



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

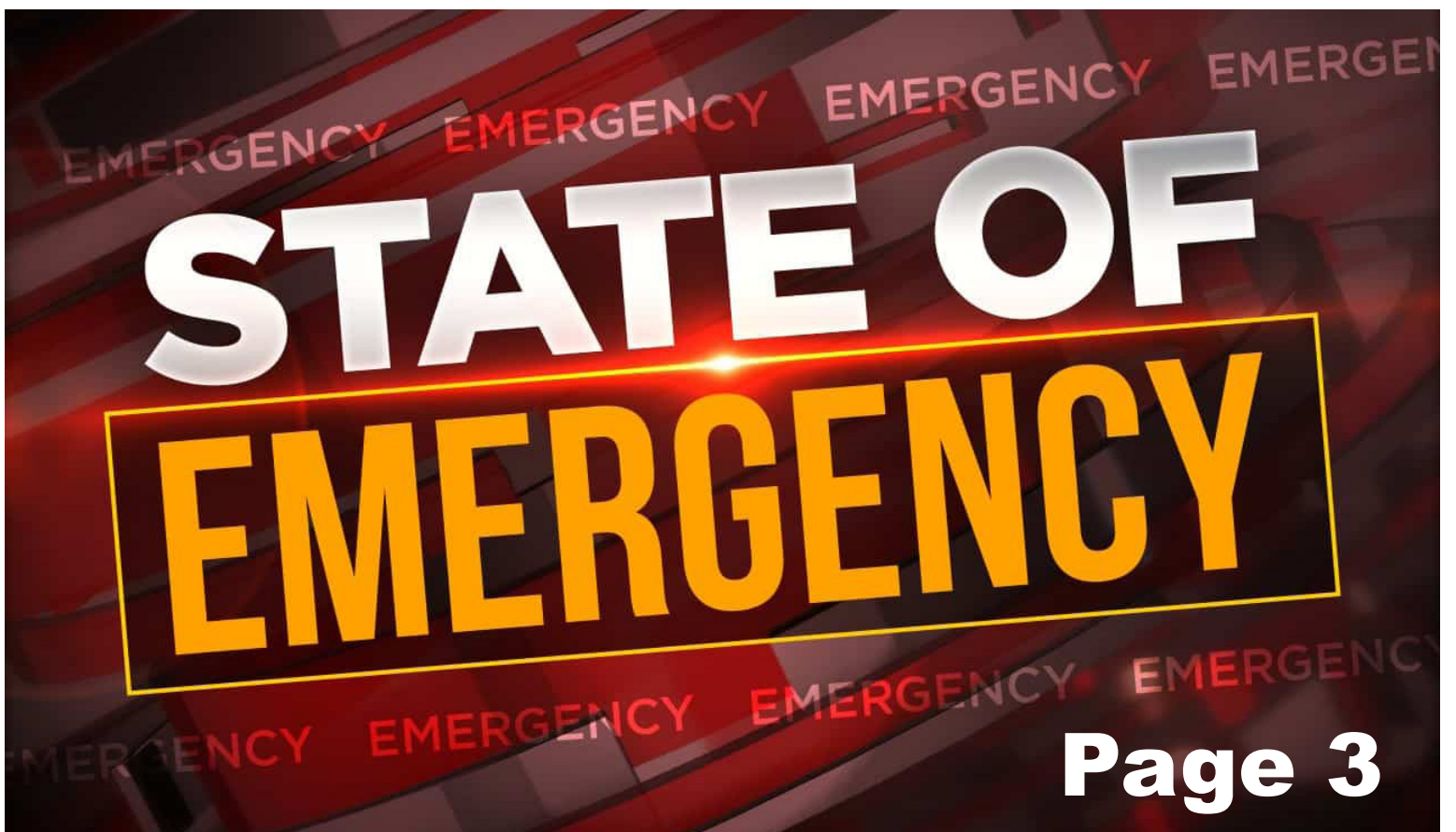
POINTEXPRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

FRIDAY 24TH JULY 2020 | ISSUE 108 | www.pointville.com

PRICE \$3

EXTENSION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY



**Ten ABDF soldiers on
quarantine - Page 2**

ABDF Department on quarantine

The Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force has confirmed ten soldiers are in quarantine as they await the results of COVID-19 tests that were conducted on Thursday.

This comes after a member of the ABDF was tested for the coronavirus using a rapid testing kit while visiting a local laboratory to donate blood. The test results suggested the officer might be COVID-19 positive. In compliance with ABDF guidelines, the soldier presented himself to the ABDF Medical Corps.

The protocol of testing using the approved reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction, or PCR Test, and quarantine were immediately activated. The ABDF Headquarters has been advised that the results of the soldier's test will be made available within 48 – 72 hours.

In accordance with established procedures, members of the forces Construction and Engineering Department, to which the soldier belongs, have been placed in quarantine until the results of the PCR test have been received.

In the meantime, the ABDF reported that it will continue its regimen of temperature testing, approved hygiene practices, monitoring by the force's medical personnel and in this particular case, an internal system of tracing to discover any contact that may have occurred in recent times by those persons presently being quarantined.

The ABDF is also assuring the public that it is following all best practices with the management of COVID-19 and other related illnesses. Additionally, measures have been put in place to ensure that the ABDF will contin-

ue to provide services to the people of Antigua and Barbuda in a seamless and uninterrupted manner.

Chief of Defense, Staff Lieutenant Colonel Telbert Benjamin, said following their internal protocols, the decision was made to quarantine the ten members of the unit until the results of PCR tests return from the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) within 72 hours.

As the officers remain in quarantine, Colonel Benjamin confirmed that the Defense Forces' internal coronavirus protocols, including quarantine, contact tracing and work space sanitization are ongoing.

Temperature checks are also being routinely performed on both military and civilian employees along with continuous monitoring by the ABDF's medical team.

DAY 7/24

Max UV Index: 13 Extreme
 Wind: E at 24 km/h
 Wind Gusts: 32 km/h
 Probability of Precipitation: 59%
 Probability of Thunderstorms: 29%
 Precipitation: 1.5 mm
 Rain: 1.5 mm
 Snow: 0.0 cm
 Ice: 0.0 mm
 Hours of Precipitation: 1
 Hours of Rain: 1

32°_{Hi}



Partial sunshine with a couple of showers

NIGHT 7/24

Wind: ENE at 24 km/h
 Wind Gusts: 35 km/h
 Probability of Precipitation: 55%
 Probability of Thunderstorms: 60%
 Precipitation: 2.7 mm
 Rain: 2.7 mm
 Snow: 0.0 cm
 Ice: 0.0 mm
 Hours of Precipitation: 1.5
 Hours of Rain: 1.5

25°_{Lo}



Partly cloudy with a shower or thunderstorm around

SUNRISE/SUNSET

Sunrise AST
 5:45AM

Sunset AST
 6:42PM



Duration
 12:57 hr

MOONRISE/MOONSET

Moonrise AST
 9:28 PM

Moonset AST
 10:08 AM



Duration
 12:40 hr

Extension of State of Emergency

The State of Emergency, which expires at the end of July, will be extended for an additional 90 days. This is the word from the Gaston Browne government which has announced its intention to seek parliamentary approval for the extension.

The SoE was first implemented in March this year and was then extended to July after its first expiration on 30th May.

Explaining the rationale for the second extension, Information Minister, Melford Nicholas, said the move is necessary as the country continues to manage the transmission of COVID-19, adding that the extended SoE will give officials the latitude necessary to manage the local

impact of the pandemic.

“Until the end of October, we will be extending the State of Emergency from August first. This gives the government the options should the prevailing circumstances regarding public health be threatened by any event or set of events related to COVID and the spread of infections it gives the government coverage under that provision to impose different curfew restrictions. This does not indicate that we perceive any worsening of the situation but the government must have that particular option,” he advised.

Nicholas indicated the existing curfew will likely remain in place and the time period unchanged, though



there are growing concerns about gatherings. The current curfew is from 11:00 pm to 5:00 am.

“Of some concern to the Cabinet is what we see as promotion of different types of social events of entertainment and the Cabinet is not comfortable and it expressed our discomfort to the Attorney General for him to advise the law enforcement agencies that these fall outside of the regulations that have already

been established. We should expect to hear more from law enforcement in this particular matter going forward. Regarding the hours of the curfew, I can't see any issue before us that would necessitate changing the hours,” he explained.

The Cabinet is expected to make a final determination on this matter when it meets next week.

According to the Cabinet notes, there are reports that private parties are being held in homes and at other locations and that attendees remove their masks and disregard social distancing rules.

“The last thing we want is for the public to be lulled into a false sense of security and then an event happens where one person is infected and then infects a large crowd and give the health and quarantine officials that much more difficulty in stopping the spread of COVID-19,” Nicholas stated.

The Cabinet is reminding the nation that there is no relaxation of rules and regulations and that only churches are allowed to have 25 or more persons gather in any one place.



A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Residency programme gathers momentum

Antigua and Barbuda is moving closer to introducing the Residency Programme through which 'high net-worth' individuals will be encouraged to move to the country for up to two years to work and to live.

With this in mind, the Cabinet has invited two experts from the Citizenship by Investment Unit (CIU) to provide it with options that will allow the residency programme to be engineered in a way which best serves the country's

needs.

"The idea that is being transformed into policy would allow high-net-worth individuals and high-income-earners who can work from any place in the world, to decide on residing in Antigua for a period of up to two years.

The presenters provided several recommendations for Cabinet that would satisfy the expectations of the lawmakers," informed Cabinet Spokesman, Lionel "Max" Hurst.

He said the Cabinet was

informed that similar programmes have been adopted by Portugal, Ireland, Netherlands, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

In the first instance, the CIU is targeting 1,000 persons who fit the profile and background of individuals who may find such an initiative attractive.

Thus far, 2,700 persons have acquired Antigua and Barbuda citizenship via the CIP during the seven

year period from 2013 to the present.

The government said it cannot give a precise figure of the revenue intake that is likely from the programme as details concerning the cost to applicants to the initiative has not yet been decided.

It is clear however, that the government sees this programme as offering an opportunity for further diversifying the economy.

Greenlight for private labs to do COVID tests

Private laboratories have received the green light to perform COVID-19 tests following a decision that was taken at the Cabinet level.

A strain on the laboratory carrying out PCR testing prompted the government to examine other establishments that can administer the test to persons in Antigua and Barbuda.

During the initial phase of the spread of the virus, Minister of Health, Molwyn Joseph, had cautioned against utilizing private labs for coronavirus tests as there were questions surrounding the accuracy of the results, but with increased demand for testing, Cabinet Spokesman and Minister of Information, Melford Nicholas, has informed the media that government is now comfortable that some private laboratories can assist.

"In the medical services, anyone who is being prepared for surgery is required to have a PCR test; anyone who is required to leave our state to travel for any reason whether medical or otherwise must do the PCR test.

"Accordingly, there needs to be a more regimented approach to testing as this is going to put an enormous amount of strain on the limited laboratory technicians and

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Tender Notice

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority Water Business Unit is inviting tenders for the transportation of its Shift Workers. Additional information regarding the number of workers to be transported, transportation route, shift schedule, station locations and pick-up points can be provided.

Interested parties must submit closed written bids for the supply of this service and address it to:

Attn: Water Business Unit Manager
 Re: Shift Workers Transportation Tender
 Antigua Public Utilities Authority
 4th Floor ABC Building
 Cnr. Independence Ave. & High Street
 St. John's, Antigua

Deadline for submission is August 15th, 2020

For further information please call 480-7170.



PM Browne visits Barbuda

Prime Minister Gaston Browne journeyed to Barbuda on Thursday, where he witnessed, firsthand, the project being undertaken by the Peace, Love and Happiness Company.

PLH is developing an 18-hole golf course at Palmetto Point as part of its multi-billion-dollar investment, but the project has been mired in controversy.

The Barbuda Council has on numerous occasions expressed concerns that protected wetlands in the vicinity of the development will be destroyed, but despite their pleadings, they claim that PLH has refused to open dialogue with them.

Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Lionel 'Max' Hurst says Thursday's visit was at the invitation of PLH in order for Prime Minister Browne to witness the progress being made.

"As you know, they are going to spend over \$1 billion on the Peace, Love and

Happiness project in Barbuda.

"It will be the largest project in Antigua and Barbuda's history when it is completed.

"They were able to introduce him to many of the workers who are now there, including eighty-nine Barbudans.

"The three mansions they are building will be valued at over \$100 million each when completed; the golf course, and how it is being constructed, and other amenities which are being built into the project," he disclosed.

It is predicted that the project, when completed, will be a significant contributor to the economy of Antigua and Barbuda, and despite the resistance being shown now, there is optimism that Barbudans will realize that they stand to benefit directly from it.

"We recall that Carlisle Bay was the subject of protests and other kinds of dis-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

ruptive action by those who at first did not wish it to succeed and then some of those same people became the main suppliers of fish and other kinds of necessities by the hotel.

"So over a period of time, we anticipate that some of the noise that we hear coming from those in Barbuda is largely because they feel that they are left out but the PLH project is intended to benefit all of Barbuda and of course, have an impact

on Antigua as well," Hurst remarked.

He noted that already, many Antiguan travel to the island to work at a time when many have lost their jobs because of COVID-19.

"At a time when there is a crisis, here is PLH in Barbuda employing people.

"So we know the future is great, that the PLH project is going to be of great economic significance to Antigua and Barbuda," he declared.

cont'd from pg 4

resources.

Accordingly, the Cabinet has taken the policy decision that there are several private laboratories that we would engage," he announced.

The Ministry of Health intends to make almost 20,000 test kits available to medical laboratories and doctors who will be expected to reimburse the government of the cost of the kits.

COVID-19 test results for firemen pending

Nine firefighters are being quarantined and are awaiting the results of COVID-19 tests after one of their colleagues tested positive for the virus in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The officer, who left Antigua to attend his mother's funeral, was tested on arrival in Kingstown, where the results showed that he was positive. Consequently, his coworkers in Antigua were placed in self-quarantine after being tested for the virus. They are now awaiting the results of the samples which were sent abroad for

analysis.

Commenting on this development, Fire Chief, Elvis Weaver, says as they await the results of nine of his officers, he is concerned about the health and safety of all his firefighters.

He offered the assurance that despite the latest development, the operations of the St. John's Fire Department will not be hampered.

Assistant Commissioner Weaver, who is acting on the guidance of health officials, says that he has been advised that there is no need to test ev-

ery member of the department.

"I am taking my cue from the health authorities. I was asking if all the people who work at the St John's Fire Station ought to be tested and they said no.

"They are of the view that unless you had what is termed 'primary contact' with the officer, they don't think it is necessary at this time. So I am relying on their advice. I would really like to do the test to make sure but I am leaving that decision to the health authorities," he stated.

Drug duo on remand

Two men held in the country's latest drug bust have been remanded to prison after appearing in court on Thursday.

The men, Everton Fitzroy Pinnock, 54, and Patrick Augustus Burrell, 48, both of Villa, appeared before Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh and were remanded. They will return to court in October for committal proceedings.

Pinnock and Burrell are

jointly charged with importation of 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds of cannabis, possession of cannabis, possession of cannabis with intent to transfer, being concerned in the supplying of cannabis, drugs trafficking and conspiracy.

The illicit substance was discovered inside three television boxes at the Deep Water Harbour on July 20 during an operation involving the Customs Department and Po-



lice.

The packages were seized and both men were later ar-



rested.

Drug busts at Deep Water Harbour are becoming regular occurrences.

Just last Saturday, Police discovered eleven pounds of cannabis in boxes of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese during an operation at the airport.

The boxes were found among other food items that arrived aboard an Amerijet flight out of Miami.



Veteran farmer wants better access to markets

Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture this week paid a visit to veteran farmer, Murphy Parker, as part of its South-West District outreach.

During the meeting at Parker's Blubber Valley farm, the agriculturalist used the opportunity to appeal to the authorities to increase their efforts to help farmers obtain ready markets for their produce as this is often a challenge.

The ministry explained that Parker's crops, which were recently planted, have been growing well despite the limited availability of water.

Parker, who has plied his trade as a farmer all his life, has managed to produce



a variety of crops consistently, including zucchini, cantaloupe, eggplant and cucumber despite drought

and other water related challenges which have presented themselves over the years.

The South-West District Officers within the Ministry of Agriculture, Milton Barnes and Shanni Joseph who conducted the site visit, underscored the importance of regular visits to farms as part of ongoing efforts to help farmers boost crop production and offer them more timely assistance

In a recent update on one of their social media outlets, Ministry indicated that, "The dominant complaints among farmers, according to the officers, has been the lack of water, but the government has taken steps to clear ponds and dams to boost water capacity and is also working along with the APUA to provide reduced water rates for farmers."





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More critical PPE coming to Antigua and Barbuda

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) have announced that they have received US\$3 million worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) and Antigua and Barbuda is among Caribbean countries that stand to benefit from the distribution of this equipment.

The PPE was purchased and procured by the CDB through the bank's special development fund.

As cases of COVID-19 continue to spread and increase throughout the Caribbean, securing PPEs are classified as "critical" for medical workers who are on

the frontlines of the Caribbean's response to the pandemic. In announcing the secured medical equipment, Antigua and Barbuda was named among the countries which will receive a share of a total of 35,000 protective suits, 111,000 isolation gowns, over 67,000 goggles, 250,000 protective gloves and 160,000 masks.

Other countries named as beneficiaries are The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

According to a statement from the CDB, the



CDB President, Dr. Warren Smith makes a point during his speech at the PPE handover event.

bank partnered with Crown Agents in the United Kingdom to secure the equipment which was sourced from providers in Germany

and China.

Revealing the massive donation of PPEs, CDB President, Dr. Warren Smith reiterated the bank's commitment to helping its Borrowing Member Countries to cope with the effects of COVID-19.

"The coming months are likely to be particularly challenging, given the uncertainties surrounding COVID-19. Helping our Borrowing Member Countries to build resilience against shocks like COVID-19 remains high on CDB's development agenda," stated Dr. Smith.

The bank also disclosed that the "CDB purchased the equipment on a pooled basis so that each beneficiary country could take advantage of economies of scale."



Boxes of personal protective equipment destined for medical workers across the region in the warehouse at the Integrated Regional Logistics Hub at the Port of Bridgetown shortly after arrival.

The UWI pays tribute to Dame Edris Mercier-Bird

The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has joined the nation of Antigua and Barbuda in mourning the passing of Dame Edris Bird.

Dame Edris, an educator par excellence, was the Resident Tutor of The UWI Open Campus in Antigua and Barbuda, then known as the Department of Extramural Studies, and later The School of Continuing Studies.

A stalwart leader in education and a symbol of selfless humanity, she served the University from 1965 to 1990.

Dame Edris is among the first graduates of the University College of the West Indies, the forerunner of The University of the West Indies. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Mona Campus, Jamaica in the late 1940's, returning a decade later to pursue and complete a Bachelor of Education degree in 1956. She subsequently read for a Master's degree in Education from the University of London, which she received in 1970 and went on to complete an EdD in Education from the University of Toronto in 1974.

Following her studies, she returned to Antigua and Barbuda in 1979 where she continued her journey in



education. Before working at The UWI, she taught English for several years at the Antigua Grammar School.

Dame Edris used her position as Resident Tutor to encourage anyone she encountered to improve themselves academically by pursuing advanced education, including stay-at-home-wives. She was truly invested in building the Caribbean region through the edification and enlightenment of its people.

Dame Edris was instrumental in introducing civil service employees to local courses offered at The UWI, which enabled them to matriculate at universi-

ties or colleges or to simply improve themselves and qualify for better positions at their places of work.

Her daughter Dr. Jilia Bird described her as a fighter for education for all. "She was a pioneer and she had a fighting spirit. She fought against adversity," Dr. Bird said.

"Her spirit was indomitable; she always put others before herself."

Dame Edris led the way in Early Childhood Education in Antigua and Barbuda by working with her colleagues at The UWI to introduce the course at a professional level. These efforts later saw the estab-

lishment of the Sir Luther Wynter Preschool.

"She had a great pioneering spirit and she loved to see fellow Antiguan and Barbudans improve themselves academically," said Dr. Ermina Osoba, who assumed the position of Resident Tutor after Dame Edris' departure.

Through Dame Edris' years at The UWI School of Continuing Studies, she collaborated and developed a close working relationship with late Professor, the Honourable Ralston "Rex" Nettleford, OM, a former Vice Chancellor of The UWI and shared his love

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of the arts. Consequently, the Harambee Open Air Theatre, one of the longest running and most successful theatre groups in the country, found a home at what is now The UWI Open Campus Antigua, still fondly called the 'University Centre'.

"I remember our summer dance and drama programmes. She invited tutors such as Rex Nettleford. We never had an opportunity like that before," her daughter Dr. Jillia Bird recalled.

As an educator, Dame Edris has left behind a legacy of professional excellence and public service, seen especially through the contributions of her children, past students and extended family. She collaborated with her husband Mr. Oscar Bird on a book titled, *A Call to Service*, which was published in 2002.

She was conferred Dame Commander, The Most Distinguished Order of the

Nation, DCN, in 2019 for distinguished contributions in the field of education and community service.

Her affinity for, and loyalty to The UWI, placed her in eager attendance at events organised by the institution for many years. She was present at open lectures and graciously contributed to The UWI Alumni Association.

Dame Edris died at age 91 on July 19, 2020. She is survived by her twin daughters, Dr. Jillia Bird and Dr. Jacqueline Bird and her son Mr. Clement Bird.

The Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, staff, students and alumni of The University of the West Indies extend heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Dame Edris. The University community will be forever indebted to her for the sterling service and loyalty that she dedicated to our regional institution. May her soul rest in eternal peace.



Serpent wins UPP primary

Popular radio personality, Algernon 'Serpent' Watts, has earned the right to contest the St. George's constituency seat on behalf of the opposition United Progressive Party (UPP) in the next general elections.

In a primary held during a UPP constituency branch meeting on Thursday night at the Hope Institute in Clare Hall, Watts was the runaway winner with 74 votes to 22 received by his opponent, Jermaine 'Buffy' Kentish.

96 people voted. There were no spoilt ballots.

Watts is expected to come up against the sitting representative, Social Transformation Minister, Dean Jonas, in the next elections which are constitutionally due in 2023.

 ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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Oxford coronavirus vaccine produces strong response in clinical trials

A team of scientists at Oxford University's Jenner Institute and Oxford Vaccine Group has taken the next step towards the discovery of a safe, effective and accessible vaccine against coronavirus.

The results of the Phase I/II trial published on Monday in the scientific journal, The Lancet, indicate no early safety concerns and induces strong immune responses in both parts of the immune system. The vaccine provoked a T cell response within 14 days of vaccination (white blood cells that can attack cells infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus), and an antibody response within 28 days (antibodies are able to neutralise the virus so that it cannot infect cells when initially contracted).

During the study participants who received the vaccine had detectable neutralising antibodies, which have been suggested by researchers as important for protection, and these responses were strongest after a booster dose, with 100% of participants' blood having neutralising activity against the coronavirus. The next step in studying the vaccine is to confirm that it can effectively protect against SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The Phase I/II data for our coronavirus vaccine shows that the vaccine did not lead to any unexpected reactions and had a similar safety profile to previous vaccines of this type. The immune responses observed following vaccination are in line with what previous animal studies have shown are associated with protection against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, although we must continue with our rigorous clinical trial programme to confirm this in humans.

"We saw the strongest immune response in the 10 participants who received two doses of the vaccine, indicating that this might be a good strategy for vaccination," Professor Pollard continues. A UK Phase I/II trial began in April testing the Oxford coronavirus vaccine ChAdOx1 nCoV-19. The team started working to develop a vaccine against the global threat that is coronavirus in January 2020 and have been working with unprecedented urgency in a race against the coronavirus.

During the Phase I/II trial the vaccine has been evaluated in more than 1,000 healthy adult volunteers aged between 18 and 55 years in a randomised controlled trial. A subset of these volunteers (10 people) received two doses of the vaccine. Between April 23, 2020 and May 21, 2020, 1077 volunteers, received the vaccine ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 or a placebo MenACWY vaccine. There were no serious adverse health events related to ChAdOx1 nCoV-19. These encouraging results support further evaluation of this candidate vaccine in our ongoing large scale Phase III programme that is still needed to assess the ability of the vaccine to protect people from COVID-19.

The University of Oxford is working with the UK-based global biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca for the further development, large-scale manufacture and potential distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine, with plans for clinical development and production of the Oxford vaccine progressing globally. The project has been further spurred by £84 million of Government funding to help accelerate the vaccine's development. "We are encouraged by the Phase I/II interim data showing AZD1222 was capable of generating a rapid antibody and T-cell response against SARS-CoV-2. While there is more work to be done, today's data increases our confidence that the vaccine will work and allows us to continue our plans to manufacture the vaccine at scale for broad and equitable access around the world," says Mene Pangalos, Executive Vice President of BioPharmaceuticals Research and Development at AstraZeneca.

Oxford and AstraZeneca are collaborating with clinical partners around the world as part of a global clinical programme to trial the Oxford vaccine. The global programme is made up of a Phase III trial in the US enrolling 30,000 patients, a pediatric study, as well as Phase III trials in low-to-middle income countries including Brazil and South Africa which are already underway.

AstraZeneca remain committed to fulfilling their commitment for broad and equitable access to the vaccine, should late-stage clinical trials prove successful. So far, commitments to supply more than 2 billion doses of the vaccine have been agreed with the UK, US, Europe's Inclusive Vaccines Alliance (IVA), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI), Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and Serum Institute of India.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said: "Today's results are extremely encouraging, taking us one step closer to finding a successful vaccine to protect millions in the UK and across the world. Backed by £84 million Government investment for the vaccine's development and manufacture, the agility and speed with which the University of Oxford have been working is outstanding. I am very proud of what they have achieved so far."

Kate Bingham, Chair of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce said: "The UK is fortunate to have such outstanding academic innovators working alongside the highly experienced global team at AstraZeneca. This partnership is working at exceptional speed to demonstrate the safety and clinical effectiveness of the chadox vaccine in protecting people against COVID-19 infection."

PRESS RELEASE

China offers \$1 billion loan to Latin America and the

Caribbean for access to its Covid-19 vaccine

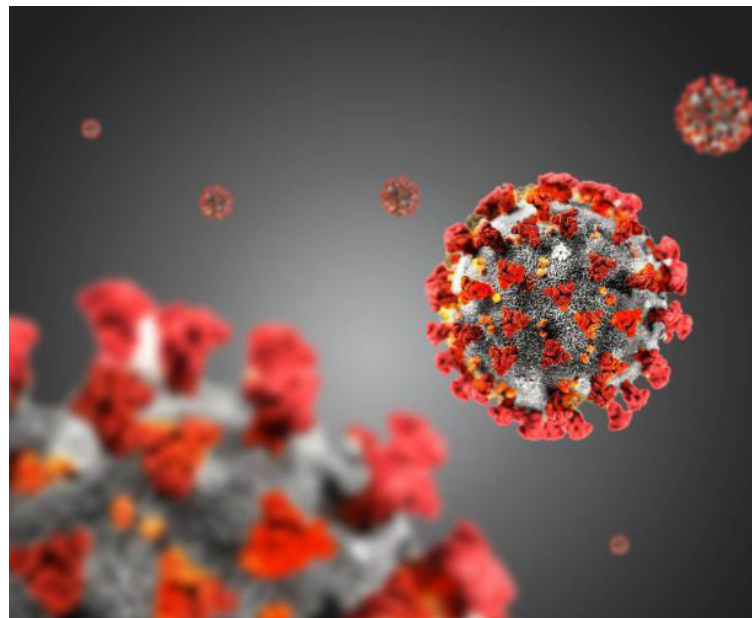
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced a \$1 billion loan to Latin America and the Caribbean for Covid-19 vaccine access during a virtual gathering with his Latin American counterparts on Wednesday, according to a statement released by the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry.

“China’s Foreign Minister said that the vaccine developed in his country will be a public benefit of universal access, and that his country will designate a loan of \$1 billion to support access [to the vaccine] for the nations of the region,” the statement said.

During a daily briefing on Thursday, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador thanked China after the loan announcement.

“We’re very grateful to China, with the Chinese government, the President -- you remember I had the chance to speak to him on the phone -- we asked him for support with medical equipment, there have been many aid flights coming from China.”

“There’s always been enough equipment supply,



medicines, and now there is this offer,” he added.

The virtual meeting on Wednesday was led by Mexico’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Marcelo Ebrard, and Wang Yi. Their counterparts from Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay also joined.

Ahead of the meeting, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in his daily briefing that during the pandemic, “China and Latin American and Caribbean countries, though oceans apart, have stood to-

gether against this common foe and conducted practical and effective cooperation to the benefit of all our people.”

He said the meeting would “consolidate consensus between the two sides on jointly fighting the pandemic, cement political mutual trust, uphold multilateralism” and build a community with a shared future for the regions.

Latin America became the epicenter of the global pandemic in late May. A CNN analysis of Johns Hopkins University (JHU) data last week found that Latin America and the Caribbean had suffered more coronavi-

rus deaths than the US and Canada -- though the latter had still reported more deaths per capita.

Brazil has the second-highest number of cases globally, after the US, with more than 2.2 million people infected, according to JHU figures. Chinese biotech company Sinovac has begun a Phase 3 vaccine trial in the country, alongside another Phase 3 trial by Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

Peru, Chile and Mexico are also in the top ten countries for confirmed cases, while the virus is also spreading in Venezuela, where concerns have been raised over the country’s crippled health-care system.

Governmental responses to the virus have differed radically across Latin America, however the region’s informal workforce and high levels of inequality are among the factors driving the widening outbreak.

Coronavirus also has deepened the rift between the US and China, with the Trump administration repeatedly lashing out at China over its early response to the virus.

A tale of two neighbours

(The writer is Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the Organisation of American States. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and at Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are entirely his own).

Recent electoral events in Guyana and Suriname, which border each other on the north-eastern coast of the South American continent, display a remarkably different approach to democracy that could be the determining factor in catapulting Suriname's development and prosperity well ahead of Guyana's.

The two countries have many similarities and some differences. One of the principal differences is that Suriname endured coup d'états by the military, whereas Guyana has not, although the latter is notorious for disputed elections with losing parties accusing the governing party of rigging the elections. There is a twist in the latest elections, held in Guyana on March 2nd 2020. After all parties and observers declared the elections to be free and fair, the governing party, APNU-AFC, claimed that the opposition party, the PPP/C had somehow fixed the elections.

The coup d'états in Suriname were both led by Desiré Delano "Dési" Bouterse, who became the de facto leader of the country from 1980 to 1987, and then again from December 1990 to May 1991.

Bouterse, eventually won two terms in office by way of the ballot box from 2010 to 2015 and 2015 until May 25, 2020 when his National Democratic Party lost elections.

As elections in these two neighbouring states were approaching at the beginning of 2020, if any public polling were taken on which government would have refused to leave office, even if it had clearly lost, it would have undoubtedly reflected Bouterse's. After all, a man who had twice seized power at the point of a gun was a superior candidate for discarding the will of the electorate, democratically exhibited in elections.

Not so. In the end, the Suriname elections result was declared on June 4, and Bouterse conceded to the Opposition parties, led by Chandrikapersad 'Chan' Santokh of the United Reform Party. Bouterse himself placed the Presidential sash of office on Santokh at a ceremony on July 16.

In the meantime, the declaration of the result of the Guyana elections has been prolonged for over four

months. A constant cycle of appeals to the Courts by supporters of the APNU-AFC now halt a result being declared. Even after the highest Appellate Court, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), pronounced on the matter, appeals have been made to lower courts to overturn the CCJ's judgement – an act unprecedented in the history of global judicial systems.

striking similarity about Guyana and Suriname is that they have both become beneficiaries of major finds of oil and gas that promise to place them amongst the richest countries in the Western Hemisphere. The revenues from oil and gas sales would transform them from backwater nations to countries, whose economic power would make them significant influencers in the Caribbean and the hemisphere.

But, there is a corollary to that observation. It is that Suriname and Guyana each has to be an acceptable state in the world community, with governments that demonstrably adhere to democracy and the rule of law. The days of rogue governments operating with impunity in the international community are over.

There are several mechanisms by which Suriname and Guyana are tested. These include the CAR-



By Sir Ronald Sanders

ICOM Charter of Civil Rights, the Inter-American Democratic Charter in the Western Hemisphere and the UN-adopted International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Suriname has now demonstrated its readiness to honour its commitments under these binding agreements, giving its own people, the international community and investors in its oil and gas industry the confidence that, in moving forward, democracy and the rule of law will be respected.

Suriname has every prospect now of establishing itself as a leader-nation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), utilising its new oil and gas wealth to help finance regional inte-

gration in crucial areas such as air and sea transportation; food security; providing concessional financing for development projects through the Caribbean Development Bank; and acting as a strong interlocutor for CARICOM in international affairs.

Guyana, on the other hand, once a strong leader and an important voice in regional and global affairs, risks being ostracised in the regional, hemispheric, and international communities.

No number of braggadocious political claims about Guyana's 'sovereignty', and why it doesn't need the United States, CARICOM, the Organization of American States, the European Union

or any other country or international institution, changes the reality that Guyana does need a constructive and respected relationship with all of them. For sure, there is a great deal of reform that is urgently required within Guyana to establish truly independent and sustainable institutions which reflect racial inclusion and balance in their composition, especially in their decision-making boards. Racial and religious understanding and appreciation must become integral to the education curriculum. Fear that the proceeds of revenues from oil and gas will be sequestered into the pockets of a few, or for the benefit of one racial group over another, has to be ad-

dressed by the adoption of laws governing transparency and wealth distribution and by severe penalties for their violation. The electoral system also requires root and branch transformation, including by ensuring that no politician serves on the Elections Commission or appoints anyone to it – that task should be passed to representative bodies of civil society and enshrined in law.

But, more than anything else, those who seek political office should understand that they are elected to serve the nation, and not to become the nation's overlords. And, when the majority of the electorate vote to relieve them of office, they should leave, recognising that polit-

ical office is not their right to hold; it is the people's right to give and to take away.

Bouterse of Suriname showed, in the end, that he understood well that Suriname's interest in the 21st Century would have been gravely blighted had he chosen to remain despite the will of the people.

In this tale of two countries, adherence to democracy and the rule of law has set the Surinamese people on the path to progress, while the Guyanese people are being hobbled from striding forward on that rewarding road.

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CDB to Govts: Create right environment for efficient air travel

It is still early days, but one of the main funding partners behind the financially-troubled airline, LIAT, is proposing that several key changes must be made to the aviation business in the region.

In fact, President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Dr Warren Smith told Barbados TODAY he believed there needs to be a multi-faceted approach to improving the aviation industry in the Caribbean, which would include changes to governments' airport taxes and efficiency concerns.

"I think there is a lot of work that needs to be done not only in relation to coming up with a new mechanism, a new entity to serve the region, but I think there is also a lot of work to be done in the business environment in aviation," said Smith.

He explained: "Our countries need to address the issue of taxation on air travel. We also need to look at the way in which we move people through our airports – in many instances there is a lot of work that needs to be done. It needs to be more user-friendly and you need to be able to have connectivity that is not as painful as it is today. That is part and parcel of the solution. So it is a multi-dimensional challenge as far as aviation is concerned in the region."

Smith was speaking against the backdrop of recent moves by LIAT's shareholder governments to save the island-hopping carrier from going under.

At the end of last month it was



President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Dr Warren Smith

announced that LIAT would be liquidated and a possible new entity should be launched.

And following uncertainty over the past few weeks, major shareholder governments – Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica – reportedly reached an agreement that could see the airline flying again by the end of October, albeit, without Barbados and St Vincent and the Grenadines as shareholders.

Following a virtual meeting on Monday, Antigua's Prime Minister Gaston Browne said "The interventions were heard and we came to the consensus that we should sell the three planes that are owned by LIAT and charged to the Caribbean Development Bank."

LIAT currently has several

outstanding loans with the CDB.

Asked to comment on the development, Smith was careful not to mention the loans or whether the bank was prepared to pump more funds into the airline, but simply said "The matter is in the hands of the Caribbean shareholders."

He added: "The region needs efficient and effective air transport. We are islands. We are an archipelago. So for us to be able to actually have an effective intra-regional economy, there is no question that we are going to need to have effective air transport and sea transport among others," said Smith.

"It is early days. The shareholders have to sort out their business. From the standpoint of the Caribbean Development Bank, we have been very sup-

portive of the regional aviation system and I think we have done our job."

He said so far, no government or private sector entity has approached the CDB for assistance in setting up a new airline.

With LIAT still facing the possibility of liquidation, shareholder governments are expected to move swiftly to put a "reorganisation" plan in place.

It is then hoped that shareholder governments will negotiate with creditors to bring down the airline's debt or to bring liabilities and assets to "some form of balance and at the same time come up with an operational plan, which will see a very lean LIAT, especially during this period of COVID-19" Browne had indicated.

Hurricane Watch Remains In Effect For Barbados And St Vincent



A Hurricane watch remains in effect for Barbados and St Vincent and the Grenadines as Tropical Storm Gonzalo moves towards the west at 14 miles per hour.

A Hurricane Watch means that hurricane conditions are possible within the watch area.

A watch is typically issued 48 hours before the anticipated first occurrence of tropical-storm-force winds conditions

that make outside preparations difficult or dangerous.

The Miami-based National Hurricane Centre, in its bulletin issued at 11:00 am, said interests in the Windward Islands should monitor the progress of this system and additional watches or warnings will likely be required for some of these islands later in the day on Thursday.

The centre of Tropical Storm Gonzalo was located near lati-

tude 9.6 North, longitude 48.3 West. An increase in forward speed is expected through the weekend and on the forecast track, the centre of Gonzalo will approach the southern Windward Islands Friday night and move across the islands Saturday and Saturday evening.

Maximum sustained winds are near 65 miles per hour with higher gusts and some strengthening is forecast during the next

couple of days.

Gonzalo is currently a small storm but the system could become a hurricane by Thursday or Friday. Meanwhile, in Barbados, boat owners have been advised to secure their vessels immediately. Owners of small craft that can be moved manually have been advised to remove gear and vessels from the water.

The 2020 Atlantic Hurricane season ends on November 30.

Granger will not accept recount figures

A statement issued by the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) Coalition yesterday outlined the clear position of their leader, de facto President David Granger that he will not be accepting any declaration based on the figures derived from the National Recount. This represents the most significant departure yet from prior commitments made by Granger, “We maintain,” the statement said, “that the Elections Commission can only make a ‘declaration’ based on valid votes. The recount process which was conducted, painstakingly, for thirty-three days revealed massive irregularities and extensive fraud which cannot be foisted on the Guyanese people to contrive an outcome that betrays the will of the electorate.” This is the latest doubling down on the President’s position as expressed in his remarks to supporters outside of State House on July, in the wake of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruling in the *Irfaan Ali vs Eslyn David et al* case. Granger told supporters that, “The matter will go back to the Election Commission but as far as we are concerned, we have evidence that there has been massive fraud and irregularities and we will continue the fight to make sure that your votes are counted.”

Granger’s recent position stands not only in direct conflict with international consen-

sus on the credibility and validity of the National Recount figures, but also with his previous commitments to stand by what he referred to as the four Cs: the Constitution, the Court, the Commission, and CARICOM.

Constitution

President Granger in the past has repeatedly stated that he would “abide by the Constitution of Guyana.” The party’s statement in fact says that, “Any attempt to include fraudulent votes in a ‘declaration’ will constitute a violation of the constitution and the fundamental principles of democracy. We maintain that the Elections Commission can only make a ‘declaration’ based on valid votes.” The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) had however, in their ruling in the *Irfaan Ali vs Eslyn David et al* case stated that, “Unless and until an election court decides otherwise, the votes already counted by the recount process as valid votes are incapable of being declared invalid by any person or authority other than the High Court through an election petition.” What the CCJ also did in their ruling was to overturn the judgment passed by the Appellate Court deeming it invalid and of no effect. As a consequence, the 23rd June report of the Chief Elections Officer, Keith Lowenfield that was supported by the President and his party that was based on this decision was similarly of no ef-



President David Granger

fect. The President’s statement then indirectly supports a departure from the Constitution on this critical issue as decided by the Guyana’s apex court.

With regards to the courts, President Granger has always maintained that he would “respect their rulings”; however, despite saying in his statement that the party “as always, remains committed to the judicial process,” he disregarded the ruling made by the Guyana’s apex court in the *Eslyn David* case.

The Coalition, not satisfied with the judgment passed, filed an application in the High Court to regurgitate the same argument hashed out at the CCJ. The Chief Justice (CJ) Roxane George-Wiltshire in her ruling stated clearly that the relief sought by application, Mesinga Jones, an APNU+AFC counting agent was already settled by previous court decisions.

Nonetheless, the party again disregarded the CJ’s ruling and filed an appeal with the Appellate Court. Touching on this,

APNU+AFC in their statement said, “The appellant Misenga Jones seeks to set aside or reverse the entire judgment of Chief Justice Roxane George” and added that such an appeal is “lawful, proper and guaranteed under the Constitution, our supreme law.”

CARICOM

APNU+AFC said in their statement that, “The recount process which was conducted, painstakingly, for thirty-three days revealed massive irregularities and extensive fraud which cannot be foisted on the Guyanese people to contrive an outcome that betrays the will of the electorate.”

The results of the recount, supervised by a high-level CARICOM Scrutineering Team revealed that the Opposition People’s Progressive Party (PPP) won the March 2 Elections with a more than 15,000 valid vote lead ahead of APNU+AFC.

Instead of conceding to their clear loss, the party continues to argue that the recount merely uncovered mass fraud and

irregularities and stated that any result from the process would be tainted and unlawful. A majority of these allegations were raised by APNU+AFC during the recount process and to date, no hard hitting evidence has been provided to support them, a point raised in the CARICOM report. Moreover, the three-member CARICOM Scrutineering Team in their report confirmed the results showing a win for the PPP and while they noted the irregularities brought to the fore by APNU+AFC, they stated that it would not affect the results. That report also received widespread support from a host of stakeholders in the international community.

The Coalition's opposition to that report reached the doors of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in the Irfaan Ali vs Eshlyn David litigation and a clear ruling was handed down, validating the recount results. Also, it should be noted that the President affirmed on more than one occasion confidence in the CARICOM team to overlook the recount process deeming them the most "legitimate interlocutor."

In fact, Granger had said, "I am very confident in CARICOM's ability and integrity and I would just like to repeat what the Ambassador of Barbados to Washington said, that CARICOM is the most legitimate interlocutor on the Guyana situation. I am inspired by that remark and I share the sentiment that CARICOM is the most legitimate interlocutor on the Guyana situation."

Commission

While the statement said that APNU+AFC is "committed to

a lawful and credible declaration of results based on valid votes," every attempt made by the GECOM Chair, Justice Claudette Singh to produce a declaration has been met with court actions brought by the party and its supporters.

Even though the President has expressed high confidence in the GECOM Chair, declaring publicly his "trust" for her and the Commission, his actions have told a different story, including the Coalition's court challenges to her instructions to GECOM CEO to prepare a report based on the recount figures. Those actions have also coupled with what has been condemned by observers, including the United Ambassador Sarah-Ann Lynch, as gross disrespect for the Chair; this includes slanderous postings by supporters on social media and a mock funeral for Singh, held by APNU+AFC supporters in front of State House, one in which her effigy was placed in a coffin and kicked. Asked by Kaieteur News last week to specifically condemn these attacks on the Chair, Granger had refused, saying only that the attacks were not "a policy" of his administration.

Open to Dialogue

The Coalition ended their statement, noting that they are "open to dialogue with other political parties and stakeholders on the way forward for our country."

"The APNU+AFC Coalition," claimed the statement "is prepared to act responsibly to bring a resolution to the ongoing political situation. We remain confident of a credible and legitimate outcome to the elections."

Grenada Implementing *Long-Term State Of Emergency To Fight COVID-19*

Prime Minister Dr Keith Mitchell says Grenadians will be living in an indefinite State of Emergency as part of measures by his administration to control and contain the spread of COVID-19.

"We will be going to parliament with a permanent State of Emergency, a law that guides us for a period of time. I honestly believe that we should have that process in place until you have a vaccine that protects the people from being infected," Mitchell said on Wednesday.

"Until a vaccine is found I don't think we should lift the emergency situation completely. The protocols are still in place and therefore you have to have a legal status for any such law that is implemented," added Mitchell, who also holds the ministerial portfolio of National Security.

"The present situation is we need it until a vaccine is found. I don't see us removing it."

In mid-March, Grenada laboratory-confirmed its first COVID-19 case which was imported from the United Kingdom and within days the State of Emergency was declared with 24-hour curfews.

As of mid-July, Grenada



Grenada Prime Minister Dr Keith Mitchell

tested more than 3,000 persons for the virus. There have been 23 confirmed cases, which have been declared medically recovered, and there were no deaths.

The island currently has no active case.

Grenada first declared a 21-day State of Emergency in March and on April 17, members of both the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament approved an extension for six months. Since then, there is continuous weekly or fortnightly renewal of the emergency regulations. The current regulation is scheduled to expire on August 5.

US evictions set to soar as coronavirus protections expire

Last month, as the coronavirus was surging in Houston, recently unemployed hospital secretary Ramzan Boudoin got more bad news: She had six days to vacate her apartment for failing to pay the rent.

A Texas ban on evictions had enabled Boudoin to keep the two-bedroom place she shared with her daughter and granddaughter while she searched for another job. But that moratorium expired on May 18.

The landlord took legal action and Boudoin could not come up with \$2,997 plus interest to settle the judgement.

So this month, 46-year-old Boudoin packed her family into a 2008 Nissan compact and headed to New Orleans, where she moved in with her mother and her sister's family. In all, nine people share the packed three-bedroom house. Boudoin said her mother suffers from a chronic lung illness that makes her particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, in a city where the number of confirmed cases is rising at an alarming rate.

"Every minute, we are worried someone is going to give it to her," Boudoin said.

As the coronavirus began to shut down large swaths of the US economy in March, spiralling millions of people into unemployment, a patchwork of state and federal eviction bans were enacted to keep people in their homes. These protections are vanishing. Moratoriums have already expired in



About 30 million could be evicted in the coming months, far more than the 2008 crisis, unless legislators take action

29 states and are about to lapse in others. On Friday, a federal stay, which protects roughly one-third of American renters who live in buildings with mortgages backed by the federal government, will run out unless Congress acts fast.

As many as 28 million people could be evicted in the coming months, according to Emily Benfer, a visiting law professor at Wake Forest University who is the co-creator of Princeton University's Eviction Lab, a national research centre on evictions.

That is nearly triple the estimated 10 million Americans who lost their homes during the years after the 2008 mortgage crisis. Public health and housing experts say such a

significant displacement of renters would be unprecedented in modern history. In addition to the hardship that comes with losing one's home, they say, the evictions could lead to a second-wave public health crisis as the newly homeless are forced into shelters or tight quarters with relatives, increasing the risk of the spread of COVID-19.

Evictions have resumed in cities including Houston, Cincinnati, Columbus, Kansas City, Cleveland and St Louis, according to data compiled by Princeton University at its Eviction Lab.

No single, comprehensive source exists to track US evictions nationwide.

In Milwaukee, eviction fil-

ings dropped to nearly zero after Wisconsin instituted an emergency 60-day ban on evictions on March 27. But after that order was lifted on May 26, evictions surged past their pre-pandemic levels. Milwaukee recorded 1,966 eviction filings in the seven weeks following the ban's expiration, an 89 percent increase from 1,038 notices filed in the seven weeks leading up to the moratorium, the Princeton data show.

For weeks, eviction courts across the US were shuttered due to COVID-19. Now, over Zoom conference calls and even in person in some places, proceedings are ramping up again. In Houston's Harris County, more than 5,100 eviction cases have been filed since the virus upended the US economy in March, according to data compiled by Houston-based data science firm January Advisors.

That is still roughly half of the pre-pandemic levels. But it is worrisome to public health advocates given that Harris County has seen confirmed coronavirus cases jump 500 percent since Texas's eviction ban was lifted May 18, the Reuters COVID-19 tracker shows.

Swapnil Agarwal is the 39-year-old founder of Nitya Capital, which has \$2bn in real estate assets under management, according to its website, and owner of the apartments from which Boudoin was evicted.

UK and US say Russia fired a satellite weapon in space

The US State Department described the recent use of “what would appear to be actual in-orbit anti-satellite weaponry” as concerning.

Russia’s defence ministry earlier said it was using new technology to perform checks on Russian space equipment.

The US has previously raised concerns about new Russian satellite activity.

But it is the first time the UK has made accusations about Russian test-firing in space. They come just days after an inquiry said the UK government “badly underestimated” the threat posed by Russia.

In a statement on Thursday, US Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-proliferation, Christopher Ford, accused Moscow of hypocrisy after it said it wanted arms control to be extended to space.

“Moscow aims to restrict the capabilities of the United States while clearly having no intention of halting its own counter-space programme,” he said.

The head of the UK’s space directorate, Air Vice Marshal Harvey Smyth, said he was also concerned about the latest Russian satellite test, which he said had the “characteristics of a weapon”.

“Actions like this threaten the peaceful use of space and risk causing debris that could pose a threat to satellites and the space systems on which the world depends,” he said.

He urged Russia to be “re-

sponsible” and to “avoid any further such testing”.

Russia, the UK, the US and China are among more than 100 nations to have committed to a space treaty that stipulates that outer space is to be explored by all and purely for peaceful purposes.

The treaty adds that weapons should not be placed in orbit or in space.

The US said the Russian satellite system was the same one it raised concerns about in 2018 and earlier this year when the US accused it of manoeuvring close to an American satellite.

On this latest incident, Gen Jay Raymond, who heads US space command, said there was evidence Russia “conducted a test of a space-based anti-satellite weapon”.

Gen Raymond added: “This is further evidence of Russia’s continuing efforts to develop and test space-based systems and [is] consistent with the Kremlin’s published military doctrine to employ weapons that hold US and allied space assets at risk.”

This Russian test of what the Americans say is an anti-satellite weapon is part of a pattern of recent Russian space activity. In February the US military said that two Russian satellites manoeuvred close to an American one, and in April Moscow test-fired a ground-based satellite interceptor.

Only four countries - Russia, the US, China and India - have demonstrated an anti-satellite capability over the past de-



The US and UK have accused Russia of testing a weapon-like projectile in space that could be used to target satellites in orbit.

acades. Anti-satellite warheads have been carried aloft by aircraft or rockets and satellites have also been illuminated by lasers.

But Moscow is also clearly looking at using one satellite to kill another. Interest in such weapons is growing given our reliance upon satellites for a variety of purposes such as intelligence gathering, communications, navigation and early-warning.

There is no treaty banning or limiting such weapons though a number of countries have argued for some kind of agreement to do just this.

But in military terms space has already become the new frontier with several countries organising specific commands in their armed forces to deal

with both the defensive and offensive aspects of protecting their essential space-based systems.

Presentational white space

A test of a new Russian satellite took place on 15 July with the aim of performing checks on the country’s space equipment, Russia’s defence ministry said at the time.

“During testing of the latest space technology, one of the domestic satellites was examined close up using the specialised equipment of small space craft,” the ministry said, according to Interfax news agency.

It added that “valuable information about the technical condition of the object under investigation” had been recorded.

China offers \$1 billion loan to Latin America and the Caribbean for access to its Covid-19 vaccine

(CNN)-Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced a \$1 billion loan to Latin America and the Caribbean for Covid-19 vaccine access during a virtual gathering with his Latin American counterparts on Wednesday, according to a statement released by the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry.

“China’s Foreign Minister said that the vaccine developed in his country will be a public benefit of universal access, and that his country will designate a loan of \$1 billion to support access [to the vaccine] for the nations of the region,” the statement said.

During a daily briefing on Thursday, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador thanked China after the loan announcement.

“We’re very grateful to China, with the Chinese government, the President -- you remember I had the chance to speak to him on the phone -- we asked him for support with medical equipment, there have been many aid flights coming from China.”

“There’s always been enough equipment supply, medicines, and now there is this offer,” he added.

The virtual meeting on Wednesday was led by Mexico’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Marcelo Ebrard, and Wang Yi. Their counterparts from



Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay also joined.

Ahead of the meeting, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in his daily briefing that during the pandemic, “China and Latin American and Caribbean countries, though oceans apart, have stood together against this common foe and conducted practical and effective cooperation to the benefit of all our people.”

He said the meeting would “consolidate consensus between the two sides on jointly fighting the pandemic, cement political mutual trust, uphold multilateralism” and build a

community with a shared future for the regions.

Latin America became the epicenter of the global pandemic in late May. A CNN analysis of Johns Hopkins University (JHU) data last week found that Latin America and the Caribbean had suffered more coronavirus deaths than the US and Canada -- though the latter had still reported more deaths per capita.

Brazil has the second-highest number of cases globally, after the US, with more than 2.2 million people infected, according to JHU figures. Chinese biotech company Sinovac has begun a Phase 3 vaccine trial in the country, alongside another Phase 3 trial by Oxford University and

pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

Peru, Chile and Mexico are also in the top ten countries for confirmed cases, while the virus is also spreading in Venezuela, where concerns have been raised over the country’s crippled healthcare system.

Governmental responses to the virus have differed radically across Latin America, however the region’s informal workforce and high levels of inequality are among the factors driving the widening outbreak.

Coronavirus also has deepened the rift between the US and China, with the Trump administration repeatedly lashing out at China over its early response to the virus.

South Africa to close schools again over coronavirus surge



Staff member sanitises hands of students at a school in Soweto township in Johannesburg, South Africa

South Africa's public schools will close again for a month from Monday to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus as the country grapples with surging infections, President Cyril Ramaphosa has said. The country has now recorded 408,052 coronavirus cases, the fifth-highest in the world, and more than 6,000 people have died from the virus.

Rising infections have caused concern among teaching staff, with unions calling on the government to revoke its decision to reopen schools for certain grades in June. "Cabinet has decided today that all public schools should take a break for the next four weeks," Ramaphosa said on Thursday during an address to the nation, adding that the academic year that is due to end in December would be extended.

Schools will be closed from 27 July and are provisionally sched-

uled to reopen on August 24.

"We have taken a deliberately cautious approach to keep schools closed during a period when the country is expected to experience its greatest increase in infections," Ramaphosa said.

The president also announced an "historic" 500 billion rand (\$30bn) social relief and economic support package to fund the health response and assist "those in greatest need".

Africa's most industrialised economy is expected to contract by between 6.3 and 7.5 percent due to the pandemic, according to the African Development Bank. Excess deaths Meanwhile, Africa's top health official said South Africa was seeing a "huge discrepancy" between confirmed COVID-19 deaths and an unusually high number of excess deaths from natural causes, while the coronavirus is

spreading there "like wildfire". A new report by the South African Medical Research Council, released late on Wednesday, shows more than 17,000 excess deaths from May 6 to July 14 as compared with data from the past two years, while confirmed COVID-19 deaths have surpassed 6,000 [same question as above regarding this figure]. "The numbers have shown a relentless increase - by the second week of July, there were 59 percent more deaths from natural causes than would have been expected," the report says. The council's president, Glenda Gray, said the excess deaths could be attributed to COVID-19 as well as other widespread diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis while many health resources are redirected towards the pandemic.

Some South Africans are thought to be avoiding health-

care facilities as fears of the new virus spread and public hospitals are overwhelmed.

"The coronavirus storm has indeed arrived," Ramaphosa said on Thursday.

Health workers

One of the country's nurses was buried on Thursday, the latest of more than 5,000 infected health workers across South Africa. Duduzile Margaret Mbonane died just a month before her retirement, her husband said. She was 59. Colleagues dressed in white stood at her outdoor memorial and recited the nurses' pledge of service. Some were scared. "As I speak now, most of our colleagues are so infected," fellow nurse Lindiwe Yeni said. "We looked after people not knowing. We only find that after two or three days." She wants a rapid test for the virus.

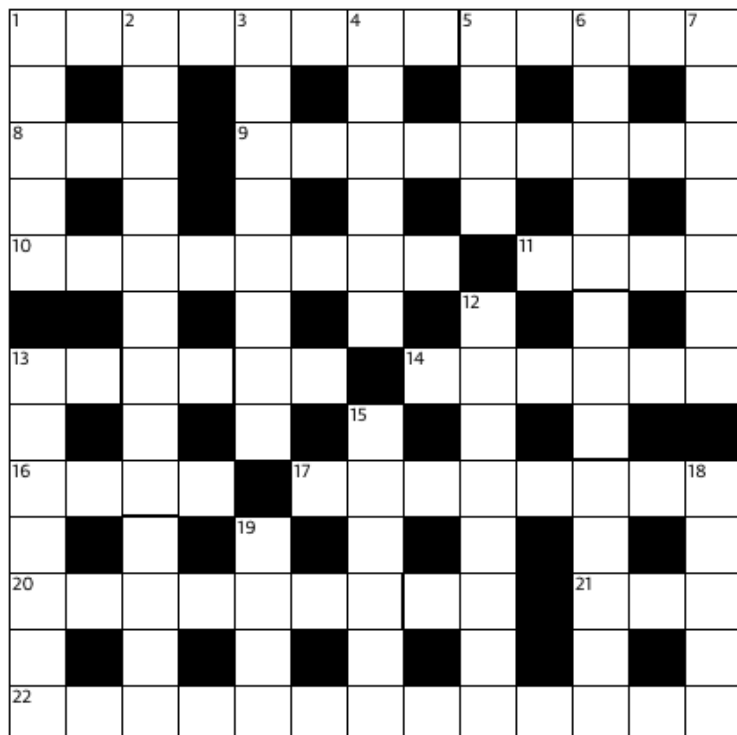
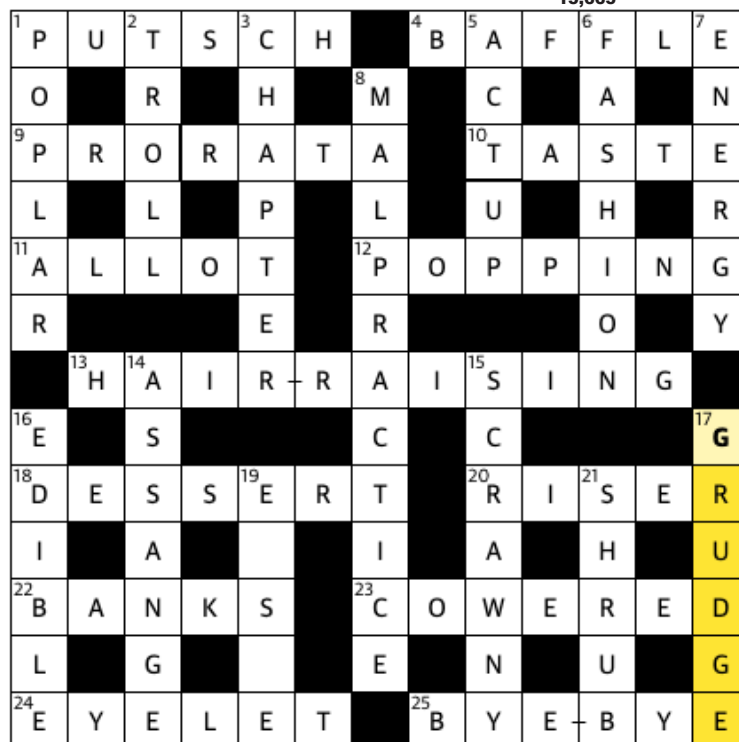
"The government must assist our nurses with protective clothing," said Duduzile's husband, Herbert Mbonane. "Maybe my wife wouldn't have died if personal protective equipment were made available in time."

Those on the front lines have been hit hard: The World Health Organization said on Thursday more than 10,000 health workers have been infected in its African region, which is largely sub-Saharan Africa.

WHO Africa chief Matshidiso Moeti said she was not able to say how many health workers, the majority of them nurses, have died. She said 41 million items of personal protective equipment are set to begin shipping from China this weekend.

QUICK CROSSWORD

Quick crossword No

Quick crossword No
15,665

Across

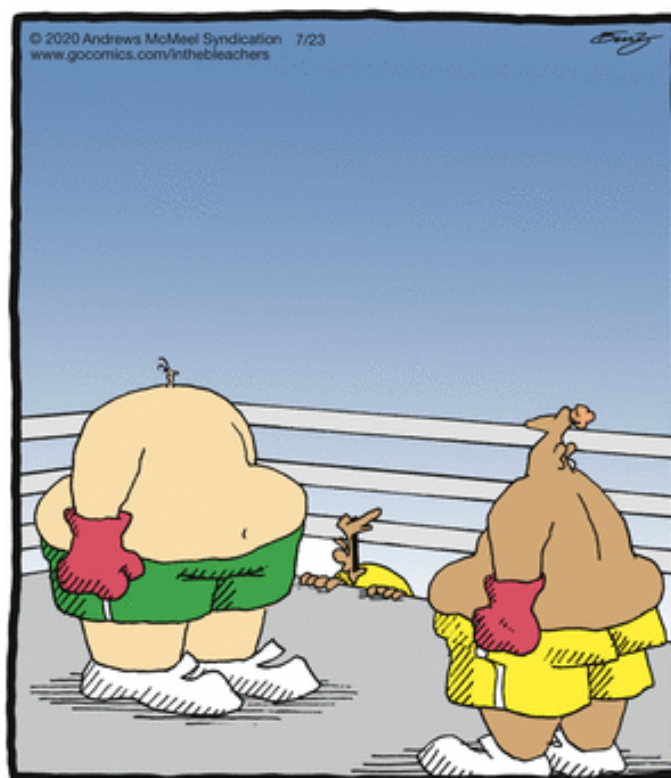
- 1 Where ants help (anag) — long-nosed insectivore (8,5)
 8 Nervous twitch (3)
 9 Convert (9)
 10 Mental disorder (8)
 11 Lump of earth (4)
 13 In the existing circumstances (2,2,2)
 14 Water gate (6)
 16 Tear (4)
 17 Feeling blissful happiness (8)
 20 Making an appearance (7,2)
 21 Vein structure in a leaf (3)
 22 European principality (13)

Down

- 1 Devoured (5)
 2 Area where entry is not permitted (9,4)
 3 Mesmerising (8)
 4 Sexual intercourse (slang) (6)
 5 River at Aviemore (4)
 6 British armed service (5,3,5)
 7 Cajole (7)
 12 Egg-laying mammal (8)
 13 Spray can (7)
 15 Hound dog (6)
 18 Room on board (5)
 19 Burbot or turbot? (4)

CARTOON CORNER

In the Bleachers



"Stick to body blows ... It's more sporting."



ARIES (Mar 21-Apr. 19): You may have a tingling urge to find a special someone to spend some time with, but this may not be the right time. Focus on achieving your greatest ambitions and stick to the plan you've already chosen to pursue.

TAURUS (Apr. 20-May 20): New beginnings should be pursued with caution; they may not be what they seem. A new love interest could lead to heartbreak if you are single, or a fascination with a new subject or life goal might not go as you expect.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Write down your latest ideas and thoughts, as they may be more valuable than you think. Your new insights might provide a way to save time and make money. Use imaginative ways to gain support from others.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Note your inspiring ideas and insights so you can remember them when you have more time. You can figure out a puzzling problem with ease but may need to wait for the perfect opportunity to put solutions into motion.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Busy bees buzz with the latest news while business hums along. You might aspire to be a top gun in your profession, so you could be anxious to show that you are smart and competent. Handle money with the greatest of care.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Good intentions don't buy the groceries. Consider going along with the opinions of your friends, but don't agree to buy something without a thorough investigation. Make a heartfelt effort to pull your weight.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Focus on your job or business, but don't get too involved with office politics. Watch your step while in social settings since business and pleasure might not mix. Make sure your intentions are clear to a certain someone.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Today's road might include a few potholes to sidestep. You might be tempted to become involved with something that is not in your best interests or cannot be accomplished. Put romantic notions on hold.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Be patient with people who mean well but offer unsolicited advice or assurances without having a grasp of key facts. Keep the purse strings drawn tightly closed and don't give in to the pressure to spend.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Know the weather forecast before you open the door. Be aware of surroundings and any conditions that may affect the outcome of your ventures. Peer groups could try to powerfully influence your behavior.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You will make the best decisions when you are safely surrounded by familiar faces and your own four walls. Outline viable financial strategies and try to implement them when a good opportunity presents itself.

PISCES (Feb. 19-Mar. 20): The dominos can fall either way, so watch your words and body language. Be mindful and kind. None of us can know everything that other people are facing, and it can be easy to unintentionally do harm.

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Mike Tyson to fight Roy Jones Jr in exhibition bout

Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson will return to the boxing ring for an exhibition fight against ex-four-weight world champion Roy Jones Jr.

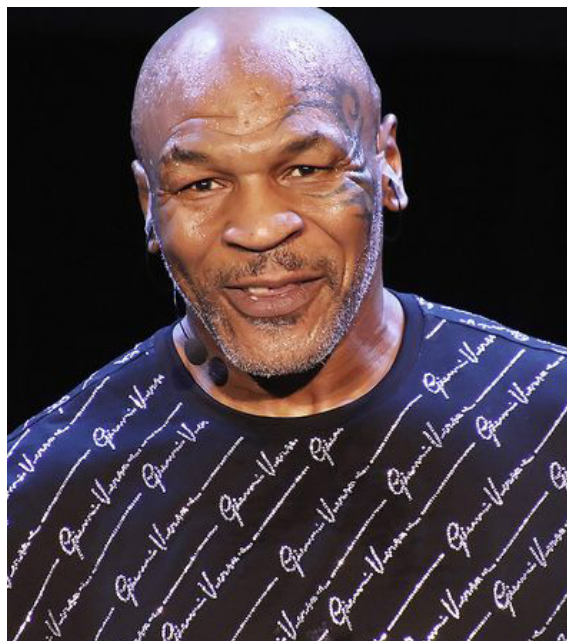
The bout is scheduled to take place on 12 September in Los Angeles.

Tyson, 54, last fought professionally in 2005 when he was beaten by Irishman Kevin McBride in what was his sixth loss in 58 career contests.

Fellow American Jones, 51, has not fought since beating Scott Sigmon in February 2018.

The California State Athletic Commission has sanctioned the fight, which will be over eight rounds and broadcast on pay-per-view.

Tyson became the youngest ever world heavyweight champion at 20 when he knocked out Trevor Berbick in 1986.



Mike Tyson, left, and Roy Jones Jr.

He recently fuelled rumours of a comeback when he shared filmed pad workouts on social media.

In 2006, Tyson had a number of four-round exhibition bouts with Corey Sanders. At the time he needed money having filed for bankruptcy in 2003, but he also spoke of the mental health

and stress-relieving benefits a light-hearted return gave him.

More recently, there had been talk of Tyson fighting former rival Evander Holyfield, who retired in 2014.

Holyfield, 57, won their two previous bouts in the 1990s, including the infamous encounter in 1997

when Tyson was disqualified for biting his opponent's ear.

Jones Jr claimed world titles at middleweight, super-middleweight, light-heavyweight and heavyweight during his career.

"It's like David and Goliath," said Jones Jr in a promotional video.

Washington's NFL team will be called the "Washington Football Team" this season

Earlier in July, the franchise announced that they would drop the team name *Redskins*, a name seen as offensive to Native Americans.

Major sponsors had threatened to pull funding from the team unless they considered renaming themselves.

The club say they will conduct an in-depth branding process as they choose a new name and logo.

A statement on the club website

read: "Starting tomorrow and over the next 50 days, we will begin the process of retiring all Redskins branding from team properties.

"We encourage fans, media and all other parties to use 'Washington Football Team' immediately."

The club also announced that fans will be able to purchase merchandise with the interim name on it in the coming days, as they unveiled new player

uniforms including helmets scrubbed of the team's former logo.

The Washington Football Team are set to face the Philadelphia Eagles in their first game of the regular NFL season on 13 September.

Team owner Dan Snyder had been a boyhood fan of the 87-year-old team - which was named the Redskins in 1933 when it was still based in Boston

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Juventus misses chance to seal title

Juventus missed out on the chance to wrap up the Serie A title as they fell to what boss Maurizio Sarri called a “messy” defeat at struggling Udinese.

Juve, who have been Italian champions for exactly 3,000 days, need to win one of their final three games to win their ninth title in a row.

They led through Matthijs de Ligt’s powerful drive.

But Ilija Nestorovski headed in an equaliser before Seko Fofana’s brilliant winner in injury time.

As Juve pushed for a winner, Fofana ran from the halfway line, beat Alex Sandro for pace before cutting inside De Ligt and slotting the ball under Wojciech Szczesny.

“We paid for a lack of order after a good first half,”

said Sarri, whose future is reportedly in doubt.

“We wanted to win at all costs, we were messy and we took the game on a dangerous track and lost it on 93 minutes because we wanted the three points.

“At this stage of the season, it is difficult, we are all tired. We have lost aggression.

“It’s complicated to stay mentally and physically on the ball for 90 minutes. The games are strange and the momentum changes very easily.

“The mental fatigue is more than the physical fatigue.”

Cristiano Ronaldo has been overtaken by Lazio striker Ciro Immobile in the golden boot race. Immobile scored his 31st goal of the season in Lazio’s 2-1 win



over Cagliari to take him one above Ronaldo’s total.

Juventus only need three points to seal an unprecedented ninth consecutive Serie A title - but they are out of form.

They have only won one of their past five Serie A games, but the three teams below them - Atalanta, Inter Milan and Lazio - have all dropped points recently.

Sarri is hoping to win the

first league title of his career.

Juve looked laboured at Udinese - who are not yet safe from relegation - with most of their 21 shots either speculative or from long range.

They play Sampdoria on Sunday (20:45 BST) - although could be champions before then if their rivals lose their weekend matches.

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- and had vowed to never change its moniker.

But amid recent protests over police brutality and racism, major sponsors FedEx, Nike, Pepsi and Bank of America all called on Snyder to consider finally changing the name.

The NFL team is not the first Washington DC sports franchise to change their name amid shifting cultural attitudes.

In 1995, basketball’s Washington Bullets were renamed the Wizards after the NBA team owner said he had become uncomfortable with the name’s violent overtones.

The Redskins, who moved to DC in 1937, were founded by businessman George Preston Marshall, who believed in racial segregation.

They were the last team to allow black players onto the team, and only did so after the US government threatened to revoke the lease on their stadium in 1962.



Sports

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FRIDAY 24TH JULY 2020

Ben Stokes v Jason Holder, Wisden Trophy on the line

Maybe this Test cricket lark has some legs after all. Two matches in as many weeks, two pulsating fifth-day finishes, one victory apiece and the promise of more to come. The series in a bubble is bubbling up nicely as the decider looms - once again at Emirates Old Trafford, where Ben Stokes' most recent expression of greatness proved that the intensity of these contests has not been diminished by the absence of crowd-based atmospherics.

What on earth can Stokes possibly have up his sleeve as an encore? There is the possibility that he may not be risked as a bowler in this match, after picking up a late niggles last week, but that hardly diminishes his value to the side. In fact, his batting performance alone in the second Test was one of the most remarkable all-round displays in Test history, as he conjured a pair of entirely opposite personas in each of his two innings. A 255-ball hundred on the first and second days; a 36-ball fifty on the fifth - his debut as a Test



opener, no less.

Not that he's the only all-rounder to have impressed in this series, mind you. Not for the first time, and surely not for the last, Jason Holder's masterful seizure of the moment in the first Test has been relegated to the undercard. Lest we forget, not only did he claim 6 for 42 in that first innings, he extracted Stokes twice in the match - intercessions that we now know were even more priceless than they seemed at the time.

And though he has now officially dipped to No. 2 in the ICC's allrounder rankings,



with Stokes taking over as top dog, Holder's talismanic value will be of even greater importance to his team in this final contest, not to mention his quietly authoritative leadership. Their squad may be feeling the strain in this back-to-back-to-back series, but West Indies have won four of their last seven Tests against England since their famous run-chase at Headingley in 2017, and (a not-insignificant detail too) they are the proud holders of the Wisden Trophy, and are unlikely to hand it back without an almighty fight.

Selection issues abound for both teams, although England's are the ones that you would classify as "good

headaches" - namely, the need to cram six fit and eager seamers into three available slots. In their differing styles, Stuart Broad, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran did absolutely everything that was asked of them in the second Test, and all three have duly been retained in an extended squad for the decider. But so too have each of the men they replaced after the Ageas Bowl loss, so expect a fully-blown selection migraine for Joe Root and Chris Silverwood before the final XI takes the field on Friday.

West Indies, by contrast, are faced with the classic stick-or-twist dilemma. Their seamers excelled in the Ageas Bowl victory, but the same attack struggled to touch such heights in the second Test - not helped, it must be said, by Holder's decision to bowl first. It was a bold move designed to seize the series there and then, and it might have worked had Stokes and Dom Sibley not been quite so bloody-minded. But instead, it leaves them fatigued with the climax still to come. Chemar Holder lurks on the bench with a big reputation already stored up in his young career. But it would be a big ask to be pitched into the series now.

DEWS

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