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SCHOOLS TO REOPEN ON APRIL 12

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Caption : Students in all educational institutions return to face-to-face learning on April 12.

Editorial: Schools reopening a sign of things to come

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EDITORIAL

Schools reopening a sign of things to come

The announcement that the Ministry of Education will commence face-to-face learning in all educational institutions in Antigua and Barbuda is welcomed news for all, whether one is a parent, a teacher or ordinary citizen in the community.

For approximately one year, all educational institutions ceased in-class learning and turned exclusively to online/virtual learning. Even with the best of intentions, these arrangements were bound to be fraught with a host of challenges.

Suspending classes was never an easy decision for any government. This is evidenced with the news reports emanating from across the Caribbean and the world at large of the many issues that have had to be resolved to make learning available to students.

Issues such as the need for children to socialize

with their peers have become discussion points across these islands and beyond. The long-term impact of having children miss a whole year of what would be normal interaction is still being assessed by sociologists and others.

Beyond the need to have students return to face to face learning, which everyone agrees is best for them, there is also the impact that closing schools for an entire year has had on the nation's economy. There are many vendors who ply their trade selling food, snacks, drinks and other items at school compounds across the country. Many of these individuals are women; many head households and are self-employed. Their inability to operate their businesses has had a negative impact on their homes as money and food are therefore in short supply.

Then there are the

suppliers of 'back-to-school' items such as books, pens, school bags and uniforms, all integral part of the economy of education. All have suffered significantly these past months. These companies/individuals are expected to breathe a collective sigh of relief with the announcement from the Ministry of Education.

Opening of schools will also have a psychological impact nationwide. It will certainly send a signal that after one year of lockdowns and curfew that the light at the end of the tunnel is now visible. It is a sign that as the government rolls out the vaccination campaign and as the nation races towards the 'herd immunity' now being touted by government officials that the country is finally turning the corner in dealing with the pandemic.

Over the past year with schools closed and learning moved to

homes, it has become a delicate balancing act for many parents who have been unable to take their children to daycare centres and often had nowhere else to take their children to allow them to go to work. This has been particularly difficult for many single mothers especially, who are expected to greet the announcement with much applause.

Opening schools in just over a month will provide a LIVE laboratory for the nation as policymakers consider the reopening of other sectors of the society. The lessons learned from schools as they undertake this task will undoubtedly be studied and analyzed by educators, government officials, as well as leaders of industry. Let us hope that the reopening of schools in a month's time will be a resounding success. The nation is depending on it!

Students return to the classroom on 12th April



Thousands of students who have been out of the classroom for almost a year because of the coronavirus pandemic are to return to face learning on 12th April at the start of the third term in the 2020-2021 school year.

Director of Education Clare Browne, who made the announcement, said this decision affects all education institutions in the country, whether private or public. It was mid-April last year that the government moved to protect the school population when it decided to suspend all face-to-face learning and to pro-

vide teaching via virtual means.

"All remote (virtual) learning will close on April first and the school Easter vacation will run from April 5 to 9, with classes resuming in all institutions on April 12 for face-to-face teaching," Browne declared.

However, the Director of Education said there are a number of things that need to be completed if this timetable is to be met. "These will depend on the continued management of the COVID-19 cases as well as the vaccination of teachers, staff at the school plants as well as school drivers and con-

ductors," he explained.

The government also announced a schedule for the vaccination of all teachers, education officials and technicians as well as ancillary staff. "Education officers, technical officers, heads of departments, level heads, master teachers, senior teachers as well as executive members of the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers will be vaccinated this Saturday and Sunday (March 6 and 7) at the American University of Antigua campus near Jabberwock beach," he revealed.

All other teachers and ancillary staff, including

school bus drivers and conductors, will be vaccinated during the week of 8th to 10th March at the Antigua Girls High School. Parking will be provided at the Lion's Den grounds.

Browne said the process will see the vaccination of approximately three thousand people and he is asking for the cooperation of all to ensure that the programme runs smoothly. Those teachers or officials who are unable to attend this weekend's inoculation because of religious or other reasons may go to the AGHS centre during the upcoming week.

Meanwhile, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) has announced its strategy for the administration of the 2021 regional summer examinations, following a meeting with the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD).

After reviewing CXC's proposal, consensus was reached by the meeting's attendees, which included Ministers of Education, senior Ministry of Ed-

ucation officials and pertinent stakeholders from across CARICOM.

CXC's proposal was formulated following extensive consultations, led by the Ministries of Education at the national level and inclusive of local stakeholders in education. The primary focus was to ensure that the administration of the regional examinations would not disenfranchise the region's students, in light of the ongoing disruptions to the education system caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COHSOD-Education has approved the following:

a) That CXC will ad-

minister the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCLSC) Examinations in their original format; that is, for CAPE and CSEC Papers 01, 02 and 031 (School-Based Assessments [SBA]) or Paper 032 for private candidates, and for CCSLC, Papers 01 and 02;

b) That the examinations will be scheduled during the period June/July 2021, CSEC and CAPE written examinations commence on 14th June and end on 16th July 2021. Results

will be made available to the Ministries of Education in the last week of September 2021;

c) That an extension will be given for the deadline by which students can decide to defer the sitting of the 2021 examinations. All Candidates will be required to indicate their intent for deferral by 1st May 2021; and

d) That taking into consideration the loss of learning many students experienced, that CXC will share with Ministries of Education for communication to Candidates, the Broad topics to be assessed on Paper 02, five (5) weeks in advance of the start of examina-

tions.

COHSOD-Education also approved the dates of 27th – 28th May 2021 for the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment™ (CPEA™) examinations, 19th – 22nd July 2021 for CCSLC examinations and that the online Training and Assessment Quality Audits for the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) will be conducted during the period May to August 2021, with dates determined by individual participating territories. Timetables for all examinations are available on CXC's website, www.cxc.org.

Mother is seeking answers



Malco Codougan

The mother of the young man whose body was discovered outside his home on Wednesday morning said she wants answers into the cause or causes of his death.

The police have not made any determination about the possible cause of death of twenty-three-year-old Malco Codougan of St Vincent and the Gren-

adines, who had been living in Antigua for almost two years.

A passerby noticed the body outside the house sometime between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. Wednesday and he alerted the neighbours. The ambulance was summoned after the EMS realized that he was already dead. The police arrived on the scene soon after

and are still carrying out their investigation. His mother, Lynette Codougan, who resides in St Vincent, told PointeXpress that so far she has not heard from the police in St. John's. Information about her son's death was relayed through family and the media.

She said she is troubled by the death of her son, especially over the fact that he was struck by a motor vehicle while on duty as a security guard and his many attempts to get some compensation have all met a wall of indifference.

Lynette Codougan reported that Malco visited the insurance company where the vehicle is insured, only to discover that the driver never submitted a report. Even the company where he worked appeared unwilling to assist. He eventually sought the advice of a union and had consulted a lawyer.

In a statement issued Wednesday, the police said they are continuing their investigations into the matter. Under situations such as this, a post mortem examination is normally conducted on the body to provide a definitive cause of death.

Nearly twenty-four hundred vaccinated on Day-4



President of the Antigua and Barbuda nurses association Nurse Soria Dupie-Winston

Nearly twenty-four and fifty-seven and hundred people were APUA three hundred vaccinated Thursday – Day 4 – of the mass vaccination programme rolled out on Monday this week.

Reports from the four centres where the vaccination is being done indicate that approximately two thousand, three hundred and ninety-four people presented themselves to be vaccinated. The Sir Novelle Richards Academy continues to be the busiest site with six hundred and forty vaccinated, the Multipurpose Cultural Centre with five hundred and fifty-seven, Villa/Point Polyclinic five hundred and seven, Glanville Polyclinic had three hundred

More than ten thousand persons have so far been vaccinated since the exercise started two weeks ago with healthcare workers.

Meanwhile, in keeping with plans to vaccinate people sixty-five-years and over as a priority, vaccination sites will open in All Saints, and Jennings to cater for the elderly in the south, south west and south east of the island.

To facilitate convenient access, vaccination sites will open at the All-Saints Secondary School and the Jennings Primary

School over the period 8th to 10th March. Consequently, the vaccination sites at the Glanvilles and Villa Polyclinics will close temporarily for these three days to allow the vaccination teams to inoculate persons in these two areas. The vaccination sites in both the Glanvilles and Villa Polyclinics will resume inoculation from 11th March. The public vaccination sites will close on weekends to focus on vaccinating targeted groups.

Additionally, teachers will be inoculated over the period 8th to 10th March at the Antigua Girls High School. Also, people who are incapacitated and with disabilities will be prioritized for vaccination in their homes through a scheduling system.

Vaccination was also conducted at the Central Board of Health, the Defence Force, and the National Solid Waste Management Authority.

Most doctors infected with COVID-19 virus have recovered

Most of the nine doctors on staff at the Mount St. John's Medical Centre (MSJMC) have since recovered, although they have not yet returned to active duty.

That is the update provided by Medical Director at MSJMC, Dr. Albert Duncan, who reported that the health institution has had to find ways to cope with the shortage created by their illness.

"The risk to our healthcare workers is one of the great vulnerabilities of our healthcare system in a pandemic like this," said Dr. Duncan. "As Medical Director, whose team includes these physicians, I know they understand the risks of our calling. Our thoughts and prayers for a full and speedy recovery are with each of them and their families."

Seven out of the nine physicians infected are recuperating well at

home. Out of an abundance of caution, two of the physicians are currently at the Infectious Disease Centre (IDC) receiving treatment.

"The growth we are seeing in COVID-19 cases in the country is placing an ever-greater strain on our hospital," said Dr. Duncan. "This has very real consequences for our team."

The MSJMC was acutely aware of the COVID-19 risk to healthcare workers. This is a global concern – the unprecedented risks they continue to face during this pandemic. Health workers have a markedly higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19, especially if they are exposed to a high volume of sick patients (such as in the Emergency Department (ED)) or respiratory secretions (such as in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU)).

"Because of this, we work closely with

health authorities and our infectious disease specialists to ensure the appropriate policies and procedures are in place to mitigate risk.

"MSJMC has repeatedly warned of the threat posed by COVID-19 to our employees and have taken several measures to limit the spread of the virus. We are committed to providing safe, high-quality care for our communities as well as protecting our patients and employees. Currently, testing is prioritized for patients and employees who show symptoms of COVID-19," a statement from the hospital said.

The Medical Director added, "The last thing any hospital wants is for its workforce to be exposed and the workforce to become ill. Our multidisciplinary care teams can't physically distance themselves from the patients they

treat and that increases both the risks and the fear that we all have of losing a colleague.

"So, of course, they are stepping up and answering the call for help, but they are not superheroes or angels: they are women and men who have children and families and friends and responsibilities – And as I've said before, if you want to honour them, wear a mask, avoid large gatherings, follow the safety guidelines we've been shouting from the rooftops since this all started."

The MSJMC urges the public to remain vigilant. The COVID-19 virus is dangerous and its impact is still unfolding. The hospital encourages all eligible residents to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available and encourages eligible family members and friends to join them in getting the vaccine.

ERRATUM

In our last issue, we published erroneous information about how the parents of the late Ralph Francis met their death. PointeXpress sincerely apologizes to all concerned for this error.

Ten new cases revealed overnight

Ten new COVID-19 cases were confirmed overnight by the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Health said it received test results from the Mount St. John Medical Centre (MSJMC) which revealed ten (10) new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 6:00 p.m. One hundred and forty-two (142) samples were processed at MSJMC, increasing the pending results from zero to one hundred and forty-two (142).

Of the one hundred and forty-two (142) samples processed by MSJMC, one hundred and twenty-three (123) were negative and nineteen (19) positive. Nine (9) of the positive

cases were repeat tests. Twenty-eight (28) recoveries have been recorded, bringing the total to three hundred and fifty-five (355).

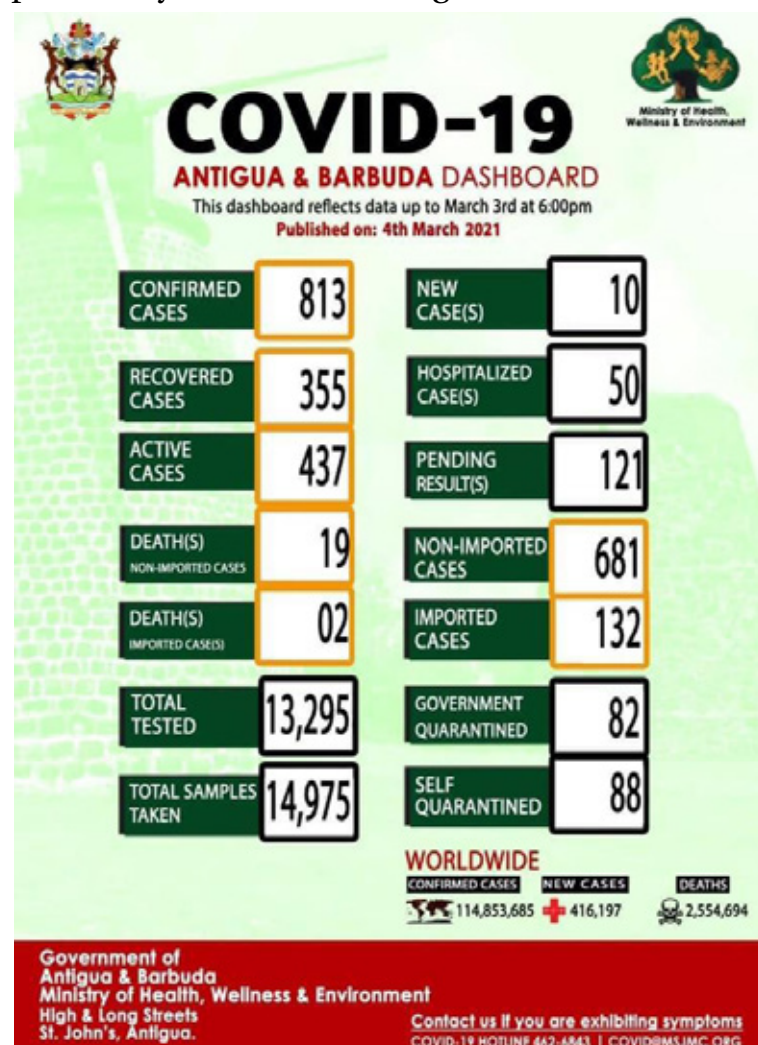
Consequently, the total number of persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda is eight hundred and thirteen (813); which is inclusive of four hundred and thirty-seven (437) active cases.

Meanwhile, there are one hundred and twenty-one samples pending.

In related development, the United States' Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a travel advisory for Antigua and Barbuda based on the

number of active cases in the country. It places the country at Level 4, the highest risk level. The CDC had previously stated that

any number of positive cases that is more than ten cases per one hundred thousand people would attract a higher risk level.



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Government clarifies what 'vaccine passport' entails

By *Shelton Daniel*

The term 'vaccine passport' has created some confusion in the media, according to Information Minister Melford Nicholas, who set about to clear this up on Thursday morning.

During the weekly post-Cabinet press briefing, Nicholas said he has seen comments on social media where persons seem to believe that getting a vaccine passport means they need to obtain another passport.

His answer to that was a definite no. "As I would have indicated when the health officials came back to us since last year, they had indicated that a number of persons who came back home would have fraudulently represented that they had a negative PCR test, because it's in the form of a paper document, and it could be doctored and manipulated to give a wrong impression." He continued: "Because COVID is so dangerous and countries may wish to have a vaccination proof of inoculation as a pre-requisite for entry, to be totally reliant on paper representation may not be such a good thing, because each

person at the end of this process is given an inoculation card with a date and time on it. But ... you take it to another country, they may not easily recognize the authenticity of that particular card.

"And so, what we have built into this process – the registration portal where persons are getting registered now and where the health officials are loading up the information – that portal ... is currently being digitized. But the digitized information, the digitized register, will be made available or can be made available through the airline community, through IATA [International Air

Transportation Association], such that when persons leave here they will have their own cards and own barcode card to be able to take with them and say 'Yes, I am vaccinated and this is the evidence.'

"But when they get to another port of entry, those ports of entry would be in a position – through investigation of the digital registry – to be able to make a comparison and a validation of what is being transported in paper form. And so, that is what is meant by a [vaccine] passport ... IATA is an organization that all ports of entry subscribe to – it doesn't matter which country – and so,

once IATA has access to this information, it will be able to transport it to any country that our citizens may hope to visit."

Nicholas added that Antigua and Barbuda is "clearly in a position to give validation and authenticity to documents that [travellers from this country] will be able to carry on their person. But there is no need to amend the existing e-passports that they now have. That programme continues, and what I've just described will be a complement to the e-passport that they already have in their possession."



Home quarantine still an option

By *Shelton Daniel*

Despite the recent announcement that home quarantine for COVID-19 would no longer be permitted, it appears the situation remains flexible and some persons may actually be allowed this regime on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of relevant health authorities.

Information Minister Melford Nicholas had previously said home quarantine was being discontinued because of the tendency by some persons to abscond and not honour the undertakings they give as conditions of being allowed to spend the mandatory fourteen-day period within an approved private setting. He had then announced that, going forward, all persons requiring quarantine would have to spend the time at a government-provided facility where their compliance and movements could be monitored and traced.

One such government quarantine facility is the renovated Jolly Beach Resort. But with a recent surge in COVID infections requiring increased vigilance and screening, the number of persons needing to be quarantined and isolated has reportedly swelled to such numbers that the facilities were quickly utilized to capacity.

During the weekly post-Cabinet press briefing on Thursday morning, Nicholas was apprised of a case involving a person who had arrived from another OECS territory a week ago and was allowed to quarantine at a private home as the sole occupant.

The individual has told PointeXpress that upon arrival at the V.C. Bird International Airport she learned that she would be granted this concession because there was no more space at the available government facilities. She also pointed out that she was permitted the home quarantine without being fitted with an electronic tracking bracelet, because, she claims to have been told, there were no more available.

The visitor, who expressed absolute commitment and adherence to the terms of her quarantine, said her only disappointment is in the non-fulfilment of a promise that nurses would visit her every two days during the quarantine period to evaluate her condition – but this has not been done even once in the seven days since her arrival.

When this was put to the Information Minister on Thursday, this was his response: “There are a range of options that the port health authorities [have] at their disposal, one of



which is the public quarantine facility. They still have the authority under law to make a determination if, in exceptional circumstances, they would want to give consideration to home quarantine. And when those home quarantine situations are being considered, they have an additional option of affixing a bracelet to those persons to ensure that they remain honest to the options that would have been granted to them.”

Nicholas said he knew of situations where some of his own constituents in St. John's City East, who were undergoing quarantine, had issues which they needed addressed. He said in such cases, numbers have been provided which they can call if the matter needs escalation to the attention of authorities tasked with attending to these matters.

Said the Minister, in conclusion: “Understand that we are working in a dynamic situation here, where persons are facing many different audiences, many different urgencies, many different meetings. So, sometimes there is slippage, but that does not change the fact that the health officials are working to ensure that the health of the community remains safe ... But the general policy is that persons who are returning home to take care of their loved ones, to make a visit, will not ordinarily be permitted to stay in their homes. We have suffered the bad experience and the bad consequences of that during last Christmas. And so, they will be, as a matter of first choice, asked to spend time in a government quarantine facility.”

ABLP Barbuda branch names its slate for Council Elections

The Antigua Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) Barbuda Branch has announced the names of five candidates who will contest the 29th March Barbuda Council elections.

In a statement, the branch said it arrived at the final list of candidates following numerous discussions “to determine how we can bring much needed changes that will put our people and country in a

better position. We have met with residents, and listened to their input.”

According to the statement, the members of the branch’s interaction with the people of the sister island revealed that many Barbudans are concerned with the manner in which the Barbuda Council is being managed. “Many have expressed they are disappointed with the leadership displayed and

the administration of the Council,” the statement noted.

The candidates who will contest the poll on the party’s slate are Tyrone Beazer, Wesley Beazer, Hesketh Daniel, Makiesha DeSouza and Kelcina George.

“They are ready, prepared, and have a mantra that is centered on much needed change, proper management, and putting the

people first. The Barbuda Council is a pivotal arm of government. It is essential there is representation from both sides to assist with balance, accountability and transparency,” the statement continued. The Electoral Commission has named 17th March as the day when nomination of candidates for the Council Elections will take place.

Art students commemorate milestone of slave history project

4th March 2021 - ENGLISH HARBOUR: The Heritage Department of the National Parks Authority is once again bringing attention to the 8th of March Project, an educational and genealogical research initiative that has been uncovering important elements of Antigua’s slave history.

The ongoing project has also been creating ancestral connections



with modern communities in Antigua.

The project was inspired by a tragic event on 8th March 1744 when a horrific explosion took the lives of enslaved Africans in the Antigua Naval Dockyard.

The discovery of their names prompted a search by the Heritage Department to deepen its research for more names.

The story of these men was discovered within archival records that listed them as property that their owners used to require compensation after the explosion. The proceeds aided in the establishment of the Antiguan Naval Dockyard.

Their names were Billy, London, Johnno, Dick, Scipio, Caramante Quamano, Joe, and James Soe. Through additional archival searches, hundreds of names of enslaved Africans have been uncovered such as Antigua, Rothsay, Bailey, William and many more,

almost seven hundred names thus far.

The 8th of March Project has grown since its launch in 2020. The project has focused on the significant contributions and lives of these African men and hopes to make ancestral linkages as well expand the interpretation of Antiguan history, especially as it pertains to the Nelson's Dockyard National Park. As the project progresses, the focus of educational outreach and the involvement of the local community has increased tremendously.

This year's commemoration will be in the form of an art exhibit with artistic contributions from the Antigua State College Cambridge Art Class.

These students are creating pieces inspired by their interpretation and connection with the stories and individuals discussed within the 8th of March Project. These pieces will be displayed later this year for the Antiguan community to be able to view once the COVID restrictions allow. Nonetheless, the activity is only one part of a whole, where other

students with talents in Computer Science and Information Technology can transform the archival information into a digital database, easily accessed by locals and the diaspora who are keen to learn about their ancestry.

The National Parks Authority is expressing gratitude to all those who have lent their support in keeping the fire burning under an initiative that will bring untold benefits to the preservation and promotion of the heritage and history of Antigua and Barbuda well into the future.

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Small states diplomacy pays dividends on 'de-risking'



By Sir Ronald Sanders

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

It was an odd law into which to place it, but new and welcome directives on 'de-risking', which has plagued

Caribbean countries, has become law in the United States.

The law in which the helpful directives are embedded is the "William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021" (NDAA). It was vetoed by former President Donald Trump and it should, at that point, have died. But for the first time in Trump's presidency, the Congress mustered the two-thirds majority needed to overturn his veto.

Trump's veto had nothing to do with

'de-risking'. It was directed mainly at the bill's removal of the names from military facilities of Confederate officers. A significant number of Trump's supporters come from the former confederate states.

Section 6215 of the NDAA, which deals with Financial Services De-Risking, is the result of painstaking work by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, and his instructions to me, as Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States, to leave no stone unturned in engaging the U.S. Congress and particularly the House Banking Committee, to draw attention to the harmful – if unintended – consequences of de-risking for the Caribbean's banking system. Browne is the lead CARICOM head of government for financial services.

The Chairperson of the Committee is the

formidable Maxine Waters, representative in the House for California's 43rd district. Throughout the latter half of 2019, she was bombarded by approaches from Antigua and Barbuda in written and personal presentations, explaining why de-risking by U.S. global banks was depriving Caribbean banks of crucial correspondent banking relations, and threatening to cut-off the region from participation in the global trading and financial system.

In early 2019, banks in some CARICOM countries had lost all their correspondent banks, and institutions in other states were tenuously holding on to only one. All this had arisen because of U.S. regulatory directives to its banks concerning money laundering, financing of terrorism and the mythical but popular view that Caribbean countries were 'tax -havens' and their



banks were awash with dirty money.

The facts told a different story. In the 10 years up to 2019, US\$26 billion has been imposed worldwide as fines for non-compliance with money laundering, but not one bank was located in the Caribbean.

Little attention was paid to the reality that all the banks in CARICOM countries and all their assets and transactions do not total 5 per cent of the assets and transactions in the

world. Therefore, in the unlikely event that all 5 per cent of financial transactions are dirty in some form or another, it stands to reason that the countries and banks, responsible for the remaining 95 per cent of assets and transactions were large tax havens and purveyors of illegal financial services.

Changing this image of the Caribbean, laying out the evidence, and making solid arguments were all nec-

essary, particularly for a U.S. Congress confronted with a multitude of domestic and global issues on an hourly basis. In Maxine Waters, the Caribbean region found a tough but decisive person, sceptical but willing to listen and to examine the evidence.

The Caribbean effort that was spearheaded in Washington by Antigua and Barbuda strongly supported by Belize and St Lucia, culminated in a Con-

gressional Round Table in November 2019, chaired by Waters and attended by Gaston Browne, St Lucia Prime Minister Allen Chastenet, and Ministers from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Jamaica. Waters had invited to the meeting senior representatives of major U.S. banks as well as other members of the House Finance Committee. A full and frank discussion ensued.

At the end of it, Waters and her Congressional

colleagues promised action. Deal making in the U.S. Congress is more art than science. It results in matters inserted in a law where it may seem to have no relevance. But that is the trade for support that occurs. In the result, the promised action was delivered in the NDAA.

Among the matters that the law stipulates as guidelines are: providing vital humanitarian and development assistance and protecting the integrity of the international financial system are complementary goals; access issues are a concern for other underserved individuals and entities such as those sending remittances from the United States to their families overseas and certain domestic and overseas jurisdictions that have experienced curtailed access to cross-border financial services due, in part, to de-risking; the financial exclusion caused by de-risking can ultimately drive money into less transparent, shadow channels through the

carrying of cash or use of unlicensed or unregistered money service remitters, thus reducing transparency and traceability, which are critical for financial integrity, and can increase the risk of money falling into the wrong hands; and anti-money laundering, countering the financing of terrorism, and sanctions policies must ensure that the policies do not unduly hinder or delay legitimate access to the international financial

system for underserved individuals, entities, and geographic area.

Those were the very points which were put forward by the representatives of small Caribbean states who can be pleased that one of the law's fundamental directives is that "policies that encourage financial inclusion must remain a priority".

The NDAA is a small but significant step by the U.S. Congress and especially by the House Banking Committee,

led by Congresswoman Maxine Waters. It was a big leap for small Caribbean countries and a triumph for their diligence and diplomacy.

Much work remains to be done but an important pathway to rectifying and balancing de-risking has been opened. Amid the ravages of COVID-19, it is welcome good news.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronald-sanders.com



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Meet the woman bringing a Caribbean twist to French Champagne

By Christopher Johnson, CNN:

A region in the north of France roughly twice the size of San Francisco is the birthplace of a revered sparkling wine synonymous with wealth, luxury and exclusivity.

Champagne – the name of the region and the drink – sells around three hundred million bottles a year, with the industry being worth over five billion dollars. And no bottle of sparkling wine produced outside of this unique region is allowed to be labeled or called Champagne.

But one woman is bringing a taste of the French Caribbean to this world of elites.

Marie-Ines Romelle, forty-two years old, with her label Marie Césaire is infusing it with the culture of her native Guadeloupe as the first Black woman to join the exclusive world of Champagne producers.

The special ingredient in Marie Césaire's champagne is sugar cane, a crop commonly found in the Caribbean.

Instead of opting for the beet sugar traditionally used in the Champagne-making process, Romelle adds sugar cane extract to create flavours that will appeal to the African diaspora.

Aromas of lychee and rose

According to Stanley Baptista, sommelier at La Petite Régale restaurant in Paris, Romelle's decision to use sugar cane in proportions higher than the current market average makes her flavours distinctive from other brands.

"Her rosé lines the taste buds with a bouquet of red fruit with aromas of lychee and rose. Her whites are very fresh, with notes of ripe white fruit and exotic fruit extract. Her wines produce a con-



Marie-Ines Romelle

trast between freshness and a sweet taste which delights the senses," Baptista says.

Born in Guadeloupe, Romelle left the Caribbean island for France with her parents at three years old. She grew up in the suburbs of Paris where she says she gained her strength.

"I was thrust into a difficult environment because of poverty. But it helped me learn drive, it taught me to have ambition and to strive to improve my situa-

tion," she tells CNN.

The brand is named after Romelle's parents, as well as being a nod to her Caribbean heritage. The logo carries the image of a hummingbird and the names Marie and Césaire, among the most popular in the French Caribbean.

Romelle's love for Champagne developed when she began her career in food retail.

"When I turned eighteen I got a job in a shop that specialized in selling French delicacies. I



hadn't been exposed as much to French culture. But the time I spent there was where I fell in love with Champagne and understood its importance to France."

Marcia Jones, founder of Urban Connoisseurs – an organization connecting Black wine-makers in the United States – says that Romelle has created an approachable wine that can appeal to all people.

"The residual sugar from the sugar cane makes a difference to her wines. Her wines come across as soft and not overly sweet," Jones tells CNN.

"But I think she appeals so much to Black people because she is one of the only Black Champagne makers. There are others that have a brand but she is directly involved in the grape to glass experience."

Simply a Champagne producer

Romelle's main goal with her Champagne brand is to be a source of inspiration to anyone who wants to achieve their dreams. "I want to prove to people that no matter your background or where you come from you can achieve. If you focus on what you want, you can

do anything you put your mind to," Romelle tells CNN.

After years of moving up the ladder to become a manager in charge of five food shops and sixty-six employees, she moved to the Champagne region of France to launch her brand. And Romelle is determined that she will not be the only woman of colour in the Champagne world.

"I will know when I have made it when I will not be noticed, when I am not seen as the woman of colour making Champagne but simply a Champagne producer."

"I am working as hard as I can to ensure that doors of opportunity open for anyone who wants to work in this industry. The main reason I work so hard is so that others can achieve like I have."

But restaurateur Maxime Chenet believes that brands like Marie Césaire need to move away from the traditional approach of making wine to become greener.

"For many years, we

have used chemicals to grow more grapes to produce more bottles of wine. The use of these products has had the effect of tainting the soil where we grow our grapes," he tells CNN.

"The Champagne house which produces Marie Césaire is traditional in the sense that chemicals are used in the vine-growing process. For me, this removes the notion of terroir – protecting the complete natural environment in which a particular wine is produced – which is lost in this process."

But for Stanley Baptista, the chatter around Marie Césaire is a sign that the brand will have a bright future.

"Our profession is one that is constantly evolving. We are always searching for innovation, new flavours and deeper knowledge," he tells CNN.

"Inevitably Marie Césaire – a young brand – has got the world of Champagne watching because of the beautiful but different flavours that she has forced us to discover."

SUGAR CROP ON COURSE



Barbados Advocate - The 2021 sugar crop officially opened this past Monday and the first signs of the annual operation were visible yesterday. The annual harvest got off the ground with heavy activity seen at various fields across St. Philip, such as Edgumbe, Rock Hall and Foursquare.

With all teams and systems prepared to begin work at the turn of the month, Deputy Operations Manager at the Portvale Sugar Factory, Marlon Munroe said that it was expected that grinding would commence before the end of this week. "It is hopeful that grinding operations will begin by the end of

the first week of March. As you know, there are a lot of bank holidays in the months of May and April, so we expect grinding operations will be completed around the first or second week of June 2021."

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Indar Weir noted that despite the fallout caused by the pandemic, Barbados was on course to reap a higher yield this year than was produced last year. "If I were to compare what we produced last year, sugar cane yields gave us 90 000 tonnes and this year we are projecting 107 000 tonnes, so therefore we are increasing. We've produced 7 200 tonnes

of sugar and we are deliberately reducing that now to 5 200 to satisfy the domestic consumption and then for export..." he said, noting that the production of molasses will move from 5 000 tonnes to 13 000 tonnes to assist the rum industry.

Weir further stated, "These are good times. I am pleased to note what is happening in the industry and I am happy to also report to you that because of the favourable rainfall, our yields are expected to be about 17.84 per acre in 2021, versus 12.14 in 2020. So all around, everything is trending in the right direction." (MP)

New creole initiative to begin in Dominica's schools in June, 2021

In an effort to enhance the creole language among students here on island, Minister for Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence, Octavia Alfred, has announced a new programme which will be implemented in all schools come June 2021.

Speaking during a Creole Symposium held on February 24, 2021, under the theme "Language and Culture Preservation: The impact of Creole on Dominica's Education System," Alfred disclosed that it's time to stop talking and take action.

"A simple two-page guide will be ready to send to the schools by the end of this term. This will be directed at two levels, primary and secondary. The document will be used at all schools to conduct a simple programme called 'A five-minute pause for the Creole cause'," she revealed.

According to the Education Minister, this programme will be conducted in Term III and all schools will be given the option to choose their five minutes, but the entire school must pause at the same time.



Dominica's Minister of Education Octavia Alfred

She further informed that the learning institutions will use a simple guide to engage the students daily for the timeframe in creole exercises and encouraged the schools to use a nice cue to alert students when the period has started.

"Maybe a special ring by the bell...or a piece of [a] Creole song on the school speaker, so when those children hear that, they know to drop everything and get ready to take a five-minute pause for the Creole cause," Alfred explained.

The Education Minister is hoping that by the end of the year, all students in Dominica will be able to hold a basic Creole conversation.

"We will keep this simple, no writing yet, no spelling of words, just oral language, conversational and the singing of a few songs," the Minister said. "Sometimes we fail because we complicate and sophisticate simple things."

She is of the view that in Dominica, culture isn't pushed in our schools as with other Caribbean islands and lamented that the culture has changed to the point where students are ridiculed for speaking the language and the educators themselves can barely understand Kweyol.

"It is not enough to try to create a deep awareness, a broad or simple understanding and a big cele-

bration of the culture of a people and who we are for just one month out of an entire year," she stressed. "Dedicating a month to our heritage, culture and nationhood of who we are and what we stand for will not suddenly make everybody celebrate who we are and take time to learn more, it will not."

The former school principal-turned-government minister called for greater action and collaboration from all stakeholders and pointed out that the focus is often placed too much on financial gain as opposed to the commitment and effort to develop our rich cultural heritage.

‘Premature and inappropriate’



- Minister Singh reacts to Scotiabank's announcement of sale of operations

- says no approval given by Bank of Guyana for transaction

Guyana Chronicle – Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, has described the decision by Scotiabank Guyana to announce the sale of its operations here, as premature and inappropriate since the regulatory process has not yet been initiated, much less concluded. The bank on Wednesday announced that it had reached an agreement for the sale of its banking operations in Guyana to First Citi-

zens Bank Limited.

According to a release from the bank, the agreement was subject to regulatory approval and customary closing conditions. “This transaction supports Scotiabank’s strategic decision to focus on operations across its footprint where it can achieve greater scale and deliver the highest value for customers. Scotiabank’s current operations in Guyana encompass four branches and approximately 180 employees. Following closing, all employees will continue to support the business,” the release said. First Citizens is one of the leading financial services groups in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, First Citizens offers a full range of retail, corporate and investment banking services as well as wealth management, trustee and brokerage services to clients through its operations in Barbados, Costa Rica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. The release noted that the transaction supports First Citizens’ strategic growth across the region and leverages its strengths in innovation and excellence to the benefit of all stakeholders.

“It has just been brought to my notice that a press release was issued... announcing a sale of the operations of Scotiabank Guyana to a regional bank — a Trinidadian Bank in particular. I wish to say

that the Government of Guyana considers it extremely unfortunate that this transaction was announced, bearing in mind that any such transaction is subject to a specified regulatory process. In particular, Section 12 of the Financial Institutions Act stipulates that no financial institution may transfer a whole or a substantial part of its operations in Guyana without the prior approval of the Bank of Guyana,” the Minister said to the media at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre where he had been participating, along with Government and the Opposition, in the examination of Budget 2021 Estimates.

While the bank noted in its press release that the transaction supports Scotiabank’s strategic decision to



focus on operations across its footprint where it can achieve greater scale and deliver the highest value for customers as well as pointing out that its sale agreement was 'subject to regulatory approval and customary closing conditions', Minister Singh stated that considering that the Laws of Guyana require this process, "we consider it premature to announce a transaction of this nature".

He added that it is the intention of the Government of Guyana and Guyana's financial sector's regulatory supervisor, the Bank of Guyana, to ensure that the Laws of Guyana are complied with in the fullest and to ensure that appropriate processes of due diligence required under the Laws of Guyana are initiated and concluded before any such transaction can be proceeded with.

The Finance Minister reiterated that both Government and the Central Bank remain firmly committed to ensuring the maintenance of a stable, strong, vibrant, dynamic and growing financial sector, especially during the current period.

Death from a sneeze

Family reeling as COVID-19 claims the life of mother, leaves daughter in a coma



Jamaica Observer - The dreaded novel coronavirus has left a family in the Corporate Area community of Kingston Gardens in despair after it claimed the life of the matriarch and left one of her daughters in a coma.

All other members of the family who share the premises in Kingston Gardens are living in fear as they await the results of their COVID-19 tests. To compound the misery facing the family, whose names are being withheld, they have been told by health officials that they will have to find just over \$200,000 to purchase medication

which could possibly save the life of the 32-year-old woman who has been in a coma for the past nine days.

"Mi mother was a 'hearty' lady, very 'hearty' lady, and one little sickness just come tek her. Mi lose mi mother and is like everything gone. Mi no have no direction, mi general. Is like everything gone," said the 35-year-old son of the woman who has died.

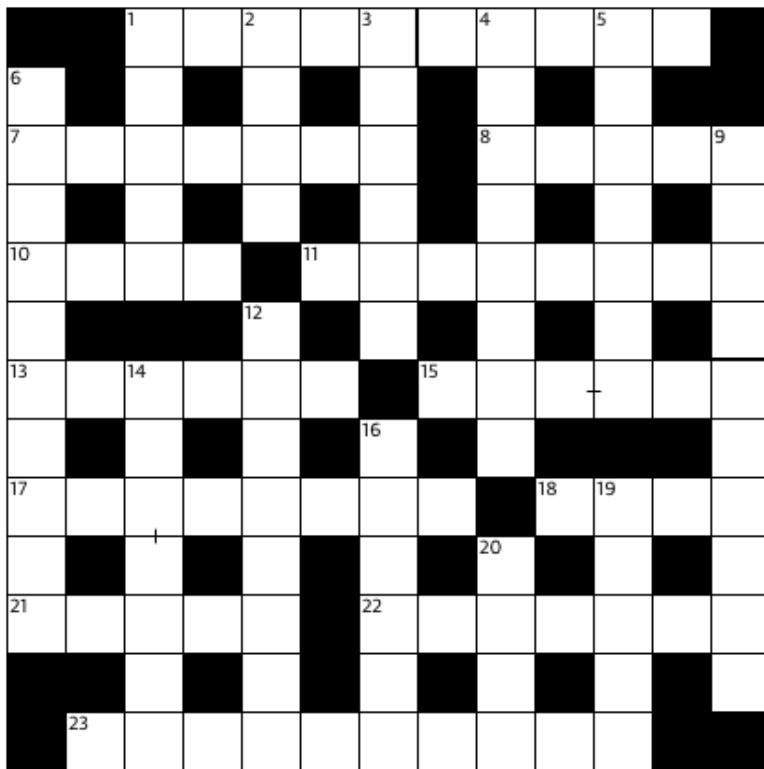
"It rough, mi general, it rough, and like how God done tek mi mother we have to try find the money to save mi sister. Right now when wi need to prepare mon-

ey to bury mi mother wi have to a try find \$202,000 to save mi sister. This rough, very rough," said the young man, unable to hide his pain.

He said the trauma started for the family just over one week ago when his sister, who is now in a coma, was on her way from work.

"She a come home in a taxi when a man sneeze in her face. She come in and she shower and everything because of the sneezing. About two days after that she say she nah feel well," he told the Jamaica Observer.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Nearby game? (5,5)
 7 Cause of irritation (7)
 8 Deduce (5)
 10 Light fawn colour (4)
 11 German or Austrian motorway (8)
 13 Bear-like (6)
 15 Daylight robbery (informal) (3-3)
 17 Leave behind (8)
 18 Sleepy gape (4)
 21 Given under oath (5)
 22 Diminish (7)
 23 Short movement between main parts of a symphony (10)

Down

- 1 Pilsner, for example (5)
 2 Signals for action (4)
 3 Hit hard (6)
 4 Intermittent (8)
 5 Animal whose milk made mozzarella initially (7)
 6 Sycophantic (10)
 9 Digit for the marital gold band (4,6)
 12 Example (8)
 14 (Inactive) industrial action? (3-4)
 16 English actor, comedian and singer-songwriter (1915-2010) (6)
 19 Television sound (5)
 20 Catnap (4)



"I couldn't get off work."

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

♈ ARIES | Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Your innocent flirtations may just be a habit or a way of passing time for you, but someone may take it seriously. In the week to come, think of every meeting as a chance to show that you are sincere and real.

♉ TAURUS | Apr. 20-May 20

It's the first day of summer, and your fancy may turn to thoughts of business affairs and money-making activities rather than love. Tackle practical subjects like your bank balance as the week begins.

♊ GEMINI | May 21-June 20

Play life like a game of chess. Sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice something unimportant in order to win the game. In the upcoming week, you can put your brainpower to work and upgrade your financial status.

♋ CANCER | June 21-July 22

There is a New Moon in your sign, and although you cannot see it, you might feel it as the upcoming week unfolds. You may feel better able to express yourself once you accept your strengths as well as your limitations.

♌ LEO | July 23-Aug. 22

It is hard to find a rainbow without seeing a little rain first. A few bumps may lessen your confidence in the beginning of the week, but your optimism will quickly return. You might prefer to think through a strategy by yourself.

♍ VIRGO | Aug. 23-Sept. 22

Turn obstacles and dropped balls into learning opportunities. Take a few ideas that have been floating around in your head and put them into motion this week. You and a partner can draw up viable plans and find practical solutions.

♎ LIBRA | Sept. 23-Oct. 22

Some of your fantasies might come true, but there is a reason they're fantasies. Try not to make irrevocable decisions or major purchases unless they make good sense. You must be perceptive enough to read the writing on the wall.

♏ SCORPIO | Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your ideas may be too big to handle alone. You could get a project off the ground if there's a good supporting cast to help you in the upcoming week. If you don't have all the answers, at least you know how to get them.

♐ SAGITTARIUS | Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You have the hammer and someone else has the nails. In the week to come, you and a partner can work together to achieve your dreams. Your powerful enthusiasm can be the driving force behind intricate plans.

♑ CAPRICORN | Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The first day of summer can light up your life. Not only is the day longer but your patience can last longer, too. As the week unwinds, you may grow closer and more comfortable with a partner or special someone.

♒ AQUARIUS | Jan. 20-Feb. 18

The difference between failure and success could depend on whether you phone it in or do your best. Remember in the week ahead that a task done correctly the first time will not need to be done again.

♓ PISCES | Feb. 19-Mar. 20

In the upcoming week you might be tempted to spend time on frivolous things that could rattle your bank account. Put creative energy to good use by focusing on a new artistic project or educational experience.

LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST

<p>Fri 05 Day</p> <p>28° ☀️</p> <p>8% SE 16 km/h</p> <p>Generally clear. High 28°C. Winds SE at 10 to 15 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 67% UV Index Extreme</p> <p>Sunrise 06:22 Sunset 18:15</p>	<p>Fri 05 Night</p> <p>23° 🌙</p> <p>7% ESE 14 km/h</p> <p>Generally clear. Low 23°C. Winds ESE at 10 to 15 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 76% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise -- Moonset 11:17</p> <p>🌑 Last Quarter</p>
<p>Sat 06 Day</p> <p>28° ☀️</p> <p>7% ESE 19 km/h</p> <p>Generally clear. High 28°C. Winds ESE at 15 to 25 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 66% UV Index Extreme</p> <p>Sunrise 06:21 Sunset 18:15</p>	<p>Sat 06 Night</p> <p>24° 🌙</p> <p>18% ESE 18 km/h</p> <p>Generally clear. Low 24°C. Winds ESE at 15 to 25 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 79% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise 24:47 Moonset 12:10</p> <p>🌒 Waning Crescent</p>

COMMUNITY NOTICES



PENSION NOTICE

The ABSSB wishes to advise our walk-in pensioners that pension payments for February 2021 will commence on March 8th, 2021. Pensioners are asked to take note of the cheque dissemination schedule according to their surname:

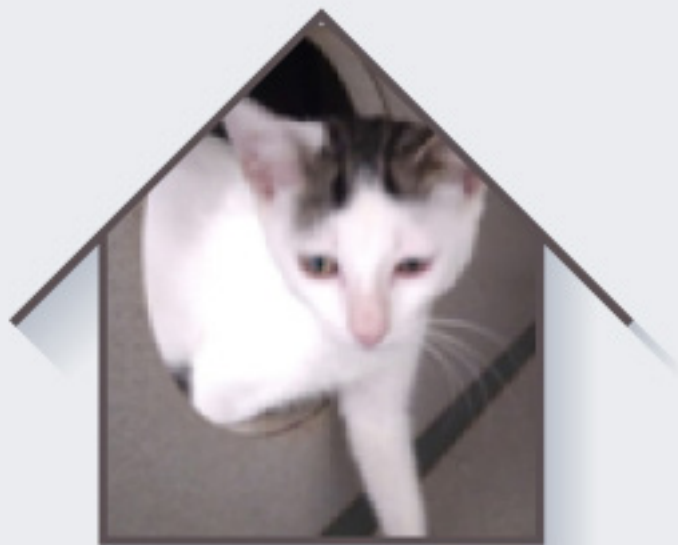
Surname	Collection Date
<u>A - F</u>	<u>Mon. 8th March</u>
<u>G - K</u>	<u>Tues. 9th March</u>
<u>L - P</u>	<u>Wed. 10th March</u>
<u>O - T</u>	<u>Thurs. 11th March</u>
<u>U - Z</u>	<u>Fri. 10th March</u>

PENSIONERS ARE REMINDED TO ADHERE TO ALL COVID-19 PROTOCOLS.



The Antigua & Barbuda Humane Society wishes to advise the public that the Animal Shelter and Donkey Sanctuary will be closed temporarily on Mondays. The new opening times are Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. The Humane Society's low-cost spay/neuter clinics for dogs and cats will now be on Thursdays by appointment only. For further information or an appointment, please call the Humane Society at 461-4957.

TAKE ME HOME



This sweet three-months-old kitten is available for adoption at the Humane Society animal shelter in Bethesda. The adoption fee of \$80 covers worming, treating for fleas, litter box training and spaying or neutering. If you would like to adopt this kitten or any of our cats or kittens.

PLEASE CALL US AT 461-4957
FOR MORE INFORMATION.
WE ARE OPEN TUESDAY TO
SATURDAY FROM 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Submit community notices to

news@pointville.ag

Italy 'blocks' AstraZeneca vaccine shipment to Australia



BBC News - The Italian government has blocked the export of an Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine shipment to Australia.

The decision affects 250,000 doses of the vaccine produced at an AstraZeneca facility in Italy.

Italy is the first EU country to use the bloc's new regulations allowing exports to be stopped if the company providing the vaccines has failed to meet its obligations to the EU.

The move has been backed by the European Commission, reports say.

AstraZeneca is on

track to provide only 40% of the agreed supply to member states in the first three months of the year. It has cited production problems for the shortfall.

In January, then Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte described delays in vaccine supplies by both AstraZeneca and Pfizer as "unacceptable" and accused the companies of violating their contracts.

The EU has been widely criticised for the slow pace of its vaccination programme.

Under the EU vaccine scheme, which

was established in June last year, the bloc has negotiated the purchase of vaccines on behalf of member states.

There has been no official comment on the Italian move by Australia, the EU or AstraZeneca.

The Italian government approached the European Commission last week to say that it was its intention to block the shipment.

In a statement on Thursday, the foreign ministry explained the move, saying it had received the request for authorisation on 24 February.

It said that previous requests had been given the green light as they included limited numbers of samples for scientific research, but the latest one - being much larger, for more than 250,000 doses - was rejected.

It explained the move by saying that Australia was not on a list of "vulnerable" countries, that there was a permanent shortage of vaccines in the EU and Italy, and that the number of doses was high compared with the amount given to Italy and to the EU as a whole.

Myanmar crackdown on protests, widely filmed, sparks outrage



YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Footage of a brutal crackdown on protests against a coup in Myanmar unleashed outrage and calls for a stronger international response Thursday, a day after 38 people were killed. Videos showed security forces shooting a person at point-blank range and chasing down and savagely beating demonstrators.

Despite the shocking violence the day before, protesters returned to the streets Thursday to denounce the military's Feb. 1 takeover — and were met again with tear gas.

The international response to the coup has so far been fitful, but a flood of videos

shared online showing security forces brutally targeting protesters and other civilians led to calls for more action.

The United States called the images appalling, the U.N. human rights chief said it was time to “end the military’s stranglehold over democracy in Myanmar,” and the world body’s independent expert on human rights in the country urged the Security Council to watch the videos before meeting Friday to discuss the crisis.

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar, which for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international iso-

lation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip in recent years, the international community lifted most sanctions and poured in investment.

U.N. special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, described Wednesday as “the bloodiest day” since the takeover, when the military ousted the elected government of leader Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 50 civilians, mostly peaceful protesters, are confirmed to have been killed by police and soldiers since then, including the 38 she said died Wednesday.

“I saw today very disturbing video clips,” said Schraner Burgener, speaking to reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York via video link from Switzerland. “One was police beating a volunteer medical crew. They were not armed. Another video clip showed a protester was taken

away by police and they shot him from very near, maybe only one meter. He didn’t resist to his arrest, and it seems that he died on the street.”

She appeared to be referring to a video shared on social media that begins with a group of security forces following a civilian, who they seem to have pulled out of a building. A shot rings out, and the person falls. After the person briefly raises their head, two of the troops drag the person down the street by the arms.

In other footage, about two dozen security forces, some with their firearms drawn, chase two people wearing the construction helmets donned by many protesters down a street. When they catch up to the people, they repeatedly beat them with rods and kick them. One of the officers is seen filming the scene on his cell phone.

Target, CVS among stores keeping mask mandates as Texas lifts restrictions



After Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) announced he would end the state's mask mandate, saying that "Texas is open 100%," some major chains and retailers are saying: Not so fast.

Target, Starbucks, CVS and Kroger are among the retailers — some of the largest in the nation — that will continue to require that customers in Texas wear masks inside stores. Others, such as Albertsons, will drop the requirement but continue to encourage people to wear facial coverings.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki defended Biden's comparison of governors who have

lifted all mask mandates to "Neanderthals," saying the president was speaking out of "frustration and exasperation."

"He believes that with more than half a million American lives lost, with families that continue to suffer, that it's imperative that people listen across the country, whether they live in a red state or blue state, to the guidance of public health experts," she said during the daily news briefing.

Psaki said Biden has not reached out to GOP governors Greg Abbott (Texas) or Tate Reeves (Mississippi) to try to convince them to back mask-wearing for a few

more months while vaccine supply is ramped up.

"I don't think his view on mask-wearing is a secret. They're certainly familiar with it. He's talked about it many, many times," Psaki said. "And I'm certain when he speaks with them next, he will convey that directly." Meanwhile, breaking with other Southern GOP governors, Alabama governor Kay Ivey on Thursday extended her state's mask order for another month, but said the requirement will end for good in April.

Following the recommendations of medical officials, Ivey said she will

keep the mask order that was set to expire Friday in place until April 9.

"We need to get past Easter and hopefully allow more Alabamians to get their first shot before we take a step some other states have taken to remove the mask order altogether and lift other restrictions. Folks, we are not there yet, but goodness knows we're getting closer," Ivey said at a news conference.

The governor said masks have been "one of our greatest tools" in preventing the virus's spread, but emphasized that she will not extend the mask order further, saying it will become a matter of personal responsibility when the mandate ends.

"Even when we lift the mask order, I will continue to wear my mask while I'm around others and strongly urge my fellow citizens to use common sense and do the same," Ivey said.

So far only about 13% of Alabama's 4.9 million people have received one dose of vaccine, according to state numbers.

US Capitol police warn of possible militia plot to breach Congress

BBC News - Security has been ramped up at the US Capitol in Washington in response to "a possible plot to breach" the building.

The move was prompted by intelligence that a militia group planned the attack for 4 March - the day conspiracy theorist group QAnon believes Donald Trump will return for a second term.

The House of Representatives cancelled Thursday's session, but the Senate will continue with its agenda.

A mob loyal to Mr. Trump stormed the Congress building in January.

That attack came as lawmakers were inside moving to certify Democrat Joe Biden's election victory. Mr Trump still refuses to admit losing the election.

The riot saw five people killed, including a police officer, and shook the foundations of American democracy. The head of the Capitol police



force later resigned.

"As of late February, an unidentified group of militia violent extremists discussed plans to take control of the US Capitol and remove Democratic lawmakers on or about 4 March and discussed aspirational plans to persuade thousands to travel to Washington DC to participate," a new intelligence bulletin issued by the FBI and Department of Homeland Security says.

Following that assessment, the US Capitol Police referred in a statement to "a possible plot to breach the Capitol by an identified militia group on Thursday, March 4".

"We have already

made significant security upgrades to include establishing a physical structure and increasing manpower to ensure the protection of Congress, the public and our police officers.

"Due to the sensitive nature of this information, we cannot provide additional details at this time."

Supporters of an extremist conspiracy theory known as QAnon falsely believe Thursday will mark Mr. Trump's return to the White House for a second term.

They have latched on to this date because, before the 20th amendment of the US Constitution (adopted in 1933) moved the swearing-in dates of the president and

Congress to January, American leaders took office on 4 March.

What is QAnon and where did it come from?

QAnon is a wide-ranging and completely unfounded theory which says that President Trump is waging a secret war against elite Satan-worshipping paedophiles in government, business and the media.

Security services were aware of online QAnon discussions surrounding 4 March, but did not "have any indication of violence or a specific, credible plot at this time", an FBI official had told The Washington Post last week.

Mend fences and create an inclusive policy

Vice president of Cricket West Indies (CWI) Dr. Kishore Shallow says the recent signing of four new broadcast contracts to expand regional cricket in Africa, Europe, United States and further afield is a clear indication of the confidence being showed in the present leadership of regional cricket.

Dr. Shallow said that the executive ten-point plan was never going to be completed in two years, but is happy with what the CWI leadership, under the guidance of president Ricky Skerritt and himself, have been able to accomplish. "Reconnecting with our senior players, media and supporters were high on the agenda when we took office two years ago," the president of the Wind-

ward island's association noted.

Dr. Shallow, the youngest CWI vice president ever, said many of the senior players who wear the West Indies colours again wanted nothing to do with the previous administration and regional cricket.

"Watching Trinidad and Tobago Red Force put out a full squad in the just concluded CWI CG Super50 was a joy when many of those players stayed away from regional cricket in the past."

"They have set the bar for future tournaments with their professionalism, and performance going unbeaten on their way to the title," Shallow explained. "The executive have also made themselves available to the media, weather



the stories are positive or negative because we need the media to promote regional cricket around the world," Shallow stated.

The Vincentian thanked the regional media for the outstanding job they have been doing promoting regional cricket. Shallow, talking to PointeXpress, also talked about players and administrators around the region feeling more confident with the

selection policy they have implemented.

CWI elections are due on 28th March and Dr. Shallow is confident the Ricky Skerritt-led executive will be reelected by a bigger margin than two years ago. Leeward Islands and Trinidad and Tobago cricket associations have already pledged their support for Skerritt and Shallow at the upcoming Annual General Meeting.

Pollard hammers Sri Lanka

Captain Kieron Pollard struck six sixes in one over off Akila Dananjaya, who had earlier taken a hat-trick, in West Indies extraordinary four wicket Twenty20 defeat of Sri Lanka Wednesday at the Coolidge Cricket Ground (CCG). The CCG, hosting its first international game after being approved by the ICC as an interna-

tional cricket venue, saw West Indies captain Pollard become only the third man to strike six maximums in an international, joining South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs and India's Yuvraj Singh. Scores in the match

Sri Lanka: 131-9 (Nissanka 39; McCoy 2-25)

West Indies: 134-6 (Pollard 38; Hasaranga 3-12)



Later today, the Caribbean side will try to secure their second victory and the

series with a win at the CCG. The game starts at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Caribbean time.

West Indies victorious in first international game at CCG

The West Indies enter their second Twent20 International this evening at the Coolidge Cricket Ground (CCG) confident after securing victory in their first outing against Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

Kieron Pollard struck six sixes in one over off Akila

Dananjaya, who had earlier taken a hat-trick, in West Indies extraordinary four-wicket Twenty20 defeat of Sri Lanka.

West Indies captain became only the third man to strike six maximums in an international. In his previous over, Dananjaya

had removed Evin Lewis, Chris Gayle and Nicholas Pooran. West Indies chased their target of 132 in 13.1 overs. The tourists had been restricted to 131-9. Pollard repeated the feat achieved by South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs against the Netherlands

at the 2007 50 over World Cup, and India's Yuraj Singh against England at the Twent20 World Cup in the same year.

The Windies will look to make it 2-0 this evening as they try to secure the three-match Twenty20 series.

Michael Jordan says LaMelo has exceeded expectation

One of the NBA's greatest players, Michael Jordan, says LaMelo Ball has adjusted well to the league, the Hornets owner told the Associated Press in an email.

"He has exceeded our expectations so far this season," the six-time champion with the Chicago Bulls said.

That is a nice compliment for Ball – both from his boss and who many believe is the greatest player of all time. Ball's strengths are more substantial and his weaknesses are less severe

than anticipated.

"His ball handling and passing are as special as hoped. His shot selection is totally fine rather than horrendous. His defence is regularly bad rather than a train wreck. He must still improve his shooting over a period of time," said Jordan.

The Hornets owner noted that Ball is a teenager point guard who is not just promising but already actually good. "Imagine how good he'll be as he ascends through his 20s," Jordan ended by saying.



SOUTH AFRICA appoints first black cricket captain

Temba Bavuma has become the first black African to permanently captain a South Africa side, after being appointed their limited-overs skipper. Batsman Bavuma, thirty, will lead the Proteas in the next two Twenty20 World Cups, later this year and in 2022, and the next 50-over World Cup in 2023. Opener Dean Elgar, thirty-three, has been named Test captain for the next cycle of the World Test Championship.

"This is one of the greatest honours of my life," said Bavuma. "Captaining the Proteas has been a dream of mine for many years as those closest to me know." Bavuma and Elgar replace wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock, who had held the T20 and one-day international captaincy roles since last January and was named temporary Test skipper in December. Bavuma said to captain South Africa in any form of the game is the biggest honour that a

player can be fortunate to receive. Mixed-race players Ashwell Prince, JP Duminy and Justin Ontong have previously captained a South Africa cricket side on a temporary basis. Hashim Amla, the first Asian to play for South Africa, has also captained his country in matches in all three formats.



DEWS



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



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

