

Arcanum in the news



ROWLEY HAILS SCOTLAND VOTE - A VICTORY FOR THE CARIBBEAN

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By Yvonne Baboolal

Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, who openly supported Sir Ronald Sanders for Commonwealth Secretary General, yesterday congratulated Baroness Patricia Scotland who copped the post.

Scotland, the Dominican candidate is the sixth Commonwealth Secretary General and is the first woman to hold this post. She replaces Kamallesh Sharma of India. Her parents were from Dominica. Sanders had the backing of eight other Caricom countries. There had been numerous calls across the region for her to drop out of the race.

The selection of the new Secretary General took place last Friday in a closed session during the 24th biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), held in Malta. Rowley, accompanied by his wife, Sharon, travelled to Malta for the meeting, which ended yesterday.

Scotland, former UK attorney general, defeated Sanders, Antigua & Barbuda's nominee and Botswana's Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba. Rowley, in a statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister yesterday said Scotland's selection was a great victory for the Caribbean.

"This is a great victory for the Caribbean, as the last Caribbean national to serve as a Commonwealth Secretary General was Sir Shridath "Sonny" Ramphal QC—who served for fifteen years from 1975 to 1990.

“As Baroness Patricia Scotland embarks on her tenure as the Commonwealth Secretary General, Trinidad and Tobago wishes her all the best in promoting and protecting the Commonwealth’s values and principles as set out in the Commonwealth Charter.” The Prime Minister said he also looked forward to working with Scotland along with the other heads of government.

Rowley had earlier indicated his support for Sanders while T&T’s Dr Bhoë Tewarie was the third Caribbean contender. Tewarie eventually pulled out of the race, citing commitments to his constituency after the September 7 general election as the reason. Opposition Leader, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in her congratulation message on Saturday said she was proud to welcome the organisation’s first female Secretary General.

“I have no doubt that Baroness Patricia Scotland would maintain her pledge to put the women’s agenda firmly on the table and work with leaders, governments, local governments and other partners. “It is most fitting for the Commonwealth to recognise the value of women in leadership roles.”

What went wrong with Sir Ron

Antigua & Barbuda’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Charles “Max” Fernandez said Sanders lost the position because Antigua was “marginalised” by other blocs in the Commonwealth who supported Scotland because she is a member of the English Parliament.

Giving an analysis of what went wrong in the Antigua Observer, Fernandez said, “We went up against Africa on one hand, and the other (voting) bloc of the Europeans.

“As you know, Baroness Scotland is a member of the English Parliament. They openly lobbied very heavily for her. “Also the (Australians) lobbied openly with the Pacific countries. So, in effect, we were marginalised, to say the least, and had a very, very tough time going forward.” He said the open European intervention on Baroness Scotland’s behalf “blindsided” the Antiguan contingent.

The Observer reported that just before voting took place, an article was carried in Daily Telegraph headlined, “Leading candidate to be Commonwealth secretary general alleged to have received \$1.4m in fraud against Antiguan government”.