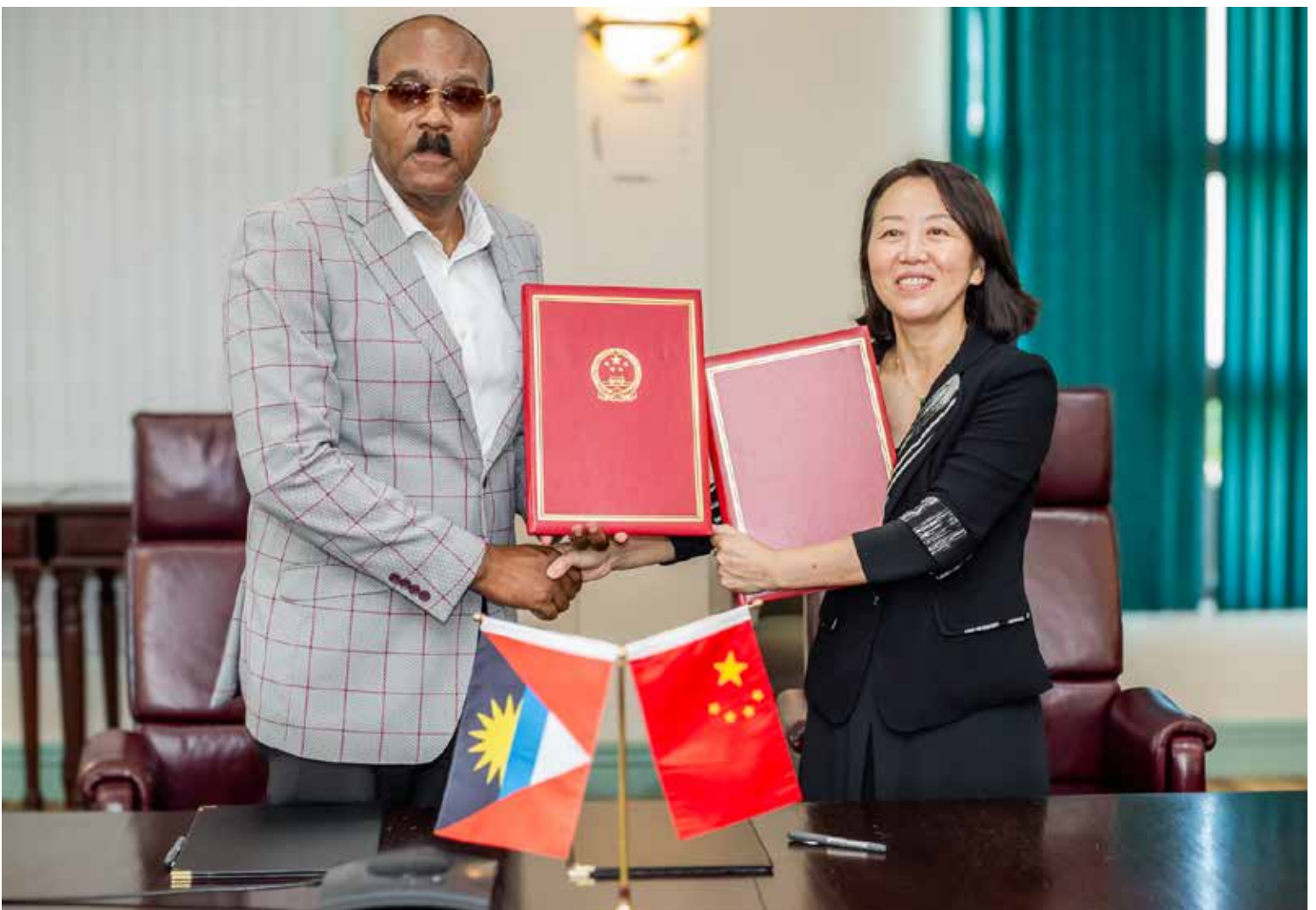


RELATIONSHIP EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL: PM

Story on Page 2



The People's Republic of China has donated more than US\$1 million worth of equipment specifically to be used for the conference. A formal signing ceremony for the handover of the equipment took place at the Office of the Prime Minister on Monday morning with Prime Minister, Gaston Browne and PRC Ambassador Zhang Yanling participating. *Story on page 3.*

Local News



PM: Relationship extremely beneficial

The relationship between the People's Republic of China and Antigua and Barbuda has been 'extremely beneficial' for the government and people of the twin-island state.

That's the assessment of the Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne made during the signing of an agreement on Monday where the PRC is making available a range of vital equipment that the country needs as it prepares to host thousands of delegates for the Fourth Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) from May 27-30.

His comments were made against the backdrop of recent attempts to undermine the relationship between the two nations but also to harm its generations-long close ties with the United States.

PM Browne reiterated that the posture of the Antigua and Barbuda government in its outlook is one

where it is 'friends of all...enemy of none'.

He added that Antigua and Barbuda has urged both the United States and China to cooperate 'in the interest of humanity' noting that as the two largest economies in the world they ought to seek areas of cooperation and collaboration rather than to engage in 'geopolitical conflict'.

The prime minister expressed the view that there may be elements within the opposition who may be attempting to drive a wedge between Antigua and Barbuda and the PRC on one hand and the US on the other.

"Those who are trying to create these artificial conflicts, especially those who are our political opponents who are joining others to create these conflicts, I wish to assure the people of Antigua and Barbuda that my administration has not and will not get involved in any geopo-

litical spat with any country.

"We will continue to respect the sterling contributions of the PRC towards the development of Antigua and Barbuda. We will continue to stand on the truth," he declared.

PM Browne strongly rejected suggestions that China is 'loan-sharking' Antigua and Barbuda and that he was attempting to 'colonise' the country through its loans.

"I say categorically to the people of Antigua and Barbuda that this was a lie as the PRC has shown its benevolence not only here in Antigua and Barbuda, but across the globe, especially among the poorer states," he stated.

The prime minister said the Chinese leader ought to be complimented for making funds available so that poorer nations may have a chance to attain their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).



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PRC donates US\$1M in equipment for SIDS4

The date for the Fourth Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)4 is fast approaching with host country, Antigua and Barbuda putting in place all the facilities necessary for a successful conference.

Several friendly governments have come forward to donate funds as well as equipment to help the Antigua and Barbuda government meet its obligations to provide a first-class facility for the conference.

In this regard, the People's Republic of China has donated more than US\$1 million worth of equipment specifically to be used for the conference.

A formal signing ceremony for the handover of the equipment took place at the Office of the Prime Minister on Monday morning with Prime Minister, Gaston Browne and PRC Ambassador Zhang Yanling participating.

"According to the needs of the conference and also based on necessary discussions, the government of China has agreed to provide a batch of equipment; including audio-visual equipment, teleprompters, LED lights, explosive detectors among other vital equipment and devices. The conference starts very soon so we are glad that this equipment has already arrived in the country," Ambassador Zhang reported.

The ambassador said she



is very happy to be able to present the equipment to the Antigua and Barbuda government with the expectation that the conference would be a successful one. She added that this gift is just the latest manifestation of the strong bonds of friendship between Antigua and Barbuda and China that has been ongoing for the past 41-years.

"This relationship has always been underpinned by mutual respect and mutual support.

China always stands ready to help in times of need and China always honours its commitment. It is also a continuation of China's support for Antigua and Barbuda to play a greater role on the multilateral fronts.

We are of the view that at a time when international challenges are continuously affecting people's daily lives, we should work together much more than ever to solve them. China therefore, looks forward to joining with Antigua and Barbuda to make more contributions to the sustainable development of other states," she remarked.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne accepted the donations on behalf of the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda. He said the government could not have afforded to purchase these equipment as it did not have the resources to do so and he expressed his government's 'eternal gratitude' to the government and people of China

for the timely donation. He identified the equipment as;

7 walk-through metal detectors

12-X-ray inspection systems

10-hand-held metal detection devices

2 hand-held multiband contraband detectors

1 desk-top explosives and narcotics trace detectors

9 broadcast-grade video cameras

3 video-camera monitors

1 audio-video conferencing system

2 teleprompters

1 video switcher

1 LED display

1,100 flexi-glass transparent name shelves

3 colour laser jet printers

10 desktop computers

Antigua and Barbuda and the US discuss 'open skies' agreement

Civil aviation officials representing the governments of the United States and Antigua and Barbuda have been engaged in discussions that will lead to the signing of a new air-services agreement, which is classified as an 'open-skies' agreement by the US.

Aviation Consultant, Ambassador Brian Challenger, revealed that the discussions have been ongoing since last December and that the outlines of an agreement have already been finalized.

He explained that the current legal framework for international civil

aviation between Antigua and Barbuda and the USA is the 1977 US-UK Air Services Agreement which Antigua and Barbuda acceded to at independence in 1981.

Despite the restrictive nature of the 1977 agreement, and with the advances that have taken place since then, both countries have found ways to work together on civil aviation matters to their mutual benefit.

According to Amb. Challenger the US has signed similar open skies agreement with more than ninety countries and territories around the world and the agreement being dis-

cussed with Antigua and Barbuda will include similar provisions.

"The new agreement provides the opportunity to formally replace the 1977 arrangements with an agreement that incorporates current ICAO best practices and principles and which reflects the safety, security and commercial practices that are already in large part being observed 'on the ground'," Challenger explained.

At the successful conclusion of the negotiations, the negotiators will present the draft agreement to their respective governments for their approval and assent.

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Skilled construction workers shortage affecting housing expansion

The construction boom that is taking place in the country – both on Antigua and over in Barbuda – has led to a severe shortage of skilled construction workers, namely, carpenters and masons.

That's the assessment coming from the Executive Chairman of the National Housing Development and Urban Renewal Company, Senator Rawdon Turner. He said the work of the company has been affected by the shortage and that it has caused a backlog in its delivery of finished homes to scores of individuals.

"The skilled workers shortage not only affects delivery of homes on time, but it has also led to a reduction in the quality of the work and this has led to even more delays thus further compounding the problem. Our entire operation is being affected by this problem," he stated in exasperation.

As an example, Sen. Turner pointed to the development at Oliver's where some 200 plots are now ready for the start of construction of houses. However, based on the availability of skilled carpenters and masons, National Housing can only work on 50 houses at a time. "We would like to be able to scale up on the number of homes under construction simultaneously, but we cannot. If we had more skilled workers, we would be able to triple the number of homes we complete in any 4-6-month peri-



Rawdon Turner.

od," he revealed.

Conversely, the executive chairman noted that an adequate supply of skilled workers would drastically reduce the wait-time for consumers before they are able to move into their newly constructed homes.

Sen Turner reported that he has held a meeting with Prime Minister Gaston Browne to discuss the crisis he now faces and he has asked the government to allow for the importation of skilled workers from other CARICOM territories.

"We have no choice but to go the route of importing skilled workers into the country. In a sense, we are the victims of our own success as the current construction boom taking place across Antigua where in practically every village and along the coastline there is some construction taking place.

"If you travel to Barbuda, you will see the same thing taking place there as well," he observed.

According to Sen. Turner the prime minister has okayed the proposal to import skilled workers to meet the current shortage of this category of workers.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Automotive Service Manager - Summary

An automotive dealership in Antigua is seeking a Service Manager who has in depth knowledge of the automotive industry. The successful candidate should have hands on technical experience working with premium brands and be able to efficiently manage a service center. The manager should be able to adapt to the client - centric culture of the company by enhancing customer satisfaction, through the delivery of first-class service.

Essential Duties

- Responsible for managing the service department operations, staff and other resources
- Ensuring the efficient and profitable operation of the department to achieve both high levels of customer satisfaction, retention and profitability
- Controlling resources at a level commensurate with profit requirements and enhanced customer relations
- Monitoring and improvement of internal control procedures and systems
- Overseeing and supervising the work technicians to ensure that customers receive consistent and accurate service.
- Managing customer satisfaction levels by ensuring fix-it-right the first-time policy is adhered to.
- Advise staff on mechanical issues or be able to resolve mechanical issues in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- Motivating and coaching staff members to ensure high levels of productivity
- Keeping track of the status of vehicle repair and notify customer about same
- Managing the work in progress
- Authorizing and managing leave for all service department personnel
- Planning and managing training needs for all departmental personnel by keeping abreast of what is trending globally for each brand.
- Monitor productivity through hours sold on daily basis
- Making sure that hours sold per RO are in-line with benchmark
- Making sure that workshop parts sales are in-line with bench mark
- Making sure that the average labour rate is above the minimum rate
- Carry-out capacity studies for the workshop
- Monitor utilization and efficiency of Technicians (Units reports) and take suitable actions to improve levels
- Ensure the utilization of workshop resources and assets for excellent rates of productivity and efficiency
- Reviewing monthly sales(hours) and profit performance (Net profit vs gross)
- Any other duties assigned

Qualifications

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required.

Education and/or Experience

- Bachelor's degree in management
- Certified auto mechanic
- Certification from training done through dealerships
- 5-10 years related experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education and experience
- Knowledge of automotive dealership software (especially CDK) would be an assets
- Sound knowledge of the automotive industry
- Recent certification in customer service

Other Skills

- Ability to read and interpret documents such as safety rules, operating and maintenance instructions, and procedure manuals. Ability to write routine reports and correspondence. Ability to speak effectively before groups of customers or employees of organization.
- Ability to read, analyze and interpret general business periodicals, professional journals, technical procedures, or governmental regulations. Ability to write reports, business correspondence, and procedure manuals. Ability to effectively present information and respond to questions from groups of managers, clients, customers and the general public.
- Ability to work with mathematical concepts such as probability and statistical inference, and fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and trigonometry. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios and proportions to practical situations.

Deadline for the receipt of applications is April 26,2024 with the names and contact information for 2 referees able to provide professional references on your behalf.

Email applications to: Accting.officer@gmail.com

Local News



Jet aircraft for LIAT 2020

The newly created airline LIAT 2020...moves closer to commencing commercial operation with the arrival today of two jet aircraft that will be added its fleet when it takes to the skies.

The airline is currently awaiting its Air Operators Certificate (AOC) and it has already commenced demo-flights under the su-

pervision of the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA).

Now, the airline has announced the arrival of the first two E-145 jet aircrafts to LIAT 2020 Limited.

The two aircraft will receive a water cannon salute moments after landing down at the VC Bird International Airport.

This will be followed



by a ceremony that will take place at Terminal B (Old Terminal) this afternoon.

This event represents an important milestone for LIAT 2020 Limited as it embarks on a new journey to be ranked king of the Caribbean skies.

Invitations have been sent to government offi-

cials, other stakeholders and the media to attend the welcoming reception for the two aircraft and their crew.

"We look forward to your presence at this historic event as we celebrate this momentous occasion and the bright future it promises," the official invitation said.



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Unveiling of 2024 Carnival Programme, Queen contestants, sponsors slated for Thursday

The National Festivals Commission will stage its first major activity of the year when it unveils the 2024 Carnival Programme as well as the seven delegates and their sponsors for the Queen of Carnival title.

The event is the media launch for the 2024 Carnival festivities that will feature addresses from the Minister of Carnival, Daryll Matthew, as well as a representative of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority.

It will take place at the Hodges Bay Club on Thursday.

The event will see the seven delegates competing for the coveted Miss Antigua and Barbuda 2024 unveiled, but also being sashed by their respective sponsors.

At a prior event, the delegates were interviewed by the sponsors and whilst the sponsors would have made their decisions regarding their young lady of choice, that will not be revealed until at the media launch.

Sources close to the Festival Commission said the 2024 Carnival Programme will run along similar lines to those of previous years as no new programme is being contemplated.

However, as it's the first Carnival following the untimely death of soca artist, Ricardo Drue, the event that

he headlined and billed under his brand, Druesday, will return for Carnival 2024.

Carnival sources say his team, DW, has made a request to have the night returned to them as they plan a major event to honour his memory and to raise funds

to set up a foundation in his name.

Meanwhile, The Festivals Commission is inviting all soca artists, songwriters, music producers, and arrangers to an important meeting tomorrow (Wednesday) at 5:30 p.m., to be held at the

Department of Creative Industries Old Parham Road, upstairs INET.

We urge all members of the fraternity to attend punctually as critical discussions regarding the future of the Party Monarch Competition will take place.



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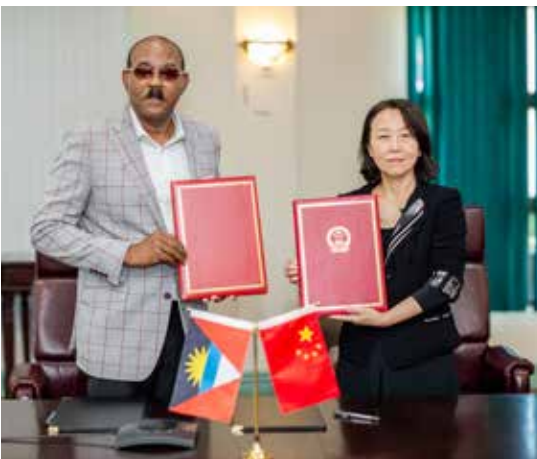
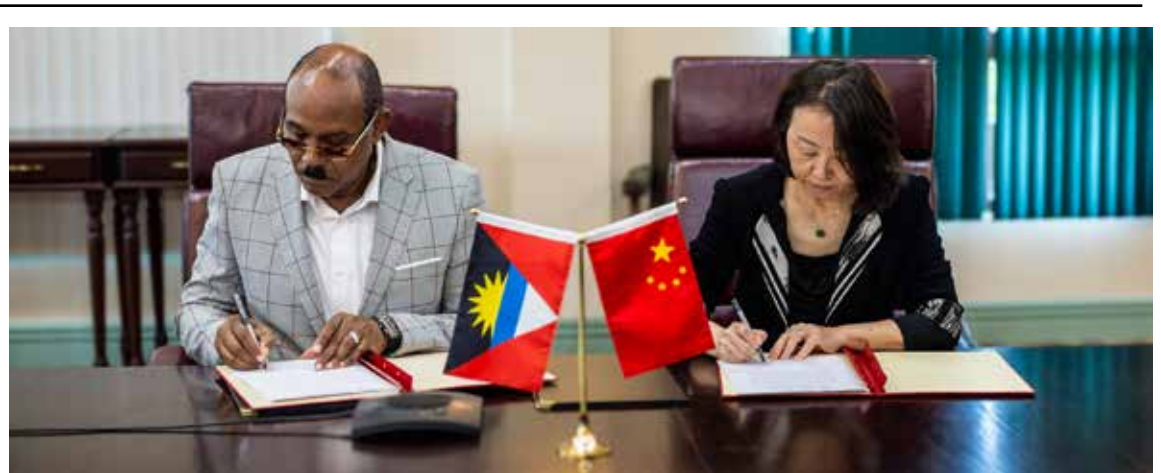
Photo Essay



A day in the life...of Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Students from one of the Pre-K classes at the Bendals Primary school had a treat on Monday when they were able to spend time with Prime Minister Gaston Browne at his office.

Prime Minister Browne warmly welcomed the students accompanied by their teachers to the conference room where he joined them in singing songs and discussing their favourite foods, fruits and sports during a lively engagement with the students.





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A price war has been intensifying between electric vehicle makers.

Tesla cuts prices in major markets as sales fall

By Mariko Oi

Tesla has cut its prices again in a number of major markets - including the US, China and Germany - as the electric car giant run by multi-billionaire Elon Musk faces falling sales.

The move comes after it reported a sharp fall in its global vehicle deliveries in the first three months of this year.

A price war has been intensifying between electric vehicle (EV) makers, with particularly fierce competition coming from Chinese firms.

Tesla is due to report financial results for the first quarter of 2024 after the US market close on Tuesday.

In a post on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, Mr Musk said: "Tesla prices must change frequently in order to match production with demand."

In China, the firm cut the starting price of the revamped Model 3 in China by 14,000 yuan (£1,562) to 231,900 yuan.

Prices of the Model Y, Model X and Model S vehicles in the US were reduced by \$2,000 (£1,616) on Friday.

There were also price cuts in many other countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, according Reuters, the news agency.

BBC News has contacted Tesla for comment.

The company triggered an EV price war over a year ago when it aggressively cut prices at the expense of profit margins.

The firm has been slow to refresh its ageing models while rivals in China, such as BYD and Nio, have been roll-

ing out cheaper models. Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi also launched its first EV last month.

Last week, Tesla announced plans to lay off more than 10% of its global workforce.

Over the weekend, Mr Musk said he would postpone a planned trip to India, where he was due to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, due to "very heavy Tesla obligations".

On Friday, the firm recalled thousands of its new Cybertrucks over safety concerns.

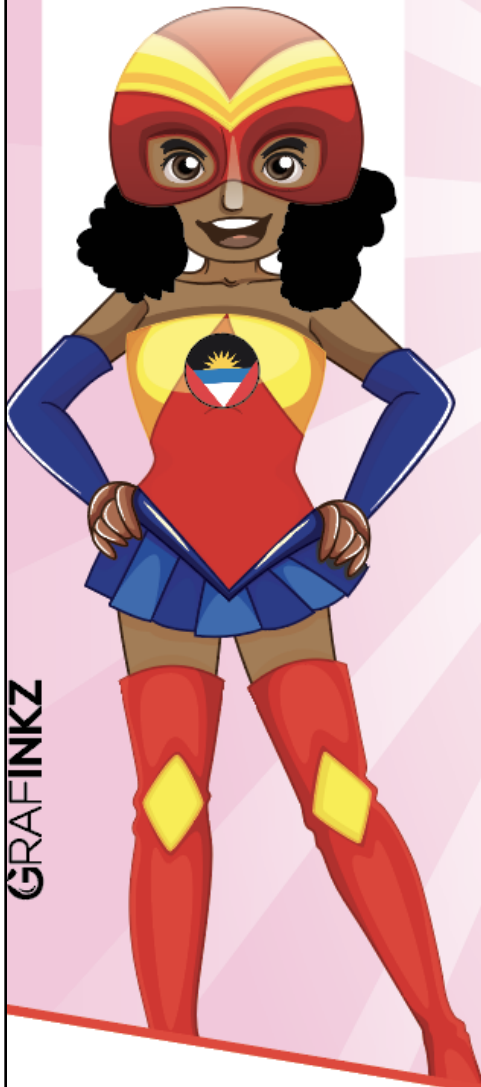
It is because their accelerator pedals currently risk getting trapped by the interior trim, increasing the possibility of crashes.

Tesla's shares have fallen by more than 40% since the start of this year.

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Kanye West wades into Drake and Kendrick Lamar's feud

By Mark Savage

Kanye West has weighed in on the simmering feud between Drake, J Cole and Kendrick Lamar.

The spat has been escalating since last year, when Cole referred to the trio as “the big three”, a description that Lamar forcefully rejected.

West, a long-time adversary of Drake, has now added his two cents, on a remix of Lamar, Future and Metro Boomin's song Like That.

“I can't even think of a Drake line,” he said, attacking the star's lyrics.

West also criticised Drake's record deal with Universal Music, suggesting he'd sold the rights to his music for “little bag” (money).

“Lifetime deal? I feel bad for [you],” he said.

West's remix was premiered on Justin Laboy's radio show The Download - and opened with the line “Yo Dot, I got you,” a reference to Lamar's nickname, K-Dot.

He only played a snippet of the song and, although a fuller version later leaked online, it was unclear whether that was genuine or fan-made.

West and Drake's animosity can be traced back to a dispute over a beat in 2018 - and culminated in an infamous song by Pusha T (and



West and Drake have been at odds.

produced by West), where he revealed the existence of Drake's son Adonis.

The latest war of words started on last year's Drake and J Cole collaboration First Person Shooter, where the “big three” claim originated.

The seemingly innocuous comment went unremarked for months. Then, in the middle of March, Lamar delivered a fiery verse on Like That, declaring that there was no “big three - it's just big me”.

He went on to call

Drake and Cole's best verses insubstantial (“a light pack”) and claimed he was the Prince to Drake's Michael Jackson.

Two weeks later, J Cole offered his own reply to Kendrick's verse, in a track called 7 Minute Drill. He called the Pulitzer Prize winner's last album, Mr Morale and The Big Steppers, “tragic” and said the star had “fallen off” his A-game.

He later apologised, appearing to back out of the feud, but Drake doubled

down, with a song called Push Ups (Drop And Give Me 50).

Amidst a lot of comments about Lamar's height, he also suggested the star was a record label puppet who'd been forced to add verses to commercial pop songs by Maroon 5 and Taylor Swift.

“Pipsqueak, pipe down, you ain't in no Big Three,” he added.

Lamar appears to be uninterested in responding, but Drake seems determined to

cont'd on pg 14

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Regional News



Grenada: Gun amnesty goes into effect from May 1

CMC - Legislators will begin debating on Thursday, a resolution giving effect to a gun amnesty in Grenada from May 1 to July 30 this year.

Parliament recently approved an amendment to the Firearms Act and according to the Order paper circulated for Thursday's meeting the legislators will debate a resolution giving effect to the amnesty.

The following day members of the Senate will also meet to debate the resolution that states in part that Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, who is also the Minister for National Security, is satisfied that the amnesty may result in the reduction of illegally possessed firearms or ammunition in Grenada.

The amendment to the Firearm Act introduced a new section that will give the Minister for National Security the power to declare a gun amnesty for 90



days.

According to the Order, all police stations and Police headquarters will be collection points for the illegal firearms and ammunitions and the Officers in charge or on duty will be responsible for receiving the firearms and ammunitions.

"A person shall not be required to disclose his or her identity or any information

when surrendering a firearm or ammunition, as the case may be and no details of the person who surrendered the said firearm or ammunitions shall be recorded if the person wishes to utilise the anonymous process for the firearms amnesty."

The legislation will also allow for an attorney being able to surrender firearms and ammunition on behalf

of any person as well as allowing for such surrender to be done anonymously.

Once a firearm is surrendered the serial number, type, make and model it will be recorded and then be forwarded to the designated officer at Police headquarters.

During the Upper House debate to amend the Firearm Act, Legal Affairs Minister Claudette Joseph had informed legislators that when the firearms are surrendered under the amnesty, ballistic analyses will take place to determine whether the firearm was used in the commission of an offense.

"And of course, if the firearm surrendered is found to have been used in the commission of an offense, that firearm will then form evidence and assist the police in investigating and solving the crime," she said.

cont'd from pg 12

provoke a response.

On Friday, the Canadian star released a new track called Taylor Made Freestyle - in which he suggested Lamar was unwilling to engage in the feud because he was in cahoots with Swift, and didn't want to overshadow (or be overshadowed) by her album release.

"If you 'bout to drop, she gotta approve/This girl really 'bout to make you act like you not in a feud," he goaded: "Yeah, shoutout to Taylor Swift/Biggest gangster in the music game right now."

The song also appeared to feature AI vocals from Lamar's rap hero Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg. Their verses also tried to prompt a response from the star.

"Kendrick we need ya, the West Coast saviour/Engraving your name in some hip-hop history," advised the AI Shakur.

"World is watching this chess game, but are you out of moves?" admonished the AI Snoop Dogg.

Of course, all of this is good for business. Both Like That and Push Ups are among the Top 40 most-played songs on Spotify.



Lieutenant Colonel
Michael Charles



Lieutenant Colonel Sean
Welcome



Colonel Michael Shahoud



Staff Sergeant Jason Khan



Brigadier Gary Beaton

Min Edghill refutes claims of pilot error in military helicopter crash

CMC - Insisting that the investigation into the helicopter crash last December that claimed the lives of five military officers is not done, the minister responsible for aviation has dismissed an article claiming that pilot error was responsible for the deadly accident.

Minister of Public Works Juan Edghill said in a statement on Saturday that the article published by Caribbeanlife.com two days prior had “prematurely” reached conclusions on an investigation that is still ongoing.

Edghill noted that three days after the December 9, 2023 crash of a Guyana Defence Force (GDF) helicopter near the border with Venezuela, he appointed an investigator in charge to investigate the incident which resulted in the deaths of Lieutenant Colonel Michael Charles who was the pilot, Col-

onel Michael Shahoud, Retired Brigadier Gary Beaton, Lieutenant Colonel Sean Welcome, and Staff Sergeant Jason Khan. There were two survivors – Lieutenant Colonel Andio Michael Crawford and Corporal, Dwayne Jackson.

“Consistent with international standards and best practices, no one can conclusively pronounce the cause of an accident until the investigation is completed and the final report is available,” he said.

“Given that the investigation is still ongoing, it is surprising that the author of the article prematurely concluded that ‘Pilot error will more than likely be blamed for the horrific early December crash of a Guyana Defence Force helicopter,’ the author’s claim of speaking to three separate high-ranking Guyanese government officials

who all blamed pilot error as the main cause of the crash is nothing short of sensationalising the outcome of the investigation.”

Edghill said that he has not made any public statement on the accident since the investigator was appointed, as he wanted to “respect the investigative process”.

He therefore urged the media: “Wait for the official final report to be published before making any assumptions. Let’s exercise caution and refrain from jumping to conclusions until then.”

The GDP had lost contact with the helicopter on December 6, about 30 miles east of the Venezuelan border, during bad weather, while transporting officers carrying out a routine inspection of troops in the forested area. The wreckage was found the following day.

Ecuador voters back tougher security to fight gang violence

By **Iane Wells**

Ecuadorians have voted in favour of allowing the military to patrol their streets as part of a referendum on bolstering security in the country.

The poll was called after Ecuador went from being relatively peaceful to having the highest recorded murder rate in Latin America.

Voters also backed longer prison terms and extraditing violent criminals.

But human rights groups have raised concerns that the measures could lead to abuses.

President Daniel Noboa called the referendum following a spate of high-profile murders, including the assassination of a presidential candidate last year and several mayors in recent months.

In 2023, police recorded about 8,000 violent deaths and in January the country was rocked by a wave of violence which saw a top gang leader escape from jail, prison riots and staff at a TV station being held hostage by armed gang members while they were live on air.

President Noboa subsequently declared a state of emergency and brought in the military to fight criminal gangs and control the prisons - but the result of the referendum will allow him to expand the powers of the



A state of emergency was declared in the country back in January.

military and the police on a longer-term basis.

At the polls, many of those voting “yes” to the raft of security measures said they had felt safer on the streets since the military presence had increased.

Carmen Elena Simbaña, whose youngest brother Darwin was killed two years ago, however, was not one of them.

Darwin was just 19 when he was stabbed to death by a gang member wanting money. Ms Simbaña said the murder happened “in the midst of police officers, who were around and did not come to help”.

But despite her personal experience, she voted against the new measures, saying “militarising the country is not the solution”.

Her son witnessed the murder of her brother, and people have come to her house threatening to kill him should the gang member responsible ever end up in jail.

“The root of all crime is abandonment,” Ms Simbaña told BBC News, adding that she wanted to see investment in youth, such as “spaces for children to occupy themselves with sport, music, art”, rather than more money for the military.

A cocaine dealer known as “El Gato” (The Cat) is perhaps one example for Ms Simbaña’s argument. The 29-year-old blamed his descent into crime on his family’s financial problems, which forced his mother to work late.

“I was alone in the house, crying and screaming for her,” he said, describing how he fell in with “bad friends”, including members of some of Ecuador’s most violent gangs, who introduced him to drugs.

“El Gato” started using and dealing drugs when he was just 14 years old and is still addicted 15 years later.

He can make \$100 (£80) from just one drug sale, some of which he said is

used to fund his own addiction.

He tried to kick the habit but has found it hard: “Obviously, I want to leave this, right? But it is such a strong addiction. I have gone to rehabilitation centres, I have locked myself in my family’s house.”

Despite his own involvement in the drugs trade, “El Gato” urged people to vote in favour of the tougher security measures, arguing that being surrounded by crime and drugs had made it harder for him to give up drugs.

“When I go and you have it out around the corner, that is the problem,” he said.

His friend, David Rodríguez, agreed, saying “El Gato” was a “kid who should have been playing ball in the park”.

“Instead he is selling drugs for people like him, to get them into the habit, recruit them, and make a profit from it.”

Like “El Gato”, he also backed the new security measures. Mr Rodríguez has been the victim of six “express kidnappings”, during which he was drugged, taken to a cash point and forced to withdraw money to hand over to his assailants.

“We need a break and a change,” he said, adding that he believed that “the

cont'd on pg 17

Japan helicopters crash: Search ongoing for naval crew in the Pacific

The Japanese navy is continuing its search for seven crew in the Pacific Ocean after the apparent crash of two helicopters on Saturday night, which killed at least one crewman.

Rescuers have so far recovered the body of one man, as well as black boxes and debris, but are yet to find the others.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida mourned the tragedy in parliament on Monday.

“It is of utmost regret that we lost our personnel as they engaged in very tough, late-night training,” he said.

It’s still unclear what exactly caused the crash, which took place near the Izu Islands, which lie not far from the mainland, about 600km (372 miles) south of Tokyo.

Flight recorders retrieved from both aircraft had not revealed technical problems, Japan’s Defence Minister Minoru Kihara

said.

“Firstly we do our best to save lives,” Mr Kihara said on Sunday, adding the helicopters had been “doing drills to counter submarines at night”.

The two helicopters were both carrying four crew during the drills on Saturday night.

Communication with one helicopter was lost at 22:38 local time (14:38 BST) off the island of Torishima, broadcaster NHK reported,

One minute later, an emergency signal was received from this aircraft.

After 25 minutes, the military realised communication with the other aircraft was also lost in the same area.

Authorities launched a major search operation using 10 ships and five aircraft to scour the waters.

“We have a 24-hour operation for the search, which took place all day and all



Japan’s defence officials announced early Sunday that two SH-60k helicopters (not pictured) carrying eight crew had gone missing off the Izu Islands.

night,” a navy officer told AFP news agency.

Along with the recovery of one man’s body, crews found the flight recorders near each other as well as debris including parts of rotor blades.

The Mitsubishi SH-60K helicopters - based on the Sikorsky Seahawk - mainly operate from naval destroyers.

As there were no other aircraft nor vessels in nearby waters, the navy said involvement of another

country in the incident was unlikely.

Japan has boosted defence spending and deepened cooperation with the US, South Korea and other countries in Asia in response to China’s growing assertiveness in the region.

In April 2023 a Japanese army helicopter with 10 people on board crashed off Miyako island in southern Okinawa prefecture.

The UH60 helicopter, known as a Black Hawk, had been surveying the local area at the time it disappeared.

A senior Ground Self Defence Force commander, Lt Gen Yuichi Sakamoto, was among those on the flight. There were no survivors.

The US military also maintains a base on Okinawa, a grouping of islands in the East China Sea about halfway between Taiwan and Japan’s mainland.

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military does give that relief to citizens”.

Violent crimes like those experienced by Carmen Elena Simbaña and David Rodríguez have become commonplace in Ecuador.

The country is wedged between the world’s two biggest cocaine producers - Colombia and Peru - and its ports provide convenient routes to ship the drug to the US and Europe, where demand is growing.

Ecuador’s economic slump during the Covid-19 pandemic pushed many young people into gangs and its relaxed visa sys-

tem led to many international gangs moving in.

The referendum also asked people to back the legalisation of hourly work contracts, which the government said would help get young people into work and away from crime. Critics argued it would roll back workers’ rights and it did not pass.

But the main focus has been on the new security measures.

President Noboa has welcomed their approval in the referendum, saying “now we will have more tools to fight crime and restore peace to Ecuadoran families”.

Sports News



Antigua win two matches in LICB Under-19 Tournament

Antigua and Barbuda's youth cricketers won two of their three matches in the Leeward Islands Cricket Board's (LICB) men's Under-19 Tournament, which took place in St. Kitts from April 19 to 21.

In their third and final match, the Antiguanians beat Nevis by 84 runs via the Duckworth/Lewis Method in a rain-affected match at Elquemedo Willett Park in Nevis on Sunday.

Antigua and Barbuda made 179 for four off 30 overs. Opener Brent Joseph slammed 86 off 87 balls, including eight fours and two sixes. Fellow opener Hosea Roberts got 57 off 77 balls. Lythe Browne claimed two for 13.

Set a revised target of 190 off 30 overs, the Nevisians were dismissed for 105 in 25 overs. Amoree Jones made 26. J'Quan Athanaze bagged three wickets for eight runs, and Mekali Tonge and Wilden Cornwall Jr. each picked up two for 16.

Antigua and Barbuda crushed St. Kitts by 114 runs in their second encounter at Warner Park in St. Kitts. The Antiguanians made 220 in 48.1



Wilden Cornwall Jr.
overs.

Yanique Watley cracked 39, J'Quan Athanaze and Micah McKenzie each struck 36, Tyree Moore hit 32, and Hosea Roberts got 24. Curdel Crooke, Caiden Francis, and Lashawn Bergan each captured two wickets.

St. Kitts was dismissed for 106 in 39.1 overs. Opener Kazim Archibald top scored with 21. Wilden Cornwall Jr. took four for 23, and Tyree Moore picked up two for 16.

But Antigua and Barbuda lost their opening encounter against St. Maarten by 17 runs at Warner Park.

St. Maarten made 156 in 32.4



Brent Joseph

overs. Opener Michael Palmer and Tyanick Honore each scored 31, and captain Israel Morton got 23. Wilden Cornwall Jr. took three for 19, leg-spinner Micah McKenzie had three for 23, and Mekali Tonge claimed two for 33.

In reply, Antigua and Barbuda were dismissed for 139 in 34 overs. Cornwall struck 34 off 26 balls, Joseph and Watley each made 25, and McKenzie got 24.

Israel Morton captured three for 23, Rudesh Ramaj took two for 19, Samuel Morton claimed two for 31, and Michael Palmer picked up two for 38.

Stingerz end Flyers unbeaten run in ABBA's First Division

The Northside Stingerz ended the unbeaten run of the EZ Fit Flyers in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) First Division League on Sunday.

The Northside Stingerz secured their eighth win in 10 games with a 55-45 victory against the Flyers in the second game of a Division

One double header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Joshua Minner produced a game-high 20 points, with five rebounds and five steals; Jayzee Saltibus sank 12 points and grabbed 20 rebounds; Kareem Edwards had seven points, eight rebounds, and five steals; and Devonte Carter chipped in with seven points and five

steals for the Northside Stingerz.

Xavier Meade converted 12 points; Alexis Jackson sank eight points and grabbed 19 rebounds; Javonte Daley had eight points and five steals; and Adonis Humphreys scored seven points and snatched 13 rebounds for the EZ Fit Flyers, who lost for the first

time in nine games.

The Kennedy's Club Ottos Full Throttle claimed their third win in 10 games with a 78-52 victory against the New Generation All Saints Slam in Sunday's second encounter.

Shaquille Kelly converted 20 points and claimed five rebounds; Warren Bo-

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Paragons 2 still unbeaten in female Division 2 volleyball league

Paragons 2 extended their unbeaten run in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Female Division 2 Development League on Sunday.

Paragons 2 won for the fourth time in as many games by recording a 3-0 straight-set victory against TOA Media and MKUU Tours Chargers Eagles in the second game of a double header at the indoor volleyball stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex.

The Paragons beat the Chargers Eagles, who lost for the first time in three encounters, 25-19, 25-14, and 25-18, in an hour and 20 minutes.

The Royal Cruisers 2 claimed their first win in four games by pulling off a hard-fought 3-2 victory against Starz 2 Juniors in Sunday's second encounter.

The Royal Cruisers secured victory with scores of 25-16, 20-25, 25-16, 22-25, and 15-2 in two hours and one minute as the Starz 2 Juniors lost for the third time in four games.

The Pytonz maintained their perfect winning for-



The Paragons 2 female volleyball squad.

mula in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Men's Division 1 Local League.

The Pytonz extended their unbeaten run, recording their seventh win in as many games as they won by default against the Sharks who were unable to field a team for their encounter.

The Pytonz were

awarded a 3-0 victory (25-0, 25-0, 25-0) after the Sharks forfeited the game by showing up with only five players. It was their sixth loss in seven games for the Sharks.

The Pytonz also claimed a hard-fought 3-2 victory against the High Flyerz 2 Phoenix in their previous encounter.

The Pytonz came from

two sets behind to achieve their victory, winning 0-25, 18-25, 25-14, 25-13, and 15-12 against the High Flyerz 2 Phoenix in one hour and 35 minutes. It was the fourth loss in seven games for the High Flyerz 2 Phoenix.

The Top Ranking Storming Lions also claimed a tough 3-0 victory against High Flyerz 1.

The Storming Lions recorded their fifth win in seven games with a 25-23, 27-25, and 25-21 victory in an hour and 18 minutes against High Flyers 1, who lost for the third time in six encounters.

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gle produced 16 points, nine rebounds, eight assists, and eight steals; and Morlon David had 16 points, five rebounds, and five assists for the Ottos Full Throttle.

In support, Akeem Davis sank 13 points and snatched five rebounds, and N'Kenge

Drew scored 11 points and grabbed eight rebounds for the Ottos Full Throttle.

Judah Ferris sank 20 points; Kim Casey had 12 points, 16 rebounds, and eight assists; and Javid Joseph scored eight points for the All Saints Slam, which lost for the ninth time in 10 games.

Sports News

Blackhawks trounce Combined Schools to stay unbeaten in Super40 Cup

Reigning champions, the Liberta Blackhawks, trounced Combined Schools by 154 runs to extend their unbeaten run and remain sole leaders of the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Super40 Cup competition on Sunday.

Michael Greaves hit a century, and Elroy Francis Jr. fell three runs short of achieving the same feat, as the Blackhawks won for the fifth time in six matches by amassing 266 for three off their 40 overs after winning the toss and batting at



Glenton Williams

Ball Beef in Liberta.

Greaves hammered 100 not out off 89 balls, including three sixes and three fours, and Francis Jr. struck 97 off 111 balls.

In reply, Combined Schools were dismissed for 112 in 31.5 overs, with coach Sylvester "Bouncing" Joseph getting 40 off 46 balls. Ephraim Pollard grabbed five wickets for nine runs, and captain Karima Gore claimed three for 16.

The New Winthorpes Lions and the Jennings Tigers each won for the fourth time in six matches to move into joint second place behind the Blackhawks.

The Lions beat Empire Nation by eight wickets in New Winthorpes. In a match reduced to 20 overs due to rain, Empire Nation made 118 for seven off their allotted overs after being sent in to bat.

The New Winthorpes Lions achieved victory at 119 for two with 13 balls to spare.

Opener Bartlette Henry hit 47 off 48 balls, and his opening partner, Asher Murray Cornelius, got 34.

The Jennings Tigers beat the All Saints Pythons by 106 runs via the Duckworth/Lewis Method in a rain-affected match in Jennings.

The Jennings Tigers won the toss and batted,

scoring 187 for seven off 39 overs. Captain Dahri Francis hammered 75 off 58 balls, including four sixes and five fours. Emmanuel Lawrence struck 36, and Glenton Williams, who opened the innings, made 33 off 38 balls.

In reply, the Pythons were dismissed for 86 in 19.1 overs. Left-arm spinner Glenton Williams grabbed four for 18, and Zavier Freeland claimed three for 24.

In the other two matches, the Pigotts Crushers and the WES Rising Sun Spartans each recorded their third win in six encounters.

The Crushers trounced the Bolans Blasters by 107 runs in a rain-affected match in Pigotts. The Crushers made 240 for seven off 25 overs.

Jewell Andrew slammed 77 off 25 balls, including six sixes and seven fours.

Captain Kadeem Henry also hit 77 off 61 balls, including nine fours and a six, and Joshua Grant scored 43 off 37 balls.

The Bolans Blasters were then restricted to 70 for nine off their allotted 25 overs. Uri Smith picked up three wickets for five runs.

The WES Rising Sun Spartans defeated the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles by 62 runs via the Duckworth/



Dahri Francis Lewis Method in a rain-affected match in Bethesda.

The Spartans made 186 in 28.3 overs, with opener Shane Burton getting 48 off 38 balls, including four fours and two sixes. Tayari Tonge captured three for 23, and off-spinner James Cornelius claimed three for 50.

Set a revised target of 165 runs in 20.3 overs, the Golden Eagles were restricted to 102 for eight.



Players of the Villa Lions football team

Empire relegated from Premier League after losing to Villa Lions

Empire was confirmed as the first team to be automatically relegated from this season's Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division following a 4-0 loss against the Villa Lions on Sunday.

The Villa Lions beat Empire in the only match in the second phase of the Premier League that was completed in Sunday's triple header at the ABFA Technical Center.

The goals were scored by Kwame "Munchie" Kirby in the 15th minute, Jaheim Ferron (30th), Orel Edwards (60th), and Tyrik Hughes in the 62nd minute.

Ferron was expelled in the 66th minute after receiving a second caution, which is an automatic red card, as the Villa Lions finished the match

with 10 players.

Their ninth win in 17 matches allows the Villa Lions to overtake the Greenbay Hoppers and move into fourth place with 30 points. The Villa Lions are two points ahead of the Greenbay Hoppers, and both teams have one match remaining for the season.

Empire became the first team to be relegated to next season's First Division after losing for the 13th time in 16 matches.

Their latest defeat leaves Empire in the cellar of the 15-team competition with five points and two matches remaining.

Empire, who have an inferior goal difference to all the other teams, can only finish with a maximum of 11 points.

It means Empire can only overtake Parham, who are second at the bottom of the standings with eight points. However, Parham has two games remaining.

The three teams that finished at the bottom of this year's Premier League will be relegated to compete in the First Division next season.

Sunday's second Premier League encounter between John Hughes and Green City was abandoned due to heavy showers. Both teams were deadlocked at nil-nil when their match was abandoned.

The heavy showers, which left the field waterlogged at the ABFA Technical Center, also forced the postponement of Sunday's third encounter between the Ottos Rangers and the Willikies Warriors.

Windies name A Team to tour Nepal

Cricket West Indies (CWI) men's selection panel has unveiled the 15-member squad for the West Indies Men's A Team, which is set to tour Nepal from April 25 to May 15.

Led by the experienced Roston Chase as captain and supported by Alick Athanaze as vice-captain, the West Indies Men's A Team will engage in a series of five Twenty20 (T20) matches against the Nepal senior men's team.

Brandon King sustained an injury during the recent West Indies Four-Day Championship and is rehabilitating. Meanwhile, Evin Lewis advised that he was unavailable for selection.

This tour holds significant importance as it serves as another phase in preparation leading up to the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup. The series also marks a historic occasion as it is West Indies' first-ever tour to Nepal.

Chase will take on the responsibility of captain for the first time at this level. Commenting on Chase's selection as captain, Dr. Desmond Haynes, CWI's lead selector, emphasized Chase's consistent display of diligence and leadership skills.

Dr. Haynes remarked, "Chase has exhibited over the past few years an impressive work ethic and proven leadership qualities."

He further noted, "No doubt since Chase made his T20I debut in October 2021 for the West Indies against Bangladesh, he has continued to make considerable strides."

Dr. Haynes further emphasized



Roston Chase the significance of this squad, stating "I am confident this Nepal tour marks a crucial step forward in our preparatory phase for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

"It presents an invaluable opportunity to get our players who are not in the IPL back on the park playing competitive T20 cricket, as well as provides the chance for us to expose a few emerging prospects."

In preparation for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, white ball head coach, Daren Sammy, said, "From a coaching perspective, the Nepal tour couldn't have come at a more opportune time.

"It offers us a chance to refine our World Cup squad, defining roles and personnel more clearly. Additionally, with nine players in the IPL, we can truly gauge and push the limits of our T20 team's depth."

The tour's opening T20 fixture will bowl off at Tribhuvan University on April 27.



Hayden Walsh Jr.

The deadline for submission of the West Indies World Cup squad is May 1, 2024. Prior to the World Cup, the West Indies team will host South Africa for a three-match T20 series from May 22 to 26.

FULL SQUAD: Roston Chase (captain), Alick Athanaze (vice-captain), Fabian Allen, Kadeem Alleyne, Joshua Bishop, Keacy Carty, Johnson Charles, Mark Deyal, Andre Fletcher, Matthew Forde, Obed McCoy, Gudakesh Motie, Keemo Paul, Oshane Thomas, and Hayden Walsh Jr.

The coaching and support staff accompanying the squad are as follows: Head Coach: Floyd Reifer; Assistant Coach: Rayon Griffith; Physiotherapist: Neil Barry; Strength and Conditioning Coach: Shayne Cooper; and Team Manager and Analyst: Avenesh Seetaram.