

PM Browne says the Caribbean is seeking 'a carve out' from a US policy regarding Chinese ships

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Governor General Sir Rodney Williams ((fourth from left) and Utilities Minister Melford Nicholas (second from left) pose with officials of APUA, Seven Seas Water Company and other officials at the formal commissioning ceremony of the RO Water Plant at Little Ffrees on Saturday

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Local News



PM Browne says the Caribbean is seeking 'a carve out' from a US policy regarding Chinese ships



The Antigua and Barbuda Cabinet has been engaged in serious discussions over the past several weeks on the likely impact on the nation's economy of a US-policy that seeks to impose a levy on Chinese-built ships that operate in US ports.

Speaking in the *Browne and Browne* show last Saturday, Prime Minister Gaston Browne, the chairman of the Cabinet, said members are concerned that such a move will likely have a negative impact on the economy as it would add to the already high inflation that residents face on a daily basis.

Of concern is a planned move by the United States to impose steep levies on Chinese-built or operated ships that dock at US ports. The U.S. Trade Representative has proposed fines of up to US\$1.5 million on China-made ships or vessels from fleets that include ships made in China.

"A analysis has been done and we have been advised that shipping a container could increase by about US\$3-US\$4-thousand. Now if that happens, you are talking about an increase in prices of between 8 and 10 percent easily, which would be extremely inflationary at this time considering that there is already an elevated rate of inflation of about 4.5 percent at the moment. This means that inflation could trend to up to 12 or 14 percent," PM Browne indicated.

The prime minister let it known that such a move would be devastating for the national economy and for consumers generally.

PM Browne said the Cabinet has been

discussing a number of options of likely actions should this measure go into effect. Additionally, discussions are also taking place at the level of CARICOM and Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, the current chairman of the grouping, has been asked to write to the US President Donald Trump on behalf of CARICOM to explain the impact this move would have on the Caribbean as it would 'literally' destabilize the region.

"What we are asking for is a 'carve out' under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) as one of the objectives of the CBI is to ensure economic and social stability within the region. The United States, obviously, should be concerned about its southern 'third border' and to lessen any unintended consequences of any policies that it would implement," he disclosed.

The prime minister took the view that the region does not want to get involved in the 'geopolitical spats' between the US and China, but where it affects the region the US Administration must be engaged and leaders are of the view that some favourable consideration should be given to CARICOM states.

PM Browne noted that both at the local and the region levels the matter is receiving the full attention of the government and counterparts across the Caribbean.

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A policy shift from government; a reduction in rentals of private accommodations

The government has announced that it will move away from its heavy reliance on the rental of privately owned buildings to house its ministries and departments, and instead, build and own such accommodations in the future.

The announcement comes from Prime Minister Gaston Browne in his first public comment on last week's decision by the Ryan Family to padlock a building on the Old Parham Road that housed a number of departments, including the Bureau of Standards.

According to the Prime Minister, the government spends millions of dollars annually on the rental of property and that much of this money could be used to pay the mortgage for a loan for several buildings that the government could own.

He announced that the government has decided to give the Spencer



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Family 30-days to vacate the property on the American Road, immediately west of Harney Motors where the government intends to erect a multi-storey office complex.

He said work on this project will commence sometime this year.

Meanwhile, temporary accommodation is being arranged to house the Bureau of Standard.

In addition, PM Browne also revealed that renovation work will commence almost immediately on the building on the LIAT Road, east of the GATE Building that formerly housed the Daily Observer newspaper.

He stated that the building is owned by the government and whilst an entity has been operation there for some time, the government is to take immediate possession of the building to enable the renovations to begin.

That building has over 20-thousand square foot of space and it will accommodate several departments when the renovations and upgrade are completed.

The reiterated that the era of government renting accommodations from private entities is fast coming to an end as this arrangement is 'totally untenable'.

Navigating the relations with US and China a challenge for small states



Foreign Affairs Minister, E. P Chet Greene

Foreign Affairs Minister, E. P Chet Greene has been speaking of the particular challenge that navigating relations with the United States and China poses for small states such as Antigua and Barbuda.

Foreign Minister Greene was at the time speaking at a the Raisina Dialogue during his just concluded trip to India.

"Modern geopolitical realities require shift in focus, however, ultimately, the key is maintaining credibility and providing strong leadership," he stated.

While in India, Minister Greene met with that country's sports minister where they held engaging discussions on possible areas of cooperation between the two countries.

Local News



Minister Nicholas: Vast improvements in the supply of water by yearend



Utilities Minister, Melford Nicholas, is giving a personal undertaking to the residents of Antigua; major improvements in the availability of water will come by the end of the year.

Minister Nicholas gave the commitment while delivering the feature address on Saturday at the commissioning exercise at Little Ffrees where the American company, Seven Seas, has installed a re-



verse osmosis plant that is already producing an average of 1-million gallons of water per day. Much of this water is already making a marked difference in homes and businesses in the southern corridor of

Antigua.

“By the end of this year, I anticipate that the capacity of APUA, with its partners, to produce enough water to supply one hundred percent of Antigua with a
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regular supply of water at their demand. That's what

The minister pointed out that while the coming on stream of the Seven Seas



my internal goal (for the supply of water) is," he told the audience at commissioning ceremony.

Plant was a significant milestone, it was certainly not the end-game in what APUA has to do regarding

the supply of water to residents.

"The programme of development that we have to make sure that there is a sustainable and reliable supply of water in Antigua for the next several decades, requires many projects such as this one. So today, rather than celebrating this moment as a 'touchdown', or to suggest that we have reached the finish line, it is merely a milestone that we have accomplished," he remarked.

APUA's General Manager, John Bradshaw, has reassured water consumers particularly those in the northern section of the island, that they have not been forgotten.

"We recognized that Seven Seas were able to deliver this plant in record time and we want to apply the lessons learnt to the Barnacle Point plant which will serve the northern sections of Coolidge, Cedar Grove, Crosbies, Mount Pleasant, Friar's Hill Development, New Winthropes, Barnes Hill and all those developments in that part of the island," he disclosed.

These areas will have water 24-hours per day when that new plant comes on stream shortly. He also disclosed that along with the plant at Barnacle Point, APUA will bring into service a plant at the Crabbes Peninsula adding additional capacity to the overall production of water.





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Automated water delivery system coming soon

The days of the antiquated system of manually turn on/off valves in the water delivery system island-wide are fast coming to an end.

That's the word of Utilities Minister, Melford Nicholas, who has long championed the need for Antigua and Barbuda to discard the old system of seeing APUA staff opening and closing valves to determine the supply of water to particular areas of Antigua.

Minister Nicholas, the minister responsible for technology, has always felt that the technology exists for the system to be automated and that these valves can be manipulated from a central command centre, making it more efficient and cost-sensitive.

The minister has announced that the government will soon pen an agreement with a company out of Trinidad and Tobago – Controls Technology Ltd. – which has already submitted a

proposal for the government to peruse. central operating centre," he reported.



"What we will be doing is operating is automating the transmission and distribution system where all of our valves in the southern corridor will move to a system where we can have a

Minister has been studying these automated systems throughout the Caribbean and even while on a recent visit to Cuba he spent time observing a similar system in operation there.

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Local News



Michael Freeland returns to Senate to fill a void in representation in St. George

Just three days after he was elected as the ABLP caretaker/candidate for the St. George constituency, Michael Freeland was re-appointed to the Senate in a move designed to provide better representation for the people of the constituency.

In providing the rationale for the move, ABLP Political Leader and Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, said while he had given a commitment that a Senate appointment will be made of a youth, someone below the age of 30 years, he decided to delay that move as he saw a need to provide better representation for the people of St. George.

The prime minister has repeatedly bemoaned what he sees as poor representation for the people of the St. George by the current representative, Algernon ‘Serpent’ Watt.

“Based on the fact that the people of St. George do not have proper representation at this time; there is a void that needed to be filled and that is why I have decided to accelerate the appointment of Michael Freeland to the Senate, so that the people of St. George can have a parliamentary voice, although not in the Lower House, as someone who can represent their interest who can make representation to get

infrastructure work done to ensure that the constituency is properly manicured, that the garbage is properly collected etc.,”

PM Browne explained.

Meanwhile, Senator Freeland will hold a ‘thank you’ public rally in New Win-

thorpes on Thursday night where leaders of the ABLP will also participate.

A vibrant red poster for a public rally. At the top center is the ABLP logo, featuring a torch and the letters 'ABLP'. Below it, the words 'PUBLIC RALLY' are written in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath that, in a smaller white font, is 'Thank you St. George!'. The central figure is a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, smiling. To his right, there are two smaller portraits of men in suits. Below the central figure, the text '27TH MARCH' is written in large white letters, followed by 'Time: 7PM' in a smaller white font. Below that, 'Venue: New Winthorpes Primary School' is written in white. At the bottom, a dark red banner contains the text 'COME MEET YOUR NEW CANDIDATE FOR ST. GEORGES AND TEAM LABOUR.' in white capital letters. At the very bottom, there are social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, followed by the handle '@michaelfreelandconnects'.

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27TH MARCH
Time: 7PM

Venue: New Winthorpes Primary School

COME MEET YOUR NEW CANDIDATE FOR ST. GEORGES AND TEAM LABOUR.

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Under representation among males ignites action from UWI FIC



The University of the West Indies (UWI) Five Islands Campus is stepping up efforts to address a persistent challenge in higher education across the Caribbean: the gender imbalance in student enrollment. With women comprising over 75% of the campus population, university officials are now actively rolling out programmes aimed at attracting more male students.

“We are seeing the same pattern that exists across the wider UWI system—women outnumbering men significantly in tertiary education,” said Professor Justin Robinson, principal of the Five Islands Campus. “But we’re not looking to lower female enrollment—we’re trying to bring more men into the academic fold.”

Two of the campus’s newest degree offerings—Criminology and Criminal Justice, and a suite of sports-focused programmes—have been designed with male engagement in mind.

The Criminology programme, in particular, is already generating strong interest from male applicants in law enforcement across the OECS. Delivered through a flexible combination of on-line, in-person, and fly-in instruction, it allows police and prison officers to pursue their degrees while continuing to serve in their home countries.

Similarly, the Faculty of Sport has introduced degree programmes in areas such as coaching and sport science, which are expected to appeal to young men passionate about athletics and careers in sport.

“Sport is not just a form of recreation—it’s a gateway to education, opportunity, and personal development,” Robinson said. “We believe that offering clear career pathways through these programmes will resonate with male students who might not otherwise consider university.”

Education Minister Daryll Matthew,

who also oversees sport, has backed the move and encouraged deeper partnerships between the Ministry and the university to create access points for young men who may be disengaged from formal education systems.

“We must do more to ensure that boys and young men see higher education as a place where they belong,” Matthew said. “UWI Five Islands is showing that the right programmes can make a difference.”

Campus leaders are also exploring additional strategies, including targeted scholarships, mentorship programmes, and alternative matriculation pathways to help more males qualify and succeed at the university level.

With the goal of reaching 5,000 students within the next decade, UWI Five Islands is placing inclusive access at the centre of its expansion plan—and closing the gender gap is a key part of that mission.

Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission endorses Junior Calypso + Soca stars initiative

The Antigua Barbuda Festivals Commission (ABFC) endorses the Junior Calypso + Soca Stars Initiative, led by Peetron Thomas and Tyreke “Vicious” Lewis. This exciting program is dedicated to nurturing and developing young talent in Calypso and Soca, ensuring these critical cultural art forms continue to thrive for generations to come.

The Junior Calypso + Soca Stars Initiative seeks to discover and mentor young singers from primary and secondary schools across Antigua and Barbuda. Through school visits, private coaching, mentorship, and community performances, the program aims to equip young hopefuls with the skills and confidence needed to showcase their talents on stage.

“This initiative is more than just preparing them for the Antigua Carnival stage. It’s about empowering young voices, instilling confidence, and fostering a deep love for our cultural artform,” said Peetron Thomas, a passionate calypsonian, soca artiste, youth mentor, and music educator. “Our goal is to find the next generation of Calypso and Soca stars and guide them on their journey, from the classroom to the stage.”

Co-lead Tyreke “Vicious” Lewis, an internationally recognized Soca artist and producer, emphasized the program’s impact: “Music has the power to shape lives, build character, and connect us to our roots. Through this initiative, we’re giving young artists the opportunity to develop their craft, learn from seasoned professionals, and gain valuable insight.”

Fully endorsed by the ABFC and Chairperson Ambassador Elizabeth Makhoul has this to say: “A Commitment to the future of the artform, Peetron and Tyreke’s passion for the art form and their dedication to its development are truly commendable. Their work with young artists is essential in building a legacy for Calypso and Soca.

The Antigua Barbuda Festivals Commission is proud to support this initiative and is pleased to announce that Peetron Thomas has been officially appointed to Junior Calypso Monarch while Tyreke “Vicious” Lewis, appointed to Junior Party Monarch subcommittees. We are confident that both Peetron and Tyreke will bring invaluable contributions to the overall growth and sustainability of the art form while laying that strong foundation for youth development.”

How the Program Works

- ✓ School Visits & Talent Search – Identifying students interested in singing Calypso and Soca, with parental consent.
- ✓ Private Sessions & Training – Vocal coaching, songwriting, stage performance, and speech development.

- ✓ Artiste Mentorship – Guidance from Peetron, Vicious, and other top Calypsonians and Soca artistes.
- ✓ Community Performances – Real-world stage experience leading up to the Junior Calypso Monarch and Junior Soca Monarch competitions.
- ✓ More Than a Competition – Building confidence, creativity, and cultural pride to ensure a lasting impact beyond the stage.

Join the Movement!

The Junior Calypso + Soca Stars Initiative aims to introduce at least 10 new young performers to the competition this year, representing both primary and secondary schools. If your child has a passion for singing and dreams of being the next Calypso or Soca star, this is the perfect opportunity!

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The Halo Foundation Illuminates Lives Through Vision Care Initiative: “Future Bright with the Gift of Sight”



In a remarkable display of community spirit and compassion, The Halo Foundation, in partnership with Progressive Vision and with generous funding from the Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Antigua and Barbuda, has successfully concluded its eye care initiative under the inspiring slogan “Future Bright with the Gift of Sight.”

This transformative project aimed to provide essential eye care services to underprivileged individuals, attempting to ensure that no one is left in the shadows due to poor vision.

After months of tireless dedication, the collaborative efforts of Progressive Vision, the Honorary Consul, and the passionate support of the local community culminated in the successful provision of free eye exams and glasses. The initiative directly impacted over 65 individuals,

enhancing their quality of life through improved vision. Participants not only received essential eye care but also valuable tips on maintaining their eye health and caring for their new eyewear.

“We believe that everyone deserves to see the world clearly,” said Lady Williams, President of The Halo Foundation. “This initiative has not just been about providing glasses; it is about empowering individuals to live fuller, more vibrant lives. We are thrilled with the positive response and grateful for the support that made this possible.”

Heartfelt acknowledgment is extended to the dedicated staff at American Airlines and the many generous individuals and organizations that contributed gently used glasses frames. Their thoughtful donations played a vital role in the project’s success, showcasing the power of commu-

nity collaboration in addressing pressing needs.

“We are incredibly thankful for the outpouring of support from our partners and the community,” said Dr. Salem Zreibi of Progressive Vision. “Together, we have made a significant difference in the lives of those who might otherwise go without the vision care they desperately need.”

As The Halo Foundation continues its mission to serve the people of Antigua and Barbuda, it remains committed to launching further initiatives that include the fostering of health and well-being.

For more information about The Halo Foundation and its upcoming projects, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/share/1B-CUcc5JiN/?mibextid=wwXI-fr> or www.foundationhalo.org.

National Sports Award





Commentary



Open Letter to CARICOM on US visa restriction policy on government officials whose countries engage Cuban medical professionals



On February 25, 2025, the United States Department of State through Secretary of State Marco Rubio, announced the expansion of an existing Cuba-related visa restriction policy applying to current or former Cuban government officials, including foreign government officials and their immediate family, who are believed to be responsible for, or involved in, the Cuban labour export program, particularly Cuba's overseas medical missions. These missions have been described as 'labor export programs' that enrich the Cuban government and countries involved are described as complicit in the exploitation, forced labour and human trafficking of Cuban workers. We endorse the responses to the US Department of State announcement by current Caribbean leaders including Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago; Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines; and Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados; who have deemed

the US visa restriction policy as a threat to the sovereignty of Caribbean states. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines stated that ending such programmes would jeopardize the lives of 60 nationals who are currently part of a Cuban-run hemodialysis program to treat kidney failure. Several Caribbean leaders have repudiated accusations that Caribbean countries are complicit in human trafficking. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, has described the arrangement with the Government of Cuba as a "legitimate partnership"; Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, has defended the Cuban doctors and nurses as "core" to the country's delivery of health services; Guyana's President, Dr. Irfaan Ali, has confirmed that the Government ensures that Cuban workers' contracts and terms of employment align with international labour laws and standards.

Jamaican Foreign Minister Kamina Johnson Smith is on record as indi-

cating that the presence of Cuban health professionals is important to the Jamaican healthcare system, pointing to 400 doctors, nurses and medical technicians currently working in the country. In a social media post, Bahamian Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell pointed out that his government "follows all international best practices in the recruitment of labor."

This is not the first time that Caribbean leaders have had to defend the work of Cuban Medical Brigades in the face of US criticism. In June 2020 the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) issued a statement expressing "its deep appreciation to the Republic of Cuba for the medical support provided to six (6) member countries of the OECS to assist with efforts to combat the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the OECS and wider Caribbean region." The OECS was responding to a recent Bill introduced by a US Republican Senator which classified this assistance from Cuba as "human trafficking" and sought to "extend punitive measures against countries accepting this assistance."

Historical and current ties between CARICOM countries and Cuba have been long and cordial. In 1972 diplomatic relations were established between Cuba and Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica. In 2002 commercial and economic agreements were signed between Cuba and CAR-

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ICOM countries and by 2017 preferential access to a range of products between the countries of the Caribbean and Cuba were agreed. Over this period areas of cooperation between CARICOM countries of the Caribbean have remained strong in trade, investments, health and agriculture. CARICOM has also been in the forefront in consistently expressing solidarity with Cuba and calling for an end to the US embargo on Cuba and the lifting of crippling US sanctions.

We categorically reject these accusations and misrepresentations of Cuban labour exploitation, forced labour and human trafficking in the Caribbean in relation to Cuban medical personnel and medical services. We stand in solidarity with our sister nation Cuba and its selfless and heroic medical professionals who have saved lives, enhanced medical services and delivered expert medical care to countless Caribbean peoples.

We call on Caricom to collectively:

- Firmly reject and repudiate the idea that the governments of the region are involved in human trafficking through the Cuban medical mission.
- Defend the inalienable right of the peoples of the Caribbean to access public health care delivered through the excellent work of the Cuban medical team.
- Firmly defend the self-evident right of member states to determine for themselves which forms of regional cooperation can best meet the needs of the people of the region.

Signed,

By close to 200 individuals and organisations from across the Carib-

bean and the Caribbean diaspora in the United States, Canada and the U.K



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Commentary



A&B must resist American Russian intrusion

By Patriot

After sleeping on the new development of a Russian application to America for help in investigating Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister, his family and Antigua and Barbuda's major investments financial management, I think in respect of our Independence we are obliged to resist the intrusiveness of foreign Governments in our affairs.

Whereas their need for further information is in order to support their court arguments, and even if they are correct in their financial assertions, the right of our government in the protection of the country's internal financial affairs is para-

mount.

With the leadership of the US proclaiming loudly of sanctions and deportations of our people from the US, the time is not right for this sort of altercation with America and Trump. Cooperating with them in bringing our leadership and government to their knees, could likely deteriorate into a Noriega situation, where the power of America colonizes us into being their 'bad boy' island in the region.

The friendship between Trump and Putin will definitely move things into the best favorable position for the attack on our island's conscience, in relation to our US Antigua and Barbuda and CARICOM relations. If

we allow the US/Russia to penetrate our affairs over the next five years, especially our relations with Venezuela in relation to oil, the willful ignorance of the Trump Administration we could easily find fault with commissions and omissions, caused in the growing pains of our small economies or as 'S-hole countries' as per Trump.

The time is not ripe for any sort of cooperation with these two world entities, whose lack of respect for life and communities is exhibited daily, as the wars they support and energize is televised. Antiguan need to realize they are not our friends, and protection of our country is more important than helping the Russian

woman expose any inadequacy, or illegality, in the processes being used in the US to resolve the Government's sale of the Russian yacht.

The government may wish to get our Head of State to initiate a Commission of Inquiry locally to establish the rights and wrongs of the actions taken by those in office regarding the affairs of the Alfa Nero in our country. These are not colonial days when we were forced to accept anything the great powers thrust upon us. Antiguan and Barbudans must learn to resolve its own issues without American or Russian interference. Antigua and Barbuda needs to protect its Independence

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Commentary

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Local Schools to Compete for Top Honors in World Water Day Challenge

In a bid to raise awareness about the pressing issue of climate change, schools across the nation have been invited to take part in the World Water Day 2025 Competition, a collaboration between Oasis Purified Water and Good Humans 268 Inc.

This year's competition, themed "Save Our Glaciers: Inspiring Change Through Words and Art," is designed to engage students in meaningful discussions about the impact of melting glaciers on the planet's water cycle. With categories open to students aged 5 to 18, the competition seeks to educate, inspire, and reward creativity and critical thinking.

Glaciers act as natural water reservoirs, supplying freshwater to rivers and communities. However, due to global warming, glaciers are shrinking at an alarming rate, endangering the water supply for future generations. Through this competition, Good Humans 268 Inc. and Oasis Purified Water hope to spark meaningful di-

alogue about the need for urgent climate action.

Students may enter in one of two categories:

1. Essay Competition – Participants will write on how glaciers sustain the global water cycle and the impact of climate change on these ice masses.
2. Art Competition – Entrants will capture the breathtaking beauty of glaciers and convey their importance in the fight against climate change.

The competition offers attractive prizes, including:



1st Place: Laptop

Computer



2nd Place: Smartphone



3rd Place: Tablet

Additionally, the winning school will receive a water dispenser with a term's supply of purified water.

Submission Deadline: April 15, 2025.

Email entries to: info@goodhumans268.org.

According to Joshuanette Francis, the driving force behind Good Humans 268 Inc., the competition provides young people with an opportunity to think critically and creatively about the role of water in our environment. "Our students have a powerful voice, and this competition will amplify their message on the importance of protecting glaciers," Francis said. This year's World Water Day Competition is expected to attract dozens of schools and hundreds of participants.



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Regional News



MFK makes history with unprecedented parliamentary majority in Curacao

In a political earthquake that has reshaped Curacao's governance landscape, the Movementu Futuro Kòrsou (MFK) party has achieved what no other political organization has done before - securing an absolute majority in parliament with 13 out of 21 available seats.

Saturday's official election results confirmed the historic outcome, which eliminates the need for coalition-building that has been a staple of Curaçaoan politics until now.

The election results represent a significant shift in power distribution, most notably rendering unnecessary the Christian Dem-



ocratic PNP party that previously served as MFK's coalition partner.

While the PNP maintained stability by holding onto its four par-

liamentary seats, the liberal PAR experienced a dramatic decline, seeing its representation halved from four seats to just two. (*Loop Caribbean*)

Guyana: Prison officer charged taking drugs into Lusignan Prison

A 25-year-old prison officer from Berbice has been charged with introducing cannabis into Lusignan Prison, according to court documents filed Friday.

Deondray Clarke, a resident of Stanley Town, New Amsterdam, was arrested on March 19, 2025, by officers from the Vigilance Police Station following an incident at Lusignan Prison on the East Coast of Demerara.

Clarke appeared before Magistrate Sunil Scarce



at Vigilance Magistrate's Court facing a charge specifically related to 28.4 grams of cannabis allegedly brought into the correctional facility.

The defendant entered a plea of not guilty during the court proceedings. Magistrate Scarce granted Clarke bail in the amount of \$100,000.

The case has been adjourned until April 24, 2025, when the court will reconvene for a report on the matter. (*Loop Caribbean*)

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Regional News



Mom excited for conjoined twins to live independent lives

For Ieasha McMurray, her experience with motherhood has been far from ordinary.

When she first learned that she would be giving birth to twins, she was ecstatic, but joy soon turned to utter shock as she discovered the babies, Azaria and Azora Elson, were actually conjoined twins.

Although she was initially surprised, she quickly embraced the unique trait of her twins with her unwavering faith.

Now, 16 months after birth, McMurray can finally release a sigh of relief as the twins prepare for life-altering separation surgery, to be performed at the King Abdullah Specialist Children's Hospital in Riyadh under the Saudi Programme for Separating Conjoined Twins. This, she says, was an early Christmas gift and a miracle.

Throughout the pregnancy and since the birth of the girls, McMurray's memories have now become a compilation of joy, sadness, hopelessness, and immense gratitude, especially as she reflects on the challenges she endured and conquered with her support system and the help of the local team at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI).

For McMurray, the moment she was told she was carrying conjoined twins is still as vivid.

"I already knew what conjoined twins were, so I was

not surprised. Me just did surprise say, yes, me a carry conjoined twin. My only concern at that time was where they were joined," she shared.



The twins are omphalopagus, meaning they are joined at the abdomen, but initially her doctor was unsure whether they were connected by just skin or shared multiple organs as well. However, after further examinations revealed that all they shared was a liver and that they were only joined at the lower abdomen, McMurray was relieved that the results were not far worse.

Despite how complex her pregnancy was, McMurray had a strong faith in God, praying over the health of her babies and leaning on

her family's support.

"Me never did a worry about the baby dem because, you know when you just know say things a go alright? Yes, right through-

out me no worry, even now because me know say dem a go alright," she said. She gave credit to God and said that prayer alone gave her the strength she needed to endure complications and carrying conjoined twins.

Giving birth, McMurray said, has never felt like it was an emergency as it was always planned and this time was no different as the twins entered the world through caesarian section at the UHWI at 35 weeks. They were delivered by Dr Nadine Johnson and Dr Tifany Hunter-Graves.

"On the day of the surgery

I was so nervous 'til me a shake. So many doctors and nurses in one room but it was a morning. It was so overwhelming, and it was the first time I was doing c-section, and I was saying, 'Wah gwaan mek me a see so much people'. Eye water full up me eye and I tell myself that 'I got this'," recalled McMurray, who at the time was already a mother of two.

Since birth, the only home the Elson twins have known is the hospital as they spent their first months in medical care, with their mother only being able to visit them during designated times daily while they were in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). For the first eight months, she had to pump breast milk to feed the babies, which eventually took an emotional toll on her that made her struggle to produce milk.

"It was difficult because I had to pump milk which me never do before, but I just had to do what I had to do," she said.

The breakthrough came when McMurray learned that her girls were finally eligible for separation surgery in Saudi Arabia, due to the intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, which facilitated talks between the UHWI, where the children currently stay, and Saudi Arabian government officials.

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Regional News

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Several medical teams in the United States considered the case but then came the financial burden as surgery costs as much as US\$2.1 million. However, thanks to Saudi Arabia, the girls can get surgery free of cost.

Grateful, McMurray said, "When the lady told me the news (about the surgery), me speechless. Me see God. She call me and tell me that it's my Christmas gift."

She did not indicate who exactly it was who first told her the surgery was going forward.

"She asked me how I was feeling but I said, 'You wouldn't even imagine how me feel right now just fi hear this'. Me couldn't go back go sleep."

The surgery, which is expected to take place soon, does have its pros and cons, as this is a major procedure. McMurray said the doctors kept nothing from her and made sure she was properly informed about the potential repercussions such as losing one of the babies during surgery, but that she has vowed to remain firm in her faith in God and keep a positive mindset.

Worry is not among the baggage she wishes to carry with her on the family's trip to Saudi Arabia.

One concern, however, remains constant as Azora, the smaller of the two, was identified as weaker than her sister

Celia Christie-Samuels, professor of paediatrics at

The University of the West Indies (UWI), was reported last week as having indicated that the toddlers have had many challenges since their birth. She said Azaria is slightly underweight for her age and had a heart lesion which is now closed.

Christie-Samuels said Azora is similarly underweight, has several congenital heart abnormalities and is in heart failure.

"Both girls also have extra heartbeats from what we call the atrium, the smaller parts of the heart, and both of them have abnormal function of the thyroid gland," she added, noting that the twins' condition is rare, occurring in approximately one in every 50,000 to one in every 150,000 babies worldwide.

"I always tell them that nothing is going to happen, but they always say 'Mommy, you have to consider what if,'" McMurray said of medical officials' attempts to prepare her for the worst. "But me no think about anything else but a successful surgery. No matter what dem tell me, me nah meds nothing else."

Although the feeling of anxiety persists, McMurray is only excited about one thing, and that is to finally bring the twins home so that they can live a normal life after separation.

"I can't wait for them to live independent lives, to move freely and to experience the world in their own way," she said.

The twins have stark differences in their personalities

which they have already begun to show. One is more active and playful with a bigger appetite, despite being smaller, while the other is quieter.

After surgery, McMurray plans to throw a huge welcome home party with family, friends, and her community when the girls get home for the first time. Her family has not really had the chance to be with them yet, but that is what McMurray is looking forward to the most, just the thought of finally having them home.

Meanwhile, McMurray recalls there were some moments where she felt the burden was just too much to carry and found herself breaking down in tears, hopelessness washing over her.

Among those moments was when, months after the twins were cleared to safely undergo surgery and there was still no news, she visited them in the hospital one day and saw them sleeping peacefully. She said that, as she watched them, she felt the opposite of peace as she thought about the fact that, although she was told they could get surgery six months after birth, the surgery kept getting pushed back.

That was one of the few moments that McMurray recalled allowing herself to break down.

Despite that, she encourages parents who are in a similar situation to persevere.

"Just have hope and have faith because prayer works. Me know that. Beg Fa-

ther God to give them the strength to go through each day because a dat me haf-fi do. Take negativity and put it aside, only positivity. [It's] Your child already and you go through it to have the child so why yuh going to speak negative about the child's condition? Just be positive and that's all dem have to do. Have faith," she encouraged.

She was also overcome with immense gratitude for the doctors in Saudi Arabia. "Me no know how fi find words to express and tell them. Even the day I met the ambassador; I was so speechless. When he started talking, I started to cry because I could not talk because to know that somebody from a next country a step in and do this thing. Me just want to say thanks for taking dem time just to look on the babies and meet," McMurray said. "The fact seh dem tek it up in hand, I just want to say thanks, thanks, thank you and I'm so appreciative of their kindness and their love."

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Jamaica, Waleed bin Abdulrahman Alhamoudi, and Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith had paid a visit to the mother and twins at the UHWI on March 13.

Alhamoudi was in Jamaica for Diplomatic Week, which was observed under the theme, 'Building Partnerships for a Sustainable Future'. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Pope Francis leaves hospital after five weeks of treatment

Pope Francis has arrived home at the Vatican after leaving the Gemelli University Hospital in Rome, shortly after making his first public appearance following a five-week hospitalisation for a life-threatening bout of pneumonia.

The 88-year-old, who was admitted on February 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened, greeted his well-wishers on Sunday from a balcony of Gemelli hospital before his discharge.

Using a wheelchair, as he has for several years, the pope smiled, waved, and made a sign of a thumbs up at a group of well-wishers gathered outside below.

The pope, whose face looked swollen, appeared only for a few moments.

Francis spoke briefly, with a feeble voice, to thank an elderly woman among the crowd below who had brought yellow flowers.

A car carrying Francis left the hospital shortly after noon and was accompanied through Rome by a convoy of police vehicles.

As he was being discharged, the Vati-



can released the pope's Angelus prayer calling for an "immediate" end to Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, and for the resumption of dialogue for the release of captives and a "definitive ceasefire".

"I am saddened by the resumption of the intense Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, with so many deaths and injuries," Francis wrote.

"I ask that the weapons be silenced

immediately and that the courage be found to resume dialogue so that all the hostages can be freed and a definitive ceasefire reached," said Francis, who was set to return to the Vatican on Sunday.

"The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is once again very serious and requires the urgent commitment of the conflicting parties and the international community," he added.

Francis had only been seen by the public once before during his hospital stay, in a photo the Vatican released last week, showing the pontiff at prayer in a hospital chapel.

In the moments before the pontiff's appearance on Sunday, the crowd of hundreds of well-wishers called out for the pope, chanting "Francis, Francis, Francis".

On Saturday, one of the doctors treating him said the head of the Roman Catholic Church would be discharged from hospital on Sunday and would need two months of rest at the Vatican. *(Al Jazeera English)*



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Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu arrives at jail, pending trial in Turkiye

Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu has arrived at prison after a Turkish court formally placed him under arrest pending trial on corruption charges, days after his detention triggered mass protests across the country.

Imamoglu arrived at Marmara Prison on Sunday near Istanbul's Silivri district. He has called for more nationwide protests.

The court on Sunday said Imamoglu and at least 20 others were jailed as part of a corruption investigation. The court in Istanbul did not press "terror" charges against the 53-year-old jailed mayor.

"Although there is strong suspicion of aiding an armed terrorist organisation, since it has already been decided that he will be arrested for financial crimes, (his arrest) is not deemed necessary at this stage," it said.

Later Sunday, the Interior Ministry said Imamoglu has been removed from mayoral duty after his formal arrest and jailing.

Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu, reporting from Istanbul, said several others who were charged were ordered released, pending trial.

Since "terror" charges were not slapped on Imamoglu, the court will not be able to appoint a government trustee to the municipality of



Istanbul, the country's largest city. The mayor would be elected from within the municipal council, Koseoglu said.

"It is good news for the main opposition party [Republican People's Party (CHP)], which controls a majority in the municipal council," she added.

In his first response after the court ruling, Imamoglu said he will not bow down.

"We will, hand in hand, uproot this blow, this black stain on our democracy... I am standing tall, I will not bow down," the Istanbul mayor said in a post on X.

In another post, Imamoglu said the legal process over his detention was "a complete extrajudicial execution" which meant a "betrayal against Turkiye". He called on Turks to

hold mass demonstrations across the country against his arrest.

CHP leader Ozgur Ozel told reporters the party would file legal appeals against the court ruling. He said the Istanbul municipality council would now elect someone to work as acting mayor while it awaits a ruling on Imamoglu.

The mayor, a key opposition figure and potential challenger to longtime President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was detained on Wednesday by the government over alleged corruption and terrorism.

Imamoglu has denied all charges, describing them as part of a "smear campaign".

Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas, an ally of Imamoglu, told reporters that the

jailing is a disgrace to the judicial system.

The court's decision to send Imamoglu to pre-trial detention comes after the opposition, European leaders and tens of thousands of protesters criticised the actions against him as politicised.

The government has denied the cases are politically motivated.

President Erdogan on Saturday accused the CHP's leadership of turning the party "into an apparatus to absolve a handful of municipal robbers who have become blinded by money".

He also accused it of "doing everything to disturb the public peace, to polarize the nation". (*Al Jazeera English*)

International

AROUND THE WORLD



Two suspects arrested after New Mexico mass shooting kills 3 and injures 15

A 17-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man were arrested in connection with a shooting that killed three people and injured 15 at an unsanctioned car show in a New Mexico park Friday night.

The Las Cruces Police Department arrested the duo Saturday evening, and identified the 20-year-old as Tomas Rivas, but did not identify the minor, according to a news release. Both were charged with three open counts of murder and additional charges are pending.

“Rivas will be booked into the Dona Ana County Detention Center where he will initially be held without bond,” police said. “The juvenile will be remanded to the juvenile detention facility.”

The investigation into the Friday-night shooting remains ongoing, police said, adding that they’re actively chasing multiple leads.

Police also identified the three victims who were killed in the shooting as 16-year-old Andrew Madrid, 18-year-old Jason Gomez and 19-year-old Dominick Estrada. Madrid and Gomez died on the scene, while Estrada died after he was taken to a medical center.



The 15 victims who were injured — nine male and six female — range in age from 16 to 36, police said, adding that they will not identify them publicly in order to protect their privacy.

The shooting involving multiple firearms happened around 10 p.m. Friday at Young Park when an altercation between two groups at the car show escalated into gunfire, Police Chief Jeremy Story said. Many were injured including bystanders who may have been struck by crossfire.

It is not clear what started the altercation between the groups, but Story said it was a wild night before gunfire broke out in the parking lot area.

“There was already craziness going on

before the shooting, with people sticking guns out the window and driving and doing doughnuts,” he said in an interview with NBC News on Friday.

Young Park has been “troubled with crime” in recent years, with unsanctioned car shows becoming “an issue” in the area, according to Story.

Multiple guns and a vehicle with gunfire damage that may have been involved in the shooting were found at the scene, Story said. Around 50 to 60 bullet casings were also found, according to officials.

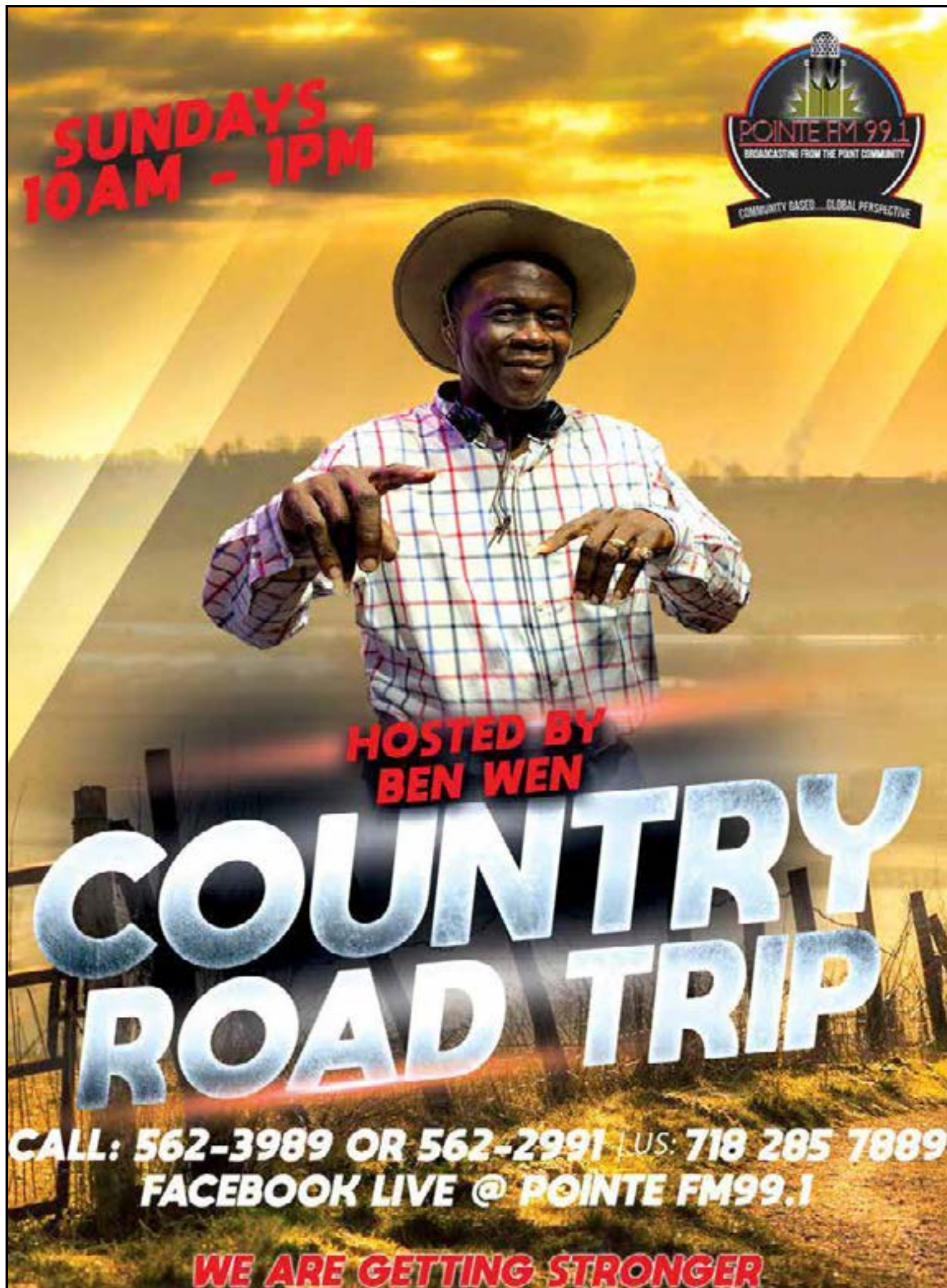
Young Park and nearby roads remained closed Saturday night as police continued gathering evidence from the area, police said. (NBC News)

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Sports News



Jennings United move to the top of First Division League

Sir Molwyn Joseph Jennings United has overtaken former leaders Ottos Rangers at the top of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League.

Jennings United leapfrogged Ottos Rangers at the top of the 14-team standings after securing their 11th win in 15 matches with a 3-1 victory against Lion Hill in their second match in the group stage at the ABFA Technical Center on Friday.

Daryl Massicot struck in the 26th minute, Kemon Samuel had a 77th-minute conversion, and Jean-Pierre Williams scored in the 79th minute for Jennings United.

Jaydiel Francis scored a consolation goal in the 41st minute for Lion Hill FC, which will remain in 11th place with 11 points after suffering their ninth defeat in 15 matches.

Jennings United will advance to 36 points, one ahead of Ottos Rangers, who dropped from first to second place after being held to a 1-1 draw by Urlings in their second group stage match at the ABFA Technical Center.

Raheem Horsford gave Urlings the lead with a conversion in the seventh minute. Josue "Naymar" Arias scored in the 22nd minute to snatch the equalizer for Rangers.

However, Arias squandered a good opportunity for Rangers to take the lead when he failed to convert a penalty kick in the 49th minute.

The result allows Ottos Rangers to advance to 35 points after salvaging their fifth draw in 15 matches. Urlings FC will remain third from the bottom of the standings with 10 points after securing their fifth draw in 15 matches.

The Freemans Village Scorpions moved into third place and three points adrift of Ottos Rangers after recording their 10th win in 15 matches by snatching a one-nil win against FC Master Ballerz at the Freemans Vil-



The Sir Molwyn Joseph Jennings United football team after one of their group stage matches at the ABFA Technical Center.

lage playing field.

Roy Gregory snatched victory three minutes from full time by scoring the only goal of the match when he converted a penalty kick in the 87th minute.

But his teammate, Darius Hector, missed a good chance to break the goalless deadlock when he failed to score a penalty kick in the 38th minute.

The result allows the Freemans Village Scorpions to move to 32 points, while FC Master Ballerz will remain in ninth place on goal difference with 14 points after slipping to their ninth defeat in 15 matches.

SAP FC moved within a point of the Freemans Village Scorpions, consolidating their fourth-place position by securing their ninth win in 15 matches with a 3-1 victory against Bolans FC at the ABFA Technical Center.

Tyrique Tonge scored twice with conversions in the 47th and 49th minutes after Peter Byers opened the scoring for SAP FC with a goal in the 10th minute. Jaric Richards scored a consolation goal in the 85th minute for Bolans FC.

The result allows SAP FC to advance to 31 points, while Bolans FC will remain in eighth place with 16

points after suffering their fifth defeat in 14 matches.

Empire moved into fifth place after snatching a 2-0 win against Tryum FC in their second encounter in the group stage at the Keithley Sheppard Recreational Park.

Both goals came in their first half via conversions by Carlos Solomon in the 11th minute and Kamali Looby in the first minute of added time.

Empire FC advanced to 30 points after claiming their ninth win in 15 matches, while Tryum FC will remain in 10th place on goal difference with 14 points after crashing to their ninth defeat in 15 matches.

But Swetes FC missed an opportunity to narrow the gap on the front-runners when they dropped crucial points in a one-nil loss to Bendals in their second encounter in the group stage at the Sea View Farm playing field.

Alva Guishard Jr. scored the winner and only goal of the match for Bendals in the eighth minute.

The result allows Swetes to slip from fifth to sixth place by remaining on 27 points after suffering their fourth defeat in 15 matches. Bendals will move from eighth to seventh place with 19 points after securing their fifth win in 14 matches.

More success for the Storming Lions in Men's Division 1 volleyball

The Storming Lions won for the second time in as many games as they continued their successful start to their campaign in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Men's Division 1 Local League in their latest outing.

After snatching a 3-2 win against High Flyerz in their opening encounter, the Storming Lions romped to a 3-0 victory against the Invaders at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Com-

plex.

The Storming Lions took just 59 minutes to dispatch the Invaders, winning 25-6, 25-18, and 25-15.

Former Female Division 1 champions Paragons rebounded from a surprising 3-0 loss to the Royal Cruisers in their opening encounter to clinch their first win by snatching a 3-2 victory against Jets.

The Paragons took an hour and six minutes to secure their victory, winning 25-22, 25-19, 15-25, 12-25,

and 15-13 against the Jets, who lost for the second time in as many games.

Stoneville also rebounded from a 3-1 loss to Starz Seniors in their opening encounter to claim their first win in the Female Division 1 League with a 3-0 victory against the Royal Cruisers.

Stoneville beat the Royal Cruisers 25-7, 25-13, and 25-23 in an hour and 13 minutes.

Reigning Men's Division 1 league champions Stoneville continued their suc-

cessful start in their title defense, romping to a 3-1 victory against the Renegades to make it two wins in as many games.

Stoneville, who overcame the Phoenix High Flyerz 3-0 in their opening game, took an hour and a half to get past the Renegades, winning 26-24, 25-10, 21-25, and 25-21.

It was the first loss in two games for the Renegades, who recorded a 3-1 victory against the Invaders in their opening encounter.

Steelers remain perfect in ABBA's Division 1 League



Total Imports EMC's Potters Steelers maintained their unbeaten run in their latest outing in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) First Division League.

The Steelers won for the 10th time in

as many games to remain the only unbeaten team in the league with a 106-68 drubbing of the Lava Smoke Shop Warriors at the JSC Sports Complex.

Keroi Lee shot a game-high 29 points and grabbed 20 rebounds; Kareem Edwards sank 14 points; Devorn Benjamin converted 13 points; Cohen Desouza produced 12 points, 11 rebounds, and six assists; Decosta Walbrook had 12 points and 11 rebounds; and Felix Hamilton scored 14 points and claimed seven rebounds for the Steelers.

Lincoln Weekes sank 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds; Zuri Nesbitt produced 17 points, nine rebounds, and six assists; and Faisal Obeidat scored 12 points and six rebounds for

the Warriors, who lost for the seventh time in 11 games.

Da Project claimed their seventh win in 11 encounters by snatching an 83-78 victory against Spanish Heat in their latest encounter.

Terry Dawkins produced a team-high 27 points with eight rebounds and six assists; T-Shawn Lewis sank 26 points and grabbed 17 rebounds; and Bryan "Hollywood" Matthew had 13 points and six rebounds for Da Project.

Steven Matthew shot a game-high 34 points and snatched six steals; Coy Quinland sank 14 points and grabbed 14 rebounds; and Kelvyn Pimental scored 14 points and claimed 11 rebounds for the Spanish Heat, who lost for the sixth time in 11 games.



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Sports News



Jennings continues to dominate U-19 schools' cricket competition

Defending champions Jennings Secondary has continued to dominate the Ministry of Sports Schools' Cricket Under-19 30-Over Championship.

Jennings Secondary maintained their perfect runs by notching up their fourth win in as many games with a commanding 147-run victory over Sir Novelle Richards Academy at the Factory Grounds on Friday.

Captain Tanez Francis hits his second century on four matches to propel Jennings Secondary to 215 for two off 15 overs.

Francis, who opened the innings, smashed 124 off 52 balls; including four sixes and 16 fours. Fellow opener J'Quan Athanaze struck 44 off 27 balls, there was a contribution of 32 extras, including 15 wides; and Nazair Williams made 13.

Cheldon Charles claimed one for 14, and captain Shaun Balgobin captured one for 32.

In reply, Sir Novelle Richards Academy was restricted to 68 for six off their 15 overs.

Cheldon Charles hit 16, there was a contribution of 15 extras, including 13 wides, while Evrick Chambers, Shawn Harris, and Nathalie Mannix each scored 12.

Giovanni Thomas grabbed three for 19, while J'Quan Athanaze, Tanez Francis, and Oziah Robertson each picked up a wicket.

After launching their campaign with an 88-run drubbing of Ottos Comprehensive School, Jennings Secondary also claimed a crushing 162-run victory against Clare Hall Secondary School and a 10-wicket win against Pares Secondary.

Antigua Grammar School snatched a 22-run victory against Clare Hall Secondary School at the Clare Hall playing field.

Antigua Grammar School



Tanez Francis

made 115 for six off 14 overs. Hosea Roberts slammed 53 off 41 balls, including eight fours and a six. There was a contribution of 38 extras, including 17 wides and 16 byes, and Shane Walsh scored 11.

Jayden Charles captured two for 11, while Jamarri Laville, Norman Bell, and Kiscean France each picked

up a wicket.

In reply, Clare Hall Secondary was restricted to 93 for five off their 14 overs. Opener Jayden Charles cracked 41 off 37 balls, including three fours and a six; Nevon Lashley hit 13; and Andre Clarke scored 12.

Hosea Roberts, Matthew Miller, and Dante Odlum each picked up a wicket

Members of the Power Speed and Endurance Track Club



The Power Speed and Endurance Track Club takes the opportunity to thank the general public who would have contributed to the success of their recent walk-a-thon fundraiser. Special mention must be made of Go-To Enterprise for their unwavering support for this we say thanks!

Grenades end Premier League campaign with defeat to Villa Lions

Former champions Sandals and APUA Inet Jennings Grenades wrapped up their campaign in this season's Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division on a disappointing note on Saturday.

The Grenades finished in the runner-up position for the second successive season, crashing to a 6-1 defeat against Aston Villa Lions in their final match at the ABFA Technical Center.

Midfielder Kwame "Munchie" Kirby opened the scoring with a strike in the 40th minute, and Eroy Gonsalves scored the first of two goals when he converted a penalty kick in the 43rd minute to give the Villa Lions a two-nil lead at halftime.

Eugene Kirwan reduced the deficit when he scored what turned out to be only a consolation goal in the 68th minute. The Villa Lions then went on a rampage to score four more goals to inflict the heaviest defeat of the past two seasons upon the Grenades.

Midfielder Sean Tomlinson scored in the 76th minute, Gonsalves converted his second goal in the 81st minute, Novelle Francis made it 5-1 with a 90th-minute conversion, and Jahlanie Barzey completed the rout by slotting home a penalty kick in the third minute of added time.



Players of the Aston Villa Lions football team

It concludes a surprising and disappointing end for the Grenades, who led the league for most of the competition and missed out on winning the title after suffering the only two losses of their campaign in back-to-back defeats in their last two matches of the season.

The Grenades finished their campaign in second place with 45 points from their quota of 19 matches, comprising 14 wins, three draws, and two losses.

The result allows the Villa Lions to consolidate their sixth-place position by advancing to 33 points after securing their 10th win in 18 matches.

The Villa Lions will play their last match in the Premier League against the Willikies Warriors at the ABFC Technical Center on Wednesday at 7 pm.

Terminix Pigotts Bullets also wrapped up their campaign in the Premier League with a 3-0 victory against Cool and Smooth Greenbay Hoppers in the second game of Saturday's

triple header.

Sujae McBean scored in the 20th minute to give the Bullets a one-nil lead at halftime. The Hoppers were reduced to 10 men in the 31st minute when Jamol Stevens received a red card and was expelled.

Akeem Isaac scored his team's second goal in the 51st minute, and Xavier Smith wrapped up the win with an 83rd-minute conversion.

The result means that the Pigotts Bullets finished their Premier League campaign with 34 points from 19 matches, comprising 11 wins, one draw, and seven losses.

The Bullets are currently in fourth place on goal difference ahead of Old Road, who also have 34 points with one game remaining.

The Greenbay Hoppers will remain second from the bottom of the standings on goal difference with 11 points after suffering their 13th defeat in 18 matches.

The Hoppers will play their final match against Is-

land Original John Hughes next Saturday.

Five Islands enhanced their chances of avoiding automatic relegation to the First Division next season by snatching a surprising 2-1 victory against Garden Stars in Saturday's opening encounter.

Kemoi Walsh scored in the 16th minute to give Garden Stars a one-nil lead at halftime. But Demario Roberts scored the equalizer in the 48th minute, and Jaheim Jeremy converted a penalty kick in the 63rd minute to snatch victory for Five Islands.

Jahred Williams squandered a good chance to snatch an equalizer for Garden Stars when he failed to convert a penalty kick in the 84th minute.

Both teams also finished the match with 10 men after Ngozie Harvey of Garden Stars and Brandon Emanuel of Five Islands were expelled after receiving red cards in the 69th minute.

Garden Stars remain in third place with 37 points after suffering their third defeat in 18 matches.

Their fifth win in 18 matches allows Five Islands to move from 11th to 10th place on goal difference with 17 points, the same as Green City FC.

The teams that finished in positions 11th to 14th will automatically be relegated to compete in the First Division next season.

Sports News

Prize-Giving for the 2025 Antigua Ilca, Optimist Open races held on Sunday



The Antigua Yacht Club at Falmouth Harbour was the site on Sunday for the prize-giving ceremony for the 2025 Antigua Ilca, Optimist Open races which were held over the weekend.

Commodore of the Antigua Yacht Club, Ambassador Clarence Henry officiated at the ceremony and he extended heartiest congratulations to all the winners, the sponsors and the organisers for another successful hosting of the event.

Overall winner in the

Lazer racing class was Jules Mitchell, while Tyler Jones was named overall winner in the Optimist division.

Twenty-two vessels participated in the races that were held within the Falmouth Harbour.

These races are not associated with the Antigua Sailing Week calendar of races, nonetheless, they signal that the race season is now fully open in the Falmouth Harbour and elsewhere within the National Park Authority.





Awards 3. Tyra Fenton, right, accepts her award from an official of the Prime Minister's Scholarship Committee.



Awards 4. Ken Pennyfeather, right, accepts his award from Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Creative Industries Rosa Greenaway.



Awards 5. President of the Antigua Barbuda Cricket Association, Leon 'Kuma' Rodney, right, accepts the award on the behalf of his organization from Minister of Education, Sports, and Creative Industries Honourable Daryl Matthews. (Photos courtesy of Wayne Mariette)

con't from pg 32

Association of the Year.

Junior Sportsman of the Year went to cricket prodigy Jewel Andrew, while rising track and field sensation Tyra Fenton won the Junior Sportswoman of the Year title in her debut year of being nominated for the award.

Both Andrew and Fenton will be receiving a US\$20 thousand scholarship grant from the government of Antigua and Barbuda. This scholarship will cover their four years at a college or univer-

sity of their choice.

The Mind Sports winner was Bernard Willock of the Antigua and Barbuda Draughts Association.

Nelson Molina Fojo of swimming was named the Coach of the Year, while football's Ken Pennyfeather won the Official of the Year Award.

Both gentlemen will also receive scholarships, compliments of the Board of Education, to study sports management at the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus (UWIFI) in Antigua.

Percival three-peat as national sportswoman of the year



Awards 1. Alzarri Joseph, center, accepts his award from Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda Sir Rodney Williams.



Awards 2. Jewel Andrew, left, accepts his award from Minister of Education, Sports, and Creative Industries Honourable Daryl Matthew.

Indies fast bowler previously won the coveted title in 2016 and 2022.

The Antigua and

Barbuda Cricket Association (ABCA) had much to celebrate as the organization was also named the 2024
con't on pg 31

Ambassador Kimberly Percival continues to let her dominance reign at the National Sports Awards.

The bikini fitness professional walked away with her third straight title as the 2024 Senior Sportswoman of the Year at the 32nd edition of the National Sports

Awards at the Royalton Resort on Saturday night.

Her latest crown is her fifth overall national Sportswoman of the Year title, having won the accolade in 2016, 2017, 2022, 2023, and now 2024.

Cricketer Alzarri Joseph won the 2024 Senior Sportsman of the Year Award. The West