



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

# POINTEXPRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

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PRICE \$3

# THOUSANDS TO BENEFIT

*from Government Assistance Program*

Story on Page 8



**Nurses Get Seedlings - Page 9**

**No cash handouts - Page 4**

# One year and elderly woman still missing - family begs for help

Tomorrow, Thursday 7th May 2020 marks one year since 74-year-old Hyacinth Gage of Potters Village disappeared.

The senior citizen was taken to Mount St. John's Medical Center by her daughter at around 7:30 a.m. that day for what were described as routine tests.

Mid-morning came and Gage's daughter grew concerned that her mother had not contacted her as expected.

Despite extensive island-wide searches by relatives, police, concerned members of her church and family, Hyacinth Gage has still not been found.

The elderly woman's children are

making a fresh public appeal to anyone with information that might shed light on her disappearance.

They say this has been an unbearably difficult time for them, and any tips or leads, however small, could assist the ongoing search for their missing mother.

If you have any information that could help locate Hyacinth Gage, the lady pictured here, please contact the police or call 723-5096 or 775-1495.

A reward is still being offered for information leading to her whereabouts.

Please help end our pain at not knowing where she is, what has happened (or may still be happening) to her.



One year later and still no sign of Hyacinth Gage

## DAY 5/1

Max UV Index: 11 Extreme  
Wind: E at 32 km/h  
Wind Gusts: 39 km/h  
Probability of Precipitation: 65%  
Probability of Thunderstorms: 20%  
Precipitation: 3.9 mm  
Rain: 3.9 mm  
Snow: 0.0 cm  
Ice: 0.0 mm  
Hours of Precipitation: 2  
Hours of Rain: 2

# 30°<sub>Hi</sub>



Partly sunny and breezy with a couple of showers

## NIGHT 5/1

Wind: ESE at 18 km/h  
Wind Gusts: 32 km/h  
Probability of Precipitation: 25%  
Probability of Thunderstorms: 0%  
Precipitation: 0.0 mm  
Rain: 0.0 mm  
Snow: 0.0 cm  
Ice: 0.0 mm

# 25°<sub>Lo</sub>



Mainly clear

## SUNRISE/SUNSET

Sunrise AST  
5:41AM

Sunset AST  
6:27PM



Duration  
12:46hr

## MOONRISE/MOONSET

Moonrise AST  
12:50 PM

Moonset AST  
2:20AM



Duration  
13:10hr



## Geography will determine cruise tourism revival

The revival of the vital cruise tourism sector in Antigua and Barbuda will depend largely on its geography as the cruise industry worldwide emerges from the shutdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

This is the assessment of General Manager of Global Ports Antigua Ltd., Donna Regis-Prosper. Last year, GPA signed a management agreement with the Antigua and Barbuda government to manage the cruise ports as well as the Heritage Quay Shopping Centre. Under the agreement, the company paid off an outstanding loan for the construction of the Redcliffe Quay pier and it is financing the construction of the 5th cruise berth near Point Wharf.

She said the cruise sector will slowly restart cruising during the second half of the year. However, most of these excursions will begin and end at US ports.

"We have been in contact with our cruise partners

(cruise lines) as well as the other ports that we manage around the world and the consensus is that where you are located in the world will determine how soon cruise ship calls will resume," she stated.

According to Regis-Prosper the resumption of cruises will also tie into the re-opening of airports and the safety protocols that are in place to protect not just the passengers, but the local population as well.

For countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, there are two cruise centres that the country should observe. "These are Puerto Rico and to a lesser extent, Miami, when it comes to our tourism. Puerto Rico is a major hub and when that returns to full operations then cruises to St. John's will return in earnest," she explained.

She said she expects the cruise sector to rebound fully because of the strong brand recognition that Antigua and Barbuda has in the

marketplace. However, she cautioned that this will not happen overnight.

Regarding developments in the cruise industry, Regis-Prosper added, "we remain in close contact with the cruise lines and are monitoring their plans as they prepare to return to market. This industry is very resilient, having survived wars, severe weather events, even 9/11 – so you can rest assured that the best and brightest minds are working together to determine how to bring them back to our shores with everyone's safety in mind as quickly as possible. There will be a lot of change, but on the bright side, this gives us the opportunity to enhance the way that we manage our businesses in preparation for the resurgence of the industry.

Meanwhile, the GPA executive also disclosed that over the past weeks, work on the fifth pier to accommodate the Oasis class of cruise ships, continued in a



*General Manager of Global Ports Antigua Ltd., Donna Regis-Prosper*

limited manner because of the regulations under the state of emergency.

"That's because while we were allowed to continue on a reduced schedule, many of our suppliers faced delays due to the lockdown imposed by the regulations," she added.

Regis-Prosper said the original completion date for the berth is August 15, and while this is still the target date, this may have to be rescheduled because of the unforeseen delays.

## Sandals announces re-opening

Sandals Resorts on Monday announced it will begin reopening its properties across the Caribbean in early June.

Most of the company's 18 resorts are scheduled to re-open on June 4, including properties in Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Turks & Caicos according to a statement.

Its Bahamas locations, Sandals Roy-

al Bahamian, and Sandals Emerald Bay, have a scheduled opening date of June 15, due to "several ongoing travel restrictions, airport closures, and increased government protocols which have caused border closure extensions," a Sandals spokesperson told Travel Market Report. "These dates are therefore subject to change, as they are dependent on those factors."

Upon reopening, the company has introduced "Sandals Platinum Protocols of Cleanliness" to address changing consumer expectations. Housekeeping will now include hospital grade hospital-grade disinfectants, electrical aerosol sprayers, UV-LED lighting equipment to inspect cleanliness, air duct sanitization for each arrival and upon

*cont'd on pg 4*

# There will be no cash handouts

Government will not be doling out direct cash grants to private individuals or enterprises that have been devastated by business lockdowns which were imposed in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

This has been made clear by Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Gaston Browne, as he spoke of his administration's plans to revive the Antigua and Barbuda economy while grappling with unprecedented financial constraints.

He said government would have no choice but to borrow massively in order to meet its fiscal obligations and reignite the major productive sectors like tourism, which has been completely shut down because of the Covid crisis.

The Prime Minister said

dishing out money to people and entrepreneurs such as taxi drivers would not achieve national economic objectives.

"They want the government to strain itself and to say we're going to give out \$100 million in cheques to people ... Whatever money that we raise will be to invest in capital projects that will generate revenue. We are not going to take scarce resources – monies that we have to borrow and struggle to pay back – and put them into dead projects or spending that would not create any value," he stated.

Browne said his government would not repeat the mistakes made by the former United Progressive Party administration which frittered away \$600 million in loans that it obtained collec-

Monetary Fund (IMF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Venezuelan government.

"We have to learn from prior experiences. The \$600 million that they got ... they spent the money on non-revenue-generating projects; so, by the end of their term, they had nothing to show and they really did not stimulate the economy. In fact, what would have happened is that the country lost 25 percent of GDP," the Prime Minister recalled.

Browne expressed the view that it would be a major victory for Antigua and Barbuda if it emerges from the ongoing Covid crisis with a GDP contraction of no more than 7-8 percent.

"That is why we have been very, very frugal. That is why we have said we are not going to follow

other governments and announce programs to give away money, because we know that we cannot sustain it. Even if we were to give 20 or 40 thousand people in this country a thousand dollars every month for a few months ... after the few months, what happens?" he asked.

The Prime Minister, a career banker prior to his entry into politics, said the current situation required people to use their savings. "Let us not forget that the first quarter, which is always the best quarter for tourism ... those are strong tourism months. So taxi men and so on would have had five strong months of performance. And we all know what they normally do – even hotel workers – they save some of their money for the off-season, which normally would have started in April-May, until about November."

He continued: "So this idea that they would have made all this money between now and November, it is not true; and what they ought to do is to do what they normally do and use their savings to carry themselves for the next few months. If per chance they end up in any difficulties and they cannot meet their expenses and so on, we have programs in place to support them. But we're not going to allow a situation in which we have to go and borrow to give people money to put on their savings."

## *cont'd from pg 3*

each departure, and a weekly steam-cleaning and sanitization of carpeting.

There will be a minimum of three inspections daily for all hard surfaces – from door handles to public restrooms, which are inspected, cleaned and sanitized in 20-minute intervals, kitchens, bars and restaurants, including menus, tables, cutlery, glassware, chairs and more; and swimming pools and hot tubs.

The new protocols will focus on eighteen key touch points – starting from the airport lounge through the entirety of the resort experience, including to guest rooms, food and beverage experiences, and all public areas.

Guests will have the ability to check-in online, allowing them to skip the front desk and go directly to their room. Handshakes from staff will be replaced with "a nod and

a smile."

Additional hand sanitizing stations will be provided for guests and team members throughout the resorts, at all dining locations, and in individual guest rooms.

To encourage social distancing, Sandals said it will add more airport transfers with fewer guests per vehicle, extend check-in times between visitors, set up "a safe social distance across restaurants, bars and beaches," and restricting elevator trips to one couple per trip at Sandals Resorts and one family per trip at Beaches Resorts, with staff members taking alternate routes.

All team members across resort locations will also undergo required temperature checks before the start of each shift in addition to undergoing medical clearance. They will also participate in ongoing specialized training.



## Heritage Quay re-opens for business

As the country moves to restart business following the total lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Heritage Quay Duty Free Shopping Centre has started a phased reopening from last Friday.

In a statement from the operators of the quay, Global Ports Antigua Ltd (GPA) several of the stores that make up the shopping center relaunched operations on Friday, May 1, including various retail and food and beverage outlets.

General Manager of Global Ports Antigua Ltd, Dona Lisel Regis-Prosper described some of the changes that have been implemented to improve the shopping experience and to protect tenants and shoppers.

“The Heritage Quay Duty Free Shopping Center re-opened select stores this week in accordance with COVID-19 Emergency Orders established by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. Several of our tenants served the local market and want to ensure a safe shopping environment. The open-air shopping environment here at Heritage Quay makes it easier for our customers to practice social distancing properly while getting their shopping done,” she explained.

According to the GPA official further explained that her team has been extremely proactive about mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the tenants and the entire community since the start of this outbreak, which led

GPA to implement some significant changes several weeks ago.

Under the new protocols put in place, she said customers will see that additional hand washing sinks have been installed in common areas and increased the frequency and soundness of the cleaning and sanitizing protocols, including the disinfection of public spaces.

“We will provide face masks for customers who don’t bring them and we have also installed new signage to encourage everyone who enters the shopping center to practice proper hygiene to protect themselves and others,” she continued, “this pandemic has been especially devastating on smaller retailers and our tenants are no exception,

so we’re launching some initiatives to help them through it.

She announced that on Friday, May 8, her team is hosting a webinar for their retailers that will focus on the future of the cruise industry and the current cruise tourism industry outlook from a local perspective. Minister of Tourism, Charles Fernandez, will be one of the featured speakers. GPA has also shared updated operating guidelines to help retailers increase the safety of their operations.

Regis-Prosper is also thanking all the retailers for their continuous cooperation and support as together with GPA they worked together to make the best decisions possible during this difficult period.

## Government to limit immigration

Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene, says he plans to meet with the Chief Immigration Officer and her team shortly to discuss implementing new guidelines on immigration announced by Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, over the weekend.

Greene said the meeting will discuss the methodology for implementing the edict as stated by the country’s leader.

Antigua and Barbuda has long been a haven for Caribbean nationals seeking a better way of life and its bustling economy and generally lax immigration policies have resulted in the largest concentration of non-native residents of any CARICOM territory.

Just last month, the Caribbean Court of Justice said the decision by the government to seek an exception in an expansion of the CARICOM Skills pro-



*Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P Chet Greene*

gramme was permissible.

However, with the severe economic impact being felt by the country as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, PM Browne said the country wants to limit all immigration, albeit, temporarily.

“One of the things we have to do is to control the number of people coming into the country as new immigrants. I know we have a large immigrant pop-

ulation, but we can’t have a situation where you have high unemployment and people coming in to burden down the system,” he announced.

The PM is urging non-national residents here to advise their relatives back in their native lands that travelling to Antigua and Barbuda, at this time, is being discouraged, temporarily.

“There is no formal ban on travel to the country...but we are appealing for those residents with families members overseas to inform them that we do not want any burdening of the system especially in light of the crisis forced upon us by the pandemic,” he stated.

Browne promised that if and when the country’s economic situation improves and there’s need for additional workers, he will have no difficulty in allowing more people in.

# Covid will change hotel operations

Personal vigilance and responsibility will become even more important as COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, according to Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

He illustrated this by pointing out that while cruise ships and passenger airlines have been shut out of the country's ports of entry, it was still possible for the virus to infiltrate Antigua and Barbuda's borders via the cargo vessels that have been allowed to continue operating out of necessity, given the country's heavy reliance on imports.

"Right now, we are trying to allow the reopening of the domestic economy, and I'm hoping that by the 15th of this month – which will end the curfew – that we should be able to reopen the domestic economy. After we [have done this], we have to look toward reopening our schools ... so we have asked the Ministry of Education

to come up with a plan," he revealed.

The prime minister added that the Ministry of Tourism has also been asked to work in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders such as airline and cruise ship operators "to work out the modalities for the protocols in which we can do some tourism business without having any spread of Covid within the domestic community."

According to the Prime Minister, this will be "a form of enclave tourism in which individuals would have to stay at the [hotel or other hospitality accommodation] property."

He said in such a scenario, guests would be allowed to enjoy the hotel's facilities and adjoining beaches, "but not to mingle with the domestic community". Even the taxi drivers who transport these foreign hotel guests and tourists would likely have to wear special protective gear while provid-

ing such services.

"Those are things we are trying to work out, to make sure these people get tested for Covid before they come to Antigua," he said, "just in case asymptomatic visitors had turned up false negatives on such pre-arrival testing, there is now local capacity to respond to such situations or possibilities."

The Prime Minister said the protection of hotel staff could mean them being required to reside on the properties "to deliver the services and to discourage restaurant dining and have more in-room dining so that the staff would not have a lot of exposure to the guests."

Browne said it might also be wise to ensure that younger and healthier people were recruited to work in that sector so that they would stand better chances of withstanding and surviving any infection or exposure to Covid.

# When to open borders

Antigua and Barbuda and other CARICOM states have spent much time discussing when to open their borders to air and maritime travel as they seek to restart their economies.

Caribbean Community leaders convened their 10th special session in marathon videoconference on Tuesday in which Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, participated.

Reports from the meeting said the top item on the agenda was the draft CARICOM common COVID-19 health policy plan which was discussed in detail. "The discussion was based on a joint



presentation by CARPHA and IMPACS.

Heads moved on to then discuss public health considerations for transitioning between the pandemic response phase to the economic recovery phase, with a view to re-establishing intra-regional travel," a source close to the meeting reported.

According to the source... the leaders undertook to

consult with stakeholders including LIAT and Caribbean Airlines (CAL) to set out a roadmap to safely re-establish civil aviation in the region.

"On restarting air and maritime travel, the meeting agreed to a sub-committee that would examine all the parameters in consultation with stakeholders and make detailed recommendations. The plan is to re-open in a

coordinated way noting that each member state has different situations," the source added.

At the moment, it was disclosed that Trinidad and Tobago is best placed to reopen with Jamaica at the far end of the spectrum, according to PAHO protocols and the other nations in between the two ends.

"There should be no new cases or deaths for a specified period before opening up is considered," the PAHO recommendations dictate.

Additionally, in light of the planned roadmap, the regional leaders considered a

*cont'd on pg 7*



## UWI Five Islands adapts to the challenges of COVID-19

The Five Islands Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) remains closed for the time being – sharing in a fate inflicted upon the operation of educational institutions all over the world by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

But the Fifth (and newest) Landed Campus of UWI – which opened its doors just nine months ago – has not ceased to function. Instead, it continued online engagements with students as it awaits the restoration of normal face-to-face teaching.

The Five Islands Campus was initially closed for teaching from Monday, March 16, 2020 for a period that initially extended to Friday, March 27, 2020. According to the official report of the last Campus Council meeting, “With due consideration to guidance provided by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda on closure of educational institutions, that period was extended ...”

It says “Students were notified of the decision to close with the understanding that we will continue to monitor the situation and advise on any further developments with respect to the resumption of classes, including alter-



native arrangements to complete their courses.

“Like the rest of The UWI system,” it adds, “the Five Islands Campus has initiated remote teaching to mitigate the impact” that the closure of the campus is having on students.

Training for online engagements with students was therefore made a requirement for staff and training to that effect was meticulously organized. As an example, staff who did not have expertise in use of the Zoom teleconferencing software were trained in the fundamentals of that platform for remote teaching in preparation for their online engagements with students.

The training and technical support for the use of Zoom was reportedly

provided by ICT technical staff of the Five Islands Campus with the assistance of part-time lecturers who were conversant with Zoom Video Conferencing Technology.

In addition, Campus authorities say, arrangements were made with the UWI Office for Online Learning for staff to benefit from more comprehensive courses.

Travel restrictions and the need to practice social distancing made it necessary to have the first Five Islands Campus Council meeting as an online engagement. This was in keeping with UWI’s decision to make extensive use of online meetings to replace face-to-face interactions, given the circumstances occasioned by COVID-19.

*cont’d from pg 6*

framework for an enhanced regional border policy that

would seek to harmonize the conditions for entry into various member states.

The source also revealed that the procurement of vital medical supplies and equip-

ment was also on the table and Heads agreed to a protocol for obtaining needed supplies on a joint procurement basis thereby reducing costs through volume discounts.

Regional food security was also on the agenda and various options were examined for boosting regional agricultural production and easing trade in food products.

## Intruder at Sir Lester’s home

National Hero and former prime minister, Sir Lester Bird, has reported that an intruder entered his yard on Sunday morning, but he was discovered before he was able to enter the house.

Sir Lester said his live-in assistant saw the young man, who was wearing a mask, scaled the fence of his Blue Waters home,

but that he was stopped as he approached the house.

When queried about the reason why he jumped the fence and entered the yard, the intruder did not respond, but made a quick get-away. The police were called, but a search provided futile up to going to the press.

# Thousands to benefit from Government Assistance Program

As countries around the world continue to grapple with the economic fallout from COVID-19, Caribbean countries are now facing the brunt of it. Antigua and Barbuda, with an economy heavily dependent on tourism, directly and indirectly, the financial hardship for many on the island has already begun to raise its ugly head.

Though the country is wrestling with the impending financial crisis and managing the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ministry of



Minister of Social Transformation Samantha Marshall.

Social Transformation has expanded its social services to reach those affected most by this national crisis.

In a call to action statement by the ministry, it stated that “in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ministry in collaboration

with the PDV Caribe Antigua and Barbuda Limited (PDVCAB) invites eligible individuals to apply for the Government Assistance Programme (GAP).”

The Social Transformation ministry indicated that the GAP initiative provides cash-transfer assistance to individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and with children.

According to the Minister, Samantha Marshall, there is a criterion for persons accessing this program. “There will be a means test, assessing the overall income of households and their standard living,” Marshall

*cont'd on pg 9*



## MINISTRY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION COVID-19 GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOOD VOUCHER PROGRAMME

### Eligibility Criteria

Unemployed (effective January 31st 2020 as a result of COVID-19) with children



Government-Issued  
Identification



Proof of disruption of  
employment



Reference Contact  
Information

### How to Apply?

Contact us on 463.5555 or 734.4555 to apply for assistance between  
Monday to Friday from 9:00- 4:30pm

ONLY ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS WILL BE CONTACTED.





# Nurses Get Seedlings

The Antigua and Barbuda Nurses Association has received some 250 seedlings to distribute to nurses who were not able to participate in the recently held 'Farm Ah Yah Yard' National Seedling Distribution Programme.

The Minister of Agriculture the Hon. Samantha Marshall urged them to take care of the plants and the Chairman of the Farmers Forum Mr Marvin Joseph said that he and his team were happy to facilitate the Initiative.



*cont'd from pg 8*

said. The minister continued by reiterating that, "this program is geared at persons who became unemployed due to COVID-19."

In speaking with PointeXpress, the Minister hinted that she does expect a significant response to the program. When asked how many persons the ministry is expecting to apply, Marshall commented, "We anticipate that in excess of 4,000. However, based on the means test the approval figures will be less."

Though unable to give a precise

amount being spent on the relief program, Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister said, "\$5 million has been set aside but that might exceed the amount which will become available."

As it stands the Government's PDV food voucher assistance program, through the Ministry of Social Transformation currently sees a face value of each food voucher at approximately \$50.00, however, based on the needs of the individual the approved applicant may receive \$150 to \$250.

These vouchers which are in part-

nership with PDV are valid at their existing vendors in Antigua being CMC, Antigua Fisheries, VM Supermarket, and Spencer's Supermarket for example.

According to Keith Hurst from PDV Caribe, the PDV program has three (3) ongoing components. These are, the assistance program for persons living with a disability, subsidized utility bills for all social security pensioners, and freight cost coverage for petroleum gas going to Barbuda for Barbudans to have the same cost of gas as Antiguans.



# Lovell, Pringle soon to be voiceless wanderers

**By Political Watcher**

If you become lost in the wilderness and shout for help...it comes back at you.

Harold Lovell has been a lot of huffing and puffing since his United Progressive Party lost the general elections 15-1 just two years ago.

The former Finance Minister who lamely presided during the 2008-9 global financial crisis has been whimsically trumpeting his failed policies these days amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.

He feels emboldened in his media appearance that he's singing all the right

tunes but with little or no noted effect.

The UPP leader, who disparagingly undermines the authority of the Leader of the Opposition by clinging onto his position, has been saying much about nothing.

He's the darling of his favourite media houses and glorifies himself in reciting information without being able to put them into any context.

Lovell attempts to demonstrate he's verbalising with authority and analytically but he's doing nothing more than continue to injure the last vestiges of his political use-

fulness which is on life support.

He has tried to shamelessly justify his party's and the Opposition Leader's non-participation on the national Economic Recovery Committee by babbling excuses after excuses.

He rode roughshod and political gimmickry over Jamale Pringle who has meekly surrendered his constitutional authority on the altar of opposition.

They have both wittingly and unwitting conspired to reduce their own relevance to their own detriment.

Pringle audaciously, in his romp last Friday, disre-

spectfully said Prime Minister Gaston Browne ought to apologise for comments he deemed offensive made by the country's leader regarding the opposition's stance on the COVID-19 situation.

Sensing his bluff, the PM seized upon it and told the radio host, he would apologise to get Pringle to sit on the ERC, but the not-so-savvy Opposition Leader cowardly suggested that it was a gimmick.

He couldn't be statesmanlike and virtually shake hands with PM Browne instead he had to maintain his limb status quo.

That another former finance minister during the UPP's 10-year rule would have accepted a belated invitation to serve on the ERC speaks volume and shamed Lovell and Pringle.

That an experienced and highly successful businessman could accept to lend his expertise to help frame out a recovery plan demonstrated to Lovell and Pringle that its country above self.

For them, it's our way and no way, but they would want the masses to believe that they have their interests at heart.

*cont'd on pg 11*

For the **safety** of employee drivers,  
their families and the communities in which they **live** and **work**.

**Wash hands** frequently (i.e. between deliveries/jobs) using liquid soap and water (hot or cold is just as effective) for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching surfaces while drying hands.

**COVID-19: Driver Safety Tips**

**ATB**  
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA TRANSPORT BOARD  
A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

**WASH**  
LAVAR

**DRIVE**  
**SAFELY**



*cont'd from pg 10*

It's inconceivable that they both could be complaining about poor treatment meted out to them by the government when they were invited to sit with the Cabinet on the eve of the COVID-19 onslaught.

In another futile press release, that seeks to sway the tide of public opinion mounting against them, they listed these spurious arguments:

"Apart from that obvious demonstration of bad faith, MP Pringle and the party agree that several other factors militate against our meaningful participation in the ERC:

1. According to Junior Minister of Finance Lennox Weston, the Government has already conceived a three-point plan for economic recovery. In addition, it has at its disposal the sum of \$500 million with which to effect its plans.

2. The Government is unwilling to give a truthful account of the country's finances. The Prime Minister repeatedly quotes figures and statistics that vary depending upon his audience.

\* What was the true debt-to-GDP ratio when the ABLP Administration assumed office in 2014: Was it 94% or 104%?

\* What is it now?

\* What is the true quantum of our borrowings? Are these payments up to date?

\* The IMF Article IV Report, for the past six years, has remained hidden from the population. This has prevented the nation from accessing any independent verification of the statistics furnished by this Administration.

It is unhelpful to simply vilify the IMF and World Bank and accuse these institutions of attempting to portray the administration in a bad light because they are jealous of the country's success.

3. The public is also unaware of the true state of the country's income and savings.

\* Why is this Administration unwilling to open the books on NAMCO, the National Housing & Urban Development, Caribbean Union Bank (CUB), or West Indies Oil (WIOC), for example?

\* In the absence of audited statements being supplied to the public, how will the ERC be guided?

4. The Prime Minister is Chairperson of the ERC and each sub-committee is headed by a member of the Executive (Cabinet).

\* Who, or what body, will ensure implementation of any recommenda-

tions from the ERC?

\* And to whom will the ERC report, ultimately, in the interest of transparency and accountability?

"Given these stated realities, we believe our efforts would be better appreciated in another forum in which the people, themselves, can play a meaningful part. Accordingly, we have already begun to share our recommendations with the public.

In the further interest of the people, the UPP will continue to demand from this administration truth, transparency, fairness, equality and accountability at all times – especially now, when our nation's very survival depends on these.

The UPP will fulfill this mandate and resist any efforts to manipulate its leadership whenever the administration decides to include the party as a matter of convenience."

These arguments and reasoning are so baseless it is not funny.

They want to be treated with kid gloves as seasoned politicians.

They will discover too late that they will become politically irrelevant akin to the relics of the Titanic.

Not even they, themselves, will hear their voices in their political wilderness.

 ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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**SHARE YOUR NEWS  
 AND VIEWS WITH US  
 CALL 268-562-4989**



# \$822m Return Bill - Repatriating 5,000 Jamaicans Could Hit Taxpayers Hard



*The Marella Discovery 2 cruise ship seen here docked at Port Royal, Jamaica, on February 24, 2020. Dozens of Jamaican workers have been stranded aboard the vessel since Jamaica barred incoming passenger traffic.*

Taxpayers will fork out \$64 million to pay for accommodation and food for 330 Jamaicans stranded overseas by the COVID-19 pandemic who will arrive back home this week.

But Gleaner analysis projects that taxpayers would have to cough up another \$758 million, at the Government's new peg of US\$1 to J\$145, for accommodation and food if the remaining 4,670 Jamaicans who have expressed an interest to return be state-quarantined at US\$80 per day per person for 14 days.

All told, the price tag would hover around \$822 million.

The Jamaicans, including ship workers fatigued by circuitous holding voyages, have been mounting pressure on the Holness administration to allow them to repatriate after the coun-

try shut its doors to incoming passenger traffic on March 24 as part of coronavirus containment measures.

Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Kamina Johnson Smith made the announcement yesterday evening during a Jamaica House press briefing but noted that other costs, including logistics, transportation, and medical care, were absent from that computation. "State quarantine for persons returning – which is mandatory – is not free to taxpayers. It comes at a negotiated cost of US\$100 per day per person inclusive of accommodation and three meals per day," Johnson Smith stressed yesterday. The quarantine period is for 14 days, but if COVID-19 is detected among the batch, the accommodation period would

be extended. "People have been asked within the framework of the JamCovid app to make a contribution of US\$20 per day or to make family arrangement in respect of meals. It was, however, decided by the Cabinet that in recognition of the particular challenge and the particularities of this week's arrivals and the circumstances under which they have been operating over the past two months, that the Government will absorb the full cost of state quarantine.

"The cost of this will approximately be 64 million. This is a significant cost and one not to be downplayed," she said, arguing that "you can't put a dollar figure on the importance of our nationals". On Wednesday, 115 will be returned to the island from the United Kingdom. The number includes 75 crew members, including 43 of the Marella Discovery 2 and six other ships from the same cruise line.

"The additional 40 will comprise Jamaicans stranded in the UK who have been affected by the global pandemic in different ways and who have been in touch with the high commission or the ministry regarding their particular challenges," the foreign minister announced.

A cohort from the United States will also be arriving in the island this week. But even as the 330 are set to rack up \$64 million for accommodation and food, other costs to taxpayers for their care are still being tallied by

the Government. "What I have not mentioned is the other logistical cost, the cost of the security, the cost of the security forces to transport them, the testing and the health monitoring that takes place, [and] not to mention the cost of the prep work that's taking place now to receive them. Those are not covered in the \$64 million," Johnson Smith explained.

The foreign minister disclosed that the Government has received 4,682 applications from Jamaicans wanting to repatriate.

The application portal was launched a week ago.

"The Government of Jamaica has to look at almost 5,000 persons who have applied to come in, plus those who are on cruise ships who have not yet applied," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said at the press briefing.

"... So the Government of Jamaica has to be fiscally responsible and absorb the cost of state quarantine of a large number of Jamaicans."

Cruise lines that have indicated the number of Jamaicans expressing a desire to be repatriated here.

== BOX ==

Disney Line – 215  
Holland America – 37  
Carnival – 342  
Norwegian – 130  
Royal Caribbean – 1349  
Saint-Nazaire – 37  
MSC – 31  
Exmar – 32  
Ships off Brazil – 10



## Forecasters say 2020 hurricane season will be more active than normal



A few weeks before the official start of the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season, forecasters at the US-based Colorado State University (CSU) are warning that the six-month period will be more active than normal.

The CSU Tropical Weather Project team said it anticipated at least 16 named storms with gusts over 100 km/h or more, eight hurri-

canes and four major hurricanes with winds of more than 180 km/h on the hurricane Saffir-Simpson wind scale.

“We anticipate that the 2020 Atlantic Basin hurricane season will have above-normal activity,” said Dr Phil Klotzbach, who heads the team, noting that “this is above the 30-year average of 12 named storms,

six hurricanes and three major hurricanes.”

The CSU outlook is based on more than 30 years (1981 – 2010) of statistical factors combined with season data showing similar characteristics of sea level pressure and sea surface temperatures in the oceans Atlantic and eastern Pacific.

In 2019, the CSU had correctly predicted that the

hurricane season would be slightly below the average based on 1981-2020 data.

The storms and hurricanes for the 2020 season, which ends on November 30, are named Arthur, Bertha, Christobal, Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gonzalo, Hanna, Isaias, Josephine, Kyle, Laura, Marco, Nana, Omar, Paulette, René, Sally, Teddy, Vicky and Wilfred.

# Bahamas: Health Minister Dr. Duane Sands tenders resignation letter to prime minister

Accepting responsibility for the breach of protocol, Health Minister Dr Duane Sands has tendered his resignation letter to Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis today.

The resignation comes after a shocking revelation last week that six American permanent residents were allowed to disembark a plane along with a donation of COVID-19 test kits and swabs amidst the country's border closure.

Sands initially told reporters that only two people disembarked the plane, advising during a press conference that he was not sure whether there were more.

However, during a national address on Sunday, Minnis revealed there were six people allowed to disembark and characterized the entry as a breach of protocol.

Sands posted the resignation letter to his Facebook page today.

"I accept responsibility for this breach of protocol," he said.

"I acknowledge that I acted outside of the scope of my authority in this matter.

"My actions were guided by my great desire to obtain the much-needed testing swabs which are in short supply both here and internationally and which are



*Dr Duane Sands*

key to our efforts to trace the spread of the coronavirus so as to better focus our responses.

"I acted at all times in good faith.

"Nevertheless, I acknowledge that my actions have caused embarrassment for which I express sincere re-

gret." Sands said the he believes that his continued presence on the Cabinet may serve as a "distraction" from the government's effort to manage the spread of the virus in the country.

"Hence I offer my resignation from your Cabinet", he said.

"I thank you for the opportunity to serve our great country."

The prime minister does have the option to deny the resignation.



## “Largescale outbreak, humanitarian crisis” brewing in Haiti

*Royston Jones Jr.*

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Dr Carissa Etienne today sounded the alarm on an “impending humanitarian crisis” in Haiti, as The Bahamas’ southern neighbor faces a bleak health outlook with COVID-19.

To date, there have been at least 100 confirmed cases and 11 COVID-19-related deaths. However, those numbers were expected to grow substantially as well as the death toll.

“We are especially worried about Haiti and I wish to sound the alarm of an impending humanitarian crisis,” Etienne said during a broadcasted PAHO press conference with stakeholders from around the region.

“Although there have been 100 cases and 11 deaths reported, one third are of local transmission and the probability of further spread is extremely high.

“The situation has been described as a perfect storm.

“There are already 17,000 Haitians, who have returned from the Dominican Republic, where there is community transmission.

“This number is expected to reach 55,000 in two to three weeks.”

She continued: “In addition, there is a real risk food insecurity will result in famine.

“Civil unrest... and precarious security may further complicate the situation.

“The health system in Haiti has limited capacity.”

She added: “There is real



*PAHO officials describe the situation as a “perfect storm”*

danger of a largescale outbreak followed by a humanitarian crisis in Haiti.”

Natural disasters and widespread civil unrest in Haiti has seen increased illegal migration attempts from the country to The Bahamas.

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force has said it continues to implement measures to address the “threats and challenges of the influx of migrants from Haiti”. Impoverished Haiti has been struck from disaster to disaster for decades, weakening its healthcare systems and the government’s ability to respond. According to international reports, Haiti had an estimated 60 ventilators in-country for its 11 million population.

Testing levels remain low, as outlined by PAHO.

According to Etienne, around 600 people have been tested, notwithstanding the thousands of test kits donated to the country.

Etienne also suggested the political unrest and deep distrust of the government among many Haitians threatens to hin-

der the COVID-19 response.

For example, there have been threats to burn down field health clinics, she said.

Etienne also indicated there was insufficient personal protective equipment in-country, leading to increased concerns about the safety of healthcare workers on the frontlines.

“PAHO is working urgently with Haitian health authorities and other partners to strengthen the preparation, including organization of health services, laboratory testing and personal protective equipment, and to train healthcare workers as to care for COVID-19 patients,” she said. “But I do believe that a much broader coalition to address a potential health crisis in this country is needed.

The government of Haiti has implemented measures to limit the spread of the virus. Schools, universities, vocation centers and factories have closed until further notice. Gatherings larger than 10 people have been banned. A curfew remains in place from 8pm and 5am.

However, Etienne said it re-

mains extremely challenging to institute social distancing measures in Haiti and there continues to be a lack of awareness among the community of the threat posed by the virus.

She said most Haitian do not have access to proper sanitation and many live in crowded dwellings and households where quarantine and isolation is “nearly impossible”.

According to PAHO officials, most countries in this sub-region remain in the “earlier stages of their outbreaks”.

Etienne underscored that small-island states have implemented strict public health measures, including air travel restrictions, which she said continues to have a positive impact in slowing the spread within borders. As of yesterday, The Bahamas had 84 cases, the majority of which were the result of community spread.

There have been 11 COVID-19-related deaths in The Bahamas.

Twenty-five people have recovered. A total of 1,446 people had been tested as of Monday.

# Coronavirus: White House plans to disband virus task force

US Vice-President Mike Pence has said the White House coronavirus task force could be disbanded this month because of the country's "tremendous progress".

He told reporters the task force may hand over US pandemic response to be led on an "agency-by-agency level" at the end of May or early June.

New confirmed infections per day in the US currently top 20,000, and daily deaths exceed 1,000.

US health officials warn the virus may spread as businesses begin to reopen.

What did the vice-president say?

In a briefing with reporters on Tuesday, Mr Pence was asked about a report that the task force would soon wind down.

He said the Trump administration was "starting to look at the Memorial Day window, early June window as a time when we could begin to transition back to having our agencies begin to manage, begin to manage our national response in a more traditional manner".

□ **Coronavirus:** Tracking the global outbreak

He said it was "a reflection of the tremendous progress we've made as a country".

White House press secre-



*Vice-President Pence visited a plant manufacturing ventilators last week*

tary Kayleigh McEnany later tweeted that the president "will continue his data-driven approach towards safely re-opening".

What did President Trump say?

During a visit to a mask-manufacturing factory in Phoenix, Arizona, President Donald Trump told journalists: "Mike Pence and the task force have done a great job, but we're now looking

at a little bit of a different form, and that form is safety and opening. And we'll have a different group probably set up for that."

Mr Trump continued: "We have now a different, a sort of a combination of safety and reopening. So we'll have something in a different form."

The president was asked if it was "mission accomplished", and he said: "No, I wouldn't

say that at all."

The president was asked, too, if White House task force experts Dr Deborah Birx and Dr Anthony Fauci would still be involved in efforts to address the coronavirus.

"They will be and so will other doctors and so will other experts in the field," the president answered. "We are bringing our country back."



## Britain's Death Toll From The Coronavirus Rivals Italy's



*Pedestrians walk along side closed shops during the coronavirus lockdown in London, Tuesday, May 5, 2020.  
(AP Photo/Frank Augstein)*

Britain on Tuesday became the first country in Europe to confirm more than 30,000 coronavirus deaths, and infections rose sharply again in Russia, even as other nations made great strides in containing the scourge.

China marked its third week with no new reported deaths, while South Korea restarted its baseball season.

In the US, some states took continued steps to lift the lock-

down restrictions that have thrown millions out of work, even as the country recorded thousands of new infections and deaths every day.

Underscoring the stakes, New York state reported 1,700 more people died in nursing homes than it had previously counted.

President Donald Trump headed for Arizona to visit a Honeywell factory that makes respirator masks, in what could be a return

to more regular travel for the president.

"The people of our country should think of themselves as warriors. Our country has to open," Trump said before boarding Air Force One.

Britain appeared set to surpass Italy as Europe's hardest-hit nation, even as the rate of deaths and hospitalisation declined and the government prepared to take tentative steps out of lockdown.

The British government said about 28,700 people with COVID-19 had died in hospitals, nursing homes and other settings, while Italy reported close to 29,100 fatalities.

Both figures are almost certainly underestimates because they include only people who tested positive, and testing was not widespread in Italian and British nursing homes until recently.

# Venezuela's Maduro: Americans captured in failed coup plot

Venezuelan security forces arrested dozens of people, including two Americans, after a beach invasion allegedly aimed at overthrowing President Nicolas Maduro - a plot said to involve US-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said the Venezuela situation "has nothing to do with our government".

"We'll find out. We just heard about it," Trump said when asked about the incident and the Americans' arrest. The Pentagon later on Tuesday echoed Trump's comments.

Maduro held up a pair of blue US passports, reading off the names and birth dates on them in a nationwide broadcast on state television on Monday.

He showed images of the fishing boats the alleged attackers rode in on and equipment such as walkie-talkies and night-vision glasses. He blamed the attacks on the Trump administration and neighbouring Colombia, both of which have denied involvement.

"The United States government is fully and completely involved in this defeated raid," Maduro said, praising members of a fishing village for cornering one group and netting the "professional American mercenaries".

A person familiar with the matter told Reuters news agency the

two US citizens were captured on Monday in a second-day round up of accomplices, and were believed to be in the custody of Venezuelan military intelligence. The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the details came from contacts with Venezuelan security forces.

A Florida-based ex-Green Beret Jordan Goudreau told The Associated Press he was working with the two American men in a mission launched early on Sunday to "liberate" Venezuela. The operation left eight people dead at a beach near the port city of La Guaira.

He identified the two former US military veterans taken into Venezuelan custody as Luke Denman and Aaron Berry. The two served alongside him in Iraq and Afghanistan, Goudreau said.

Goudreau said the men were part of an mission called Operation Gideon.

Opposition politicians and US authorities issued statements suggesting Maduro's allies fabricated the assault to draw attention away from the country's problems.

Juan Eduardo Romero, a member of the ruling party, told Al Jazeera there is "a war on multiple levels against the government of Maduro".

"The US has decided to keep pushing with a proxy war against a constitutional govern-



*Venezuelan soldiers move a suspect from a helicopter after what authorities described as a 'mercenary incursion' [Venezuelan gov't handout via Reuters]*

ment. However, the perfect civic-military union that exists in the country remains the best deterrent," he said.

Political, economic turmoil

Venezuela has been in a deepening political and economic crisis under Maduro's rule.

Crumbling public services such as running water, electricity and medical care have driven

nearly five million people to migrate.

But Maduro still controls all levers of power despite a US-led campaign to remove him. It recently indicted Maduro as a drug trafficker and offered a \$15m reward for his arrest.

Venezuela and the US broke diplomatic ties last year amid heightened tensions, so there is



no US embassy in Caracas.

"I've tried to engage everybody I know at every level," Goudreau said of the attempt to help his detained colleagues. "Nobody's returning my calls, It's a nightmare."

Goudreau said he signed a contract with the US-backed Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido to overthrow Maduro, which Guaido has denied. The opposition leader said he had nothing to do with Sunday's raid.

Venezuela's attorney general said the contract was valued at \$200m and alleged he had seen Guaido's signature on it.

'Mercenaries'

Goudreau said the opposition politician never fulfilled the contract, but he pushed ahead with

an underfunded operation with just 60 fighters, including the two US veterans.

He said he last communicated with Denman and Berry when they were adrift in a boat "hugging" the Caribbean coast off Venezuela. They were still in their boat following an initial confrontation with the Venezuelan navy early Sunday, he said.

"They were running dangerously low on fuel," Goudreau said. "If they had gone onto landfall, they would have gone to a safe house."

Goudreau said the two were waiting for a boat on the Caribbean island of Aruba with emergency fuel to help extract them.

Venezuelan authorities said on Monday they arrested another eight "mercenaries" in a coast-

al town and showed images on state TV of several unidentified men handcuffed and lying prone in a street. Among them was a National Guardsman Captain Antonio Sequea, who participated in a barracks revolt against Maduro a year ago. Goudreau said Sequea was a commander working with him in recent days on the ground in Venezuela.

Venezuelan state TV showed authorities handling a shirtless Sequea in handcuffs.

Maduro ally and Attorney General Tarek William Saab said in total they arrested 114 people suspected of involvement in the attempted attack and they are on the hunt for 92 others.

Officials in Venezuela's government accuse Colombia and the US of organising and car-

rying out the attack aiming to overthrow Maduro. Both US and Colombian officials have denied the Venezuelan allegations. Goudreau, a three-time Bronze Star US combat veteran, said the deadly seaborne raid was launched from Colombia.

An AP investigation published on Friday found Goudreau had been working with a retired Venezuelan army general - who now faces US narcotics charges - to train dozens of deserters from Venezuela's security forces at secret camps inside Colombia.

Guaido on Monday denied having anything to do with the ex-Green Beret. In a statement, he said he has "no relationship nor responsibility for any actions" taken by the US war veteran.

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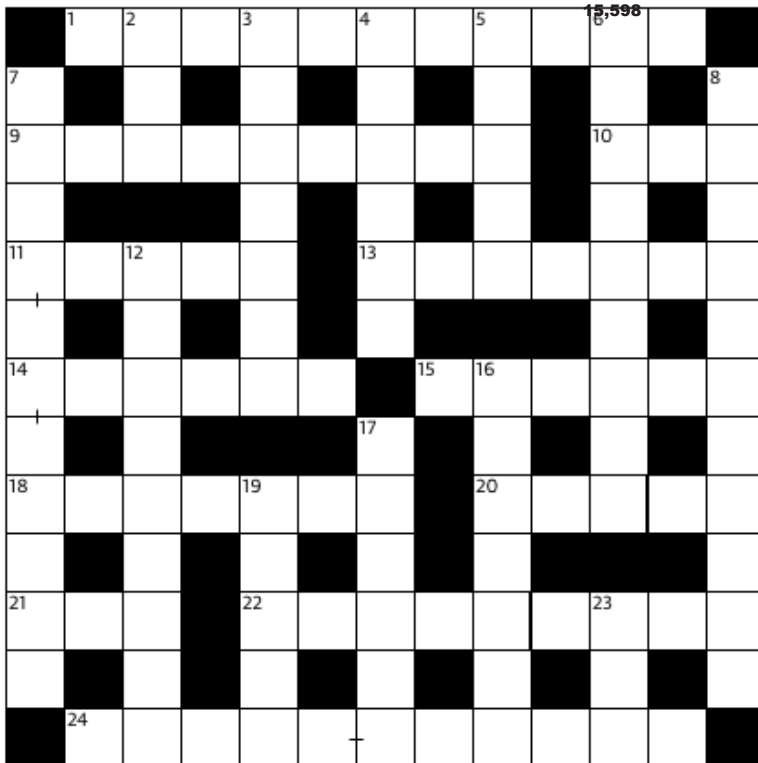
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# QUICK CROSSWORD

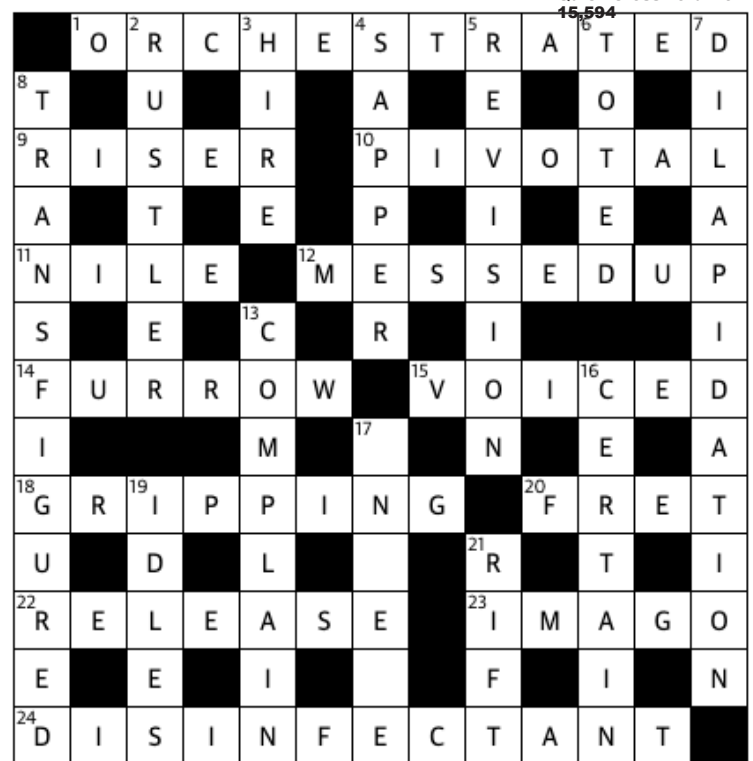
Quick crossword No

13,596



Quick crossword No

15,594



## Across

- 1 Scary (11)
- 9 Servant (9)
- 10 Contest (3)
- 11 Two-masted sailing vessel (5)
- 13 Young child (7)
- 14 Elaborately decorated (6)
- 15 Underside (6)
- 18 CVs (7)
- 20 Coordinate (3,2)
- 21 Gesture of agreement (3)
- 22 Vanilla-flavoured fizzy drink (5,4)
- 24 Person attracting a large audience (5-6)

## Down

- 2 Decompose (3)
- 3 Firearm's range — no thugs (anag) (7)
- 4 Warm (6)
- 5 Observed (5)
- 6 Short story? (9)
- 7 The wrong way round (4-2-5)
- 8 Causing harm (11)
- 12 Geordie (9)
- 16 Plot aim (anag) — most favourable (7)
- 17 Napping (6)
- 19 Large and showy Latin American parrot (5)
- 23 Be indebted (to) (3)

# CARTOON CORNER

## Dilbert







## DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES (Mar 21-Apr. 19):** Stay on your toes and you could win by a nose. You love to come out on top. Fortunately, you are a gracious winner. You may become surrounded by an aura of enthusiasm and cheerfulness that others find simply irresistible.

**TAURUS (Apr. 20-May 20):** You can't put a monetary value on every item that you possess. You may impress people with your originality and skills rather than spending money on your appearance. Staying home might be more fun than evening outings.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Enjoy the camaraderie available to you at work and with groups of friends. You may fit well within a think tank situation but could find it difficult to understand someone's point of view in one-on-one interactions.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** Learn from criticism but don't take it personally. Try to arrive on time and complete assignments to the letter, or you risk receiving negative feedback. Maintain the peace at home by being loving and kindhearted.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** You may be feeling quite energetic, but don't move too fast with a business deal. Let any pending proposal or unresolved agreement simmer over the weekend before you commit yourself by signing on the dotted line.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** You might be in a period of dynamic growth. Every book or article you read can add to the breadth of your knowledge. Once the pieces come together, they may trigger your creative genius and prove profitable over time.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Flights of fancy may carry you away. Be sensitive to someone's feelings if you want to fully enjoy romantic escapades. Use your good judgment about business strategies and financial matters to avoid pitfalls.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** When you are paired with the right person, you may appear especially brilliant and perceptive. It's important to employ kindness and empathy while dealing with others in pursuit of your objectives.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Consider making it your mission to indulge in entertainment and activities that spark joy. Your partner might have some unique ideas about what will be fun. Remember, you can always agree to disagree.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Something newsworthy might trigger your desire to try a new hobby. Avoid signing agreements, as the terms might not be as financially advantageous as you may think.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** You might think it's important to appear businesslike, but try not to take bargaining over minute details a step too far. Make sure there aren't any unexpected strings attached to proposed projects or investments.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20):** It may be challenging to muster up the extra energy to deal with emotionally challenging family squabbles, but ignoring the situation could be worse. Confer with a friend who can offer worthwhile suggestions.

## Djokovic trains on court despite ban

Novak Djokovic has filmed himself back in training on court in Spain, despite a ban still in place in the country over the use of sports facilities.

Djokovic posted a video on Instagram showing him exchanging shots with another man at a tennis club in the coastal city of Marbella where the Serb has reportedly stayed.

The 17-time Grand Slam winner wrote: "So happy to play on clay. Well just for a bit with my phone in the hands."

On Monday, Spain loosened some of the lockdown measures that had been in place since mid-March because of the coronavirus pandemic, allowing professionals athletes to re-



Novak Djokovic  
turn to practice.

But sports facilities are supposed to remain closed at least until next week in most parts of the country, with the exception of training centers for teams in professional leagues in sports such as football.

The Spanish tennis federation said in a statement on Monday that professional players in Spain were allowed to exercise by themselves or with a coach, but not yet on a tennis court.

It said it would work on a set of guidelines to inform players and clubs about what they would be permitted to do from the beginning of next week.

The federation's statement did not appear to be related to Djokovic's appearance on the court in Marbella.

Djokovic revealed last week that he initially struggled to cope with the uncertainty surrounding when tennis can restart, but having a daily routine has helped him.

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## Captain focused on all formats

West Indies Test captain Jason Holder says he does not want to be classified as simply a Test player but believes he can excel and help West Indies cricket in all three formats.

The Barbadian, who has led West Indies in tests for the last five years, has been ranked as the leading all-rounder for the past year, emerging as a top player in the longest format.

The 28 year old has moved up to number three in the latest bowling charts rankings.

Despite Test cricket being where he has managed to make an impact – with 106 wickets at an average of 26.37, and 1898 runs at an average of 32.72 with three centuries, including a career best 202 not-out – Holder still thinks his skills and knowledge can be helpful in the white ball versions.



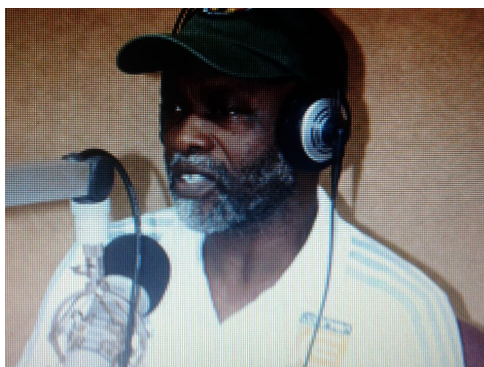
## Porridge wants 2019/2020 football season cancelled

Former national coach Rowan “Porridge” Benjamin is calling on the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) to cancel the 2019/20 season.

The defending champions’ Liberta Blackhawks coach says they have two choices: declare the season null and void to avoid being taken to court by teams; or cancel the season while promoting two teams from the first and second divisions, respectively.

Benjamin does not agree with the idea being bandied about promoting four teams from the First Division, saying it would create a cluster to the upcoming 2020/21 season.

Benjamin, who is the coordinator of schools football in the Ministry of Sports, was critical of the ABFA’s re-



*Former national coach Rowan “Porridge” Benjamin*

cent decision to change an article in the rules and regulations that states the 2019/20 season must be completed by July 2020 to October 2020.

He noted that the decision was never brought to the membership and the competition committee has no right to make such decisions without con-

sulting the members.

Meanwhile, former ABFA presidential candidate and former president of Old Road and Tryum football clubs Keithroy Blacks said that if football is unable to be continued, four teams should be promoted from the First Division and a midweek game be added to next season’s schedule, so that the football season can finish in time to accommodate the cricket season.

Football associations around the world have been wrestling with different ideas of how and when to restart their seasons. But, in the end, governments will have the final say.

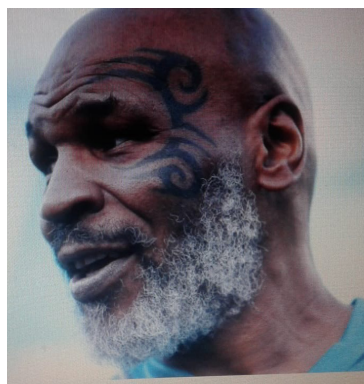
Here in Antigua and Barbuda, the local body will have to adhere to guidelines in making their final decision.

## Tyson: I want to box four rounds

Mike Tyson’s return to training has caused a social media storm after a video showed the self-proclaimed “baddest man on the planet” still has plenty of speed and power at the age of 53, as he ponders boxing in exhibition bouts.

The former world heavyweight champion, who said he could return to the ring in exhibitions to raise money for charity, posted a training video on social media that has been viewed more than 9 million times.

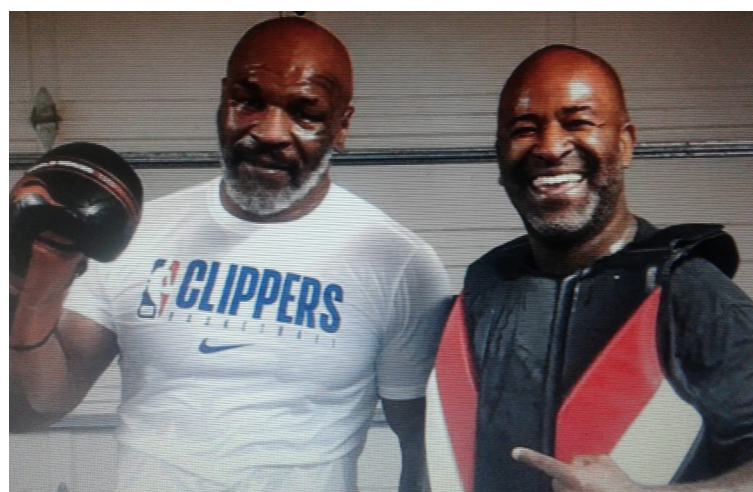
The video shows Tyson - the first heavyweight to hold the WBA, WBC and IBF titles - working with pads with trainer Rafael



*Mike Tyson Cordeiro.*

“I do two hours on cardio, I do the bike and the treadmill for an hour, then I do some light weights, 300, 250 reps,” Tyson said.

“I start my day with the boxing thing; I go in there and hit the mitts, 30 minutes, 25 minutes, start getting in better condition.”



Codeiro told ESPN “he hasn’t hit mitts for almost 10 years, so I didn’t expect to see what I saw. I saw a guy with the same speed, same power as guys 21, 22 years old.”

If Tyson does return to the ring, he will be following in

the footsteps of Floyd Mayweather Jr and Manny Pacquiao.

Former heavyweight champion George Foreman, however said Iron Mike had given enough to the sport and no more is needed.



## Piggotts focuses on youth while catering to seniors

President of the Piggotts Sports Club Bakesha Francis James says the executive is keeping in contact with its members and ready to hit the ground running once the government lifts the ban and sports resume in Antigua and Barbuda.

The Ministry of Sports banned all sporting activities since March 13, 2020 before releasing the ban on Golf recently.

James, one of the few females in Antigua and Bar-

buda to hold such a position, said she was encouraged to get involved in the club by Everton Jeremy, but she was always involved in community activities and was not aware that so many people were taking notice.

Piggotts are the defending two-day cricket champion and were doing fairly well in the 2020 season before the Antigua Cricket Association halted the season because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mrs. James noted that it

has been very hectic for the cricket club, participating in the two-day championship and parish league, but expressed the executive's preference for the two-day version because it presents opportunities for players to gain national selection and further their careers.

But the president added that parish league presents the opportunity for the older players to stay active and involved in the club.

On the subject of football, James articulated that the focus is on youth development and producing players for the senior team.

"We have five overseas players who are incorporated into our academy coaching and set to pass on their experience and knowledge to the younger players," James said.

She was full of praise for their Cuban coach, Blake, who she describes as a disciplinarian and focused individual.

"Our Club is focused on providing opportunities for our young players and hoping to attract scholarships moving forward," the president said.

James, talking to PointeXpress, encouraged everyone to follow all the protocols set out by the government and ministry health.

# DEWS