



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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|

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STATE OF EMERGENCY EXTENDED TO MARCH 31, 2021

SEE PAGE 7

PAGE 3

Pringle: Go back
to the IMF!

PAGE 4

LIAT granted
approval to return
to Barbados, SVG

PAGE 11

Port workers
cautioned:
"Protect your
jobs!"

Photo caption: Arton Capital in partnership with Prime Minister Hon. Gaston Browne proudly celebrates a new milestone with the 2020 Valedictorian of the Villa Primary School, Ms. Aliana Jack

Editorial: Human rights and what it means to Antigua and Barbuda Pt. 1

Page 2

GUEST EDITORIAL

HUMAN RIGHTS AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA PT. 1

J'Moul Francis BA Law, LLM, (EU Law, Competition Law, and International Law); Commonwealth Scholar, Legal Commentary Blogger at www.francisobiter.org

Last week on Thursday 10th December 2020, the world marked 'Human Rights Day' under the theme 'Recover Better- Stand Up for Human Rights'. Given how problematic this year has been and the need to swiftly recover and build dynamic resilience, it is evident that the theme implores us, individually and collectively, to put human rights at the nucleus of our strategies from now on as we hope to end the tumultuous challenges unleashed by the pandemic.

The underlying theory here is that the recognition, guarantee, and enforcement of human rights could lead to the reduction and even elimination of inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion.

Throughout human history, there have always been a perennial struggle for more rights and liberties to improve the lives and livelihood of all. International law historically offered limited protection to combatants and civilians during war, while national law had a piecemeal approach to individual rights, however, this reality changed after two world wars through the efforts of the League of Nations and later the United Nations.

Even for us as Antiguan and Barbudans, our post-colonial strug-



J'Moul Francis BA Law, LLM

dence achievements are part of the global story towards the development of human rights. Yet, there is still much more to be done to improve our socio-economic and human development.

With this year's theme in mind, what are human rights? What are the human rights challenges we face? How can we strive towards placing human rights at the centre of our development as people?

In sum, human rights are freedoms, entitlements, and privileges that are inherent to every human being regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or any other status. These include the right to life; the prohibition of slavery, discrimination, forced labour, and torture; right to a fair trial; the right to personal liberty and security; freedom

and religion; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly and association; right to own property; and right to education and adequate living standards. Moreover, these rights must be applied without discrimination as they are universal and indivisible as they transcend social, economic, and political boundaries. Yet, some rights can be limited once they are prescribed by law, proportional and legitimate.

I must also note that human rights developed from the evolution of historical lessons, enlightened norms and general legal principles, international legal instruments, and institutions operating on the international, regional, and domestic planes. The result of this development is enshrined in the UN Charter which reaffirms 'a faith in

fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person' and encourages the 'universal respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms'.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular, brought the necessary protections into the scope of general principles of customary international law and placed an obligation on states to take effective steps in their respective jurisdictions. With a declaration not being sufficient, two UN-administered treaty regimes, i.e. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966) created a comprehensive code for human rights and fundamental freedoms and also an international legal framework to hold each other to account. These covenants co-exist and complement other human rights systems such as those governed by the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and others. Although there is no formal human rights system within CARICOM's legal framework, there is the Kingston Declaration (1990), the Charter of Civil Society

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(1997) and general principles within the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas in which the Caribbean Court of Justice engages with and employs interpretative tools to bring about protections at the Community-level.

Domestically, Chapter Two of our Constitution provides a legal guarantee for the protection and enforcement of human rights within Antigua and Barbuda. However, even though the requisite legal protections are posited, more could be done to enhance the every-day lives of those who see interferences with their rights. As such, it is necessary to highlight some of those reoccurring human right issues.

Human rights become relevant for us in the con-

text of the tragic homicides resulting from abuse and domestic violence especially against young women because this issue treads upon one's right to life, freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment; respect for private and family life; and the prohibition of discrimination. Moreover, the jurisprudence from around the world trends towards the use of human rights, in addition to criminal law, as a legal tool for holding authorities accountable for failing to provide protective measures and effective deterrence.

Another discussed issue is the suppression of the freedom of expression to enforce political 'loyalty' or silencing opinions that may damage a particular promoted narrative. It

is important to remember that everyone is entitled to freedom of thought and conscience as it creates a 'marketplace of ideas' which is inherent to any democracy to safeguard against totalitarianism. Also, the freedom of expression, which as one court puts it, 'constitutes one of the essential foundations in a democratic society' and one of the 'basic conditions for the progress and development of every man'.

The exploitation of workers is another issue, particularly in the tourism sector where workers are sometimes overworked, underpaid, subjected to racism and discriminatory behaviour from tourists and others with impunity. Sometimes, one might think whether the 'tourism

dollar' is even mightier than basic regard for the human rights of workers and the public. Of relevance here is the prohibition of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, which is based on the principle of equality and a positive obligation to combat discrimination, whether it arises from actions or omissions. There is no justification whatsoever for discrimination; however, there is a grey area where the rights of non-nationals might be limited by statutory and treaty arrangements. The rights within this grey area must be addressed as a collective in terms of how we, as a society, wish to treat such individuals and empower them through equal and equitable measures.

LIAT granted approval to return to Barbados, SVG

LIAT has secured landing rights into Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines ending a two week long stalemate.

The airline's court appointed Administrator, Cleveland Seaforth, confirmed that airport authorities in Bridgetown gave LIAT clearance to resume flights to the island

'with immediate effect'.

Seaforth revealed that Barbados authorities wanted a new application for landing rights and, after the airline complied, permission was granted. Barbados persisted in their demand despite the fact that LIAT had a valid license to operate into Barbados

APUA ELECTRICITY MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

These planned outages are necessary for our continuous upgrade and maintenance programme to provide reliable and consistent service to our customers.

Date: Monday 14th December 2020

Time: 8:00AM - 2:00PM

Affected areas: Motor Pool & Piggotts Main Road

Date: Wednesday 16th December 2020

Time: 8:30AM - 12:00PM

Affected areas: Section of Point near the Fisheries Complex

Date: Thursday 17th December 2020

Time: 10:00AM - 11:30AM

Affected areas: Section of Glanvilles and Seatons

Date: Friday 18th December 2020

Time: 8:30AM - 1:00PM

Affected areas: Section of Old Road near the school

Kindly note that this schedule is subject to slight variation. Changes will be communicated on the APUA Facebook page.

Any service disruptions outside of this schedule were not anticipated. For further information and updates please call 311.



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ABTA chairperson earns doctorate from UWI

Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA), Dr. Lorraine Headley-Raeburn, was awarded the Doctorate in Business Administration from the Sagcor Cave Hill School of Business and Management, University of the West Indies.

The ABTA said her research focused on how companies, particularly those in the hospitality industry, can use customer perspectives and feedback to boost the quality of their services and products especially given the extensive use of online customer feedback mechanisms such as TripAdvisor and the growing influence of the voice of the customer.

Her study adds to the body of work which will lend to organisations improving their marketplace identity and customer reputation, derive insight driven strategic objectives and more ably utilise their strategic resources for com-



**Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA)
Dr. Lorraine Headley-Raeburn**

petitive gain while enhancing both customer and stakeholder satisfaction.

Her research also highlighted the fact that broad diversity matters at all levels of the organisation, more so at the governance and executive level, particularly in the area of diversity of thought and perspectives.

According to Dr. Headley-Raeburn, "My research

supported propositions that firms' resource choices are driven by the social norms within the firm, industry and society plus the critical need for seamless integration of customer and stakeholder perspectives in company decisions." She also indicated that, "I am looking forward to incorporating my research in helping organisations em-

brace new and more diverse perspectives by decision makers, at both the employee, management and board levels, to garner improved performances."

Dr. Headley-Raeburn has been the Chairperson of Antigua Commercial Bank since 2016, Chairperson of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority since 2019 and is Co-founder and Director of Keyonna Beach Resort in Antigua established in 2011.

She has also served as Director General of Tourism for Antigua and Barbuda.

Dr. Headley-Raeburn was born and raised in the United Kingdom where she obtained her first degree in Mathematics and Economics from Girton College, Cambridge University. She continued her studies at the University of the West Indies where she completed a Masters Degree in Business Administration following her move to Antigua in the early 1990s.

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until July 2024.

Seaforth further contended that the argument being made that there is a distinction between LIAT (1974 Ltd.) and LIAT (under administration) is artificial as both refer to the same company.

Flights into Barbados are expected to commence this weekend.

Meanwhile, the Administrator confirmed that LIAT's issues with St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Argyle International Airport have been settled and an agreement reached. The airline will be required to pay its fees to that country in advance and the other administrative differ-

ences have been settled which will allow the airline to resume flights.

LIAT returned to a limited schedule of operation on November 30, but the authorities in Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines announced new guidelines which negatively affected the air-

line's operations into those countries. The move spurred a wave of disapproval for both countries that washed across the region.

"I just want us to land in these countries with no further obstacles then I will be alright," said a clearly relieved Seaforth.

Pringle: Go back to the IMF!

Leader of the Opposition, Jamaica Pringle, wants the government to return to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to borrow money to meet its shortfall in revenues.

Speaking on the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) loan agreement bill in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, Pringle said he did not support the government borrowing the \$126 million at an 'exorbitant interest rate'.

"Why we, the people of Antigua and Barbuda, should look at this facility when the government should be able to borrow monies at concessionary rate? For example, I think, and the government tries to avoid it, to have a relationship with the IMF. We all know the situation; the government's back is against the wall as it literally has no money. We hear the cry every day: with this pandemic, why not approach the IMF?" he asked.

Pringle added that at one percent interest, the payments over time would save the country money. He

said pursuing an IMF loan at one percent, versus a loan from ACB at 6.5 percent, would net the country \$30 million over the life of the loan.

The opposition leader also contends that taking a loan over \$127 million from ACB could very well undermine the main. Additionally, he accused the government of depriving small businesses of loans to finance their operations. He also charged the government with taking a large slice of the loan portfolio.

In response to the opposition leader, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Lennox Weston, said going to the IMF is not in the best interest of Antigua and Barbuda at this time.

He said the IMF is considered 'lender of last resort' and countries only approach this institution for assistance when they have nowhere else to turn. Additionally, IMF loans come with harsh conditions that countries must implement in order to meet the loan obligations. He

also said that the country's reputation would suffer.

"When you declare bankruptcy as a country, the reputational damage is massive. Nobody does business with a bankrupt country; no investor comes to a bankrupt country. All your financial systems are under threat so that when you go to the IMF it is not only about what interest rate you get. The biggest cost of going to the IMF is reputational damage and not being able to drive private investment in the economy because people know you can't manage your finances properly," he warned.

He noted that going to the IMF for a bail out would be conceding to the world you have no ideas or capacity.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who introduced the bill, said the government is using the facility to consolidate several existing loans with ACB into one loan that will be repaid over a longer period of time at a reduced monthly payment.

22-year old fined for unruly behaviour in court

A young mother who wanted to receive her child support payment in order to get back to work, and who later created a scene at the St. John's Magistrates' Court, will have to pay for her actions.

Jene James, 22, was fined a total of \$400 for disorderly conduct and making use of indecent language. Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh ordered that she pay \$200 on each charge.

The woman, a mother of two, went to the court on December 11 to collect child maintenance payments. There, she was met with a long queue of others doing the same. Reports indicate that she demanded immediate attention and refused to wait her turn as she wished to return to work.

As a result of her poor conduct, the court's employees refused her

demand for immediate service and insisted that she wait. A magistrate who was present at the time also intervened and asked her to be calm.

The woman spurned the magistrate's advice and resumed her outburst outside of the Gary's Farm facility.

The Cashew Hill resident was then arrested by the police and charged with the offences.

James' lawyer requested leniency on her behalf, but the magistrate did not accede to his request pointing out that the client had been warned about her conduct.

James also offered an apology to the court in which she promised not to repeat her uncouth actions.

Should she fail to pay the fines, she will face jail time of up to one month.

Port workers cautioned: "Protect your jobs!"

Antigua Port Authority employees have been put on notice that they are placing their jobs at risk if they make good on their threat of industrial action at the nation's main seaport.

The warning came from Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, in a statement made to the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

PM Browne was responding to a letter from the Deputy General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union (ABWU), Chester Hughes, in which he gave a deadline of December 15, 2020, for the

port authority to pay bonuses to the staff or face industrial action.

In the letter dated December 11, 2020, the union demanded outstanding bonus payments for the period 2016-18 and for the year 2020. It stated that the workers had performed 'above and beyond' duty under the circumstances and therefore were requesting a bonus of 3.5 percent this year.

"We are therefore officially putting you on notice that if you fail to comply in reaching an agreement on the payment and the quantum

by December 15, we will take industrial action against your establishment under the laws of Antigua and Barbuda," the union's missive declared.

In response, PM Browne who has ministerial responsibility for the port, noted that the collective agreement speaks to bonuses being paid on the basis of productivity. He continued that operations at the port, however, have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The port did not generate enough money to pay bonuses. If we are to define productivity, there is no basis for the claim as there has been no increase in productivity nor any increase in profitability"

The prime minister told the Parliament that in the early months of the pandemic all 250 port workers, except for a skeletal staff of 25, were sent home for two months and were paid in full during that time. The 25 who remained to keep the port operational have since received an ex gratia payment.

In a stern warning to the workers, the prime minister noted that the port is heavily over-staffed. He also pointed out that, while the former UPP administration instituted a voluntary separation programme, his administration dis-

continued this arrangement in deference to the workers.

"The port has seen a 40 percent reduction in volume and a 40 percent reduction in productivity. The port is unable to meet certain financial obligations including the loan from the Chinese Ex-Im Bank. For workers to demand bonus payments under these circumstances will undermine the financial viability of the port," he stated.

He explained that wages and salaries at the port are higher than in many other government entities and cautioned that should a strike take place, the government will be left with no option but to furlough some workers and reinstate the voluntary separation programme.

Meanwhile, the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force has been placed on standby should the matter escalate to industrial action.

Additionally, the attorney general has issued an order providing protection for the government for 21 days.

The prime minister said industrial action at this time will have a severely negative impact on the economy during the COVID-19 crisis.

The matter of the port workers will be discussed at today's meeting of the Cabinet.

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State of Emergency extended to March 31, 2021

The State of Emergency (SoE) that has been in place in Antigua and Barbuda since the end of March this year has been extended until March 31, 2021.

This followed the adoption of a motion by the House of Representatives to extend the provisions of the State of Emergency to at least the end of the first quarter of 2021.

The measure is being implemented by the government as part of its ongoing effort to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus which is now responsible for five deaths in the country; three

local and two imported.

The country has recorded 148 confirmed cases and there are five active cases.

In tabling the motion, Prime Minister Gaston Browne said extending the SoE was necessary as the government must continue measures to contain the spread of the virus.

"Whereas the government of Antigua and Barbuda is satisfied that the continued effectiveness of the various protocols and measures to control the dangerous effective disease requires that the state of emergency be continued for a further period of

three months or until the 31st March, 2021," the motion stated.

Browne said it is important that the government keep the measures in place even though several vaccines will become available next year.

He underscored the importance of keeping the country's active cases low in light of the fact that a sense of normality will return to the world by the end of the first quarter of 2021. Browne said the United States and other countries will likely urge their citizens to avoid travel to countries with high rates of

infection in favour of destinations which have managed to contain the spread of the disease.

Both members of the parliamentary opposition - Opposition Leader Jamale Pringle and the member for Barbuda, Trevor Walker - vociferously opposed the extension of the State of Emergency.

Pringle said it represents an infringement of the personal freedoms of citizens and residents. Walker, on the other hand, contended that health protocols can be enforced without extending the State of Emergency.

No new cases in the latest COVID-19 update

The latest COVID-19 update released by the Mount St. John's Medical Center (MSJMC) has revealed no new laboratory confirmed cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Monday 14th December 2020 at 6:00 pm.

The Ministry of Health said subsequent to the publication of the dashboard on Sunday 13th December 2020 with the cut off time of 6:00 pm, sixty-three samples were processed at the Mount St. John's Medical Center which increased the pending results from zero to sixty-three.

"All sixty-three samples processed by MSJMC yielded negative results and are reflected in the total tested and total samples taken columns of the dashboard. In addition,

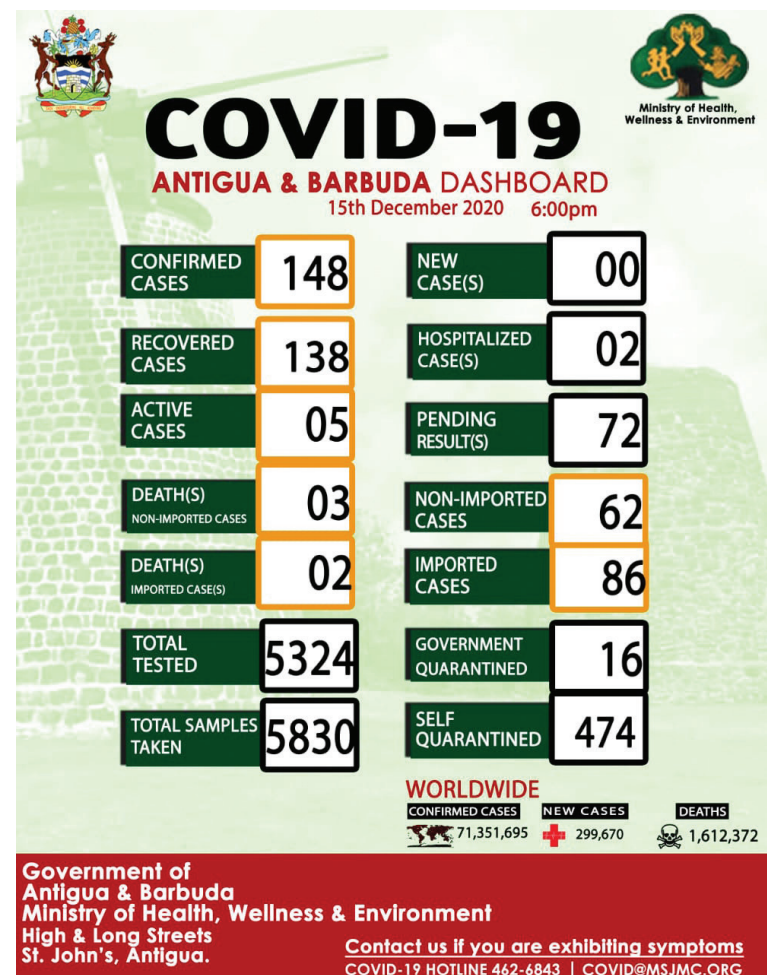
one person has been hospitalized at the Infectious Disease Control Center bringing that total to two," the ministry added.

The total number of persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda remains at one hundred and forty-eight (148) including six (6) active cases and five (5) deaths.

Meanwhile, seventy-two samples are pending; forty (40) from MSJMC and thirty-two (32) from CARPHA.

The statement drew attention to the fact that the epidemiology unit has made a change to the classification of deaths to correctly reflect 3 non-imported and 2 imported.

This publication includes data for the 13th and 14th December 2020.





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SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

PM announces tighter measures for Westmoreland as COVID cases surge



Jamaica Prime Minister Andrew Holness

(Jamaica Gleaner): Jamaica Prime Minister Andrew Holness has announced a tighter curfew and other COVID containment measures for Westmoreland as cases of the infection continue to surge.

Over the past couple of weeks, health officials have been raising

alarm about the increase in COVID cases in Westmoreland.

New COVID measures for Westmoreland:

1. Curfew 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. daily (Effective Wednesday, December 16 to Thursday, December 31)
2. Public gathering

Limited to 10 people, down from the 15 permitted elsewhere

3. Grand Market cancelled

4. Burials

(Remain at 15 persons)

In announcing the new measures in Parliament Tuesday, Holness said Westmoreland has 117 active COVID cases, 76 of which were confirmed last week.

It also has a very high positivity rate.

One out of every three persons tested were positive for the coronavirus," Holness said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said the establishment of the field hospital in the parish was delayed due to recent heavy rains. At the same time, the four hospitals in the western region are currently at 80 to 90 percent bed occupancy. The Savanna-la-mar hospital is up to 87 percent occupancy with 15 of 18 COVID beds occupied.

Some 18 patients in the emergency section of the hospital are also awaiting bed.

T&T Central Bank paints grim picture of economy

(Trinidad Guardian): The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (CBTT) has painted a grim picture of T&T's economy in its latest Monetary Policy Report.

The Bank said economic activities contracted in the first half of 2020 in both the energy and non-energy sectors. A decline in output was seen in natural gas, crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and petrochemicals, especially methanol and ammonia.

"As several businesses closed and others reduced their operations, declines were recorded for several non-energy sectors, such as Wholesale and Retail Trade (Excluding Energy), Construction, and Manufacturing (Excluding Energy

and Petrochemicals)." The report read.

It noted that labour market adjustments included furloughed employment, layoffs, pay cuts, and reductions in working hours.

It added; "Despite the gradual re-opening of the economy, labour demand softened, resulting in higher retrenchments. Job advertisements in the print media, a proxy for labour demand, declined during May to October 2020."

However, growth was recorded for Real Estate Activities and the Financial and Insurance Activities.

It revealed that the Government's accounts came under increased strain in fiscal year (FY) 2019/20 as a result of

the COVID-19 crisis. The Bank revealed that data from the Ministry of Finance show that the budget deficit jumped to 11.2 per cent (as a per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)) in FY2019/20 from 2.6 per cent in FY2018/19.

Public revenue collections declined by 27.1 per cent in FY 2019/20 from FY2018/19 due to lower energy prices and a smaller corporation tax take as business operations were curtailed. Public expenditures, however, increased due to higher outlays on transfers and subsidies and the capital programme to shore up the health system and support those adversely affected by the pandemic.

Exonerated: SOCU drops 'politically-motivated' charges against Dr. Singh, Brassington

(Guyana Chronicle): Charges laid by the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) against former Finance Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, and former head of the National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), Winston Brassington, have been withdrawn, exonerating the public officials who were victims of a "politically-motivated" attempt, under the former APNU+AFC Government, to taint their character.

When the case was called before the Chief Magistrate, Ann McLennan, at the Georgetown Magistrates' Court, on Monday, SOCU prosecutors informed the court that they will not be proceeding with the charges against the defendants. This was also confirmed by the men's Attorney, Sase Gunraj. The withdrawal of charges against the duo comes weeks after Chief Justice Roxane George ruled, in the High Court, that the charges

against Dr. Singh and Brassington must go to trial at the Magisterial Court.

The defendants had challenged the legality of the charges laid against them by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Shalimar Ali-Hack, SC. Their lawyers had argued that the charges of misconduct in public office, contrary to common law, is an abuse of process, malicious, biased, capricious, arbitrary, and without proper evidential basis. They also contended that the charges were made in bad faith, and were unreasonable, discriminatory, unlawful, and influenced by irrelevant and improper considerations and motives, null, void, and of no effect.

In April 2018, Dr. Singh, who is now the Senior Minister with responsibility for Finance in the Office of the President, and Brassington, were first charged and released on \$6 million

bail each.

The first charge alleged that, on Monday December 28, 2009, by way of an agreement of sale and purchase, they "acted recklessly" when they sold to National Hardware Guyana Limited, lands belonging to the state amounting to 103.88 acres, for the sum of \$598 million (Vat exclusive), without first having procured a valuation of the said property from a competent valuation officer. The second charge alleged that the duo, on Tuesday December 30, 2008, by way of agreement of sale and purchase, "without due diligence," sold to Scady Business Corporation, State lands located at Liliendaal, amounting to 4,700 acres, for the sum of \$150 million, knowing that the said property was valued at \$340 million by Rodrigues Architects Associate.



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Barbados may get World Bank loan

Barbados appears close to securing \$200 million in concessional funding from the World Bank after 27 years of being cut-off from such financing.

A Government official and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) confirmed that the budget support was now under consideration by the international financial institution and could be provided by the time the financial year ended next March 31.

This development

emerged as the IMF concluded in its latest staff report that Barbados' ability to repay its IMF loans was "adequate".

Under the terms of its expanded Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Barbados is scheduled to borrow \$928 million from the IMF, which also said that while short-term risks to debt sustainability had increased, this was "mitigated by Barbados' strong track record under the EFF-supported programme". (SC)

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Mitch McConnell: Top Trump ally breaks silence to congratulate Biden



U. S. President-elect Joe Biden

(BBC World News) A top member of US President Donald Trump's Republican Party, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, has congratulated Joe Biden on winning the presidential election last month.

Senator McConnell spoke after the Electoral College formally confirmed Mr Biden's victory over Mr Trump.

The Democrat won 306 Electoral College votes to

Mr Trump's 232.

President Trump still refuses to concede, making unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud.

Relations with the Senate, currently controlled by the Republicans, will be crucial to Mr Biden's presidency.

He visited Atlanta, Georgia, to campaign for the Democrats in next month's Senate run-off elections. Two seats will be decided on 5 January and could determine whether or not his party takes control of

the chamber. Democrats already control the House of Representatives.

After Monday's confirmation of Mr Biden's victory, three world leaders whose refusal to congratulate the president-elect had been commented widely, did so on Tuesday: Russia's Vladimir Putin, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Speaking on the Senate floor, Mr McConnell said he had hoped for a "different

result" from the 3 November election but the electoral college had spoken. "So today I want to congratulate President-elect Joe Biden," he said.

Also congratulating Mr Biden's running-mate, Kamala Harris, he added: "All Americans can take pride that our nation has a female vice president-elect for the very first time."

Mr Biden said later he had phoned Mr McConnell to thank him for the congratulations and the two had agreed to "get together sooner than later".

In an interview to ABC News, Ms Harris said she welcomed Mr McConnell's comments. "It would have been better if it were earlier but it happened, and that's what's most important. Let's move forward. And where we can find common purpose and common ground, let's do that."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer urged Mr Trump to "end his term with a modicum of grace and dignity".

Hack may have exposed deep US secrets; damage yet unknown

BOSTON (AP) — Some of America's most deeply held secrets may have been stolen in a disciplined, monthslong operation being blamed on elite Russian government hackers. The possibilities of what might have been purloined

are mind-boggling.

Could hackers have obtained nuclear secrets? COVID-19 vaccine data? Blueprints for next-generation weapons systems?

It will take weeks, maybe years in some cases, for digital sleuths combing

through U.S. government and private industry networks to get the answers. These hackers are consummate pros at covering their tracks, experts say. Some theft may never be detected.

What's seems clear is

that this campaign — which cybersecurity experts says exhibits the tactics and techniques of Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency — will rank among the most prolific in the annals of cyberespionage.

U.S. government agen-

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France replaces lockdown with evening curfew



Police are carrying out spot checks during the curfew

(BBC World News) France has replaced its second national lockdown with a night curfew.

People will not be allowed out of the house between 20:00 and 06:00 without an authorisation form.

Christmas Eve will be exempt, but the rule will stay in place for New Year's Eve. Bars and restaurants are to remain closed until at least 20 January.

The number of people in France who have died from coronavirus infections rose by 790 on Tuesday to a total of 59,072.

People in France are no longer required to print or download an official justification for leaving their homes during the day.

But with daily infection rates more than double the 5,000-a-day target, a night curfew is being imposed and spot checks

will be implemented.

Neighbouring Germany is introducing a hard Christmas lockdown on Wednesday after the number of infections there hit record levels.

Non-essential shops will close across the country, as will schools, with children to be cared for at home wherever possible.

Restaurants, bars and leisure centres have already been shut in Germany since November.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has blamed Christmas shopping for a "considerable" rise in social contacts.

The new lockdown will run from 16 December to 10 January, but this will be relaxed from 24 to 26 December when one household will be able to invite a maximum of four close family members from other households.

Elsewhere, a five-week

lockdown in the Netherlands is the strictest set of measures announced in the country since the pandemic began.

Non-essential shops, cinemas, hairdressers and gyms have all closed and schools will follow suit on Wednesday. People have also been told to refrain from booking non-essential travel abroad until mid-March.

But restrictions will be eased slightly for three days over Christmas, when Dutch households are allowed three instead of two guests.

In the UK, London enters England's highest tier of lockdown rules on Wednesday. Pubs and restaurants must close, except for takeaway and delivery, and indoor entertainment venues such as theatres, bowling alleys and cinemas must remain shut.

cont'd from pg 13

cies, including the Treasury and Commerce departments, were among dozens of high-value public- and private-sector targets known to have been infiltrated as far back as March through a commercial software update distributed to thousands of companies and government agencies worldwide. A Pentagon statement Monday indicated it used the software. It said it had "issued guidance and directives to protect" its networks. It would not say — for "operational security reasons" — whether any of its systems may have been hacked.

On Tuesday, acting Defense Secre-

tary Chris Miller told CBS News there was so far no evidence of compromise.

In the months since the update went out, the hackers carefully exfiltrated data, often encrypting it so it wasn't clear what was being taken, and expertly covering their tracks.

Thomas Rid, a Johns Hopkins cyberconflict expert, said the campaign's likely efficacy can be compared to Russia's three-year 1990s "Moonlight Maze" hacking of U.S. government targets, including NASA and the Pentagon. A U.S. investigation determined the height of the documents stolen — if printed out

and piled up — would triple the height of the Washington Monument.

In this case "several Washington Monument piles of documents that they took from different government agencies is probably a realistic estimate," Rid said. "How would they use that? They themselves most likely don't know yet."

The Trump administration has not said which agencies were hacked. And so far no private-sector victims have come forward. Traditionally, defense contractors and telecommunications companies have been popular targets with state-backed cyber spies, Rid said.

Cuba rejects U.S. report on diplomat health incidents



US Embassy Havana, Cuba

HAVANA (Reuters) - Cuba on Tuesday rejected a U.S. government report concluding that directed radio frequency was the most plausible explanation for mysterious ailments suffered by U.S. diplomats in Havana and elsewhere, calling it more "very unlikely" hypothesis than "demonstrated fact."

Between 2016 and 2018, dozens of U.S. embassy staff, largely in Cuba, reported symptoms that included hearing loss,

vertigo, headaches and fatigue, a pattern consistent with mild traumatic brain injury that came to be known as the "Havana syndrome."

Canada has said more than a dozen of its embassy staff and relatives stationed in Havana experienced similar symptoms.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump said the diplomats were attacked by some sort of secret weapon. Cuba has repeatedly said there is no

evidence for that and denied any involvement.

The Cuban Academy of Sciences said on Tuesday the report by the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, commissioned by the U.S. State Department and published on Dec. 6, gives no scientific evidence of the existence of radio frequency waves.

"Cuba's Academy of Sciences disagrees with the final conclusion regarding the causes of the ailments," the academy said

in a statement read to journalists by its President Luis Velazquez.

Velazquez, who did not take any questions at the news briefing in Havana, said the "investigation about these health ailments has suffered from a lack of fluid communication between U.S. and Cuban scientists."

U.S. officials say off the record they cannot cooperate with Cuba on such a sensitive investigation where its Communist government has a strong interest in the outcome.

Cuba said the Trump administration has used the health incidents to further its political agenda of dismantling U.S.-Cuban relations, after Trump's predecessor Barack Obama had worked to improve diplomatic ties with Havana.

The administration reduced the U.S. embassy in Havana to skeletal staffing and hiked its warning on travel to Cuba following the mysterious incidents.

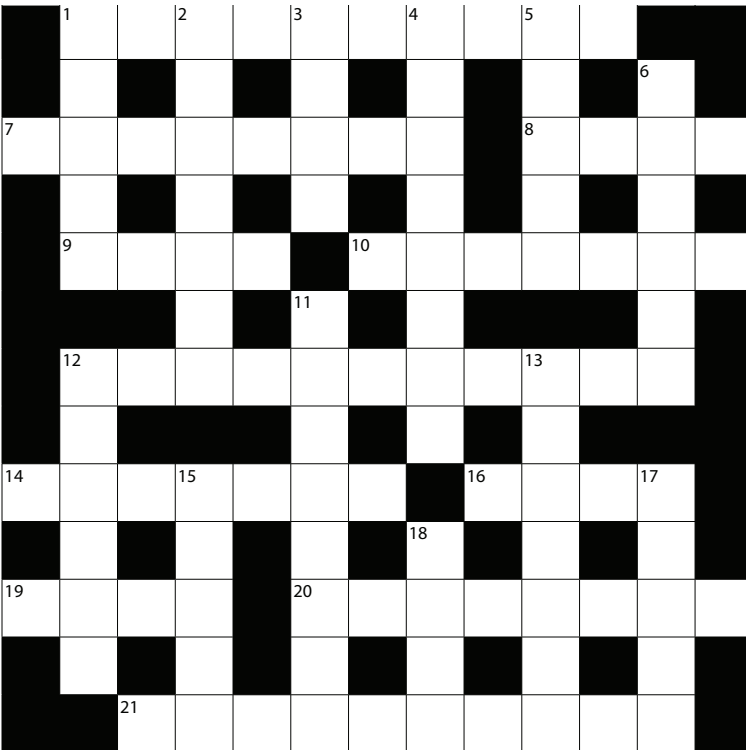
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QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Regiment of the Household Cavalry (4,6)
- 7 Norwegian parliament (8)
- 8 Cosy corner (4)
- 9 Dilapidated building (4)
- 10 Legal pardon (7)
- 12 Where performers are congratulated by the audience (7,4)
- 14 Tailor-made (7)
- 16 Pleased (4)
- 19 Unpleasant child (4)
- 20 Hot spell (4,4)
- 21 African country founded in 2011 (5,5)

Down

- 1 By and by (5)
- 2 Horseshoer (7)
- 3 Grasp securely (4)
- 4 Altercation (8)
- 5 Reel, say (5)
- 6 Special website bringing together information from diverse sources in a uniform way (6)
- 11 Impertinent rejoinder (8)
- 12 Fruit with a stone (6)
- 13 Permitted (7)
- 15 Paved area next to a house (5)
- 17 English county (5)
- 18 Felines (4)

DAILY COMICS

Dilbert



Garfield



Cathy

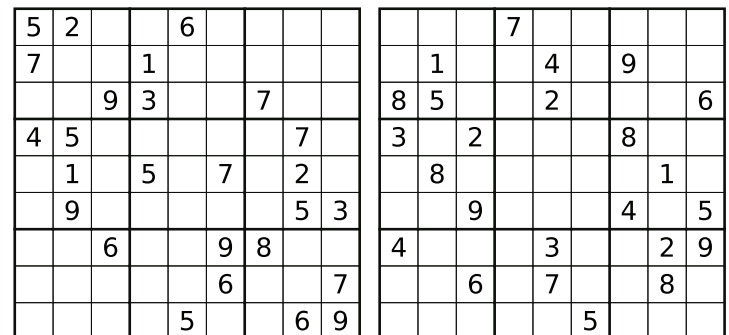
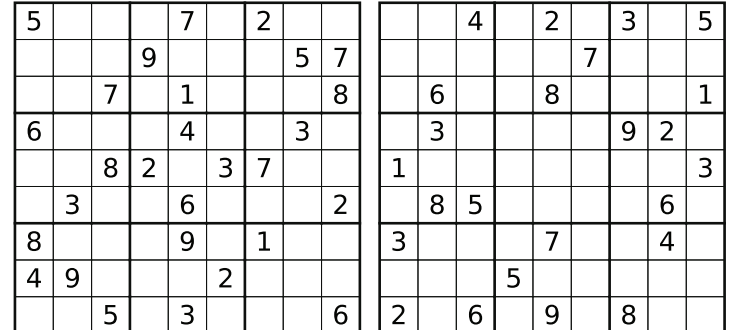


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SUDOKU



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.

LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST

WED
12/16

82° Hi
75° Lo

DAY
Partly sunny with a passing shower
NIGHT
Partly cloudy with a late shower

Sunrise 6:39 AM
Sunset 5:37 PM
Moonrise 8:24 AM
Moonset 7:46 PM

THU
12/17

82° Hi
75° Lo

DAY
Partly cloudy with a passing shower
NIGHT
Partly cloudy with a late shower

Sunrise 6:30 AM
Sunset 5:37 PM
Moonrise 9:20 AM
Moonset 8:36 PM

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES | Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It should be quite easy for you to make decisions today, even the ones that are usually real head-scratchers for you. Your emotions are running black and white, which helps to simplify things quite a bit.

LIBRA Sept. | 23-Oct. 22

Even though you could be feeling some serious peer pressure today, don't compromise your beliefs. Show people that you have principles and you're not afraid to stand up for them.

TAURUS | Apr. 20-May 20

You might need to look past your deep emotions today if there's a major time crunch and you have to get a lot of stuff done in a little bit of time. There simply won't be time to explore your feelings the way you might want to.

SCORPIO Oct. | 23-Nov. 21

In every social interaction you have today, it's important to stay true to yourself. It's the best way to stay comfortable around others. You have an intense energy that appeals to most people.

GEMINI | May 21-June 20

It's a good day to focus on your health. The clothes in your closet haven't been shrinking, despite what you'd like to think. Start keeping track of what you eat each day and how much exercise you get.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Now is an excellent time to take stock of where you are and where you want to go in one of your personal relationships. Things have been complicated lately, and they need to be addressed.

CANCER | June 21-July 22

Your emotional intensity could be getting in the way of things today, but it's important for you not to get too self-conscious about it. This is not a good day to make major decisions. Your judgment is a bit clouded.

CAPRICORN | Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Today, making a fresh start seems like the right way to solve a relationship issue, but it might not be. Unless you truly talk out what has been causing strife between you and this other person, nothing will really change.

LEO | July 23-Aug. 22

No one can get away with any foolishness around you today! When someone comes along talking about how important they are, you won't buy it, nor should you. Have some fun with them.

AQUARIUS | Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Right now, whatever you've got up your sleeve should stay there: juicy gossip, insider information, whatever. Become a person of mystery and you will succeed at creating quite a buzz around yourself!

VIRGO | Aug. 23-Sept. 22

You enjoy having your curiosity piqued as much as the next person, but today someone could be so mysterious that you might be driven over the edge! They get a kick out of giving you just enough information to keep you intrigued.

PISCES | Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You need to speak with conviction today. Now is not the time to be wishy-washy about things! People are looking to you for guidance, and if you show any hesitation about what you're thinking, you'll lose their allegiance.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

SUBMISSION OF WORK PERMIT APPLICATION

The General Public is advised that the Work Permit Unit of the Labour Department will not be accepting any applications for Work Permits after December 15, 2020. The acceptance of applications will resume on January 4, 2021. Also note that the final date for receipt of payments for work permit applications, work permit fees, CARICOM Skills Certificate applications and verification will be December 29, 2020. All other services offered by the Unit will be performed during regular working hours on work days. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience these changes may cause.

SDA CREDIT UNION AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Antigua & Barbuda Seventh-Day Adventist Co-operative Credit Union Limited will take place on the Zoom Platform on Tuesday, December 15 at 6 pm. All members are asked to contact the office at 562-3446 to receive the Zoom link and an electronic copy of AGM booklet.

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.

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.

EXHIBITION & FAIR

The CAPE Entrepreneurship class of the YEAP learning Centre will be hosting a "Show arf yuh skill set" Exhibition & Fair on Friday, December 18 from 12 pm - 5 pm at the Rising Sun Cricket Grounds. Come see future entrepreneurs display their work - food and drinks, arts & craft, games and much more will be on sale and on display. Bring yuh puss, wear yuh mask and distance yuh self while you traverse. Come and support our future entrepreneurs.

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Michael Phelps not confident Tokyo Olympics will be clean



Olympic legend Michael Phelps

won 23 gold medals as the most decorated Olympian of all-time.

"I can honestly say that throughout my whole entire career, i don't know if i ever competed in a clean field," Phelps said Friday in an interview with CNN Sports.

Phelps went on to add that he suspected that current Olympians are using performance enhancing drugs and rated the Olympics to be "four or five" out of ten when it comes to clean athletes.

From the 2012 London Games , 130 athletes were either banned or disqualified for doping offenses according to Olympedia. A New York Times report found one of 100 competitors at the 2016 Rio Games have served suspensions or returned medals due to doping.

The Tokyo Games were rescheduled to summer of 2021 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Phelps said he was tested rigorously during his career.

Olympic legend Tokyo Games next Michael Phelps said year and it's largely he's skeptical about based on his own the state of clean experience in five competition at the Olympics where he

Elite athletes need more financial assistance

President of the Antigua and Barbuda Athletic Association Everton Cornelius says elite athletes need more financial assistance if they are going to achieve any level of success.

Cornelius said athletes, when seeking financial assistance from the National Olympic Committee (NOC), need to follow protocols which prescribe that they channel their request through their local association which in turn will make representation to the NOC on their behalf.

The former national sprinter acknowledged, however, that more can be done to assist athletes like C. J. Greene and Darnell 'Bakka' Bailey who perform

at the highest level without a major sponsor. The lack of additional assistance from the NOC in cases like these, he asserts, will result in athletes being denied the tools they need to prepare adequately for the best chance of success.

Cornelius was also critical of some elite athletes who fail to communicate adequately with their local association after achieving some success. He said some athletes have adopted the attitude that their local body 'needs them' instead of appreciating that a beneficial relationship requires reciprocity.

"No athletes can represent Antigua and Barbuda at the Olympics, or any other ma-

ior events, without them being sanctioned by their local body," Cornelius noted.

Meanwhile, PointeXpress Sports used the opportunity with Cornelius to enquire when the facilities at Yasco will be completed. Cornelius said local authorities are awaiting the return of the technicians who are presently in St. Lucia completing an assignment.

The technicians were on island earlier this year to lay the Mundo track but left after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic for fear of becoming trapped in Antigua away from their families in Panama and Italy when border closures appeared inevitable.

CWI medical team has been outstanding



Cricket West Indies(CWI) Chief Executive Officer Johnny Grave

Cricket West Indies (CWI) Chief Executive Officer Johnny Grave has singled out the CWI medical team responsible for organising the protocols and preparing West Indies players for bio-secured bubbles in

England last summer, the Caribbean Premier League recently held in Trinidad and their ongoing tour in New Zealand.

No West Indies player has returned a positive COVID-19 result while oth-

er countries have struggled coping with the protocols.

Graves, a guest on Pointe FM's Touchline programme, said West Indies is due to tour Bangladesh in January as part of the ICC future tours.

A two-man team has just returned from Dhaka where they toured and inspected the training facilities, hotels, stadiums and hospitals the Caribbean team are expected to utilise if the tour happens.

CWI just completed a Coaching Education course in which over 100 women participated. Grave said CWI and its regional partners have focused and improved in the areas of coaching, science and technology over the last two years.

He added that Cricket West Indies is keeping an eye on the anticipated growth and development of the sport in the United States which will unlock more opportunities for regional players.

Concacaf restructure women's teams calendar

Concacaf, and member associations, has restructured its senior Women's national teams' calendar "with the aim of increasing the number of games national teams play in the confederation.

Broken into two parts, the calendar will for 2021/22 be built around FIFA World Cup qualifica-

tion and for 2023/24 see the introduction of a Women's National league-the first of any of the global confederations to do so.

The final round of this competition will see participation from four guest nations outside of Concacaf. The new format is designed to get more nation-

al team matches throughout the confederation as well as, with the invitation of guest nations, create more elite competition in the final round of the "national league".

Official competition names are still to be decided.

Both competitions will finish with major centralized tour-

naments in 2022 and 2024. Concacaf said the new calendars will more than double the number of official senior women's national team matches compared with the current cycle of competitions.

Photos Of the Jamaica female national team or player and USA national player or team.

ABCA 10 Splash match updates



From left to right: Bolans players, Terez Parker, Tonya Martin, and Shawnisha Hector, Umpires Candis Butler and Melissa Lawrie

/PHOTO NEVIL NICHOLLS - MORE SPORTS & EVENTS ANTIGUA

In the first match of Tuesday evening in the Antigua Barbuda Cricket Association 10 Splash, PIC Liberta Black Hawks defeated Massy United Combined Schools. Massy United won the toss and decided to bat. Combined Schools scored 60 for 6 wickets off their allotted 10 overs while Black Hawks scored 61 for 2 in a winning reply.

The Man of the Match was Black Hawks' Kofi James for his 36 from 19 balls and 1 wicket and 10 runs from his two overs.

In the second match last night, Splash Jennings defeated Rising

Sun Spartans by 4 runs.

Rising Sun Spartans won the toss and chose to field. Jennings scored 54 for 7 off of their 10 overs. Rising Sun fell short scoring 50 for 6 from their 10 overs.

Orlando Peters was named Man of the Match after topping the bowling with 2 wickets, 7 runs from his 20 overs and having top scored with 16 runs, including one 6, from 15 balls.

Over the weekend the ABCA 10 Splash also witnessed the historic inclusion of women.

Bolans Blasters fielded three women in their squad - Terez Parker, Tonya Martin and Shawnisha Hector - and two

female Umpires - Candis Butler and Melissa Lawrie.

Bolans Blasters fell to Empire Nation who won the toss and decided to field, bowling out their competition for 63 runs for 4 wickets in their allocated overs.

Empire Nation closed out the match with 67 for 1 in 6.5 overs.

PIC Liberta Black Hawks top Zone 1 with 12 points from their 4 matches played closely tailed by Rising Sun Spartans who are also on 12 points by Net Run Rate, 2.104 and 1.511 respectively.

Pigotts Crushers sit at the top of Zone 2 with 12 points from their 4 matches.

DEWS