



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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Antigua and Barbuda tells IMF **NO THANKS!**



Prime Minister Gaston Browne confirmed that Antigua and Barbuda will not be accepting funding from the IMF. See story on Page 3.

Social Security is paying - Page 2

Social Security is paying

The Social Security Scheme has started making payments to its eleven thousand pensioners for the month of April.

Superintendent, David Matthias, said payments for 'walk-ins' started on Monday and those pensioners who are paid through the General Post Office will begin receiving their cheques today (Wednesday) and tomorrow (Thursday).

"Because of the state of emergency the GPO is not open, so now we are making special provisions for those who are paid through that facility to be paid at our offices. In addition, those whose payments go directly to their accounts at the commercial banks/credit unions can expect payments to begin by Thursday," he revealed.



Social Security Scheme Superintendent, David Matthias

The SSS official noted that the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a debilitating impact on its revenues this month. "Our revenues have declined by approximately forty per cent since the crisis forced the lock-

down of the country. So we have had to resort to other means to meet the shortfall in revenues in order to be able to make our pension payments," he explained.

Matthias said the scheme has had to convert some of its reserves to cash to make up the shortfall, a situation it never anticipated that it would have to do.

"We were anticipating that our revenues each month would have been enough to cover all our expenses. The figures for the first few months of the year already confirmed this. No one saw this pandemic coming; we could not prepare for it," he stated.

Each month, the scheme pays out \$13 million dollars in pension payments, its largest expense.

DAY 4/29

Max UV Index: 13 Extreme
 Wind: E at 17 km/h
 Wind Gusts: 26 km/h
 Probability of Precipitation: 40%
 Probability of Thunderstorms: 20%
 Precipitation: 0.5 mm
 Rain: 0.5 mm
 Snow: 0.0 cm
 Ice: 0.0 mm
 Hours of Precipitation: 1
 Hours of Rain: 1

30°_{Hi}



Mostly sunny with a shower in spots

NIGHT 4/29

Wind: E at 15 km/h
 Wind Gusts: 24 km/h
 Probability of Precipitation: 41%
 Probability of Thunderstorms: 20%
 Precipitation: 0.6 mm
 Rain: 0.6 mm
 Snow: 0.0 cm
 Ice: 0.0 mm
 Hours of Precipitation: 1
 Hours of Rain: 1

24°_{Lo}



Partly cloudy with a shower in places

SUNRISE/SUNSET

Sunrise AST
 5:42AM

Sunset AST
 6:27PM



Duration
 12:45hr

MOONRISE/MOONSET

Moonrise AST
 10:01 PM

Moonset AST
 12:20AM



Duration
 13:28hr

No Thanks! Antigua and Barbuda tells IMF

Three OECS countries have received approval for loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)...however, Antigua and Barbuda says “No thanks!” to the international financial institution.

Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, confirmed to PointeXpress last night that Antigua and Barbuda has opted not to go that route as, in his mind, the amount of money that has been approved is ‘peanuts’ based on the country’s real needs. He said Antigua and Barbuda prefers to ‘paddle its own canoe’ rather than accept an IMF loan that comes with a likely set of harsh conditionalities.

In news breaking last night, the Executive Board of the IMF approved disbursements to Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia following their requests under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) mechanism, with a combined total of US\$65.6 million, to help cover their balance of payment needs stemming from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Disbursements to all three countries are set at the maximum available access under the RCF instrument of 100 percent of quota for Grenada US\$ 22.4 million and St. Lucia US\$ 29.2 million, and 89.4 percent of quota



for Dominica US\$14 million. These countries are small states that are very vulnerable to shocks, including large natural disasters, with Dominica in particular still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017,” the IMF release said.

Ask to comment on the announcement, Browne said what the IMF is offering is insufficient for Antigua and Barbuda’s needs at this time. “A US\$20 million loan can’t help us. What we need debt write-off and this is what I requested in my letters to the IMF and the World Bank earlier this month,” Browne explained.

Unfortunately, he noted that the country’s high per capita income precludes it from concessional funding. In his letter, the prime minister had made



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

a case for a suspension of the per capita income criteria knowing that the country’s vulnerability to exogenous shocks, such as hurricanes, or in this case, the COVID pandemic, expose many of the structural weaknesses in these societies.

PM Browne has repeatedly said that he would not take Antigua and Barbuda into an IMF programme because of the stringent measures that the institution forces countries to adopt.

The IMF statement did not say what measures the three islands would have to implement only stating that “the authorities have expressed commitment to meeting the regional debt target of 60 percent of GDP by 2030. To this end, they plan to implement necessary adjustment measures to rebuild policy space once the crisis has abated, building on the progress achieved in recent years. Looking forward, the authorities are also committed to implementing policies that support durable economic growth and poverty reduction within a balanced development strategy that includes comprehensive measures to boost resilience to natural disasters.”

ABHTA, ABWU to donate food packages

Over eighteen hundred (1800) furloughed employees of the hotel sector are in line to receive care packages of food items donated by the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA) and the Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union (ABWU).

In a joint release, they said funding for the project was made possible from the ABWU’s Welfare Fund and the ABHTA Tourism Development Fund.

“It is through the \$1/day Tourism Development Fund contributed from

cont’d on pg 4

Don't let your guards down!

The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, and residents of Antigua and Barbuda are again being warned not to let their guard down, despite encouraging figures for the past three weeks that have seen the number of confirmed cases virtually frozen at 24.

This has led to widespread relaxation of some restrictions, notably the extension of a 5-hour curfew window to 12 hours for obtaining essential supplies such as food and medicines and accessing essential services such as banking and auto-repairs.

But since the easing was announced, authorities and concerned citizens have been expressing alarm that many persons seem to have interpreted it as meaning the COVID coast is clear, manifested by such dangerous behaviours as no longer wearing face masks in public, a requirement by law under State of Emergency regulations that are still in force.

Health and Wellness Minister Molwyn Joseph has expressed alarm about this premature slacking off from safety measures.

"Let me make it very clear

that the fight against COVID is not over," he declared. "Having said that, and the fact that we have gone approximately 12 days without any new case of COVID, we must recognize that the war against COVID might have just begun."

Joseph explained that he was making these remarks "in the context of the reality that we have to open up our economy. There'll be more people mingling. There'll be more opportunity for the spread of COVID when we open up the society and the economy generally."

He said the people of Antigua and Barbuda now need to "recognize that they have an even greater role to play in maintaining this progress and to eliminate COVID from our society. We must maintain adherence to the instructions and rules that have been laid down."

Minister Joseph warned that "COVID is no less deadly today than when it started in Wuhan ... this press conference, if it accomplishes nothing else, is to say to the people of Antigua and Barbuda 'we cannot put down our guards; we must continue to do the things that have worked to prevent the spread of COVID in Antigua and Barbuda.'"

Joseph said he was appalled to see people in places such as the public market not wearing their masks despite having them in their possession.

The question was also posed to Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas, whether she felt the relaxation of measures was sending the wrong message to people who were increasingly flouting the regulations on social distancing.

The CMO, backed up by the Minister, both urged residents to continue practicing the recommended measures of social distancing, wearing of masks, practicing good cough and sneeze etiquette, frequent hand washing and effective sanitizing.

cont'd from pg 3

Blue Waters Resort, Curtain Bluff, Galley Bay Resort & Spa, Hermitage Bay, Jumby Bay, Siboney Beach Club and Sugar Ridge that the ABHTA is able to make such a contribution," according to the release.

Chairman of the ABHTA, Vernon A. Jeffers, Snr. stated "at the end of March we began registration of employees within the resorts, in an effort to fully understand the individuals who would immediately be in need.

Registration was paused due to the Government issued lockdown, however, we were able to work with the Human Resource Managers of the properties to gather the data we needed to commence this project.

Staff within our member properties were asked to register if they wanted to



Vernon Jeffers

receive a care package. Although we will not be reaching all persons within the sector, we are pleased to be in a position to deliver relief to so many persons."

General Secretary of the ABWU, David Massiah remarked "this week is a busy one for both of our organizations.

In addition to delivering over 1,800 food packages, on April 30, 400 employees will also be receiving another round of payment from their Thrift Fund."

Noting that the hotel sector



David Massiah

is at the beginning of a long road to recovery, Massiah added "we are pleased to be playing our part at this stage of the pandemic, in easing the burden being placed on so many persons."

To qualify for the food packages, employees must meet the established criteria: they must be employees whose employers are members of the ABHTA, they must currently be on lay-off and are registered at the ABWU office up to March 31, 2020.



At rare moments such as this, during the COVID-19 pandemic, while our Government continues to support especially students abroad, thank you for stepping forward to help repatriate Antigua & Barbuda and Montserrat students who were studying in universities across Jamaica.

Michael S. Browne

**Minister of Education,
Science & Technology**



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Affairs Jamaica

Government of Jamaica

Diane Shurland, LIAT Legal Counsel

LIAT

Hawksbill

thank you

Future of quarantine not yet decided

No final decision has been made on whether persons coming to Antigua and Barbuda will still be required to undergo the current mandatory 14-day quarantine when the country's borders are reopened to arrivals. No date has been set as yet for ending the border closure which has been a key measure employed to prevent further importation of the deadly COVID-19 disease.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas addressed the question about what the future is likely to hold for quarantine requirements following any easing of the current tight border controls.

"It depends, and I would say yes, because we are still not sure what is going to be happening when we open our borders. Maybe other countries

might still be having a lot of cases, new cases, and community transmission. If that is the case, maybe persons coming from those areas where there is sustained community transmission and they would want to come to Antigua, certainly I would recommend they would go into quarantine," the CMO advised.

Dr. Sealy-Thomas said she has observed that "the corona virus in the Caribbean has been a little bit different," and she quickly went on to explain what she meant by that.

"We have not seeing, so far, the large number of cases ... Maybe it might be a situation for intra-regional travel. For example, if a country in the Caribbean has had no community transmission for a sustained period, maybe we may not require persons coming from



Health Minister, Molwyn Joseph

that country to have mandatory quarantine," she explained.

Dr. Sealy-Thomas however observed that it was difficult to adopt any definitive position in advance on such matters, "because the situation with coronavirus is evolving".

She however offered the health min-
cont'd on pg 7

Sir George Walter Highway Traffic Management – Dee's Intersection construction

CLOSURE TYPE: Single lane closure at Dee's intersection with diversion route

CLOSURE LIMITS: Dee's intersection to Powells Main Rd.

CLOSURE DURATION: 0700 to 1400 daily commencing Wednesday 29th April 2020



KEY:

Main diversion route
(Southbound traffic only):

Roadblock:



NOTES:

- Northbound traffic along Sir George Walter Highway remains unaffected throughout.
- Southbound traffic along Sir George Walter Highway must follow published diversion route from intersection of Powells Main Rd. and SGWH.
- Southbound traffic exception for Heavy vehicles only who may proceed through road closure under the escort of police presence.

Three-point plan for post-COVID

The government has devised a three-point plan to revive and restore the nation's economy in the post-COVID-19 era.

In making the announcement, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Lennox Weston, said the primary plank of the plan calls for bringing the spread of the virus in Antigua and Barbuda under control.

"That's why we deployed so much of our resources in setting up the Infectious Disease Centre (IDC) and other measures to fight COVID. Our ability to bring about some stability in the spread of the disease, it means that we can now begin to look at re-opening the country and stimulating economic activ-

ity," Weston stated.

The next step would be to find replacement employment for the thousands who have lost their jobs due to the premature closure of hotels and the cruise sector. "We know that tourism would be one of the hardest hit areas from this pandemic. So we knew right at the beginning that we must look at other sectors to generate employment. Construction and agriculture come to mind; here is where we have to look for alternative jobs," he disclosed.

The minister noted that there are about five to six thousand people who are directly and indirectly employed by tourism with an estimated five hundred

more as taxi drivers. "We have to get COVID under control so that we can open the tourism plant in three or four months, rather than the twelve or eighteen months that some have predicted. If that happens, then we will be in serious trouble," he explained.

Weston said the aim is to immediately boost agricultural production with additional acreage being placed into production. He noted that there is both a plan to boost exports as well as another one to produce more for local consumption. Led by Agriculture Minister, Samantha Marshall, he said the government will launch a campaign that will encourage laid off hotel workers

and others to get involved in agriculture.

The third plank involves massive investments in the construction sector. He said the government itself has a number of construction projects in the pipeline which it plans to start shortly. In addition, he said that there are several private sector initiatives that the government will encourage the investors to start up as soon as possible. "Construction has an immediate impact on the economy as the multiplier effect of each dollar spent is quite significant. We will encourage the National Asset Management Company (NAMCO) the West Indies Oil Company and others to quickly get their projects off the ground," he further explained.

The minister of state revealed that the government has been able to negotiate deferrals for \$300 million dollars in loan payments for six months, and that this month can be spent in other areas of the economy.

"The important thing is that we maintain demand for goods and services with our people having the purchasing power to support these wants and desires. The government will then benefit from increased customs importation fees and ABST. If that happens, then the impact from the pandemic will not be as painful as some may have predicted," he concluded.

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istry's assurance that it would "do whatever it takes to protect the public, and to prevent the re-introduction of COVID into Antigua and Barbuda."

Health Minister, Molwyn Joseph, who chaired the press conference, said "the great challenge is going to come in about a month to a month-and-a-half or so when most countries will begin to activate their tourism economy, and Antigua will be faced with that decision."

He noted that "CARICOM member states have agreed to coordinate the opening up for tourism."

Any decision on that, Minister Joseph stated, would likely follow inter-ministerial consultations.

"The Ministry of Health will be meeting with the Ministry of Tourism shortly – most likely next week – to discuss measures that can be taken by both cruise lines as well as airlines upon embarkation of their customers to come to the Caribbean

... specifically to Antigua and Barbuda."

Joseph added that, "With those measures in place, it was not conceivable then to have quarantine for tourists coming to Antigua.

"What is more likely to be a scenario is that we find a way of determining the risk of that person, in terms of that person's health, whether or not that person is going to bring COVID to Antigua. Those things have not [yet] been decided".

The first locally diagnosed case of the disease was confirmed on March 12; a 24-year-old female visitor from the United Kingdom.

Several others of the 24 known cases detected so far were also imported, prompting the authorities to declare a state of emergency that included prohibition of inbound and outgoing passenger travel, 24-hour curfews, the compulsory wearing of face masks in public places, and the complete shutting down of all but a few businesses – among many other strict measures.

Statement from Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas

I am pleased to present an update of some aspects of COVID-19 to the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

To date, Antigua and Barbuda has recorded 24 laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19. This represents approximately 25% of the 97 persons with samples sent to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). Of the 24 positive cases 58% are males and most are in the 70 -79 year old age group. To date two persons remain in critical condition in the ICU at MSJMC.

Eleven persons have recovered. This means that they are free from clinical symptoms and have a negative Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT PCR) test. Let me use the opportunity to speak about testing.

There are basically two methodologies to detect SARS CoV 2, the virus that causes COVID-19, molecular tests and serological tests. Molecular tests detect the actual RNA of the virus and say with almost 100% certainty that if a person has the virus in their throat, nose, pharynx, lung or from where ever the sample is taken, it would be detected.

The RNA or genetic material is detected using a RT PCR test. The other types of tests detect antigens or other viral particles and antibodies. The latter are produced in the body in response to the presence of the virus. Antibody tests cannot detect the actual virus. Antibody levels vary according the patient's immune response and the duration of the infection.

There are only a few countries in the Caribbean that can conduct RT PCR testing. These include Dominica and Barbados. Note that they have had this capability prior to COVID-19. Others such as Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, the British Virgin Islands, Grenada and St. Lucia do not have RT-PCR testing technology and rely on the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), our reference laboratory in

Trinidad.

The transportation of samples to Trinidad involves a coordinated effort between the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda, the Regional Security System (RSS), the laboratory at the Mount St. John Medical Center, the Emergency Medical Services and the doctors and nurses who put their health at risk by taking the samples.

Let me emphasize the doctors and nurses who put their own health at risk, utilizing protective equipment or PPE, to take samples. I take this opportunity to thank all the persons involved in this process. Globally and regionally testing has been restricted by insufficient testing reagents and testing swabs. For example, Antigua and Barbuda in the initial phase of the pandemic was limited to 20 samples per week by CARPHA due to limited testing reagents. Testing was also limited to the number of available swabs and to persons who meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of suspected cases.

WHO is the global public health agency with access to experts in the public and private sectors and provides advice to countries on COVID 19. It is, and will continue to be, the agency that the ministry will look to for relevant technical advice and recommendations on COVID-19, including the Director General's advice to test, test, test and we will test with approved, proven and recommended technologies and in accordance with the WHO's guidelines.

In order to improve testing in Antigua and Barbuda the Ministry of Health has done the following;

1. Procured additional RT PCR machines. One has been installed at the lab at MSJMC taking into account all safety precautions. Laboratory staff are being trained in the use of this machine.

2. Acquired viral swabs to conduct additional RT PCR tests thanks to the OECS Secretariat and neighboring countries including Barbados.



Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas

As a result of the above it envisioned that RT PCR testing will commence shortly in country. We will continue to work with PAHO and CARPHA on validating our RT PCR testing and other testing modalities. Note that testing will still be prioritized. Suspected hospital cases, health care workers, close contacts of laboratory confirmed cases, mild and moderate suspected cases will be of high priority. Of least priority will be persons who show no symptoms of the disease. Let me emphasize that not everyone who wants a test actually needs one at this time. Allow me to speak briefly about the serological rapid tests. These detect antibodies to the virus and are not recommended by the WHO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) for the diagnosis of COVID-19. They can provide some information that a person may have had COVID-19 or another corona virus. They are not very specific for COVID-19. They also do not prove at this time that a person is protected from developing COVID-19 in the future. They have been used in some countries for research to give an idea of the percentage of the population that may have been infected. They have very limited use in the diagnosis of COVID-19.

WHO and PAHO do not endorse their use at this time and the ministry of health does not recommend their use at this stage in Antigua and Barbuda. Before I close let me speak about the clinical course of the persons diagnosed with COVID-19 in Antigua and Barbuda.

Fifty eight percent of those positive

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Don't leave the blind in the dark!

There's an urgent call for including the blind and people with special needs when information about the COVID-19 pandemic is communicated to members of the public.

The call comes from the Caribbean Council for the Blind following a meeting of its Emergency Response Team called to assess the circumstances of people (across the Caribbean) who are blind or have other special needs. In a statement the committee calls for a more inclusive approach to dissemination of information about COVID-19.

"The web-based meeting was convened by President of CCB, Kerryann Ifill (of Barbados), and attended by Eye Health and Blindness services representatives from: Antigua-Barbuda, Barbados, Commonwealth of the Bahamas; Jamaica, St Lucia and Trinidad-Tobago. Guyana and Martinique were unable to attend," a CCB statement said.

According to the statement...primary concern for the delegates was 'the state and wellbeing of blind and other special needs people in the region, under the unprecedented lockdown of government and civil society services across the Caribbean and around the world'.

It noted that critical services including: government-operated eye clinics, Inclusive Education for special needs children and programmes for special needs adults, are particularly hard hit.

"Delegates noted that some governments; Members of CCB and other civil inter-

ests, have included a limited number of blind and other special needs people, in some COVID-related services, but that many gaps remained. However, the Emergency Response Team recognized and appreciated," the statement added.

It identified the areas to include the following:

a) Priority access for the elderly and other special needs people to shop and access financial services.

b) Limited preparation and distribution of care packages in some communities.

c) Some countries increasing the number of people who can access publicly funded assistance programmes.

The CCB statement raised an issue which it said was

of grave concern. "Members of the Emergency Response Team, expressed distress and alarm at anecdotal reports, of persons with special needs, being set-upon by others, in households struggling with lockdown related stresses," it revealed.

The delegates attending the CCB meeting issued a call for ministers of government, other Public sector officials and leaders of Civil society organizations, to consistently reference the at-risk circumstances of the elderly and other special needs people, in official statements and press briefings, on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, in the area of inclusive education, the committee is urging education

authorities, to take careful account of (and mitigate) online study challenges and examination requirements, of blind and other special needs children, as the Caribbean moves toward an unprecedented season of CXC exams (possibly) under lockdown.

Not all its emphasis has been on the blind, as according to the statement, delegates discussed the circumstances of the hearing impaired, including people living with presbycusis, a form of progressive hearing loss, which affects up to 44 out of every 100 older people. Some members lamented the lack of sign-language and captioning, during official briefings on the COVID-19 crisis, in some countries.

cont'd from pg 8

have not been hospitalized. Eleven have recovered and three remain in hospital with two in critical condition in the ICU. My sincerest gratitude to all health care providers, who have managed and continue to manage these cases.

As you are aware we blessed the Infectious Disease Center (IDC) on Monday and that facility will assist in COVID-19 and other infectious disease care on Antigua and Barbuda. In speaking of health care workers more than 20% of all persons tested for COVID-19 have been health care workers. They continue to remain a priority and with the scarce resources, we have tested a wide range of health care workers from both the private and public sectors, including doctors, nurses, laboratory and radiology technologists, administrative staff and emergency medical services.

We have also conducted follow up and contact tracing for persons who may have been in contact with them. Let me say thanks to those individuals who have been working with us in contact tracing and to the staff at the Hawksbill Hotel where we have had per-

sons in quarantine since the end of March. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda and members of the Defense Force and the EMS who assist the ministry with security and medical checks at that quarantine facility. Thanks as well to the members of the public who have been compliant with our home quarantine rules. Let me mention Barbuda and the team of health care providers who are working with the ministry's team and have kept Barbuda COVID free. Our own analysis along with modeling from the University of the West Indies indicate that we may be flattening our curve. I view this with mixed feelings including optimism that we will continue to see fewer cases, trepidation when I see and hear of the relaxation of restrictions and hope that the population will remain vigilant and not become complacent.

Let us continue on the trends of a flattened curve. Let us continue to have no more positive cases of COVID-19 in Antigua and Barbuda. Thanks once again to all health care workers and the public in our achievements in managing COVID-19 in Antigua and Barbuda.

The world has loved, hated and envied the U.S. now, for the first time, we pity it.



By Fintan O'Toole

Irish Times

“Over more than two centuries, the United States has stirred a very wide range of feelings in the rest of the world: love and hatred, fear and hope, envy and contempt, awe and anger. But there is one emotion that has never been directed towards the US until now: pity.

“However bad things are for most other rich democracies, it is hard not to feel sorry for Americans. Most of them did not vote for Donald Trump in 2016. Yet they are locked down with a malignant narcissist who, instead of protecting his people from Covid-19, has amplified its lethality. The country Trump promised to make great again has never in its history seemed so pitiful. “Will American prestige ever recover from

this shameful episode? The US went into the coronavirus crisis with immense advantages: precious weeks of warning about what was coming, the world’s best concentration of medical and scientific expertise, effectively limitless financial resources, a military complex with stunning logistical capacity and most of the world’s leading technology corporations. Yet it managed to make itself the global epicentre of the pandemic.

“As the American writer George Packer puts it in the current edition of the Atlantic, “The United States reacted ... like Pakistan or Belarus – like a country with shoddy infrastructure and a dysfunctional government whose leaders were too corrupt or stupid to head off

mass suffering.”

“It is one thing to be powerless in the face of a natural disaster, quite another to watch vast power being squandered in real time – willfully, malevolently, vindictively. It is one thing for governments to fail (as, in one degree or another, most governments did), quite another to watch a ruler and his supporters actively spread a deadly virus. Trump, his party and Rupert Murdoch’s Fox News became vectors of the pestilence.

“The grotesque spectacle of the president openly inciting people (some of them armed) to take to the streets to oppose the restrictions that save lives is the manifestation of a political death wish. What are supposed to be daily briefings on the crisis, demonstrative of national unity in the face of a shared challenge, have been used by Trump merely to sow confusion and division. They provide a recurring horror show in which all the neuroses that haunt the American subconscious dance naked on live TV.

“If the plague is a test, its ruling political nexus ensured that the US would fail it at a terrible cost in human lives. In the process, the idea of the US as the world’s leading nation – an idea that has shaped the past century – has all but evaporated.

“Other than the Trump impersonator Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, who is now looking to the US as the exemplar

of anything other than what not to do? How many people in Düsseldorf or Dublin are wishing they lived in Detroit or Dallas?

“It is hard to remember now but, even in 2017, when Trump took office, the conventional wisdom in the US was that the Republican Party and the broader framework of US political institutions would prevent him from doing too much damage. This was always a delusion, but the pandemic has exposed it in the most savage ways.

Abject surrender

“What used to be called mainstream conservatism has not absorbed Trump – he has absorbed it. Almost the entire right-wing half of American politics has surrendered abjectly to him. It has sacrificed on the altar of wanton stupidity the most basic ideas of responsibility, care and even safety.

“Thus, even at the very end of March, 15 Republican governors had failed to order people to stay at home or to close non-essential businesses. In Alabama, for example, it was not until April 3rd that governor Kay Ivey finally issued a stay-at-home order. In Florida, the state with the highest concentration of elderly people with underlying conditions, governor Ron DeSantis, a Trump mini-me, kept the beach resorts open to students travelling from all over the US for spring break parties. Even on April 1st,

Cont’d on pg 11

when he issued restrictions, DeSantis exempted religious services and ‘recreational activities’.

Georgia governor Brian Kemp, when he finally issued a stay-at-home order on April 1st, explained: ‘We didn’t know that [the virus can be spread by people without symptoms] until the last 24 hours.’

“This is not mere ignorance – it is deliberate and homicidal stupidity, as the demonstrations this week in US cities have shown, plenty of political mileage in denying the reality of the pandemic. It is fuelled by Fox News and far-right internet sites, and it reaps for these politicians millions of dollars in donations, mostly (in an ugly irony) from older people who are most vulnerable to the coronavirus.

“It draws on a concoction of conspiracy theories, hatred of science, paranoia about the ‘deep state’ and religious providentialism (God will protect the good folks) that is now very deeply infused in the mindset of the American right.

“Trump embodies and enacts this mindset, but he did not invent it. The US response to the coronavirus crisis has been paralysed by a contradiction that the Republicans have inserted into the heart of US democracy.

“On the one hand, they want to control all the levers of governmental power. On the other they have created a popular base by playing on the notion that government is innately evil and must not be trusted.

“The contradiction was made manifest in two of

Trump’s statements on the pandemic: on the one hand that he has ‘total authority,’ and on the other that ‘I don’t take responsibility at all’. Caught between authoritarian and anarchic impulses, he is incapable of coherence.

Fertile Ground

“But this is not just Donald Trump. The crisis has shown definitively that Trump’s presidency is not an aberration. It has grown on soil long prepared to receive it. The monstrous blossoming of misrule has structure and purpose and strategy behind it.

“There are very powerful interests who demand ‘freedom’ in order to do as they like with the environment, society and the economy. They have infused a very large part of American culture with the belief that ‘freedom’ is literally more important than life. My freedom to own assault weapons trumps your right not to get shot at school. Now, my

freedom to go to the barber (‘I Need a Haircut’ read one banner this week in St Paul, Minnesota) trumps your need to avoid infection.

“Usually when this kind of outlandish idiocy is displaying itself, there is the comforting thought that, if things were really serious, it would all stop. People would sober up. Instead, a large part of the US has hit the bottle even harder.

“And the president, his party and their media allies keep supplying the drinks. There has been no moment of truth, no shock of realisation that the antics have to end. No one of any substance on the US right has stepped in to say: get a grip, people are dying here.

“That is the mark of how deep the trouble is for the US – it is not just that Trump has treated the crisis merely as a way to feed tribal hatreds but that this behaviour has become normalised. When the freak show is live on TV

every evening, and the star is boasting about his ratings, it is not really a freak show any more. For a very large and solid bloc of Americans, it is reality.

“And this will get worse before it gets better. Trump has at least eight more months in power. In his inaugural address in 2017, he evoked ‘American carnage’ and promised to make it stop. But now that the real carnage has arrived, he is revelling in it. He is in his element. “As things get worse, he will pump more hatred and falsehood, more death-wish defiance of reason and decency, into the groundwater. If a new administration succeeds him in 2021, it will have to clean up the toxic dump he leaves behind. If he is re-elected, toxicity will have become the lifeblood of American politics.

Either way, it will be a long time before the rest of the world can imagine America being great again.”

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A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Opinion

Pringle defies popular opinion to sit out ERC

By Political Watcher

So once again the Opposition Leader, contrary to the consensus of views, has remained bigheaded, and opted out of serving on the Economic Recovery Committee set up by the Cabinet of Antigua & Barbuda to mitigate against the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Having indicated that he would consider the invitation issued by Prime Minister Gaston Browne, the ERC Chairman, Jamale Pringle has misguidedly stuck to the advice of his United Progressive Party's disciples who are hell-bent on not cooperating with the government during this unprecedented crisis.

On Sunday, the day after he received the invitation, and having stated on last Saturday that he felt "disrespected because he wasn't officially invited, Pringle met with his advisors and the following day issued a statement alluding that his "decision" was "strongly supported" by the UPP's executive and membership.

They childishly complained that prior to receiving the invitation electronically Browne "was on the airwaves castigating the UPP...and members of its leadership, as is his practice."

They also spuriously argued that the PM's 'belated invitation' to MP Pringle to



serve, "there can be no expectation of respect, honesty or good faith on his part."

The UPP hierarchy would want the public to believe that they are holier than thou and have never sinned or come short of the glory. This is not to say that the PM has done anything wrong by hitting his opponents with a few political jabs on Saturday's Browne & Browne Show on Pointe FM radio station.

PM Browne was at pains to explain that while serving in opposition between 2009-2014 he supported the then UPP-government introduction of the Citizenship by Investment Programme, among other initiatives

He also differed with the Antigua Labour Party's position, during their stewardship in opposition, on issues that he felt strongly about, demonstrating strong lead-

ership and reasoning against the odds.

It appears that the UPP leader Harold Lovell, who holds no Parliamentary position, is peeved that, he, nor the Party, was invited among other institutions to serve on the ERC.

"MP Pringle maintains that the institution he represents has not been accorded the respect shown to the six organizations named to the ERC, and that he will not allow himself to be used to discredit the UPP," it said, vainly trying to justify its action.

Now, this is where the Opposition Leader, as constitutionally appointed and elected by the constituents of All Saints East & St Luke, needed to have shown backbone and call the shots.

But Pringle, who publicly told the Antigua and Barbuda public that he's not interested

in the UPP leadership, is fearful of putting Lovell in place. Pringle's gentle demeanour is a clear example of his weak leadership style and clear indication that he's swimming, not only in uncharted waters, but like fish out of water.

Gauging public opinion on the radio talk shows and social media, Pringle has his choir members defending his puerile position, while those who rightly took him to task, have indicated to him that he should seek the higher ground and duly serve on the ERC.

Pringle and the UPP are foolishly maintaining that their COVID-19 recovery "plans will be shared in the coming weeks, with the public invited to give feedback and share their ideas."

As of Wednesday (today), Pringle promises that will make lame duck attempt to "speak, in greater detail, on the decisions he has made and how the party will proceed" via social media.

He would be better advised to make those pronouncements to the ears of the decision-makers who will sit on the ERC.

It's not too late for the Opposition Leader to eat humble pie and take his seat; at least a vacant chair will await his presence

The Antiguan public hopes he does put the ball in his own net, again.

Ronald Jackson Leaves CDEMA After Seven Years

The Barbados-based the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) says its executive director, Ronald Jackson, is leaving the post after seven years “of unwavering and exemplary service to the region”.

It said that under the stewardship of the Jamaican national, CDEMA gained further recognition and prominence throughout the Caribbean and globally as one of the foremost regional disaster risk management institutions and a preferred partner for a safe and more resilient Caribbean.

“This is a bittersweet moment for me. I am excited at the opportunity to be able to practice in a global capacity but I feel a sense of duty to the Caribbean Community and as such, a part of me will miss working in a context that inspires innovation.

“However, I feel that I am leaving behind a wonderful platform for the continued advancement of the region’s Integrated Risk Management Agenda and the continued growth of the agency”, said Jackson, who media reports said is due to take up an appointment in Geneva.

CDEMA said that Jackson has forged relationships and cultivated several strategic partnerships with a broad-based and diverse range of regional and international development partners, donors, governments, private



Ronald Jackson - CMC photo

sector entities and non-governmental organisations.

“His commitment and advocacy in promoting and advancing the implementation of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy and Framework for the region has captivated many audiences across the globe, resulting in a significant increase of resources through donor financing support to the implementation of Disaster Risk Management programmes in participating

states.

“He led the development of the Caribbean Pathway to Resilience and spearheaded its socialisation within the region and among the Americas. Mr Jackson was also instrumental in the strengthening of cooperative arrangements with the Disaster Management Organization in the Dominican Republic, with the French Overseas Territories and the Dutch Caribbean. CDEMA’s membership also in-

creased from 18 to 19 under his stewardship.”

Prior to joining CDEMA in April 2013, Jackson served as the director general of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management in Jamaica.

He currently lectures on Disaster Risk Management in the Tourism and Occupational Health and Safety Masters Programme at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill and Mona campuses.

Haiti: Cops in Violent Protest Over Back Pay



Cars burn after angry police protesters set fire to them at the Ministry of Finance. (VOA Creole/Matiado Vilme)

Dozens of police officers took to the streets of Port-au-Prince to demand the government pay them the money it owes them. The group, who fanned out on motorbikes, pickup trucks, SUVs and on foot, were accompanied by some civilian supporters.

“We’re out in the street today because we still haven’t received what we asked for,” a policeman, dressed in uni-

form, wearing a black face mask and holding a rifle told VOA Creole. He said he is part of a group that calls itself “Fantom 509” and who represent those killed on the job. Fantom means ghost.

The officer said they are asking the government to put a credit of 25,000 Haitian dollars on their debit cards and pay them a 50,000 Haitian dollar base salary. Overall, they want better

work conditions and a better salary. The officer, who did not give his name, also accused the Office National d’Assurance-Vieillesse (ONA), a government agency that oversees retirement benefits for government employees, of corruption and favoritism.

“We know ONA doesn’t provide loans to poor people like us, they only know law-makers (and their relatives) like Youri’s mother (Senator Latortue), senators and deputies,” he said.

“The living officers asked us to join them in the street today,” a man, dressed in black clothing, a black hat, dark sunglasses and a black face mask told VOA. Asked who exactly the ‘living officers’ are, the masked man said they are the officers who work out of the police stations, responding to 911 calls, direct traffic and perform other law enforcement duties.

Haiti police and some civilian supporters took to the streets of Port au Prince, April 27, 2020 to demand back pay and better working conditions. (VOA Creole/Matiado Vilme)

While he was talking to reporters, VOA heard shots being fired on the street – one of which was so loud it caused the officer to flinch. He said they are prepared to continue protesting until their demands are met.

At one point, the protesters exchanged fire with a group of policemen who arrived on the scene in armed vehicles to disperse them. At least one person was injured, VOA Creole has learned.

But the attempt to disperse the protest was unsuccessful, and the group made its way to the Ministry of Economy and Finance where they rammed the gate with an SUV, then set fire to four vehicles.

During the protest, which lasted several hours, VOA saw some protesters wearing masks, but many others were not social distancing at a time when the coronavirus continues to spread in the country.

As of April 26, Haiti has a total of 74 confirmed COVID-19 cases, according to the Public Health Ministry. Seven people have recovered and six have died.

Shortly after the protest, Haitian President Jovenel Moise addressed the nation in a pre-planned speech about the government’s coronavirus response. During the address, Moise said he has instructed Prime Minister Joseph Jouthe to release back pay for the police officers who have not been paid. He made no mention of Monday’s police protest.

Operation Recovery - Gov't Launches Task Force To Rescue COVID-Wrecked Economy

Ravaged by fallout from the coronavirus disease, the Holness administration has established a high-powered task force to kick-start Jamaica's battered economy and chart the road to recovery in the medium term.

Chaired by Finance and the Public Service Minister Dr Nigel Clarke, the committee was approved by Cabinet yesterday and comprises leaders and thinkers from academia and industry.

Bemoaning how quickly the effects of the dreaded virus severed tens of thousands of jobs locally, Clarke told a press conference from Jamaica House yesterday that the administration was determined to restore economic activity and claw back employment numbers lost in the wake of COVID-19. The lifting of a lockdown of St Catherine, by Friday morning, is also expected to unshackle commerce in a parish with a population topping half a million.

Clarke indicated that data from SET Cash applications captured 60,000 people who had lost their jobs and were now seeking financial assistance.

HEAVY OBLIGATIONS. This category of persons, he said, comprised mainly persons below the age of 40 who were now facing heavy obligations, including rent, mortgage, and hire-purchase



Cars burn after angry police protesters set fire to them at the Ministry of Finance. (VOA Creole/Matiado Vilme)

arrangements, without an income to keep them afloat.

"We, through the Economic Recovery Task Force, our job is going to be to do all that we can working with other sectors in the society to ensure that we have the best chance for a recovery of all the jobs that have been temporarily laid off or terminated, that we can have a restoration of economic activity to allow persons to resume the lives they have lived," said Clarke.

Commenting on the over-subscribed compassionate programme, Clarke said that ministry had confirmed as eligible, on Friday, 350,000 applicants. He said those persons can expect to receive their grant in the coming days.

Financial Secretary Darlene Morrison told members of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee last Tuesday that a total of 403,000 applications were received for the compassionate grant.

The finance minister said the Government took pride in the recent jobs data, noting that in January 2020, unemployment levels had shrunk to a record of 7.2 per cent.

"It is incredibly painful knowing where we have come from, with unemployment just a few years ago about 17 per cent."

Clarke said that apart from the various assistance packages being rolled out at this time, the Government would be working assiduously "to

ensure that this is a temporary experience and that Jamaica can bounce back and can have an economic recovery where all these jobs are restored".

IMF FUNDS SOON

Providing an update on Jamaica's application to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to access its Rapid Financing Instrument, Clarke said he expected the application to be considered in a matter of weeks. He said that he received a favourable response from the board of the IMF.

The IMF had recently forecast that the economy would contract by 5.6 per cent.

The Government will table the First Supplementary Estimates of Expenditure in the next two to three weeks, with Clarke conceding that the administration would re-cast revenues in light of the COVID pandemic.

And minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Daryl Vaz, yesterday detailed plans for the reopening of the business process outsourcing sector. This comes in the wake of the partial shutdown of the sector stemming from an explosion in COVID-19 cases at the Alorica call centre in Portmore, St Catherine.

A major inspection drive of BPOs is expected to be completed next Monday.

International

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British Airways set to cut up to 12,000 jobs

British Airways is set to slash up to 12,000 jobs as part of a restructuring plan as the carrier grapples with the fallout of the novel coronavirus pandemic, its parent company IAG said Tuesday.

The firm said it was still deliberating its options but that it was “likely that they will affect most of British Airways’ employees and may result in the redundancy of up to 12,000”.

Passenger demand will take “several years” to return to 2019 levels, it added.

Shares in International Airlines Group (IAG), which also

owns Iberia and Vueling, lost 2.2 per cent as preliminary results showed that first quarter revenue fell by 13 per cent to 4.6 billion euros (US\$4.9 billion).

The group’s operating result before exceptional items came in at a loss of 535 million euros, compared with a profit of 135 million last year, with the second quarter expected to be worse.

IAG said it had reduced passenger capacity for April and May by 94 per cent compared with the same period last year.

Executive Alex Cruz

warned last month of consequences for the airline after the coronavirus pandemic gutted demand.

Recent weeks have seen it operating flights only for essential travel and repatriation of tourists marooned abroad.

The carrier, which has approximately 45,000 employees including around 4,000 pilots and 16,500 cabin crew, has already furloughed nearly 23,000 staff.

Brian Strutton, general secretary of the British Airline Pilots’ Association (Balpa) union, called Tuesday’s announcement “a bolt out of



BA chief executive Alex Cruz.

the blue”, noting that BA had previously suggested “it was wealthy enough to weather the COVID storm and declined any government support”.

“Balpa does not accept that a case has been made for these job losses and we will be fighting to save every single one,” Strutton said on the union’s Twitter account.

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An ER doctor who continued to treat patients after she recovered from Covid-19 has died by suicide

A New York City emergency room doctor who recovered from Covid-19 and continued to treat coronavirus patients has died by suicide, her father confirmed to CNN.

Dr. Lorna Breen, 49, died a hero, said her father, Philip Breen.

"She was in the trenches," he said. "She was a hero."

Lorna Breen died Sunday morning by suicide in Charlottesville, Virginia, her father said.

Breen worked in the Columbia University Irving Medical Center and New York-Presbyterian hospital system.

'Killed by the enemy on the front line,' father says

"She went down in the trenches and was killed by the enemy on the front line," Philip Breen said. "She loved New York and wouldn't hear about living anywhere else. She loved her coworkers and did what she could for them."

"I just want people to know how special she was," he added.

Philip Breen is a retired trauma surgeon, and he and his daughter would speak frequently about work, he said.

Lorna Breen told her father that her colleagues were putting in 18-hour days and sleeping in hallways, and that ambulances couldn't get in because it was so busy.

She worked in the emergency department and had been on the front lines for weeks,



Dr. Lorna Breen

handling the onslaught of cases, her father said. New York City has been the US' pandemic epicenter, recording nearly 300,000 cases and more than 22,000 deaths as of Tuesday morning.

Breen contracted Covid-19 and took a week and a half off to recover, but when she went back to work, she couldn't last through a 12-hour shift, her father said. Still, she felt like she had to get back in there to help her colleagues.

Then, a doctor friend visited Breen at home and told her she should go home to Virginia, where most of her family is based, Philip Breen said. Some friends and relatives helped get her to Charlottesville.

She was hospitalized and treated for exhaustion

Lorna Breen soon was admitted to the hospital at the University of Virginia for exhaustion, her father said, adding that her mother is a doctor

in the ward where she was treated.

After about a week, Lorna Breen left the hospital to stay with her mom, her father said. Then, last weekend, she went to stay with her sister, and that is where she died.

Officers responded Sunday to a call for medical assistance and identified the victim as Breen, the Charlottesville Police Department said in a news release. She was taken to University of Virginia Hospital for treatment and "later succumbed to self-inflicted injuries," police said.

"Frontline healthcare professionals and first responders are not immune to the mental or physical effects of the current pandemic," said Charlottesville Police Chief RaShall Brackney. "On a daily basis, these professionals operate under the most stressful of circumstances, and the Coronavirus has introduced additional stressors." "Words cannot convey the sense of loss we feel today," the New York City hospitals where Breen worked said in a statement. "Dr. Breen is a hero who brought the highest ideals of medicine to the challenging front lines of the emergency department," they said. "Our focus today is to provide support to her family, friends, and colleagues as they cope with this news during what is already an extraordinarily difficult time."

As Germany lockdown eases, spread of coronavirus worsens

First signs that the transmission of the novel coronavirus has again picked up were visible in German official data, just as the country attempts a cautious easing of its lockdown measures.

The reproduction or infection rate - under close watch by health authorities - mounted again to approximately 1.0, meaning each infected person passes the virus on to one other, figures from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for disease control showed late on Monday.

Ministers and virologists have hammered home the importance of squeezing the number below 1.0. The country has seen days of intense media and political debate after Chancellor Angela Merkel warned Germany's federal states against loosening their lockdowns too quickly.

Since mid-April, the infection rate had sunk as low as 0.7 before inching up again.

Meanwhile, the mortality rate from COVID-19 has also been rising day by day.

By Tuesday, it had reached 3.8 percent, according to RKI figures, which remains well below



Lower Saxony's Prime Minister Stephan Weil and a worker wear protective masks at the Volkswagen assembly line after the company restarts Europe's largest car factory after coronavirus shutdown in Wolfsburg, Germany.

some neighbouring countries such as France. The latest data showed 156,337 cases in Germany and 5,913 deaths.

Rising infection and mortality rates could pose a puzzle for authorities, as a population chafing at lockdown measures is just beginning to enjoy some refund freedoms and an initial united front in politics and media crumbles. Further easing?

Health Minister Jens Spahn, earlier in April, declared the pandemic "under control" in Germany, as Merkel and state

premiers agreed smaller shops could open from last week and some pupils return to school from next Monday.

Meanwhile, some large businesses like car giant Volkswagen have restarted production in recent days. Now the less encouraging data will flow into the chancellor's deliberations with regional leaders on Thursday, in the face of a new round of lockdown decisions on May 6. Until now, the May 6 gathering had been expected to bring further easing of restrictions. Merkel's

pleas not to rush a step-by-step unwinding of lockdown for fear of again worsening the spread of the virus were dismissed or even blasted as authoritarian by some voices in media and the opposition. "Even if we assume that one person infects 1.1 others, we would reach the limits of what our health system and intensive care beds can manage in October," she warned earlier this month. "If we assume a rate of 1.2 ... we would reach the health system's limit in July. And with a rate of 1.3 - it doesn't sound like much - we would get there in June already," she added.

Merkel urged citizens to stick to strict social-distancing measures that are still in place, limiting them to meeting only one other person from outside their household at a distance of 1.5 metres (5 feet).

Meanwhile, all of Germany's 16 federal states have made mouth-and-nose coverings compulsory in public spaces such as shops and on public transport.

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IMF Executive Board approves USD\$65.6 Million in Disbursements to Dominica, Grenada and St. Lucia To Address COVID-19 Pandemic

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved disbursements to Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia following their requests under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) mechanism, with a combined SDR 48 million (US\$65.6 million), to help cover their balance of payment needs stemming from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Disbursements to all three countries are set at the maximum available access under the RCF instrument of 100 percent of quota for Grenada (SDR 16.4 million or US\$ 22.4 million) and St. Lucia (SDR 21.4 million or US\$ 29.2 million), and 89.4 percent of quota for Dominica (SDR 10.3 million or US\$14 million). These countries are small states that are very vulnerable to shocks, including large natural disasters, with Dominica in particular still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017.

The pandemic has hit these largely tourism-dependent countries very hard. Tourism inflows essentially came to a halt in mid-March, 2020, with ripple effects across other sectors. The closure of the borders, coupled with the curtailment of commercial activity, has had a debilitating impact on these economies. A drop

in fiscal revenues, combined with additional direct health and social expenditures will temporarily increase the fiscal deficit and financing needs. IMF support will help cover some of these needs and allow the governments to ease the impact on the population, such as upgrading public health facilities and providing social assistance to the vulnerable and adversely affected sectors.

Following the Executive Board discussion of the requests, Mr. Tao Zhang, Deputy Managing Director and acting Chair, made the following statement:

“The COVID-19 pandemic poses a major challenge to Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia. Their key tourism sectors have been hit hard by the shock. The contraction in tourism is expected to have a major impact on their economies, by causing ripple effects across all economic sectors, eroding fiscal revenues, and creating urgent balance of payments pressures. In addition, these three small states are also highly vulnerable to natural disasters.

“The countries’ governments have responded to the pandemic by swiftly implementing containment measures, allocating scarce budgetary resources to critical

health care spending, and introducing income support to the most affected sectors and households. Protection of the financial system will help cushion the economic impact of the pandemic. Measures have also been taken by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to facilitate the provision of credit and safeguard financial stability.

“The authorities have expressed commitment to meeting the regional debt target of 60 percent of GDP by 2030. To this end, they plan to implement necessary adjustment measures to rebuild policy space once the crisis has abated, building on the progress achieved in recent years. Looking forward, the authorities are also committed to implementing policies that support durable econom-

ic growth and poverty reduction within a balanced development strategy that includes comprehensive measures to boost resilience to natural disasters.

“IMF emergency support under the Rapid Credit Facility will help fill the three countries’ balance of payments needs and create fiscal space for essential health expenditures, income support to workers, and cash transfers to households. Fund financing will also help catalyze further donor support to close the remaining balance of payments needs.

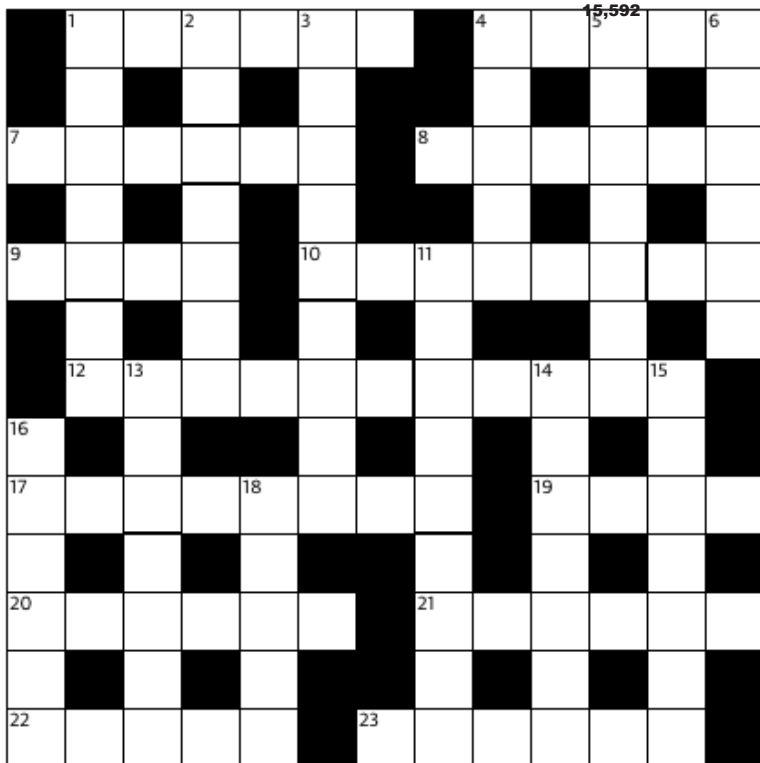
“The IMF will continue to be engaged with Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia, and stands ready to provide policy advice and further support as needed.”



QUICK CROSSWORD

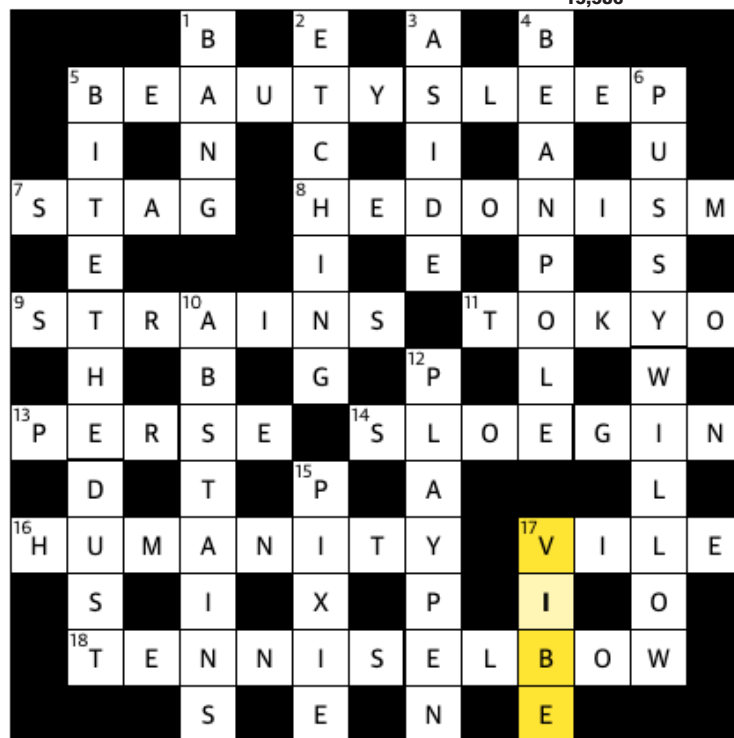
Quick crossword No

15,592



Quick crossword No

15,586



Across

- 1 Possibility (6)
 4 Police trainee (5)
 7 Pleasure craft — old ape (anag) (6)
 8 Fast cat — fast car (6)
 9 Consequently (4)
 10 Engage an electrical device (6,2)
 12 Number that's of interest to hay fever sufferers (6,5)
 17 Frankly — that's outrageous! (8)
 19 Item resting on stumps (4)
 20 Dependable (6)
 21 Rubber (6)
 22 Sweet — money (5)
 23 Way (6)

Down

- 1 Don't be so glum! (5,2)
 2 Having a run of luck (2,1,4)
 3 Ship lookout's position (5,4)
 4 Ship — art (5)
 5 French king's eldest son (7)
 6 Authoritarian (6)
 11 Urge to travel (5,4)
 13 Costly footballing error (3,4)
 14 Annoyance (7)
 15 Britannia's weapon (7)
 16 Tool with a flat cutting edge (6)
 18 Gleaming (5)

CARTOON CORNER

Garfield

April 28, 2020





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ARIES (Mar 21-Apr. 19): Your need for autonomy could disrupt someone's amorous intentions. For example, you might go shopping after work without providing adequate notice, letting a loved one's homecooked meal get cold. Focus on being considerate.

TAURUS (Apr. 20-May 20): Your need for autonomy could disrupt someone's amorous intentions. For example, you might go shopping after work without providing adequate notice, letting a loved one's homecooked meal get cold. Focus on being considerate.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): With Venus in your sign, you are probably more interested in social interchanges than hard work. Be careful, since you could unintentionally operate at cross purposes with someone who's especially sensitive to slights.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): The Moon is passing through your sign today, so you might receive a barrage of intuitions. Some of your instincts could be way off, however, so don't offer advice or sympathy unless someone asks for it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Compliments could go to your head and create temptations. It isn't that you are disloyal, but you may crave more attention and validation than you get. Don't take casual endearments too seriously.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Only a rookie plays hooky when there is a job to do. It may be difficult to escape on an amorous adventure and evade critical eyes. Keep extra spending money on hand for incidental expenses that may occur during the day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): An attractive new acquaintance might flatter you. It's in your best interests, however, to steer clear of anyone who isn't completely legit. Allow yourself to be admired without being caught in a web.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Offer sympathy carefully. Your efforts to be generous and caring may backfire if someone takes offense. Consider keeping a low profile for now and staying out of other people's business.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): This may be the kind of day when the boss decides someone else needs a turn at leadership. You might be content to sit on the sidelines while others with greater needs have an opportunity to appear in the spotlight.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): What looks good on paper might not turn out well in the real world. You may experience an urge to take calculated risks with your money. Don't gamble your heart out of a yearning for more validation and affection.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You can't always live up to your own expectations. You may briefly become disheartened if you make a mistake, or if life doesn't live up to your dreams. Cheer up, because someone might soon show their high regard.

PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20): You may be so intent on making a good impression or doing good deeds that you inadvertently hurt someone's feelings. For instance, a well-intentioned charitable gesture may seem like a personal insult to a proud individual.

Ivor Luke: Fearsome defender

He was feared in the 80's and 90's.

Ivor "Ninja" Luke, a man who started with an immense passion for cricket while playing in King George the V Ground, eventually emerged and as one of the most feared football defenders Antigua and Barbuda produced, roaming the ARG during the 1980's and 90's.

Luke played cricket which was his first love until injuring his hand taking a catch while playing cricket. This event changed his mind on the hardball version of the game leading to his focus on football, a sport he found cheaper and easier to participate.

Ninja, as he is called in the football fraternity, named his favorite players growing up as Fernando Nando Abraham, and Peter Henry who he considers as the best player he has ever seen.

Luke was part of a dominant Lion Hill Spliff in the late 80's and ear-

ly 90's that bagged four championships featuring players like Sir Vivian Riachards, Mervyn Richards, Tull, Youngbull, the Williams brothers and Peter Henry.

Luke said some of the most challenging strikers he has competed against were Everton Batow Gonsalves, Remy, Waspa and Spade from Freemansville.

The former national defender, who was dominant in the former Leeward Islands tournament, said he is not happy with the high number of foreign-based players contracted to play in the local league pointing to the lack of chances for local talent to develop.

"I am not against foreign players coming into the league but I have told the president that there needs to be a cap and the amount allowed on the field at one time," Luke added.

He noted that one of the things affecting the growth of football in the



region is the fact that there is no Leeward Islands tournament been hosted for many years, which was instrumental in the development of many players and national teams.

Luke is encouraging young players to work hard on their physical fitness, to remain focus and to put education as a top priority.

FIFA medical chair does not want restart this season



FIFA's chief doctor has warned against restarting the interrupted 2019-20 campaign and suggested governing bodies prepare for action next season instead.

Michel d'Hooghe said, as a doctor, he would be sceptical about continuing leagues amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The chair of Fifa's medical committee said his proposal is, if it is possible; avoid playing competitive football in the coming weeks.

Try to prepare for the start of good competition next season.

European leagues have until 25 May to tell European governing body UEFA whether they wanted to complete or cancel their seasons.

Begin D'Hooghe added it would be extremely difficult to continue social distancing if football matches were resumed and he believes some "hygienic rules" would have to be put in place if seasons were to continue.

We would have to avoid direct contact he said.



Ramnaresh Sarwan



Chris Gayle

Chris Gayle calls Sarwan a snake, worse than coronavirus

West Indies opener Chris Gayle has blamed former teammate Ramnaresh Sarwan for his release from the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) franchise, Jamaica Tallawahs.

Gayle called Sarwan a “snake” and “worse than coronavirus” in a three part video uploaded on his YouTube Channel.

“What transpired with

the Tallawahs, you had a big part to play,” the man dubbed the Universe Boss said, “You gave a big speech at my birthday party about how far we have come Sarwan but you are a snake.”

He said he told Sarwan directly that ‘he had no experience being a coach and that is not an easy job. Gayle was the marquee player for the franchise in the pre-

vious season.

Gayle also accused 39-year-old Sarwan of imposing restrictions on players and of being biased.

“The amount of lies this guy told on players. Sarwan wanted to put curfew on the players when games were 8 ‘o’clock at night, he wanted to know why there were so many Jamaicans on the team. You take it upon

yourself and say too many Jamaicans on the team,” Gayle noted.

The ‘Universe Boss’ also feels that his visit to community meetings arranged by Guyana’s Minister of State, Joseph Harmon, could be another reason he was axed.

“This is all coming from one visit to Guyana. Apparently, Guyana had their election and the minister invited me to his community and the other side, which the owner is a part of as well, got offended and they all take it personal,” Gayle added.

Gayle played 10 matches in the previous season for Jamaica scoring 243 runs. The franchise had a forgettable season winning just two matches out of 10 and finishing at the bottom of the points table.

France’s top two divisions will not resume this season

The League 1 and League 2 seasons will not resume after France banned all sporting events, including behind closed doors, until September.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said the 2019/20 sporting season was over as he announced plans to ease France’s coronavirus lockdown on May 11.

French football’s governing body had hoped to resume the season on 17 June and finish the campaign on 25 July.

Football was suspended indefinitely in France on 13 March.

It is not known whether the Football Professional (LFP) will choose to abandon the season with no promotion or relegation and no champions or base the outcome of the campaign on current standings.

Defending champions Paris St. Germain are 12 points clear of Marseille at the top of League 1, with 10 rounds of matches and one outstanding fixture left to play.

Olena Knight: Multi-faceted sportswoman

Olena Knight one of the finest female athletes Antigua and Barbuda has produced started in netball in 1981 while a student at Villa Primary school when Lorretta Charles arrived as a coach and encouraged her to get involved.

Coming from a Seventh Day Adventist home, Knight had difficulty getting permission to leave home to practice until Charles was successful in getting her parents to agree for Knight to travel to Antigua Girls High School to train and play in the evenings.

Olena was part of an elite group of young players recruited by Yvonne Willis to play for Eagles which led to her being selected to represent the national team.

Knight played at the national level in her homeland but never travelled abroad to play for Antigua and Barbuda in netball.

Netball was a popular sports in the 1980's but Knight believed the intro-



duction of female softball in 1995 and a weak administration led to herself and many top players gravitating to softball, thus leading to the demise of local netball.

Presently, working as a coach at the Ministry of Sports for over thirty years, Knight eventually took up basketball a sport she has tremendous passion for;

representing Antigua and Barbuda in 1986 in Trinidad and Martinique, 1988 in United States and Guyana. This waned her interest in continuing to play netball.

As a young lady, the second vice president of the Antigua and Barbuda Netball Association, started her journey in 1989 as a coach working nine months for free before being retained by the government in 1990 officially.

Presently, Knight's pas-

sion is her family life, church and working with young people. In 2004, Olena took 57 boys and girls to St. Kitts to play Basketball and netball.

The former national player, who is the wife of former national player and coach Boli Knight, says god has been good to her family who gets up every morning and thank the man above for everything he has bestowed on them and she is encouraging the nation to give their lives to the man above and stay safe during this time of COVID-19.

