



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

POINTX PRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

WEDNESDAY 03 FEBRUARY 2021

ISSUE 186

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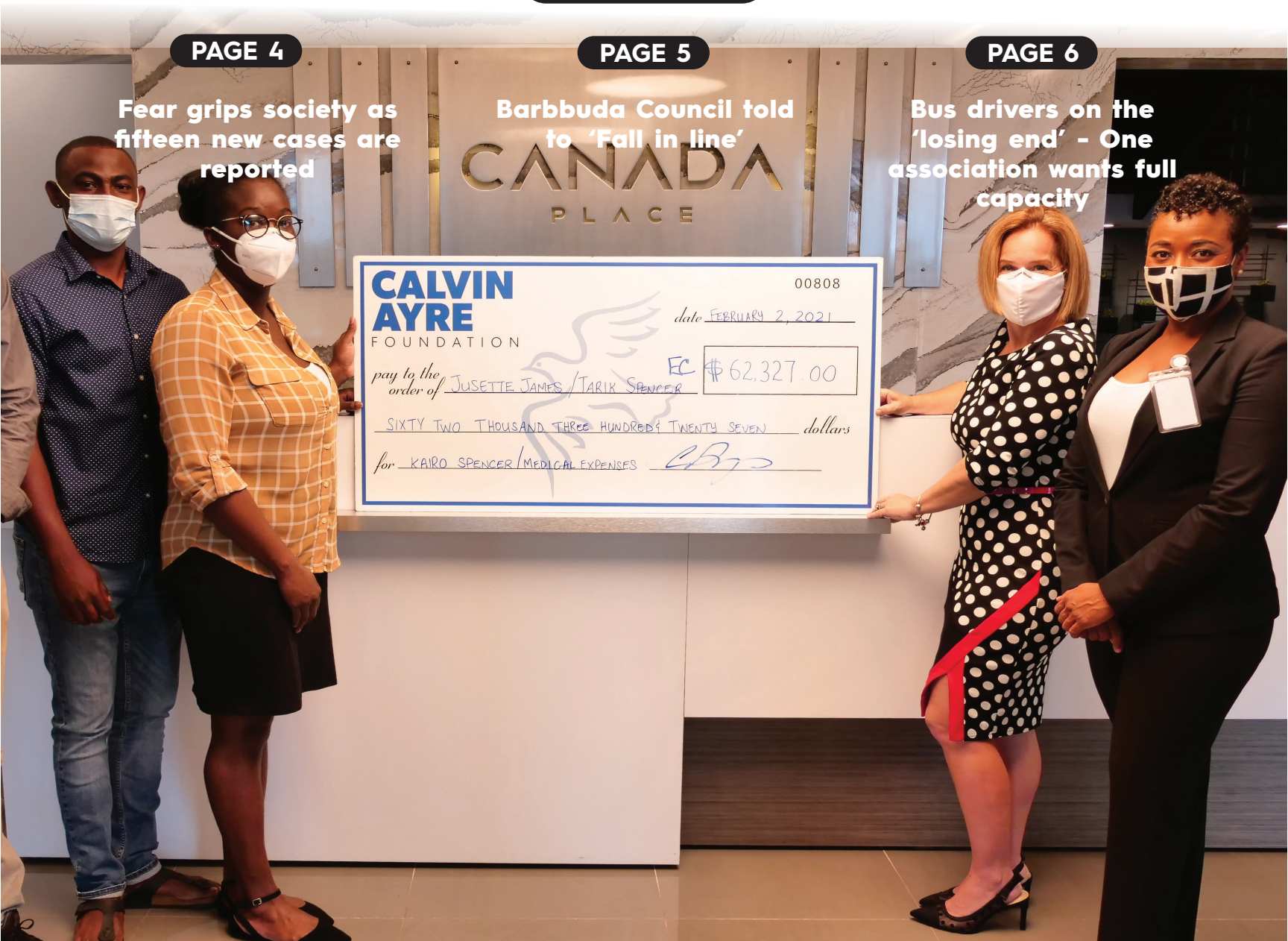


Photo Caption: Calvin Ayre Foundation presents cheque for over \$62,000.00 to the parents of Baby Kairo

RUMOURS AND DISTRUST: RECIPE FOR DISASTER

In our last issue (Monday February 1st, 2021), highly respected physician, Dr. Lester Simon, sought to put to rest the many rumours that have been circulating in the country, almost from the start of the pandemic, that the Ministry of Health, and by extension the government, is hiding the true figures regarding COVID-19 infections.

This hyperactive rumour mill ignores the fact that the data presented by the government regarding the number of positive cases was information provided by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), a highly respected regional body, over which the Antigua and Barbuda government has no control.

In more recent times, the Mount St. John's Medical Centre (MSJMC) developed its own capabilities to conduct the PCR COVID-19 tests and since then its work has been done in close collaboration with CARPHA.

As Dr. Simon stated clearly in his article, hiding data takes much effort and he is too busy managing a department that is at the centre of a crisis to be engaged in such nefarious activities.

Other government officials have stated about the same thing, yet social media posts continue to raise doubts and to openly ac-

cuse 'officialdom' of manufacturing data regarding the rate of infection in the country.

The rumour mill has not been able to point to a single fact or evidence to support the claim, yet there are some who speak with much 'authority' when they make these unfounded claims.

As a matter of fact, using a simple extrapolation, one can easily demonstrate that the rumours are totally unfounded and without a scintilla of merit. If the number of COVID-19 cases is much higher than the authorities are reporting, how come there has not been a corresponding rise in the number of serious cases that require hospitalization? Statistics show that about fourteen per cent of COVID-19 cases require hospitalization. Fourteen per cent of a higher number than is being reported would certainly have resulted in a higher number of persons requiring hospitalization. But that has not happened. It follows, therefore, that the spurious idea that the very capable professionals are concealing data is nothing but hogwash.

Rumours, innuendos and half-truths surrounding a matter as serious as the COVID-19 pandemic are not things to be taken lightly; they have serious conse-

quences. Antigua and Barbuda has just emerged from its worst month with regard to the number of new positive cases reported since the start of the pandemic. Much of this could be related to what has been described as 'health protocol fatigue' as many have become restless and wary of constantly having to adhere to the health protocols such as the constant wearing of masks and social distancing, among other things.

Many have openly flouted the regulations with gay abandon. As these activities increased so too has been the rise in the number of positive cases. Unfortunately, there are some whose 'restlessness' could lead them to engage in the type of behaviour about which the health authorities have warned.

If there is a sense that the figures are been rigged one way or another it may give some people cover to act in a manner that may be injurious to themselves and to others. Those who have initiated these rumours or who may have been engaged in helping to spread these untruths should understand that they are not doing themselves or anyone else any favour by engaging in this practice. In short: please cease and desist!

No Lockdown!

Despite the recent upsurge in the number of positive COVID-19 cases reported in the country over the past week, there are no immediate plans by the government to institute a second lockdown of the country.

Attorney General and Minister of Public Safety, Steadroy Benjamin, said when the Cabinet convenes its weekly meeting today he will not be proposing to the other members that they should agree to another lockdown.

"I am aware that we have had several new positive cases; however, as Minister of Public safety, I don't believe that we should go the route of a lockdown. My feelings are that we should wait for a week or so to examine the development before we make that decision," he explained.

According to the Public Safety Minister, none of his other Cabinet colleagues has made contact with him to discuss a lockdown. "Nobody, not the Prime Minister, nor the Minister of Health has called to dis-

cuss the matter. However, we will discuss the matter in further details at Cabinet later today," he stated.

Benjamin is suggesting that the government should concentrate on encouraging residents to strictly adhere to the health protocols as established by the Ministry of Health. Additionally, the Attorney General will be recommending stiffer penalties for those who break the curfew regulations. He will also discuss ways to improve the policing of the state of emergency regulations.

The minister has expressed dismay over what he said are examples of residents continually flouting the regulations, despite information of the recent increase in the number of cases and the established fact that adhering to the protocols works.

"Sometimes as I drive around I see people in groups at street corners socializing without wearing masks. They are putting themselves and their families at risk. They are also putting the nation at risk!"



Attorney General and Minister of Public Safety Steadroy Benjamin

he declared.

Last week, the government extended the curfew hours under the state of emergency for a twenty-one-day period. The move came following several consecutive days of high positivity rates and govern-

ment said the move was designed to bring to rate under control. The curfew hours are 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Previously, they were from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

It promised that the matter will be reviewed at the end of this period.



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Fear grips society as fifteen new cases are reported

The Ministry of Health is reporting that its latest data has revealed that there are an additional fifteen new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Monday 1st February 2021.

The latest information has led to a sense of dread that has now gripped the society.

Several institutions in the country have been forced to close their operations on a temporary basis after individuals within their organizations have either tested positive or may have been exposed to someone who did. One such organization is the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force with seven officers having reportedly tested positive for the virus. On Tuesday, the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) closed its Redcliffe Street Branch due to COVID-19 exposure.

In a statement, ECAB said all employees of its Red-



cliffe Street branch have been quarantined due to potential exposure to COVID-19. The bank said the building will be sanitized in accordance with national COVID-19 protocols.

"It is unclear when the bank will reopen but customers are being advised to use automated and online systems and night deposit functions will continue to function normally," ECAB said.

Meanwhile, the Seventh

day Adventist Church has announced the closure of both its secondary and primary schools for the rest of the week due to COVID-19 exposure.

This comes as the Ministry of Health announced Tuesday that subsequent to the publication of the dashboard for Monday 1st February with the cut off time of 6:00 p.m., sixty-eight additional samples were processed by MSJMC, increasing the pending results from zero to sixty-eight.

Of the sixty-eight samples processed by MSJMC, fifty-three were negative and fifteen positive. Thirteen are non-imported and two imported. Investigations have begun and contact tracing and testing are ongoing.

The sixty-eight samples are reflected in the **total persons tested** and **total samples taken** columns of the dashboard.

Meanwhile, two recoveries have been recorded, bringing that total to one hundred and seventy nine. Four additional persons have been hospitalized, bringing that total to twenty-one. One hundred and ninety-eight samples are pending.

Consequently, the total number of persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda remains at two hundred and forty-nine (249); which is inclusive of sixty-three (63) active cases.



Colin James CEO of ABTA

Tourism CEO confident about industry future

Antigua and Barbuda's best days are still ahead where the tourism industry is concerned, despite the prolonged battering that the sector is taking from the COVID-19 pandemic. So says the CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA), Colin James, while speaking Tuesday morning on the PointeFM programme Starting Pointe with Shelton Daniel.

He expressed conviction that the situation would turn around for the benefit of all, borrowing the well-known "better days are coming."

The pandemic has brought global tourism to its knees due to travel restrictions and border closures in several countries, forcing hotels, guest houses and other hospitality establishments to close and cruise ships to indefinitely sus-

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Barbuda Council told to 'fall in line'

The Cabinet has asked the Barbuda Council to discard its proposed shut-down of the island and to implement the new curfew measures instituted by the government effective last Friday.

Informed sources say the Cabinet convened an extraordinary meeting on 31st January 2021, when it discussed the matter concerning the confirmation of two positive cases of COVID-19 on the island of Barbuda and the press release issued by the Barbuda Council captioned "Positive COVID-19 Cases recorded for Barbuda Effective February 1st to February 5th 2021."

The sources say during its

deliberations, Cabinet reiterated its fullest commitment to taking all necessary and lawful measures to protect the lives and livelihood of all citizens and residents of Antigua and Barbuda. Notwithstanding the contents of the press release issued by the Barbuda Council, the Cabinet re-emphasized its pledge to collaborate with the Barbuda Council to implement the policies of the government and at all times to act in the interest of the state of Antigua and Barbuda.

Accordingly, in respect of the emerging public health concern in Barbuda, that is, the confirmation of two positive COVID-19 cases

the Cabinet has agreed that Barbuda Council should be advised that the lawful authority in the state to make decisions for the closure of any establishment is the Central Board of Health and any restrictions on the movement of persons or their activities is regulated by the Public Health Act.

Following consultations with the Attorney General and having received advice from legal counsels within the Ministry, Cabinet agreed that the Barbuda Council has no authority impose any measures articulated in its press release of 31st January.

Cabinet also agreed that the Ministry of Health

should work with the Barbuda Council to approve measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on the island or elsewhere within the state. Cabinet further agreed that all business establishments on the island of Barbuda, inclusive of major developments, to include activities associated with the PLH development and other construction projects, with the exception of bars and clubs, shall be permitted to operate between the hours of 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. daily. Cabinet expressed in unrelenting support for all and any efforts to safeguard the health, lives and livelihood of all the residents of Barbuda.

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pend operations.

Restaurants and bars worldwide have either been shut down as part of lockdowns to prevent clustering of people that could facilitate transmission, or made to operate under stringent conditions such as prohibition of all dining-in, with food served on a takeaway-only basis, for example.

Monday of this week, 1st February 2020, marked twelve years since James has been CEO of ABTA, and he agrees that the pandemic has ravaged the industry in Antigua and Barbuda, and all other countries that are heavily dependent on tourism within the Caribbean and elsewhere.

But he believes one of this country's and the region's greatest strength is in their resilience, noting that they

had bounced back from the global economic crisis that arose in 2008 and whose effects continued to be felt for several more years.

"I have no doubt about this and no hesitancy in my spirit that we will bounce back from this one as well. We've endured catastrophic climatic events and Hurricane Irma is an example. We've gone through difficult challenges that have affected our tourism like the sargassum crisis. You name it. We've had heavy exogenous shocks before but we've always come back because we're a resilient people. We've been surviving for hundreds of years and will continue to do so because of the drive and passion of our people to ... weather these storms and to come back."

James does not agree that the region may have staked too much on tourism, given its vulnerability to international crises.

"When you look at this pandemic, the vulnerability goes across the board, whether you're selling cars or manufacturing cars. I think the only industries that are booming nowadays are those making sanitizers, Clorox and that sort of thing ... If anyone had told us last year around this time that the whole global economy would come to a halt and we would have had over a million people dead from a virus, we would have thought that's something from a science fiction novel or movie. But I think as we go forward we will build the resilience that we need, and we have been remarkable

in doing that. When you look at the protocols that are involved as the new normal in sanitizing hotels and making sure people are safe; not only the people who come here - but mainly the people who live and work here - I think we have done a remarkable job."

James said the pandemic has revolutionized the way people work, citing the Digital Nomad Residency Programme, which Antigua and Barbuda has domestically rebranded as 'Business on the Beach.'

"Based on some of the preliminary data that I am seeing for the pent-up demand of people just to get up and travel after all this lockdown would have finished, then we would be well positioned to take advantage of those new opportunities."

DPP attends Caribbean DPPs virtual conference



Anthony Armstrong Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

Antigua and Barbuda's Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Anthony Armstrong, joined DPPs from seventeen Caribbean islands at a recent virtual conference co-hosted by the United Kingdom and United States.

Conference notes said participants discussed the difficulties and challenges they collectively face, as organized-crime groups exploit structural vulnerabilities and benefit from the

ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Armstrong joined DPPs from The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the British Overseas Territories.

Conference delegates heard from regional and international experts on a range of issues, including the resumption of trials after COVID-19 and vulner-

able witnesses in serious crime and sexual exploitation cases, recognizing the impact on children as online and offline sexual abuse increased.

The release said Justice of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago, Lisa Ramsumair-Hinds and Cheryl-Lynn Vidal, Director of Public Prosecutions from Belize, presented and led a discussion on trials held with judges alone, in the light of the ban on

jury trials during the pandemic.

"DPPs were treated to a wellness session on productivity and managing stress by Mathew Brown, productivity 'Ninja'. Legal and administrative issues faced by DPPs were the subject of a roundtable discussion led by Donna Babb-Agard, QC, DPP of Barbados, including appeals on points of law during trials and sentencing guidelines," according to the release.

UK Chargé d'Affaires Craig Fulton, who opened the conference, said, "My hope is that DPPs can identify some of the regional best practices in the fight against serious organized crime and explore the potential for a collaborative approach in policy-making in these areas in the Caribbean."

Criminal Justice Adviser to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, Sirah Abraham, lauded the conference as yet another demonstration of the US's and UK's commitment to supporting the role of the DPP, especially in the context of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

MSJMC introduces strict new visitation policy

The country's main public hospital, the Mount St John's Medical Centre (MSJMC), has put in place new policies to govern visitor access to the health institution amidst the coronavirus outbreak.

"To ensure excellent patient care as well as family and visitor safety, the MSJMC health teams are

working around the clock to stay on top of the evolving COVID-19 situation. We are monitoring the rise in COVID-19 cases very closely and adjusting our visitation guidelines as needed," a statement from MSJMC said.

The hospital is also suspending all outpatient clinics, except for the

following: High Risk Maternity, Oncology, Pediatrics and Dialysis. It noted that patients requiring prescription renewals are asked to visit their community clinic.

The new policy reduces visiting hours to a single hour - 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. - and will only allow a single visitor at a bedside during that period.

Separate rules apply for pediatric patients, especially the guidelines regarding parents/guardians who may need to overnight with these younger patients.

The new policy is already in effect until 21st February 2021. Further information is available on the MSJMC Facebook page.

Study findings of NDNP's ecosystem released

The Nelson's Dockyard National Park (NDNP) has released the findings of a study of the area's ecosystem to coincide with the observance of World Wetlands Day on Tuesday.

The study was commissioned by the National Parks Authority in partnership with the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG). It examines the wetlands throughout the park which are largely covered by several species of mangrove. These include the Red, Black,

White and Buttonwood mangrove.

World Wetlands Day seeks to bring awareness of the importance of wetland ecosystems as a source for freshwater, which is becoming increasingly limited in supply across the globe. The mangrove wetlands play crucial roles in supporting ecosystems such as seagrass beds and coral reefs, protecting coastlines, supporting local livelihoods and ecotourism activities, and providing habitats and nurseries for coastal marine organisms.

The National Park study will achieve a better understanding of the ecological, spatial distribution and threats of mangrove wetlands. It will also guide the future monitoring and management of these ecosystems throughout the park.

Among their major threats are illegal dumping, back-filling and termites, which attack the Red and Black mangroves in particular.

The research however uncovered the obvious presence of mangrove seedlings at all areas under

study, raising hope for strong recovery potential and possible source stock for mangrove restoration activities.

The report on the study can be found on the National Park website at <https://www.nationalpark-santigua.com/eco-wetlands/>. The actual research and document preparation were carried out by Marine Ecologist at the National Parks Authority, Ruleo Camacho, and Wildlife Officer with the Environmental Awareness Group, Britney Hay.

Bus drivers on the 'losing end' - One association wants full capacity

One association representing most of the bus drivers who operate at the East Bus Station is said to be the cause of commotion amongst bus operators.

According to the President of the Bus Association (ABBA), Keithroy Black, whose association represents mainly West Bus Station drivers, since a notice was issued by the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board (ABTB) on Friday, indicating reduced seating capacity for buses, some drivers at the East Bus Station have resorted to striking by withdrawing their buses from the routes.

Black said that the Northeast Bus Association indicated in

a meeting on Sunday that, "If you (ABTB) are not giving us what we want today we are not budging; we will continue to strike."

They demanded that they be allowed to operate at full capacity or receive a massive discount on gas.

The ABBA president said that the men also refused to comply with the shift system, implemented months ago due to COVID-19, where most drivers work every other day or three days a week. Instead, "They are going to take their bus from home and just work every day," Black shared.

"It's worrisome and I just find people are just selfish and bad minded," he lamented

in response to their stance.

Black further disclosed that the General Manager of the ABTB, Hubert Jarvis, offered an alternative to 'ease the squeeze' bus drivers are experiencing. He said Jarvis agreed that "each bus will receive one hundred dollars each week for the twenty-one days. If it goes beyond that then they will extend it."

Also on the table was a twenty-five per cent discount on fuel - a proposal the government had been looking into for some time. Both options could have been available to the bus drivers, but Black revealed that the members of the other association made it

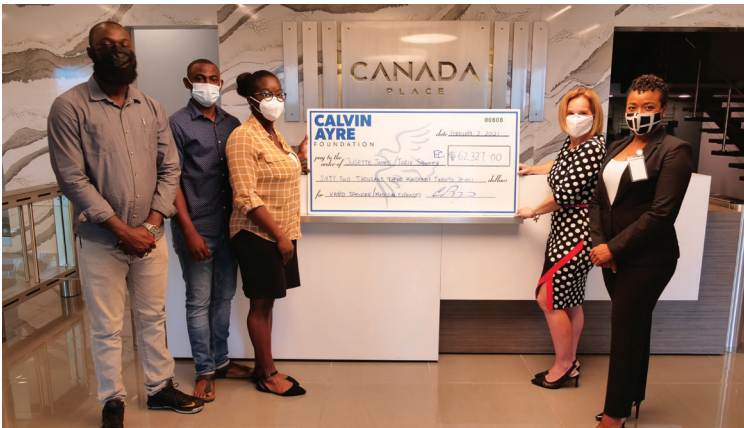
known "that they are not crackheads; they are not taking no one hundred dollars."

"The noise that was being made overshadowed reasoning," he further explained, noting that all drivers are now at the 'losing end.'

The ABBA president also claimed that politics is involved in this matter.

"It's not about drivers anymore, it's not about association. To me it goes beyond this and I'll tell you why. I am being attacked personally because I work for the government of Antigua and Barbuda," he alleged. He claimed that he was threatened to be fired should the opposition party takes over.

Ayre funds emergency airlift for Baby Kairo



The parents of two-week-old Kairo Spencer, who needs emergency health services not readily available in Antigua and Barbuda, have been informed that one of the country's main charitable organizations - the Calvin Ayre Foundation (CAF) - has agreed to fund their travel expenses.

On Tuesday, a representative from CAF informed the parents - Jusette James and Tarik Spencer - that it would make a donation to cover emergency airlift and expenses for Baby Kairo in the amount of EC\$62,327.00.

Both parents are said to be brimming with optimism and have expressed gratitude for having received the donation they almost thought would have been impossible, after reaching out to various organizations.

Kairo was born prematurely on 16th January and was diagnosed with small bowel or intestinal atresia. The condition is one in which there is a narrowing of the segment of the intestine that connects the stomach to the large intestine. As such, Kairo has not eat-

en since birth and often regurgitates any food given to him via intravenous methods.

A CAF statement noted that all children with intestinal atresia and stenosis require an operation, and the exact type of operation differs depending on the location of the obstruction.

"With no on-island paediatric surgeon to perform this type of surgery, the family was faced with waiting for a visiting surgeon, before Kairo could be examined. The significant impact on travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, would delay Kairo's chances of survival, as his condition would become critical after two weeks without immediate medical intervention.

"When the CAF team met with the parents and uncle of Baby Kairo, it was a meeting punctuated by anxiety, hushed tones to disguise tears, but mostly of hope.

"Speaking on their feelings of their precious son's condition, Jusette, a nurse by profession, said 'I think that this (being a nurse) is the hardest part for me; seeing and knowing the drastic ends

of both of it. I know firsthand that anything can happen, at any time. This is the hardest thing I've ever had to deal with - I never expected to have so much difficulty having my first child. Some days I don't know feel like I can cope with it - I don't know what else to do."

Tarik added that for him, this was a very emotional time seeing Kairo like this, struggling and seeing Jusette stressed out and crying every day. "I just want him to get through it and for him to be okay," he said.

During the emotional presentation on Tuesday at the Ayre Group's Canada Place Headquarters, the family accepted the donation in the amount of EC\$62,327.00. This will cover Kairo's flight by air ambulance to Jamaica's Bustamante Children's Hospital, the cost of surgery, and hospitalization.

CAF's Executive Director, Corinna Delowsky, said, "We receive so many applications for assistance and the task of selecting the causes we support is very difficult. We would love to assist many more. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has posed an immense

challenge and we have had to refocus towards pandemic relief. This new baby, who is only two weeks old, and his first time parents' story really stood out to us. We hope our contribution gives Kairo a fighting chance."

NOTICE

To: His Worship the Licensing Magistrate
To: The Magistrate District "A"

And

To: The Commissioner of Police

I, **Hancong Cao** of All Saints Road, Radio Range in the Parish of St. Johns in the State of Antigua and Barbuda **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is my intention to apply at the next licensing session to be held at the Magistrate's Court, High Street, St. John's, Antigua, District "A" on the 25th day of February 2021 for a "Liquor License" in respect of my premises known as "Guang Yuan Enterprise" situated at All Saints Road, St. John's, Antigua.

Dated the 15th day of January 2021

Peyton J. V. Knight & Associates
Solicitors for Hancong Cao

BVI businesses angered as Port Authority hikes shipping fees

(BVI NEWS): BVI News has received complaints from some sections of the business community that are dissatisfied with the BVI Ports Authority's (BVIPA) decision to hike fees as of 1st March 2021.

A public release from the BVIPA said the adjustments in select fees are overdue and are necessary to efficiently and properly operate and further develop the territory's port facilities.

An increase in BVIPA fees is of significance to regular consumers as almost all business sectors use the Port Authority to import goods into the territory. This means consumers will likely be affected once they rely on businesses such as supermarkets, automotive dealers, hardware stores, clothing stores, etcetera, for goods and services.

Consumers will feel in-

crease

The business operators who contacted our news centre say with the hike in cargo-related fees, they will have no choice but to pass on some of these costs to consumers who are already struggling with day-to-day living expenses because of COVID-19.

The new fees are posted on the BVIPA's website but our news centre could not do a comparison because the old fees have not yet been located.

However, some operators allege that some fees have increased by one hundred per cent and others by more.

"I understand that the fees haven't been raised in a long time but you don't go and do all your raises in one hit. You can't do twenty-five years of patching up overnight. It's not the people's fault. The people

are the ones who are going to be penalized," said one business owner who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"I've been running some figures and whereas before a forty-foot container would cost four hundred dollars to import, it will now cost you over eight hundred dollars to import and that doesn't include wharfage. It's like double-decking because you've got carrier charges (ships) which are being increased and when the consignee (business owners) pay for the cargo, there are significant increases," the entrepreneur said.

Former BVIPA boss decries price hike

Our news centre was also told that storage costs for containers have increased dramatically.

Yesterday, former Managing Director of the

BVIPA, Claude Skelton Cline bemoaned the increases on his Honestly Speaking radio programme. Skelton Cline said he understands that the government needs revenue, but said now may not be the best time to increase these fees that will no doubt be passed on to the consumers.

The BVIPA said the amended fees were made effective on 18th December 2020.

However, Acting Managing Director Oleanvine Maynard said: "The BVI Ports Authority is applying a grace period for full implementation until 1st March 2021 to ensure the public has the opportunity to become familiar with the new fees."

After this date, all payments must reflect the new fees established by the amendment.

Jamaica WEED WOES - Shortage threatens medicinal marijuana sector

(Jamaica Gleaner): Adverse weather and inferior plant strains have been cited for an island wide ganja shortage that could threaten Jamaica's emerging medicinal marijuana industry.

The illegal marijuana trade has also been impacted by the developments, sparking a meteoric rise in prices.

President of the Westmoreland chapter of the Ganja Growers and Producers Association of Ja-

maica (GGPAJ), Rasta Juta, said that the confluence of scarcity and manipulation from speculators has caused price instability, with weed normally costing \$5,000 rising to a minimum bid of \$8,000 on the market.

The market's wild ride can even fetch the price of \$80,000 per pound among deep-pocketed purchasers, said Ras Juta.

Storm-force rains from weather systems Eta and

Zeta pounded Jamaica's agricultural sector in October and November 2020, racking up a preliminary estimate of \$2.4 billion. But the data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries are unlikely to capture the severity of fallout at ganja farms, which largely operate outside the law and are linked to illegal intra-island sales and transnational smuggling.

Ras Juta said that the strains of marijuana that

dominate the ganja fields of Jamaica are not resistant to the vagaries of the weather, which could jeopardize the country's prospects of tapping a medicinal marijuana market projected to reach US\$44 billion by 2024, according to research firm IMARC Group.

"We no longer have our sativa, it's all hybrid ganja," said the Rastafarian, referring to the biological name, Cannabis sativa.

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SVG Gov't ups Customs charge to fund regional agencies

(IWN SVG): The government is taking a step back from implementing a slew of revenue-earning measures in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister of Finance Camillo Gonsalves said in his Budget Address on Monday.

He, however, announced a one-percentage-point increase in the Customs Service Charge, which will go toward funding regional agencies and organizations, from which St. Vincent and the Grenadines benefits.

In presenting the EC\$1.2 billion fiscal package, Gonsalves said the new measure is expected to raise almost EC\$10 million.

"The increase will move the Customs Service Charge from five per cent to six per cent, a rate that is still among the lowest in the region," he told lawmakers, who are expected to approve the budget by the end of this week.

"We expect the measure



Minister of Finance Camillo Gonsalves

to yield \$9.6 million this year which represents less than 1.5% of budgeted revenue," he said.

"It is precisely the nature of the times and challenges that demand our response today. We simply cannot manage the pandemic and the volcano without properly funded regional institutions."

Gonsalves said that current challenges — including the coronavirus pandemic, the on-going effusive eruption of La Soufriere volcano and the dengue epidemic — have high-

lighted "the indispensable role" played by a number of regional organizations in the governance, safety and resilience of SVG.

"Our response to the pandemic to date would have been impossible without the support and technical experience of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Pan-American Health Organization and the Regional Security System (RSS),"

The finance minister further said that the monitoring, analysis and prepara-

tion for any eventuality at La Soufriere were made effective through Kingstown's cooperation with a number of regional organizations.

He listed the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Caribbean Meteorological Services and the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre.

He said that these agencies and more "constitute an extension of local functions of our government, and are inextricable from the work of a modern nation state.

"They are also collective entities, upon which multiple nations in our region depend," he said.

Gonsalves said that the functions of these essential agencies are "significantly stymied by irregular and insufficient funding."

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"The hybrid ganja cannot take the rain because it is not native to Jamaica."

Paul Burke, programme director and chief spokesman for the GGPAJ, said anecdotal accounts indicate that consumption of the drug has increased during the coronavirus pandemic, inducing soporific highs to deal with increasing stress and mental health woes reported globally.

"More people have called me about obtaining

ganja since COVID than ever before, so there might be consumption also going up," said Burke, former general secretary of the Opposition People's National Party.

"People have called me saying they want to learn to grow ganja - all of this since COVID, there has been renewed interest."

Checks with local drug-awareness and control organizations could not verify that claim.

The GGPAJ said that it

would be ramping up a campaign in February to promote the cultivation of marijuana in line with the law. In 2015, Jamaica decriminalized the possession of a maximum of two ounces of marijuana and allows for each household to grow no more than five plants.

There were several large seizures of marijuana by the police in 2020, including a major bust in May netting approximately 8,700 pounds of compressed

weed with an estimated street value of \$35 million.

Other big hauls were made in Barrett Hall, of more than 1,000 pounds (\$4 million), in September; 1,960 pounds (\$7.8 million) in Parottee, St Elizabeth, also in September; and 3,000 pounds (\$12 million) in November.

Two Jamaica Defence Force soldiers were also allegedly busted with more than 1,500 pounds in Gutters, St Elizabeth, in October.

St. Lucian arrest by COVID-19 wardens goes viral

(St Lucia Times): An arrest by COVID-19 Wardens in Castries went viral after someone posted a video recording on social media.

Police told St Lucia Times that they are aware of the video. But they have not issued an official statement.

However, according to an eyewitness, the incident unfolded on Saturday afternoon near the Ciceron Bus stand in Castries. The eyewitness explained that she arrived on the scene as three COVID-19 Wardens were trying to place handcuffs on a male individual. Two of the wardens were young women.

The woman told St Lucia Times that the man had not been wearing a mask. But in the video recording people also made reference to a knife.

"You all have guns, you all don't want the man to have a knife," someone declares.

At least one member of the crowd shouts encouragement to the man to resist as the three wardens struggle with him.

The commotion, which attracted a group of on-lookers, eventually ended with the officers taking the man into custody. But a relative told St Lucia Times that officers subsequently released the resident of Trou Rouge, Castries.

It was not immediately clear whether officers had charged him.

Police selected and trained one hundred and seventy-three individuals late last year and trained them as COVID-19 Wardens. They have been deployed in various communities to help ensure people comply with existing COVID-19 protocols.

NOTICE

To: Her worship,
The Licensing Magistrate.
District "A" Magistrate Court
Grays Farm
St. John's Antigua

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

I **Elvis Joseph** of Freetown the owner of Hillside Snackette whose registered business is situated on Freetown Main Road in the Parish of St. Philip in Antigua and Barbuda, **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is my intention to apply at the next Special Session to be held at the Magistrate Court, St John's Antigua on the 25th day of February 2021, next ensuring, for a tavern License in respect to my premises known as Hillside Snackette situated at Freetown. This application is made pursuant to section 11 (5) of the Licensing (Intoxicating Liquor) Act, Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.

Respectfully yours,
Elvis Joseph

Dated 22nd January, 2021

**WE'RE PROTECTING
OUR CUSTOMERS
FROM COVID-19**



In response to Public Health direction, we:

- ✓ Make hand washing and hand sanitizer available.



- ✓ Ensure sick employees stay home.



- ✓ Clean and sanitize surfaces frequently.



- ✓ Stay home if you are feeling sick, including:

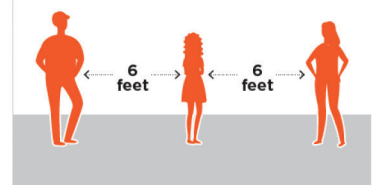
fever OR shortness of breath OR cough OR any other sign of illness



- ✓ Please wear a face covering.



- ✓ Keep at least 6 feet apart from others.



- ✓ Thank you for helping prevent the spread of COVID-19.



A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Biden signs orders on migrant family separations and asylum



Only unaccompanied minors are covered by the ruling

(BBC): US President Joe Biden has signed three executive orders, seeking to reunite migrant families split up by a Trump-era policy and to order a review of his predecessor's wider immigration agenda. In an attempt to deter illegal immigration, President Donald Trump's administration separated undocumented adults from children as they crossed the US-Mexico border.

Mr. Biden's orders will set up a task force to try

to reunite the estimated six hundred to seven hundred children who are still apart from their families. The Trump administration split up at least 5,500 children from adults along the border between 2017-18.

The administration of US President Barack Obama - whom Mr. Biden served as vice-president - also separated undocumented children from adults at the border, though much more rarely, say activists.

One of Mr. Biden's orders

will set up an inter-agency task force - led by the newly confirmed Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas - to oversee family reunifications

Mr. Biden's second and third orders signed on Tuesday order a review of Mr. Trump's immigration policies that curtailed asylum, slowed legal immigration into the US, and cancelled funding to foreign countries.

Speaking at the White

House, Mr. Biden said: "We're going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration that literally, not figuratively ripped, children from the arms of their families, their mothers and fathers, at the border and with no plan, none whatsoever, to reunify the children who are still in custody and their parents."

Mr. Biden has also proposed legislation to grant legal status and a path to citizenship to all of the estimated eleven million undocumented people in the US. But analysts say the new president has so far avoided reversing Mr. Trump's hardline policies in order to avoid a surge in illegal immigration at the southern border.

At Tuesday's White House briefing, press secretary Jen Psaki said the administration was committed to building a "moral" and "humane" immigration system. But until that happened, she added, now was "not the time to come to the United States."

REAL TALK

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KENTAE & BERNARD**

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TUESDAY 9pm-Until**



Amazon's Jeff Bezos to step down as CEO later this year

(Aljazeera): Amazon.com Inc has announced that longtime CEO Jeff Bezos will step down from his post later this year, transitioning to executive chairman of the world's largest online retailer.

In a statement on Tuesday, the company said Bezos will be replaced in the fall by Andy Jassy, who currently runs Amazon's cloud business.

"Amazon is what it is because of invention. When you look at our financial results, what you're actually seeing are the long-run cumulative results of invention," Bezos said in the statement.

"Right now, I see Amazon at its most inventive ever, making it an optimal time for this transition."

Bezos founded Amazon as an online bookstore twenty-seven years ago and turned it into a behemoth that sells just about everything. In the process, he became one of the world's richest people, with Forbes estimating his current net worth at over \$196.2bn. Amazon has faced criticism, however, for working conditions at its warehouses, with human rights groups urging the company to ensure workers' safety is protected.

The company nonethe-

less has seen record profits since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, which pushed consumers to turn increasingly to Amazon for delivery of home staples and medical supplies as brick-and-mortar shops closed their doors due to public health restrictions. Net sales for Amazon rose to \$125.56bn from \$87.44bn in the fourth quarter of last year, which ended 31st December, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

In a note to employees posted on Amazon's website on Tuesday, Bezos said he intends to stay engaged on important Amazon initiatives but would also turn

his attention to other interests, including The Washington Post newspaper, which he owns.

"I've never had more energy, and this isn't about retiring," he said.

The company's next CEO, Jassy, joined Amazon in 1997 and has an MBA from Harvard Business School, according to the company's website. He founded Amazon Web Services (AWS) and grew it to a cloud platform used by millions, the company said.

Amazon said it would not be announcing a replacement for Jassy at this time.

US billionaire buys SpaceX flight to orbit with three others



U.S. billionaire Jared Isaacman

(AP): A U.S. billionaire who made a fortune in tech and fighter jets is buying an entire SpaceX flight and plans to take three "everyday" people with him to circle the globe this year.

Besides fulfilling his dream of flying in space, Jared Isaacman announced Monday that he aims to use the private trip to raise \$200 million for St. Jude

Children's Research Hospital, half coming from his own pockets.

A female healthcare worker for St. Jude already has been selected for the mission. Anyone donating to St. Jude in February will be entered into a random drawing for seat No. 3. The fourth seat will go to a business owner who uses Shift4 Payments, Isaacman's credit card process-

ing company in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

"I truly want us to live in a world fifty or one hundred years from now where people are jumping in their rockets like the Jetsons and there are families bouncing around on the moon with their kid in a spacesuit," Isaacman, who turns thirty-eight next week, told The Associated Press.

"I also think if we are going to live in that world, we better conquer childhood cancer along the way."

He's bought a Super Bowl ad to publicize the mission, dubbed Inspiration4 and targeted for an October launch from Florida. The other passengers aboard the SpaceX Dragon capsule — what Isaac-

man calls a diverse group "from everyday walks of life" — will be announced next month. SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk expects the flight to last two to four days.

Isaacman's trip is the latest deal announced for private space travel — and it is No. 1 on the runway for an orbital trip.

"This is an important milestone toward enabling access to space for everyone," Musk said during a press conference Monday from SpaceX headquarters in Hawthorne, California. While expensive, these initial private flights will drive down costs over time, he noted.

Last week, a Houston company revealed the

cont'd on pg 14

Two million Australians in lockdown after one coronavirus case found

(Reuters): About two million Australians began their first full day of a strict coronavirus lockdown on Monday following the discovery of one case in the community in Perth, capital of Western Australia state, but no new cases have since been found.

Authorities ordered a five-day lockdown of Perth after a security guard at a hotel used to quarantine people returning from overseas was found to have contracted the virus.

The state government said sixty-six people have been deemed close contacts of the unidentified guard and none of those already tested were infected.

"In total thirteen close contacts have now tested negative and of those eleven high-risk contacts have been moved into hotel quarantine as an extra precaution," Western Australia state Premier Mark McGowan told reporters in Perth.

Tests on the rest of the close contacts were expected to be completed



Medical workers administer tests at the Bondi Beach drive-through coronavirus disease (COVID-19) testing centre in the wake of an outbreak in Sydney, Australia, December 22, 2020. /PHOTO REUTERS/Loren Elliott

on Monday, McGowan said.

Australia has managed to largely contain its novel coronavirus epidemic - limiting cases to nearly 29,000 and deaths to nine hundred and nine - with the sort of decisive action seen in Perth, and tight border controls.

A vaccine campaign is due to begin this month, which Prime Minister Scott Morrison said would cost at least A\$6.3 billion (\$4.8 billion).

Australia had already pledged to spend A\$4.4 billion to acquire enough doses for its 26 million population, but Morrison said his government had set aside a further A\$1.9 billion to pay for the roll-out.

"The strategy is backed by an initial allocation of around A\$1.9 billion in new support for the vaccine roll-out. This is on top of more than \$4.4 billion allocated for vaccines purchases," Morrison said

in a speech in Canberra.

Classifying the inoculation programme as his "first priority", Morrison said the economy must now begin to wean itself off government spending.

Australia has pledged more than A\$250 billion in stimulus, which has already begun to taper.

But Morrison said there was a limit to the support government could afford.

"We are not running a blank cheque budget," Morrison said.

cont'd from pg 13

names of three businessmen who are paying \$55 million apiece to fly to the International Space Station next January aboard a SpaceX Dragon. And a Japanese businessman has a deal with SpaceX to fly to the moon. In the past, space tourists had to hitch rides to the space station on Russian rockets.

Isaacman would not divulge how much he's paying SpaceX, except to say that the anticipated donation to St. Jude "vastly exceeds the cost of the mission."

While a former NASA astronaut will accompany the three businessmen, Isaacman will serve as his own spacecraft command-

er. The appeal, he said, is learning all about SpaceX's Dragon and Falcon 9 rocket. The capsules are designed to fly autonomously, but a pilot can override the system in an emergency.

A "space geek" since kindergarten, Isaacman dropped out of high school when he was sixteen, got a GED certificate and started

a business in his parents' basement that became the genesis for Shift4. He set a speed record flying around the world in 2009 while raising money for the Make-A-Wish programme, and later established Draken International, the world's largest private fleet of fighter jets.

Myanmar doctors stop work to protest coup as U.N. considers response

(Reuters): Staff at 70 hospitals and medical departments in 30 towns across Myanmar stopped work on Wednesday to protest against the coup that ousted elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the newly formed Myanmar Civil Disobedience Movement said.

A statement from the group said the army had put its own interests above a vulnerable population facing hardships during the coronavirus pandemic. The virus has killed more than 3,100 people in Myanmar, one of the highest tolls in Southeast Asia.

"We refuse to obey any order from the illegiti-

mate military regime who demonstrated they do not have any regards for our poor patients," said a statement from the protest group.

Four doctors confirmed they had stopped work, but did not want to be identified.

"I want the soldiers to go back to their dorms and that's why we doctors are not going to hospitals," one 29-year-old doctor in Yangon told Reuters. "I don't have a time frame for how long I will keep on this strike. It depends on the situation."

Student and youth groups have also joined the civil disobedience campaign.

Reuters was unable to reach the government for comment on the doctors' action.

The army seized power on Monday, cutting short an unsteady transition to democracy on the grounds of fraud in last November's general election, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won in a landslide.

The coup drew condemnation from the United States and other Western countries as the ruling generals detained Suu Kyi and dozens of other officials.

Nobel Peace laureate Suu Kyi, 75, remains in detention despite international calls for her immediate release. An NLD official said he had learned she was under house arrest in the capital Naypyidaw and was in good health.

In the biggest public protest against the coup so far, people in the commercial hub of Yangon chanted "evil be gone" and banged on metal pots late on Tuesday in a traditional gesture to drive away evil or bad karma.

The latest coup is a massive blow to hopes the impoverished country of 54 million people was on the path to stable democracy.

At the United Nations, the world body's Myanmar envoy Christine Schraner Burgener urged the Security Council to "collectively send a clear signal in support of democracy in Myanmar". U.S. President Joe Biden has threatened

to reimpose sanctions on the generals who seized power.

U.S. Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tried but was unable to connect to Myanmar's military following the coup.

The council is negotiating a possible statement that would condemn the coup, call for the military to respect the rule of law and human rights, and immediately release those unlawfully detained, diplomats said. Consensus is needed in the 15-member council for such statements.

But a diplomat with China's U.N. mission said it would be difficult to reach consensus on the draft statement and that any action should avoid "escalating the tension or further complicating the situation."

The Biden administration had determined the power-grab constituted a coup d'etat, triggering restrictions in foreign assistance. Humanitarian aid, including to the stateless Rohingya Muslim minority, and programmes that promote democracy or benefit civil society would continue.

The International Monetary Fund said it had little hope of recovering \$350 million in cash it to the Myanmar government days before the coup, part of a no-strings-attached emergency aid package to help the country battle the coronavirus pandemic.

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: Wednesday 3rd February 2021
Time: 8:30AM - 12:00PM
Affected areas: Law Pasture

Date: Wednesday 3rd February 2021
Time: 8:45AM-11:30AM
Affected areas: Section of Parham

Date: Wednesday 3rd February 2021
Time: 8:45AM-11:30AM
Affected areas: Section of Clare Hall west of the secondary school

Date: Wednesday 3rd February 2021
Time: 10:00AM-12:00PM
Affected areas: Section of All Saints Road and Renfrew

Date: Thursday, 4th February 2021
Time: 8:45AM-11:30AM
Affected areas: Section of Wireless Road east of the New Testament Church

Date: Thursday, 4th February 2021
Time: 8:45AM-11:30AM
Affected areas: Section of Bolans

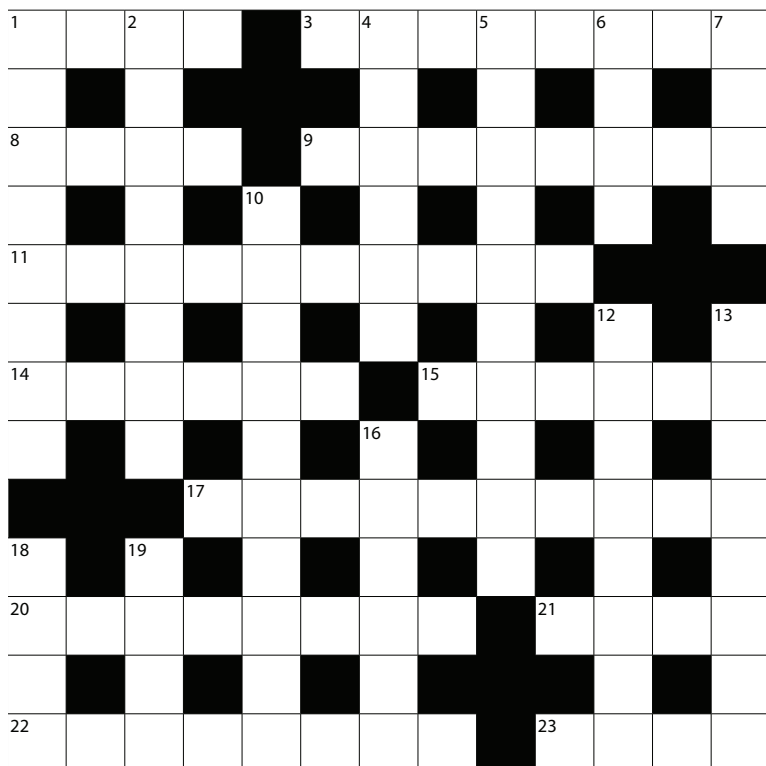
Date: Friday 5th February 2021
Time: 8:45AM - 12:00PM
Affected areas: Section of Lightfoot west of BBC Relay Station

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.



QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Jolly joke (4)
- 3 The adventures of Captain Kirk? (4,4)
- 8 Care for (4)
- 9 Wooden house (3,5)
- 11 Straying from the party line (3-7)
- 14 One of Jupiter's moons (6)
- 15 Area that's the commercial heart of Venice (6)
- 17 Theatre stage (10)
- 20 Yobbo (8)
- 21 French bread (4)
- 22 You needn't thank me (3,2,3)
- 23 Sell (4)

Down

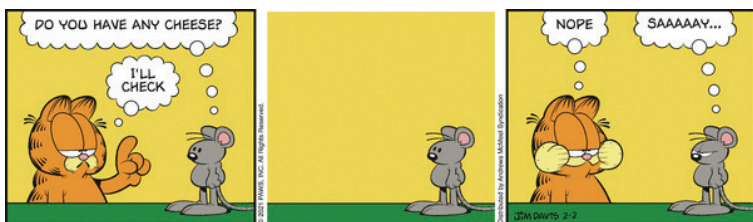
- 1 Festive party (8)
- 2 Sleeveless dress, like an apron (8)
- 4 Chinese philosophical system based on the teachings of Lao-tzu (6)
- 5 Generally accepted (10)
- 6 Red gem (4)
- 7 Sharp twist (4)
- 10 Aromatic leaves, used for flavouring (10)
- 12 Last — mutilate (anag) (8)
- 13 Was at one (with) (8)
- 16 Attack (6)
- 18 Bottom of one's face (4)
- 19 Chimney dirt (4)

DAILY COMICS

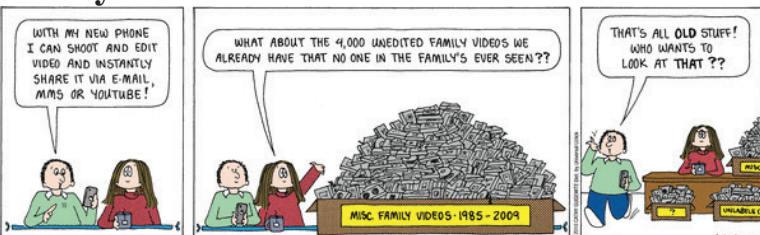
Dilbert



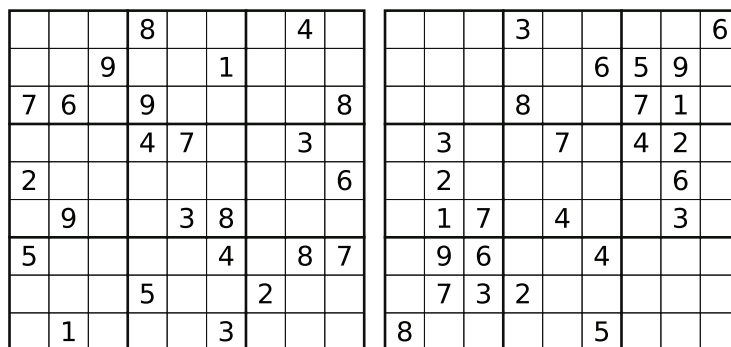
Garfield



Cathy



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
02/03



83° Hi
DAY
Partly sunny with a shower in places

75° Lo
NIGHT
Partly cloudy with a shower in places

Sunrise 6:38 AM Sunset 6:04 PM Moonrise 11:50 PM Moonset 11:43 AM

THU
02/04



82° Hi
DAY
Partly sunny with a shower in places

74° Lo
NIGHT
Partly cloudy with a passing shower or two

Sunrise 6:38 AM Sunset 6:04 PM Moonrise 10:52 PM Moonset 11:43 AM

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

♈ ARIES | Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The audience you appear in front of today isn't in the mood for vagueness or coded business speak. You need to speak directly and clearly if you want to keep their attention any longer than common manners requires them to give it.

♉ TAURUS | Apr. 20-May 20

You're far too humble to start bragging left and right about your recent accomplishments, but in your quest to not be pompous, are you depriving yourself of some positive press that you really deserve?

♊ GEMINI | May 21-June 20

Lighten up about yourself! No matter how bad things may or may not be right now, there is plenty of stuff in your life that you can celebrate. Stop dwelling on the worries and the woes that have been swirling around your head lately.

♋ CANCER | June 21-July 22

Being selfless and giving your time to a worthy cause is a wonderful thing to do, but if you're only doing it for bragging rights, there's no point in doing it at all. People can see through a false act, even yours, which is better than most.

♌ LEO | July 23-Aug. 22

The biggest risk you can take in life isn't letting it all ride on black at the craps table or betting your life savings on a football game. No, the biggest risk you can take is to give your heart completely to someone else.

♍ VIRGO | Aug. 23-Sept. 22

When you feel a jolt of social electricity hit you today, go with it. Don't be too rigid and try to figure out why you're feeling this burst of conviviality, just enjoy it! You're starting to see someone in a whole new light.

♎ LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 22

Are you afraid to take on a leadership role? You might have no choice today when other people start looking to you for answers or advice. Don't freak out! You can handle their questions. Feel free to give advice on topics you are familiar with.

♏ SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Save all of your outrageous antics for another time. Today you want to keep things low-key. Ironically, being subdued will end up getting you a lot more attention than being flashy would. Being loud and flamboyant is a problem right now.

♐ SAGITTARIUS | Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Is someone's generous gift causing you to feel guilty? Do you worry that you don't truly deserve the praise (or the price tag)? Set your guilt aside and learn how to accept the things that people give to you.

♑ CAPRICORN | Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The person you are worried about right now needs your patience and support more than anything, so give them the space they're asking for. Don't be too demanding of them about coming clean with all their innermost feelings.

♒ AQUARIUS | Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You could be given a wonderful opportunity to share what you think with people who can make a difference in your world. Their fixed ideas about what is right are starting to loosen up, and they are in an unusually receptive frame of mind.

♓ PISCES | Feb. 19-Mar. 20

If you're going to be around a big personality today, your tendency might be to let them take the lead and call the shots. After all, they enjoy it and they seem to be pretty good at it. What you need is a more level-headed person.

NOTICE

To: Her worship,
The Licensing Magistrate.
District "A" Magistrate Court
Grays Farm
St. John's Antigua

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

I, **NADIA MARTIN**, of Skerrits Pasture, St. John's, Antigua **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is my intention to apply at the next special sitting to be held at the Magistrate's Court, Perry Bay, St. John's, Antigua on **Thursday 25th, February, 2021** for a Tavern License for the premises known as **HAAD's Restaurant & Bar** situated at Skerrits Pasture in the Parish of St. John's in the Island of Antigua pursuant to **Section 11(5) of the Licensing (Intoxicated Liquor) Act, Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.**

Dated the 28th, January, 2021

Cumberbatch & Associates
Attorneys-at-Law for the Applicant

NOTICE

To: Her worship,
The Licensing Magistrate.
District "A" Magistrate Court
Grays Farm
St. John's Antigua

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

I, **SELOCHNIE PERREIRA**, of Sutherlands, St. John's, Antigua **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is my intention to apply at the next special sitting to be held at the Magistrate's Court, Perry Bay, St. John's, Antigua on **Thursday 25th, February, 2021** for a Tavern License for the premises known as **Ryan's Bakery** situated at Sutherlands in the Parish of St. John's in the Island of Antigua pursuant to **Section 11(5) of the Licensing (Intoxicated Liquor) Act, Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.**

Dated the 28th, January, 2021

Cumberbatch & Associates
Attorneys-at-Law for the Applicant

THE ROOT KULCHA

RADIO SHOW 99.1 FM

WITH RAS JUBA & JUSTICE



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Australia pull out of South Africa tour

Australia have pulled out of their tour of South Africa because of coronavirus concerns. The teams were due to play three tests, subject to bio-secure protocols being agreed.

But Cricket Australia said it had "no choice" but to postpone the

series because of the health situation in South Africa, where a more contagious variant of the virus has been reported.

Australia had named a 19-man man squad, but the schedule had not been confirmed. It has become clear that travelling from Australia

to South Africa at this current time poses an unacceptable level of health and safety risk to the players, support staff and the community, said Cricket Australia interim chief Nick Hockley.

The government has announced it is to carry out door-to-door testing

in parts of England for a new variant of coronavirus originally identified in South Africa. More than 100 cases of the South Africa variant have been spotted since 22 December. Most are linked to travel, but some may be community cases.

Tokyo 2020 president says Olympics still on

The 2020 Olympics, postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will go ahead this summer "however the coronavirus evolves", Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said Tuesday, brushing aside doubts about the event.

Organizers, Japan's government and Olympic officials are trying to shore up support for the Games de-

spite a surge in infections around the world, less than six months before the opening ceremony.

Doubts about the Games have grown as countries have been forced to re-enter lockdowns, with large parts of Japan currently under state of emergency, but Mori sounded a confident note.

"We certainly go ahead however the coronavirus

pandemic evolves, Mori told a meeting of Olympic organizers and members of Japan's ruling party in Tokyo.

The comments came hours before Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is expected to announce a month-long extension of the state of emergency, meaning the measure will run until March 7 in Tokyo and several other states.

Hetmyer donates to Berbice cricket development



West Indies player Shimron Hetmyer

Guyana - The Berbice Cricket Board will later this week sign an agreement with West Indies player Shimron Hetmyer to set up the Shimron Hetmyer Berbice Cricket Development Fund.

The three-year contract would involve GYD700,000 for purchasing cricket balls to donate to clubs across Berbice, and GYD200,000 for a University of Guyana scholarship for a cricketer living in the Canje/New Amsterdam/East

Bank-Berbice area.

Additionally, from 2022, the fund would pay the cost of CSEC for two students from the Berbice High School.

BCB said Hetmyer and his family have been generous to the Board and have already committed to sponsoring three tournaments at the cost of GYD500,000.

The Berbice Cricket Board has thanked Hetmyer and his family for their massive investment in Berbice Cricket.

More communication and inclusiveness in ABABWF

The new executive of the Antigua and Barbuda Bodybuilding and Weightlifting Federation hosted their first meeting on Sunday after securing the organization's leadership the previous day via elections held at ABI center.

New president Hazel Went was the overwhelming winner, defeating her predecessor Dave George 43-19, while Kimberly Percival was elected as vice-president.

Speaking with **Point FM's** morning sports program *Touchline*, Percival said the executive's first order of business is filling out the appointed positions. Second on the agenda is planning the 2021 schedule of events, including hosting their first championship

as an executive and organizing fundraisers.

Percival noted that the athletes have been training and are anxious to showcase their hard work. "Securing more sponsorship is also a priority and a number of adjustments will be made to make the sport stronger," she explained.

President Hazel Went noted that there are a number of former athletes on the executive and her leadership style will include more inclusiveness and communication among the membership. The former athletes noted that the Federation will embark on a recruitment drive and, when the environment allows, they will look to promote the sport in schools as part of their development program.

Other members



Kimberly Percival



Hazel Went President



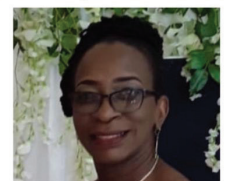
Dwayne Edwards



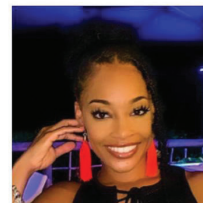
Jonte Barnes



Sher-Rhonda Greenaway



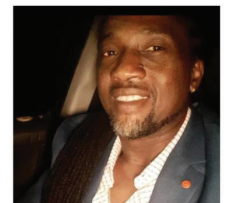
Marvette Richards



Melissa Seaforth



Steve Williams



Joseph Meade

ABABWF Executive

on the ABABWF executive are Dwayne Edwards, treasurer; Jonte Barnes, assistant treasurer; Marvette Richards, secretary; Melissa Seaforth, public

relations officer; Joseph Meade, athlete and event coordinator; and former national champion Steve Williams, assistant athlete and event coordinator.

DEWS



with
VERON 'EPLIUS' EDWARDS JR.
VERNON A. SPRINGER



POINTE FM



MONDAY-FRIDAY
7:00am - 8:30am



99.1 FM