

Portia becomes PNP president, Prime Minister

After a nasty, fractious and bruising contest, it was the sole woman among the four People's National Party (PNP) presidential aspirants that triumphed.

In February, after polling 1,775 votes among PNP delegates, Portia Lucretia Simpson Miller was named PNP president ahead of her rivals National Security Minister Peter Phillips, who got polled 1,538 votes, Finance Minister Omar Davies, and former cabinet member, Karl Blythe. It was second time lucky for Simpson Miller, who in 1992 unsuccessfully challenged P J Patterson for the leadership of the PNP. Patterson went on to become the longest serving prime minister of Jamaica. It was the first time that a woman was elected to the leadership of a major political party in Jamaica.

On March 31, Simpson Miller, who turned 61 in



The symbolic passing of the baton from outgoing PNP president PJ Patterson to incoming PNP president Portia Simpson Miller.

December, again entered the record books as the first woman to become prime minister of Jamaica, having secured the confidence vote of the majority of

government parliamentarians. Thousands of Jamaicans revelled in her ascension to the post vacated by the island's longest-serving prime minister, PJ Patterson, and

thousands of invited and uninvited alike attended her swearing-in ceremony, which took place on the grounds of King's House.

Affectionately called 'Sista P' by the masses, Simpson Miller's rise to Jamaica's highest political office is in itself a classic rags to riches story, which began with a poor powerless girl from Wood Hall in St Catherine who worked her way through Jamaica's notoriously challenging political jungle to become the most powerful woman in Jamaica.

Immediately following her election victory, Simpson Miller rode on a wave of magical popularity in public opinion polls. That lead, however, was cut significantly towards the latter half of the year. She will seek her own electoral mandate in general elections, expected to be held no later than October this year.

- Erica Virtue