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# SOCIAL SECURITY: PENSIONERS TO BE PAID TODAY

SEE PAGE 3

Tracking bracelet legislation goes to Parliament next week

Defence Force called to keep Post Office open

IICA spearheads major automated project for farmers



**EDITORIAL: Social Security: Victim of the pandemic** 

Page 2



# Social Security: Victim of the pandemic

On Thursday, scores of pensioners, angry over late payments from the Social Security Scheme (SSS), gathered outside the Office of the Prime Minister to protest.

The group of pensioners and their supporters gathered to ventilate their frustration over the late payment of their pensions. This unfortunate situation began shortly after the start of the COVID-19 and the lockdown in April.

The halt in the operations of virtually all businesses affected everyone, but hotels and service oriented operations such as restaurants and salons were among the worst hit.

The lockdown, which was accompanied by the closure of Antiqua and Barbuda's borders also resulted in Antigua-based airline, LIAT, being grounded as country after country in the region followed suit and closed their airports.

This was devastating to the SSS as LIAT is one of its major contributors.

Compounding the crisis was the abrupt end of the cruise season one and a half months before it would normally wind down. This resulted in taxi drivers being made idle as the itineraries of thousands of cruise passengers were canceled literally overnight.

As if these trials were

enough, the Jolly Beach Hotel announced its permanent closure as its owners sought an investor to revive the failing property.

Any fair analysis of the current situation facing the SSS must take all these matters into account. They are all related and a problem that existed prior to the onset of the pandemic was amplified by its crippling impact.

There is a shortfall in revenue now because the private sector now only contributes about half of its pre-COVID-19 payments. The government now has to meet the shortfall that has been created. The Gaston Browne administration has paid all premiums due to the SSS and would have increased the contribution income to bring payments in alignment to fulfil pension disbursements.

Prior to this intervention by the ABLP administration, pension payments exceeded SSS revenue.

The vulnerability of SSS can be traced to the failure of previous ABLP and UPP administrations to pay their premiums. SSS was further strained because those administrations also borrowed money from the SSS.

In the history of the SSS, the Browne administration is the only one that has not borrowed money from the SSS.

Over its tenure, he UPP paid only \$1.5M monthly into the SSS and accrued arrears between 2009 and 2014.

Upon taking office in 2014, the Browne administration moved quickly to return the scheme to a position of stability. It raised contributions and it instituted measures to increase the pension age from 60 to 65 years over a period of time.

is understandable that pensioners, some of whom have no other source of income, are unhappy with the fact that they are being paid late as these delays will no doubt cause hardship for some.

Despite the best planning, however, the reality is that Antiqua and Barbuda has had to endure two major calamities over the last ten months - the coronavirus pandemic and the once-in-a-generation flood of November.

What we must collectively reject in the face of this knowledge is the attempts of some political operatives to piggy-back on the situation facina pensioners in an attempt to score political points. It is unfortunate, but not surprising, that there are those who would seek to pin their political aspirations on the unfortunate circumstances of pensioners.

The combined impact of the pandemic and the flood on the economy has been estimated at more than one billion dollars. Put another way, Antigua and Barbuda has lost 20 percent of the value of its economy in a mere ten months.

This significant blow to the economy was due to factors beyond the control of this, or any government. With such losses, it is clear that government's revenues would be negatively impacted particularly as we are a service-based economy.

There is some light, however, at the end of this turbulent tunnel.

The Ministry of Tourism has announced an encouraging increase in visitor arrivals and there has also been the announcement of the availability of vaccines which appear to be highly efficacious in preventing the contraction of the virus.

The availability of a vaccine now means that in time, economic activity will be restored which in turn will generate more revenue for SSS and eventually the end of late payments.

All are encouraged to exercise some patience and lower the temperature. The end is in sight!



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

### **MARKETING OFFICER**

The University of the West Indies (UWI) is a dynamic, international institution serving the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Its faculties and institutes offer a wide range of undergraduate, masters and doctoral programmes in Humanities and Education, Science and Technology, Engineering, Law, Medical Sciences, Sport and the Social Sciences. The institution represents the oldest of its kind within the region and has been responsible for producing outstanding leaders who have made remarkable contributions to regional development. In 2019, the UWI placed 32nd among the 150 best ranked universities across Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the Times Higher Education (THE) Latin America University Rankings. After 71 years The UWI remains the number 1 ranked university, out of more than 200 registered universities in the Caribbean. The UWI is currently within the top 3% of universities in Latin America and the Caribbean from a complement of over 2,000 registered universities.

The Five Islands Campus is inviting applications from suitably qualified individuals for the post of Marketing Officer.

The successful candidate will be required to:

- Develop and implement communication and marketing strategies aimed at raising the brand profile of the UWI Five Islands Campus across a wide range of stakeholder groups.
- Support the building and maintenance of a strong identity, public image and brand, ensuring One UWI consistency in all aspects of brand communications particularly in the local and OECS space.
- Build and maintain relationships with internal and external stakeholders to advance implementation and dissemination of communication messages specific to the UWI Five Islands.
- Prepare materials for internal and external communiqués including the web and digital assets/social media.

### **QUALIFICATION, TRAINING & EXPERIENCE:**

- Bachelor's degree in; communications, marketing, or journalism. Masters degree is an asset.
- Minimum 3 years' experience managing, supporting and delivering exemplary marketing, communications or media services in a medium or
- Knowledge of project management, brand reputation management, marketing strategy, development and implementation methodologies.
- The ideal candidate should also have a record of successful administrative innovation, change management and motivational leadership towards the transformation of Institutional culture.
- Excellent organisational and administrative skills coupled with an ability to carry a heavy work load, perform under pressure, and contribute to the innovative transformation of job processes.
- Excellent organizational, writing, editing, content creation, and verbal
- Knowledge of the structure of The University of the West Indies, its rules and regulations, its systems including their enterprise software will be a

Applicants are required to submit a completed employment application form, Curriculum Vitae giving particulars of qualifications, experience, the names and addresses of at least three (3) references (one of whom should be from your current organization) and copies of academic qualifications. These are to be sent by electronic mail to hr.fiveislands@uwi.edu addressed to the Director of Administration, The University of the West Indies, Five Islands, Antigua and Barbuda, West Indies. Application forms, which must be completed can be requested by emailing hr.fiveislands@uwi.edu. The completed application must accompany your CV and cover letter to complete the application package. The final date for receipt of applications is December 12, 2020. In order to expedite the appointment procedures, applicants are advised to ask their referees to send reports under confidential cover to the above address without waiting to be contacted.

# **Social Security to** start November pension payments today

The Social Security Scheme (SSS) has confirmed that it will begin paying November pensions today.

Matthias, announced that pensioners whose cheques are normally delivered by the General Post Office can collect their November 2020 cheques today at the SSS's London House Office.

"Please note if you are sending someone to collect on your behalf, the individual must have a valid Government issued ID, a written note granting authorization for cheque collection and the Pensioner's Social Security number, or presenting the Pension Card for the cheque to be issued," Matthias further advised.

Matthias said all pensions for October have been paid in full and added that only November pensions are due. He explained that pensioners who receive payments through CIBC First Caribbean International Bank and Royal Bank of Canada were

paid their October pensions this week due to technical issues which were resolved this week.

Earlier this year Mat-Director of SSS, David thias reported that SSS has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in a decline in its revenue of approximately 40 percent. The steep decline in revenue is directly linked to the job losses in the tourism, airline and service sectors.

> On Thursday, scores of pensions gathered outside the Office of the Prime Minister to draw attention to the issue of late payments. Prime Minister Gaston Browne left his office to speak with the pensioners advising them that all outstanding payments will be made during this month.

> He explained that the scheme has been underfunded for nearly four decades. The SSS's accumulated deficits, Matthias continued, means that the scheme no longer has a reliable revenue source with its only revenue coming from the contributions of the workforce.

# Tracking bracelets legislation goes to Parliament next week

Two hundred trackina bracelets have arrived in the country and the government will go to Parliament next week to pass legislation which will pave the way for their use.

On Thursday during the Post Cabinet Press Briefing, it was confirmed that next Tuesday legislation for the bracelets, which will be used to monitor the movement of people placed in quarantine, will be debated and passed.

According to the dashboard sent out by the Ministry of Health dated December 1st 2020, 247 persons are in self-quaran-

The bracelets are intended to ensure that people in the fourteen day quarantine remain in the location they agree to be restricted to. This is part of the government's effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus. It is also possible that the Parliament will pass legislation to address people arriving in Antigua and Barbuda without a negative COVID-19 PCR Test. These people will be fined, tested at the airport and quarantined at their own expense. Several Caribbean countries have also implemented this measure.

Minister of Information, Melford Nicholas, reported that technicians are making some final adjustments which will ensure that the bracelets work as intended. Health officials are also

being trained in the use of the bracelets, interpreting the information collected and implementing regulations. The implementation of a Command Center is also in the cards.

"The training is taking place even as we speak and when I leave here this morning I will be working with the technology team to make sure that that support that we offered the Ministry of Health in terms of building a command center will take place," he added.

Nicholas is confident that this new initiative will improve security in respect of the spread of the coronavirus and the control of people in self-quarantine.

"We do anticipate that not only will the bracelets act as a security mechanism for the Ministry of Health, but it does improve the surveillance and the monitoring of persons who would be isolated simply because the bracelets are able to give a report back to the Ministry of Health officials of not only the temperature but also of the heartbeat conditions and if these two things were to change they would be able to respond in a quicker manner than they are currently doing at the moment," he said.

According to Nicholas, the bracelets could be put to use as early as next week. It was also disclosed that an additional 300 bracelets will be acquired.



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

### **HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER**

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The Five Islands Campus is inviting applications from suitably qualified individuals for the post of Human Resources Officer

The successful candidate will be required to:

- Provide Human Resource administration for staff at all staffing categories to include Senior Academic and Professional and Administrative Technical and Support staff levels at the Five Islands Campus
- Support the management of the Human Resource Cluster of the Five Islands Campus.
- Manage the recruitment, hiring and onboarding processes for the
- Servicing of selected Committees/Boards relating to HR matters on behalf of the Director of Administration.

### **QUALIFICATION, TRAINING & EXPERIENCE:**

- Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management/ Development, Management Studies or Business Administration or a related discipline. Master's degree would be an asset.
- Minimum 3 years' experience managing, supporting and delivering exemplary human resource services in a medium or large organization.
- Knowledge of Enterprise HRM design, structure and implementation.
- Knowledge of procedures contained in collective agreement bargaining.
- Have a record of successful administrative innovation, change management and motivational leadership towards the transformation of Institutional culture.
- Excellent organisational and administrative skills coupled with an ability to carry a heavy work load, perform under pressure, handle multiple priorities and contribute to the innovative transformation of job processes
- Excellent organizational, writing, editing, content creation, and verbal
- Knowledge of the structure of The University of the West Indies, its rules and regulations, its systems including their enterprise software will be a distinct asset.

Applicants are required to submit a completed employment application form, Curriculum Vitae giving particulars of qualifications, experience, the names and addresses of at least three (3) references (one of whom should be from your current organization) and copies of academic qualifications. These are to be sent by electronic mail to hr.fiveislands@uwi.edu addressed to the Director of Administration, The University of the West Indies, Five Islands, Antiqua and Barbuda, West Indies. Application forms, which must be completed can be requested by emailing hr.fiveislands@uwi.edu. The completed application must accompany your CV and cover letter to complete the application package. The final date for receipt of applications is December 12, 2020. In order to expedite the appointment procedures, applicants are advised to ask their referees to send reports under confidential cover to the above address without waiting to be contacted.

# Defense Force called in to keep Post Office open

Cabinet took the unusual step during its Wednesday meeting of calling on the Antigua and Barbuda Defense (ABDF) to help man operations at the General Post Office after its staff downed tools forcing the closure of the critical service.

Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, Lionel 'Max' Hurst, said the executive body discussed the disruptive action of the staff at the General Post Office who have been off the job since November

"GPO staff are part of the 'essential services' list of employees who can take industrial action only after giving two weeks' notice to their employer. The Cabinet ordered the Postmaster General and senior management at the GPO to report for work immediately and to make stamps available to those who wish to mail Christmas cards, bills and other correspondence and for purchase of passports," Hurst reported.

According to reports the staff took action without notifying the government as neither of the unions involved - the Antiqua Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU) and the Public Service Association (AB-PSA) - communicated a grievance.

Hurst explained that the staff have taken issue with working conditions at the GPO where water from the flood water last month compromised the roof. This led to water damage to the interior of the building. He announced that the Ministry of Works is already on the job and is carrying out repair work on the High and Long Street site.

Head of the ABDF, Colonel Telbert Benjamin, said a team from the unit visited the GPO to assess what needs to be done. Talks are also taking place with the Postmaster General, Algernon Gomes.

"The discussions are ongoing with all involved and we are ready to move forward," he declared.

# **Prices and Consumer Affairs** urges wise holiday consumerism

Joanne Peters. the press officer for the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division is admonishing consumers to ensure that they check goods properly prior to purchasing and before leaving the store this Christmas season.

Both consumers and traders are being reminded of the Sales of Goods Act, which defines, among other things, the steps that can be taken in disputes between a trader and consumer and the rights which both parties have.

Peters said that persons should also avail themselves of information relating to the return policy of the business, and other pertinent information relating to their sales policy, which may differ depending on the store the item is purchased at.

She said there have been cases in which consumers purchase an item and do not use it immediately, only to later discover that it is defective.

Peters specifically mentioned electronic items, which she advises should be used once you get home, even for a short period.

"Consumers, please check your items carefully before you purchase them; when you go

home. I know this is the season where we find a lot of sales of appliances and other household items. Especially for the small appliances you may be thinking, for example, I'm replacing my blender-now when you purchase that blender don't just go take it home [and] keep it in the box for the next three four months and then when you open it, it is not working as it should," Peters cautioned.

"At that time you cannot get redress. So even if you are not quite ready to put that new blender into play, please at least use it to do somethina. Make some smoothie

once or twice to ensure that it is working."

According to Peters, there is a limited period within which redress can be sought and consumers should avoid missing this timeline. She also called for people to make wise purchasing decisions.

"So again, although you are making your purchases, ensure that you are checking them [and] they are fit for the purpose," Peters said.

The press officer is also advising traders that the goods which they have on offer are offered as described and should be what the consumer requested.

# Airlift into V. C. Bird International is improving



Tourism officials sav Antiqua and Barbuda will benefit from increased airlift during the winter season as demand for the destination increases among travellers seeking to escape the cold weather.

In a press statement, tourism authorities said activity at the V. C. Bird International Airport will dramatically increase with the return of Air Canada on December 6. Other major US and UK airlines will up the number of their flights to the country this month.

"We are heading into the holiday season with increased airlift which will be a catalyst for the destination going into the first quarter of 2021," Tourism Minister Charles Fernandez said.

As a result of the dip in

business travel because of the pandemic, airlines have shifted their focus, and their planes, to the leisure travel market where the demand is slightly better. According to the tourism insider, consumer confidence is returning and authorities here on the ground are ensuring that the country has adequate airlift in place to support the demand that it will receive into the first quarter of 2021.

Minister Fernandez reported that from the US, American Airlines will operate an additional daily flight to Antiqua from Miami International Airport. The second Miami flight is scheduled to begin on December 17. The airline will also resume daily flights from JFK International Airport on December 18.

Delta Airlines will also ramp up its Atlanta service to Antigua increasing its service from one Saturday flight, to five weekly flights on Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday starting on December 18.

Flights will resume from JFK International Airport on January 16.

United Airlines will continue its weekly flight on Saturday from Newark.

CEO of the Tourism Authority, Colin C. James, encouraged tourism stakeholders to remain optimistic going into 2021.

"We are seeing an uptick in leisure travel which is really taking up the slack from business travel. Demand for the destination is extremely strong," he stat-

Over the past months, the Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism have held discussions with airline partners regarding the destination going into

"Our country's tourism continues along the path of positive recovery with airlift increases. Five flights from Atlanta with Delta, is the most flights we have ever had. This airlift coming out of Atlanta is a vote of confidence in the destination," James said.

Arrivals from the United Kinadom will also steadily increase as British Airways has announced the return of daily flights to Antiqua from December 11 until January. A strong demand for Antiqua has also resulted in two additional British Airways flights. For the first time ever, the airline will operate two flights on December 19 and December 26.

The Virgin Atlantic service will continue from Heathrow.

Air Canada will return on December 6, with a full flight.

Sunwing and WestJet are yet to announce when they will resume flights to Anituaa from Canada, however, it is expected that both will return in early 2021.

November LIAT's return to commercial operation on November 30. The airline will operate flights five days a week to seven destinations: Antiqua, Barbados Dominica Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and St. Vincent.

# GG plants trees to mark **Arbor Day**

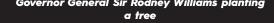
Activities marking Arbor Month continued with Governor General Sir Rodnev Williams and Lady Williams planting trees to bring focus to the annual event which is aimed at encouraging people to plant trees.

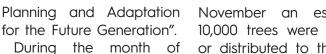
Their Excellences collaborated with the Department of Environment to plant a number of fruit trees on the lawn at Government House. Plants were also distributed to members of the Government House staff to plant at home.

The trees distributed included mango, soursop, cherry, lime, lemon, golden apple and guava.

The distribution of trees formed part of the Department of Environment's Arbour Month 2020 which was held under the theme. "Ride the Climate Wave:







November an estimated 10,000 trees were planted or distributed to the pub-

lic, schools and community agencies around Antigua and Barbuda.





Governor General Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams with staff of the Environment Division

# **IICA** spearheads major automated project for farmers



Farmers in Antigua and Barbuda will benefit from a major project that will promote activities to strengthen food security during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Institute For Co-

operation on Agriculture (IICA), through a collective crowdfunding or microfinancing campaign entitled #IAmJoiningIICAChallenge, will spearhead the US\$25,000 project which will see six small scale farmers from various agricultural districts receive fully automated drip irrigation systems.

The funding provided will also cover the procurement of seeds and other agro-inputs and the construction of a Multiplication Humidity Bin and a Seedling Nursery in Barbuda.

US\$12,000.00 has been allotted to begin the activities.

Persons who wish to donate to the #IAm Joining IICAChallenge can do so by visiting GoFundMe at www. gf.me/u/yn5cg6 or the IICA website, www.iica.int/en/crowdfunding.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was announced in Antigua and Barbuda in March 2020, food security has been a recurring theme for the government and its people. The government, as a result, has encouraged more people to engage in backyard gardening. A COVID-19 barrel initia-



tive for the public and other concessions specifically designed for farmers were also introduced.

Haiti which also faces food vulnerabilities has also been included in the initiative.

# Alleged used car scammer granted bail

A 29-year-old alleged scammer has been granted bail after appearing in the Magistrates' Court on charges of fraudulent conversion and larceny of over \$15,000.

Jevaughn Josiah Seatons was placed on \$20,000 bail, with a cash deposit of \$5,000 and two sureties.

In addition to receiving

bail for the alleged offences, Josiah, who is defended by attorney Wendel Robinson, was ordered to surrender his travel documents to the court. He must also report to the nearest police station three days each week until his committal hearing which is set for February 24 next year.

Josiah was picked up and questioned by the police after the female victim reported that he had taken \$18,000 from her to purchase a vehicle online, but failed to deliver it.

The woman is alleged to have contacted him in 2019 in order to purchase a Honda CRV for her busi-

Josiah allegedly instructed her to make a payment of \$18,000, to an account in

Japan, however, the victim never received the vehicle which was to have arrived in Antigua and Barbuda by February this year.

Reportedly, several unsuccessful attempts were made to contact Josiah. It was at this time that the victim involved the police.

Following investigations Josiah was arrested and charged.

# **Government House and Halo** Foundation recoginise outstanding community contributions



Several people presented with awards for outstanding community work by Government House and the Halo foundation.

Several people were awarded for outstanding community work by Government House and the Halo Foundation, a charity associated with Governor General Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams.

In a ceremony held at Government House Thursday, Sir Rodney said both he and Lady Williams were happy to celebrate outstanding service and those who give of their time, effort and resources, above and beyond the call of duty.

"This philosophy propelled us to establish two awards entitled the Governor General's Faithful and Meritorious Service and the Halo Hero Humanitarian awards," he stated.

Sir Rodney explained that the insignia in the Faithful and Meritorious Service Awards includes a cross, at the highest level as well as three medals designated as gold, silver and bronze, ranked in that order.

"These insignia are presented to deserving individuals who have demonstrated their invaluable service to humanity, wheththrough charitable works, the transformation of a sector, organisation or community, faithful service or meritorious acts all done to the benefit of Antiqua and Barbuda," he explained.

This year, two people were presented with the Faithful and Meritorious Service Award. Teacher, poet, author and playwright, the late Mrs. Mary Quinn, known as 'The Grand Dame of Poetry' was singled out for her legacy, focus and positive influence on her family. In recognition of these, she was awarded at the highest rank, the Service Cross.

second recipient was George Yeager, a former homeowner at the Mill Reef Club, who quietly, but generously, supported development in Antigua and Barbuda. He was recognised for his philanthropic services to Antigua and Barbuda.

Five people received Halo Hero Humanitarian

Awards - Kaynas Phillips, Michael Joseph, Cuthbert Forbes Jr., Brent Scotland and Asha Graham.

"These young people are blazing the trail and providing leadership in the area of humanitarian service. As more mature adults, we have a duty to encourage them on their path to help others. Today, awardees we applaud your efforts but remind you that you should not grow weary in well doing," Sir Rodney remarked.

The Halo Hero Humanitarian Awards are presented by the Halo Foundation Inc. which is the parent organisation for the over thirty charities listed under their Excellences' Patronage.

These awards recognise outstandina charitable work among children and youth at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Recipients are identified based on their acts of bravery and/or kindness in their educational institutions or their communities.



# Guyana and Suriname can underpin CARICOM's sovereignty and prosperity

(The writer is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the U.S. and the Organization of American States. He is also a senior fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London and at Massey College in the University of Toronto)

The presidents of Guyana and Suriname have announced two major joint venture projects whose implementation will deepen the beneficial relations between the two countries, and could have a positive effect for the 15-nation Caribbean Community (CARICOM) of which they are members.

The projects are a bridge across the Corentyne river to link the two countries, and the construction of a US\$1 billion offshore base to support huge oil discoveries in the Guyana-Suriname basin of more than 10 billion barrels of oil.

Relations between the two countries have not always Land and been harmonious. sea territorial disputes have caused military skirmishes and tension in the past. Fortunately, successive governments of both territories were sufficiently restrained to stop short of a full-scale war - a marked difference with the other countries on the South American continent.

Peaceful resolution of disputes through negotiation and international arbitration, and active fostering of economic integration, have always been the best way forward for Guyana (formerly British Guiana) and

Suriname (formerly Dutch Guiana). Along with French Guiana, they make up what used to be known as 'The Three Guianas', lying next to each other on the north-eastern coast of South America.

In the foreword to the book, "Post-Colonial Trajectories in the Caribbean: The Three Guianas", published by Routledge in 2017, I wrote: "Guyana and Suriname are more similar to each other than they are to any of the member countries of CARICOM, except Trinidad and Tobago. Given the similarity of their resources which includes mining, agriculture, fisheries and oil, they would benefit enormously from the economic integration of their production, freedom of movement of goods and services, joint bargaining with foreign investors and the international community generally".

I added: "If the governments of Guyana and Suriname - together with the private sectors of both countries - were to work diligently toward economic integration, the two countries could easily become a joint economic powerhouse, exporting their products glob-In this connection, ally". it is noteworthy that the Surinamese President, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, said that the US\$1 billion offshore base "will extend also to the private sector so that we can have a public-private partnership approach".

In pursuing joint venture projects that will strengthen their economic integration, the governments have sensibly not ignored their one remaining ter-



By Sir Ronald Sanders

ritorial dispute. Having settled their maritime boundary dispute in September 2007 under an arbitration by the United Nations Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, the governments have agreed that their joint Border Commission will continue to examine ways of resolving the land border dispute over an area known as 'the New River Trianale'.

Guyana's President Irfaan Ali, in noting that the "future of (the two) economies is intertwined", also stated that "Guyana and Suriname are also part of the Caribbean Community". did not have to do so. His deliberate inclusion of this remark to the Suriname Parliament, is an indication of the importance his government places on CARICOM. Even more indicative of Guyana's commitment to CARICOM is President Ali's further remark that "both



### cont'd from pg 10

states (should) take the lead in demonstrating the efficacy of regional integration". "Together", he said, "we can meet and fulfil a great portion of the food needs within the Caribbean community".

President Ali is right, provided that the long-standing problem of sea and air transportation can be resolved to carry food between Suriname-Guyana and other countries in CARICOM. The regional group's bill for the importation of food is now US\$5 billion a vear. It would be highly beneficial to the region's food security and its retention of foreign exchange, if its member states could collectively devise at least a breakeven financial operation for a shipping line. It is a project which Guyana and Suriname, in collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago, might consider underwriting through a portion of their oil and gas income. Guyana and Suriname are ex-

pected to receive significant revenues in the coming years. Neither country has the absorptive capacity to utilize all the expected annual income, however free spending they might be in building physical infrastructure, increasing the wages of their workforce, and improving health and education. They should be able to dedicate a portion of their revenues to invest in CARICOM projects and member states in ways that would strengthen the region, breaking its dependence on external powers and enhancing its integration.

None of this would be a giveaway; it could be targeted investment in projects that provide financial returns for all the parties concerned, while accelerating development in CARICOM. In addition to food and related transportation, Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago could consider, in consultation with other CARICOM states, how they could profitably underpin energy security for the region. That profit would be measured not only in financial terms, but also in the benefits of ending

reliance on external countries and strengthening the sovereignty of the region in its decision-making.

Security of regional transportation, food and energy would be three important, immediate areas for Guyana and Suriname to "take the lead in demonstrating the efficacy of regional integration" to which President Ali referred.

The "dedicated pathway to deepen economic and social cooperation" between Guyana and Suriname should be applauded by all. Even as they pursue this path, from which both countries and their peoples will undoubtedly benefit, they should take the steps to examine how such cooperation can be extended to CAR-ICOM.

The neighbourhood in which the people of Guyana and Suriname live would be more secure, and in that regard, so would they.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com





### By Tony Deyal

I am not sure about the issue in other countries of the Caribbean, but there is one in Trinidad that I tried to bring to the attention of the Standards Bureau. I called and sent messages on FB but for months got no response and, finally, they told me that I should take the issue to the Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division of the Ministry of Health I called the Department and immediately got a response then I wrote to the Head of the Division, Mr. Farz Khan and copied my email to the Minister of Health, Mr. Terrence Devalsingh.

Basically, the problem is that in any supermarket in Trinidad chicken breast with the bone and skin still on it is sold with large sections of the back and neck still attached (See picture below). This way the companies that sell the product to the supermarkets get paid for "bonein chicken breast" although what they are including in the package is a large, heavy piece of a much cheaper part of the chicken (back and neck).

In my letter I added, "Many of the people I spoke to, including some of my colleagues in the local and regional media, are convinced that either the people in your division are being paid to turn a blind eye to

# **BREAST IS NOT BEST IN TRINIDAD**

the issue and allowing it to happen, or they just sit in the office, when they condescend to work, and let these things happen. Either way, it poses a problem.

"My concern is that the situation is remedied. I don't want to write about it except as a positive dealt with by the Ministry and your department. I have absolutely no political axe to grind. If you look at my articles you will see they try to be fair to both political sides in TNT. However, it is possible this is happening in some of the other countries I write for but having lived in Barbados, Belize and Antiqua, I have no evidence that it is. However, I have evidence that because of the lack of action by your office, it is widespread in TNT. I don't want to pillory you or bring your name, reputation and career into disrepute but in these times, the scam has been allowed to go on too long and it costs retired people like me a lot of money. You might say, as some cynics do, "So why you eh eat some other part of the chicken? Or become a vegetarian?" If anyone from your office, Ministry or Government, a Grocery owner or a chicken company says that to me will immediately make sure that my readers throughout the Caribbean and Diaspora know about it.

I am not threatening you or your Ministry. It is just that I want you to, as we say, "do your wuck".

"This has been happening to me for at least two years now and I was finally told by the Standards Bureau it was your problem and not theirs."

I never got an email response from the Minister and did not expect one but I got a commitment from Mr. Khan by email the next day. He made it clear to me, "Your concerns dated Nov 16 2020 have been received and noted by the Division. I have already communicated with my counterparts from the Veterinary Public Health Department -MoH. We are in the process of putting a team of inspectors to conduct an investigation on the matter that you have reported on. There are three major chicken processing establishments hence our investigation will include those as well as supermarkets.

"If possible can you share the Brand and location where you purchased the product.

"I will keep you updated on the findings and corrective actions taken based on the investigation. have also included the Senior Food and Drugs Inspector who has responsibility for the Food and Drugs Inspectorate-Mrs.Stella Harrygin in the email to provide additional support."

Mr. Khan kept in touch with me and reported on Monday this week (November 30) that his Division conducted some inspection and received feedback from two of the major processors of chicken. Awaiting feedback from the third proces-

He explained, "From the initial feedback and observation it will require additional labelling information to be placed on the packaging to adequately inform the consumer of the nature of the product. Also no part of the neck should be included in the

breast ( Side Breast/ centre breast). Correspondence will also be sent to the Consumer Affairs Division (CAC)- Ministry of Trade to get their input and recommendations on the issue. I must point out that if the chicken breast is being sold unpackaged/ unlabeled and placed in the display freezer/ chiller

### cont'd from pg 12

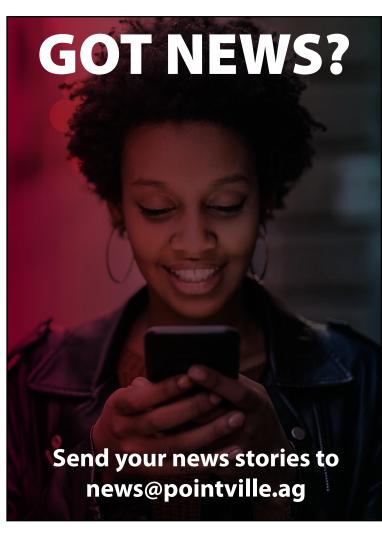
then CFDD will have limited jurisdiction hence the role of CAC."

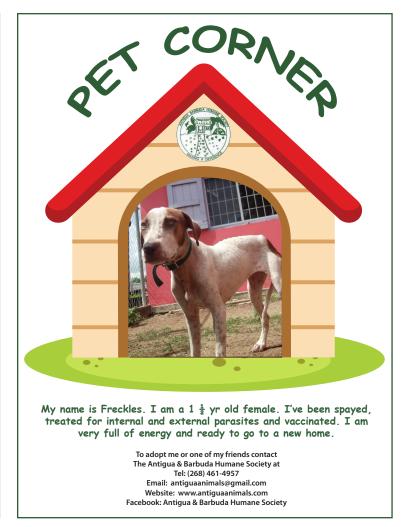
I must say that I was impressed and quite pleased that the Ministry not only responded initially kept in touch and provided me with some sense of the problem from their perspective and what they were doing to deal with it fairly and with the interest of consumers at heart, especially people of my age.

While I will continue to be critical of Governments and any other organisation which does not deal fairly with us, I must thanks Mr. Khan, the Minister and Ministry for investigating and seeking to deal with the problem.

Tony Deyal







POINTE PRESS FRIDAY, 04 DECEMBER, 2020 OPINION PAGE 14

# The reality in Haiti is there for all to see

### By Pierre Esperance

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – In Haiti, the people are not living; they are just surviving. Holding all the power, as the government, is only one branch – the executive, in the hands of one man only. President Jovenel Moïse. With regard to the other branches of government, there is no parliament and the judiciary is intimidated.

Since January 2020 there has been no parliament, no Senate. There is no counterbalance to president Moïse. He is governing by decree, making policy decisions that benefit only his own interest and that of his henchmen. They support gangs of villains, terrorizing dissidents, and they operate the levers of government, including the treasury, with no accountability.

Recently, the experienced Caribbean diplomat and respected scholar, Sir Ronald Sanders, published an article on Haiti. He wrote the truth. He knows Haiti. And, after many meetings with Haitian representatives, he is very connected with the situation of Haitians. He believes that better must be done. It is the right thing to do.

They are a few appointees of president Moïse who have tried to deny what Sir Sanders has written, but they are singing for their supper. They cannot disprove the reality on the ground. It is there for all to see.

Since president Moïse came to power, Haiti has lived with more, insecuri-

ty, more corruption, and more human rights violations. The gangs, who support the president, have been involved in ten massacres from November 2017 to present.

There is a call for elections. But it is a poisoned chalice because president Moïse alone, in contradiction to the Constitution of Haiti, is organizing elections with his own appointees. That very act is an alteration of the constitutional order Haiti, and a violation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter which the Organization of American States (OAS) and its secretary-general, Almagro, should have investigated long ago. Yet, nothing is done.

The only elections in which president Moïse has any interest is one which accords with his own wishes. In Haiti, the voters had electoral cards and he changed that. Most Haitians don't have an electoral card. We had an electoral system, but he changed the system.

If Haiti has elections in this situation, the opposition parties will not be able to campaign freely. They will be plagued by organized gangs and violence under the control of the executive branch of government. The opposition could not organize or express their fundamental rights and freedom. Right now, if a demonstration is attempted, the police arrest the organizers and use whatever means necessary, including brutality and bullets, to disburse

gatherings. The government does not respect the freedom of the people.

Yes, Haiti needs free elections. However, what is required is a transition in which the elections can be organized and conducted by independent bodies. If the OAS, CAR-ICOM and the international community, come to observe president Moïse's elections, it will only be to legitimatise an illegitimacy.

We cannot have elections in Haiti under these conditions, with a presidency that controls all key institutions. The solution is a transition government for a period of two-years. The transition government should comprise civil society and political parties, working together towards an agreement that lays the groundwork on the way forward for Haiti, including free and fair elections.

When elements of the government say "we are working with the OAS, CARICOM and the rest of the international community to be able to hold this constitutional referendum as well as general elections in 2021", one has to ask the question: what is their intention?

Right now, we have a government ruling by decree that is attempting to re-write a new constitution, unconstitutionally, by a group of persons hand-picked by the president. For whom are they rewriting the constitution, when there is no civil society involvement? We cannot talk of rewriting the constitution, outside the par-

ticipation of a transitional government.

When we in Haiti look at the situation in Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, we see the readiness of the OAS and the international community to call for democracy, constitutionality and the rule of law. But on Haiti, they are silent and are looking away. We ask ourselves why? It is a question the member states of the OAS should also ask themselves.

Haiti today is the most dangerous place in the Caribbean, because of kidnappings, gang violence, death squads, organized murder with the support of the executive branch and a presidency by decree. Their interest is corruption and staying in power.

# **NOTICE**

To: Your Worship St. John's Magistrates Court Gray's Farm St. John's Antigua

To: The Commissioner of Police Police Headquarters American Road St. John's Antigua

Dear Sir/Madame:

I Maria Elena Rodriguez of Bennet Street Villa, with registered business situated at Bennet Street Villa St. John's. Antiqua DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that it is our intention to apply at the next sitting of the liquor license Court to be held at the Magistrate's Court, Grays Farm, St. John's, Antigua on Thursday, 7th January, 2021 next ensuring for a Liquor License pursuant to section (11) (5) of the Licensing (intoxication Liquor) Act Cap. 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda 1992 Revised Edition, in respect of premises known as M.E. Rodriguez Mini Mart situated on Bennet Street Villa in the Parish of St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda.

Dated 2nd day of December, 2020

# ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

**DECEMBER 04, 2020** 

16

Arlen Seaton: From medicine to music **17** 

Christmas in Antigua and Barbuda: Part 1 18

Majah Hype's Juno actor, Elliot estranged wife Page comes out accuses him of as transgender abuse

20

Shaggy reveals all about Rihanna album 'fiasco'



# Arlen Seaton: From medicine to music

One medical professional turned musician is encouraging others to follow their dreams no matter how controversial they may be.

Arlen Seaton is an Ansinger-songwriter tiquan easy-as-molasses whose vocals charm the listener with a disarming sense of familiarity. It's not the familiarity of a lyric heard before, but of the stranger sitting beside you in a bar who you feel like you've known all your life after a short conversation.

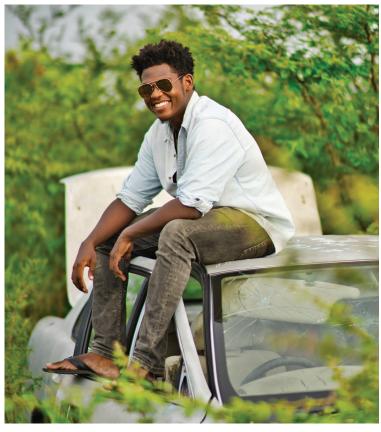
His nostalgic style of storytelling through song owes a lot to his West Indian heritage of Calypso and folk tales as well as the influence of eclectic artists including Damien Rice, John Legend, Coldplay and the Cinematic Orchestra.

Two years ago, he made the unlikely decision to pursue his passion for music instead of practicing medicine. The transition, Seaton shared, "has definitely been challenging, but the decision has been the most liberating and empowering" of his life.

"I couldn't be more arateful for the opportunity I have received to live my truth, and for the people who have supported and encouraged me on my journey," said Seaton.

The Antigua Grammar School (AGS) graduate will be releasing his first sinale as a solo artiste titled "Queen Supreme" on Sunday online.

"The song just gives you a good feeling, a good vibe. It has some funk to it. This song had me going around dancing in my kitchen and when I sent



this one, my producer was like well 'hey, let's do this one and drop the other five," Seaton explained about his song.

This is not the first song Seaton has featured on as he has performed on a number of others, however this will be his official debut as a solo artist.

Seaton, speaking on the We are the Ones radio programme on Wednesday, shared that music has always been a part of his life. In fact, in his early days of tertiary education at the Morehouse College in Atlanta, he double majored in Biology and Music.

A clash of scheduling, however, forced Seaton to drop the music major, but he never gave up his love of music.

Although Arlen graduated magna cum laude from Morehouse College with a degree in Biology, he studied voice under the tutelage of Dr. Melvin Foster every semester of his tenure there. He spent as much time in practice rooms as he did in the laboratory, using music as a means of negotiating the world around him and as a tool for introspection.

"I would study in the music room and even do voice lessons. Sometimes I would spend more time than I planned to because music was always an escape for me," he said.

He continued that practice as he pursued his medical career, this time at the American University of Antiqua. It was there that he truly began to master his craft, spending extended hours at Brukway Studios producing, writing and singing songs.

It was after his fourth vear at AUA that he began to guestion whether he truly wanted to pursue medicine. He did, however, complete his medical degree and moved on to begin his residency in the US.

This did not work out as expected, however, so Seaton returned home to work with Dr. Walwyn.

Not straying far away from music, he co-founded the 'Blakk Gold' band in 2018 with Hani Hechme and Venisa Gittens while balancing his full-time job.

"We made it work despite our busy schedules. We had the ability of playing 45 minutes of our own songs. We wrote our own music. We weren't there to offer dinner music but our own brand. We would practice a lot. To be honest, we even practiced more than we played," he said jokingly.

"Our unique sound has brought opportunities to open for major international acts to include Marcia Griffith and Buju Banton."

Previously, he collaborated with York on York's 2016 Traveler album and in that same year released 'Christmas By My Side', a dynamic duet with fellow Antiquan, Jenny Medina.

Now, he continues to hone his craft as the lead singer of the band Rico & Muzic4Play under the expert guidance of premier Antiquan drummer and band leader, Ricardo Anthony.

Seaton is ready. He has found the gumption to share his music with the world. He is currently working on his EP album and is committed to creating honest pieces, inspired by real life and to giving of himself, through his music, to those who listen.

# Christmas in Antigua & Barbuda

PART 1

Antiqua and Barbuda's Christmas traditions are founded in our colonial heritage. The Europeans introduced the concept of celebrating Christmas as part of the conversion to Christianity which was forced upon the Amerindians and then later, enslaved Africans and the other ethnicities.

PAGE 17 ARTS

Although we do not think about it, European Christmas customs are dominant components in our celebrations today. Christmas morning services, Christmas Day family feasts, gift giving, Christmas trees, Santa Claus - these are all European traditions.

It is noteworthy that there are many African traditions which were incorporated giving some unique characteristics to our celebrations from the days of enslavement until to today.

Looking further into the European colonialists past, Antigua and Barbuda's Christmas history is further infused with Scottish traditions. 'Ole Time' traditions with the Scottish brand include the John Bull (twist on the Scottish Jam Bull), the Hilanders, Long Ghosts and others.

Caroling traditions are also steeped in Scottish legacy.

The John Bull character is based on an African witch doctor commingled with the interpretation of the Scottish Jam Bull. Dressed in dry banana leaves and old clothes, he was probably created by African slaves to satirise their British masters as the costume closely resembles that of the Sensay dancers of Guinea who performed at the end of the first stage of work initiation.

The Highlanders are remnants of Antiqua's Scottish heritage and were quite popular at Christmas. They danced the Highland Fling dressed in a sort of kilt. Their wire masks and cowhide whips are based on a Scottish military costume, but with an Af-



Christmas tree



rican historical twist.

Long Ghosts were costumed stilt walkers whose masked faces used to peep into the upstairs windows of homes on Market Street, provoking terror in little children. They were popular during new year celebrations as well. These costumed characters are a combination of Scottish an African traditions. The Scots have a centuries old 'Ghost Trail' tradition which was married with African traditions for a unique practice.

From the 1800s, Christmas became a three-day holiday that required a new dress for each day's celebration for those among the high society. Quadrille parties were popular among the affluent and the halls were decked with sprigs of pimento. Bay leaf and cherry branches were also key decorative pieces. Dances were set to the music of the fiddle, tambourine and triangle. Drinks included fermented Christmas bush, ginger and water molasses. Christmas balls were accompanied by feasts of mutton, pork, turkey, duck, fowl, guinea bird, ham, tongue, cakes and tarts.

In Contrast Christmas for the poor, who were the majority of both islands' population, meant serving 'their betters' in the hope of benefiting from their generosity. The majority feted on corned pork and journey cakes (fried dumpling). Elements of all these customs still survive in our Christmas traditions today.

A long-standing legacy which has only recently begun to fade in 'Scots Row' (Scatthrow), the moniker for Market Street, so named because of the dominance of the Scotts in commerce, most of whom resided upstairs their stores. The street was not only the center of commerce, but was als pivotal to many Christmas celebrations for almost a century.

# Majah Hype's estranged wife accuses him of abuse



Brooklyn based Caribbean comedian Majah Hype, who's real name is Colin Nigel McPherson, has served a niche market for years, crafting skits on social media that appeal the English-speaking West Indian community.

His fans were plunged into shock and disbelief abuse allegations made against him by his

McPherson's wife, whose name is Latisha, according to Urban Islandz.com, took to Instagram Live this week to share a disturbing account of what her marriage with McPherson was like for several years.

Latisha, who was at times tearful, described the abusive relationship with him. She accused the Grenada-born artist of abusing her on multiple occasions. Apologising to her family and friends for alienating them as she tried to hide bruises, she also claimed that McPherson would threaten to harm himself after episodes of abuse.

His wife also accused him of using his massive social media following to attack her and undermine her claims of abuse by countering that she had affairs outside of their union.

She said her Instaaram post revealing all was the first step in reclaiming her life and ending the abuse.

Majah Hype gained popularity as a comedian and social media star in 2012 after he started making sketches poking fun at Caribbean culture and people.

Last week, Majah was hospitalised in Atlanta and revealed to fans he had suffered a mild heart attack.

## Juno actor, Elliot Page, comes out as transgender



Oscar-nominated actor Elliot Page, the star of Juno, Inception and The Umbrella Academy, has come out as transgender in an announcement greeted as a watershed moment for the trans community in Hollywood.

"I love that I am trans. And I love that I am queer," Page said in a statement on social media on Tuesday.

Page, the 33-year-old

actor from Nova Scotia. Canada, said his decision to come out as trans, which also involved changing his first name from Ellen to Elliot, came after a long journey and with much support from the LGBTQ community.

"I can't begin to express how remarkable it feels to finally love who I am enough to pursue my authentic self," Page wrote. "I've been endlessly inspired by so many in the trans community. Thank you for your courage, your generosity and ceaselessly working to make this world a more inclusive and compassionate place."

"The more I hold myself close and fully embrace who I am, the more I dream, the more my heart grows and the more I thrive," added Page, who said his preferred pronouns are "he" and "they".

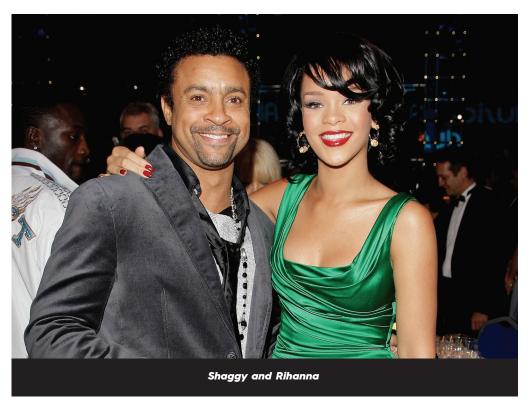
age signed his statement with the words, "All my love,

The announcement was celebrated widely on social media by LGBTQ rights advocates and many in the film industry. Netflix, maker of the comic book series The Umbrella Academy, said, "So proud of our superhero! WE LOVE YOU ELLIOT!"

"Elliot Page has given us fantastic characters on screen, and has been an outspoken advocate for all LGBTQ people," said Nick Adams, director of Transgender Media and Representation for GLAAD (formerly the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). "He will now be an inspiration to countless trans and nonbinary people. All transgender people deserve the chance to be ourselves and to be accepted for who we are. We celebrate the remarkable Elliot Page today."

Page broke out in Jason Reitman's 2007 film Juno in a performance as a pregnant teenager that earned him an Academy Award nomination.

# Shaggy reveals all about Rihanna album 'fiasco': "There's no animosity"



(Buzz Caribbean) - Online gossip would lead anyone to think that there's bad blood between Shaggy and Rihanna but the dancehall star says that's far from the truth.

Following Rihanna's reaching out to Shaggy to possibly be part of her upcoming album, there was a breakdown that led many to think he may have been snubbed by the Bajan superstar, however, Shagav has moved to clear the air. once and for all, in an interview with YouTube show The Fix.

The It Wasn't Me artiste said, "There's no secret, Rihanna was

reggae album and everybody who do reggae, they [her team] got in touch with to do it. Why would I be an exception, I'm one of the top guys, of course."

He continued that an issue arose for him when he was told to record songs and submit them for consideration, which later spurred rumours that he was asked to 'audition' for the

project.

Shaggy said, "Well, that was probably my fault. Mi probably chose the wrong word, but the point I was trying to make is me busy, she busy and the magic happen when we in a room together and we can vibe. So dem a say 'mek some tune and send go in and if she like dem she do it', and mi a say a nuh really mi dat."

Despite not being part of her yet-to-be-announced Mr Boombastic says he is on good terms with the musician turned beauty mogul. He said he's seen her on many occasions and that at one Grammy Award she even walked up behind him and playfully covered his eyes

He added that their interaction continued at a label party, where they spoke at length. "Mi and har did end up at the Roc Nation party and we chat fi a while and... so there's no animosity of (bad) vibes."

Shaggy later said he roots for her because she is a "Caribbean girl, first and foremost and mi glad say she a come back in a reggae where she start out and it would be an incredible boost to the genre if she does it."



### FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS MUSIC COLLECTION, WE PRESENT OUR ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA CHRISTMAS MUSIC SELECTIONS

**Christmas Dinner by Menace No Ham by King Obstinate** No Place Like Home by Qualadli Kaiso Collaborative Christmas by my Side by Arlen Seaton & Jenny Medina **Christmas in Your Eyes by Denise Edwards** 

**How will Santa Get here by King Obstinate Chinese Christmas Party by King Obstinate Christmas Joy by Rachel Collis** 

Who would Imagine A King by Laurena Davis

What is your favourite and how many of these songs are you familiar with? Drop us a line at editor@pointville.ag with your favourite five and be a part of our PointeTV Christmas in the Antigua & Barbuda weekly countdown beginning this Sunday.



# **Barbados moving forward with plans** for a medicinal cannabis industry



Executive Officer of tley-led administration submit plans to develop a as January. medicinal cannabis industry.

Munro-Knight

(CMC) - The Chief backs attributed to the stressed that locals COVID-19 pandemic, the Barbados Medici- interest in the lucranal Cannabis Licensing tive industry remains high costs associated Authority (BCLA), Dr. extremely high among Shantal Munro-Knight prospective investors, says the Mia Mot- who will be able to ro-Knight, in some casapplications is moving ahead with and proposals as early is five times cheaper

greatest interest is bethat despite some set- tional investors, but reduce infrastructural

should not be discouraged by the perceived with the sector.

According to Mun-She added that the Caribbean countries.

She says the BCLA said ing shown by interna- has been working to

costs and procedural inefficiencies that have made life difficult for locals in other cannabis-growing Caribbean countries.

"We have held meetings with, and engaged, over 88 differagencies across Barbados, both government and others as well, to make sure that we are reflecting and building an industry that is reflective of how people want to see it."

She said that Canadian investors in particular, are expressing the strongest interest in the industry that is said to be still in high demand across alobe for its usefulness in the treatment of numerous mental and physical health conditions.

Munro-Knight es, the cost of licences ed that there is also growing interest than those in other the potential for new strains of cannabis to be cultivated using the unique soil found on



### REGIONAL NEWS PAGE 22

# Petition launched to protest Disney's plan to build cruise destination in the Bahamas



A petition that has been launched by environmental activists to protest against Disney's plans to construct a multi-million-dollar cruise destination in The Bahamas /PHOTO CMC

CMC - A petition that has been launched as part of a campaign to "Stop Disney-Last Chance for Lighthouse Point" has collected close to 400,000 signatures.

The petition was launched by environmental activists to protest against Disnev's plans to construct a multi-million-dollar cruise destination in South Eleuthera.

"We're looking to reinvigorate the campaign and continue pushing out the fact that we do need answers to our questions," re-Earth president, Sam Duncombe told The Tribune newspaper.

"Disney's pages on Lighthouse Point talk about how they're going to be respectful to the environment... and on one hand, they push out

a lot of good information but then they're not walking the walk when it comes to their own development," said Duncombe.

The environmental watchdogs are concerned about the negative implications that the project could create for the area's environment and want more sustainable development options for South Eleuthera and its residents.

"We are deeply concerned about Disney's plans for a massive cruise ship port at Lighthouse Point that threaten this unique natural place treasured by generations of Bahamians and visitors from around the world. This is not the place where an environmentally-responsible corporation would choose to develop a massive cruise ship port," Duncombe said.

In 2019, the government and Disney Island Development Ltd signed a Heads of Agreement for the construction of a US\$250M to US\$400M cruise port and

entertainment facility at Lighthouse Point.

The deal allows for the conveyance of 190 acres of land along the southernmost point of the property - a \$6.29m value - to the government for establishment of a national park.

Some 120 **Bahamians** are expected to be employed directly during the construction of the project, which will begin after the Environmental Impact Assessment - which was submitted last December-and Environmental Management Plan has been approved by the government.

Public consultation must also be completed, and all other necessary government permits and approvals granted.

Giving an update on the process during a Ministry of Environment press conference in September, officials said they were still in the process of finalising the document, noting it will be released to the public soon.



# Virgin Atlantic launches COVID-19 testing trial for Heathrow, Caribbean flights



(The Daily Herald) - Virgin Atlantic has announced plans for a pre-departure COVID-19 testing trial on selected services from Heathrow to Barbados, Antigua and Grenada.

For six weeks from December 9, customers travelling on selected flights to Barbados, which continue onto Antigua and Grenada, will be required to take a rapid, point-of-care, lateral-flow antigen test before they depart.

The free test will be carried out at the Collinson and Swissport Terminal 2 pre-departure testing facility, up to one hour and 45 minutes before departure, with results received within 30 minutes.

Customers whose flights are included in the trial will be contacted by Virgin "in the coming days" with further information.

Those customers not wishing to take part in the trial will be offered the choice to rebook free of charge to another Virgin Atlantic flight and where a customer tests positive they will be able to rebook free of charge or cancel their trip.

The lateral-flow antigen test does not replace existing testing requirements to enter the countries concerned. For example, passengers flying to Barbados still need to arrange a valid, negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, no more than three days prior to arrival.

Virgin Atlantic is also planning a second trial phase for selected inbound services from December 15.

The airline said the initiative is "part of an airline-led trial to gather vital data on the logistics and effectiveness of pre-departure testing."

British Airways American Airlines recently launched a transatlantic testing trial on selected flights between the United States and London Heathrow/

Virgin said that these trials "support the latest independent analysis by Oxera and Edae Health which shows that all forms of passenger testing would be more effective than the current 14-day quarantine."

### Quarantine breach trial commences in SVG



The accused, Jeyandra Jackson outside Kingstown Magistrate's Court on Tuesday. /PHOTO IWN

(iWNSVG) - The first trial of a person charged with breaching COVID-19 quarantine in St. Vincent and the Grenadines began, on Tuesday, at the Kingstown Magistrate's Court, with two witnesses for the prosecution having to be summoned after failing to attend.

The absence of the two witnesses forced Crown

Counsel Shakelle Bobb to ask Senior Maaistrate Rickie Burnett for an adjournment.

Jeyandra Jackson, 24, of Long Piece, Lowmans Windward, is being tried on a charge that on October 27, she contravened an order made by Dr. Roger Duncan, health officer, under section 27(a) of the Public Health Act, requiring her to quarantine herself from other persons.

She had initially pleaded guilty to the charge when she was arraigned at the same court on November 25, but changed her plea to not guilty after disagreeing with the facts and after Senior Magistrate Rickie Burnett explained the charge to her.

Jackson did not have a lawyer at her arraignment or when the trial commenced on Monday.

# France launches checks on dozens of mosques



/PHOTO FRANCE24

(BBC) - French authorities have launched inspections of dozens of mosques and prayer halls suspected of links to Islamist extremism.

Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin announced the crackdown, saying some could be closed if found to be encouraging "separatism".

It comes a week before the unveiling of a new law to combat such extremism.

It is a response to attacks in October, blamed on Islamists, including the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty.

In a note to regional security chiefs, reported by French media, Mr. Darmanin said there would be special checks and surveillance for 76 mosques and prayer halls, 16 of them in the Paris region.

He ordered "immediate action" concerning 18 of them, with the first checks set to be done on Thursdav.

In a tweet he called it a "massive and unprecedented action to combat separatism".

State inspectors will examine their financina, their imams' connections possible Koranic schools for young children, Reuters news agency reports.

The BBC's Hugh Schofield in Paris says Mr. Darmanin's authority has been dented in recent days by a row over police abuses in France and a proposed new law to protect police officers' identities

The 76 addresses set to be visited by inspectors are only a fraction of about 2,600 Muslim places of worship in France.

Mr. Darmanin said that fact showed that "we are far from a situation of widespread radicalisation" among Muslims in

"Nearly all Muslims in France respect the laws of the republic and are hurt by that [radicalisation]," he said.

# UN sounds 'wake-up call' to save millions of Yemenis from famine

(AlJazeera) - The win- the Food and Agriculture ognised government to dow to prevent a famine in war-torn Yemen is narrowing, with a new study showing that millions of people in the country will face some form of food crisis next year, according to United Nations agencies.

More than half of Yemen's population of 30 million risks slipping into "worsening levels of hunger" by mid-2021, according to a joint statement published on Thursday by the World Food Proaramme, UNICEF and

Organization (FAO).

"These alarming numbers must be a wake-up call to the world. Yemen is on the brink of famine and we must not turn our backs on the millions of families who are now in desperate need," said David Beasley, WFP's executive director.

The conflict in the Arab world's most impoverished nation began when Iran-backed Houthi fighters captured the capital of Sanaa in 2014, forcing internationally-recflee.

The following year, a Saudi-led coalition supporting the government intervened to battle the Houthis and curb Iran's influence in what has turned into a stalemated regional proxy war.

Since then, more than 100,000 people - fighters and civilians - have been killed

The number of Yemenis poised to face an "emergency phase" of food insecurity - a prelude to famine - is expected to

increase from 3.6 million to five million in the first half of 2021, said the UN statement.

The emergency phase means people are suffering "enormously", with some of the most vulnerable dying of hunger, according to the statement

The three UN agencies also warned that the number of Yemenis currently suffering famine-like conditions could triple from 16,500 to 47,000 between January and June 2021.



# Iran rejects Biden's terms for reviving nuclear deal

(BBC) - Iran will not accept preconditions from a new Biden administration over its nuclear programme and the US must return to a 2015 deal before talks can take place, its foreign minister says.

Javad Zarif said the US had its own "commitments" that must be implemented.

President-elect Joe Biden has said he will reioin the nuclear deal and lift sanctions if Tehran returns to "strict compliance with the nuclear deal".

Both sides appear to want the other to readopt the agreement's terms first.

In May 2018, US President Don-

ald Trump pulled out of the deal negotiated under his predecessor, Barack Obama.

He then reimposed strict economic sanctions against Iran, targeting the country's oil and financial sectors.

Tehran has since exceeded limits to its nuclear activities set under the deal, raising suspicions that it could be using the programme as a cover to develop a nuclear bomb.

Its government insists, however, that its nuclear ambitions are entirely peaceful.

Addressing a virtual conference hosted by Italy on Thursday, Mr Zarif said the US had been "in grave breach" of a UN resolution endorsing the nuclear deal when it abandoned it, describing the Trump administration as "a roque regime".

"The United States must stop, the United States must cease its violations of international law," he said. "It doesn't require any negotiations."

Mr Zarif went on to say that the US was "not in a position to set conditions".

Mr Biden, who is due to be sworn in as the 46th US president on 20 January, said he would prioritise returning the US to the agreement and look at lifting sanctions, but that it would require Iran to first comply with its terms.

# Dr. Fauci: The UK 'was not as careful' as US in vaccine approval



(BBC) - Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious disease expert, has said that the UK was not as rigorous as the US in its COVID-19 vaccine approval process.

The UK on Wednesday became the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer vaccine for the coronavirus.

"The UK did not do it as carefully," he told Fox News. "If you go quickly and you do it superficially, people are not going to want to get vaccinated."

The UK has defended its process, and said the jab is safe and effective.

Dr. June Raine, the head of the UK medicines requlator, on Wednesday said that "no corners had been cut" in vetting the job. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) reviewed preliminary data on the vaccine trials dating back to

"No vaccine would be

authorised for supply in the UK unless the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met," the regulator said.

On Thursday, the UK's deputy chief medical officer Prof Jonathan Van-Tam told the BBC he was "very confident" in the MHRA.

He said there was more than "100 years of medical experience" between the UK regulator and the committee advising which groups of people are vaccinated first and UK education secretary Gavin Williamson attributed the UK's expedited process to the regulator's "brilliant clinicians".

Dr. Fauci's remarks come as the US surpasses 14 million total COVID-19 infections, with a recorded 274,648 deaths.

1		2	3	4	5	6		7
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9								
				10				
11	12							
			13				14	
15		16		17				
					18	19		20
21								
				22				
23								
				24				

### **Across**

- 1 Natural environment (7)
- 8 Haematite, for example Nero or I (anag) (4,3)
- 9 Absconds (7)
- 10 German castle (7)
- 11 Bewildered (2,3)
- 13 City serving Perth, Australia as its port (9)
- 15 Play ball (2-7)
- 18 Storehouse (5)
- 21 Smarter (7)
- 22 Enter forcibly (5,2)
- 23 Person from Birmingham (7)
- 24 Merit (7)

### **Down**

- 1 Many-headed snake slain by Hercules (5)
- 2 Defensive players (5)
- 3 Repeatedly (4,5,4)
- 4 Disposable handkerchief (6)
- 5 These dashed on (anag) impetuosity (3-10)
- 6 As well (2,4)
- 7 Tenant (6)
- 12 French-speaking West African country, capital Lomé (4)
- 14 Floor covering (abbr) (4)
- 15 Peevish (6)
- 16 Decide not to participate (3,3)
- 17 Inflatable mattress (3,3)
- 19 Fire iron (5)
- 20 Slight but perceptible amount (5)

### **DAILY COMICS**

### **Dilbert**







### Garfield







### Cathy









### **SUDOKU**

1		3			8			
6							8	2
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				7		4		
7				2				3
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	5			3		7		
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5		4			2		9	
			5				6	
2					1			3
		8	4					
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7			6					4
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		9			6	5		7
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7		1	5			2		
8		7						
6			2	5		3		
	1						5	

		4		1			2	
3		5			9			
2							9	7
				8		2		
1				5				4
		7		4				
5	3							9
			3			1		8
	4			7		5		

### How to play

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

### FRIDAY, 04 DECEMBER, 2020 POINTE PRESS

### **LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST**





### YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



### (Y) ARIES | Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's time to get more strategic in terms of your career. Think more analytically about how you can get to where you want to be, and be bolder! Is there someone you know who can get you in the door at your dream job?



Take your latest endeavor to the next level. You're ready whether you feel totally prepared or not. If you're in a promising romantic relationship, plan an intimate date where the two of you can confess your real feelings.

### GEMINI | May 21-June 20

When was the last time you got totally flirtatious with someone? Tossed all subtleties out the window? Went for broke with cheesy-yet-charming lines and glowing compliments? It's high time you got back into the action.

### CANCER | June 21-July 22

Get ready for a flood of social invitations to come your way. The trouble is, you still might not feel like accepting any of them. If you don't want to climb out of your shell that's perfectly okay! There's nothing wrong with that.

### (d) **LEO** | July 23-Aug. 22

Some influential people are impressed by your outstanding ability to follow through with the projects you've committed to, so don't go disappointing them now by flaking out just because it isn't turning out how you planned.

### (N) VIRGO | Aug. 23-Sept. 22

You're going to be in the thick of things today, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to fully understand what's going on. Just be careful when communicating with new people because they could have more power than you think.

### LIBRA Sept. | 23-Oct. 22

Right now you're in the perfect frame of mind for substance. The emptiness of styles and trends has grown tiring for you. It's not a great day for mindless activities. Instead, you should seek out stimulation through history, art, movies, or books.

### SCORPIO Oct. | 23-Nov. 21

You have different opportunities tempting you today, so which one will you pick? Well, which one do you want to pick? No one has direct control over what you do right now. You get to do whatever you want!

### SAGITTARIUS | Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Are vou nervous about a meeting or conversation that's coming up today? There's no way to know for sure how things will go down, but since you don't know the outcome, why not choose to imagine it will be a good one?

### (Ya) CAPRICORN | Dec. 22-Jan. 19

This day could throw a lot of details at you, but try not to get too bogged down in them early in the day. You don't have to solve every problem before lunchtime! Skip the martyr act and just tackle one thing at a time.

### (S) AQUARIUS | Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Right now is a very important time for your family relationships, so try to reach out to as many different branches of your family tree as you possibly can. If it's someone's birthday, call them up instead of just sending a card or gift.

### (H) **PISCES** | Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Sometimes it can be helpful to live in an illusion, to keep yourself so distracted by daydreams and fanciful wishes that you don't have to deal with unpleasant thoughts. If you're having troubling thoughts, it might be okay to just pretend everything is fine.

### COMMUNITY NOTICES

### CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

The Halo Foundation Inc is again hosting its annual Christmas card competition which is open to youngsters aged seven (7) to eighteen (18). All entries should be 'Caribbean Christmas' themed. Deadline for submission is December 11, 2020. Call 562-5193 for more details. Prizes to be won.

### STATE INSURANCE EARLY CLOSURE

State Insurance Company Ltd advises that our offices will be closed at 2:00 pm on Friday 4th December for a staff meeting. Regular business resumes Monday 7th December at 8:15 am. We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

### CHSS DARE to D.E.A.R. Book Drive 2020

Clare Hall Secondary School is inviting past Clarehalites, entertainers, radio personalities and the general public to participate in its DARE to D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read) Book Drive 2020. Send us a video recording about your favourite book and donate a copy or multiple copies of that book to our school library. Give us a call at 462-3487 or mail us at admin@chss.edu.ag. The book drive culminates in December 2020. We DARE you to D.E.A.R with us and help us promote literacy amongst our students.

### SATELLITE OFFICE REOPENED

The English Harbour Satellite Office has reopened. Employers can now make all statutory payments (Medical Benefits, Social Security, Education Levy and Inland Revenue) from Monday to Thursday, 9:00am to 2:00pm and on Friday, 9:00am to 1:00pm. Drop Box service is also available. Other services offered include acceptance of claims by the Medical Benefits Scheme and Social Security. Member and employer registration are also offered by the Medical Benefits Scheme.

### **CLOSURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT**

The Quality Assurance Unit, Ministry of Tourism will be suspending operations from December 15, 2020 to January 15, 2021. All property owners are asked to take note as no inspections and covid-19 certifications will be executed during this period. For more information contact the department t 468-4061/4003.

### **CHSS TAKE-AWAY BREAKFAST**

The staff and students of the Clare Hall Secondary School will host a grand Take-Away Breakfast on Friday 11, December from 7am to 9am, at the school. Tickets - \$15.00.All Covid-19 protocols will be observed. Past students are invited to call the school at 462-3487 or lanthe Carr-Jenkins at 774-2881 to make donations of prepared or unprepared breakfast items.

### **BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION AGM**

All members of the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association are asked to note that the 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 15 December, 2020 at 7:15pm, virtually via ZOOM. Relevant documents and ZOOM link will be sent subsequently. Each team/club should have two representatives at this meeting.

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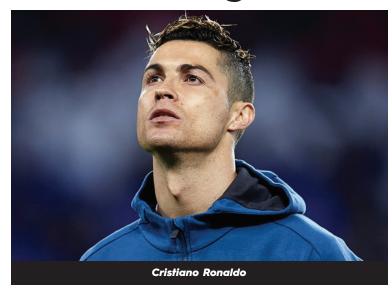
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# Cristiano Ronaldo scores his 750th career goal



Cristiano Ronaldo scored the 750th goal of his outstanding career in Juventus' comfortable 3-0 win against Dynamo Kyiv in the Champions League on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old was on target in the second half to double his side's lead but it's probably fair to say he scored from more impressive efforts in the past.

The forward tapped in from no more than a yard out to reach the milestone and the forward is already looking ahead to the next target.

"750 goals, 750 happy moments, 750 smiles on the faces of our fans," Ronaldo wrote on social media. Thanks to all the players and coaches who have helped me this incredible reach number, thanks to all my loyal opponents who have made me work harder and harder every day. Next stop 800."

Ronaldo is now just 17 goals behind Pele and 22 behind Romario in the all time charts, according to a list compiled by the Soccer Statistics Foundation.

# Holder happy with NZ approach to fight against racism



West Indies captain Jason Holder has urged continued global education in order to more effectively tackle racism in sport and has praised New Zealand Cricket for its positive stance on the Black Lives Matter Movement.

The Barbadian, who is leading the Caribbean side presently in New Zealand against the Black Caps, said based on discussions with opposing captain Kane Williamson, he is happy the issue of racism is being seriously addressed by authorities.

The 29-year-old said he sat down with Williamson

with whom he had a positive discussion about the matter

Holder said greater education on the issue will lead to a better world with people who are more aware.

Holder related a touching moment in England earlier this year some of teammates shared their personal experiences dealing with racism.

"If we throw a little more awareness and support behind the Black Lives Matter Movement, then people would be more open to understanding the issues," Holder said.



# T&T's football authorities "working on Christmas money for coaches"



Robert Hadad, head of the Normalization Committee in charge of football in Trinidad and Tobago presently, said on Tuesday national coaches, players, members of the administrative office and technical staff will be paid for Christmas.

Hadad, who has been in the hot seat since March 27, said committee, consisting former banker Nigel Romano and attorney Judy Daniel, has been working hard daily to solve a number of the current issues that are affecting the sport.

One of the major problems is payment of salaries to players, staff and coaches which he assured has already been addressed. Hadad said all payment documents for all parties have already been submitted to the sport's world governing body FIFA for payment to be made before Christmas.

The coaches have not been paid since they started their contracts in December 2019 and January 2020, under former president William Wallace.

Some coaches, it is understood, engaged on contract while others received letters of agreement which expired at the end of August.

Meanwhile, Hadad revealed that work has begun on a debt repayment plan. The TTFA has been crippled by debt which is said to be between \$70-80 million. Hadad noted that a holistic role to lift the sport to its former glory is underway.

# 48 NBA players test positive for coronavirus



The NBA said on Wednesday that 48 players have tested positive for the coronavirus since testina resumed last week.

leaque National Basketball Players Association said 546 players were tested between November 24 - 30 in the initial phase after returning to team markets. That means about 9% of the tests were positive.

Any player with a confirmed positive test is isolated until cleared by rules established by the league and union.

The League's health protoand safety cols for this season say that anyone with a positive test in this pre-camp phase must receive clearance medical from a team-designated physician and

a league designated physician prior to entering a team facility.

Anyone with a confirmed positive test will also need to successfully complete a cardiac exam before being able to return to play.

There is a possibility that some of the positive players will not be cleared before the NBA's preseason schedule starts on December

The regular season begins on December



# **Antigua and Barbuda remains** 126th in latest FIFA Men's ranking

For the second year straight the Antiqua and Barbuda Benna bBoys have retained the 126th spot in the FIFA rankings released on November 26th.

The Benna Boys also retained their place in both CONCACAF and Football Caribbean Union (CFU) rankings. In CONCACAF, the island remains 12th and 5th in the CFU.

Mexico at 1st is the top ranked team CON-CACAF followed by the U.S. 2nd and Jamaica in the CFU.

In CFU rankings Japlaced 54th for the third year in a row making it the top ranked Caribbean team followed by Curacao, 80th and Trinidad and Tobago 92nd.

The Dutch territoof Curação was the biggest mover in the CONCACAF World Rankings table in the past month moving up five places to hold on tightly to second place

The biggest drop in CONCACAF on the World Rankings table was recorded by St. Kitts and Nevis. They fell three places to 140th, but they remained at number six in the CFU, whose standings were unchanged for Novem-

There was not much change at the top of the 211 country list. This was mostly credited to the delay of a number of international competitions and friendlies due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Belgium remains at the top of the rankings with World Cup champions France in 2nd place, Brazil 3rd, England 4th and European champions, Portugal round off the top 5.

San Marino bottomed out the list at 211th with the Bahamas one space ahead at 210th. Anguilla and the Turks and Caicos tied for 208th.

# Lakers agree to 2 year, \$85 million extension with LeBron

year, \$85-million max lion. extension, his agent,

LeBron James and His previous contract the Los Angeles Lakers had a player option have agreed to a two- for 2021-22 at \$41 mil-

James turns 36 on De-Rich Paul, told The Ath- cember 30 and a new letics' Shams Charania. deal extends through extension re- the 2022-23 campaign moves the possibility on what would be his of James entering free 20th season in the NBA agency next summer. and his 38th birthday.

He is on pace to pass Angeles Lakers. Kareem Abdul Jabbar as the NBA's all-time the same agent as leading scorer sometime during the 2022-23 season.

Meanwhile, Davis' new five-vear contract will be worth up to \$190 million when he returns to the Los comment.

Davis, who shares LeBron James, Paul of Klutch Sports, confirmed the terms of Anthony Davis pending deal to the associated press on Thursday.

The Lakers did not

# Kemar Roach loses his father



dies and the West land, Roach and his family on the passing Smith.

Roach, who is cur- honour of Mr. Smith.

Cricket West In- rently in New Zeaproceeded Indies senior men's with his first team team have extend- match against the ed condolences to Black caps at Sedfast bowler Kemar don Park in Hamilton on Thursday.

Both teams wore of his father, Andre black armbands on the opening day in

# SIOOFTS POINTE PRINTED NEWS AT THE PRINTED NEW



PAGE 32

FRIDAY 04 DECEMBER 2020 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

# Football referee airs grievances over lack of recognition following World Cup appointment

Curtis Charles, decorated football referee, is airing grievances over considers a what he lack of recognition and support of the Antiqua Barbuda Football and Association (ABFA) after he was chosen to officiate at the 2002 World Cup in South Korea.

"I was very happy, I think the nation of Antigua and Barbuda was happy. If they see it that way I don't know because when you have someone reaching to the highest level that being World Cup I think that that should be something that should always be mentioned. FIFA had 209 countries and if you have one person from Antigua who will be a part of it

that should be something great," Charles said.

Charles. who is football coach school's football programme having worked at the Princess Margaret and All Saints Secondary Schools, shared that even leading up to the World Cup he did not receive enough support from the

"Leading up to the World Cup, I went to Trinidad to do some training because in those times we weren't active here. I had to buy my own ticket to go to Trinidad. Even leaving from the airport to Japan, no one from the ABFA came to see me off. Returning, the same thing. I never shared how I felt and I am not saying that they

didn't do anything,

Decorated football referee and school's football programme

coach Curtis Charles

but they didn't do enough," he noted.

At that time Ralph Potter was the president of the ABFA, but even with the subsequent change executive, Charles noted that he has never been recognised for his accomplishment.

"How many people if you

ask a child who is maybe 15, 16 or maybe 20, 'Name a person in Antigua who has been to the World Cup?' They wouldn't know because it has not been published," he added.

This recognition he believes could be used to encourage others to become referees.





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