



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

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5th Berth...soon ready for Oasis Class cruise ships

Story on Page 2



Aerial view of the St. John's Harbour with three cruise ships in port, including one at the 5th Berth

5th Berth...soon ready for Oasis Class cruise ships



Tourism Minister, Charles Fernandez

The 5th Berth at the St. John's Harbour will soon be able to accommodate the largest class of cruise ships, the Oasis Class.

Word of this comes from Tourism Minister, Charles Fernandez as well as the Manager of the Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority, Darwin Telemaque. Fernandez was on the Browne and Browne show on Point FM on Saturday when he announced that a multi-beam survey for the harbor has just been completed to determine just how far along the dredging has come to accommodate the larger class of cruise ships.

He said the dredging is about 90 percent completed with a few areas left to be completed. He explained that there have been several delays to the completion of the dredging but the end is much closer now with less than 10 percent of the dredging remaining.

For his part, Telemaque explained that a multi-beam survey is more accurate than the other type of survey, single-beam. In multi-beam surveys, the lines that are used to do the measuring are much closer together, thus giving a better reading...in a single-beam, the lines are further apart.

Despite, the delays in the completion of the dredging, Telemaque reveals that although the Oasis Class vessels have not yet sailed into the harbour, already the 5th Berth has been accommodating similar size vessels. These include the P&O Cruise Lines' Arvia, which has been home-porting in the country for the last two seasons (it left Antigua over-



Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority, GM Darwin Telemaque

night following its latest visit) and its sister ship, Iona, which made its inaugural call on January 31. A Third vessel in this class is the MSC Virtuoso which has made several calls already this season.


According to Telemaque these vessels need a draught of 9.5 metres depth of water. This is the same for the Oasis class.

Telemaque also explained that the 5th Berth is already having a major impact on the cruise industry by allowing the harbour to be able to accommodate more than on Quantum class vessels at once.

This has had a significant impact on the number of cruise passengers that are visiting Antigua and Barbuda. "The 5th Berth has had an impact on both the flow of cruise ship traffic into the St. John's Harbour and the flow of passengers alighting from those vessels. This is happening even though the Oasis Class has not yet sailed into the harbor. This is tangible evidence that the 5th Berth is paying dividends to the country," he declared.

(Telemaque is committed to doing an extensive interview with Point Express when he will provide all the relevant data concerning the impact of the 5th Berth on the cruise industry).


Meanwhile, ground will be broken Monday morning for a terminal building at the 5th Berth to process passengers who are beginning or ending their cruises in Antigua.



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Government will hike vehicle registration fees to assist with road repairs

The government will be increasing the registration fees paid for all vehicles shortly to raise funds to carry out much needed nation-wide road construction and repairs.

Making the announcement, Prime Minister Gaston Browne said the government hopes to raise enough money from this levy to help finance the massive road programme. He said the government plans to spend a quarter of a billion dollars (\$250 million) on road repairs and construction during this calendar year.

“The Cabinet has taken the decision to increase the registration fees for all vehicles and in so doing we are hoping to float a bond or secure a loan for \$100 million to improve the country’s road network. I am here appealing to all Antiguans and Barbudans to cooperate as we should all accept that the roads in the country have found themselves in a state of disrepair for decades. My Administration will not be going to the people of Antigua and Barbuda with any excuse; you elected us to resolve the problems and that’s what we are doing,” he affirmed.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Browne revealed that over the next twelve months, there will be significant improvements in the state of the community roads as already a significant amount of work has started on these roadways.

“This \$100 million that we are raising will include fixing the All Saints Road, one of the main thoroughfares leading into and from the city. So those who have been complaining about the need for repairs to All Saints Road...it will be fixed,” PM Browne stated.

He reiterated that the country can ‘trust’ his administration to resolve all the issues facing the country. “I want to assure the public that

towards road repairs,” he declared.

On another matter, he said the government is working towards resolving the water issue with the recent addition of an extra one million gallons of water daily to the production with another 2 million gallons expected to be added to the system by the end of September this year. This is another commitment that the government gave to resolve one of the vexing issues in the country, the issue of water.



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Local News



Roadworks set to begin in All Saints West this week

Teams from the Ministry of Works are expected to move into the All Saints West constituency during this week to officially begin much needed roadworks in that part of the island.

The announcement comes from the representative for the area, Agriculture and Blue Economy Minister, Anthony Smith Jnr. His announcement comes in a Facebook post where he thanked constituents for their community efforts in assist with temporary road repair in Buckley's.

“Your dedication and willingness to help truly embody the spirit of All Saints West. I am grateful to provide the necessary resources to support this effort—because at the end of the day, it takes a village!

“That being said, we want to take this opportunity to let everyone know that roadworks will officially continue in the constituency next week. Addi-



tionally, we will be cleaning out the ponds in the area, so residents nearby, please bear with us during this process,” he stated.

The representative identified the areas of Freemans Ville, Lightfoot, Law Pasture and Sea View Farm as areas

for immediate attention in the upcoming roadworks.

MP Smith is thanking his constituents for patience and support as all join hands to continue working towards a better, stronger All Saints West.

POINTE ON DE STREETZ
 HOSTED BY
VERNON A. SPRINGER

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2PM - 3PM

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Four candidates to contest ABLP St. George Primary



Michael Freeland



Bakisha Francis-James



Salim Browne



Joel Rayne

Four candidates will contest a primary election that the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party will hold in the St. George constituency on March 18.

The slate of candidates was approved on Friday at a special executive meeting of the ABLP at its People's Place headquarters. The candidates are media personality Joel Rayne, sports administrator and entrepreneur, Michael Freeland, Deputy Chair of Festival Commission and Licensed Auctioneer, Bakisha Francis-James, and Salim Browne, who works in the public sector and is also an entrepreneur.

All four candidates addressed the executive to introduce themselves and to share some ideas of likely plans for the constituency should they emerge as the winner in the primary. All have pledged to work assiduously, individually and collectively, to return the St George

seat to the folds of the ABLP.

Voting is open to registered voters in the constituency who are card-carrying members of the ABLP who are in good financial standing.

The cut-off date for the publication of the provisional list is March 14. The candidates will have until March 16 to raise objections and have them resolved while the final list will be available on March 17 for the primary the following day.

The primary takes place at the Potters Primary School between the hours of 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

Meanwhile, the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party will contest this year's Barbuda Council Elections slated for March 25. Former parliamentarian, Arthur Nibbs will lead a slate of five candidates for the elections. The party will announce the names of the other candidates



Arthur Nibbs

at a later date.

The ABLP had forgone competing in the Barbuda Council elections for the past several election cycles. However, members of the ABLP Barbuda branch have convinced the senior executive to contest the elections given what they see as the current Barbuda Council's policy of retarding growth and development on the sister isle.

Swetes man is the country's latest homicide victim

Police have mounted an investigation into a shooting incident at Swetes that resulted in the death of 40-year old Richard Winfield, a resident of the village.

According to police reports around 10:30 pm on Friday, 7 February, a lone assailant approached several men on foot at St. Ann Road and fired multiple shots at them. Two men, including the deceased were transported to the hospital with multiple gunshot wounds.

Winfield succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced dead at 11:28 pm.

Meanwhile the second victim, a 31-year-old of male

of Hatton remains hospitalized, also nursing multiple gunshot wounds to his body. His injuries have been described by medical personnel as serious; however, not life-threatening.

The police are asking anyone with information surrounding this incident to contact the All Saints Police Station at 460-1000 or the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913.

Meanwhile in a separate incident, the police are appealing for information leading to the arrest of suspects involved in a

wounding incident on St. John's Street.

Around 4:10 am on Saturday, February 8, a 31-year-old male of Newfield reported that while he was walking on St. Johns street in the vicinity of Enzo's Restaurant, he was attacked and stabbed by eight unknown assailants.

He sustained several lacerations about his body and was transported to the hospital.

Police are asking anyone with information surrounding this incident to contact the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913.

Meanwhile, the police are

investigating a separate stabbing incident where a 30-year-old male of Potters is nursing multiple stab wounds at the hospital.

The circumstances surrounding the incident are still under investigation; however, the victim sustained multiple lacerations about his body, including punctured lungs. Hospital sources say his injuries are serious; however, his condition is stable. The incident occurred around 4:45 am at G-Spot Night Club. One male suspect is in police custody in relation to the ongoing investigation.

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Antigua and Barbuda Youth Cricket Scholarship in the UK extended for second

Two Antigua and Barbuda students who gained scholarships to study and play cricket at the prestigious Harrow School in the United Kingdom have learnt that their scholarships have been extended for a second year.

This, according to a joint announcement from the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission in the UK.

In a media release, they said building on last year's success, the upcoming summer term will take place from 22nd April to 28th June 2025 and will provide a platform for two young Antiguan and Barbudan male cricketers aged 13 to 15 to develop their skills and gain international exposure. The players will reside at Harrow School where they will receive coaching, engage in competitive matches, form valuable friendships as well as participate in a full academic programme. In 2024, the first players to benefit from the scholarship programme were Tanez Francis, a student at Jennings Secondary School and a player for the local Empire Nation team and Matthew Miller, a student at the Antigua Grammar School and a member of the Jennings Tigers team. While attending Harrow School, Matthew and Tanez studied a range of subjects including Math, English Language and Literature, Physics, Design Technology and Engineering, Biolo-



The poster features a dark blue background with a faint image of Harrow School. At the top left is the Ministry of Sports logo, and at the top right is the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission logo. The central text reads 'Harrow School Cricket Exchange Programme 2025' in white and yellow. Below this is an illustration of cricket bats and a red ball. The Harrow School crest is also visible. Two white boxes with black text provide details: 'DURATION: 22nd April - 28th June 2025' and 'ELIGIBILITY: Boys aged 13-15'. At the bottom, it says 'Spend a term at a prestigious school with a strong cricket culture' and 'APPLICATION DEADLINE: 21ST FEBRUARY 2025'. A yellow banner at the very bottom contains the 'HOW TO APPLY:' information.

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Antigua and Barbuda High Commission
London, United Kingdom

Harrow School Cricket Exchange Programme 2025

HARROW SCHOOL

DURATION:
22nd April – 28th June 2025

ELIGIBILITY:
Boys aged 13-15

Spend a term at a prestigious school with a strong cricket culture

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 21ST FEBRUARY 2025

HOW TO APPLY:
Ayana Dorsette from the Ministry of Education, Sports, and the Creative Industries at ayana.dorsette@ab.gov.ag or call 268-725-9588

gy, Sports Science, History, Spanish, Theology and Philosophy.

Reflecting on his time in the UK, Matthew shared: “Firstly, I’ll always be grateful for the chance to visit England—it’s always been a dream of mine. I was almost overcome by the weather when I first arrived since I didn’t know if I would have liked the cold. After the initial shock of the temperatures, I settled in quite quickly. Seeing Trent Bridge and Lord’s, the home of cricket, were two incredible highlights of my trip—places I had only ever seen on TV. The weather and pitches in England differ from those in

the Caribbean. They made things a bit challenging for me, but I had to adapt quickly. During my time at Harrow School, I played 5 matches, scored 170 runs and took 10 wickets. My best performance was against Cranleigh. I scored 86 not out and took 2 wickets for 13 runs in 6 overs at an economy rate of 2.17. Overall, I had a wonderful experience at Harrow and will always remember it. I hope to return.” Matthew was recently selected to be part of the West Indies Under-19 training programme in preparation for the ICC Under-19 World Cup in 2026. Tanez also reflected on his

experience: “My time in England was a good experience. The biggest challenge was adapting to the weather. It was challenging because I’ve never played cricket when it’s cold and it was tough to get used to. One of my standout moments was scoring 56 not out in my first match, which I’m really proud of. It felt like a solid way to start things off, and it gave me confidence for the rest of my time there. Looking ahead, I’m taking away a stronger mental game and a deeper understanding of how to handle pressure in tough conditions. The ability to adapt quickly is something I’ll keep with me moving forward. The experience has definitely helped me grow, and I’m excited to build on it in the future.”

Minister of Education and Sports, Daryll S. Matthew, expressed his deep appreciation for the support and hospitality provided by Harrow School. He particularly acknowledged the efforts of Natalya Silcott, Mathematics Master and Awards Registrar, and Johny Marsden, Mathematics Master and Master-in-Chief of Cricket, for their pivotal roles in supporting the development of this programme.

High Commissioner of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Kingdom, Karen-Mae Hill, also commended the initiative, highlighting its significance in broadening the awardees academic perspectives.

Community activist donates to Jennings Primary school

Community activist, Dr. Terry London, continues her activism in the St. Mary's North constituency, especially to support educational initiatives.

Recently, London and the Level Up team have fulfilled their commitment to empowering communities in the area through education. London and her team are covering half of the payment for the database software at Jennings Primary School.

"This essential tool will enhance record-keeping, ensuring that student data is securely stored and easily

accessible for teachers and administrators. With this system in place, parents will also have better access to their children's academic progress, strengthening the connection between home and school.

"At Level Up, we believe that investing in education is investing in the future. By supporting growing minds today, we are laying the foundation for a brighter tomorrow. We look forward to continuing our mission of uplifting our schools and communities," London said in a media release.



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ABEC makes donation to Fiennes Institute



The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) is continuing its social outreach programme by donating

cleaning supplies to the Fiennes Institute. In making the presentation to the institution, Public Relations Officer,

Elisa Graham who stated, “We are very happy to be here to make this contribution to the Fiennes

Institute after holding discussions with the staff who indicated that cleaning products go a long way in enhancing the care offered at the facility.

“The donation is made possible through individual contributions for ABEC’s team members who are equally excited about giving back to the community.”

Matron of Fiennes, Clarissa Christopher, spoke on behalf of the facility and thanked ABEC for the timely gesture.

“We welcome this timely donation and the supplies will go a long way in assisting us in our endeavors to maintain a wholesome atmosphere for our residents. We are truly grateful,” she noted. The Commission is committed to supporting the care giving facility by assisting in areas where needs exist and enhancing wellbeing and human connections.

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**SUNDAYS
10AM - 1PM**



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Bahamas: Shark attack leaves 2 American tourists injured

Police are investigating a reported shark attack that left two American female tourists injured in the waters off Bimini Bay on Friday evening. The incident occurred around 6:30 pm on

February 7, when both women were swimming in waters near the popular tourist destination.

Following the attack, the victims were quickly transported to a local medical clinic for im-

mediate treatment.

Due to the severity of their injuries, both tourists were subsequently airlifted to New Providence for advanced medical care.

According to authori-

ties, one of the victims has sustained serious injuries.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force in Bimini has launched an investigation into the incident. (Loop Caribbean)

Tragic house fire in Guyana claims two lives

A tragic fire claimed the lives of two individuals on East Bank Essequibo, Guyana early this morning.

Hansraj Narine, 57 and Hemwattie Narine, 52 lost their lives when a fire broke in their home located at Lot 1 A, Hydronie, East Bank Essequibo, early Sunday morning (February 9) according to the Ministry of Home Affairs via a Facebook post.

The fire reportedly broke at about 1:55am destroying the one-flat wooden and concrete structure measuring 15m x 88m.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the fire was caused by a “slack electrical connection, which resulted in arcing and sparking that ignited nearby combustible materials” the Guyana Fire Service said.

“The Guyana Fire Service promptly responded to the distress call, arriving on the scene at 02:16 hrs. Firefighting efforts commenced

immediately, with the first jet deployed,” Chief Fire Officer Gregory Wickham reported.

“Despite the rapid response, the



fire had already engulfed the building, leaving no time for the occupants to escape.”

Wickham reiterated the importance of fire safety and adherence to electrical maintenance protocols, urging all citizens to take necessary precautions to safeguard their homes and families.

The Guyana Fire Service will continue to educate the public on fire prevention measures and the importance of ensuring electrical systems are properly installed and maintained he said.

Benn, and Wickham extended their condolences to the family and community with the home affairs minister reassuring the bereaved that a full investigation to determine what exactly happened was underway.

He said the hope is that this will help prevent similar events like this in the future. (Loop Caribbean)

**TUES - FRIDAY
11AM - 2PM**



**HOSTED BY
SENATOR COLIN O'NEAL BROWNE**

TALKING POINT

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Bodies on ice: Jamaica seeks overseas pathologists as shortage fuelling autopsy backlog

There are 490 bodies awaiting autopsies in Jamaica, some of which have been on ice since November last year.

The figure, which is the total number as of February 7, 2025, was obtained by the Jamaica Observer from the Institute of Forensic Science and Legal Medicine — the independent investigative institute under the Ministry of National Security that, among other things, performs post-mortem examinations on behalf of the coroner for the entire island.

The government facility said that bodies are being housed at 12 contracted funeral homes and two main hospitals — Cornwall Regional and Savanna-la-Mar hospitals — and sometimes Noel Holmes Hospital.

A total of 103 bodies were scheduled to undergo post-mortem examinations from February 8 to 16.

However, the institute said that with daily updates in murder and fatal crashes, as well as violent unrest in areas such as Spanish Town in St Catherine where autopsies are conducted, there is no guarantee that the examinations will be completed as scheduled, as these factors often disrupt the process.

So far this year, Jamaica has recorded 73 murders and 37 fatal motor vehicle crashes. Jamaica also recorded 1,139 murders last year and 364 deaths from motor vehicle crashes. While the owner of one funeral home did not state

the number of bodies at his facility awaiting an autopsy, Michael Archer of Archer's Funeral Home — where bodies are housed by the Institute of Forensic Science and Legal Medicine — told the Jamaica Observer that he has bodies of individuals who died in November last year that are still awaiting autopsies.

"It takes, normally, a month, six weeks, or two months [for an autopsy]. November bodies are being done now, and after that we'll have December [bodies]. It also [depends on] the type of deaths as well because it is only one day per week that we do decomposed [bodies]," he shared.

In an emailed response to the Sunday Observer, Institute of Forensic Science shared that it performs autopsies from three autopsy sites — House of Tranquillity Funeral Home, Archer's Funeral Home, and Doyley's Funeral Services.

Autopsies are performed, "Mondays to Saturdays at Archer's and Tranquillity, and once per month for three days at Doyley's. On weekdays, the staff would be given an autopsy list containing six and sometimes up to eight bodies. On Saturdays we conduct post-mortems on the decomposed bodies," the institute wrote.

The government agency further stated that, "high-profile cases and foreign nationals are expedited and given a date within 10 working days, once notified

by the police. All the other cases are placed in a queue and done in a scheduled manner".

The institute is also responsible for conducting autopsies on victims of suicide and wards of the State, including inmates.

Head of Institute of Forensic Science and Legal Medicine, Dr Judith Mowatt shared that the delay in autopsies is mostly due to a lack of pathologists on the island.

There are currently six pathologists on staff, and two are being processed for employment. However, she told the Sunday Observer that one of the pathologists is on a short-term contract from February to April 2025.

Dr Mowatt further shared that some of the pathologists are from overseas, as there are not enough qualified individuals locally to perform the procedure. "We have tried to recruit forensic pathologists internationally because they aren't available locally to join our staff. We have been somewhat successful in that we have recruited another forensic pathologist from Cuba, and we hope that she will begin to join us by the end of this quarter. We are also in the process of recruiting a forensic pathologist from India, also to join us as soon as his work permit has been issued by the Ministry of Labour," she said.

"We have on board a short-term assignment in that we have a pathologist

from Sri Lanka who joined us in January, and he will be here in three months in order to build some capacity. Among the staff we do have, one pathologist was on a well-deserved vacation leave for all of January. We're trying to make best use of the human resources that we have while trying to get more professionals on board so we can manage the workload," she explained.

Dr Mowatt further shared that the institute has also lost some of its pathologists, one of whom now works at The University of the West Indies as part of the teaching staff.

"We [also] had two of our pathologists who resigned and went overseas. We've been losing staff, and the [result] is a negative effect on our staffing complement. The three that we lost in short order — the one to university and two to overseas — we haven't been able to replace them immediately. In fact, their replacements are just going to arrive this year. In the interim we've been really short-staff[ed] — and that is the main reason for the backlog because when we have a full complement of staff we don't have this backlog," she told the Sunday Observer.

Dr Mowatt said to operate effectively the institute would need seven or more pathologists.

In addition to a lack of pathologists, the institute,

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con't from pg 14

in its written response, said that autopsies can be delayed if information about the deceased is late or not forthcoming. Without information about the deceased, an autopsy cannot be scheduled.

A timeline for the clearing of the backlog could not be provided, “as this depends on an increase in the staff complement”, the institute informed the Sunday Observer.

In an emailed response to questions posed, Dr Tracey Gibson, head of the pathology department at The University of the West Indies (The UWI), Mona, explained that postgraduate training in pathology is accomplished via the Doctor of Medicine in Pathology (DM Pathology)

programme offered in the Department of Pathology at The UWI.

“The number of MBBS graduates entering the DM Pathology programme varies from year to year but currently ranges from two to four per year. The programme trains for the Caribbean region, and so DM Pathology graduates can be found working across the Caribbean,” she explained. Dr Gibson further noted that The UWI, Mona, had once been the only campus of the regional university offering postgraduate training in pathology, but since 2021 an identical programme is now being offered at the St Augustine campus in Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Dr Christopher Tufton said he is optimistic that the

recent health expo that was orchestrated by the Ministry of Health and Wellness — which sought to educate citizens on different medical careers and jobs available — will help with the situation.

“We had the health expo recently, exposing Jamaicans to careers in public health [and so] all of the above would apply, meaning including that area [pathologists]. There is also the Barry Wint Scholarship that offers studies for health-related fields, which that particular health category calls for,” said Tufton.

In July last year, Minister of National Security Dr Horace Chang said the long-promised forensic pathology autopsy suite — which is expected to bolster the work of Institute for Forensic Science and

Legal Medicine, as well as increase the forensic capacity of Jamaica Constabulary Force, and reduce the backlog of criminal and other cases — “is practically finished”.

The Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Government had announced in 2021 a \$555.9-million spend, stating that two years should see the long-awaited forensic pathology autopsy suite gracing Jamaica’s capital. However in an interview with the Observer last July, Chang said the opening for the state-of-the-art facility, which will be located at 149 Orange Street in downtown Kingston, would “definitely” take place that year.

One month into 2025 there’s still no word on the official opening of the suite. (*Jamaica Observer*)

Bahamas set for historic SpaceX rocket booster landing



The Bahamas will make history on February 17 as the first international location to host SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket booster landings.

“This historic event, set to take place off the coast of

The Exumas, marks a significant leap for The Bahamas into the realm of space tourism,” the Ministry of Tourism stated.

A delegation of key agencies is meeting with

SpaceX officials to finalize preparations. The Bahamas will become “the exclusive location to witness these remarkable events,” with 20 scheduled landings planned on autonomous drone ships in Bahamian waters.

The delegation includes senior officials from the Royal Bahamas Defense Force, Bahamas Air Navigation Services Authority, Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, and Port Department.

“The relevant senior officials will remain on hand during the launch sequence

and launch and ascent,” noted the Ministry. “They are fully engaged to ensure all safety, regulatory, and operational measures are in place for the scheduled landing. Every effort is being made to facilitate this historic event while maintaining the highest standards.”

This partnership with SpaceX positions The Bahamas as “a key player in the growing space tourism industry,” offering new economic and technological opportunities for the nation. (*Loop Caribbean*)

Remains of all 10 people killed in Alaska plane crash recovered



The remains of all 10 people killed when their small plane crashed into ice on the Bering Sea have been recovered, authorities said. The Nome Volunteer Fire Department made the announcement on its Facebook page Saturday afternoon. Recovery crews had been racing to recover the bodies before a winter storm was expected to hit the region.

“All ten individuals aboard the Bering Airplane have been officially brought home,” the fire department wrote in the social media post at about 3pm.

Crews were still working on recovering the aircraft, the fire department said. The Bering Air single-engine turboprop plane was traveling from Unalakleet to the hub community of Nome when it disappeared

Thursday afternoon. It was found the next day after an extensive search with all nine passengers and the pilot dead, making it one of the deadliest plane crashes in the state in 25 years. The aircraft is on an ice floe that is drifting about 5 miles (8 kilometres) a day, creating difficult conditions for recovery crews, said National Transportation Safety Board chair Jennifer Homendy during a press conference Saturday afternoon.

“Please know that we’ll work diligently to determine how this happened with the ultimate goal of improving safety in Alaska and across the United States,” said Homendy. As the community tried to process the deadly event, crews worked swiftly on unstable, slushy sea ice to

recover the bodies and the wreckage. The National Weather Service issued a winter weather advisory, with snow and winds up to 45 miles per hour (72 kilometres per hour) expected to hit the region Saturday night, lasting into Sunday evening.

Among those killed in the crash were Rhone Baumgartner and Kameron Hartvigson. They had traveled to Unalakleet to service a heat recovery system vital to the community’s water plant, according to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

“The loss of these two incredible individuals and everyone else on board the plane will be felt all over Alaska,” David Beveridge, vice president of environmental health and engineering for the organization,

said in a statement.

The pilot, 34-year-old Chad Antill of Nome, was also killed. The other victims ranged in age from 30 to 58 years old.

The flight was a regularly scheduled commuter trip, according to Lt. Ben Endres of the Alaska State Troopers.

A photo provided by the Coast Guard showed the plane’s splintered body and debris lying on the sea ice. Two people in brightly colored emergency gear circled the wreckage.

“It’s hard to accept the reality of our loss,” US Senator Lisa Murkowski said during an evening news conference.

Nome Mayor John Handeland choked up as he discussed the deaths and the response effort.

“Nome is a strong community, and in challenging times we come together and support each other. I expect the outpouring of support to continue in the coming days as we all work to recover from this tragic incident,” Handeland said.

The Cessna Caravan left Unalakleet at 2:37pm Thursday, and officials lost contact with it less than an hour later, according to David Olson, director of operations for Bering Air. There was light snow and fog, with a temperature of 17 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 8.3 degrees Celsius), according to the National Weather Service.

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The Coast Guard said the aircraft went missing about 30 miles (48 kilometres) southeast of Nome.

Radar forensic data provided by the US Civil Air Patrol indicated that about 3:18pm, the plane had “some kind of event which caused them to experience a rapid loss in elevation and a rapid loss in speed,” Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin McIntyre-Coble said. “What that event is, I can’t speculate to.”

McIntyre-Coble said he was unaware of any distress signals from the aircraft. Planes carry an emergency locating transmitter. If exposed to seawater, the device sends a signal to a satellite, which then relays that message back to the Coast Guard to indicate an aircraft may be in distress. No such messages were re-

ceived by the Coast Guard, he said.

Rescuers were searching the aircraft’s last known location by helicopter when the wreckage was spotted, said Mike Salerno, a spokesperson for the US Coast Guard. Two rescue swimmers were lowered to investigate.

The National Transportation Safety Board was sending nine people to the scene from various states. Flying is an essential mode of transportation in Alaska due to the vastness of the landscape and limited infrastructure, and it’s common to travel by small plane.

The plane’s crash marks the third major US aviation mishap in eight days. A commercial jetliner and an Army helicopter collided near the nation’s capital on January 29, killing 67 people. A medical trans-

portation plane crashed in Philadelphia on January 31, killing the six people on board and another person on the ground.

Bering Air serves 32 villages in western Alaska from hubs in Nome, Kotzebue and Unalakleet. Most destinations receive twice-daily scheduled flights Monday through Saturday.

“Our hearts are heavy with grief as we process this heartbreaking news,” Bering Air wrote in a statement on its website. “At this time, our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those affected by this tragedy.”

A phone line was set up to give updates and emotional support to people who had loved ones on board, Bering Air said. The company asked for privacy for everyone involved, and said it was committed to sup-

porting authorities.

Unalakleet is a community of about 690 people about 150 miles (about 240 kilometres) southeast of Nome and 395 miles (about 640 kilometres) northwest of Anchorage. The village is on the Iditarod trail, route of the world’s most famous sled dog race, during which mushers and their teams must cross the frozen Norton Sound.

Nome, a Gold Rush town, is just south of the Arctic Circle and is known as the ending point of the 1,000-mile (1,610-kilometre) Iditarod. The city said prayer vigils would be held Friday for those on board the plane, friends and family and those involved in search efforts. (Loop Caribbean)

DR Congo court issues arrest warrant for rebel leader Corneille Nangaa

A military court in the Democratic Republic of Congo has issued an international arrest warrant for the leader of the Congo River Alliance, which includes the M23, for war crimes and treason.

State media reported on Thursday that the warrant was issued on Tuesday against Corneille Nangaa for massacres it claimed he committed in eastern DRC’s North Kivu and, more recently, in South Kivu regions – constituting a crime under Congolese legislation, as well as international law.

The court has ordered Nangaa to be arrested wherever he may be found and brought to Congolese territory. Violence erupted in Goma, a city of two million people in eastern DRC, two weeks ago when the M23 fighters launched a major offensive against government forces.

On Wednesday, the UN Office for the



Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that at least 2,800 people died in Goma due to the violence. Thousands of people have also been displaced, with many fleeing to neighbouring Rwanda, including staff from international organisations such as the UN and the World Bank.

Swiss Church Aid said on Thursday that three of its local employees were killed during an attack in Rutshutu Territory which was captured by

the M23 fighters last week. The aid group, also known as HEKS/EPER, did not say who was responsible for their deaths.

On Monday, the M23 declared a ceasefire after fighting the Congolese army for control of Goma. But on Wednesday, it seized control of Nyabibwe, a mining town in eastern DRC’s South Kivu province, in an apparent violation of the unilateral ceasefire.

Eight people, including local officials, a civil society representative, rebels and an international security source, confirmed that Nyabibwe had fallen to the rebels.

DRC’s communications minister Patrick Muyaya said that the M23 rebels violated the ceasefire at night and were facing resistance from Congolese armed forces around Nyabibwe.

(Al Jazeera English)

Hong Kong to ban vaping in public by mid-2026

Hong Kong will ban the possession and use of e-cigarette cartridges in public by mid-2026, the city's top health official said on Sunday as the government pushed ahead with its anti-tobacco agenda.

Vaping remains common in Hong Kong even though the Chinese finance hub banned the import, manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products in April 2022.

"To protect our young people, we believe it is time to ban the use of e-cigarette cartridges,"

Secretary for Health Lo Chung-mau said on a television programme.

"We will start by legislating against outdoor possession and use," Lo said. "Once the public is accustomed to (the ban), we will implement it in all places."

The policy — first floated last year as a blanket ban on e-cigarettes — will be sent to the legislature in April with the goal of taking effect by mid-2026, Lo said.

The ban will start with public places because there will be "many en-

forcement problems" in indoor areas.

The World Health Organization said last year that around 35 countries have banned the sale of e-cigarettes.

Hong Kong authorities hope to reduce the smoking prevalence rate to 7.8 percent this year, down from 9.1 percent in 2023.

Following a 2022 law, anyone in Hong Kong who imports e-cigarettes can be punished by up to seven years in jail and a fine of HK\$2 million (\$257,000), while sellers and manufacturers can be

jailed for up to six months.

Lo said many of the people still vaping in Hong Kong relied on illegal imports and that e-cigarette cartridges or pods have become a tool for recreational drug use.

Authorities have scrambled to crack down on the rising use of etomidate — an anaesthetic nicknamed "space oil" that is often inhaled through vaping.

As part of its legislative push, the Hong Kong government will also propose in April banning non-menthol flavoured cigarettes. (Jamaica Observer)

Indian security forces kill 31 Maoist rebels

Indian security forces have killed 31 Maoist rebels in the forests of Chhattisgarh state.

Two Indian commandos were also killed in the battle, and two other security force members were wounded, police said.

Chhattisgarh has seen a long-running insurgency by Maoists who say they are fighting for the rights of the poor.

Sunday's clashes were among the deadliest clashes since the government ramped up efforts to crush the insurgency, which has been running since the

1960s.

"So far 31 dead bodies of the Maoists have been recovered," senior police officer Sundarraj Pattilngam said.

The death toll could rise as police carry out operations in the area, he said.

Police said they had seized assault rifles and grenade launchers from the bodies of the dead rebels.

The clashes took place in the forests of Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh.

Amit Shah, India's interior minister, who says the government expects to crush the rebellion by 2026, said

the operation had been a "big success".

The rebels are inspired by the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. They claim to be fighting for communist rule and greater rights for tribal people and the rural poor.

The insurgency began in West Bengal state in the late 1960s and has since spread to more than a third of India's 600 districts.

The rebels control large areas of several states in a "red corridor" stretching from north-east to central India.

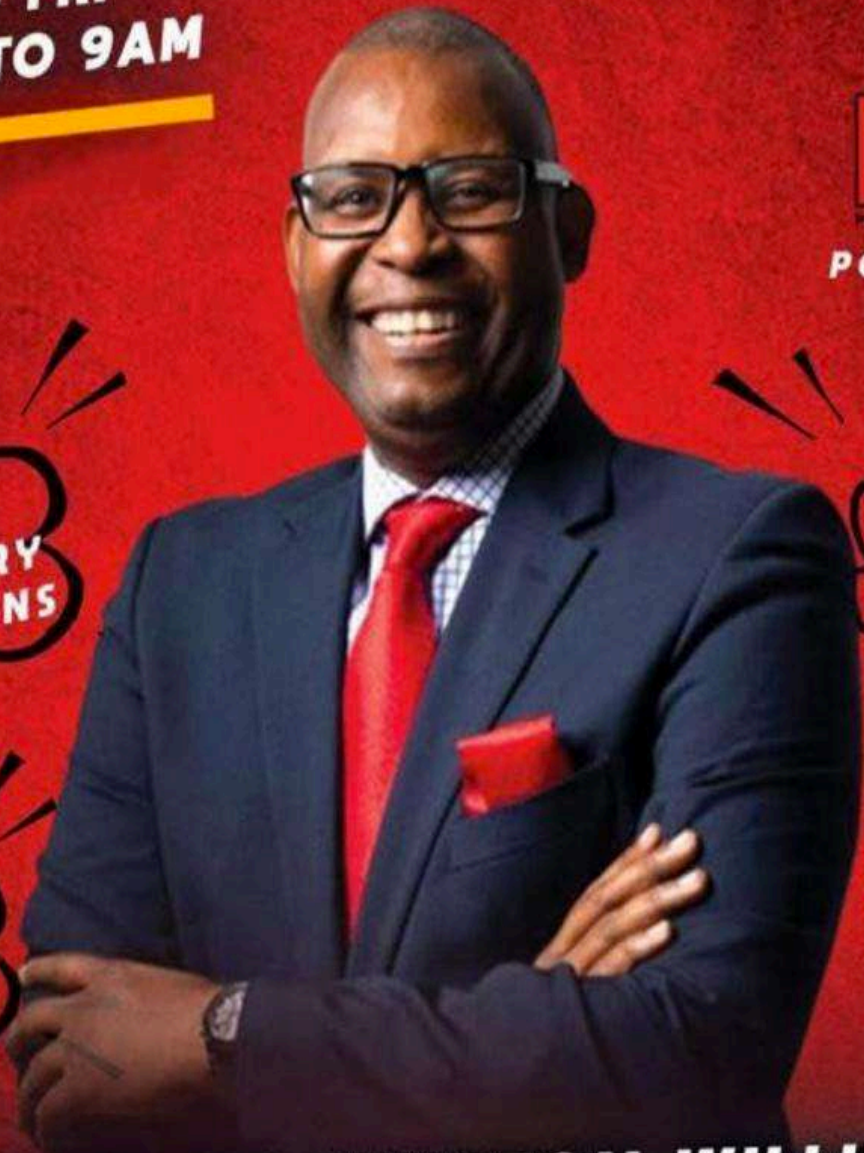
Major military and police

offensives in recent years have pushed the rebels back to their forest strongholds and levels of violence have fallen.

But clashes between security forces and rebels are still common, killing scores of people every year.

A crackdown by security forces killed around 287 rebels last year - the vast majority in Chhattisgarh - according to government data. More than 10,000 people are believed to have died since the 1960s. (BBC News)

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Belmont FC drop points in Second Division League



The Belmont FC football team

Belmont FC dropped more crucial points in their quest to stay in touch with the front-runners during the latest round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League.

Belmont FC was held to a 1-1 draw by West Ham FC in their latest outing. Following a goalless first half, Brandon Coates scored in the 63rd minute to put Belmont FC ahead, and Anderson Herbert scored the equalizer for West Ham FC with a 75th-minute conversion.

The result allows Belmont FC to remain in fifth place by advancing to 28 points after securing their

first draw in 14 matches. West Ham FC will move on to 10 points after recording their first draw in 11 matches.

Earthquake FC claimed their sixth win in 13 matches with a 2-0 victory against TAMO FC at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

Following a goalless first half, Marlon Matthew put Earthquake ahead with a 63rd-minute conversion, and Shakir Perry scored in the 66th minute to wrap up the victory.

Earthquake FC will advance to 19 points from 13 encounters, while TAMO FC will remain on eight points after suffering their

10th loss in 14 matches.

Diondre Harrigan scored twice as Blackburn Palace claimed their fifth win in 11 matches with a 4-0 drubbing of the Young Warriors at the PMS playing field.

Harrigan had conversions in the seventh and 36th minutes, Chesley Simon scored in the 15th minute, and Roshan Samuel struck the final goal for Blackburn Palace in the 56th minute.

Blackburn Palace will advance to 15 points from 11 matches, while the Young Warriors will remain on seven points after slumping to their ninth defeat in 12 encounters.

Skerwin Bolans struck a hat trick as Real Blizzard notched up their fourth win in 13 matches with a 4-3 victory against Glanvilles FC at the St. Johnstone's Village Stadium.

Boland scored in the 19th, 73rd, and 80th minutes for Real Blizzard, while the goals for Glanvilles FC were scored by Roshane Burton in the 51st minute and Jayquanie Nanton in the 59th minute.

Real Blizzard FC will advance to 15 points from 13 matches. Glanvilles FC will remain second from the bottom of the standings in the 17-team league with five points after losing for the eighth time in 11 matches.

Success for State College in school basketball league



Players of the Antigua State College team listen to their coach Mahijah Davis, second right, during a timeout in their Senior Boys Division game against Antigua Grammar School in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League at the JSC Sports Complex on Friday, February 7, 2025. (Photo courtesy of the school basketball league)

The Antigua State College made a successful start to their campaign in the Senior Boys Division in the Ministry of Sports Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball League on Friday.

State College clinched a narrow 45-40 victory against Antigua Grammar School in their opening encounter

at the JSC Sports Complex.

Jaleyle Joseph and Aiden Christian each scored 14 points for Antigua State College, while Raheem Sawyer shot a game-high 18 points for Antigua Grammar School.

A narrow win as well for St. Anthony's Secondary School in the Miniboys Second-

ary Division.

Emil Noyce converted six points as St. Anthony's Secondary School snatched an 18-15 victory against Clare Hall Secondary School.

There were mixed fortunes for Island Academy in the Inter-School Basketball League as well.

Elijah Peters sank nine points as Island

Academy romped to a convincing 17-7 victory against All Saints Secondary in the Miniboys Secondary Division.

However, Island Academy suffered a 25-36 defeat against St. Mary's Secondary School in the Senior Boys Division.

Yohan Nicholas converted 22 points for St. Mary's Secondary School, while Alexander Fuller scored 21 points for Island Academy.

Zendi Dorsett scored 15 points to lead St. Anthony's Secondary School to a commanding 49-12 victory against Jennings Secondary School in the Junior Boys Division.

There was success as well for Princess Margaret School, which cruised to a 34-15 victory against Christ the King High School.

Lena Mills and Kayla Melvin each converted 10 points for Princess Margaret School.

Potters Steelers maintain perfect run in ABBA's Division 1 league

Total Imports EMCs Potters Steelers won for the fourth time in as many games in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Division 1 League on Saturday evening.

The Potters Steelers notched up their fourth win with a 94-58 drubbing of the All Saints Slam at the JSC Sports Complex.

Devorn Benjamin shot a game-high 19 points, Cohen Desouza converted 17 points and grabbed 17 rebounds, Kareem Edwards sank 15 points and snatched six rebounds, and Darnell Azille scored 13 points and claimed 18 rebounds for the Potters Steelers.

Humroy Wright sank 15 points, Kim Casey had 13 points and six rebounds, and Andrew Venture scored 11 points for the All Saints Slam, who lost for the second time in three games.

The Potters Steelers claimed their third win with a 79-54 victory against Kennedy's Club Ottos Full Throttle.

Cohen Desouza had 21 points and six assists, Kareem Edwards produced 16 points and six rebounds, and Keroi Lee chipped in with 11



The Potters Steelers basketball team. (File photo)

points, five rebounds, and five assists for the Potters Steelers.

Warren Bogle sank 18 points and claimed eight rebounds, and Akeem Davis converted 10 points and snatched eight rebounds for Ottos Full Throttle, which lost for the third time in as many games.

After losing their previous two matches, the Northside Stingerz recorded their first win in three outings by snatching a narrow 73-71 victory against Lava Smoke Shop Warriors.

Ammiel Williams sank 23 points and

claimed six rebounds; Te-Ran Zachariah produced 13 points, nine rebounds, and seven assists; and Jevonte Valerie had 13 points and five rebounds for the Northside Stingerz.

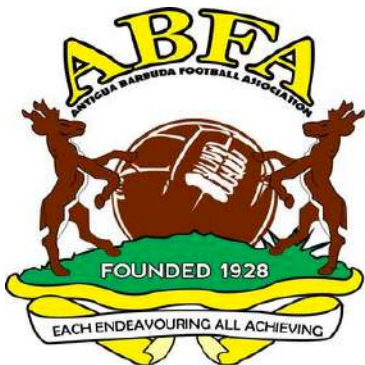
Lincoln Weekes shot a game-high 27 points, and Zuri Nesbitt had 11 points and five assists for the Warriors, who lost for the second time in three encounters.

The Lava Smoke Shop Warriors rebounded to claim their second win in four games by snatching a narrow 85-81 victory against Da Project on Saturday.

Kebo Orford produced 25 points, 21 rebounds, and seven steals; Lincoln Weekes had 17 points and seven assists; Zuri Nesbitt contributed 12 points and five assists; and Faisal Obeidat scored 12 points for the Warriors.

Bryan "Hollywood" Matthew shot a game-high 35 points and claimed nine rebounds, Sean Nicholas sank 23 points and grabbed 19 rebounds, and Nathan Matthew had 12 points and eight rebounds for Da Project, who lost for the second time in as many games.

Scorpions go joint-second in First Division League



The Freeman's Village Scorpions moved into joint second place with Empire FC after the latest round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League on Friday.

In a game that lasted only 45 minutes, Darius Hector scored five goals, including two penalty kicks, as the Scorpions notched up their eighth win in 13 matches with a 10-0 drubbing of the Liberta Blackhawks at the Freeman's Village playing field. Hector opened the scoring with a third-minute conver-

sion and made it three-nil by converting two penalty kicks in the sixth and 12th minutes. He also had conversions in the 33rd and 24th minutes.

Noel Jno Baptiste scored twice with goals in the 18th and 35th minutes, and Roy Gregory also had a double conversion with strikes in the 39th and 41st minutes.

The other goal for the Scorpions was scored by Abraham Barry in the 37th minute. The match ended prematurely at halftime after the Liberta Blackhawks did not return to the field to play the second half of the encounter.

The result ensured that the Liberta Blackhawks remain in the cellar on three points after suffering their 11th defeat in 12 matches.

The Freeman's Village Scorpions advance to 26 points, the same as Empire FC, which failed to add to their tally after suffering their third defeat in 13 matches in a 2-0 loss against Urlings FC at the Urlings playing field.

Kayan London scored in the second minute, and Derrick Pryce wrapped up Urlings two-nil victory with a conversion in the 29th minute.

It was the second giant-killing act by Urlings FC, which claimed their first win in their previous encounter with a 3-1 victory against Jennings United that ended their opponents unbeaten run with their first defeat of the season.

Their second win in 13 matches allows Urlings to jump from 13th place in the 14-team standings to 11th place by advancing to eight points. Swetes FC moved into joint-fourth place with Jennings United and SAP FC after recording their seventh win in 12 matches with a 6-0 victory against Tryum FC at the Sea View Farm playing field.

All six goals came in the first half, with Jondale Jno-Lewis scoring four times with conversions in the 14th, 16th, 33rd, and 34th minutes.

The other goals were scored by Vashawn James in the 12th

minute and Juwan Roberts in the 45th minute. Tryum finished the match with 10 men. Cordell Pelle was expelled in the 82nd minute after he picked up a second caution (yellow card).

Swetes FC advanced to 24 points, the same as SAP FC and Jennings United, who have a game in hand. Tryum FC will remain on 14 points after suffering their sixth loss in 12 matches.

Bendals claimed their fourth win in 13 matches with a 2-0 victory against FC Master Ballerz.

Nelson Woodman gave FC Master Ballerz the lead with a 24th-minute conversion, but goals by Abendigo Jacobs in the 32nd minute and Alva Guishard in the 35th minute snatched victory for Bendals. The result allows Bendals to join Bolans FC with 16 points from 13 matches, while FC Master Ballerz will remain tied with Tryum FC on 14 points after suffering their sixth loss in 12 matches.

LI Hurricanes beat Jamaica Scorpions in four-day contest

The Leeward Islands (LI) Hurricanes completed a five-wicket victory over the Jamaica Scorpions on day four of their round two 2025 West Indies Championship clash at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Saturday to move to two wins in as many games.

The Hurricanes, after entering the day on 44 for one off 9.1 overs in their second innings and needing a further 112 runs for victory, reached their target in 41 overs while losing another four wickets.

Kadeem Henry (25), Keacy Carty (34), Karima Gore (7) and Jahmar Hamilton (3) were the batsmen dismissed on Saturday as Jewel Andrew led the successful chase with 62 not out off 81 balls, including six fours and two sixes.

Andrew, who turned 18 last December, already has five first-class fifties in 10 games.



Jewel Andrew and Hayden Walsh at the wicket during their West Indies Championship four-day match against the Jamaica Scorpions at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua over the weekend.

Marquino Mindley finished with two for 32 from nine overs while Gordon Bryan, Jeavor Royal and Tamarie Redwood took the other three wickets.

In round three beginning on February 12, the Hurricanes will take on the Trinidad and Tobago Red Force at Warner Park, while the Scorpions will travel to Barbados to take on the Pride at the Kensington Oval.

Summarized scores: Jamaica Scorpions 320 all out in 94.4 overs (John Campbell 126, Brad Barned 63 not out, Kirk McKenzie 33; Jeremiah Louis three for 44, Rakheem Cornwall three for 71, Hayden Walsh Jr. two for 78) & 170 all out in 58.5 overs (John Campbell 53, Gordon Bryan 34 not out, Jeavor Royal 25; Oshane Thomas three for 44, Rakheem Cornwall three for 54).

Leeward Islands Hurricanes 335 all out in 87.4 overs (Jahmar Hamilton 93, Karima Gore 76, Hayden Walsh Jr 31, Marquino Mindley 4-44) & 156-5 in 41 overs (Jewel Andrew 62*, Keacy Carty 34, Kadeem Henry 25, Marquino Mindley 2-32).

Sports

THURSDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2025



Grenades return to winning form in Premier League

Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades returned to winning form in their second game in Group 1 of the second round and moved back to the top of the overall standings in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division on Saturday.

After squandering a two-goal lead in a surprising 2-2 draw with the Cool and Smooth Greenbay Hoppers in their opening match in the second round, the Grenades moved back to the top of the Premier League with a 5-0 drubbing of the Willikies Warriors in the second game of a triple-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Ex-Willikies Warriors midfielder D'Jarie Sheppard scored twice against his former side with conversions in the 70th and 84th minutes.

Barrington Blake scored in the 17th minute, and Kurt Frederick had a 43rd-minute conversion to give Grenades a 2-0 lead at halftime. Luis Ciudad Labrada scored the other goal for the Grenades in the 62nd minute.

The Grenades remain the only unbeaten team in the league after securing their 12th win in



Players of the Jennings Grenades football team

15 matches.

Their latest win allows the Grenades to move back to the top of the overall standings by advancing to 39 points, two ahead of defending champions Special Security Services and Bitar Pizza All Saints United, who have a game in hand.

The Willikies Warriors will remain third from the bottom of the overall standings on goal difference with 10 points after crashing to their 11th loss in 15 matches.

Island Original John Hughes opened their campaign in Group 1 by snatching a 3-2 victory against FC Aston Villa Lions in the last game of Saturday's triple-header.

Rajadel Maiko scored in the 19th minute to give the Villa Lions a one-nil lead at halftime. But Deno Bryan scored twice in

a five-minute span to give John Hughes a 2-1 lead.

Bryan struck the equalizer in the 50th minute and scored his second goal of the match in the 55th minute. Troy Jules gave John Hughes a 3-1 advantage with a conversion in the 78th minute.

Substitute Orel Edwards reduced the deficit by scoring the second goal for the Villa Lions in the 84th minute. It was the first defeat in Group 1 for the Villa Lions after prevailing 2-1 against Green City in their opening encounter.

John Hughes moved up to seventh place in the overall standings with 18 points after recording their fifth win in 14 matches. The Villa Lions remain in sixth place with 24 points after suffering their fifth loss in 15 matches.

Ngozie Harvey struck a hat-trick to pro-

pel Garden Stars to their second win in Group 2 with a 7-3 victory against the Potters Tigers in the first encounter on Saturday.

Harvey had conversions in the first minute of added time in the first half, the 63rd, and the 79th minutes. Goals by Kimoi Walsh in the 15th minute and Wilden Cornwall Jr. in the 18th minute pushed Garden Stars to a 3-0 lead at halftime.

The other two goals for Garden Stars were scored by Tarek Charles in the 57th minute and Jahred Williams in the 86th minute. Keon Greene also hit a hat-trick by scoring all three late goals for the Potters Tigers in the 77th, 85th, and 90th minutes.

Their ninth win in 15 matches allows the Garden Stars to move into fourth place on goal difference in the overall standings by advancing to 31 points, the same as Old Road, who have a game in hand.

It was the first match in Group 1 for the Potters Tigers, who dropped to eighth place in the overall standings by remaining on 17 points after suffering their seventh loss in 14 matches.