

FINANCIAL SECRETARY PLEASED WITH IMF REPORT ON ECONOMY

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Governor General Sir Rodney Williams with outgoing UK Resident High Commissioner Lindsay Thompson at a reception Wednesday night at Nelson's Dockyard. Thompson is leaving the post after a four-year assignment in Antigua and Barbuda. (Photo credit: Wayne Marriette)

Financial Secretary is pleased with IMF report on economy...the work is not over

Financial Secretary, Rasona Davis-Crump is pleased with the latest appraisal of the Antigua and Barbuda economy by the International Monetary Fund, which gave the government high marks for its handling of the economy, however, she says there is still work to be done.

Davis-Crump gave her assessment of the IMF Article 4 review conducted in January this year, in an interview with Pointe Xpress newspaper.

“Generally, the IMF’s report provides a comprehensive and fair assessment of the state of Antigua and Barbuda’s economy. It high-

lighted the positive outcomes for several key economic indicators and reinforced the Ministry’s perspectives on the major macroeconomic challenges we currently face. While we are pleased with the outcome of the Article IV consultations and the resulting staff report, there is still work to be done to better align revenue performance with the level of economic expansion,” she observed.

The Financial Secretary was asked to comment on steps being taken to address some of the weaknesses highlighted by the IMF.

“The 2024 Budget presentation included a number



Financial Secretary, Rasona Davis-Crump

of measures that are intended to build fiscal resilience. These measures form part of the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy and focus mainly

on enhancing revenue performance, improving expenditure management, and reducing arrears. Other inter-
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Top cop looks to tackle growing security concerns in Barbuda

Barbuda's growing resident population is giving rise to security concerns by the nation's top law enforcement officer.

Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney addressed the issue while speaking on the Barbuda Channel on cable television noting that there is a need for more trained fire fighters and police as the number of people moving to the island increases due to the ongoing developmental projects.

Rodney noted that the construction of the PLH project as well as the airport has increased the number of persons living over in the sister isle and with that increase, there needs to be adequate officers to enforce safety.

"A police and fire station



Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney

will also need to be attached specifically to the airport," he stated.

Rodney mentioned that dialogue is ongoing to address both the human resource as well as the material needs of the facilities.

"We do not have enough, if we are going to man a second airport with additional traffic. We would need more fire officers in particular. So, we must have fire officers at the airport and there must

be a certain number to meet the standard requirement.

"At the same time, we will still need fire officers within the community to provide that fire and rescue service. Obviously, it creates the challenge of providing additional persons and if we continue to struggle with facilities that becomes a concern for us.

"We are doing the dialogue now, in terms of improving the facilities because

additional fire officers for the airport need housing and what we have now cannot adequately accommodate a new group with the existing group. So, facilities are an issue for us and we are working towards that.

"Same thing with the police, if they are going to have that level of assets on the ground, we have to provide more security," Rodney explained.

In July 2018, the Development Control Authority (DCA) granted a development permit for the airport's construction.

Later that year, the Cabinet announced that it was expanding the runway by more than 1,000 feet to accommodate commercial flights to the sister island.

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ventions include strengthening social programs, better targeting of subsidies, strengthening regulatory oversight of systemically important financial institutions, and supporting initiatives to increase MSMEs' access to credit," Davis Crump explained.

She further explained that there are several measures being implemented to ensure that the positive growth rate forecast by the IMF for 2023 continue into 2024 and beyond.

"The Prime Minister would have announced several private and public sector projects that are ongoing or will start in 2024. Government will continue to pursue investment-enabling policies, to include concessions during the construction phase of these projects.

Additionally, with improved rev-

enue performance, Government will be better positioned to execute critical infrastructure development projects which will be important drivers for economic expansion.

Other projects and events such as the UWI Five Islands Campus expansion project, the SIDs Conference, ICC T20 World Cup are expected to positively impact on GDP growth in 2024 and into the short to medium term," she noted.

The Financial Secretary also addressed public concerns that the recent two percent increase in ABST will trigger another round of inflationary increases.

"The concerns about the impact of the increase in the ABST from 15% to 17% on prices is understandable. The Government, through the Prices

and Consumer Affairs Department is closely monitoring the implementation of the increased ABST rate to ensure that retailers are not using the change as an opportunity to indiscriminately increase prices. The Ministry of Finance will work along with the Prices and Consumer Affairs Department and other relevant stakeholders to increase surveillance and reporting on price levels," she stated.

Additionally, Davis-Crump added that the basket of ABST zero-rated items is under review and recommendations will be made to adjust the list of goods where appropriate. It should be noted, however, that outside of price-gouging, any major increase in inflation will be due to adverse changes in international price levels rather than domestic changes in taxes.

Local News



One Jamaican escapee jailed, the other to be charged

The Jamaican national who escaped legal custody and was on the run for over a week before surrendering to the authorities has been jailed. Immigration sources say Tiffanie Stephanie How-

ell, 30, was charged with escaping lawful custody when she appeared before a magistrate and she was sentenced to a prison term of seven months. Howell was denied entry when she arrived from Jamaica on January 18. Two days later, while awaiting deportation back to Jamaica, she and another Jamaican national, Donnalee Samantha Salmon - 23 - escaped from the Detention Centre by climbing through a window.

Howell surrendered to the authorities over the weekend, while Salmon

was recaptured in the Crosbies area on Tuesday night.

Salmon will be similarly charged like Howell and will likely be sent to jail as well.

Both are also expected to be deported immediately after the end of serving prison time.

Both women were the focus of a massive manhunt involving immigration and the police. The Immigration Department is thanking the public for the many leads they received that eventually led to both women now in custody of the legal system.

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New Initiative set to be launched next month involving Cervical Cancer fight

The fight against cervical cancer in Antigua and Barbuda is set to get a major boost with the launch of a new programme, the National Cervical Screening Guidelines.

Along with this initiative, HPV testing will also be scaled up.

According to a recent release from the National Cervical Cancer Elimination Team, the “initiative represents a pivotal moment in our national health strategy and recognizes Antigua and Barbuda as a regional leader in cervical cancer elimination”.

The official launch is set to take place on February 11 at the Sandals Grande Antigua Resort’s Ballroom from 4pm-8pm.

Cervical Cancer remains one of the leading cancers being diagnosed in women of Antigua and Barbuda with the estimated death rate from cervical cancer in the twin island nation being among one of the highest in the region.

Cervical cancer affects young women – mothers, daughters, sisters, and in many cases breadwinners.

This latest initiative joins an ev-

er-growing list of programmes implemented by the local task force.

In 2022, the Ministry of Health, along with PAHO, introduced a new high-performance test - HPV testing - becoming the first country in the Eastern Caribbean to implement it.

The test runs in conjunction with the traditionally used pap smear which for years has been the foremost protection against cervical cancer.

The PAHO has supported the country with technical training, as

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No foul play detected in death of mother and son at Devils Bridge

Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney has said that the incident that occurred at the Devils Bridge, where a five-year-old and his mother died, was an accident.

Rodney said after investigation which included eyewitness accounts, the deaths of 37-year-old Mohini Misra and her son Shray have been ruled as an accident.

At the time of the incident, the woman, her son, and her husband, Satwik Misra, were at the Devil’s Bridge.

They had come just hours before returning to Canada to take photos of the sunset.

According to reports, a wave struck the boy, who grabbed onto his mother. They both fell into the water.



Devils Bridge

The father and husband, Satwik Misra, could not save them.

He tried, according to his account to the police, but somehow lost grip. He

dove into the water to rescue his wife and son but was unsuccessful.

Mohini and Shray Misra’s bodies were repatriated to their family’s birth-

place in India.

The family of three who were staying at an Air BnB in Seatons had arrived in Antigua on November 23. (*Antigua.News*)

CUB announced as title sponsor of Inter-School debate programme

Caribbean Union Bank has been named the title sponsor for the Ministry of Education’s Inter-Secondary School Debate Series and Impromptu Speaking Competition.

This marks the 40th edition of the competition, a significant milestone in the development and promotion of public speaking skills and critical thinking among secondary school students.

Caribbean Union Bank has been the title sponsor of this longstanding event for the past several years, reinforcing its dedication to fostering education, empowering young people, and community engagement.

The competition commenced on January 30th, 2024, and will run until Tuesday, April 30th, 2024. Seventeen schools in Antigua and Barbuda will take part, highlighting their students’ intelligence and speaking abilities. Importantly, the debates will be broadcasted on ABS TV every Tuesday at 6:00 pm, providing a platform for the wider community to witness the intellectual prowess and articulate expressions of the participating students.

Additionally, the debates will be made available on the Ministry of Education’s Facebook page and YouTube



channel, ensuring that the valuable content reaches a broader audience. General Manager at Caribbean Union Bank, Karen Richardson shared the bank’s excitement for backing this vital educational initiative. “Caribbean Union Bank is proud to play a pivotal role in the advancement of the nation’s youth by sponsoring initiatives such as the Inter-Secondary School Debate Series and Impromptu Speaking Competition. These initiatives serve as a

medium for intellectual development while promoting essential life skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and effective communication skills.”

Caribbean Union Bank says it looks forward to an exciting and intellectually stimulating competition and encourages the community to tune in to ABS TV and follow the Ministry of Education’s online platforms to witness the talent and potential of the participating students.

cont’d from pg 5

well as equipment and tests to start the project. The organisation has also provided machines that can help treat women diagnosed with cer-

vical cancer.

The first phase began in 2018 with the launch of the HPV vaccination programme.

HPV is a viral infec-

tion that commonly causes skin or mucous membrane growths (warts). There are more than 100 varieties; some types of infection cause warts, and some can cause different types of cancer.

Most HPV infections don’t lead to cancer. But some types of genital HPV can cause cancer of the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagi-

na (cervix). Other types of cancers, including cancers of the anus, penis, vagina, vulva and back of the throat (oropharyngeal), have been linked to HPV infection.

These infections are often transmitted sexually or through other skin-to-skin contact. Vaccines can help protect against the strains of HPV most likely to cause genital warts or cervical cancer.

COMMUNITY NOTICE

Monday, 5th February, 2024
Sons & Daughters of Willikies, monthly general meeting.
Venue: St. Barth's School Room, Willikies
Time: 7:30pm
Annual Membership Dues are payable at the meeting.

CAF pledges continued support to GNFC after successful CAF Football Identification Combine

On the heels of a successfully staged Calvin Ayre Foundation (CAF) Players' Identification Combine, which concluded on Sunday, January 25th, at the St. Anthony's Secondary School, CAF is continuing its partnership with the Generation Next Football Club (GNFC), with a sponsorship for 2024 of over EC\$240,000.

The continuation of sponsorship, stemming from a partnership that was formed in 2018 between CAF and GNFC, was announced at a brief ceremony on Wednesday at Canada Place, and was received by President of GNFC, Richard "Ricky" Santos and Administrative Assistant, Jonathan Thoroughgood.

Media Relations Specialist for the Ayre Group and Manager of the Calvin Ayre Foundation, Jamilla Kirwan expressed CAF's sentiments in supporting the Club for the 6th year.

"It is a pleasure to partner with the Generation Next Football Club. This year, along with the Combine marks our 6th installment. We are just happy to see the caliber of coaches who came down to assess our young people with the aim of creating pathways for them, and happy to play our role in helping them achieve their goals through education and the sport that they love, Football."

Santos expressed sincere thanks to the Foundation for its commitment to the



youth of Antigua and Barbuda, through it giving pillars of Sports and Education.

"We'd like to thank the Calvin Ayre Foundation profusely, for the generous sponsorship for the two events that we have planned over the years and for the future, which is the Calvin Ayre Foundation Advance Academy - which runs from September to June every year - and also the Calvin Ayre Foundation's Player Identification Combine, which runs once a year, where we bring down some significant scouts."

Santos explained that this year's Combine saw two former Premier League Managers; Micky Adams, former manager for Leicester City, South-

ampton, Sheffield United and Brentford, and Garry Monk, who is the former manager for Swansea and Leeds United, in attendance. Representation also came from Hartpury and Brookehouse Colleges in the UK; University of District of Columbia in the US, and scouts for the United Soccer League (USL) and Major League Soccer (MLS) teams.

"As everyone can appreciate," Santos added, "the cost factor involved in having these relationships and bringing these professional scouts together to offer scholarship opportunities to our young and budding footballers, for international high schools, universities and colleges, and now professional contract opportunities, is huge. We thank CAF for seeing the vision we have at GNFC."

The EC\$240,000 donation will support the Club's sporting initiatives for managing the sporting initiatives for 2024 for the CAF Advance Football Academy; to include coaches' and players' uniforms, coaches' fees, footballs and other training and sporting gear. In addition, CAF's donation facilitates SAT classes for the young players and the staging of the CAF Player Identification Combine.





Brand said he had put himself in a “vulnerable position by being very, very promiscuous”.

Russell Brand denies ‘very hurtful’ sexual abuse allegations

By Steven McIntosh

Russell Brand has said accusations of sexual assault made against him are “very, very hurtful”.

The actor and comedian has denied allegations of rape, assault and emotional abuse between 2006 and 2013.

The allegations were reported as part of an investigation by the Times, the Sunday Times and Channel 4 Dispatches.

Brand said in an online interview it was “very, very painful” to be accused of “what I consider to be the most appalling crimes”.

He has been questioned by the Metropolitan Police in relation to nine alleged offences. The Met said last month its inquiries were continuing.

Brand was interviewed on YouTube by former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who asked him about the impact of the allegations.

The comedian and activist told him: “I’m aware that I put myself in an extremely vulnerable position by being very, very promiscuous, [but] that is not the type of conduct I endorse, and it’s certainly not how I would live now.”

“Of course, I deny any allegations of the kind that have been advanced - and what I have seen is the significance of family and the importance of beliefs that are transcendent of this.”

He added: “My son was born with a heart condition and while this [the allegations being made] was happening he was undergoing heart surgery.

“He was 12 weeks old and I suppose what that did, Tucker, is it revealed that what we were experiencing was a public concoction.”

He added that he was bringing up the subject of his son because the reaction to the documentary made him aware of what is “important in life”.

This is not the first time Brand has

spoken out about the allegations, but it is the first time he has been publicly interviewed.

Brand starred in films such as *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *Get Him To The Greek* and *Arthur*, and hosted radio and TV programmes for broadcasters including the BBC, MTV, Channel 4 and Radio X.

The 48-year-old said when he was a “denizen” of the entertainment world, he was “fostered and adored and celebrated, and lived the kind of lifestyle that was kind of common for people in that arena, for single people... certainly with an appetite for a promiscuous lifestyle”.

He continued: “When I was part of it, I found it empty and unfulfilling.”

The allegations against Brand also included controlling, abusive and predatory behaviour, which he denies.

The BBC and Channel 4 are both conducting internal investigations about his time working for them.

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- After touching pets or animals
- After handling rubbish

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3

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Technology

Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg apologises to families in fiery US Senate hearing

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg has apologised to families who say their children had been harmed by social media, during a fiery hearing in the US Senate.

Mr Zuckerberg - who runs Instagram and Facebook - turned to them and said "no-one should go through" what they had.

He and the bosses of TikTok, Snap, X and Discord were questioned for almost four hours by senators from both parties.

Lawmakers wanted to know what they are doing to protect children online.

It was a rare opportunity for the US senators to question tech bosses.

Mr Zuckerberg and TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew voluntarily agreed to testify - but the heads of Snap, X (formerly Twitter) and Discord initially refused and were sent government-issued subpoenas.

Behind the five tech bosses sat families who said their children had self-harmed or killed themselves as a result of social media content.

They made their feelings known throughout, hissing when the CEOs entered and applauding when lawmakers asked tough questions.

While the hearing



Mark Zuckerberg turned and addressed the audience directly at one point.

mostly focused on the protection of children from online sexual exploitation, the questions varied widely as the senators took advantage of having five powerful executives there under oath.

TikTok's Mr Chew was asked whether his company shared US users' data with the Chinese government, which he denied.

He said "as a father of three young children myself I know the issues that we're discussing today are horrific and the nightmare of every parent" - and admitted his own children do not use TikTok because of the rules where he lives in Singapore.

But it was Mr Zuckerberg, chief executive of Meta, who came under the

most scrutiny, as he testified before Congress for an eighth time.

At one point, Republican Senator Ted Cruz asked, "Mr Zuckerberg, what the hell were you thinking?" when he showed the tech boss an Instagram prompt that warns users they may be about to see child sexual abuse material, but asks if they would like to "see the results anyway".

Mr Zuckerberg said the "basic science behind that" is "it's often helpful to, rather than just blocking it, to help direct them towards something that that could be helpful". He also promised to "personally look into it".

During another exchange with Republican

Senator Josh Hawley, Mr Zuckerberg was invited to apologise to the families sitting behind him.

He stood up, turned to the audience and said: "I'm sorry for everything you've all gone through, it's terrible.

"No-one should have to go through the things that your families have suffered."

At the heart of the hearing was the companies' attitudes to legislation currently going through Congress which aim to hold them to account for material posted on their platforms.

This was summed up in a tense exchange between Jason Citron of Discord and Republican lawmaker

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Families held up photos of their loved ones in the audience

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Lindsey Graham.

Mr Graham listed a number of bills going through Congress related to online safety, asking if Mr Citron supported them or not.

While he gave Mr Citron little opportunity to respond, the Discord boss appeared to have reservations about most of them.

Mr Graham concluded: "So here you are - if you're waiting on these guys to solve the problem, we're gonna die waiting".

Social media industry analyst Matt Navarra told the BBC he thought the hearing resembled many similar showdowns, with "lots of US political grandstanding" and a perfect photo opportunity provided by Mr Zuckerberg's apology.

He added that despite senators agreeing on the need for bipartisan legislation to regulate platforms, the question of what happens next remains unclear.

"We've seen these hearings time

and time again and they have often, so far, led still to not actually generate any significant or substantial regulation," he said.

"We're in 2024 and US has virtually no regulation, as was pointed out during the hearings, with regards to the social media companies."

The bosses also revealed how many people they employed to moderate content on their platforms.

Meta and TikTok, with the largest user numbers of the platforms represented, said they had 40,000 moderators each, while Snap said it had 2,300, X had 2,000 and Discord - who said it was smaller - had "hundreds" of moderators.

Discord is a messaging platform and has previously been questioned over how it detects and prevents child abuse across its platform.

After the hearing, some of the parents who were in the room staged a rally outside, with several calling on lawmakers to urgently pass legislation to hold firms accountable.

"Just like I did, many parents continue to think that these harms that we're talking about today won't affect their families," said Joann Bogard, whose son Mason died in May 2019. She said he had taken part in a TikTok choking trend.

"These harms are happening overnight to our average kids," she said. "We have the testimonies. Now is the time for our legislators to pass the Kids Online Safety Act".

Arturo Béjar, a former senior staff member who testified to Congress in November 2023, was also there, and told the BBC: "Meta is trying to push their responsibility to provide a safe environment for teens to parents, yet won't add a button where a teen can tell them they've experienced an unwanted advance."

"How can they make it safe for teens without that?"

During today's hearing, Meta said it had brought in "over 30 tools" to support a safe environment for teens online.

US businessman convicted for illegal importation of gun in Dominica

CMC – A 79-year-old United States businessman has been fined EC\$7,500 after he pleaded guilty to gun-related charges on Tuesday.

The court heard that on January 24, 2024, William Elton Kennedy of Louisiana arrived here with his wife and two pilots on his private jet at the Douglas Charles Airport. He had in his possession a nine mm pistol and two .9mm magazines one with 11 rounds and the other 13 rounds of ammunition.

Kennedy did not declare the items to the Customs and Immigration and when returned to the airport on January 28, the pilot, Phillip Schiatel, during his inspection discovered the firearm and ammunition inside the aircraft and informed the ground handlers.

The police were called and the firearm and ammunition were handed over to them.

Kennedy admitted that he had failed to declare the firearm and ammunition, telling the authorities “I came down with it but did not know that I could not travel with it to Dominica.”

Kennedy was arrested and slapped with a charge of importation of a firearm,



importation of ammunition into Dominica without a firearm and ammunition license. But those two charges were withdrawn by the prosecution after he pleaded guilty to his failure to declare the firearm and ammunition to customs.

In his mitigating plea, attorney Wayne Norde told the court that his client was 79 years old and travelled to Dominica for business purposes, was at the court’s mercy with no previous convictions, and had not wasted the court’s time pleading guilty at the “first opportunity.

“He was very cooperative with the police, customs, and immigration, he was the one who told them about the firearm in the aircraft so he was honest from the word go and yes his honesty brought him to court,” Norde said.

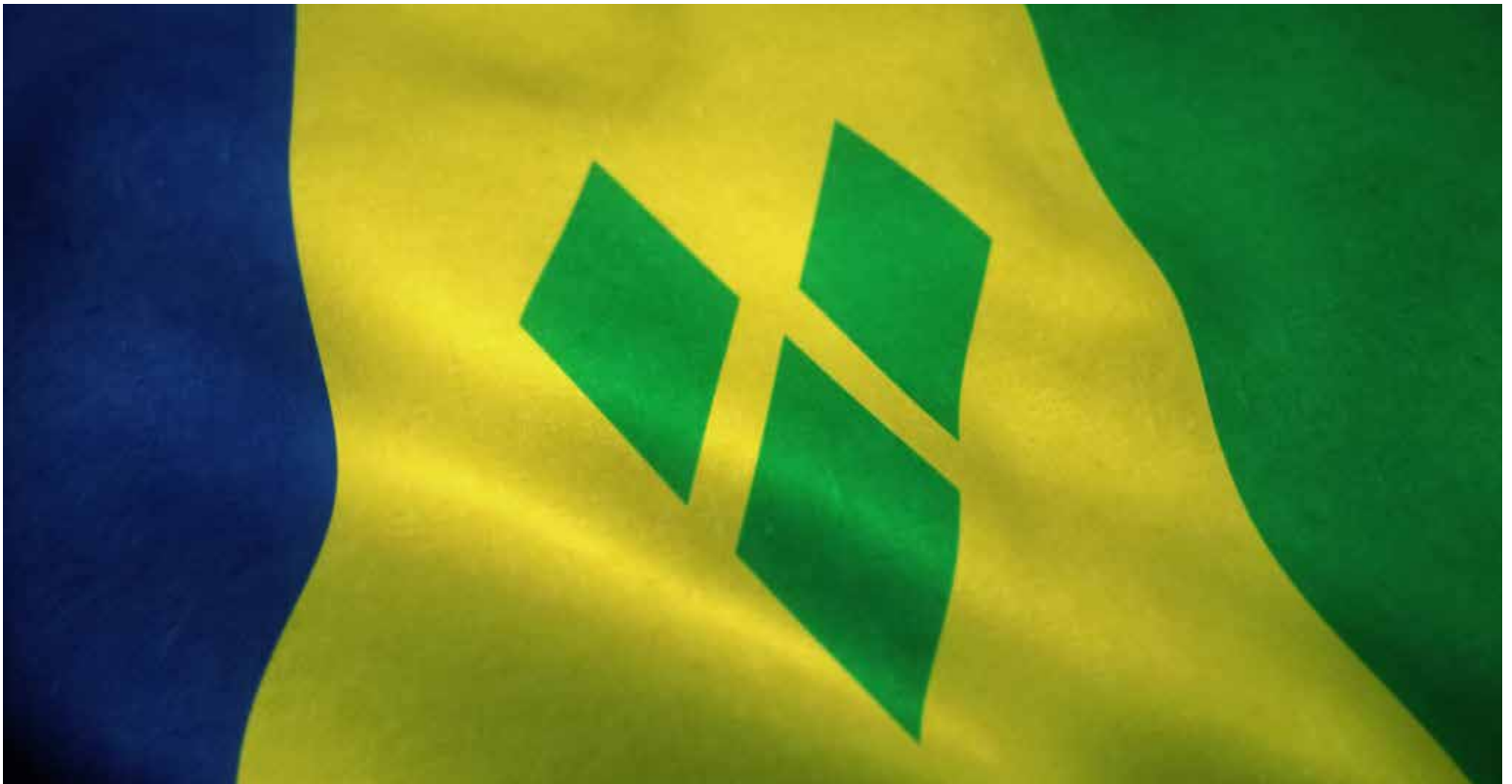
He asked the court to use its “discretion based on the facts, give his client a strong warning and reprimand and discharge him,” adding “this is not a case of a custodial sentence, the facts of this case are special.”

But Magistrate Michael Laudat told him that igno-

rance of the law is no excuse and while he will not impose a “custodial sentence he must look at the public’s interest in the matter.

“I’m not going to impose a custodial sentence on you, you have fully cooperated, you pleaded guilty and did not subject the court to a prolonged trial,” the Magistrate said.

Kennedy was given a fine of EC\$7,500.00 for the failure to declare a firearm to customs and for the ammunition charge with no separate penalty. The fine was paid immediately.



SVG: Police officers suspended as probe continues into child abuse

CMC - Three police officers, who were allegedly involved in the beating of a 10-year-old boy at a police station last Sunday, have been suspended from duty.

A statement from the Royal St Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) Public Relations and Complaint Department said, the officers - a corporal and two constables - have been suspended on half pay pending the outcome of the investigation into the allegation.

It said that the policemen were suspended by acting Commissioner of Police, Enville Williams, as the authorities urge witnesses to come forward and assist the probe.

On Sunday, a woman, who identified herself as Rosita Phillips appeared in a Facebook live video saying she

was outside the Stubbs Police Station and that her 10-year-old son had been locked up after it was alleged that he had gone into someone's yard and taken their bike.

She said she went to the police station to find out what was going on and the officers released the child to her and told her they would investigate the matter.

Phillips said that when she was in the yard of the police station, the child told her that his back was hurting.

"Two police officers beat my child. If you see the bruises on his back," she said.

The child's back, which was later shown in the video, appeared to have marks on it and he appeared to be bleeding slightly in one area.

In an earlier statement, the police

said the allegations of abuse and misbehaviour by police officers towards a minor had been drawn to the attention of the acting Commissioner of Police and other senior-ranking police officers.

"While the allegations are painful to listen to, we must strive to be fair to all parties involved. We, however, wish to reiterate that the police force is an organisation that does not operate outside of the laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines and no officer will be tolerated if he or she chooses to do so," the statement said.

"Police abuse and allegations of police abuse are not policies of the RSVGPF. Any police officer who is found culpable for such allegations will be dealt with in accordance with the law," the statement said.

White House blames Iran-backed militia for deadly drone strike

The White House has blamed an Iran-backed militia for a deadly drone strike on an American base in Jordan, as the US considers how to hit back.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said US intelligence believed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq was responsible for Sunday's attack.

President Joe Biden has said without elaborating that he has already decided what the US response will be.

The strike killed three US soldiers and injured at least 40 other US troops.

The "attribution that our intelligence community is comfortable with is that this was done by the umbrella group", said Mr Kirby in a daily press briefing on Wednesday.

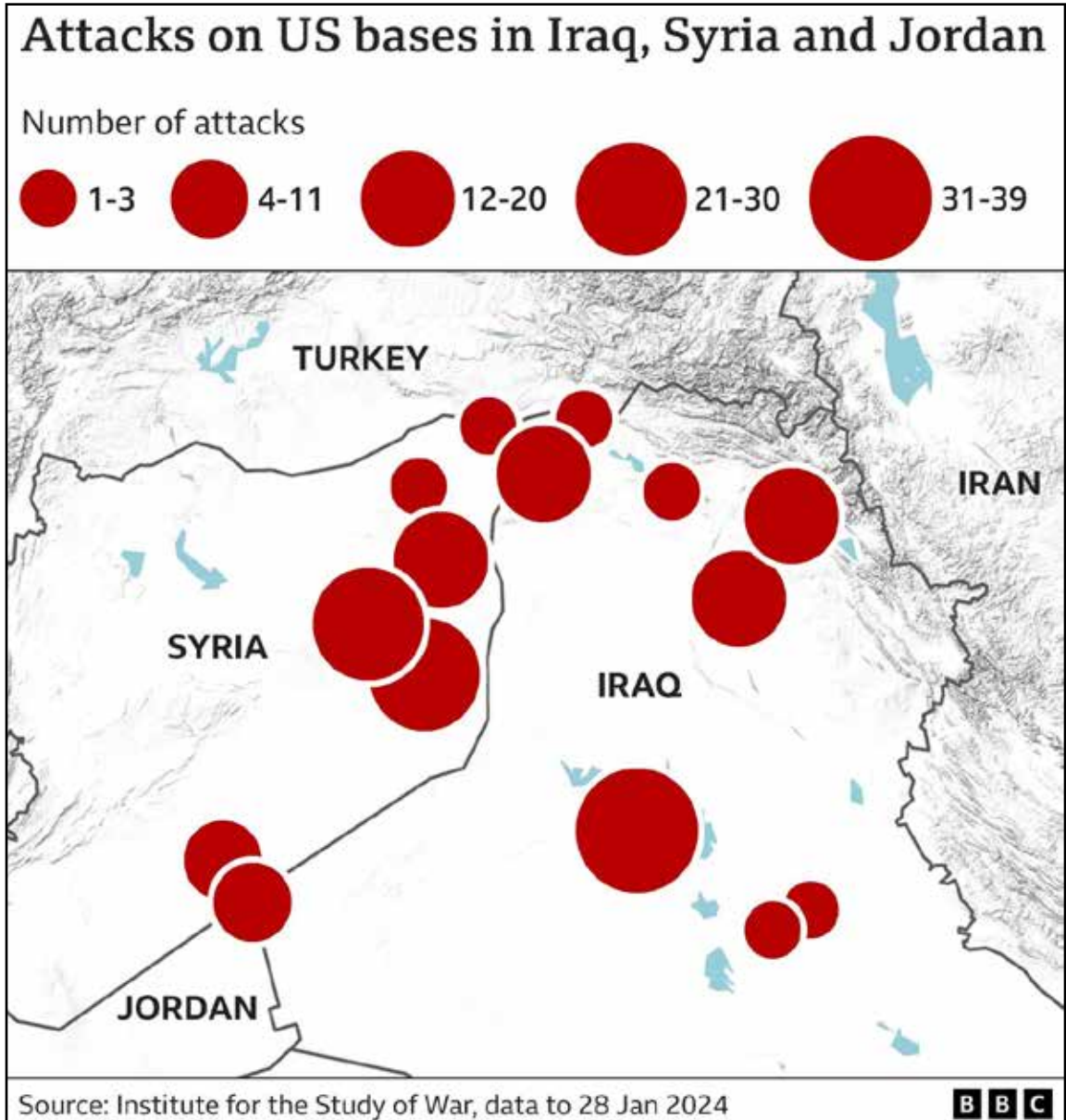
The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has already claimed responsibility for the strike.

The national security spokesman repeated that the US response would be "in a time and in a manner of our choosing, on our schedule".

"Just because you haven't seen anything in the last 48 hours, it doesn't mean that you're not going to see anything," he said.

"The first thing you see won't be the last thing," he added.

Mr Biden has said he does not want a wider conflict in the Middle East, which has already been destabilised by the Israel Gaza



war that erupted in October.

Iran has denied any role in the drone attack.

At an event on Wednesday, Revolutionary Guard commander Major General Hossein Salami, who advises Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said that Tehran hears the "threats coming from American officials".

"No threat will be left unanswered," he added.

His remarks came a day

after Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the UN, told Iranian journalists in New York that Tehran would "decisively respond" to any attack on the country, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

While Washington weighs its response, Kataib Hezbollah, part of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, said on Tuesday it had suspended operations against US forces to avoid causing

"embarrassment" to the Iraqi government.

Three American soldiers who were based at Fort Moore, in the US state of Georgia, died in the drone strike in north-eastern Jordan.

At least 41 National Guard members were injured, US officials confirmed on Wednesday.

The injured soldiers are from units based in Arizona, *cont'd on pg 15*



Brazil's Lula sacks deputy intelligence chief amid spying probe

Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has sacked the deputy director of the national intelligence agency and four department heads.

Investigations continue into claims the agency, Abin, illegally spied on ex-president Jair Bolsonaro's enemies.

The deputy, Alessandro Moretti, is accused of passing information to former Abin boss Alexandre Ramagem, a politician for Mr Bolsonaro's party.

Mr Bolsonaro says he and his family are being persecuted.

Lula has rejected that claim, saying his government does not give orders to the federal police.

The scandal first broke on Thursday when Brazil's Supreme Court unsealed documents in which Abin was accused of carrying out surveillance on key political



Lula at his residence in Brasilia on Tuesday.

and judicial figures critical of the former president.

Among the alleged targets of the illegal eavesdropping were three Supreme Court justices and a speaker of Brazil's lower house of Congress.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes said police had identified Mr Bolsonaro's son Carlos as

part of the "political nucleus" suspected of ordering the illegal spying.

The judge authorised raids on Monday on the home and offices of Carlos, who is a Rio de Janeiro city councillor.

Carlos Bolsonaro's lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the Associated

Press news agency.

Last week, police searched the office and home of Mr Ramagem, who has denied wrongdoing, Reuters news agency reports.

Police suspect Abin used Israeli software known as FirstMile to monitor mobile phones illegally.

Veteran leftist Lula narrowly beat Mr Bolsonaro, a far-right politician, in a tense presidential runoff election on 30 October 2022.

This latest probe adds to the legal problems of Mr Bolsonaro, who has been banned from running for office for eight years after casting unfounded doubts on Brazil's electronic voting system.

cont'd from pg 14

California, Kentucky and New York.

Twenty-seven were able to return to duty while 14 others continue to be medically evaluated, the US National Guard Bureau said.

Meanwhile, the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen have continued to carry out missile and drone attacks on merchant ships in the Red Sea in response to the war in Gaza.

Early on Thursday local time, a ship in

the Gulf of Aden was struck by a missile fired from the Taiz region, according to Ambrey, a maritime security firm.

A spokesman for the Houthis confirmed the attack.

According to the Pentagon, the Houthis have launched more than 30 attacks on commercial ships since 19 November.

The ongoing attacks have triggered retaliatory strikes from both American and British forces.

Parham Football Club left in the lurch as Asot Michael withdraws sponsorship post-elections

The Parham Football Club finds itself at a crossroads as the looming specter of relegation to the first division overshadows its once-prominent status in the Premier League. However, the latest blow comes not from the playing field but from the realm of politics,

as Asot Michael, the Member of Parliament and a key sponsor, has decided to sever ties with the club.

Asot Michael, previously a fervent supporter and sponsor of the football club, seems to have had a change of heart now that the election season has con-

cluded. With the political battles won, his decision to distance himself from the Parham Football Club raises eyebrows and sparks disappointment among fans and players alike.

The abrupt withdrawal of sponsorship has left the club scrambling to fill the

financial void and maintain its standing in the Premier League. Michael's apparent shift in priorities has left the football community questioning the authenticity of his earlier support and the impact of political dynamics on local sports.

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Sir Curtly urges Shamar Joseph to focus on red-ball first

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (CMC) - Legendary former West Indies pacer, Antiguan Sir Curtly Ambrose, has urged West Indies' latest fast bowling recruit Shamar Joseph, to focus on the longer format of the game first, in order to properly develop his skill set.

Speaking in the wake of Joseph's fireworks in the second Test against Australia in Brisbane on Sunday, Sir Curtly said it was critical the 24-year-old established a "solid foundation" before experimenting in the shorter versions.

"I believe that he loves cricket in general and it doesn't matter whether it's Test, ODI or T20 cricket. I believe he is just passionate about cricket," Sir Curtly told the Daily Star in Dhaka.

"But for me, I would love to see him continue playing red-ball cricket for a while so that he can develop his skills. Because we know sometimes as a young player, as you gain success you are wanted in the T20 franchise cricket around the world.

"I would like to see Shamar Joseph

play a lot of red-ball cricket. He has just started his career so he needs to learn and understand what it takes to become a world class fast bowler and then you can always branch out to ODIs or T20 cricket.

"But learn the art first; make sure he's got a solid foundation and then he can branch out."

Joseph arrived in Australia as one of seven uncapped players in an inexperienced West Indies squad, but quickly made an impact with a five-wicket haul on debut in Adelaide as the tourists went down by 10 wickets in the opening Test.

And West Indies appeared headed for another defeat on Sunday penultimate day of the final Test at the Gabba in Brisbane, with Australia cruising to 113 for two inside the first hour in pursuit of 216 for victory.

However, Joseph's introduction turned the game on its head, the speedster defying painful toe to snatch seven for 68 in 11.5 consecutive hostile overs, and send the Aussies tumbling to an eight-run defeat.



Sir Curtly Ambrose. (CWI Media)

Sir Curtly, who managed Joseph at a fast bowling clinic in Guyana two years ago, described the right-arter as a "huge find" and said he had the potential to be very successful in the global game.

PMS and CKHS win by narrow margins in senior girls basketball

Princess Margaret School (PMS) and Christ the King High School both clinched wins by narrow margins as they began their campaign in the Senior Girls Division of the 2024 Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball Championships on Tuesday.

Princess Margaret School snatched a 13-12 victory against St. Anthony's Secondary School in the first of two games in the senior girls division at the JSC Sports Complex.

Kayla Melvin scored five points for Princess Margaret School, and Jenna Andrew converted eight points for St. Anthony's Secondary School.

Melvin, who got injured and was forced to miss some of the game, believes the players of the Princess Margaret School could have played a lot better in their opening game of the competition.



Christ the King High School's point guard Jodaliah Constant dribbles the ball up the court during her team's Senior Girls Division encounter against Antigua Girls High School at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, January 30, 2024. (Photo courtesy School Basketball Unit)

“We played okay. I know we could have done better. I know we could have communicated better, although I was not on the court, and that's what affected our game, but we still won,” Melvin said.

Christ the King High

School prevailed 14-12 against Antigua Girls High School in Tuesday's second senior girls encounter.

Point guard Jodaliah Constant shot a game-high 12 points for Christ the King High School, and Shakorah Prince had six points for An-

tigua Girls High School.

Although Christ the King High was able to win the game, Constant said she and her team will improve on their performance in their next outing.

Greenbay and J.T. Ambrose primary schools recorded wins in the Miniboy's Primary Division.

Greenbay Primary pulled off a 14-8 victory against T. N. Kirnon Primary. Ethan Browne scored four points for Greenbay, and Kaydon Sampson produced six points for T.N. Kirnon.

J.T. Ambrose Primary prevailed 19-7 against Combined. Raylon Nicholas converted 11 points for J.T. Ambrose Primary, and Derrick Perez scored four points for Combined.

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The Parham Football Club now faces not only the challenges of relegation but also the aftermath of a severed connection with a once-enthusiastic sponsor. The stark reality of being left to fend for themselves post-elections highlights the vulnerability of local sports organizations when political support is contingent on electoral aspirations.

In the wake of Asot Michael's decision, the onus is on the Parham community to rally behind their football club and find alternative means of support. As the team battles for survival in the Premier League,

the absence of a key sponsor underscores the need for sustainable local backing to ensure the club's continued presence on the competitive stage.

The Parham Football Club's struggle against relegation is now intertwined with a larger narrative of resilience and self-sufficiency in the face of changing political landscapes.

While Asot Michael's decision may cast a shadow over the club's immediate future, the resolve of the community to stand by their team will ultimately determine the next chapter in the Parham Football Club's storied history.

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Benta and Athanaze lead ABCA two-day batting and bowling aggregates

Demari Benta of Pigotts Crushers and Justin Athanaze of Empire Nation are currently leading the batting and bowling aggregates, respectively, after the first three rounds of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's two-day competition.

Benta has a total of 277 runs in five innings at an impressive average of 138.50. He has batted not out in three of those five innings and has struck two centuries.

Benta hit 123 not out in the opening round encounter against Combined Schools and struck exactly 100 against the Bolans Blasters in the second round.

Empire Nation's opening batsman, Tyrone Williams Jr., has the sec-

ond-highest aggregate of 260 runs in just three innings.

Williams Jr., who has an average of 86.67, has struck one century and narrowly missed out on achieving another ton in his team's opening round match against the Jennings Tigers.

Williams Jr. slammed 113 against Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles in the second round and made 97 against the Jennings Tigers.

Junior Henry of the WES Rising Sun Spartans has the third highest aggregate of 240 runs in five innings at an average of 48.

Demari Benta, Williams Jr., and Henry are the only three players to have scored more than 200 runs so far in the two-day competition.

Athanaze, who is a vet-



Justin Athanaze of Empire Nation

eran right-arm off-spinner, is currently the leading wicket-taker with 21 scalps in five innings at an average of 3.86 runs per wicket.

National left-arm spinner Glenton Williams of the Jennings Tigers is the second-leading wicket taker. Williams has so far captured 18 wickets in five innings at an average of 10.39.

Pigotts Crushers fast bowler Jawaki Joseph is the third leading wicket taker and player to have taken more than 15 wickets in the first three rounds of matches.

Joseph has captured 17 wickets in six innings at an

average of 6.41 runs apiece.

The players will have the opportunity to improve their batting and bowling aggregates when the competition resumes with its fourth round of matches across five venues in Antigua on Saturday.

Leaders Pigotts Crushers, with 36 points, will face Empire Nation, who are in third place with 24 points, at the Pigotts playing field.

Cup-holders PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks, currently in second place on 27 points, will meet the New Winthorpes Lions at the New Winthorpes play-

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Demari Benta of Pigotts Crushers



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Spectators watching a cricket game in the West Indies

West Indies fans urged to register for public ticket ballot system for T20 World Cup

Cricket fans around the West Indies are being urged to register for the public ticket ballot as they prepare to be part of the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Fawwaz Baskh, the tournament director, reached out to the regional fan base to encourage the supporters to make wise use of the available window which will allow them to pre-register for tickets.

"Everyone is eagerly

looking forward to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, this is the biggest event to be staged in the West Indies. It will feature the best players in the world, and as a result, the eyes of the sporting world will be on our countries in this region and the USA," Baskh said.

"There will be a great demand for tickets as cricket lovers worldwide want to get this golden opportunity to see their favorite

players. This will be a truly world-class event – at a level never before seen in our region – and fans will enjoy the amazing atmosphere and entertainment that is in store.

"We want to encourage our 'hometown' fans to join the public ticket ballot and give themselves every opportunity to secure the best seats and be part of an amazing event on their shores," he added.

Ten of the 20 teams will play their first match of the 29-day tournament in the USA – with 16 games to be held in Lauderhill, Florida; Dallas, Texas; and Nassau County, New York.

The remaining 39 matches will be played in the Caribbean across six different countries, with semi-finals to be played in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago on June 26 and 27 respectively, and the title decider to be played in Barbados on Saturday, June 29.

Details on the public ticket ballot will be shared in the coming days. The start time for games will vary from venue to venue, for tournament details fans can visit www.t20worldcup.com.

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ing field.

The Bethesda Golden Eagles will tackle the Jennings Tigers in Bethesda; the WES Rising Sun Spartans will host the Bolans Blasters at Rising Sun; and the All Saints Pythons will clash with Combined Schools at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

Felix Auguste and Julian Roberts will umpire at Pigotts. Donald Sheckle and Nigel Clarke will officiate at New Winthropes.

Bernard Joseph and Cadis Butler will umpire at Bethesda. James Trotman and Akeem Marshall will officiate at Rising Sun, and Keller Joseph and Fitzroy Langley will be umpiring at All Saints.

Tigers narrow gap on leaders of First Division League

The Potters Tigers have narrowed the gap on leaders Five Islands in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division.

Jamour Martin scored twice to lead the Tigers to a four-nil victory against the Attacking Saints at the ABFA Technical Center on Tuesday.

Martin had conversions in the 8th and 18th minutes, Javon Benjamin found the back of the net in the 24th minute, and Ordell Samuel scored the Tigers' final goal in the 82nd minute.

Their sixth win in nine games not only ensures they remain in second place, but it also carries the Potters Tigers to 21 points, one adrift of Five Islands, who are currently leading the 11-team round-robin competition.

The Attacking Saints remained in third place on 17 points after suffering only their second loss in nine matches.

Bendals and Bolans also recorded wins in the other two First Division League matches on Tuesday.

Bendals, who were playing at home, romped



The Potters Tigers football team. (File photo)

to a four-nil victory against Fort Road.

The home side never looked back after making a fast start by taking an early lead via Darren Stevens' conversion in the first minute of play.

Mitcheo Edwards scored two minutes later to double the home side's advantage, and Adrian Constant effectively put the match beyond Fort Road's reach when he struck in the 44th minute to give Bendals a three-nil halftime lead.

Alvah Guishard Jr. completed the scoring for Bendals with a 58th-minute

conversion. However, it was only the second win in nine matches for Bendals, who advanced to nine points. The win allowed Bendals to leapfrog Liberta Blackhawks and Fort Road and move into eighth place in the First Division standings.

Fort Road slipped from seventh to ninth place after slumping to their seventh loss in 10 matches to remain on nine points.

Bolans achieved their third win in nine matches to jump from eighth to seventh place by snatching a one-nil victory against Lion Hill at the Golden

Grove playing field.

The Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's domestic season will continue with four matches in the Second Division today at 4:30 pm.

Real Blizzard will face the Urlings Golden Stars at the New Winthorpes playing field, and Soccer Academy will meet Glanvilles at the ABFA Technical Center.

Golden Grove will tackle Celtics at the Golden Grove playing field, and English Harbour will oppose FC Master Ballerz at the English Harbour playing field.