

Photo Caption: Team Antigua Pairs - Atlantic Rowers, Travis West and Joseph 'JoJo' Nunes have completed the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, The World's Toughest Row! They arricved at the Nelson's Dockyard on Thrusday afternoon. Photo credit: Atlantic Campaigns

Editorial: A time to help former LIAT employees

(Page 2)

# **A TIME TO HELP FORMER** LIAT EMPLOYEES

Antiqua and Barbuda is again showing that there is good reason for it to be considered as a leader within the OECS, and the wider even CARICOM grouping, by its actions in this time of crisis.

Antigua and Barbuda has agreed to pay 'compassionate' severance payments to the former staff of the regional airline, LIAT, resident in the country. The airline has employed hundreds of workers throughout the region.

The plight LIAT workers is well-documented. 11 affects manv households not only in Antiqua and Barbuda but throughout the region. LIAT has been operating in the region for over sixty years and over that time it has developed a reputation of being one of the safest airlines in the

world, an attribute odds. which many in the region saw as a 'badge of honour.' LIAT has also been signifia cant cog in the wheel of Caribbean integration by moving people and goods from island to island, thus maintaining that key factor of people-to-people contact. Each year, LIAT moved hundreds, perhaps thousands, through the region who are members of sporting, religious or cultural often at groups, reduced prices. The airline over of time has become an indispensable part of many regional organizations and entities. LIAT has been through many crises over its lifetime. Most are related to the lack of proper capitalization of the airline. But somehow LIAT has proven to be a most resilient entity, surviving despite the

The current challenges faced by its staff is at hand. LIAT are however unique; overcoming them will require not only well-devised plans and strategies but the continued of support the governments and people of the Caribbean. After all, while LIAT is headauartered in Antiaua and Barbuda, every Caribbean territory that the airline serves has benefitted in some way.

The Antigua and Barbuda government is committed to injecting US\$20 million to help keep the airline afloat, a remarkable show of commitment to an important Caribbean institution. Antiqua and Barbuda should not have to go it alone because LIAT as a rebirthed LIAT to will continue be a valuable asset to the entire English-speaking Caribbean.

The hour of reckoning for LIAT and Who among the Caribbean leadership will step forward like Antiqua and Barbuda and offer assistance to the former employees their in respective country?

No one could have predicted the coronavirus pandemic; it came like a thief in the night. LIAT's staff found themselves without a job in the twinkling of an eye with no time to prepare or to strategize on the next move. Many face mortgage payments, tuition fees, as well as the regular expenses of daily life. They should not have to wait too long.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines leader has shown a willingness to assist his people in this their time of need. A welcomed move. Now, who is next?

#### PAGE 3 LOCAL NEWS

FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021 POINTE PRESS

# We will do it again!



Prime Minister Gaston Browne delivers the 2021 Budg /PHOTO WAYNE MARIETTE

Prime Minister Gaston Browne delivered an optimistic overview of the nation's economy when he delivered the 2021 National Budget in the House of Representatives on Thursday under the theme 'Maintaining a Healthy Nation and Restoring a Vibrant Economy.'

The Prime Minister's upbeat tone in his two-and-ahalf-hour presentation was made against the backdrop of the economic decline recorded in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the past year, Antigua and Barbuda recorded a seventeen per cent decline in output or roughly \$100 million in lost revenues.

PM Browne appears undaunted by the challenges ahead, noting that Antigua and Barbuda has rebounded quite well from other crises in the past.

"We saw similar resilience when our country recovered from the devastating impact of Hurricane Irma in 2017, to become the world's tenth fastest growing economy in 2018. So, we have a track record of recovering from crises.

"We have done it before. And, I assure this House and this Nation, that we shall do it again.

"Antigua and Barbuda will rise and recover rapidly!" he remarked.

According to Browne, the government's strategies for economic recovery will feature, among other things, fiscal strategy focusing on enhancing revenue performance, increasing efficiency in public spending, securing debt sustainability, and positioning the government to meet its obligations in a more timely and predictable manner.

Significantly, the Prime Minister noted that before the virus fully made its presence felt, the country had a twenty-eight per cent improvement in tax revenue in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

"The nation was on track to achieve the fiscal targets set out in the Budget. How-



Members of Parliament and citizens gather for the 2021 Budget presentation /PHOTO WAYNE MARIETTE

ever, preliminary data for 2020 now shows an overall fiscal deficit of 5.5 per cent of GDP, and a primary deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP for fiscal year 2020," he revealed.

Not only was there a decline in government's revenue over the past year, but the pandemic caused a spike in unemployment after the government had been able to bring it down to single figures over the past five years.

Figures from Social Security show that approximately eleven thousand people lost their jobs during the pandemic.

The Prime Minister is predicting that the economy will be in recovery in the second half of the year when the vaccine is expected to be readily available, both here and in the source markets.

For 2021, Estimated Recurrent Expenditure, excluding principal payments, is \$928.1 million. Therefore, a current account deficit of \$55.6 million is projected for 2021.

The components of recur-

rent expenditure are:

Wages and Salaries -\$402.8 million

Transfers and Grants -\$154.4 million

Pensions and Gratuities -\$70.9 million

Goods and Services -\$157.9 million

Interest Payments - \$103.2 million

Statutory Contributions -\$39.0 million

Government's Capital Budget for 2021 is \$167.2 million, which is a sixty-two per cent increase over the \$103.3 million spent on capital projects in 2020.

Total revenue is expected to improve gradually during this fiscal year.

Recurrent Revenue is estimated at \$872.5 million for 2021, which is a seventeen per cent increase over the \$745.8 million generated in 2020. The components of recurrent revenue are:

Indirect Tax Revenue -\$604.2 million

Direct Tax Revenue - \$98.5 million

Non-Tax Revenue - \$169.0 million

# **Education gets lion's share of budget**

Prime Minister Gaston Browne on Thursday announced a \$1.4 Billion dollar budget, with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries receiving the highest budgetary allocation in the amount of \$143.1 million.

Prime Minister Browne in his budget highlighted his government's commitment to improving all levels and modalities of education in Antigua and Barbuda, which he said is a platform for high levels of economic growth.

This budget provides for an overall resource requirement of \$1.4 billion. This represents a decrease of eighteen per cent, or approximately \$300 million, when compared to total estimates for 2020. This reduction is not due to the government's reduction in service delivery, but an adoption of more efficient measures of service delivery.

During his presentation, Prime Minister Browne also commended the growth and development of the agricultural sector during 2020.

"A bright light in the nation's economic activity and one that illumes possibilities for the future - is agriculture," PM Browne stated.

The Prime Minister explained that although affected by the impact of COVID-19, the agriculture, livestock, and forestry sector returned growth of 1.1 per cent in 2020, as compared to 0.5 per cent in 2019.

Such improvement in the performance of the agricultural sector is primarily due to the quick and effective implementation of the government's policies at the height of the pandemic.

The country's leader noted some of the policies and programmes implemented to help bolster agriculture during that time. These included granting farmlands to fifty new farmers, distribution of seedlings throughout the sector, promotion of backyard farming, improvement in infrastructure, and increasing the availability and access to water on farms.

This strongly suggests, PM Browne said, "that there is potential for increased agricultural production in the future that would create jobs and income, as well as, foreign exchange savings and provide our nation with a measure of food security and food sovereignty."

Turning to the manufac-

turing sector, PM Browne reaffirms his government's commitment to lending support to that sector.

"While size and production costs prevent this sector from being a much more significant contributor to GDP, it is still an important component of the economy as it is a source of employment and income for our people," PM Browne indicated.

The PM went on to explain that manufacturing contributes about 2.5 per cent or sixty million dollars to GDP annually.

"That is why, through various laws, including the Small Business Development Act, special incentives are provided, to encourage local manufacturers and other entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses," the Prime Minister stated.

### LIAT administrator writes to Caribbean leaders



Court-appointed administrator for LIAT Cleveland Seaforth

At least one Caribbean territory has responded to a letter dispatched by the Court-appointed administrator of LIAT, Cleveland Seaford, asking that regional leaders take up the issue of severance payments for former employees of the airline. Seaforth told PointeXpress that the letter was dispatched on Monday and already he has heard from the St Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, indicating an interest in assisting LIAT workers in his country.

"PM Gonsalves wants LIAT to supply all relevant information regarding severance for the workers there as well as information on Vincentians who purchased tickets for travel on LIAT prior to the lockdown last year and who have not been able to travel due to the COVID-19 situation," the administrator detailed. The airline is currently collating this information for the SVG leader.

In the letter addressed to all CARICOM heads, Seaforth wants the leaders to consider the severance issue collectively or individually in order to bring much needed relief to the former airline staff.

The letter was also copied to all the unions throughout the region who represent the various categories of LIAT staff. Gonsalves is the only person to respond so far. administrator The noted that the Antigua and Barbuda has agreed to make a 'compassionate' payment of severance of A complete shutdown of all bars and a prohibition of sports that feature constant and close physical contact will be among tighter restrictions for the next twenty-one days.

Antigua and Barbuda's ten-month-old state of emergency in response to the coronavirus pandemic is being stepped up as of 8:00 p.m. tonight Friday 29th January 2021 when the curfew hours kick in three hours earlier than the previous cutoff time of 11:00 p.m.

These were among the measures announced during a special post-Cabinet press briefing on Wednesday evening, hosted in advance of its usual Thursday morning schedule due to the urgency of announcements pertaining to a worsening incidence of COVID-19 since the start of 2021.

Close to sixty new cases of infection with the virus have been recorded so far for 2021 with nearly forty active cases, for a total of almost two hundred and twenty. According to the post-Cabinet briefing notes, "That number exceeds by far the monthly average since March 2020 when the first positive result was recorded. The Cabinet determined that the serious threat faced by the population, because of the disregard of the protocols and the resulting increase in infections, demand that new rules be applied."

The extended curfew hours and other tightened restrictions – described as no surprise by Information Minister Melford Nicholas – will remain in place until 19th February.

The authorities had expected and predicted a post-Yuletide jump in COVID cases as persons let down their guard amid increased feasting and unrestrained socializing over the holiday season.

"There will be no operation of any bars under any circumstances," Nicholas said, before adding that restaurants will only be permitted to serve takeaway meals, with absolutely no dining-in allowed. When it comes to sports, football and basketball are an absolute no-no for the next three weeks. But he did indicate the Super50 cricket tournament, which is being hosted by Antigua and Barbuda this year, will go ahead as planned. The

tournament is due to start on 7th February.

"It is still on, but there will be no spectators allowed, so they are going to be operating in a bubble and that will be effectively supervised," Nicholas declared.

"Regular church services will be allowed to continue, as they have been monitored and managed effectively by the clergy in conjunction with the Ministry of Health," he disclosed.

But "with respect to weddings and funerals, we are obliged to limit the numbers to twenty-five in each instance; there will be no wakes, and there will certainly not be any [wedding reception feasts following the ceremonies]."

The Jolly Beach Resort has been co-opted as a government quarantine facility. Nicholas said this means "all persons who are returning to Antigua as residents will be required to enter a public facility. That will also mean that they will be required to pay for the boarding and for the meals. We are mindful that these are hard economic times, and we have managed to hammer out an

agreement with the management of Jolly Beach that will keep this cost below one hundred dollars per day."

FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021 POINTE PRESS

In addition, the Minister stated, persons were being encouraged, "to limit their travel out of the country for only essential purposes. Should they make up their minds that there is a necessity for them to travel, they have to make provision for, on their return, to quarantine for fourteen days in a public facility."

Turning to the subject of tracking bracelets, Nicholas said in instances where persons are deemed to have suitable conditions for home quarantine available to them, this option could be granted at the discretion of quarantine authorities, on condition that the bracelets must be worn by those quarantining at home.

He said there are more than five hundred bracelets available and their effectiveness has been confirmed by trials. The devices, according to Nicholas, are expected to "close any further gaps in the quarantining of individuals who are returning to the country."

#### cont'd from pg 4

up to fifty per cent of the outstanding payment in the form of cash, government bonds and land. On the issue of investment into the airline, Seaforth said this is still an ongoing matter but like everything else, it too has been affected by the pandemic. "We have one group that had planned on coming to Antigua early next month to do their due diligence, but they decided to postpone the visit because of the pandemic," he disclosed.

According to the administrator, the group is from an area where a spike in COVID-19 cases has had the government discussing the possibility of instituting a lockdown and the members do not want to be stranded should they decide to travel out. He said there are at least three groups showing interest in investing in the airline and he hopes that this can be completed as soon as practicable.

Meanwhile, Caribbean people are still showing an

interest in flying on LIAT. The average load factor increased from nineteen daily to thirty-three daily from December to January. However, he said this is still not enough to sustain the airline over the long term.

"It is extremely difficult, but we remain hopeful," he declared.

### POINTE PRESS FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021

# **Community spread still undetermined**

Women accounted for slight-Iv more than males in the fifty-six new cases of coronavirus infection on record for the first month of 2021 as of Tuesday 26th January.

This was disclosed by Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Dr. Anju Smith, who is a member of the National COVID-19 Coordinating Committee.

She was speaking on Wednesday evening during a special post-Cabinet press briefing to announce and discuss heightened measures that are being put in place from tonight (Friday 29th January 2021) to deal with a sharp increase in confirmed cases of infection, following the Christmas holiday season.

Dr. Smith said thirty females and twenty-six males made up the number of new diagnosed cases, while noting that thirty-two of those cases (fifty-seven per cent) are non-imported and the other twenty-four cases (forty-three per cent) are imported.

"These cases were detected as a result of persons who required a test for travel, or through contact tracing and case finding, and also from persons who would have arrived at our airport who either brought an incorrect test, an expired test, or no test," she explained.

She revealed that "so far for January, no hotel workers have tested positive from an imported case. Of the cases of local transmission, we have detected some contacts through our contact tracing, and we have had one death so far for January."

Of the two hundred and fifteen total confirmed cases in Antiqua and Barbuda as at Tuesday 26th January, ninety-nine were imported and the remainder scored as local transmissions, with a total of six fatalities since the pandemic arrived here in late March 2020.

Pathologist Dr. Lester Simon, who heads the testing laboratory at the Mount St. John's Medical Center, said although the facility is now in a much better place where equipment is concerned, the pandemic has exposed the need for more trained technical personnel who can handle the increased workload brought about by the pandemic. He indicated that the few available are being utilized to the maximum extent of their capacity. Dr. Simon expressed hope that, as time goes by, more people will become interested and pursue studies to become

medical laboratory technologists, an area in high demand. He revealed that the number of tests being done daily has increased sharply from thirty tests per day to one hundred and twenty not very long ago, more recently climbing to two hundred per day.

To those who have been alleging that local health authorities are not conducting sufficient testing, Dr. Simon said: "You can only test when you have people to do the test properly, but it has not been for want of supplies. I started pathology from 1978 and this is the first time I have worked in any laboratory where we have a surplus of over eight thousand tests waiting for workers to come in so we can use these tests."

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas who chairs the COVID-19 Committee - clarified that nineteen of the active cases are in hospital care, but none require the use of a ventilator, although all are receiving oxygen therapy. Eight of the nineteen are being treated at the specialized and purpose-built Infectious Diseases Center (IDC).

"Two are critical in terms of the amount of oxygen they are receiving. One has improved significantly over the last twenty-four hours, and five are mild-to-moderate," the CMO elaborated.

Health Minister Molwyn Joseph took time to clarify that imported cases do not always or necessarily mean tourists or people of foreign nationality, but could also mean returning nationals who became infected abroad and not from local transmission.

The new and more highly transmissible variants of the virus that have latterly been discovered in the UK, South Africa and Brazil, have so far not shown up on any tests in Antiqua and Barbuda

It has not yet been determined whether Antigua and Barbuda is experiencing community spread of the virus, and the Chief Medical Officer said consultations are ongoing to determine whether the pattern and origin of transmissions could be categorized as such. According to nurse-epidemiologist Soria Dupie-Winston, the parish of St. Paul

appears to be the part of Antiqua with the most cases. The area is home to the major tourism and vachting centers of English Harbour and Falmouth Harbour.





#### PAGE 7 FEATURE

# **MSJMC pens letter to community**

The country's main public hospital the Mount St John's Medical Centre - has launched a public awareness campaign aimed at encouraging members of the community to follow the health protocols as the country's active COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

The health institution is making use of print and audio-visual media to communicate to the public the need for everyone to fully participate in helping to curb the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

MSJMC has issued a letter to the community and a video presentation which it is distributing throughout the community, urging compliance with the health protocols. The full letter is published below:

#### Dear Community,

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have urged you to protect yourself, your neighbors, and your loved ones amidst the worst global health crisis in generations. And for months, many of you stayed home, physical distanced and we were able to keep our infection rate very low and our country began reopening. However, we are now watching in real-time as a dramatic uptick in COVID-19 cases erases our hard-won gains.

This is why we're reaching out to you. We need your help in reminding the public about those simple steps they can take; ones that we know will help stop the spread of the virus: washing hands, wearing a face mask, and maintaining physical distancing.

We're asking you to consider supporting our hospital by airing our COVID-19 PSAs within your organization. Are you playing music through your PA system (or radio) while your customers shop or waitin-line? We're asking you to skip one of your music tracks and play one of our PSAs instead. We know... This will be a new venture for all of us but so is this pandemic - And what we're certain of - and what the science and evidence are telling us - is that COVID-19 is not behind us and what we need more than ever is joint actions that are critical to stopping the spread.

We are not powerless. We are powerful - and we can defeat this public health crisis if we act together. Defeat it in the same way we defeated previous threats to public health—by allowing science and evidence to shape our decisions and inform our actions.

Our community is grateful to those of you who are doing your part in helping turn the tide of this pandemic - Mount St. John's Medical Centre thanks you. Continue protecting one another. There is only one way to get past some challenges - together.



# Woman gets maximum fine for breaching self-quarantine to go to bar

twenty-three-year-old order." А woman has been slapped with a \$10,000 fine, the maximum for breaching quarantine.

Jayelle Jarvis Wednesday admitted that "when ordered by the quarantine authority to self-quarantine for a period of fourteen days, having been identified as a person likely to be exposed to the dangerous infectious disease COVID-19, did breach such

On 13th January 2021, Jarvis came to Antigua from the United States and was ordered to self-quarantine for fourteen days at her family home in Bolans.

But on 17th January, the young woman left her home and went to Dre's Bar on Kentish Road with a friend to celebrate her birthday.

A video was taken and brought to the attention of the Ministry of Health who then alerted the necessary authorities.

Investigations were carried out and when interviewed she denied the allegations. However, the video posted by her friend was proof of the violation.

Jarvis was then placed in the government quarantine facility at Dickenson Bay where she was later served with the charge.

Yesterday, she told Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh,"My friend influenced me to go to the bar because it was my birthday. I didn't think it would have reached this far."

FEATURE PAGE 8

She however agreed with the Magistrate that her actions were "reckless" and "callous."

She was then given the maximum fine, half of which she must pay forthwith and the balance by 26th February.

# Willikies man charged in first fatal accident

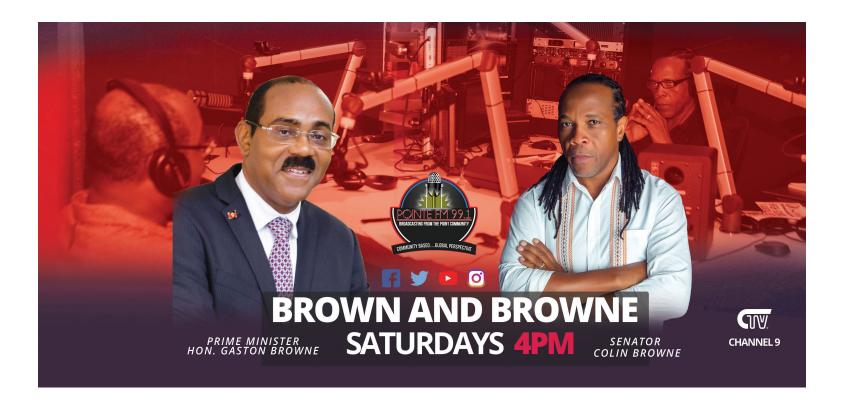
and charged twenty-nineyear-old Glen Greene of Willikies for causing death by dangerous driving. Greene was the driver of in the vicinity of XPZ Su-

The Police have arrested the vehicle in which twentyone-year-old Zurie Holder was a passenger, when it got into a collision on Sir Sydney Walling Highway

permarket on 2nd January tor. 2021.

Holder was pronounced dead two days later at Mount St. John Medical Center by a medical doc-

His death was recorded as the first fatality for this year. Greene is expected before the Court Friday.



# A second UN term for a champion of causes crucial to the Caribbean

(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)

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has announced his availability to serve a second term when his current term ends on December 31.

Arguably, Guterres is the UN Secretary-General that has paid the greatest attention to the concerns and challenges of the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Over the last four years, the policies and priorities he has vigorously pursued and tirelessly advocated have aligned with the interests of the people of the Region.

When three Caribbean countries experienced grave destruction in 2017 and 2019, Guterres made it his business to fly to them, not only to witness the devastation but to make the world aware of the catastrophes, and to formulate plans to help.

Visiting Barbuda in 2017, weeks after the ravages of Hurricane Irma, he walked with the people who had suffered in the disaster that left no inhabitable house and no functional building. Guterres told the world, "I have been in areas torn by conflict. In my own country,

I have seen earthquakes, I've seen storms [...] I have never seen such a high-level of devastation like the one that I witnessed in Barbuda." Moving from Barbuda to Dominica, which was worst affected because its population was much larger, the UN Chief declared, "the link between climate change and the devastation we are witnessing is clear, and there is a collective responsibility of the international community to stop this suicidal development."

He immediately launched an agenda on the theme of connecting climate change to natural disasters. Justification for his campaigning and advocacy was bolstered two years later, in 2019, when Hurricane Dorian demolished islands of the Bahamas chain. Again, turning up to focus world attention on the catastrophe, Guterres told global audiences, "Hurricane Dorian has been classified as Category 5. I think it's Category Hell."

The Secretary-General recognised the links between natural disasters caused by climate change, the accumulation of unsustainable debt by countries struggling to rebuild infrastructure and economies, and the crucial need for better debt forgiveness; debt rescheduling; and access to concessional financing from the International Financial Institutions. He has championed this



By Sir Ronald Sanders

stance relentlessly.

As recently as January 25, he told a Climate Adaptation Summit meeting in The Netherlands, "We are facing a climate emergency. We are already witnessing unprecedented climate extremes and volatility, affecting lives and livelihoods on all continents. According to the World Meteorological Organization, there have been more than 11,000 disasters due to weather, climate and water-related hazards over the past 50 years at a cost of some US\$3.6 trillion.

Extreme weather and climate-related hazards have also killed more than 410,000 people in the past decade, the vast majority in low and lower middle-income countries".

giveness; debt rescheduling; And, he added, "We must and access to concessional expand the provision of lifinancing from the Interna- quidity and debt relief intional Financial Institutions. struments to developing He has championed this and middle-income coun-

#### cont'd from pg 9

tries that lack the resources to relaunch their economies in a sustainable and inclusive way". Guterres was commanding world attention to issues confronting the Caribbean region with the authority that Caribbean countries alone cannot muster.

He has also stressed that "The share for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in total climate finance remains small, representing only 14 per cent and 2 per cent of flows respectively". In that context, he has arqued for "support for regional adaptation and resilience initiatives that would debt-for-adaptation allow, swaps for the Caribbean or the Pacific Islands and provide much needed liquidity to vulnerable countries in dire need".

Similarly, since the middle of 2020, he has been warring for developing counparticularly tries, small states, over the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In his unflagging championship, on January 25, he told the World Economic Forum in Davos, "Inclusive and sustainable recovery around the globe will depend on the avail-

ability and effectiveness of vaccines for all, immediate fiscal and monetary support in both developed and developing countries, and transformative longer-term stimulus measures".

Declaring that "Vaccines must be seen as global public goods -- people's vaccines", Guterres told the world's leading economic and financial lead-"If developed couners, tries think they will be safe if they vaccinate their own people while neglecting the developing world, they are wrong". He argued that what is required is "full funding for the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and its COVAX facility led by the World Health Organization (WHO)".

Countries in CARICOM, which now have no vaccines and little prospect of getting sufficient, under the existing COVAX programme of the WTO to inoculate their populations, strongly agree with Guterres' position.

It is significant that he attended CARICOM Heads of Government Meetings in 2019 and 2020 to hear their concerns first-hand.

On January 28, the Secretary-General outlined his priorities. They reflect concerns expressed by CAR-ICOM leaders, including promoting vaccine equity, providing access for the world's poorest countries; combatting climate change and biodiversity loss; conquering the grave impacts of poverty and inequality; and strengthening multilateralism to ensure delivery of public health, peace and a healthy environment.

Undoubtedly, there's good reason for all CARICOM leaders to take leaves from the books of Antiqua and Barbuda's Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, who pledged his support by letter to Guterres on January 12, and British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, who on the same day, "warmly welcomed the secretary-general's decision to run for a second term and congratulated him on a successful first term".

António Guterres, by just doing his job with fidelity to the countries he represents - including small states - has proven himself very worthy of the unequivocal support of CARICOM countries.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.ronaldsanders.com



We are just a month into a new year, and there is a fresh crop of artists who are ready to dominate the music arena and put Antigua on the map.

As such, Showman 'The Gift' may be one to watch this year as he sets his sights on reaching international charts. Dion "Showman 'The Gift'" Samuel fell in love with music at the age of thirteen but his talents remained untapped until recently.

Showman 'The Gift' said that it was not until mid-2018 that he started exploring writing to a greater extent.

The thirty-threeyear-old picked up a microphone for the first time in January 2020 when he was invited to a studio and given an opportunity to freestyle on several beats.

"I got a chance to go into a studio and the words just basically came to me," he said.

Thereafter, his future as an artist was illuminated.

Then one day during The the calm of Antiaua's lockdown last year, and how it can be was introduced to a called Showman. he emerging within fif- officially teen minutes with a on the DJ Kenny live able to record his song called 'Wash show on 25th April first rap song 'Backs book called yuh hands.'



Up and coming rap artist Dion "Showman 'The Gift'" Samuel.

soca song COVID-19 to the coronavirus Gift' began writing, kept at bay. It was released 2020.

Because of that brought awareness song, Showman 'The said that he Jamaican label and producer and was against the wall.'

Now, as he continues to pen what may become hits, the sports lover said: "I would want to become the first local artist that makes it from an international standpoint." He added that despite challenges penetrating the music arena in the Caribbean as a rap artiste, he is optimistic.

FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021 POINTE PRESS

Hence, Showman 'The Gift' said that he currently has an eight-track demo which he intends to approach record labels in the United States with.

But the aspiring star has not limited himself to one genre, he said that he has a soca song on the way called 'Dadli man' which will be about all Antiguan cricketers who have made a notable impact on the West Indies team.

"I am working hard on the low; the crowd will break," he said.

The Skerritts Pasture man is also the manager of a promotional company called Showman Promotions and is the member of band The artist is also

working towards publishing a sports 'Athlete's bible.'

# Singing Sandra – Veteran calypsonian dies at sixty-four

(Jamaica Gleaner): Sandra DesVignes-Millington, the veteran calypsonian known as 'Singing Sandra,' has died. She was sixty-four.

Calling the 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' singer a "national icon," Randall Mitchell, Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, said he was sad to hear of the famed singer's passing.

"For decades, Singing Sandra, a former twotime Calypso Monarch, not only entertained national and international audiences with her many calypsos, but she was seen as an educator via her songs," said Mitchell in a statement.

He hailed Singing Sandra as a feminist icon, adding that her contributions made the twin-island republic a "richer nation."

"Long before the 'Time's Up' and the 'Me Too' movements took root, Singing Sandra embraced the women's movement and provided our women with the rallying call to 'die with their dignity," he said. "Singing Sandra was true to her word, and as we mourn her passing, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in general, and the cultural fraternity, in particular, will always be thankful for her contribution which has made us a richer nation."



# **Cicely Tyson is dead**

Cicely Tyson, an actress whose electriportrayals fying of resilient Black women - foremost in the 1974 TV movie "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" but also as Coretta Scott King and Harriet Tubman brought some of the first ennobling portrayals of African Americans to a vast television audience, died Jan. 28 at 96.

Tyson, who had roots in neighbouring Nevis, was an outstanding actress whose roles have always been about positive characters.



**Cicely Tyson** 

FROM ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TRANSPORT BOARD

# Driver's Licence Renewal REQUIREMENT

Effective February 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, the Antigua and Barbuda Driver's Licence will now feature **NATIONALITY**, as well as, **COUNTRY OF BIRTH**. This is to facilitate the regional integration movement.

Each driver's licence holder is therefore required to <u>bring along your valid passport</u> upon your next driver's licence renewal date.

Please be guided accordingly.



## Governor Antoine reappointed, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank



Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank Timothy N. J. Antoine

**(OECS Press Room):** The Monetary Council has approved the reappointment of Timothy N. J. Antoine as Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

The new five-year term commences on Monday 1st February.

In conveying the Monetary Council's decision, Chairman of the Monetary Council Dr. Timothy Harris remarked: "The Council commends the Governor for his stewardship over the past five years and especially over the past year. Governor Antoine has led the Bank with vision, empathy and with a keen eye for innovations that have helped to lift the people of our region."

In commenting on the Monetary Council's decision, Governor Antoine thanked the Monetary Council for its support throughout his first term and its confidence reposed in him to continue to lead the Bank.

"It is my distinct privilege to serve the governments and people of our Currency Union. I look forward, with the support of the Council, Board and our team, to the implementation of the Programme of Action for Recovery, Resilience and Transformation and the rollout of the Bank's new strategic plan. Our pursuit of socio-economic transformation continues."

OECS Director General Dr. Didacus Jules applauded the reappointment of Governor Timothy Antoine, pointing to the many innovations that he has spearheaded at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank:

"Governor Antoine's tenure has been characterized by a highly collaborative approach to the shaping of the Eastern Caribbean Economic Union. He has passionate been a champion of financial inclusion and under his watch, the ECCB is the first central bank in the world to have issued a digital version of its currency. While being agile and innovative, he has nevertheless maintained the delicate balance between the boldness of vision and deliberation in action that has helped to maintain the viability of the EC Dollar in a period of unprecedented uncertainty and volatility. The OECS Commission looks forward to the deepening of collaboration with him as he embarks on his renewed mandate."





## Caribbean at high-risk for importing all three COVID-19 variants

#### (Guyana Chronicle):

CARPHA advises that testing, entry requirements continue

As Guyana awaits laboratory results that will confirm whether variants of the COVID-19 virus have been imported, the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) has emphasized that Caribbean countries are at a "very high" risk of importing the three known variants, even with travel protocols and requirements in place.

Currently, the three variants of concern are: the B.1.1.7 variant, or what is commonly called the United Kingdom (UK) variant; the B.1.351 or the South Africa variant; and the B.1.1.28 variant found in Brazil.

All three of the variants have been found to be more transmissible, meaning that they can infect more persons easily. Only the UK variant, which was the first variant to be discovered through a type of genetic analysis known as genomic sequencing, has been detected in the Caribbean (in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Lucia) so far.

In a progress report published on 25th January, CARPHA highlighted, "Even with country travel protocols and requirements in place, there is a very high risk of the [UK variant], the [South Africa variant]



Former Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Country Representative Dr. William Adu-Krow

and the [Brazilian variant] being imported to the Caribbean, given travel from the UK, Europe and South America."

Numerous countries have imposed restrictions on travel from the UK, South Africa and all of South America in an effort to halt the spread of these new variants. And in light of the evolving situation, CARPHA affirmed that "It remains crucial that travel guidelines, including testing and other entry requirements, continue."

The Brazil variant was first identified in December 2020, in Manaus, Brazil. Given Guyana's proximity to Brazil and the porous border between the two countries, health authorities have been on the alert. Though Guyana cannot conduct genomic sequencing, to define the variants, on its own,

it has been engaging CARPHA to secure these services.

Local private establishment, the Eureka Medical Laboratories Inc, has identified potential UK variants, but this will only be confirmed after CARPHA sends its laboratory results back to Guyana.

On Tuesday, in an invited comment, former Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Country Representative, Dr. William Adu-Krow also expressed concerns over the importation of the variants.

"The idea is that the vaccines may cover all of these strains but now that they are saying that the strain is more virulent, that is, they are more of a killing capability. We have to be more concerned," Dr. Adu-Krow emphasized.

Health Minister, Dr.

Frank Anthony, recently told the Guyana Chronicle that vaccines are the "exit strategy" for the pandemic. Importantly, he also noted that the variants indicate prospects for re-infection of persons who were previously diagnosed with the 'normal' variant or strain of COVID-19.

Cognizant of the developments with the variants, Dr. Adu Krow pleaded with persons to take the COVID-19 vaccines once they are made available.

"With the emergence and spread of at least three identified COVID-19 variants, there is the increasing prospect of reinfection with distinct variants and, potentially, the reduced efficacy of current spike-based vaccines," CARPHA stated, adding: "Though the virus itself and pandemic situation remain in flux, vaccination roll out will continue with approved COVID-19 vaccines. Field investigations into vaccine efficacy for these variants are presently underway."

However, during an this interview earlier month, WHO Director of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals, Dr. Kate O'Brien, highlighted that "The kinds of changes that are being seen in these variants are not felt to be likely to change the impact of the vaccines..."

#### POINTE PRESS FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021

### Four tons of cocaine seized from fishing boat off Barbados

(The St Kitts/Nev-**Observer):** More is than four tons of the high-purity cocaine were discovered on a fishing vessel that was intercepted off the coast of Barbados.

Deputy Director Tom Dowdall, head of NCA International, said: "A seizure of this size will have a dramatic impact on the orgagroups nized crime involved, and deprive them of huge profits."

Working with European partners as part an investigation of started last year, the

NCA developed intelligence leading to the identification of the fishing vessel that was carrying the drugs.

On 17th January, a French naval vessel operating out of Martinique intercepted and boarded the boat in international waters east of Barbados.

The NCA said the 4.2 tons of cocaine found on board would likely have had "a street value of several hundred million pounds to criminal networks in Europe."

eight crew were ap-

ed over to administrative and iudicial authorities.

Throughout the operation, officers from the NCA's international network shared intelligence and coordinated the deployment of law enforcement and military assets, working closely with international partners through the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (MA-OC-N) in Lisbon.

Mr. Dowdall said: "The role played by The boat and her the NCA in identifying and locating the ves-

prehended and hand- sel was critical to the success of the operation.

> "Through MAOC-N we were then able to ensure that the boat was intercepted bv our partners, in this case the French Navy. "Working with our European partners we have stopped a huge haul of drugs from making it onto the European market, and I've no doubt some of that would have ended up in the UK in the hands of criminal gangs also engaged in violence and exploitation."

### Flight crew test positive in SVG after getting COVID results waiver

(iwnsvg): Two members of a group allowed to travel to St. Vincent without COVID-19 negative test, results although they departed a country with community spread of the illness, tested positive for the virus after arriving in SVG.

iWitness News was reliably informed that the positive test results among six-member the group came even as they were lobbying health officials to allow them to guarantine for three days, rather than fourteen.

The six persons arrived in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on 16th January 2021 - amidst a spike in cases locally.

iWitness News has obtained a 15th January 2020 document in which Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Simone Keizer-Beache, as chair of the Health Services Committee of the National Emergency Manaaement Organisation (NEMO), granted the exemption.

"Passengers listed above are granted permission to enter the state of St Vincent and the Grenadines," the document said.

It also identified a hotel in St. Vincent at which the persons were to quarantine.

The document further said that the passengers were required to be tested on arrival in SVG, to quarantine for fourteen days until cleared by the Ministry of Health, and to be retested as stated within the ministry's protocol.

At a press conference Tuesday, iWitness on

News asked the Ministry of Health what informed the decision to allow the waiver and whether any of those persons tested positive for COVID-19 while in quarantine.

"Okay, so the query is whether or not the Ministry of Health used its discretion to grant a permission for some travellers to enter the country," Keizer-Beache said in response.

She said that the Health Subcommittee Services "has various protocols and these protocols - the general protocol, as you remember, at the bottom has at the discretion of the chief medical officer or the medical officer of health.

"The particular situation is a matter that was assessed as persons travelling in a private plane, and

therefore, they were all of the same risk level to themselves, they were then instructed to quarantine as everyone else would coming from a high-risk country," the chief medical officer said.

"And on that basis, because those persons were not posing a risk to anyone else on the flight, they were allowed to come into the country on the discretion of the chief medical officer, myself," she further stated.

"In terms of the other question, you are asking for the personal, private and confidential information of a client of the ministry of health and it would be against my ethical standards to provide you with that information," Keizer-Beache said.

# China warns Taiwan independence 'means war'

(Aljazeera): China toughened its language towards Taiwan on Thursday, warning after recent stepped-up military activities near the island that "independence means war" and that their armed forces were taking action to respond to provocation and foreign interference.

Taiwan, claimed by China as its territory, reported multiple Chinese fighter jets and bombers entering the island's southwestern air defence identification zone over the weekend, prompting concern in Washington.

China believes that Taiwan's democratically-elected government is moving the island towards a declaration of formal independence, though President Tsai Ing-wen has repeatedly said they are already an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name.

Asked at a monthly news briefing about the air forces' recent activities, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said Taiwan was an inseparable part of China.



China believes that Taiwan's democratically-elected government is moving the island towards a declaration of formal independence

"The military activities carried out by the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the Taiwan Strait are necessary actions to address the current security situation in the Taiwan Strait and to safeguard national sovereignty and security," he said.

"They are a solemn response to external interference and provocations by 'Taiwan independence' forces," he added.

The Chinese incursions coincided with a US car-

rier battle group entering the disputed South China Sea to promote "freedom of the seas."

Wu said a "handful" of people in Taiwan were seeking the island's independence.

"We warn those 'Taiwan independence' elements: those who play with fire will burn themselves, and 'Taiwan independence' means war," he added.

Democratic Taiwan has denounced China's threats and efforts at intimidation, and Tsai has pledged to defend the island's freedom and not be coerced.

China routinely describes Taiwan as its most important and sensitive issue in relations with the United States, which under the former Trump administration ramped up support for the island in terms of arms sales and senior officials visiting Taipei.

President Joe Biden's government, in office for a week, has reaffirmed its commitment to Taiwan as being "rock solid," potentially auguring further strains with Beijing.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reaffirmed Washington's commitment to the support of Southeast Asian nations in a long-running dispute with China over sovereignty in the South China Sea.

Blinken "pledged to stand with Southeast Asian claimants in the face of PRC pressure," the State Department said in a statement, referring to China by its formal name.





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## EU warns it could block vaccine exports, wields legal threat at drugmakers



People queue to receive the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine outside a closed down Debenhams store that is being used as a vaccination centre in Folkestone, Kent, Britain January 28th 2021

(Reuters): Europe's fight to secure COVID-19 vaccine supplies intensified on Thursday when the European Union warned drug companies such as AstraZeneca that it would use all legal means or even block exports unless they agreed to deliver shots as promised.

The EU, whose member states are far behind Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States in rolling out vaccines, is scrambling to get supplies just as the West's biggest drug makers slow deliveries to the bloc due to production problems.

As vaccination centres in Germany, France and Spain cancelled or delayed appointments, the EU publicly rebuked An-

glo-Swedish drug maker AstraZeneca for failing to deliver and even asked if it could divert supplies from Britain.

European Council President Charles Michel said in a letter to four EU leaders that the EU should explore legal means to ensure supplies of vaccines it contracted to buy, if negotiations with companies over delayed deliveries are unsuccessful.

"If no satisfactory solution can be found, I believe we should explore all options and make use of all legal means and enforcement measures at our disposal under the Treaties," he said in the 27th January letter.

EU rules on monitoring and authorizing exports of COVID-19 vaccines in the twenty-seven-nation bloc could lead to exports being blocked if they violated existing contracts between the vaccine maker and the EU, an EU official said.

The European Commission is to lay out the criteria under which such exports would be evaluated on Friday.

The global mass vaccination is stoking tensions across the world as big powers buy up doses in bulk and poorer nations try to collect whatever supplies are left

Israel is by far the world leader on vaccine rollout per head of population, followed by the United Arab Emirates, United the Kingdom, Bahrain and the United States. Behind them are Italy, Germany, France, China and Russia.

Both New York-based Pfizer and AstraZeneca, headquartered in Cambridge, England, have had production problems.

CEO AstraZeneca Pascal Soriot said the EU was late to strike a supply contract so the company did not have enough time to iron out production problems at a vaccine factory run by a partner in Belgium.

The European Commission has asked Belaian authorities to inspect production at the plant, Belgium's Federal Agency for Medicines Health Products and (FAGG) said on Thursday.

Britain, which has repeatedly touted its progress rolling out vaccines since leaving the EU's orbit on 1st January, said its deliveries must be honoured.

"I think we need to make sure that the vaccine supply that has been bought and paid for, procured for those in the UK, is delivered," Minister for the Cabinet Office Michael Gove told LBC Radio.

European regulators are expected to decide on Friday whether to approve AstraZeneca's Germany's vacshot. cine committee said this vaccine should be given only to people aged between eighteen and sixty-four.

### Outrage as Nigeria sentences teenage boy to ten years in prison for blasphemy

**(CNN):** Child rights agency UNICEF has condemned the sentencing of a teenager to ten years in prison for blasphemy in northern Nigeria.

Omar Farouq was convicted in a Sharia court in Kano State in northwest Nigeria after he was accused of using foul language toward Allah in an argument with a friend.

He was sentenced on 10th August by the same court that recently sentenced a studio assistant Yahaya Sharif-Aminu to death for blaspheming Prophet Mohammed, according to lawyers.

Farouq's punishment is in violation of the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of a Child and the Nigerian constitution, said his counsel Kola Alapinni, who told CNN they filed an appeal on his behalf on 7th September.

Farouq was tried as an adult because he has attained puberty and has full responsibility under Islamic law.

Alapinni told CNN he or other lawyers working on the case have not been granted access to Farouq by authorities in Kano State.

He said he found out about Farouq's case by chance when working on the case of Sharif-Aminu, who was sentenced to death for blasphemy at the Kano Upper Sharia Court.

"We found out they were





A team of Islamic sharia enforcers called Hisbah on patrol in the northern Nigerian city of Kano

convicted on the same day, by the same judge, in the same court, for blasphemy and we found out no one was talking about Omar, so we had to move quickly to file an appeal for him," he said.

"Blasphemy is not recognized by Nigerian law. It is inconsistent with the constitution of Nigeria."

The lawyer said Farouq's mother had fled to a neighboring town after mobs descended on their home following his arrest.

"Everyone here is scared to speak and living under fear of reprisal attacks," he said.

UNICEF Wednesday issued a statement "expressing deep concern" about the sentencing.

"The sentencing of this child-thirteen-year-old Omar Farouq-to ten years in prison with menial labour is wrong," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF representative in Nigeria. "It also negates all core underlying principles of child rights and child justice that Nigeria—and by implication, Kano State—has signed on to."

Kano State, like most predominantly Muslim states in Nigeria, practices Sharia law alongside secular law.

CNN contacted a spokesman for the Kano State governor for comment but had not heard back before publication.

UNICEF has called on the Nigerian government and the Kano State government to urgently review the case and reverse the sentence, the organization said in a statement.

"This case further underlines the urgent need to accelerate the enactment of the Kano State Child Protection Bill so as to ensure that all children under eighteen, including Omar Farouq are protected—and that all children in Kano are treated in accordance with child rights standards," Hawkins said.

# **Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio 'once a prolific police informer'**

(bbc.com): The leader of the far-right Proud Boys group, at the heart of recent pro-Trump protests, was once a "prolific" informer for the FBI and local police, old court transcripts show.

Enrique Tarrio helped authorities prosecute more than a dozen people involved in drugs, gambling and human smuggling, the 2014 transcripts reveal.

He denied the allegations when asked by Reuters, which broke the story.

There is no suggestion he has been an informer while leading the Proud Boys.

But the revelations will surprise many.

Tarrio, thirty-six, was arrested two days before the 6th January 2021 riots at the US Capitol in Washington, which other members of his group took part in.

He was charged with carrying two high-capacity rifle magazines as well as burning a Black Lives Matter banner taken from a church in DC during a rally in December.

The court transcripts uncovered by Reuters relate to a hearing in a federal court in Florida in 2014 in which Tarrio and two others had pleaded guilty in a fraud case relating to the resale of diabetic test strips.

Both the prosecutor and Tarrio's defence lawyer asked the judge for leniency in sentencing, pointing to his extensive co-operation with both federal and local law enforcement since a previous arrest in 2012.

The prosecutor said Tarrio's undercover work had led to the prosecution of thirteen people and the court heard he had helped police investigate a gambling ring, the sale of both prescription and illegal drugs and human smuggling.

"Your Honour, frankly, in all the years, which is now more than thirty that I've been doing this, I've never had a client as prolific in terms of co-operating in any respect," Tarrio's then lawyer Jeffrey Feiler, told the court, according to the transcript.

The judge eventually reduced Tarrio's sentence from thirty months to sixteen months.

Mr Feiler, when interviewed by Reuters, said he did not recall the details of the case but added: "The information I provided to the court was based on information provided to me by law enforcement and the prosecutor."

Tarrio denied to Reuters that he had ever worked undercover or co-operated with the police in cases against others, saying: "I don't know any of this. I don't recall any of this."

He did acknowledge that his sentence had

been reduced but insisted it was because he had his co-defendants help investigators "clear up" questions about his own case, Reuters reports.

Miami-based Tarrio became leader of the Proud Boys in 2018 - two years after the group was established by Canadian-British right-wing activist Gavin McInnes.

The group is a far-right, anti-immigrant, all-male group with a history of street violence against its left-wing opponents.

Their platform, such as it is, includes Trumpian ideas ("glorify the entrepreneur," "close the border") libertarianism ("give everyone a gun," "end welfare") and traditional gender roles ("venerate the housewife").

The group was referenced by then-President Donald Trump during the first presidential debate last October. Responding to a question about White supremacist and militia groups, he said, "Proud Boys - stand back and stand by" which members of the group online took as a call to prepare for action. Mr. Trump later distanced himself from the group.

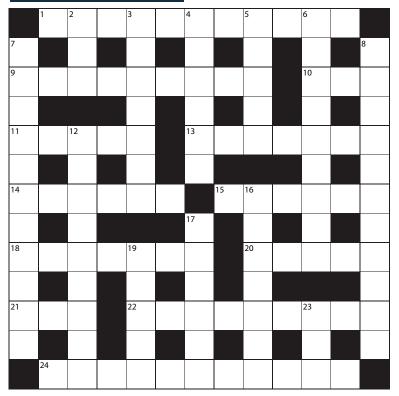


Charles is a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yr old male dog who is available for adoption at the Humane Society's Animal Shelter near Bethesda. He has been wormed, dipped for fleas and ticks, and vaccinated. If you can offer Charles a new home, please contact us at 461-4957 or visit the shelter Monday to Saturday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The Antigua & Barbuda Humane Tel: (268) 461-49957 Email: antiguaanimals@gmail.com Website: www.antiguaanimals.com Facebook: Antigua & Barbuda Humane Society

### POINTE PRESS FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY, 2021

#### **QUICK CROSSWORD**



### **DAILY COMICS**

### **Dilbert**



### Garfield



### Cathy



#### Across

- Large crate (7.4) 1
- Written agreement between a country and the Vatican (9) 9
- 10 Chinese leader, d. 1976 (3)
- 11 Unfortunately (5)
- 13 Bitter conflicts (7)
- 14 Bind firmly together (6) Sultanate in Borneo (6)
- 15 18
  - Remark (7)
- 20 Longest European river, flowing into the Caspian Sea (5)
- 21 Monotonous routine (3)
- 22 Top dog? (6,3) 24 Waste frivolously (7,4)

#### Down

- 2 Stiff bristle growing from an ear of barley, for example (3)
- 3 Indirect or cumulative effect (5-2)
- 4 Going without clothes (6)
- 5 Make provision for (5)
- 6 Meeting between two of the last four still in a knockout competition (4-5)
- 7 Stiff slip with sections covered by a film to be removed to discover if a prize has been won (7,4)
- 8 Lacking any interest or creativity — nepotist cad (anag) (11)
- 12 One's old university or school (4,5)
- Nice region? (7) 16
- 17 Hamper (6)
- German painter Max, a pioneer of Dada, d. 1976 (5) 19
- 23 Egg cells (3)

### SUDOKU

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#### 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.

2

7

9

2

4

#### LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST



#### YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

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

Someone who is far away is going to be on your mind today, and you are on their mind as well. In fact, they/ve been thinking about you for a while now and are eager to get back in contact. If so, today you need to make an extra effort to reconnect with them.

#### TAURUS | Apr. 20-May 20

Today is a great day to clean out your emotional closet and say what you have been wanting to say to that certain someone. Holding on to your feelings is not wise. It could cause your imagination to run wild and fear to overtake you.

#### (I) GEMINI | May 21-June 20

Lots can be communicated with body language today, so get moving. Arch an eyebrow to ask for an explanation. Bat your eyelashes to turn the current conversation into a more flirtatious one.

#### (5) CANCER | June 21-July 22

Fake it 'fil you make it today! It's fun, it's exciting, and it can be incredibly effective. If you get stuck in a situation that's a bit over your head, call upon your best acting abilities to bluff your way through it.

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

Your quick thinking in a tricky situation will leave others quite impressed, although you might not completely understanding why. In your mind, you did what anyone else would have done in that position.

#### VIRGO | Aug. 23-Sept. 22

There's a fine line between being charmingly talkative and being a blabbermouth. You know how to walk that line, but not all people do. Keep an eye out for a friend or co-worker who isn't watching what they say today.

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

Good and bad energy is floating around you today, and you need to figure out how to avoid the bad. Sure, negative vibes are just a part of life. Sometimes a bummer of a day provides the motivation you need to make a change.

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

If you're looking for more insight into your latest dilemma, turn to your co-workers or friends. You need to consult with someone who is either in the same situation or has been there before.

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

Be careful not to go along with that latest theory people are pushing right now. As you know, new ideas aren't always good ideas. In terms of your romantic life, you shouldn't adhere too rigidly to some new self-help philosophy.

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

The only thing that matters today is doing what you want to do. Stick to your plan and don't let yourself get distracted by anyone or anything. Some very flighty people have been inviting you to join in on their adventures.

#### AQUARIUS | Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Not every romance is constantly a sizzling affair. From time to time things cool off. They have to. So if your current romance is feeling less than dynamic, don't assume it's headed for the end.

#### H PISCES | Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Everybody wants something different today, and trying to get your people on the same page will be a frustrating experience. So focus on activities that are best done alone. Save time for things like reading, napping, and relaxing.

#### COMMUNITY NOTICES

#### COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP NOMINATIONS

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom is inviting nominations from Antigua and Barbuda for Commonwealth Master's Scholarships tenable from 2021. Closing date for nominations is 1st March, 2021. Deadline for submission of applications to the Ministry of Educa-

tion, Sports and Creative Industries is 19th February, 2021. Full details of the scholarships are included in the 2021 terms and conditions, available at: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/about-us/scholarships

#### 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.

#### INVITATION TO CONSTITUENCY TOWNHALL MEETING

Member of Parliament for St. Mary's North, the honourable Sir Molwyn Joseph cordially extends an invitation to his constituents for a Town hall meeting in his constituency on Thursday 28th January 2021. The meeting will be held at the Bendals Primary School starting at 7:30pm. The Parliamentary representative will be updating the constituency on matters of national importance as well as issues specific to the community. The Member of Parliament also holds the Health portfolio and will use this opportunity to discuss issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's response including vaccinations. Matters related to the infrastructural developments will also be discussed with particular focus on the Bendals community. The constituents and are encouraged to attend and raise any other issue they would bring to bring to my attention.



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## Football referees needed urgently

The Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA), in conjunction with the local referee's association, is on an urgent recruitment drive for new officials.

Former president of the Antigua and Barbuda Referee Association Audwin "Jarmar" Walsh, presently who forms part of the physical and technical team that officials locally, train said the need for new officials is urgent and local associating the has just concluded two consecutive recruitment



courses which were successful.

Over forty individuals registered for the initiative and Walsh said the focus during the two sessions was introduction to the laws of the game, practical field work, and classroom session with a phycologist to assist them with the mental aspects of making difficult decisions.

Presently, there are twenty active officials in the local football programme with referees having to officiate five games weekly. Walsh, who is still an active official at the age of fifty, said the local programme needed fifty to sixty referees to function optimally.

The timeline for integrating the new officials is immediate with the hope that all applicants forty will be successful in their upcoming exams.

### Barbados and Trinidad captains confident ahead of the 2021 CWI Super50

Trinidad and Tobago Red Force captain Kieron Pollard believes that his team is blessed with a good blend of youth and experience to enable it to advance to the semifinals, and eventually win the 2021 CWI Super50 tournament. The tournament is slated to be played at the Coolidge Cricket Ground and the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here in Antigua.

Pollard said over the last few years, the Red Force have been beaten in the semifinals, but hopefully, they have the energy and enough gas in the tank to go all the way.

Meanwhile, Barbados Pride Captain Jason Holder said his team is excited and focused on winning the CG Insurance sponsored tournament, set to begin on 7th February. Barbados won the title in the 2016/17 season and Holder believes that, with a shortened season before them, they need to be ready to win consistently.

The West Indies Test captain said there is much excitement in their camp and they are focused on winning and looking forward to the first tournament of the year.

Holder also said that it will be important they hold their nerve and execute under pressure. Both Pollard and Holder are among several West Indies stars set to participate in this year's tournament.

Because of the COVID-19 constraints the 2019-2020 champions, the West Indies Emerging Stars team is unable to defend their title. Eight of those talented players have found spots in the competing franchise teams.

### Florida volunteers to host 2021 Olympics if Japan backs out

As it currently stands, Tokyo is planning to hold the summer Olympics, which has been rescheduled from 2020, this year.

Despite confidence from those in charge of the event that the games will be staged as scheduled and in a safe manner, there are still growing concerns that they will be pushed back or cancelled. The state of Florida has therefore decided to throw its hat into the ring in the event Tokyo is unable to host. On Monday, Florida's chief financial officer, Jimmy Patronis, sent a letter to the International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach asking that they consider taking the games to Florida.

The letter outlined Florida how the state has handled the pandemic and its plans for the COVID-19 vaccine. Patronis also claimed that "unlike other states, when COVID-19 vaccine the reached Florida it did not just sit on the shelf wrapped in government red tape; moved fast to protect the communities."

He used the NBA bubble in Orlando as an example to show that Florida is capable to hold events during the pandemic. However, the letter did not contain any logistical plans on how the state would physically host the game. Presently, there is nothing to indicate the games will be moved from Tokyo.



Team Antigua Pairs, Travis West and Joseph 'JoJo' Nunes celebrate their completion of the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge, on Thursday. /PHOTOS ATLANTIC CAMPAIGNS

### **Team Antigua Pairs finish TWAC2020**

Team Antigua Pairs - Atlantic Rowers has completed the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, The World's Toughest Row!

The team of Travis Weste and Joseph 'JoJo' Nunes completed the race on Thursday afternoon, arriving at Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbour to a rousing welcome of family members and well-wishers, including senior government officials.

Team Antigua Pairs rowed three thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean in a time of forty-seven days, six hours, and fifty-seven minutes.













PAGE 28

FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 2021 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

# **Celebrating Melissa Seaforth**

Sports in Antigua and Barbuda was brought to a halt on 13th March 2020. For most of the year, athletes bemoaned the fact that they were unable to train and compete.

It was certainly α aloomy year in the life of sports on the island, until Melissa Seaforth brought excitement and joy to all athletes, no matter what sport they represented, by electrifying the Central American and Caribbean Championships (CAC) in the Dominican Republic in December 2020.

The CAC championship, which was scheduled to be held in Barbados before being postponed due the coronavirus pandemic, moved to the Dominican Republic.

The country island witnessed thirty-one-yearold Seaforth win the 160cm

**Fitness** Bikini category before moving on and winning the overall section, securing her professional The well-built card. Seaforth was then eligible to participate in the Elite Pro category competition, walking away with first prize and a sweep of the competition in the bikini section.

Seaforth, who started her career in bodybuilding in 2016 with her first competition at the nationals in 2017 where she placed second, said the success at CAC was surprising since her plans were to secure her professional card in 2021, based on her training and preparation schedule.

"I will have to step up my game by working on my overall muscle development and better conditioning now that I am

an elite athlete," Seaforth noted. She told



Melissa Seaforth

PointeXpress there is not much time left in the sport at the age of thirty-one, but she will eventually move to the area of mentorship for upcoming athletes.

The sport is very expensive as Seaforth pointed to the US\$400.00 custom-made swimsuit she wore at the CAC championship, eating properly, training and

travelling as adding to the expenses.

There are nine Antiauan athletes with Elite Pro cards.

Meanwhile, the Antigua and Barbuda Bodybuilding and Weightlifting Federation will be hosting their election of officers on Saturday 30th January at the ABI financial center.



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