



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

# POINT EXPRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2024 | VOLUME 5 ISSUE 244 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

# MORE HAPI HOMES FOR 2025



## More HAPI homes are coming in 2025

The Home Improvement Programme for the Indigent (HAPI), as it was first conceived, has been earmarked for additional government investment for further expansion into 2025.

That's the word from Prime Minister Gaston Browne speaking Monday morning as the latest HAPI home was presented to a beneficiary in the Villa Area. He said the government is quite pleased with the programme started by Inspector Veldon Ragguette approximately ten years ago.

"We want to be able to help at least one hundred persons across the country each year through the programme. As such, the Cabinet has decided to inject an additional \$5 million into the programme annually," he revealed.

The prime minister however recognized that the HAPI programme could itself be hampered by a critical issue already affecting other government housing programmes; the shortage of skilled labour. Noting that the inmates of HM Prison com-



prise the main workforce for the programme, PM Bird said carving out an even greater role for the inmates may help solve the problem.

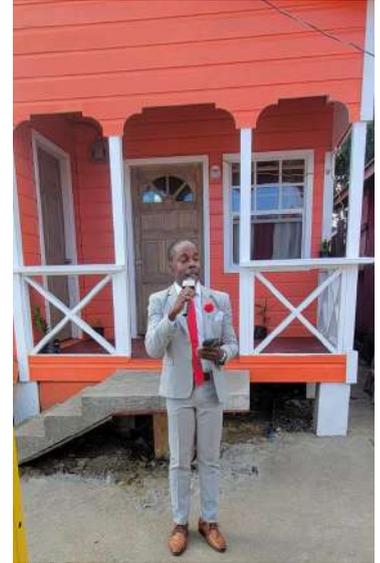
"I have started the discussion even today with the Minister (Attorney General Sir Steadroy Benjamin) where I advised him that we should get all of the prisoners with skills in the building trade, carpentry, plumbing, masonry, etc., who will be mandated to be part of the programme," he stated.

According to the Prime Minister there are concerns about the number of prison officers who accompany the prisoners whenever they

leave the prison walls. But, PM Browne believes that there are ways to get around this issue.

"I don't know that we can be overly conservative; we can adopt special constables or even retirees as we have to expand the HAPI programme. We may even have to supplement the inmates with persons from the society who are unemployed and looking gainful employment," he remarked.

The area MP indicated too that retired construction workers and builders will find a space in the HAPI programme to help with the construction of homes for those



in need.

Another service which the Cabinet is also considering is to make free broadband internet services available to recipients of the HAPI for one year.

The prime minister also addressed the issue of payments for prisoners taking part in the programme. He said he favours some form of stipend which could possibly be made available to the families of the inmates.

On Monday, Ronald Mussington took possession of a 3-bedroom wooden home in Villa. It came fully furnished with well-stocked cupboards.



## PM Browne participates in house handover to constituent

Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for St. John’s City West, Gaston Browne, working through the Ministry of Social Transformation on Monday handed over a newly constructed home valued at \$150,000 to Ronald Mussington of Villa. This initiative is part of the government’s Home Advancement Programme for the Indigent (HAPI).

Prime Minister Browne, was joined by Minister of Health and Social Transformation Sir Molwyn Joseph. Head of the Social Protection Board, Mary Baltimore and Founder of HAPI, Inspector Veldon Raguette at the handover ceremony.

Prime Minister Browne expressed his commitment to furthering the goals of the HAPI while emphasizing the government’s dedication to scaling up the initiative in the coming year, with plans to construct more houses



to benefit the nation’s most vulnerable. He also announced that the home will be outfitted with free broadband internet, which will be provided for up to one year, further improving the quality of life for Mussington and his family as well as future beneficiaries. The Prime Minister highlighted the government’s innovative

approach to the programme, which involves engaging skilled prisoners in the construction process. This initiative not only increases the number of houses built but also provides valuable opportunities for prisoners to develop skills that will aid in their reintegration into society.

the Prime Minister’s sentiments, emphasizing that the programme is about more than just building houses—it is about transforming lives. He noted that the involvement of skilled prisoners in the construction process is a testament to the government’s commitment to rehabilitation and second

Minister Joseph echoed

*cont’d on pg 4*



# Local News



*cont'd from pg 3*

chances. “These individuals are learning valuable skills that will prepare them for life beyond incarceration, ensuring they can contribute positively to society once released,” Minister Joseph observed as he praised the programme’s holistic approach, which uplifts not only the recipients of the homes but also those involved in their construction.

Head of the Social Protection Board, Mary Baltimore, highlighted the collaborative effort required to make the programme successful. She commended the Ministry and its partners for their tireless work in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. Baltimore reiterated the Board’s ongoing commitment to identifying and supporting individuals and families in



need, ensuring that the programme continues to reach those who require it most.

Founder of HAPI, Veldon Raguette, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the Ministry, and the Social Protection Board for their unwavering support. He described this partnership as the most impactful collaboration in all of his years of being involved in

charity work, emphasizing the life-changing impact the programme has had on individuals like Monday’s recipient, Ronald Mussington. Raguette called on corporate and community partners to continue supporting initiatives that create sustainable change.

As the new homeowner, Mussington shared his gratitude for the generosity and support he has received. He expressed that this home represents a fresh start and a brighter future for him and his family.

One corporate entity which has been a sponsor of the HAPI programme since its inception, King’ Casino, presented 50-inch smart TV



to the Mussington Family.

The Ministry of Social Transformation thanks Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, Townhouse Furnishing, King’s Casino, Cool and Smooth, Furniture Gallery, Louis Brothers, Leslie Barnes, Sunny Limited and the Harrison Centre for their sponsorship which made this a success.



## Technical Vocational Training comes to Barbuda

An innovative Technical Vocational Programme, aimed at equipping students with practical skills and career-focused education has been launched at the Sir McChesney George Secondary School in Barbuda.

According to Principal Rexford Harry, this pioneering initiative addresses the needs of youth who often feel underserved by traditional academic approaches. During his presentation, he drew attention to the significant gap between the school’s average student intake and its average graduating class, emphasizing that the introduction of TVET programs could be instrumental in closing this divide.

Director of TVET in the Ministry of Education, Marion Byron, highlighted that TVET training provides students with access to dynamic pathways for workforce readiness while contributing



to socioeconomic growth and sustainability. Together, their perspectives underscored the programme’s transformative potential to empower young people and shape a brighter future.

During the launch ceremony, Pethrolyna Isaac, a representative from barbudanGO who is the implementing body of the programme, highlighted the transformative potential of vocational education. “This programme provides an opportunity to reimagine

learning environments,” one presenter noted, “shifting towards a hybrid model that produces industry-ready youth equipped with both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.” The focus is on creating a pathway for students to thrive in specialized trades, which aligns with the community’s broader goals of economic

resilience and sustainability.

Showcasing Opportunities and Excellence

Attendees were given an immersive experience with guided tours of the state-of-the-art facilities. These included the Culinary Arts Lab, where budding chefs will hone their skills, and the Beauty Basics Cosme-

*cont’d on pg 6*



**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**  
with

The Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority -

serves as the regulatory authority for safety and security oversight of civil aviation activities and the Communications, Navigation, and Surveillance (CNS) service provider in Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Additionally, the ECCAA acts as the CNS service provider for Anguilla, Montserrat, and Tortola.

The Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) is inviting applications from suitably qualified professionals to fill the position of:

**Director – Finance and Administration**

For more information on the employment opportunity and details for submission of applications, please visit the following websites [www.eccaa.aero](http://www.eccaa.aero) or [www.oecs.int](http://www.oecs.int).

To apply, email your application to [spoyotte@eccaa.aero](mailto:spoyotte@eccaa.aero).

Application deadline is 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Please note only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

# Local News



cont'd from pg 5

...tology Lab, which will serve as a hub for aspiring cosmetologists.

Adjunct tutors for each programme introduced themselves, sharing their industry experience and passion for

mentoring the next generation of professionals.

Adjunct Tutors, Ashani Cochrane (Culinary Arts) and Afiya Frank (Beauty Basics) also provided an overview of the curriculum for the programs.

The Culinary Arts course, set to begin in January 2025, will cover essential topics such as food safety, basic cooking techniques, and nutrition. Similarly, the Beauty Basics Cosmetology course will delve into skincare, make-up, and introductory message therapy techniques, ensuring students acquire skills that are both relevant and marketable.

In a symbolic gesture, students enrolled in the Culinary Arts course were presented with chef hats and aprons, sparking excitement and a sense of pride as they prepare to embark on this new journey.

### A Collaborative Effort

The success of the Technical Vocational Programme is the result of a collaborative effort involving several key stakeholders. The programme is coordinated by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum - Caribbean, implemented by BarbudanGO Inc., and supported by the Barbuda Local Council, the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Creative Industries, and Sir McChesney George Secondary School. This initiative has been made possible through the generous funding provided by the European Union. This collaboration underscores the importance of partnerships in education and workforce development, bringing together expertise, resources, and shared commitment to empower youth and strengthen the local economy.

**ANTIGUA MASONRY PRODUCTS**

# CHRISTMAS

## Sale

**UP TO 50% OFF**  
**Plus 10% ABST OFF**

**ALL BLOCKS WITH BLEMISHES, CONCRETE PAVERS, DECORATIVE BLOCKS**  
(Blocks sold by Pallets ONLY)

Opening hours for Friday 20th December, 2024- 7:00am to 4:00pm  
 Saturday 21st December, 2024 - 7:00am to 3:00pm  
 Sunday 22nd December, 2024- 8:00am to 2:00pm

Visit or call:  
 Bendals, St. Mary's Antigua  
 Tel. #: 268-484-3250

## Sir Molwyn Joseph congratulates Morvin Fiedtkou on becoming a certified pharmacist

The Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, along with the management and staff, extends heartfelt congratulations to Morvin Fiedtkou, Deputy Director of the Antigua and Barbuda Emergency Medical Services (ABEMS), on achieving certification as a pharmacist.



Morvin Fiedtkou

Minister Joseph commended Fiedtkou for his dedication and the significance of this milestone, stating, “This achievement not only reflects Morvin’s personal commitment to excellence but also enhances the capacity of the Antigua and Barbuda Emergency Medical Services to deliver high-quality care. Having a certified pharmacist within the leadership team strengthens the ability to manage medications and improve emergency medical response, which is a critical component of healthcare delivery.”

Reflecting on his journey, Fiedtkou described the challenges he faced while pursuing his studies. “The most challenging part of this journey was balancing my personal life, professional responsibilities, and the demanding schedule of being a full-time student. Pharmacy is heavily rooted in chemistry, which required intense focus and dedica-

tion. Despite the difficulties, I am immensely grateful to my family, friends, and the incredible staff at ABEMS, whose unwavering support and encouragement made this achievement possible.”

This accomplishment is expected to significantly contribute to the development of ABEMS, enhancing its ability to provide top-tier healthcare services to the people of Antigua and Barbuda. Fiedtkou’s new expertise will allow ABEMS to better manage pharmaceutical needs, streamline medication processes, and improve patient outcomes in emergency medical care.

The Ministry of Health celebrates Fiedtkou’s success as an inspiration for others within the healthcare system to pursue professional growth. Congratulations once again to Morvin Fiedtkou on this remarkable achievement!

### SIR LESTER BIRD MEDICAL CENTRE

# WE'RE HIRING



Located on a hill in the city (St. John’s), Sir Lester Bird Mount St. John’s Medical Centre, a teaching hospital serves a diverse group of patients — from residents to tourists.

Everything matters to us at SLBMC. Because when it’s you and your family, everything matters to you.



### JOIN OUR TEAM!

Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) employees are part of a premier organization dedicated to excellence in patient care and education. By working at SLBMC, you gain the opportunity and the responsibility to make a real difference in the world. Take a closer look at the open positions below and submit your resume for consideration if you are interested in helping contribute to the legacy of great achievement and even greater promise at SLBMC.

### OPEN POSITIONS:

- ✓ Scrub Technician
- ✓ MRI Assistant
- ✓ HVAC Technician
- ✓ Nursing Assistant
- ✓ Quality Manager
- ✓ Quality Coordinator
- ✓ Radiology Supervisor
- ✓ Unit Nurse Manager Oncology
- ✓ Customer Experience Agent
- ✓ Shift Supervisor
- ✓ Pharmacy Technician
- ✓ Electrician
- ✓ IDEH Health Nurse
- ✓ Pathology Attendant
- ✓ Social Services Secretary
- ✓ Administrative Assistant Director of Operations

Submission Deadline: January 3, 2024.



To apply- visit us at: [www.msjmc.org/careers](http://www.msjmc.org/careers)

## Antigua and Barbuda High Commission hosts book launch for Maurice Hope's Land of Glory

Antigua and Barbuda High Commissioner to the UK, Karen-Mae Hill of hosted an engaging book launch event on the 11th of December 2024 at the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission in London to celebrate the release of Land of Hope and Glory by Maurice Hope GCH MBE.

Land of Hope and Glory highlights the inspiring journey of Maurice Hope, a proud son of Antigua and Barbuda, whose life embodies the resilience and triumph of the Windrush generation. Born in Antigua in 1951, Hope migrated to London at the age of nine, overcoming difficult odds to become a world champion boxer and a celebrated coach.

During an insightful conversation with sports commentator Jaydee Dyer, Maurice Hope shared the story of his life, highlighting the experiences that shaped him and inspired his boxing career. He recounted how he discovered boxing as a way to channel his energy and focus on a path to success. Hope also spoke about

the racial obstacles he faced growing up in the United Kingdom, detailing how he overcame these challenges through perseverance, determination and self-belief.

The conversation also gave the audience a glimpse into Hope's celebrated boxing career. He shared insights from his world championship fights, breaking down his experiences in the ring. Hope provided practical boxing tips and emphasised the importance of discipline, mental toughness and rigorous training for success.

Jaydee Dyer, whose maternal grandparents are from Antigua and Barbuda, guided the discussion in a professional manner, drawing out key moments of Hope's journey.

High Commissioner Hill praised Maurice Hope for his achievements: "Maurice Hope's story is one of resilience, perseverance and triumph. His success serves as a powerful example of the strength of the Antigua and Barbudan spirit, and we are immensely proud to celebrate his legacy with this



book launch. We are deeply grateful to Maurice for sharing his journey so candidly and to Jaydee for facilitating such an engaging and inspiring conversation".

Hope expressed his gratitude for the evening's success, saying: "I extend my gratitude to the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission, in particular Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill, for supporting this book launch. I also thank all the attendees and I am grateful for their support. The event was a huge success, and I look forward to another collaboration with the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission in the future."

The evening's programme included a musical prelude by Harry Hughes on steelpan, a prayer by Reverend Canon Les Isaac OBE (founder of Street Pastors), and the singing of the national anthems of Antigua

and Barbuda and the United Kingdom by Tiffany Smith, an Antiguan PhD students studying in London. Mistress of Ceremonies Annetta Jackson, an Antiguan Chevening Scholar kept the evening flowing seamlessly, while Natalie Hope, Maurice Hope's daughter, delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks.

Maurice Hope's illustrious career has earned him numerous accolades, including the WBC World Super Welterweight title, an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II, and the Grand Cross of the Most Precious Order of Princely Heritage (GCH) – Sports, awarded by the Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda.

Land of Hope and Glory is now available, offering readers an inspiring account of Maurice Hope's journey from humble beginnings to global acclaim.



## Attorney Dane Hamilton, KC, dies suddenly

Dane Hamilton, KC, a highly respected and decorated attorney whose reputation is well-known throughout the sub-region, died suddenly Monday afternoon from a suspected heart

attack.

Hamilton's career took him from being Director of Public Prosecutions in both Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis to a highly respected

and sought after defense attorney.

Some of the high-profile cases he has handled as attorney cover the range of business, criminal and politics.

## The Wait is Over! "Children of the Soil" series expands with highly anticipated Volumes 2 and 3

Following the overwhelming success of the Children of the Soil: Jumbo Colouring and Activity Book launched in 2022, fans of the beloved series can now rejoice. Author and creator Karian Christian is thrilled to announce the release of two new additions to the series: Children of the Soil Volume 2: Colouring and Activity Book and Children of the Soil Volume 3: Alphabet and Tracing Book

These exciting new volumes, beautifully illustrated by Chaneil Imhoff of Avada Digital, continue the mission of celebrating Caribbean culture while fostering creativity and learning in young minds. Perfect for children, families, and educators, the series is a vibrant resource that highlights the richness of Caribbean heritage through engaging and educational activities.

What's New?

- Volume 2: Colouring and Activity Book

Dive deeper into Caribbean culture with a fresh collection of activities and colorful adventures that inspire curiosity and connection to heritage.

- Volume 3: Alphabet and Tracing Book

Designed for preschool and kindergarten learners, this book builds foundational literacy skills through a Caribbean lens, making learning fun and culturally relevant.

Both volumes are now available for purchase on Amazon, ensuring accessibility for families and educators across the globe.

Purchase Here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0D-Q2KT3F3?binding=paper->

[back&ref\\_ast\\_author\\_bsi\) A Labour of Love](#)

"The launch of Children of the Soil Volumes 2 and 3 marks an exciting milestone in our journey to celebrate Caribbean culture and inspire young minds," says Karian Christian, Author and Creator of Children of the Soil. "These books are a labour of love, created to nurture creativity, literacy, and a deeper connection to our rich heritage. I'm thrilled to finally share these highly anticipated additions with fam-

ilies and educators across the region and beyond."

About the Author

Karian Christian is a passionate advocate for cultural preservation and early childhood education. Through the Children of the Soil series, she combines her love for storytelling with her commitment to showcasing the vibrant traditions of Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean.

The books are expected to arrive in Antigua and Barbuda today.



## State Insurance spreads holiday cheer with Gift Giving to Adele School

St John's, Antigua (December 12, 2024) – In the spirit of the Christmas season, State Insurance Company Limited (SICL) made a heartwarming donation to the students of Adele School to spread joy and cheer during this festive time of year. This gesture is part of the company's efforts to brighten the holidays for children within the community.

The staff of SICL were thrilled to interact with the children and experience the warm smiles and excitement through our donation. Assistant Manager of Marketing and Public Relations expressed, " It was grati-



fy to see the joy on the faces of the children." Ms. Beazer stated, "We believe in impacting the communities we serve and sharing

the season's joy with these wonderful children is a privilege."

State Insurance Company Limited (SICL) remains

committed to supporting local communities and looks forward to spreading goodwill and making a difference throughout the year.

**KFC**

# FESTIVE FEAST

**Santa's Wow Box** \$28.<sup>99</sup>  
 -Burger -Fries  
 -1pc Leg/Thigh  
 -Med Drink

**Santa's Festive Feast Bucket** \$59.<sup>99</sup>  
 6 Pieces of Chicken  
 (2 wings, 2 drumsticks, 2 legs, 1 breast)  
 Included Sides:  
 Fries, Corn, Mash, Biscuit x2



Antigua Barbuda  
**FESTIVALS  
COMMISSION**  
**ANTIGUA  
AND  
BARBUDA**  
*The beach is just the beginning...*

**12TH JAN 2025**  
**NIGHT TWO**

# ONE NATION

MUSIC FESTIVAL

FEATURING:

# ABYSSO

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**ANTIGUA  
RECREATION  
GROUNDS**

available on  
**ticketing**  
TICKETS AVAILABLE

**CIU**  
CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT UNIT

Antigua & Barbuda  
**Youth  
Symphony  
Orchestra**  
Promoting Excellence Through Music

**ONE PEOPLE. ONE LOVE**

## Telegram pushes extremist groups to users - study

By Bronagh Munro

The social media platform Telegram uses an algorithm that promotes extremist content, a new study shared exclusively with the BBC has revealed.

The report, from the US civil rights organisation the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), found that the “similar channels” feature introduced last year recommends extremist channels even to users browsing subjects such as celebrities or technology.

A professor also showed BBC Panorama how he found someone within moments on Telegram who offered to ship an Uzi submachine gun to the UK for £850.

Telegram says users are “only presented with content they have chosen to engage with” and it removes millions of pieces of harmful content daily.

The company’s founder, Russian billionaire Pavel Durov, is under formal investigation in France accused of failing to stop criminality on his platform. He has denied the allegations.

Best known as a messaging app marketed with secretive features, Telegram also allows its almost one billion users to set up groups where they can broadcast messages and videos to up to 200,000 people at a time.

SPLC researchers looked at 28,000 of these Telegram channels for their report Telegram’s Toxic Recommendations.

It found that users browsing mundane topics would be recommended extreme content - while users looking at one form of extreme content, such as anti-government conspiracies, would be pushed towards other extremist ideologies such as antisemitism or white nationalism.



Lead researcher Megan Squire demonstrated how the algorithm works by searching for “Donald Trump” in a newly set up Telegram account.

Immediately in the “similar channels” recommendations were multiple examples of channels promoting the Q-Anon conspiracy, which maintains with zero evidence that Mr Trump is waging a secret war against elite Satan-worshipping paedophiles in government, business and the media.

Another search for “UK riots” showed a meme about Adolf Hitler as the first result, followed by suggestions for a series of channels run by violent far-right groups.

“Some of these groups are pretty active. You’re not just on Telegram getting memes, you’re getting shuffled into to actual events. They’re having events on the ground with people showing up,” Ms Squire said.

In the hours after the Southport knife attack in August, which prompted riots, Telegram users posted some of the first calls for protest, along with false claims the suspected attacker was an asylum seeker.

Ms Squire told BBC Panorama that the research showed Telegram had become a “digital threat”.

“On a scale of one to 10, Telegram I would say is an 11. It’s dishing out enormous amounts of criminal content, extremist content. It is extremely dangerous in my opinion,” she said.

A former insider who was part of Telegram’s inner circle for six years, Elies Campo, told Panorama that he had challenged Pavel Durov about extreme material in 2021.

“His stance was it’s not up to a platform like us to decide who should be speaking out. It was clear that he didn’t want to dedicate more resources to it,” Mr Campo said.

“I think if he could choose, he would choose more a stand where he doesn’t have to moderate anything.”

Prof David Maimon from Georgia State University, who has spent six years studying illegal content on Telegram, said there were tens of thousands of channels offering everything from tools for scammers to guns.

“Telegram is definitely one of the most important platforms criminals

*cont’d on pg 13*

## Bitcoin hits new record high of more than \$106,000

By João da Silva

Bitcoin has surged to a new record high, extending a rally that has seen the cryptocurrency's price rise by more than 50% since Donald Trump's victory in the 5 November election.

The world's largest cryptocurrency briefly passed \$106,000 (£83,890), before falling back to around \$105,000 in Asia trade on Monday.

The incoming Trump administration is seen as being far more friendly towards cryptocurrencies than the Biden White House.

On Thursday, the US president-elect reiterated that he is considering creating a national stockpile of the digital currency, similar to the country's strategic oil reserve.

"The Bitcoin rally since the election has been parabolic and the FOMO - or fear of missing out - rally is gathering momentum," Peter McGuire from trading platform XM.com told the



The world's largest cryptocurrency has risen by more than 50% since Trump's election victory. BBC.

"Many investors believe \$120,000 is achievable by the end of the year and then in 2025 there's talk of greater than \$150,000 by mid-year".

Earlier this month, Trump named Silicon Valley entrepreneur David Sacks as his artificial intelligence (AI) and cryptocurrency tsar.

Mr Sacks is a former PayPal executive and a close friend of Trump ad-

viser and mega-donor Elon Musk.

Trump has also said he would nominate pro-cryptocurrency Washington attorney Paul Atkins as the new head of the Wall Street regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Last month, the SEC's current head, Gary Gensler, said he would resign from the role on the day of Trump's inauguration, on 20 January next year.

"I thank President Biden for entrusting me with this incredible responsibility. The SEC has met our mission and enforced the law without fear or favour," Mr Gensler wrote on the social media platform X.

Trump had previously revealed plans to sack Mr Gensler on "day one" of his new administration after the SEC chairman took legal action against cryptocurrency firms, sparking controversy in some quarters.

*cont'd from pg 12*

are using now for criminality," he said.

He showed Panorama how within moments of posting a message saying he needed "an Uzi and a shotgun", a seller posted a picture of an Uzi and said he could "get it fast-tracked" to the programme's address in Belfast within two or three days.

The French authorities have accused Pavel Durov of complicity in drug dealing, organised crime and

sharing child abuse images on Telegram. He is currently on bail and is not allowed to leave France.

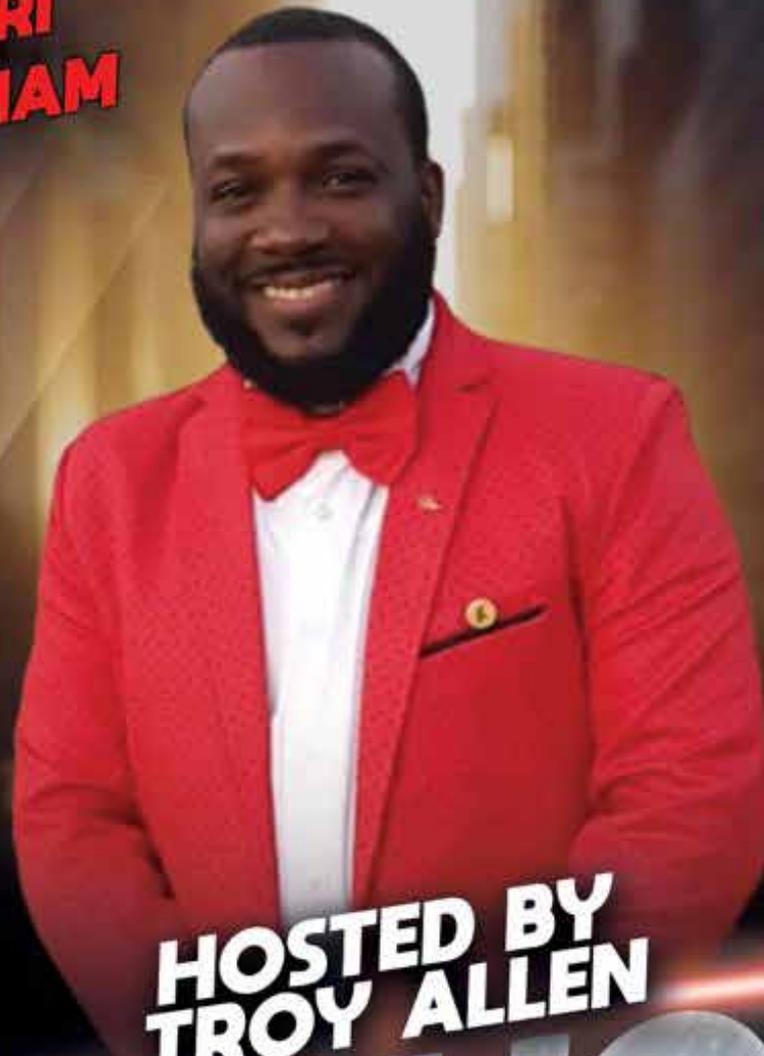
Telegram says it takes extremist and illegal content very seriously and its moderation teams and AI tool remove millions of pieces of harmful content each day.

It says its users only receive the content to which they have subscribed - as Telegram does not "inject or promote content".

"The 'channel suggestions' feature shows only channels with the same topic as those a user already follows. This approach ensures that users are only presented with content they have chosen to engage with. This is completely different from how other platforms make suggestions," the company said.

Telegram said "it does not amplify content, but instead shows topic-based suggestions tied to user choices".

**MON - FRI  
9AM TO 11AM**



**HOSTED BY  
TROY ALLEN**

# TALK YOUR MIND

**CALL: 562-3989 OR 562-2991 | US: 718 285 7889  
FACEBOOK LIVE @ POINTE FM99.1**

**WE ARE GETTING STRONGER**

## RSS investigates WhatsApp scam trend in region

**By Rosemary Forde**

The Regional Security System (RSS) is alerting the public about numerous WhatsApp scams which have severely impacted persons across the region.

According to RSS, the alarming trend has not gone unnoticed by officials of the Regional Security System (RSS) Headquarters, who are working diligently to ensure that citizens of its member states do not fall victim to these emerging scams.

The unsuspecting victims have received



WhatsApp messages from numbers purporting to be sensitive, requesting a code from unknown numbers, or a WhatsApp support representative, requesting a code

*cont'd on pg 16*

**POINTE ON THE STREETZ**  
 HOSTED BY  
**VERNON A. SPRINGER**

**PBN**  
 POINT BROADCASTING NETWORK

**TUE - FRI**  
**2PM - 3PM**

**CALL: 562-3989 OR 562-2991**

**f POINT FM99.1**

# Regional News



## Barbados signs \$40M loan for south coast water reclamation project

By Rosemary Forde

The Government of Barbados and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have signed a \$40 million loan, which is expected to drive climate resiliency and water security in the island.

The agreement was signed by Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley and President of the IDB, Ilan Goldfajn, during a recent ceremony at Ilaro Court, St Michael.

“The real work begins now in being able to make sure we can reconstruct the South Coast Sewage Treatment Plant by allowing it to have treated water as opposed to separating liquids from solids,” Prime Minister Mottley stated.

The Prime Minister said that flooding, drought-like conditions, climate change,



President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Ilan Goldfajn and Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley display the signed documents for the \$40 million loan aimed at driving climate resiliency and water security in Barbados, as officials look on. Photo: BGIS.

pests, and pathogens will continue to impact the agricultural sector, and these upcoming enhancements were “critical”. She noted

that wars and supply chain issues could also impact Barbados’ food security.

“We have recognised that it is going to be com-

pounded by the continued wars and conflicts.

“The disruption in the supply chain will lead to increased pricing and the return of migrant labour will lead to compromised capacity with respect to growing crops, where labour is a key component of growing vegetables and fruit we depend on.”

“We have to become more resilient, self-sufficient, self-reliant, and we can’t do that unless we transform how we produce,” she added.

Prime Minister Mottley and President Goldfajn also held a bilateral meeting, where they discussed a number of issues of mutual interest to both parties.

**cont’d from pg 15**

received via SMS be sent to the contacting number. Users are made to believe that the code is required to verify their WhatsApp account. Once this is done, the hackers gain access and control of the victim’s account.

The statement explained that the hackers use the target’s number to send messages to persons in their contact list, requesting money be sent to them via a money remitter.

In some instances, hackers claim to be stranded overseas and in need of money to pay for a hotel or airline ticket. The offenders are also known to send links or codes to these contacts, as a means of soliciting more victims.

The RSS’ Asset Recovery Unit (ARU) urged all WhatsApp users to remain vigilant and exercise caution when utilizing this communication platform.

Persons are asked to follow these guidelines to significantly reduce the risk of falling prey to these criminal actors:

Follow the recommended steps to verify requests

Protect your personal information

Be cautious with verification codes

Report any suspicious activity to local

law enforcement agencies

Enable two-factor authentication on WhatsApp

The public is also encouraged to stay abreast of this trend, and cooperate with local authorities.

## Canada's finance minister quits over Trump tariff dispute with Trudeau

By Nadine Yousif

Canada's Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland has resigned from her post, citing disagreements with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on how to respond to incoming President Donald Trump's threat of tariffs.

She announced her resignation in a letter to Trudeau on Monday, in which she said the two have been "at odds about the best path forward for Canada", and pointed to the "grave challenge" posed by Trump's policy of "aggressive economic nationalism".

Freeland said the decision comes after Trudeau informed her last week that he no longer wanted her to be his government's top economic adviser.

Her resignation came hours before she was due to provide an annual fiscal government update in parliament.

The move may push Trudeau's already shaky minority government to the brink.

After nine years in power, the prime minister has faced growing calls to resign over concerns he is a drag on his party's fortunes. The Liberal leader's approval rate has plummeted from 63% when he was first elected to 28% in June of this year, according to one poll tracker.

Following Freeland's



Chrystia Freeland resigned from her post as finance minister Monday.

departure on Monday, five sitting Liberal MP publicly called on Trudeau to step down.

"Let's put it this way - firing the minister of finance who has served you extremely well is not what I'd call a trustworthy move," Helena Jacek, an MP from Markham-Stouffville in Ontario, told reporters, before saying that Trudeau should resign.

An emergency Liberal caucus meeting was set for 1700 local time (22:00 GMT).

Within hours of Freeland's announcement, Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc was sworn in as her replacement. LeBlanc, who has been close friends with the prime minister since childhood, is considered one of his most loyal

allies.

Trudeau was present at the swearing-in - his first appearance in front of media since Freeland's announcement - but he did not provide any statements. His office and the finance department both did not respond to the BBC's request for comment.

In her publicly-shared resignation letter, Freeland said Canada needs to keep its "fiscal powder dry" to deal with the threat of sweeping tariffs from US President-elect Donald Trump.

She added this means "eschewing costly political gimmicks" that Canada cannot afford.

Trump has promised to impose a levy of 25% on imported Canadian goods, which economists have

warned would significantly hurt Canada's economy.

Referencing the tariffs, Freeland called them a "threat" that needs to be taken "extremely seriously".

She added that this means "pushing back against 'America First' economic nationalism" and working with unity in response to these tariff threats.

When the fall economic statement was released on Monday afternoon, it revealed a C\$60b deficit (\$42bn; £33bn) - far exceeding Freeland's C\$40bn target.

She and Trudeau were reportedly also in disagreement over a series of recently-proposed policies by the prime minister designed to address the country's cost-of-living crisis.

*cont'd on pg 18*

# International

AROUND THE WORLD



*cont'd from pg 17*

Among them is a cheque of C\$250 that the government wanted to send to every Canadian earning less than C\$150,000 annually. These cheques were expected to cost the federal government a total of C\$4.68bn.

Another is a temporary tax break on essential items during the holidays which is anticipated to cost C\$1.6bn in lost tax revenue.

Freeland's office had reportedly been concerned about the price of these two policies, saying they are economically unwise at a time when the country's

deficit is growing.

The tax holiday has since been approved in the House of Commons, but the C\$250-cheques hit a hurdle when the New Democratic Party (NDP) - a centre-left party in parliament - signalled it would not lend its support to the policy unless it is expanded.

A poll by the Angus Reid Institute showed that four out of five Canadians viewed the cheques as a political move designed to win public goodwill as Trudeau's popularity plummets.

In response to Freeland's exit, Pierre Poilievre,

leader of the opposition Conservative Party of Canada, called for a federal election as soon as possible.

"Everything is spiralling out of control. We simply cannot go on like this," he said, adding that her resignation comes "at the very worst time".

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh called on Trudeau to resign. But Singh, whose party has propped up Trudeau's minority government thus far, stopped short of committing to a vote of non-confidence, which would effectively force a federal election.

Freeland, who also

holds the position of deputy prime minister, has long been one of Trudeau's closest allies within his Liberal party. She has held the key role of Canada's finance minister since 2020, helping to lead the country through the pandemic and its aftermath.

Other members of the Liberal party's cabinet have since reacted to her resignation.

Minister of Transport Anita Anand described Freeland as a "good friend," and added: "This news has hit me really hard and I'll reserve further comment until I have time to process it."

In a statement, the Business Council of Canada called Freeland's resignation "deeply troubling" and said the concerns that she raises put into question "whose interests the federal government is looking out for".

Canada's public broadcaster CBC reported that Freeland's decision to quit was not expected today, citing a senior federal government source.

Freeland said she intends to stay on as a Liberal member of parliament, and that she will run again in Canada's upcoming election, which must be held on or before October.

Her resignation comes after another cabinet member, housing minister Sean Fraser, announced he will not be seeking re-election, saying he wants to spend more time with his family.

**STATE INSURANCE**  
COMPANY LIMITED

Live in a better State of mind

I am grateful for:

ANTICUA (268) 481-7800/04 BARBUDA (268) 727-7422

info@sicffinancial.com www.sicffinancial.com

## Two killed by student at Wisconsin Christian school

A student opened fire at a private Christian school in the US state of Wisconsin, injuring six people and killing a teacher and teenage student.

Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes has so far declined to identify the attacker or their gender, but US media reports the attacker is a 17-year-old female.

Authorities say the attacker was in attendance at Abundant Life Christian School before opening fire and was found dead at the scene. Six students were injured, including two who suffered life-threatening injuries.

“Today is a sad day not only for Madison, for our entire country,” Chief Barnes said. “We have to do a better job in our community.”

He added the police had not identified a motive in the shooting, and the suspect’s family was co-operating with the investigation.

Officers responded to a 911 call of an active shooter at the Christian school around 11:00 local time (17:00GMT) on Monday. The attacker attended school before the shooting, Chief Barnes said.

The shooting was confined to one space, but it’s unclear if it was in a classroom or a hallway.

Barbara Wiers, director of relations at the school, said the school had conducted active shooter training earlier this year and the information was “very fresh” for educators to put into practice Monday.

She said while the school does not have a dedicated police officer, known as a school resource officer, the doors of all classrooms automatically lock and anyone wanting to gain entry to the campus must be buzzed in through the primary entrance.

Ms Wiers, who said she was teach-



ing at the time of the attack, said students handled themselves “brilliantly”.

“They were clearly scared,” she said. “When they heard ‘lockdown, lockdown’ and nothing else, they knew it was real.”

Police say they found the shooter dead when they arrived at the school, along with a handgun. No officers fired weapons.

Police have not named any of the victims, and have not provided any details about the student attacker. CBS News, the BBC’s US partner, as well as other US media outlets report that the attacker is female.

Chief Barnes said two students were in critical condition in the hospital facing life-threatening injuries. Four others were taken to hospital with non life-threatening injuries, two of whom have since been released.

Authorities have appealed for witnesses who saw or heard the attack to come speak to police, and that they hope these accounts will shed light on the attacker’s motive.

“But that’s not something we want to rush. We’re not gonna interrogate students,” Chief Barnes said. “We’re

gonna give them an opportunity to come in and tell us what they saw when they’re ready.”

He added that “every child, every person in that building is a victim and will be a victim forever”.

The chief said officers responded to the school as they were undergoing training at a training centre for law enforcement located three miles away.

“What began as a training day became an actual day,” he said.

The shooting also resulted in a large response from emergency officials. Madison Fire Chief Chris Carbon said 15 ambulances responded.

Officials from the FBI also responded, as well as other federal and local law enforcement officials.

The Abundant Life Christian School has around 400 students ranging from kindergarten through high school.

“Please pray for our Challenger Family,” the school wrote in a post on Facebook. The post quickly received hundreds of comments of support from people across the US.

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers  
*cont’d on pg 20*

# Bangladesh beats West Indies by 7 runs in first T20I

KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent (AP) - Bangladesh opened their three-match Twenty20 International (T20I) series against the West Indies with a tight seven-run win at Arnos Vale in St. Vincent on Sunday night.

At 61 for seven in the 12th over, the West Indies looked a long shot to get close to Bangladesh's 147 for six off 20 overs, but some lusty hitting from captain Rovman Powell got the hosts within 10 runs from the final over to steal victory.

But Bangladesh seamer Hasan Mahmud, who finished with two for 18, produced a stunning last over and dismissed Powell for 60 off 35 balls, and two balls later, ended the match by bowling Alzarri Joseph with the final delivery to bowl out the West Indies for 140 in 19.5 overs.

Mahedi Hasan took a career-best four for 13 from four overs for the tourists, including four of the West Indies' top five batters.

Earlier, opener Soumya Sarkar top-scored for Bangladesh with a breezy



Mahedi Hasan, third right, celebrates with his Bangladesh teammates after claiming career-best four wickets against the West Indies during the first T20 International at Arnos Vale in St. Vincent on Sunday, December 15, 2024. (Getty Images)

43 from 32 balls, with two fours and three sixes.

Handy lower-order batting contributions from Jaker Ali (27 from 27 balls), Shamim Hossain (27 from 13 balls), and Mahedi Hasan (26 not out from 24 balls) lifted Bangladesh to 147 for six from their 20 overs.

Left-arm spinner Akeal Hossein

captured two for 13, and pacer Obed McCoy claimed two for 30 for the West Indies after the men from the Caribbean won the coin toss and elected to field.

Both teams will clash in the second match on Tuesday, and the third match is on Thursday at the same venue in Kingstown, St. Vincent.

## cont'd from pg 19

said that he was closely monitoring the situation and praying for everyone involved. He also ordered that flags fly at half mast on state buildings.

President Joe Biden said in a statement that the shooting was "shocking and unconscionable".

"Students across our country should be learning how to read and write – not having to learn how to duck and cover," said Biden, who also called on Congress to act immediately on legisla-

tion that could prevent more gun violence.

Shootings are common in the US, and schools are no exception.

The K-12 Violence Project, a non-profit working on reducing violence through accessible and actionable research, has counted more than 300 shootings in 2024.

These include events where a gun is brandished or fired, or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims.

According to the news

organisation Education-Week, 38 school shootings have resulted in deaths or injuries across the US this year. There were a total of 69 victims - including 16 deaths - before today's shooting.

Mass shootings by females are far less common, however. School shootings committed by female attackers are even less common.

In a blog post last year, K-12 School Shooting Database founder David Riedman wrote that the vast majority of school shooters are males in their teens or

early 20's. However, at least four planned school shootings were by female attackers dating back to 1979. Last year in Nashville, Tennessee, a 28-year-old trans man opened fire in a school and killed six people. The diary of the attacker was obtained by media in September, and it revealed how the attacker agonised over being born a female.

The attack at The Covenant School, a private Presbyterian school, left three students and three teachers dead.

## CWI appoints Chris Dehring as its new Chief Executive Officer

Cricket West Indies (CWI) has announced the appointment of Chris Dehring as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

A visionary leader with an extraordinary track record in finance, sports management, media, and telecommunications, Dehring is uniquely positioned to steer CWI into a bold new chapter of growth and development.

Selected from a competitive pool of over fifty (50) applicants representing Europe, Australia, Afghanistan, India, and the Caribbean, Dehring's appointment is the culmination of a meticulous, meritocratic process which included independent experts.

His selection reflects CWI's steadfast commitment to attracting top-tier talent to lead West Indies cricket.

Dr. Kishore Shallow, President of CWI, praised the appointment, saying, "Consistent with the priority to recruit exceptional leadership to drive our mission forward, Chris Dehring represents the best of the best—an innovator, strategist, business magnate and passionate advocate for West Indies cricket.

"His return as an executive at West Indies cricket signals the dawn of an exciting new era as we work to reclaim our position as



Chris Dehring, newly appointed CEO of Cricket West Indies

a dominant force in world cricket."

Dehring is no stranger to pioneering achievements. As the founder of SportsMax, the Caribbean's first sports television broadcaster, he revolutionized the region's media landscape by showcasing global events such as the FIFA World Cup and the NBA.

He also co-founded Jamaica's first investment bank, Dehring, Bunting & Golding, which grew into a financial powerhouse and was eventually acquired by Scotiabank.

His entrepreneurial portfolio further includes ReadyTV, Jamaica's first digital broadcast television service, and ReadyNET, the country's first satellite internet provider.

In telecommunications, Dehring's leadership at Ca-

ble & Wireless Communications was transformative. He served as a member of the Senior Executive Global Leadership Team responsible for US\$3.5 billion in annual revenues while spearheading innovative digital content delivery and expanded access to advanced telecommunications services across the Caribbean and Latin America.

His ability to seamlessly integrate commercial strategy with technological advancement has earned him international respect.

Chris Dehring's earlier tenure with CWI cemented his legacy as a game-changer for West Indies cricket. As Managing Director and CEO of ICC Cricket World Cup 2007, he delivered one of the most complex and successful multi-nation sporting events in the Carib-

bean's history.

His leadership resulted in the construction of 10 state-of-the-art stadiums, the introduction of groundbreaking fan experiences such as The Mound party stand at Sabina Park, and the implementation of development programmes like the Shell Cricket Academy and Scotiabank Kiddy Cricket.

Under his guidance, the tournament achieved record-breaking revenues and global viewership, enhancing the Caribbean's reputation as a world-class cricketing destination.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the role, Dehring said, "West Indies cricket has always held a special place in my heart. As a unifying force and a symbol of pride for our region, I am honoured to return to an organization that holds great significance to our people.

"Together with the CWI team and stakeholders, I am committed to driving innovation, fostering talent, and reigniting the passion for West Indies cricket, both at home and globally."

Chris Dehring will officially begin his tenure on February 1, 2025. He will be based at Cricket West Indies' headquarters at the Coolidge Cricket Ground (CCG) in Antigua, where he will lead the organization's strategic vision and operational objectives.

# Sports News



## Zamine Shipping continues to dominate the MPL

Zamine Shipping extended their unbeaten run with two more wins on Sunday to remain as leaders of the Mandy Premier League (MPL), Cool and Smooth, Joma, and Sherma Jackson Business Softball Cricket League.

Zamine Shipping beat defending champions TG Welding by seven wickets and prevailed by 39 runs against Grill Box AGSPT in the latest round of matches in the 10-over competition at the Potters playing field.

The results allow Zamine Shipping to consolidate their position at the top of the standings with six wins in as many games to advance to 60 points.

TG Welding were restricted to 92 for eight off their allotted 10 overs. Maliq Jacob hit 32, which included five sixes, and Es-san Warner made 28.

Male player of the game Zack Thomas claimed the first hat trick of the competition to finish with four wickets for eight runs, and Dorian Grant picked up one wicket for seven runs.

In reply, Zamine Shipping achieved victory at 93 for three in 9.3 overs. Mervin Higgins and Tyrone Williams Jr. each made 37. Hughan Tonge claimed two wickets for eight runs, and Richie Thomas picked up one wicket for three runs.

Sacha Michael of



Sacha Michael, right, and Zach Thomas of Zamine Shipping claimed the female and male player of the game awards against TG Welding. (Photo courtesy of the MPL)

Zamine Shipping claimed their first two matches, the female player of the TG Welding have suffered game award. After winning back-to-back losses.

Zamine Shipping batted first against Grill Box AGSPT and made 89 for seven off their 10 overs.

Tyrone Williams Jr. slammed 57, and Mervin Higgins got 13. Kadeem Josiah picked up two for 12, and Shaquan Reifer took two for 13.

In reply, Grill Box was dismissed for 50 in 9.4 overs. Demetri Lucas made 16. Erwin Mathrine snapped up four wickets for 10 runs, and Mary Browne picked up a wicket for one wicket to claim the male and female players of the awards, respectively.

Grill Box AGSPT will remain on five points after suffering their third defeat in four matches. However, two other matches were abandoned due to a wet pitch and outfield at Potters.

The affected matches were TG Welding against Construction Solutions and Buck and Sons Landscaping Services versus PEL Mix Stars. All four teams received five points each for the abandoned matches.

TG Welding will move on to 25 points from five matches; Construction Solutions also advanced to 25 points from five encounters; Buck and Sons Landscaping Services moved on to 40 points from five games; and PEL Mix Stars advanced to 15 points from five matches.



Players of the Potters Tigers football team

## Grenades drop more points in Premier League

The Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades maintained their unbeaten run but dropped points for the second time in eight matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Sunday.

The Grenades finished deadlocked in a match for the second time this season when they were held to a 1-1 draw by John Hughes FC in the last game of a triple header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Bryan Daniel gave John Hughes the lead with a 26th-minute conversion, and Luis Labrada scored in the 35th minute to equalize for the Grenades.

John Hughes advanced to six points after claiming their third draw in nine matches.

The result meant that the Grenades

dropped from joint-top of the standings to joint-second with Garden Stars on 20 points, two adrift of unbeaten leaders and defending champions Special Security Services and Bitar Pizza All Saints United.

However, Grenades and All Saints United have played eight matches, one less than Garden Stars.

The Potters Tigers and Five Islands recorded wins in the other two Premier League matches on Sunday.

Keon Greene scored the only goal of the match in the 42nd minute to give the Potters Tigers a 1-0 victory against Parham in Sunday's opening game.

Parham's coach, Trevaughn "Peter Reds" Harriette, was expelled from his team's dugout in the 81st minute after he received a red card for using offensive, insulting, and abusive language to the referee.

The Potters Tigers will move on to seven points after recording their second win in eight matches. Parham will remain in the cellar on goal difference with three points after suffering their eighth defeat in nine matches.

Following a goalless first half, Five Islands scored two late goals within a two-minute span in the second half to snatch a 2-0 victory against the Willikies Warriors in Sunday's second encounter.

Samuel Semper broke the deadlock with an 83rd-minute conversion, and Darbel Nado Tito scored one minute later to wrap up the victory.

The result allows Five Islands to move on to 10 points after claiming their third win in seven matches.

The Willikies Warriors will remain on nine points after suffering their sixth defeat in nine matches.

## Hermitage Hotel wins business football league title

Hermitage Hotel has won the 2024 JOMA Caribbean Ministry of Sports Business Football League Championship.

Hermitage Hotel won their maiden title by prevailing 4-2 against the Ministry of Agriculture in a penalty shootout after both teams battled to a goalless draw in regulation during the final at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) on Saturday evening.

Last year's losing finalists, Sandals Resort, captured third place via default after DEWS Pro Builders failed to show up for their encounter in the playoff for the bronze medals.

However, His Majesty's Prison (HMP) United prevailed 1-0 against the Business League All Stars team in an exhibition encounter.

The annual competition, which commenced on September 20 with twenty-seven teams, divided into three zones, climaxed with an awards and closing ceremony at the ARG on Saturday.

Hermitage won Zone 1, the Ministry of Agriculture came out on top in Zone 2, and the Antigua Port Au-



Players of the Hermitage Hotel football team after winning the 2024 JOMA Caribbean Ministry of Sports Business Football League Championship at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) on Saturday, December 14.

thority prevailed in Zone 3.

Hermitage Hotel's Mas-siah Hillhouse captured the Coach of the Year Award, while his colleague Las-celle Landell claimed the Manager of the Year Award.

Jaheim Christopher of Hermitage Hotel captured

the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the Tournament Award. Christopher also claimed the Golden Gloves or Best Goalkeeper Award. His teammate Ramar Perry also captured the Best Mid-fielder Award.

Shalon Knight of St.

John's Development Cor-poration (SJDC) won the Golden Boots or Leading Goal Scorer Award. Knight scored a total of 14 goals in the competition.

Chad Williams of the Ministry of Agriculture won the Best Defender Award.