan of the UK had made a donation of US\$1 million to help with the rehabilitation work on Barbuda following the hurricane. But according to the prime minister, the money was never received by the government due to regulatory and other issues associated with Global Bank of Commerce, where the funds

were deposited.

“Kindly note that the government never received the US\$1M that was deposited in the Morgan Trust account with GBC, the proceeds of which were intended to assist with the recovery in Barbuda.

This was due to financial difficulties the bank was experiencing. The information was communicated to Morgan and his team,” the prime minister’s posting disclosed.

Consequently, the government has advised Morgan that it would seek to make arrangements for the transfer of US\$1M to Global Bank of Commerce to assist with that institution’s liquidity, to settle the transfer from Morgan’s account to fund the Barbuda Luis Hill Housing project.

“The US\$1M was remitted and credited to the government’s account with



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

GBC as agreed.

“However, we were subsequently advised by the management of GBC that they could not make the Morgan transfer as agreed, because GBC’s corresponding bank was placed into receivership and therefore could not make the Morgan transfer,” he explained.

PM Browne further explained that whereas the government bears no liability for the Morgan depos-

it, the proceeds of which were never paid to the government; the Cabinet has instructed the Financial Secretary to make US\$1M available to construct homes at Luis Hill in Barbuda; the credit of which should be extended to the Morgan Trust.

“Evidently, the government cannot be held accountable for monies that were held in escrow at GBC, monies that it never received,” the prime minister concluded.

PM Browne was responding to questions that were raised by the Member of Parliament for Barbuda, Trevor Walker, who inquired publicly about what has happened to the funds from Morgan Trust.

Luis Hill is that area that is located east of the Sir McChesney George Secondary School in Barbuda.

### *cont'd from pg 2*

are still going to be looking at the distribution system and to replace the pipelines.

On Wednesday, we held a meeting with representatives of the Chinese government which has offered some assistance with the plan to send a team to Antigua and Barbuda to work along with APUA to help with the issue of pipeline replacement and distribution,” he reported.

One year later, the information minister said much work has been done to stabilize the water situation and that the work continues.

Regarding the economy, he noted that the prime minister has reported that the country has achieved economic growth ‘across the board’ as the government continues to manage the economy ‘with a steady hand’.

“We have seen the crystallisation of several projects; the Harrison Centre is now operational; the expansion of the UWI FIC is on track along with plans to build a new primary school; while the ministry of tourism has boasted its best year on record for tourist arrivals. The work continues!” he declared.

## Works Ministry announces road preparations at new cemetery site

Preparatory work for the new public cemetery to be located at Tomlinson's is now underway with the construction of a road that will lead to the new facility.

The work is being carried out by several government agencies including the Ministry of Works and Housing in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

In a statement, the Ministry of Works said it is using the plans developed by the Ministry of Health to undertake preparations at the new cemetery site. "This significant development aims to ensure that the area is ready for burials in the near future. To date the perimeter fencing of Phase I is completed and the internal road is currently being prepared," the statement said.

The ministry noted that it recognizes the importance of creating a dignified resting place for loved ones and that this work forms part of its com-



mitment to providing essential infrastructure and services to the community.

The road preparations at the new cemetery site will facilitate easy access for mourners and ensure a peaceful and well-maintained environment.

It said the collaboration between

the government agencies signifies a shared vision to enhance the quality of life for residents. By working together, both entities are dedicated to creating sustainable urban spaces that meet the evolving needs of the community.

"This project reflects our commitment to providing accessible and well-maintained burial grounds for our citizens.

"We understand the importance of offering a peaceful and dignified resting place for loved ones, and we are confident that this development will meet the needs of our community," according to the statement.

The road preparations and fencing at the new cemetery site are expected to be completed in the coming weeks, subject to all necessary approvals.

The ministry of works said it remains committed to keeping the public informed about the progress of this project and will provide updates as they become available.



## Nugent Avenue health facility to house Sickle Cell clinic

The health facility located at Nugent Avenue that was constructed to house any over-spill from the COVID-19 outbreak, is to be repurposed to house a Sickle Cell clinic.

The announcement by Information Minister Melford Nicholas came on Thursday during the post-Cabinet press briefing.

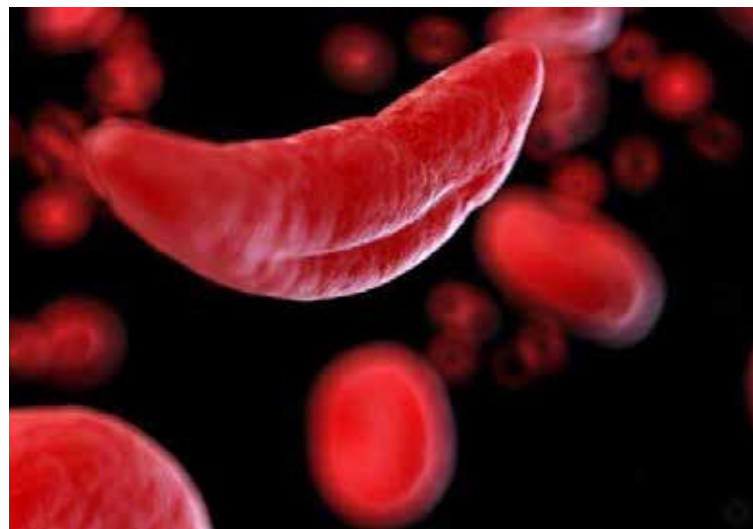
This came out of discussions on Wednesday between members of the Cabinet and Dr. Edda Ha-

deed, President of the Antigua and Barbuda Sickle Cell Association.

The Cabinet report said Dr. Hadeed was invited to its meeting to discuss Sickle Cell Anemia as a health-care challenge in Antigua and Barbuda.

The doctor pointed out that pain management is one of the greatest challenges faced by those who have the full-blown disease.

Sickle Cell has been described as a disease in-



herited from parents and it is a blood condition with pain which affects all as-

pects of a patient's life.

During a crisis, oxygen is cut off in the blood with the potential for harm to many of the organs within the body.

It was revealed that one out of every five persons in Antigua and Barbuda carries the trait, and about 1,000 sickle cell patients rely on medicines to help them to manage the pain.

The Cabinet agreed that a clinic dedicated to treating Sickle Cell patients, will be established at the Nugent Avenue facility, which has been idle since the initial repurposing during the pandemic.

The primary objective of the clinic is to arrange to treat the pain experienced by a patient during a crisis as quickly as possible by diverting the patients from the hospital to this specialized facility.

It was emphasised that harm to a patient's organs can be minimized by early intervention.

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Valiant Lady approaching Heritage Quay.

## Cruise ship makes inaugural call to St. John's

Antigua Cruise Port welcomed Valiant Lady of Virgin Voyages which sailed into the St. John's Harbour on Thursday on its inaugural call to Antigua and Barbuda.

Tourism representatives

boarded the vessel at Heritage Quay to officially welcome Captain Justin Lawes and his crew. Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez, Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority's Chief Executive Officer, Colin

James, and Antigua Cruise Port Officer-in-Charge Cynthia Jacobs-Browne were among the attendees who exchanged pleasantries and plaques with the captain.

Jacobs-Browne said, "We are happy to have you

here in Antigua. The country has great regard for the Virgin Group and to receive our first vessel from Virgin Voyages is an extension of our relationship."

January has been a significant month for Antigua Cruise Port. Over the weekend, on January 13th, Arvia had her first turnaround call of the year while on January 14th, SeaDream II had her first homeporting operation with the company at the Nevis Street Pier.

This January is the company's busiest month to date with 42 calls and 91,706 cruise passengers having visited the island by January 18th. The month will close with 76 calls and over 160,000 passenger arrivals.

## Trio charged with unlawful possession of firearm and ammunition

Three persons have been arrested and charged by the police for unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition.

Jahmarie Joseph of Carlisle Estate, Kemmoy Bailey of Gray Hill, and Donalee Salmon of St. Johnson's Village were jointly charged with unlawful possession of a .22 pistol.

Joseph was further charged with unlawful possession of 4 rounds of .22 ammunition.

The accused were taken into custody on Tuesday, having been found in possession of the illegal items during a stop-and-search exercise on Friars Hill Road. They were due in court on Thursday.

# VACANCY

## MOBILE SUPPORT TECHNICIAN

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority is now seeking applications from suitably qualified persons for the position of Mobile Support Technician:

The Mobile Support Technician will provide support to maintaining and improving roaming services on the inet Mobile network and ensuring continuous connectivity with all Roaming Partners. This role will be responsible for configuring the necessary mobile network elements to allow voice, data and SMS roaming to take place for both inbound and outbound directions including the monitoring, reporting and troubleshooting of network elements that may point to issues that negatively affect roaming services. Reporting and resolving those issues also form key functions of the role along with providing support to internal customers in the use and management of the inet Mobile eTopUp systems.

**Key tasks include but are not limited to the following:**

- Designing and maintaining scripts/code and templates;
- Collaborating with internal and external suppliers of goods and services in the troubleshooting process;
- Managing tests with internal and external suppliers;
- Investigating and fixing issues;
- Ensuring that network elements are correctly configured;
- Ensuring that network elements are kept up to date;
- Documenting procedures and ensuring that that these procedures are kept up to date;
- Working closely with internal and external customers to ensure accurate billing;
- Managing system configurations including user accounts as required;
- Troubleshooting and managing system problems

**The ideal candidates should possess the following:**

- A Bachelor's Degree in Information Communications Technology (ICT) or related field.
- Proven experience and knowledge in communication protocols (TCP/IP, SS7, SIP etc.);
- Excellent communication and organizational skills;
- Proficiency in the use and configuration of mobile devices;
- Proficiency in the use of computers (both hardware and software);
- Knowledge of UNIX/LINUX and Windows for managing and researching files and data produced by the switch and/or billing system.
- Proficiency in using Microsoft Office Products;
- A solid understanding of telephony operations;

## MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority is now seeking applications from suitably qualified persons for the position of Management Accountant:

The Management Accountant is responsible for establishing and enforcing policies, procedures, and operating margins for each Business Unit. The Management Accountant is also responsible for assisting the Senior Accountant with the production of the Annual Audit schedules during the first quarter of each year and for revision of annual budgets with Business Unit Managers where required. The Management Accountant will further monitor expenditure to ensure it is within approved budgetary allocations and, provide various periodic financial reports and analysis to the Financial Controller and Management team.

**Key tasks include but are not limited to the following:**

- Establishing and enforcing policies and procedures, standard costs and collects operational data.
- Collecting and interpreting data and making comparative analyses.
- Discussing reports and analyses with Management Team.
- Ensuring accurate production of management accounts reports.
- Assisting with production of Annual Audit schedules within specified timelines.
- Completing special projects and producing specific reports.

**The ideal candidates should possess the following:**

- A minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting or Finance from a recognized tertiary institution.
- Certification as a Chartered Accountant would be ideal.
- Three (3) to five (5) years' work experience in managerial cost accounting role.
- Demonstrated ability to meet deadlines and be able to take initiative.
- A keen eye for detail.
- Excellent oral and written communication and report production skills.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Products. Working knowledge of Microsoft Great Plains would be an asset.
- The ability to work long and flexible hours as the need arises.

**Interested persons are asked to apply in writing to:**

The Human Resources Manager  
Antigua Public Utilities Authority  
P.O. Box 416  
Cnr. High Street & Independence Avenue  
St. Johns, Antigua  
**OR** Email: [hr@apua.ag](mailto:hr@apua.ag)

**Deadline for application is Wednesday 31st January, 2024**

\*\* Only suitable applicants will be acknowledged \*\*  
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# Local News



## ABIA issues 'call to action'

The Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority, (ABIA) has issued a call for all small and medium size businesses operating in the country to register with its offices.

In a media release, ABIA said the move is part of ongoing efforts to provide improved dedicated service, support and resources to sole proprietors, small and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) in Antigua and Barbuda.

"The ABIA, as the country's primary business support organization, is conscious of the global external forces at play that continue to affect local and international busi-

nesses alike.

"Therefore, in order to increase our support, working with regional and international partners including the Organization of American States, (OAS), the European Union (EU), Caribbean Development Bank, (CDB) and similar organizations, a strategic objective in 2024, is to provide even more support to local businesses," the release stated.

It said the support the ABIA provides includes: export opportunities, grants, mentorship, business training, and financial assistance.

In order to provide that

support, the ABIA says it needs the contact information of the MSME's in the country.

The 'Call to Action' is therefore a call for these businesses and their own-

ers/operators to provide the ABIA will all relevant information as it seeks to develop its own database.

*Please send the email to this email address: [edd-abia@ab.gov.ag](mailto:edd-abia@ab.gov.ag)*



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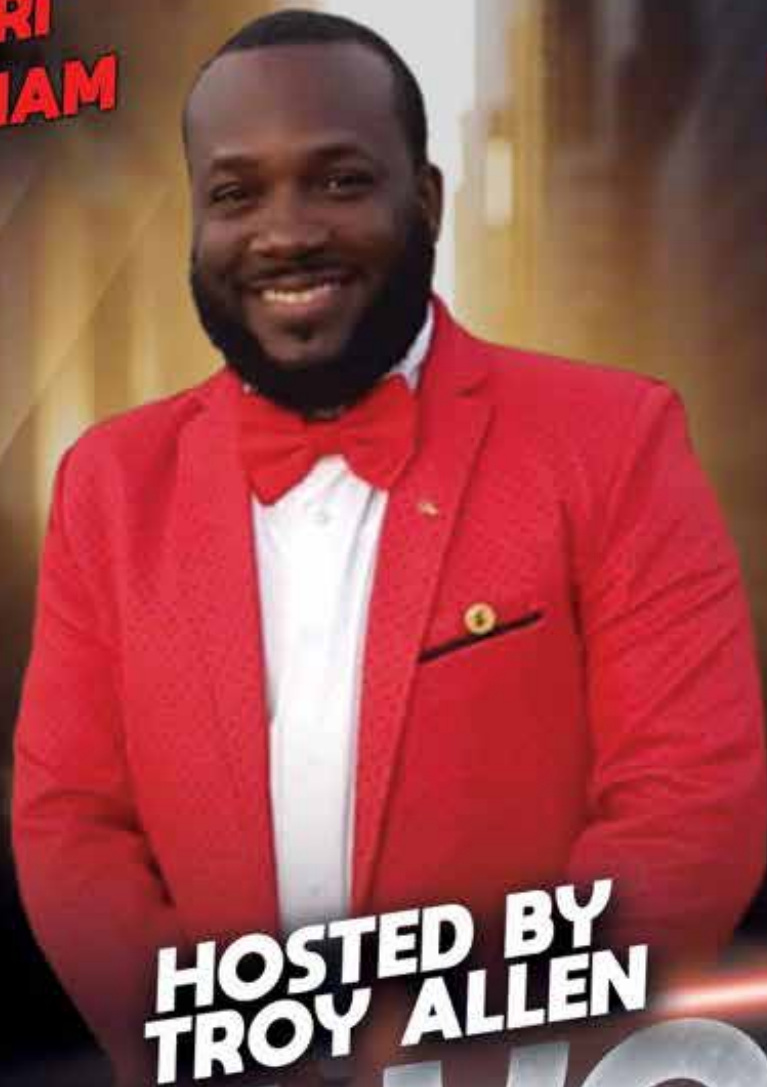
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## From crisis to democracy: OAS shines in Guatemala's political transition

By Sir Ronald Sanders

The Organization of American States (OAS) demonstrated its continuing relevance and importance to member states by playing a constructive role in ensuring the transition of government in Guatemala, despite numerous attempts to disrupt the process.

Undoubtedly, had the OAS and its Secretary-General, Luis Almagro, supported by key member states of the Permanent Council, not played an active role as mediator, negotiator, and influencer, Guatemala would currently face a constitutional crisis and civil unrest.

As the run-up to the Presidential and legislative elections in Guatemala approached in June 2023, signs of trouble were evident.

Much of the concerns centred around the deterioration of the rule of law, threats to judicial independence, and the activities of the country's Attorney General, Consuelo Porras, and the Special Prosecutor in the Public Ministry, Rafael Curruchiche. The European Union (EU) was among the international bodies that had persistently expressed concerns about Porras.

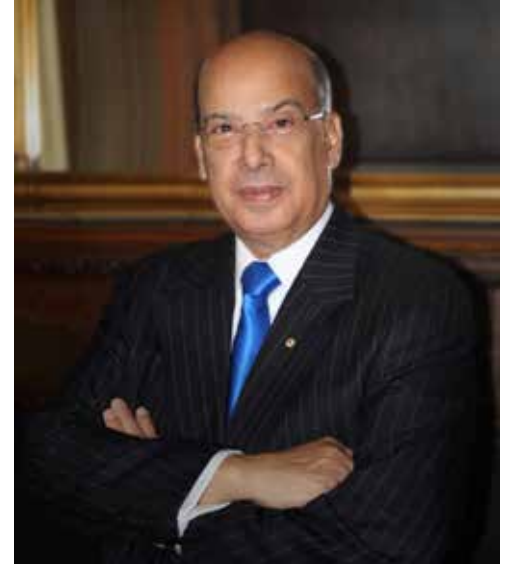
Under the direction of Porras and Curruchiche, the Public Ministry used its "independence", and absence of any institution to oversee its activities, to pursue a campaign of political intimidation against political persons and parties. After the July 2023 elections in which Bernardo Arévalo emerged in second place as a contender for the Presidency of the country, the Public Ministry focussed its attention on disqualifying him, his running mate for the Vice Presidency, Karin Herrera, and his Semilla (Seed) Party.

When Arévalo obtained an overwhelming majority at run-off elections on 20 August 2023, the

Public Ministry intensified its already strident efforts to disqualify him and the Semilla party candidates. Taking advantage of the interregnum before Arévalo could be sworn in as President on 14 January 2024, the Public Ministry intensified its efforts against him and the Semilla Party. These actions created great concern in the international community, and especially among certain member states of the OAS Permanent Council, that the transition of power, in accordance with the will of the majority of the Guatemalan electorate, would be overturned promoting civil strife.

Sensing the need for a constructive high level OAS diplomatic intervention in Guatemala to try to ensure that the looming crisis did not occur, an informal meeting of the Permanent Council in the July 2023, agreed that Secretary-General Almagro should go to Guatemala to use his good offices to try to guide all parties away from the abyss to which they were being led with the Public Ministry as the chief pilot. Recognizing that the consent of the government of Guatemala was necessary for Almagro's visit, a behind the scenes agreement was reached that the Government should invite him, and importantly, that he should go with the full backing of the OAS Permanent Council.

The OAS already had an Electoral Observer Mission in Guatemala. It had done a courageous and highly professional job in overseeing the first round of elections held in June 2023, but had a technical team on the ground since January 2023. The preliminary and final report of the Mission had helped to advise both the Permanent Council and Almagro of the political challenges that were brewing and the fragility of the situation.



Sir Ronald Sanders

In what should be regarded as Luis Almagro's finest moment as Secretary General, he embarked on a successful "good offices" mission to ensure the transition of Government. Between August 1, 2023, and January 15, 2024, he visited Guatemala six times, meeting all relevant players. On December 15 and 16, 2023, as Chairman of the Permanent Council, I participated in high level meetings with him.

The task was formidable; forces unwilling to relinquish power persisted in a relentless campaign of persecution, with the Public Ministry at the forefront. This caused Almagro to declare, fearlessly, in early December 2023, that: "The Public Prosecutor's Office is still bent on bringing cases from the past to affect the transition".

In addition to his own good offices' role, Almagro also dispatched two supporting special missions with the agreement of the Guatemalan government. One was a "transition mission" and the other a "mediation mission". The latter was sent as a result of peaceful protests, initiated by the indigenous and ancestral communities on 2 October 2023, against the Public Min-

*cont'd on pg 11*

*cont'd from pg 10*

istry and in support of Arévalo and the Semilla party.

As part of the OAS' involvement in ensuring that the will of the electorate was respected, amid the continuous efforts to deny the installation of Arévalo and Herrera, a five-member group of Ambassadors, representing the Permanent Council, went to Guatemala from 12 to 14 January 2024 for discussions with the parties, including the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Private Sector, and the ancestral communities.

All of this proved to be vital. The Public Ministry never ceased its attempts at prosecution. Up to two days before the inauguration ceremony, it still tried to remove immunity from the Vice President-elect in order to pursue investigations against her. And on January 14, 2024, the day of the inauguration which was scheduled for 2 pm,

the opposition forces fought a desperate, last-minute action in the Congress to stop the installation of Arévalo and Herrera.

It fell to Luis Almagro to issue a public statement, late that night, on behalf of all Presidents, Foreign Ministers, and diplomatic representatives, calling on the Congress "to fulfil its constitutional mandate to hand over power as required by the constitution" and stressing that the will of the Guatemalan people "must be respected".

The situation in Guatemala is still not finally settled. A decision by the Constitutional Court, issued on January 17, 2024, questioning the composition of the Board of the Congress, has opened a new area of controversy. Fortunately, the same decision "validated" the swearing in of the President and Vice President.

Further, the Public Ministry remains, headed by an Attorney-Gener-

al who is palpably antagonistic to the new government, but who is insulated from removal by any institution or organ unless she is "convicted of an intentional crime". It is unlikely that once she holds office – and she is there for another 2 years – that her campaign, obviously supported by powerful groups, will end.

Therefore, while the OAS has proved its relevance and importance by its vital work, in relation to Guatemala, that work is not yet over. The task of supporting democracy, the rule of law and inclusive social and economic development in Guatemala remains on its agenda.

*(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States. The views expressed are entirely his own. Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronald-sanders.com](http://www.sirronald-sanders.com))*

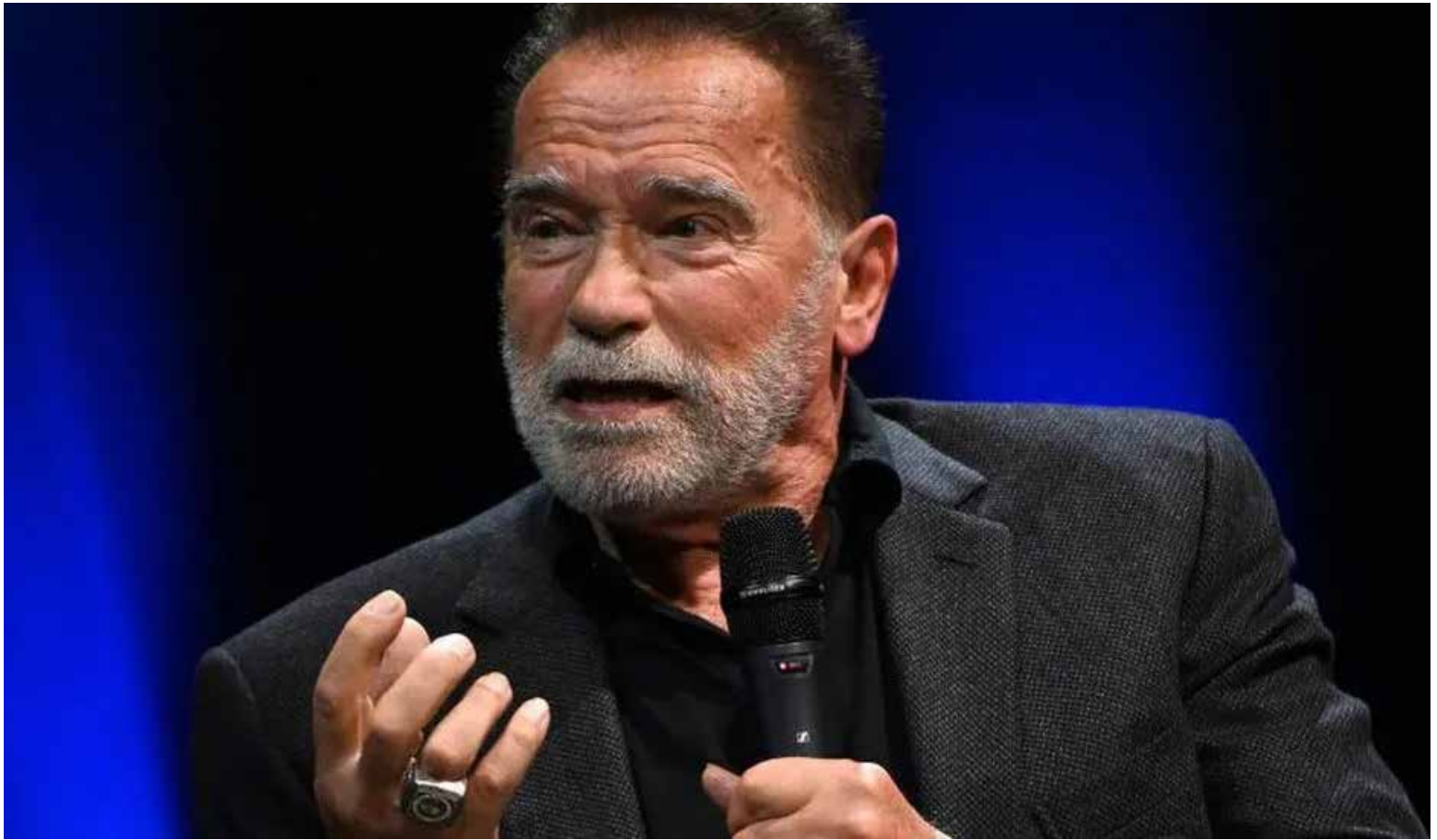


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## Arnold Schwarzenegger detained over EU tax for luxury watch

By **Oliver Slow**

Arnold Schwarzenegger was detained at a German airport for allegedly failing to declare a luxury watch he was planning to auction for charity.

The Hollywood actor was held for three hours at Munich airport on Wednesday.

An investigation for alleged tax evasion was launched as the watch was intended to be sold within the European Union (EU).

According to EU rules, anyone arriving with “cash or certain valuable items” over €10,000 (£8,580) must declare it.

However, a source told CBS News, the BBC’s US partner, that Schwarzenegger was not asked to fill out a declaration form.

The actor, politician and climate change campaigner was eventually

able to pay the tax, but only after overcoming a number of problems.

After an initial card machine did not work, it was discovered that the nearest bank was closed and ATM withdrawal limits were too low, meaning the 76-year-old had to wait for a new card machine to be brought by customs officials, the source said.

The actor’s spokesman told German tabloid Bild that the airport incident was “a total comedy full of errors, but which would make a very funny police film”.

Bild said he “took the incident calmly” and an image it published showed a smiling Schwarzenegger posing for a photo and holding a box for the watch with a note saying «For Austria».

According to local media, the watch was custom-made for the Terminator star by luxury watchmak-

er Audemars Piguet, which makes timepieces that can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The watch was said to be up for auction at a fundraising dinner for The Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative in Kitzbuhel, Austria, about 89 km (55 miles) from Munich, later on Thursday.

A press release for the event, due to take place at the five-star Stanglwirt hotel, said “artworks, signed exhibits, and experiences from the worlds of sports and film” will be up for sale.

An auction listing for the watch, obtained by Bild, said it was one of only 20 in existence, and would include “an image of Arnold in his iconic pose with the words ‘Arnold Classic’”.

The stated starting price for bids was €50,000.

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# Regional News



## USVI unveils temporary measures for St. Croix water crisis

With no date in sight for when it will be safe to drink tap water again on the island of St Croix, officials in the US Virgin Islands announced Wednesday night that they would distribute water filters and provide free lead and copper testing as they work on long-term solutions.

The newest measures were unveiled at a virtual town hall held months after people in St Croix complained about red and brown water coming out of their taps.

The complaints led to the governor of the US Virgin Islands to declare a state of emergency in November after an investigation found high levels of lead and copper.

US President Joe Biden also declared an emergency later that month.

Subsequent studies by the US Environmental Protection Agency found lead levels at people's homes were significantly lower than those reported previously at distribution meters. The agency said that of the 119 samples collected at nearly a dozen homes in St. Croix, only three samples showed levels higher than those recommended by the EPA, according to a report released in late December.

Local authorities conducted their own study, analysing 31 samples collected from kitchen taps. All



were found to be within US federal standards, said Don Gregoire, water director for St Croix.

Despite those findings, people on St. Croix remain concerned.

"Everyone knows the water is still not safe," a woman who identified herself as Shirley Smith said during the virtual town hall.

She called on local officials to set more stringent standards for lead and copper in water, saying the federal ones are "not acceptable."

Echoing her remarks, another woman, who identified herself only as C.J. said, "The ideal lead level is zero."

Authorities agreed, saying they are in talks about the issue.

So far, the US Virgin Islands government's response has included distribution of thousands of wa-

ter vouchers, a \$75 water bill credit, installation of lead-free meter boxes and other equipment, and free lead testing for children up to 6 years old.

At least 1,270 people on St Croix have been screened. Three have tested positive for lead, six others tested positive for copper and 17 are awaiting final results.

Authorities plan to extend the screening to the islands of St Thomas and St John by the end of January, said Reuben Molloy, acting commissioner for the US Virgin Islands Health Department.

On Thursday, officials will start distributing free water filters as they continue to test water samples taken from homes and businesses across St Croix.

Long-term solutions include eliminating corrosion from water distribution

lines and overhauling the entire system, a more than \$1.5 billion project that would take an estimated 20 years to complete, said Noel Hodge, chief operating officer for water in St. Croix.

So far, \$30 million in federal funds has been allocated to the Water and Power Authority in St. Croix, which treats up to 3 million gallons of drinking water a day and serves up to 40% of the island's 41,000 residents, according to the EPA.

In its report, the EPA found that the water agency's distribution system is more than 60 years old and deteriorating.

Gregoire said federal funds are needed to replace the entire system because the water agency is allocated only \$5 million to \$7 million a year.

*cont'd on pg 15*

## BVI Governor denies tampering with territory's democracy

CMC - The Governor of this British Overseas territory, John Rankin has suggested that his hand was forced in seeking additional powers for his office from the United Kingdom (UK) to help implement the Commission of Inquiry (COI) good governance recommendations.

Speaking on local radio, the governor said his request was necessary because there has not been sufficient drive and determination across the various ministries and departments to deliver on the agreed-upon COI deadlines.

However, the government has pushed back on this assertion and accused the governor of overreaching and encroaching on the powers that have traditionally been held by elected officials in the territory.

According to a report in BVI News Online, one legislator suggested that the governor may force same-sex marriage laws on the territory with the new pow-

ers that he is seeking.

"I'm aware that the additional powers proposal is a strong proposal to make, but I think there's been some, perhaps incorrect representation of precisely what it is I have suggested," Rankin said.

He also suggested that some of the concerns shared by lawmakers were ridiculous.

"Some people have suggested that the proposed additional powers are, somehow or another, a takeover of the democratic system. That's not true. I've even seen a suggestion that the additional powers are designed to force through same-sex marriage in the territory," said Rankin.

"Well, actually, what I proposed additional powers for is for Commission of Inquiry implementation. And whatever your views on same-sex marriage may be, that's not one of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations. So those people that have suggested that are way off beat in terms of



Governor John Rankin.

what's being proposed."

Rankin said the proposal to seek additional powers was not made to accomplish anything that the government has not already promised, yet failed to deliver.

Concerning additional powers for the introduction

of legislation, the governor said he did not suggest that the House of Assembly should not pass legislation into law and argued that his move would help overcome blockages in getting legislation to the House where bills can then be debated and considered by lawmakers.

He reminded persons that the COI found evidence of poor governance, misuse of public funds, assistance grants being misused in their distribution, lawmakers not registering their interests, and over two-thirds of all major contracts not being openly tendered.

### cont'd from pg 14

"The couple million that we've been getting will definitely not cover the replacement," he said, adding that officials are looking at upgrading pump stations as well. "It's basically bringing our water system up to industry standards."

Residents participating in the virtual meeting peppered officials with questions and their concerns.

"These pipes are older than me. I'm

23 years old," said C.J. "Mothers use the pipe water for formula."

When a reporter asked officials when they believe it would be safe to drink tap water again in St Croix, there was a moment of silence. The host then asked Harold Mark with the Department of Natural Resources to reply.

He said it all depends on data still being collected, with new results expected in the coming weeks.

## Ecuador security forces launch major prison operation

By Will Grant

Security forces in Ecuador have launched an operation in a major prison complex in the port city of Guayaquil.

Soldiers and police officers have entered the facility and say they have restored order following a week of rioting in jails across the country.

Ecuador's President, Daniel Noboa, has said his government is at war with gangs and organised crime.

Earlier this month, gang leader Adolfo Macías Villamar, known as "Fito", escaped from the same complex.

Images show hundreds of troops storming the main prison in Guayaquil, as President Daniel Noboa's crackdown on gangs shows little sign of slowing down.

The troops appear to have taken back control of the penitentiary which is considered the base of operations for the drug gangs in Guayaquil.

The government's recent move comes shortly after the murder of a prosecutor, César Suárez, who was investigating organised crime in Ecuador.

Mr Suárez, who was murdered on his way to a hearing on Wednesday, had been looking into a siege at a local television station in Guayaquil when masked gunmen took over



Images show security forces moving into the prison complex.

the channel live on air and held the journalists hostage at gunpoint.

Authorities have detained two people accused of killing Mr Suárez. Local media reported that the two suspects belong to a criminal gang linked to one of Mexico's powerful drug cartels.

Earlier this year, drug gang leader Fito's escape from La Regional prison sparked a wave of violence both inside the prison system and on the streets.

Police had entered the prison on 7 January looking to move Fito to a higher security wing within the same compound, but found his cell empty.

Two prison guards have been charged with helping him escape, and a govern-

ment spokesman said he had been tipped off about his impending transfer.

News of his escape sparked riots in at least six jails across the country, and saw prison guards held hostage, and explosive devices set off in a number of cities across the country.

President Daniel Noboa declared a 60-day state of emergency in Ecuador on 8 January.

He said the country is in an "internal armed conflict" with drug gangs and ordered his military to "neutralise" 22 armed groups - which he redefined as terrorist organisations.

Speaking to the BBC during his first visit to Guayaquil since the violence broke out, the president said he would not

allow it to continue.

"I didn't sign up for this thinking it was going to be easy," he said.

"We can't continue with this game that these terrorist groups are trying to establish."

The escape of Fito and ensuing violence represents a huge blow to Mr Noboa's presidency, which began in November last year.

At the age of 36, Mr Noboa became Ecuador's youngest leader to be democratically elected, winning an election tarnished by the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio.

Mr Villavicencio had reported receiving death threats from Fito just days before he was shot dead while leaving a campaign rally in Quito.



## Netanyahu publicly rejects US push for Palestinian state

By Mark Lowen

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he has told the United States that he opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state once the conflict in Gaza comes to an end.

In a news conference, a defiant Mr Netanyahu vowed to press on with the offensive in Gaza “until complete victory”: the destruction of Hamas and return of the remaining Israeli hostages, adding that it could take “many more months”.

With almost 25,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry, and 85% of the strip’s population displaced, Israel is under intense pressure to rein in its offensive and engage in meaningful talks over a sustainable end to the war.

Israel’s allies, including the US - and many of its foes - have urged a revival of the long-dormant “two-state solution”, in which a future Palestinian state would sit side-by-side with an Israeli one.

The hope in many circles is that the current crisis could force the warring parties back to diplomacy, as the only viable alternative to endless cycles of violence. But from Mr Netanyahu’s comments, his intention appears quite the opposite.

During Thursday’s news conference, he said Israel must have security control over all land west of the River Jordan, which would include the territory of any future Palestinian state.

“This is a necessary condition, and it conflicts with the idea of (Palestinian) sovereignty. What to do? I tell this truth to our American friends, and I also stopped the attempt to impose a reality on us that would harm Israel’s security,” he said.

Mr Netanyahu has spent much of



The Israeli Prime Minister vowed to press on with the offensive in Gaza ‘until complete victory’.

his political career opposing Palestinian statehood, boasting just last month that he was proud to have prevented its establishment, so his latest remarks come as no surprise.

But the very public rebuttal of Washington’s diplomatic push, and determination to stay the current military course, show the chasm widening with Israel’s western allies.

Since the 7 October attacks - the worst in Israel’s history, when Hamas gunmen killed about 1,300 Israelis and took some 240 hostage - the US has supported its right to defend itself.

But as the death toll in Gaza has grown, and the scenes of horror there have abounded, Western governments have called for Israeli restraint.

The White House has repeatedly tried to influence Israel’s military policy: urging more precision-guided weapons rather than the blanket air strikes; discouraging a ground offensive; and calling for a two-state solution, with a role for the Palestinian Authority in post-conflict Gaza.

But Washington’s advice has fre-

quently fallen on deaf ears or been met by outright rejection - often publicly so, during visits by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

That, in turn, has hardened frustration in some American circles over the Biden administration’s apparent blanket support for Israel, with strident calls to put conditions on US aid to its Middle East ally.

Responding to Mr Netanyahu’s latest comments, White House national security adviser John Kirby said his government would not stop working towards a two-state solution, adding there would be “no reoccupation of Gaza.”

Israel’s prime minister’s comments will please his dwindling support base and the far-right ministers who prop up his government.

But they will dismay those at home and abroad who are increasingly horrified by the human cost of this war. Recent polls show most Israelis want him to prioritise bringing the remaining hostages home over the potentially impossible aim of destroying Hamas.



Australia's players gather to congratulate Nathan Lyon after he took the wicket of West Indies' Justin Greaves on the second day of the first cricket Test match in Adelaide, Australia, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024. (AP)

## Head and Hazlewood put Australia in control against West Indies

ADELAIDE (Reuters) - Travis Head smashed a rapid 119 and Josh Hazlewood blew away the West Indies top order to put Australia on course for a comprehensive victory on day two of the opening Test at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday.

Head's seventh Test hundred, the second at his home ground, helped Australia post 283 all out for a handy lead of 95 in the low-scoring contest.

Hazlewood then produced a four-wicket burst to rock West Indies, who finished day two on a precarious second innings score of 73 for six, still 22 behind and with a defeat inside three days looming large.

Justin Greaves fell for 24 to the final delivery of the day leaving Joshua Da Silva on 17 at the other end.

After Australia resumed on 59 for two, West Indies made frequent inroads to stay in the contest. Occupying

the number four position after Steve Smith moved up to the top of the order, Cameron Green (14) could not impress immediately.

Shamar Joseph, who claimed five for 94, dismissed Green caught behind, and fellow debutant Greaves sent back Usman Khawaja (45), who was snared in the slip.

Mitchell Marsh and Alex Carey did not last long, but Head counter-attacked and brought up his hundred with a driven four off spinner Gudakesh Motie before celebrating the milestone in style.

The left-hander, who hit Shamar Joseph for back-to-back sixes, went past 3,000 Test runs during his knock.

Kavem Hodge took a well-judged skyer near the rope to dismiss Head, who had gone after Alzarri Joseph.

Shamar Joseph dismissed Nathan Lyon (24) to complete his five-wick-

et haul, but world Test champions Australia remained in the ascendancy when West Indies came out to bat for the second time in two days.

Hazlewood dismissed Tagenarine Chanderpaul for a duck with his first delivery and, in his next over, sent back West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite (one) with Head taking a sharp catch at short leg.

West Indies slumped to seven for three after Alick Athanaze fell for a duck, attempting a hook against Hazlewood only to glove the ball to wicketkeeper Carey.

Hazlewood did not concede a single run until his fifth over, when he struck again, this time Hodge edging him to Smith at second slip.

Replacing Hazlewood in the attack, Green dismissed Kirk McKenzie (26) in his first over to reduce West Indies to 40 for five.



Players of the Villa Lions football team. (File photo)

## Two top of the top three teams to clash in the Premier Division

Old Road and Aston Villa Lions, two of the top three teams, will clash in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League this weekend.

Old Road are currently in second place on goal difference behind fellow unbeaten leaders Sandals, Inet Jennings Grenades. Both teams are tied at the top of the standings with 21 points apiece, having won all seven matches thus far in the Premier League.

Old Road will put their perfect start on the line when they face the Villa Lions, another team with an unbeaten record, in the second game of a triple header at the ABFA Technical Center on Saturday.

The game, which will kick off at 6 pm, is expected to be a keenly anticipated affair as the Villa Lions, cur-

rently in third place on 17 points, are likely to be the toughest challenge Old Road will face thus far this season.

The eighth round of Premier League matches will commence with an encounter between Willikies and Ottos Rangers at 4 pm on Saturday.

Both teams, who are hovering around mid-table in the standings and are separated by a point, have managed to record only one win apiece in their previous matches.

Two struggling teams who have yet to win a game in the league, Parham and Green City, will clash in the last game on Saturday at 8 pm.

Parham will enter the game fourth from the bottom of the standings with just two points, while Green City are languishing in the cellar without a point after losing all six previous

matches.

The Premier League will continue with another triple header at the same venue on Sunday. Unbeaten All Saints United, currently in fourth place on 16 points, will face SAP in Sunday's first encounter at 4 pm.

Struggling former champions Empire, who picked up their only point in their previous encounter, will go in search of their first win when they tackle John Hughes in the second game at 6 pm.

Swetes, another struggling team, will face a big challenge to avoid suffering a sixth defeat in eight matches when they face the Jennings Grenades in the last game on Sunday at 8 pm.

Pigotts Bullets and Garden Stars will clash in the final eighth-round fixture on Monday at 6 pm.

# GERM BUSTER

## TIPS!

1

**WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS**

- Before eating or handling food
- After using the bathroom
- After touching pets or animals
- After handling rubbish

2

**CATCH YOUR COUGH OR SNEEZE IN A CLEAN TISSUE, AND TOSS IN THE BIN**

- Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer

3

**AVOID PUTTING YOUR HANDS IN YOUR EYES, EARS, NOSE OR MOUTH**

- Germs spread this way



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Players of the Empire Nation team leave the field at the end of a two-day cricket match at King George V Grounds in St. John's. (Photo by Elwin Francis)

## ABCA Two-Day contest continues with second round matches

Some teams will be aiming to maintain their successful start while others will look to rebound from disappointing showings in last week's opening round when the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship continues this weekend.

In similar fashion to the first round, all 10 teams will be in action during the second round of matches across five venues on the island on Saturday.

Defending champions PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks, one of four teams to record emphatic wins during the opening round of matches, will go in search of more success when they travel to face the Jennings Tigers in Jennings.

The Tigers will be hoping to make amends after suffering a 110-run loss against Empire Nation at Rising Sun,

while the Black Hawks will be soaring after romping to an innings and 164-run victory against the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles at Bethesda.

The Golden Eagles will look to rebound when they host Empire Nation in Bethesda.

The Pigotts Crushers and the New Winthorpes Lions, the other two teams to win their opening round encounters, will be aiming to maintain their winning formula during their second round matches at home.

The Crushers, who trounced Combined Schools by 232 runs at Pigotts last weekend, will remain on home turf to welcome the Bolans Blasters.

The Blasters should enter the second round encounter with all intentions to improve on last week's performance when they slumped to an

innings and 75-run defeat away to the New Winthorpes Lions.

The Lions will be staying on home soil to entertain the visiting All Saints Pythons on Saturday. The Pythons and WES Rising Sun Spartans played to the only draw in the opening round at Mack Pond in All Saints last weekend.

The Spartans will take on Combined Schools in the other second round encounter at the Rising Sun playing field in St. John's.

Felix Auguiste and Nigel Clarke will umpire at Jennings, and Donald Scheckle and Julian Roberts will officiate at Bethesda.

Umpiring at Pigotts will be James Trotman and Candis Butler; Avoy Knight and Bertil Baltimore will officiate at New Winthorpes; and Bernard Joseph and Calvin Thomas will be the umpires at Rising Sun.



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## West Indies Women's quartet confirm international retirement

West Indies Women's cricketers Anisa Mohammed, Shakera Selman, Kycia Knight, and Kyshona Knight have confirmed their retirement from international cricket.

Mohammed and Selman both served as vice-captains during their 20- and 18-year careers respectively, and all players recently communicated their decisions to Cricket West Indies (CWI).

Mohammed made her debut for the West Indies Women in 2003 at the age of 15 against Japan Women in an ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in the Netherlands. Her last match was against Australia Women in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in March 2022.

She played 141 One Day Internationals (ODIs) and 117 T20 Internationals (T20Is). She took 180 ODI wickets, with a career best

of seven for 14 against Pakistan.

She took 125 T20I wickets and in 2016 she became the first cricketer (male or female) to take 100 T20I wickets. She also has the distinction of being the first West Indian bowler to take a hat-trick in a Women's T20I.

She was a member of the West Indies Women's team which won the ICC Women's T20 World Cup at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, India in 2016.

Selman started her international career against Ireland Women in Dublin in 2008 and quickly established herself as a key member of the West Indies Women's team.

She played 100 ODIs taking 82 wickets and 96 T20Is, taking 51 wickets. Selman was also a member of the 2016 ICC Women's T20 World Cup winning



Shakera Selman squad.

In a heartfelt statement, Shakera Selman said, "This marks my final bow after 18 incredible years. I am proud of playing with and against legends, and lucky to have dismissed a few. My aim was always to inspire and assist others in their dreams. I owe immense gratitude to God, my supportive family and friends, and to CWI, my teammates, and the medical and management teams for their unwavering guidance."

The Knight twins Kycia and Kyshona made their debuts for West Indies Women in 2011 and 2013 respectively. Kycia, a left-handed wicketkeeper/batter, holds the record for the most dismissals in Women's T20I innings with 5, as well as the most stumpings in an

innings of four and tied for most catches in an innings also with four.

She played 87 ODIs, amassing 1327 runs and played 70 T20Is, scoring 801 runs. Kyshona played 51 ODIs, scoring 851 runs and played 55 T20Is, scoring 546 runs.

In their announcement, the Knights said, "As this marks the end of an enjoyable and amazing journey, we would like to take this time to thank our family, friends, teammates & supporters for the continued love and support throughout the years."

Mohammed, Selman, Kycia and Kyshona Knight were all part of the West Indies victorious ICC Women's T20 World Cup winning squad of 2016 in India.



Kycia Knight

## Freemans Village and SVF return to winning form

Freemans Village and Sea View Farm (SVF) returned to winning form in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Wednesday.

After suffering their first defeat of the season in a one-nil loss to host Bethesda in their previous outing, Freemans Village returned to the top of the Second Division and winning form by prevailing 4-3 against English Harbour at the English Harbour playing field.

All four goals for Freemans Village were scored in the first half via conversions by Darius Hector in the 5th minute, Malik Charles in the 9th, Roy Gregory in the 18th, and Kahlique Kellman in the 36th minute.

Wayne Phillip scored twice with conversions in the 35th and 90th minutes, and Oshane Blackwood scored in the 55th minute for English Harbour.

Their sixth win in seven matches allowed Freemans Village to move back to the top of the league by advancing to 18 points, two more than Belmont FC, who have a game in hand.

English Harbour would



Players of the Sea View Farm football team. (File photo)

remain on 11 points and slip from fifth to sixth place on goal difference.

After losing their two previous matches, Sea View Farm rebounded to pull off a two-nil victory against Lingie's CPTSA Wings in the second game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Following a goalless first half, striker Markland Wright scored in the 69th minute, and Klyster Rowe converted a second goal for Sea View Farm in the first minute of added time (90+1 minute).

Their fourth win in sev-

en matches carried Sea View Farm to 13 points and into fourth place in the standings, while Wings would remain on eight points after losing for the second time in six games.

Real Blizzard leapfrogged English Harbour into fifth place on goal difference after playing to a goalless draw with Soccer Academy in the first game of the double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Their second draw in six matches allowed Real Blizzard to join English Harbour on 11 points, while Soccer Academy moved on to nine

points from five games.

West Ham and TAMO FC battled to a 2-2 draw in their Second Division affair at the Princess Margaret School playing field.

Following a goalless first half, Rome Didds scored in the 61st minute, and Vaughn Roberts had an 86th-minute conversion for West Ham, and Jaheim Grant scored both goals for TAMO FC with strikes in the 46th and 76th minutes.

The result carries TAMO FC to 10 points from six games and allows West Ham to advance to four points from seven matches.