

# NO MANDATORY VACCINATION

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*Celebrating our COVID-19  
Vaccination Nurses on International  
Women's Day*

**Hadeed Group donates US\$100,000 to purchase vaccines**

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**NEW CURFEW HOURS:**  
**8:00 PM TO 5:00 AM MARCH 15 - APRIL 15, 2021**

## EDITORIAL

# No time for sentimentality

About a month ago, PointeXpress published an editorial in two parts titled, "Apartheid in a time of COVID" and "Apartheid in a time of COVID redux." The editorial was used as a way to sound the warning about the current practice of some countries hoarding the vaccine and the dastardly results that could ensue.

Sadly, Antigua and Barbuda is now faced with one of the consequences of when richer nations are consumed by rapacity. These countries' hoarding of COVID-19 vaccines has led to the unfortunate situation where countries such as Antigua and Barbuda must make some very difficult decision. This was clearly enunciated in Thursday's Cabinet notes as released by Government Chief of Staff, Ambassador Lionel 'Max' Hurst. Inter alia, the notes read:

"More than 18,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been injected in the arms of the elderly, teachers,

hotel workers and other select groups since February 17, 2021, when the first dose was administered; only 22,000 doses remain in stock. AstraZeneca is a two-dose vaccine; and, since 40,000 doses were imported, and since no precise date for delivery of a second batch of the AstraZeneca is fixed, the [Chief Medical Officer] proposed that one half of the total be stored so that the second dose can be on hand to be administered in May and in June 2021.

"The Cabinet debated this important proposal and decided otherwise. Seven to ten thousand additional doses will continue to be applied, with the expectation that at least 14,000 doses will be secured through COVAX of PAHO/WHO by the end of April 2021. Antigua and Barbuda has contracted and paid COVAX for 40,000 doses; the AstraZeneca is in very high demand globally."

What is being highlighted here is that "vaccine Apartheid" –

the unfair and unequal access to vaccines – is now having direct consequences for Antigua and Barbuda. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have been the voices in the wilderness warning that no country will be safe if there is not enough effort at the just and equitable distribution of vaccines. They have cautioned against the dangerous approach where some countries, particularly in Europe and North America, have access to enough vaccines to cover their populations multiple times. Yet there are some countries that have not even seen a single dose of vaccine. Their cries have fallen on deaf ears. It is worse than if the WHO and PAHO were hoarse!

The reality faced in Antigua and Barbuda will become the reality for other countries in the region and wider hemisphere. It will also become the reality for sub-Saharan Africa, and this threatens the

success of the effort to get the world's economy back on track.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has signalled its resolve in pursuing all avenues, including trying to access vaccines from Cuba, China, and Russia, even if these have not been approved for use in the country as yet. As the Cabinet notes explains: "If the nation waits until these vaccines have the approval of the WHO, they would then be gobbled-up by the large, well-endowed states and those vaccines would be placed outside of Antigua and Barbuda's means. Now is the time to import them, the Director reported."

While we have heard grumblings from people on social and traditional media regarding not wanting vaccines from either China and Russia, we challenge you to do the research and not rely on emotions. Studies have been published in the peer-reviewed Lancet, the world's most re-

spected medical journal, regarding the efficacy of the Sputnik V vaccine from Russia. They have also published information on one of the vaccines developed in China. The research shows that both vaccines have a high level of efficacy and that the process used to create those vaccines is the very same process used by

the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. Now is not a time for sentimentality and personal opinion. We are living in extraordinary times, and it requires extraordinary decisions that are based, not on feelings and sentiments but on cold hard facts, better known as science! Throughout this pandemic, one of the

things the Government has always maintained is the primacy of science in guiding its decision making. Thus far, the nation has managed COVID-19 in a creditable manner. The Chief Medical Officer, the Medical Director at the Mount St. John's Medical Centre, the Nurses, doctors, other health workers, and the policymakers

have come together to create solutions that have redounded to the benefit of the country. The Government's stated intention of seeking alternative sources of vaccines must be evaluated in a dispassionate and rational manner; not with personal feeling and sentimentality!

# No mandatory vaccination

There are no plans by the government to institute measures to make it mandatory for residents of Antigua and Barbuda to be vaccinated.

That's the word of Public Safety and Labour Minister Steadroy Benjamin who addressed going concerns on the matter when he addressed the House of Representatives on Thursday.

Benjamin, the country's attorney general and legal affairs minister, reported to the parliament that he was approached by business owners as well as by several trade unions about whether there was a national mandate on vaccination.

"As minister of labour, I was approached by many employers who indicated that members of staff have been refusing to be vaccinated. What should I do under these circumstanc-

es? I am concerned about safety; safety for co-workers and safety for people who transact business in my establishment. We have received calls from the Employers Federation whose members have been making inquiries about what is the position," Benjamin recalled.

Following the announcement that a meeting to discuss this matter was facilitated by him this week, Benjamin said there have been suggestions circulating around the country which state that the government plans to make vaccination mandatory.

According to the minister some have even suggested that the government was acting as though the country was a dictatorship in its desire to make vaccination mandatory for all.

"This government will not man-

date that persons must vaccinate; it is a voluntary process. The decision on how employers approach this issue must be driven by them," he declared.

The Labour Minister said he wants the employers, unions and other stakeholders to meet amongst themselves and to discuss the matter fully before submitting their recommendations for the government to ratify.

"They must make the decision! They must come together and arrive at a way forward and to communicate this to the government for consideration," Benjamin stated.

On this critical matter, Benjamin re-emphasised the government's role. "We are not dictators; we are facilitators," he concluded.



# COVID-related deaths climb to twenty-six



A thirty-four-year-old male patient at Mount St. John's Medical Centre (MSJMC) has died of COVID-19, making him the youngest person in the country to die from the virus since the pandemic started.

The male patient, with no significant co-morbidities, was admitted to the hospital on 12th February 2021, after testing positive for COVID-19 three days prior to admission. The patient has been undergoing treatment since then, which included ventilator support. Despite our best efforts, the patient died this morning 11th March 2021 at 8:15 a.m.

"All of these deaths are difficult for all of us,"

said Dr. Albert Duncan, MSJMC Medical Director. "We are heartbroken that COVID-19 has taken the life of such a young person. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and all others who have lost a loved one to this virus." "Early on in this crisis, the message to young people was, you can spread it silently to someone who can't afford to have it. So, don't think about yourself, think about the person who you could infect, who you will never forgive yourself for if you lost them because of that. That's really been a message that we have been trying to put out there for a long time. But we've also said - it could be you. Young

people really do have a real risk of having serious illness."

The Medical Director continued, "This is another tragic milestone. Young, healthy people are low on the priority list for the vaccine roll-out. That means that modifying behaviour

now – if you are not already doing this - can save lives.

"And that is the crux of it. Our messaging is no longer about merely flattening the curve to prevent our hospital from overflowing. Now with vaccines, our policies and our individual choices can together save a far larger number of lives. That challenge is ours to confront - the sooner that reality sets in, the better."

This brings the number of COVID-19 related deaths to twenty-six.

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# Chinese, Russian vaccines being considered



**By Shelton Daniel**

There are no easy or obvious answers for questions that government and health authorities are grappling with about whether to utilize the entire supply of COVID-19 vaccines currently, or whether to hold some in reserve for second-round inoculations – and how much. This quandary was explained Thursday morning in the weekly post-Cabinet briefing notes and further expanded in the live televised briefing which followed.

It is because Antigua and Barbuda has so far obtained only forty thousand total vaccine doses to administer – which it received as a gift from India – meaning only twenty thousand people could be fully inoculated with the required double-dosing spaced out over a twelve-week interval. Arrangements have been made for additional supplies of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine which is so far the only one approved for use in this country. The problem

facing Antigua and Barbuda is that these additional supplies needed to fully inoculate a desired seventy to eight per cent of the country's roughly one hundred thousand population may not be available within the three-month window within which the double-dosing must be completed to achieve the needed efficacy.

Although government has announced that an additional fourteen thousand doses are due to arrive at the end of next month, this represents only about twelve per cent of the forty thousand doses that St. John's is entitled to (and has prepaid for) under the WHO/PAHO COVAX arrangement for approval and joint procurement.

With about eighteen thousand people vac-

nated in the twin island state as of Wednesday 10th March 2021, it has been a question of whether to give as many people their first doses until supplies run out and hope shipments for the required second doses arrive in time; or whether to utilize only half of the forty thousand doses on hand and hold back the other twenty thousand in order to give the first-jab recipients their second shot when it becomes due.

The latter was the advice given to Cabinet by Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr. Rhonda Sealy-Thomas who, according to the Cabinet notes, "proposed that one half of the total be stored so that the second dose can be on hand to be administered in May and in June 2021" ... "since no precise date for deliv-



TALKING POINT

DR. MASERATI
SENATOR COLIN BROWNE

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ery of a second batch of the AstraZeneca is fixed.” Cabinet did not agree with the CMO’s suggestion, but did not reject it outright, instead settling on a mid-point compromise of sorts. According to the notes, “The Cabinet debated this important proposal and decided otherwise; seven thousand to ten thousand additional doses will continue to be applied, with the expectation that at least fourteen thousand doses will be secured through [COVAX] by the end of April 2021.”

It has been noted that “not administering

the second dose when [it becomes] due is ... risky since the efficacy may be lost,” although that for the time being remains uncertain.

Government is therefore giving consideration to importing COVID-19 vaccines from alternative sources that are currently available – to wit, the Chinese made Sino-pharm and Sinovac, and the Russian manufactured Sputnik V.

Cabinet was advised by senior health administrators that “If the nation waits until these vaccines have the approval of the WHO, they would then

be gobbled-up by the large, well-endowed states and those vaccines would be placed outside of Antigua and Barbuda’s means”; therefore “Now is the time to import them.” According to the notes, four members of the Pharmaceutical Council were invited by Cabinet to discuss securing an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the previously named Chinese and Russian vaccines, but informed the government executive body that are not empowered by existing laws to grant EUAs – only to approve or disapprove the use of

particular drugs. Further, that in the case of the three alternate vaccines being considered, the Pharmaceutical Council is yet to see the information required to make such determinations.

“A debate followed in which it was agreed that the use of the vaccines could be separated from [their] importation ... Permission to import would be provided, it was agreed, and after the [English language] data [is] provided, permission to use would subsequently be granted,” the notes disclosed.

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# Health Minister explains departure from technical advice

*By Shelton Daniel*

The 27th March will mark one year since COVID-19 announced its arrival in Antigua and Barbuda with the first diagnosed case; ironically, a medical doctor in private practice. Dr. Raymond Daoud's painstaking recovery spanned four months of intensive care at the Mount St. John's Medical Center, which included several weeks on a ventilator.

It was with this arduous anniversary in mind that Minister for Health and Wellness Sir Molwyn Joseph delivered a special address to Parliament on Thursday.

He had earlier, on Wednesday during their regular weekly meeting, spoken to his fellow Ministers of Government about the "calculated risks" that Cabinet must face in responding to vaccine supply challenges, stressing that those risks would have to be managed as they could not be entirely avoided. He informed the House of Representatives that "In less than two weeks we succeeded in vacci-

nating 19,500 people in Antigua and Barbuda – one of the most successful rollouts of vaccines within the Caribbean, and even North America ... and by the end of this day, we would have vaccinated over 20,000 Antiguan and Barbudans – which is half of the doses we have. And, for this vaccine, we must reserve the second dose for all who have received the first dose."

But, Minister Joseph pointed out, "We have not yet covered all the vulnerable groups ... and we have several of our frontline workers who must also be vaccinated. The question we must ask now is 'where will we get the vaccines beyond the 20,000 that we have reserved for the second dose?' ... The technical people in my Ministry are of the view that we should not use any of the 20,000 that we have reserved. In other words, vaccination should cease in Antigua and Barbuda. That's the technical recommendation."

According to Sir Molwyn, "The distribution of vaccines is not a clinical is-

sue, it is a management issue ... Even though we have not [yet] vaccinated all of [those over 65], whether or not we should cease ... and in serious deliberations within the Cabinet ... the decision was made that we must continue vaccinating the vulnerable within Antigua and Barbuda."

The Minister said it was understandable that some would see such an approach as risky, but the rationale could easily be explained.

Said Sir Molwyn: "Every person who has received the first dose, is due to get the second dose between May and June. So we have between now and [then] to acquire more vaccine, so that we can guarantee continuation of the vaccination programme, as well as to ensure that come May and June, vaccines are there for the second dose. We have been advised by COVAX and PAHO that there will be 14,800 additional doses delivered to Antigua and Barbuda by the end of this month."

He continued: "And so we have decided ... that we will take half of that



*Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph*

14,800 – to be specific, we are going to take 7,000 of that allocation – and we will continue vaccinating our citizens and residents, the vulnerable, the priority, and anticipate that before the end of May or June we would have been able to acquire vaccines to guarantee that everyone can get their second dose."

Minister Joseph expressed the view that it would be unconscionable "for us to have vaccines now and not administer them to people who are vulnerable" such as the elderly.

Minister Joseph explained that Antigua and Barbuda should give consideration to vaccines developed by non-traditional sources such as China and Russia, because it does not make sense to limit procurement from only the Western nations such as the US and UK when supplies are so urgently needed.



# Jury numbers to be reduced to nine



*Steadroy Benjamin*

The House of Representatives has approved legislation that will reduce the number of people who comprise juries in the country from the current twelve to nine.

Attorney General Steadroy Benjamin said the proposal has the support of the Antigua and Barbuda Bar Association as well as the broader legal fraternity in the country.

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, Benjamin said even judges are in full support of the measure as they too are concerned about health protocols and safety.

Benjamin explained that the adhering to

health protocols makes the passage of the law necessary at this time as it allows for better spacing in the jury box

for trials among other benefits.

"I submit this bill to the house as it is another way of showing the

government's commitment towards fighting the spread of the coronavirus," he stated.



# Changes to Revenue Recovery Charge law

The government is following through on its promise to tighten up certain revenue measures as part of efforts to plug holes in the revenue collection machinery.

Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Gaston Browne, said the measure, approved by the House of Representatives on Thursday, seeks to place a limit on the discretion that the finance minis-

ter has with respect to the Revenue Recovery Charge (RRC). "This is a simple amendment to the RRC where we are capping any waiver or exemption up to fifty per cent. This means that if a waiver or exemption is being given under the RRC for whatever reason, the maximum that can be applied is fifty per cent," he explained.

PM Browne further explained that the

amendment does not affect agreements already in place with certain developments or other entities that have been signed prior to this.

He said the rationale for the amendment is to remove the discretion from the finance minister in issuing waivers as a means of 'protecting' the country's revenues. He noted that Antigua and Barbuda has one of

the lowest tax ratio to GDP and while the government is not introducing new taxes, it merely wants to make tax collection more efficient, thereby increasing the yield.

"It's a policy decision that we have taken that we are now effecting in law as we move to reduce tax avoidance, tax evasion and reducing discretionary waivers," he emphasized.

## Hadeed Group donates US\$100,000 to purchase vaccines



The Hadeed Group of Companies (HGC), the country's largest private sector entity, has made a donation of one hundred thousand US dollars (two

hundred and seventy thousand EC dollars) to the government to assist with the vaccine purchase programme. During a presentation ceremony on Wednesday,

Prime Minister Gaston Browne highly commended the Hadeed Group for its generosity at this time when the nation is in the midst of a nation-

al crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

PM Browne said it was good that companies and individuals come forward on their own to assist the government to purchase additional vaccines to help stem the tide of the pandemic which has devastated the national economy, sickened hundreds and has led to more than twenty-five deaths so far. "I take this opportunity on behalf of the government and people of Antigua and

Barbuda to express sincerest gratitude to the Hadeed Group of Companies for this gesture. It's a voluntary contribution as the government has not openly solicited contributions for this effort. However, there are a number of conscientious citizens and corporate entities who have been contributing to the acquisition of vaccines for the programme. It is important that these contributions are made at this time of crisis when we ought to be 'our brother's keeper and our sister's protector.' This is a timely contribution and nothing new as the Hadeeds have been contributing to all aspects of national life over the years," he stated. In making the presentation, Executive Director of the Hadeed Group, Francis Hadeed, said his family as well as the

companies within the HGC are happy to assist the government at this time when the country is 'at war' with an invisible enemy. "On behalf of the Hadeed Group of Companies we are very pleased, very happy to be making this contribution. COVID is a war; it's the worst pandemic the world has seen since World War II. I must add that, Mr. Prime Minister, you have been a very good

war-time leader. The WHO now says the economic devastation caused by COVID far exceeds that of World War II and everyone must join in this battle against COVID. We will continue to contribute and to help as our way of joining this national effort," he remarked. Antigua and Barbuda is seeking additional doses of vaccines to fully inoculate at least eighty per cent of the population.

## Sandals offer of vacation for healthcare workers draws praise



Sandals Resorts International has announced its intention to gift three hundred healthcare workers across the region with complimentary two-night stays at its award-winning all-inclusive resorts.

The company's Executive Chairman, Adam Stewart, is quoted as saying the gesture is in recognition of the selfless efforts of healthcare workers across the region, who continue to exhibit admirable

bravery and make tremendous sacrifices in the face of what has now become a year-long fight.

The resort company will work closely with Ministries of Health in the seven islands where it operates to identify the beneficiaries of its latest act of generosity.

Healthcare workers in Antigua, Barbados, The Bahamas, Grenada, Saint Lucia and The Turks and Caicos Islands and home base, Jamaica, are to receive complimentary vacations.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry

of Health, Ena Dalso-Henry said, "This thoughtful gesture in recognition of the invaluable contribution and sacrifices made by the frontline healthcare workers to the COVID-19 response efforts speaks volume to the core values of Sandals Resorts International. The Ministry of Health in Antigua and Barbuda expresses its gratitude and appreciation for this gift to our hardworking and dedicated staff and look forward to continued collaboration and partnership on this national effort."



# Rotary Club of Antigua donates big to Mount St. John's Medical Centre



The Antigua Rotary Club (RCA) has come forward with a donation to the Dialysis Unit at the Mount St John's Medical Centre (MSJMC). The presentation ceremony took place at Rotary House in the presence of Rotarians, representatives from the MSJMC, the Antigua and Barbuda Renal Society, Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB), along with Permanent Secretary within the Ministry Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Ambassador Anthony Liverpool and other social and corporate partners. Their gift toward the hospital's Dialysis Unit will help to fund a Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) project.

The overall estimated cost of the CKD project is two hundred

and twelve thousand dollars. The RCA, with support from partners (Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) and Antigua and Barbuda High Commission UK), has so far invested over one hundred and forty-five thousand dollars in the project. A donation from the Renal Society of sixty-seven thousand dollars financed the remainder of the project. "We are incredibly grateful for the Rotary Club of Antigua and Renal Society's (along with all the other partners) willingness to step up during this critical time. I won't mince words, this donation will save lives," said Dr. Ian Thomas MD, MSJMC Nephrologist. During the presentation ceremony,

Permanent Secretary within the Ministry Foreign Affairs and Immigration Ambassador Anthony Liverpool brought greetings on behalf of the High Commissioner to London, Ambassador Karen-Mae Hill.

"We really want to recognize the work of the Renal Society over the years in bringing awareness to Chronic Kidney Disease. The High Commission of London is pleased to be associated with the purchase of equip-

ment to support the dialysis needs of Antigua and Barbuda," Ambassador Liverpool expressed.

Michael Spencer, General Manager of ECAB, another corporate partner in the project, urged persons to take responsibility for their health, bearing in mind the strain that the country's health system is currently experiencing, especially with Chronic Kidney Disease.

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## THANK YOU TO ALL FRONTLINE WORKERS FROM AUA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE



In the era of COVID-19, there's more uncertainty than ever before: about our loved ones, our health, and our futures. It's important, then, to recognize what we can be certain about: that we owe a debt of gratitude to the doctors, nurses, technicians/therapists, EMTs, security officers, countless other healthcare professionals, police officers, and other first responders who play an integral role in getting people the care they need when a crisis first strikes.

These brave, dedicated men and women go to work every day with the intention of keeping our communities and citizens safe. Their lifesaving efforts over the past year have not gone unnoticed, and they deserve recognition today and every day.

**On behalf of American University of Antigua, THANK YOU.**



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## GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment

Long and High Street

ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA, W.I.

Telephone: 462-5522

Statement from Ministry of Health

March 11th, 2021

(COVID-19 Vaccine continues with exclusive vaccination of the elderly)

The Ministry of Health, Wellness and The Environment continues to take note of the strong turnout of senior citizens at the vaccination centers. Thursday, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight (1,848) Covid-19 vaccines were administered. The general public is reminded that all vaccination centers will continue their exclusive focus on vaccinating persons 65 years and older, and specific target groups inclusive of persons who are differently abled and hotel workers. The public vaccination sites will close on weekends to focus on vaccinating additional targeted groups.

The general public is also asked to take note of the following announcements.

Persons vaccinated at the Multipurpose Center between March 1 - 5, are asked to collect their vaccine cards on Friday 12th March 2021 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm. There will be a designated area at Multipurpose Center for this purpose. To collect your vaccine cards an ID must be presented.

Persons vaccinated at the Villa Polyclinic between March 1 - 5, are kindly asked to collect their vaccine cards on Friday 12th March 2021 from 12pm to 4:30 pm at the gate. To collect your vaccine cards an ID must be presented.

Persons vaccinated at the Sir Novelle Richards Academy (SNRA) in Potters between March 1 -5, are kindly asked to collect their vaccine cards on Friday 12th March 2021 from 12pm to 3:30pm and on Monday 15th March 2021 from 12:00pm to 3:30pm. There will be a designated area at SNRA for this purpose. To collect your vaccine cards an ID must be presented.

# Will regional unity be forever lost to the Caribbean?



**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)*

Several editorials in respected newspapers as well as blogs by influential persons in the

region are, once again, expressing deep concern about CARICOM, particularly over its lack of unity in international affairs and the failure of its leaders to implement their own decisions regarding the single market.

This has led a Minister of the St Vincent and the Grenadines government to reproduce on his blog, a strong view that "CARICOM is dead", depicted by a headstone in a burial ground. Against the background of these re-

cent pronouncements, my commentary this week draws on an article I wrote in 2013.

Ian McDonald's, "A Cloud of Witnesses", published by The Caribbean Press, is a collection of thoughtful reflections on the Caribbean condition; visionary and inspirational addresses to diplomats and graduating University students; and moving accounts of experiences that are shaping the Caribbean in which we live.

The topics in the book are varied reflecting a long life in the Caribbean; the interests of a man who is poet and writer; lover of cricket; executive in the sugar industry and a consummate West Indian – born in Trinidad of Antigua and St Kitts ancestry, grew up in Trinidad and Antigua, earned a degree from Cambridge University, Captained the West Indies Davis Cup tennis team, and worked most

of his adult life in Guyana. He is also among a rare breed – a white and proud West Indian as comfortable in the company of other West Indians of all races as he is content in his own skin.

After he retired as an Executive of the Sugar Industry in Guyana, and by then an accomplished and well-recognised writer and Poet, McDonald worked with the West Indian Commission – that body of distinguished West Indian men and women who produced in 1992 the seminal study, Time for Action, that laid out a blueprint for the Caribbean's future. McDonald recalls the testimony of "experts" who pointed to the models that were being developed elsewhere – the Asian Tigers, the Singapore model, the new Europe. He also remembers with satisfaction that the Commission felt that, while these models were use-



ful reference points, the West Indian model had its own intrinsic value. “West Indians”, the report said, “offer a rare creation – a people of many nationalities, many races, many faiths, and different cultural heritages” who have stayed together in a single community.

McDonald asserts his own belief in the value of the West Indian model. Nonetheless, he is practical enough to “pray because I think we will need some heavenly blessing in a hard task... but in the end I profoundly believe because I think we already hold enough in common to secure an undivided future together”.

His profound belief does not prevent him from being “disillusioned with the pettifogging gradualism that the word CARICOM is rapidly coming to stand for”. “All of our small countries”, he says, “simply have to make ourselves bigger very soon – enlarge our domestic market, broaden our technological base, combine our financial

resources, increase the scale of opportunity for our ambitious young people, bring together behind one frontier the marvellous common cultural strains that exist in the West Indies side by side but apart – apart and therefore more vulnerable to outside cultural impact”.

As for the grand communiques, speeches and often touted plans of CARICOM meetings, he despairs – “every country in the region is littered with the burnt-out corpses of plans not implemented and reports unread”. Of the high-sounding declarations, he laments that they are “Declarations of futility”.

The book conjoins cricket with poetry not only in capturing the superlative stroke play of Rohan Kanhai and Vivian Richards; the genius of Frank Worrell; and the artistry of Garfield Sobers and Brian Lara, but the essence of what cricket means to every West Indian – “truly cricket is supremely an imaginative possession which binds our Caribbean Com-

munity together... If it is no longer to be so we have lost something of infinite value”.

McDonald’s book celebrates the nobility and importance of West Indian-ness and the necessity to consolidate its value. However, it does not ignore the warts so obvious on our Caribbean face, nor does it avoid confronting our obsession with our sovereignty that is constantly invoked to pursue narrow political interests. Clinging to sovereignty, which in any event we only exercise against ourselves is an obstacle to the unity we all need to survive in a world that cares little about small states. As the rest of the world sees the English-Speaking Caribbean, our entire populations are collectively no more than a small city in the US, Europe or Asia. What is more, many of our countries frequently yield their sovereignty to larger countries when they are either lured or pressured to do so – even at the expense of the CARICOM Treaty obligations.

In truth, as was evidenced in their testimony to the 1992 West Indian Commission, Caribbean people would prefer a Caribbean with one currency, one passport, free to travel between them, to invest in them, to benefit from its abundant collective wealth, to hail their joint heroes in sport, in literature and in other areas of achievement. And, more than anything else, to command respect in the world.

McDonald’s book describes the things that give pleasure and cause the soul to soar and want to accomplish what looks impossible like “painting the wind” or creating a West Indian nation – the former only God can accomplish; the latter is within the capacity of Caribbean people inspired by their leaders, when we all get to it.

Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronald-sanders.com](http://www.sirronald-sanders.com)

# BUT NOT A DROP TO DRINK



*By Tony Deyal*

In 1834, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in which, having shot the Albatross, the bird which was thought to cause the breeze to blow, the mariner and all the others on board the ship were doomed. As he lamented to everyone he could buttonhole and force to listen to his story, “Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink.” I first read the poem in 1958 when I was thirteen and having left home where, for a whole week, despite my father having paid a lot of money and a

bottle of whisky to his “connection” in the local council to “expedite” a connection to our house, I woke up at four in the morning to take a quick bath from a bucket so I could go to school. I had filled the water from the standpipe at the foot of the hill where, perhaps because of gravity, we sometimes got some. For a long time that poem had the greatest impact on me of all that I had read so far, even the New Testament which was the mandatory text in our religion class in the Anglican or EC school I attended.

My reaction to the Coleridge stanza was

very much like the way a Trini mother responded to the tears of her son when he was put out of Elementary School. When she asked him what had happened, if some school bully had beaten him, the little boy told her that the teacher questioned him “How did Jesus Christ die?” and because he didn’t know the answer, she put him out of class and told him to go home and not to come back to school without one of his parents. The very angry mother, took her son to the school, demanded to see the teacher and declared, “Miss James. My son is a little boy and you asking him thing that even big people don’t know. You want him to tell you how Jesus Christ die when I didn’t even know that the poor gentleman was sick self!”

My predicament was that we in Trinidad had the same problem as the Ancient Mariner. We were, and are, surrounded by the seawater where, even in the dry season, the North East

Trade winds pick up liquid that my teacher told me became “Convictional Rain”. The same three mountain ranges still cause the North East Trades to release “Relief” rainwater for six months of the year in our “rainy” season. We continue to have rivers and streams where some people still wash their clothes and some even have to boil and drink the water. From 1964, we had a “Water and Sewerage Authority” managing water distribution and several “reservoirs” they control but, despite all this, our taps remain dry for weeks and often months on a never-ending end. What I learnt then and have internalised since is that regardless of the name of the rain or type that fell, relief was not something that we would get or should expect from our governments.

Now, 53 years later, the situation is worse despite promises by all the different Governments and their boasts of “Water for All”. The promise re-



mains but the date shifts as the Governments become shiftier than their dates. That day in class, listening to the story of the Albatross, I asked myself, who or what we killed that brought that doom upon us and even now, an Ancient Mariner myself, it still hangs over us without rhyme, reason or remedy.

We are not alone though. Three years ago, Daphne Ewing-Chow writing in Forbes Magazine on "In Search Of A Solution For Water Scarcity In The Caribbean" pointed out, "Barbados, given its lack of fresh water resources, has a water availability of just 306 cubic meters per capita per year, which make it the 15th most water-scarce nation in the world. Jamaica has suffered from an aging and overburdened water system with tens of thousands of repeated leaks per year..." She added, "It is not surprising that, of the 37 countries that the World Resources Institute has identified as having "extremely high" levels of water stress, sev-

en are from the Caribbean: Dominica, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis..."

It is incredible that people in these countries still have to pay huge water bills and even if they get sick from the water, because the Government prevents citizens from creating their own sources, even a "Get Well Soon" card is of no use. Water is so scarce that when you get it from the tap, despite its dark yellow or black colour you have to treat it like Holy Water and boil the hell out of it. If you don't succeed in getting rid of the impurities, the holiness is multiplied in the wash-room because you're sure to get a few religious movements that cause you to shout out for help from the Deity. Now, with climate change, we get sudden, sharp showers interspersed with periods of drought. If we don't capture and save the water while we have rain, when the droughts come it is not just farm-

ers who lose their crops although that, too, is a growing problem.

The poet, W.H. Auden noted, "Thousands have lived without love not one without water" and Jacques Cousteau, the famous explorer and conservationist observed, "We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one." A few years ago, I was back in Trinidad for a while and suffered like everyone else from a daily water-shortage caused by the incompetence of the Government in power. The issue then, as now, is not only the management of the water resources of the entire region or their distribution to the population, it is whether water is a commodity to be sold to the citizenry by Governments or private agencies, regardless of the quality or availability of the commodity, or whether it is a right of citizenship.

It is easy to joke, as we did by the standpipes while we patiently endured long delays in long lines waiting our turn to fill our buckets, or took

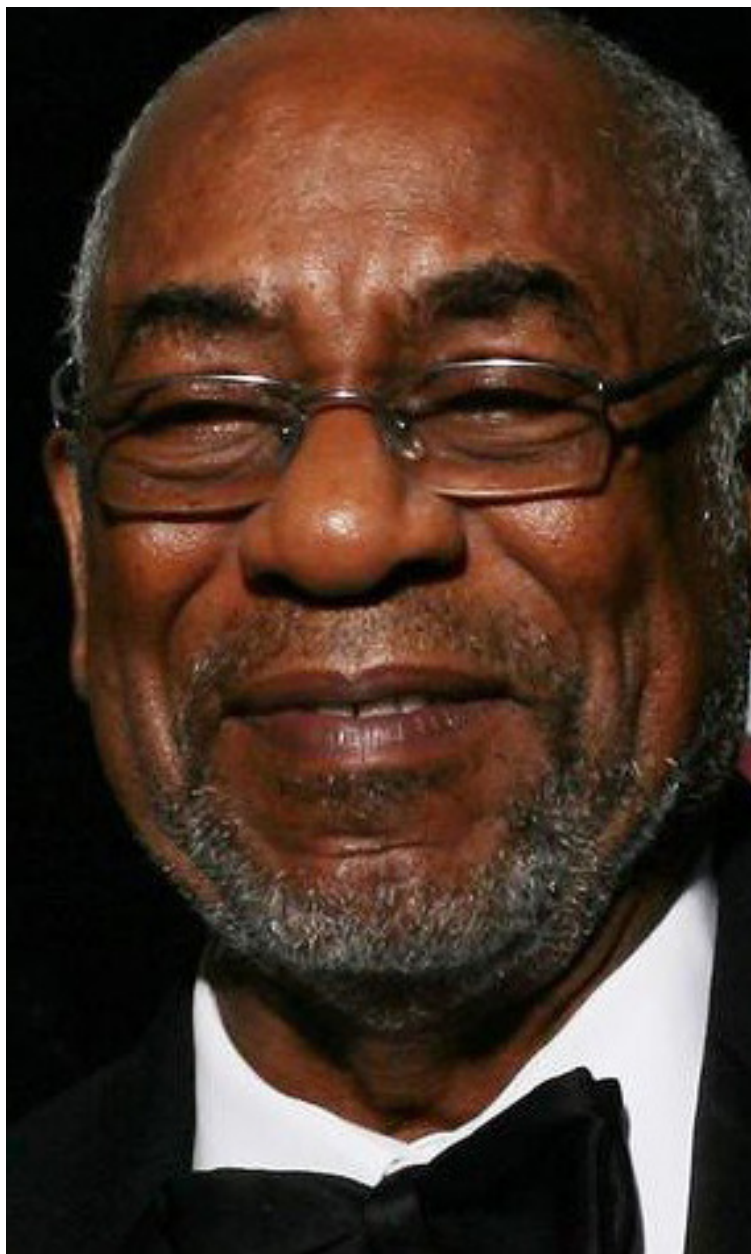
our quick, nightly, after-football wash, most times and depending on how dark it was, in our underwear. There is a story about a man who stood in the very long line in a posh section of Port-of-Spain, bucket in hand, waiting and waiting until he finally had enough. He threw down his bucket, jumped up and down on it until he flattened it and then screamed in anger, "I done with this. I am going to see the Prime Minister and tell him what I think about the incompetence of his government." Two days later he was back in the line, a new bucket in his hand, quietly and sheepishly waiting his turn. The person in front of him queried, "I thought you said you going to the Prime Minister to give him a piece of your mind." The man replied quietly, "You think this line long?"

\*Tony Deyal was last seen saying he believes his brand of dark, off-key humour is like drinking water in the Caribbean. Only a few people get it.

## Tribute to Clarvis Joseph by Dr. Errol Samuel, President of the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce Limited

James Clarvis H Joseph assumed the presidency of the Chamber in 1995, and served for twelve years until 2007. He was preceded by at that time Carl Roberts and succeeded by Everett Christian.

He came to the Chamber at a time when the country was in the first year of the leadership of Hon. Lester Bryant Bird, who had won general elections for the Antigua Labour Party (ALP) in the previous year, 1994. It was also later in 1995 when the island was to experience a major category 5 cyclone, Hurricane Luis. Clarvis as he was known to all, came to office with experience in both the private as well as public sectors; as a salaried employee, and as an independent contractor; as an academic, as well as an administrator in business as well as sports, and other disciplines, in Antigua and Barbuda as well as abroad. So, when he assumed the presidency representing Carib Seas Limited, the Chamber's



leadership was well poised to engage with its many stakeholders.

During the early period which Clarvis presided over the Chamber, the Chamber, the Employers' Federation, and the Hotels and Tourism Association had a functional cooperative styled as a national Private Sector Organisation. It

was the broad objective of this organisation to unite to represent private sector policies in the country, and to ensure that one organisation did not exercise undue influence to bias their organisation's interest, the presidency was rotated annually among the three. The Private Sector Organisation even went

as far to seek to purchase or construct a building which would house all three organisations, and so take them all out of rented premises. Unfortunately, due to perception that the ALP government had over some leaders of the confederation, the plans were still born, and the official cooperation unraveled.

On assuming office, he also sought to work closely with the APL government on reform of the economy, and with the Past Presidents, Eustace Francis, Noel Walling, then Vice Everett Christian and others, the Chamber presented a white paper to the Lester Bird administration on Public Sector Reform, seeking to rationalize the human resources of the public sector, as well as advise on management of the economy. The extent to which this assistance to the government of the day heeded or was able to benefit from this is still unknown.

Clarvis was well known for advocacy, and there was perhaps no more



memorable demonstration (no pun intended) that the famed stand which the Chamber took against what it considered to be government's attempt at enacting what was in essence a levy on revenues. It was an amendment to the Income Tax Act of 2000 to allow for the collection of 2% on the turnover of businesses. The amendment was seen to be draconian, especially given that it compelled businesses once assessed, to pay first then appeal. The Chamber was able to mobilize the greater part of the business community in Antigua and Barbuda, and bring a close to business activity in the country for two days. The result of this persuaded the government to amend the law. In his later years as president of the Chamber, he was almost obsessed in

trying to bring group insurance to the Chamber members, as well as a private pension scheme, given the very difficult circumstances employees found themselves in, at the twilight of their careers. This goal however eluded him, and the board at that time.

Clarvis used his knowledge and experience to give corporate governance to several companies in both the public and private sectors. He served on the board of the ABI Bank, and was an unofficial consultant to many in the group. With the change in administration in 2014 when Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and the United Progressive Party came to power, he initially chaired the Antigua Port Authority, and later the Antigua Public Utilities Authority. Clarvis was a champion of the

common man, and the underprivileged. It is reliably reported that on returning to Antigua in the 70's after studying, getting married and working abroad, he found himself at the Ministry of Education, where he discovered many scholarships from the "wastepaper basket" which subsequently a number of deserving Antiguan would be able to benefit from for years to come, and thus make meaningful contributions to the country. One of his amazing qualities was his ability to find time to meet with and speak to virtually everyone who needed advice or other support. He was a man for all seasons, and as they say larger than life. Those of us who served with him could not but admire him, because he was a friend of all.

We would like to ac-

knowledge the persons who contributed to this brief glance into the life of our brother in commerce, his fellow JCI Life Senators: Dr. Sir Carl Roberts, and Sir Eustace Francis (who are also past president of the Chamber); as well as another past Chamber president Mr. Everett Christian.

On behalf of the Membership, Board, Management and staff of the Chamber, I extend our thanks to God for the life and contributions of our dear brother in commerce, and offer deepest condolences to his wife Dr. Marlene Joseph, his sons Kevin, and Damon, and their families, and well as his surviving siblings, and their families, as well as other relatives, many friends, former colleagues and loved ones at this time of loss.

# REAL TALK

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# Sean Paul Release

## MONUMENTAL DANCEHALL ALBUM 'LIVE N LIVIN' HIGHLIGHTING COLLABORATION OVER CONFRONTATION

Sean Paul Release monumental dancehall album 'Live N Livin' highlighting collaboration over confrontation Kingston, Jamaica: "Dancehall is alive and well. Check the pulse. This album is one I hold very dear to my heart for many reasons. It's the first album of mine being released off my own label, Dutty Rock Productions, and a body of work which has allowed me to work so closely with artistes I revere in my genre," says Sean Paul.

The Grammy® Award-winning global megastar, philanthropist, Sean Paul releases his seventh studio album—Live N Livin—arriving on all platforms on Friday, March 12th. Live N Livin is produced by Dutty Rock Productions and distributed by ONErpm.

In the spirit of coming together, Sean Paul chose to collaborate with others in the Dancehall space to promote unity. Live N Livin features collaborations from 22 reggae and dancehall powerhouses like Buju Banton, Damian "Jr Gong" Marley, Agent Sasco, Mavado, Busy Signal and newcomers such as Govana, Chi Ching Ching, Intence, Skillibeng and several other artistes that play a pivotal role and whose sound remains a cornerstone of the genre. With a collection of traditional and fresh sound of dancehall Live N Livin captures the essence of dancehall and the unity, which exists within the culture. Dancehall has recorded tremendous success over the years, with amazing fusion offered by the likes of Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Sam Smith, and genres



like Reggaeton and Afro Beats. The genre has continued to impact the world and Sean Paul aims to highlight the significance of dancehall while collaborating with different talented artistes.

The 16-track album was produced with a collaboration over confrontation undertone, 15 include features and one single from Sean Paul. In the midst of this great body of work highlighting dancehall from Jamaica, Ghanaian dancehall artiste Stonebwoy is also featured on the album's Guns of Navarone remix. "Stonebwoy, is a very talented artiste from Ghana who always pay homage to the dancehall genre and visits the island of Jamaica. It was clear to me when he stated he wanted to be a part of this project I could not say no" says Sean Paul.

With over one year at home, due to the pandemic, like many artists, Sean Paul has been unable to hit the stage and tour vigorously as he is used to. Using his time to record two albums, 'Live N Livin' & 'Scorcha' Sean Paul has partnered with Dreamstage and is set to perform virtually for his fans Live from Jamaica. Fans are in luck as they will get to teleport to the Caribbean for feel-good music through Dreamstage's superior hi-def visual virtual concert stage that brings dancehall ambassador Sean Paul and surprise musical guests into homes where fans can dance like no one's watching in unison with others. He will perform live from the sandy beaches of Jamaica on Saturday, April 10. [www.dreamstage.live](http://www.dreamstage.live).



# BEST REGGAE ALBUM NOMINATIONS @ 63RD GRAMMY AWARDS

(Reggaeville.com) - The 63rd Annual Grammy Awards will air on CBS on Sunday night. It is often referred to as the biggest night in music as the Grammys are music's equivalent to the Academy Awards for movies. Congratulations to all nominees!

## What are the eligibility requirements for nominations?

For the 63rd Annual GRAMMY Awards, recordings must be released between September 1, 2019, and August 31, 2020. To be eligible, recordings must be for sale commercially via general distribution or made available as a digital recording, either for sale or via a recognized streaming service.

To be considered an album, recordings must contain at least five different tracks and a total playing time of 15 minutes or a total playing time of at least 30 minutes with no minimum track requirement. Recordings (albums/singles) must be available to the public as stand-alone purchases or audio-only streams.



## BEST REGGAE ALBUM - NOMINEES

- BUJU BANTON - UPSIDE DOWN 2020 [Roc Nation]
- SKIP MARLEY - HIGHER PLACE [Island Records]
- MAXI PRIEST - IT ALL COMES BACK TO LOVE [S-Curve Records]
- TOOTS & THE MAYTALS - GOT TO BE TOUGH [Trojan Jamaica]
- THE WAILERS - ONE WORLD [Sony Music Latin]

Shortly after the Grammy announcement The Wailers' Aston Barrett Jr. told Reggaeville: "I am more than thankful to the Academy for the nomination of The Wailers for best Reggae Album of the year. We have worked so hard to create this album. For years, I have been carrying the sound & legacy of the Barrett family and to be honoured by this nomination is very touching. Special thanks to Emilio Estefan, everyone at Sony Latin and our talented team for all their dedicated hard work. One World, One Love!"



IN REACTION TO THE NOMINATION

# BUJU BANTON

published a short statement on social media

"Let the music speak,

I wanna be a silent listener.

Thanks to all. A telling album in telling times."

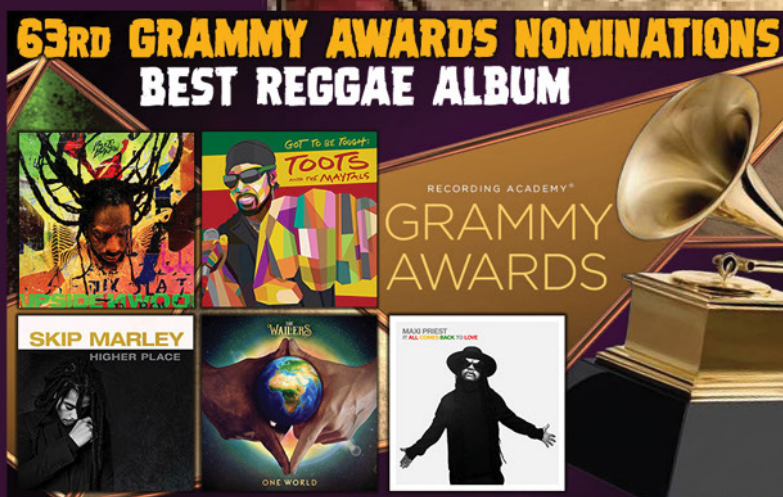
## NOMINATION FACTS

- Maxi Priest's album is the only release from 2019. Third Grammy nomination.
- Shaggy is featured on four songs on It All Comes Back To Love.
- Buju Banton's 5th nomination. One win.
- Skip Marley's Higher Place 7 track EP features Damian Marley.
- Toots & The Maytals 6th nomination (plus one for the album Toots in Memphis by Toots). One win for True Love (2005).
- Toots Hibbert passed away September 11, 2020. So far there has only been two posthumous nominations in the Reggae category, when Dennis Brown (RIP 1999) was nominated for his 2000 album Let Me Be the One and Peter Tosh (murdered in September 1987) with No Nuclear War (1987), which was awarded as winner in March 1988.
  - First nomination for The Wailers led by Aston Barrett Jr.
  - Skip Marley's mother Cedella Marley is featured on the Wailers' album title song. So is Shaggy!

Skip Marley got a second nomination in the category BEST R&B SONG for his combination Slow Down with H.E.R.

Recent album releases by Ziggy Marley (More Family Time), Shaggy (Christmas In The Islands), and Spragga Benz (The Journey Chosen), were released after August 31. They have to be submitted for the next Grammy.

The 63rd Annual GRAMMY Awards, hosted by comedian Trevor Noah, will be broadcasted on the CBS Television Network on March 14, 2021 (originally scheduled for Jan. 31, 2021).





# National Security Strategy to provide a comprehensive threat assessment

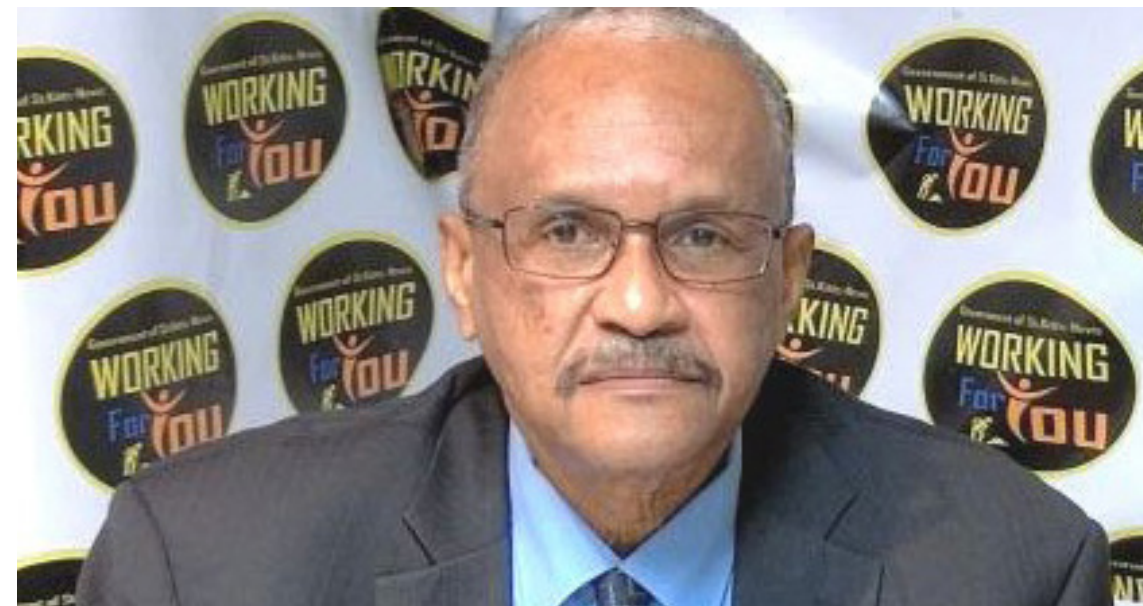
St. Kitts-Nevis Observer — One of the most important aspects of the National Security Strategy (NSS) is threat assessment, according to National Security Advisor, Retired Major General Stewart Saun-

necessary to ensure the safety, security, and stability of the nation and its interests,” said Major General Saunders. “The document represents the results of a detailed and in-depth study that was embarked upon by

statements,” explained Major General Saunders. “Through the strategy, all government agencies, ministries, and departments are expected to review their structure and operations to ensure that the

to the Federation, and to an extent the wider Caribbean, include illegal arms and ammunition trafficking; the illegal drug trade; organized crime; transnational organized crime; corruption; financial crimes—money laundering, cybercrime — identity theft, fraud, lottery scamming, human trafficking to include human smuggling; illegal migration; terrorism to include chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives (CBRNE); acts of extreme violence; health security—the impact of epidemics and pandemics, in particular; human security—human capacity deficiency concerns; food and water security; natural and manmade disasters and climate change,” said Major General Saunders.

Major General Saunders said the NSS document outlines steps that the Government intends to take to make sure that a proper National Security Architecture is in place to deal with these threats.



ders. He said the National Security Strategy provides a comprehensive plan for an “all-of-government approach” to ensure a safe and secure environment for citizens, residents, and visitors.

“The objective of the NSS is to clearly determine the threats that impact, or could impact, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, inform the citizenry, as well as provide for and take those actions that are

the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis, together with consultations with all the relevant stakeholders to include a very wide cross-section of the public,” said Major General Saunders. “The Government now presents the strategy for dealing with the Federation’s threat realities and outlines the threat assessment, approach, tier rating system, responsibilities and their allocations, tangential or cross-cutting issues and closing

security of the nation receives priority attention as required.”

Major General Saunders said the threat assessment is derived from a cross-section of entities. “I would like to point out that the threat assessment is not something that has been pulled out of a book,” he said. “It is as a result of the interaction between people, organizations, agencies, ministries and other departments and these have been compiled.”

“The current threats

# Caribbean countries to receive funds from EU to fight COVID-19



**BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (CMC)** — The Commissioner for Crisis Management within the European Commission, Janez Lenarčič, says 17 million in humanitarian aid is being donated to address the needs of the Caribbean's most vulnerable which have been worsened by the pandemic.

"The EU continues to provide life-saving humanitarian aid support directly to the most vulnerable population. In Haiti, as well as in the

rest of the Caribbean, recurrent natural hazards further increase vulnerabilities [that are further] exacerbated by the coronavirus. In this challenging time, the EU is stepping up its long-standing humanitarian assistance to those most in need," said Lenarčič in a statement on Thursday.

From the amount being donated, Haiti will receive 14 million to address extreme food insecurity, provide protection for migrants

and victims of gang violence, and increase resilience to disasters. The EU estimates that 4.4 million people or 40 percent of the Haitian population will need humanitarian assistance in 2021.

"Due to its vulnerability to natural hazards, governance issues and high levels of poverty, Haiti has limited capacity to cope with recurring emergencies. Food shortages, malnutrition, recurrent disease epidemics, and additional humanitari-

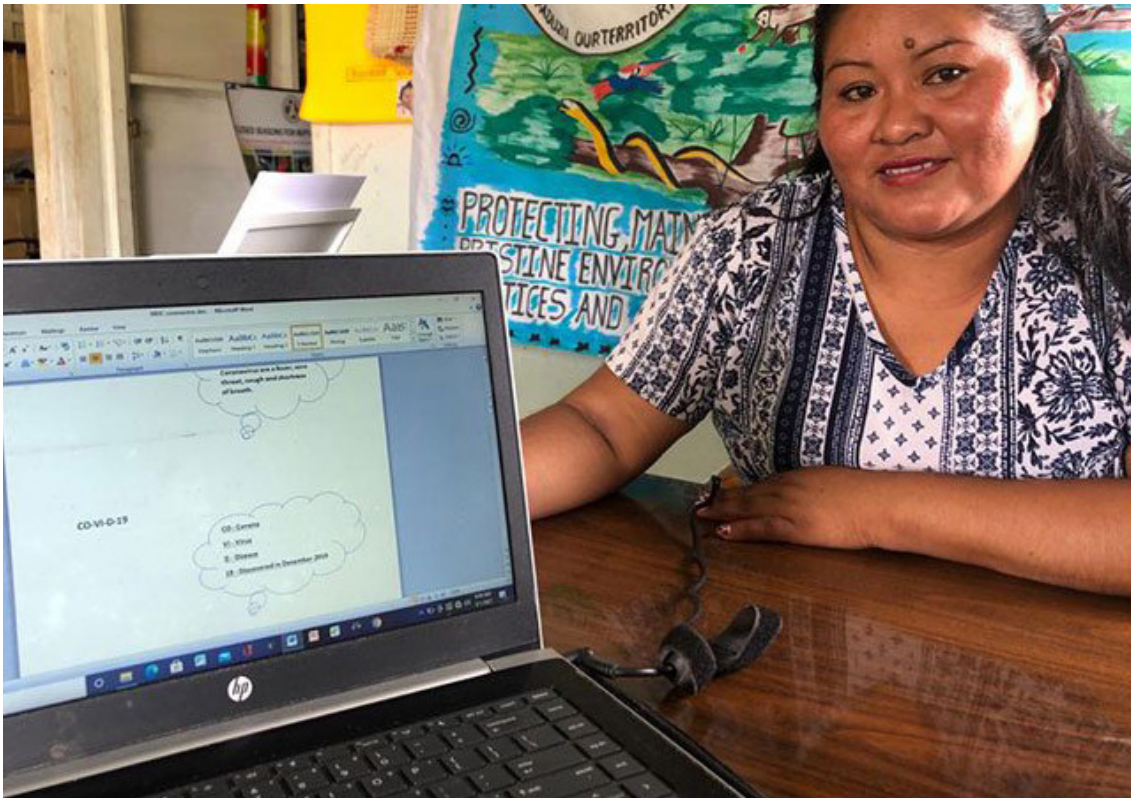
an needs generated by an ongoing socio-political crisis require sustained humanitarian assistance," the EU said.

Three million euros will go to the other islands to help with disaster preparedness and resilience interventions in at-risk communities.

Since 1994, the European Union has provided 183 million in humanitarian aid to the Caribbean, excluding Haiti.



# 'Deep South' Rupununi COVID-free



**Guyana Chronicle** - It is just after the crack of dawn on Monday morning. Dorothy James, an elderly guest house proprietor in the indigenous community of Aishalton, is busy preparing breakfast. For her guests, she prepares a jug of juice using fresh oranges that she grew in her garden. In the background, just before the six o'clock news airs, a radio drama on COVID-19 plays on James' solar-powered radio. The drama encourages persons to wear their face masks, constantly wash their hands and maintain an appropriate social distance to safeguard against contracting the novel coronavirus.

Aishalton is located in the 'Deep South' area of the Rupununi, located in Region Nine (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo). It is one of the 21 communities located in the Wapichan territory. And in Aishalton, and the Deep South Rupununi at large, the residents are cognizant of the measures needed to safeguard against contracting the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the disease, COVID-19. It is the adherence to these measures that, perhaps, prevented the area from recording a single case of COVID-19 in the year since the virus has spread to Guyana. "For us in the village

we acted quickly when the pandemic first came to Guyana. What we did first, on the 28th of March, was that we erected a gate quickly," Michael Thomas, the Toshao of Aishalton, told this publication in a recent interview. This gate was erected at the entrance to the community to monitor and record travel into and out of Aishalton, allowing the village council to engage in its own contact tracing, if need be. They, gate monitors — which are women from the village — are tasked with recording the names and temperature of each person. According to Toshao Thomas, it was also

important to institute such a system since there is frequent travel through the community, from local miners and those from nearby Brazil, heading into the gold mining area of Marudi. This would later present greater concerns.

These miners would often stop in the village to purchase food or stay overnight at one of the guesthouses, but due to concerns over the spread of the coronavirus, the village council prohibited interaction between the miners and the villagers.

Beyond just erecting the gate, though, Thomas and other Toshaos across the Wapichan territory decided that a coordinated approach to mitigating the effects of the pandemic was necessary. These toshaos form part of the South Rupununi District Council (SRDC), a body that aids in the management of the Wapichan territory. And in the wake of the emergent COVID-19 pandemic, the council, along with health officials in the communities, convened a meeting to chart a way forward.

## LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST



## COMMUNITY NOTICES

### ANTIGUA STATE COLLEGE

Antigua State College announces the closure of its Administrative Offices, Golden Grove Campus on Thursday 11th, Friday 12th and Monday 15th March, 2021. Online classes will continue as scheduled.

The closure is to facilitate the sanitization of workspaces, in the interest of the health and safety of employees and members of the general public.

Regular hours of operation will resume on Tuesday 16th March, 2021. Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted.

## ART CORNER

# TAKE ME HOME



This very sweet-natured young dog named Pebbles would make a wonderful family pet and companion. She has been treated for parasites, vaccinated, and spayed. If you would like to adopt Pebbles, please contact us at 461-4957 or visit our shelter in Bethesda (same location as the Donkey Sanctuary)

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



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.

**TELL US WHAT'S  
HAPPENING  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY.**

Submit community notices to

**news@pointville.ag**



# Meghan and Harry interview: Royal Family 'very much not racist' – William



BBC News - The Duke of Cambridge has said the royals are "very much not a racist family" in his first comments after accusations by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in a TV interview.

Prince William also said he had not yet spoken to his brother but would do so.

Meghan and Prince Harry said a royal had expressed concern over "how dark" their son Archie's skin might be.

Buckingham Palace

previously said the claim was "concerning" but it would be addressed privately.

In a statement, the Palace said "recollections may vary" but that the Sussexes would "always be much loved family members".

During a visit to a school in Stratford, east London, on Thursday, Prince William was asked by a reporter: "Is the Royal Family a racist family, sir?"

The duke replied: "We're very much not a racist family."

Asked whether he had spoken to Prince Harry since the Oprah interview, Prince William said: "No, I haven't spoken to him yet but I will do."

Prince William's visit is not the first appearance by a senior royal since the interview aired - the Prince of Wales carried out an engagement earlier this week. Despite Prince William's team making clear to reporters he wouldn't be answering questions, he must have known they

might come. One wonders if he had planned to engage or whether the answers were impromptu.

William will be well aware that anything he utters will be headline news.

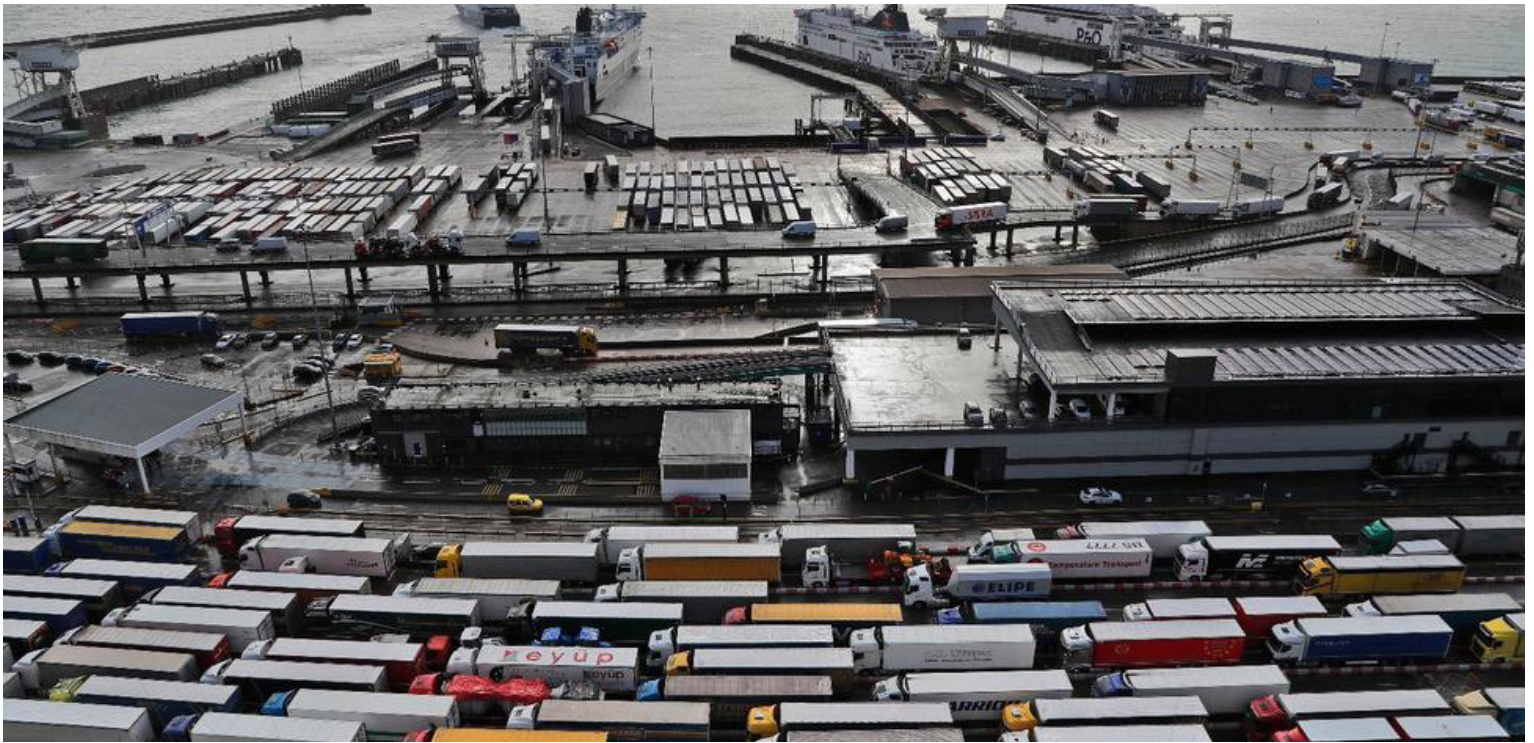
The first question alluded to the rift between the two brothers. In the Oprah interview, Prince Harry said their relationship is "space" at the moment but that "time heals all things hopefully".

We don't know when they last spoke but we do now know that William does intend to speak to him.

As for the second and more direct question - "Is the royal family a racist family, sir?" - William could have ignored it. But, despite the Queen's statement saying the race issue would be dealt with privately, the prince clearly felt he had to push back on what has become a very public and damaging allegation.

Remaining silent, he felt, was not the best option.

# UK delays post-Brexit import checks to give more time to prepare



LONDON (Reuters) - Britain on Thursday delayed the introduction of a range of post-Brexit import checks on goods from the European Union by around six months, saying businesses needed more time to prepare because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The British Retail Consortium welcomed the move, but said it was needed because the government was not ready and the required border control posts were "little more than a hole in the ground".

Britain departure

from the European Union at the end of last year created a full customs border with the bloc where previously goods could move freely, threatening the intricate supply chains between the two sides.

Brussels immediately introduced checks and paperwork for goods moving from Britain into the EU, which has led to delays, higher costs and a serious blow to some businesses such as in fishing industry that are struggling to compete.

To soften the impact, Britain delayed the start of import

checks on food until April 1 and full checks until July. They will now be delayed by a further six months.

Britain's relations with the bloc have soured since it left last year, over COVID vaccines and accusations from both sides that the other is acting in bad faith over their Brexit divorce and trade agreements.

The fate of Northern Ireland, where Britain has already unilaterally sought to delay customs checks to avoid disruption, has been one of the most bitterly contested issues, drawing criticism from an ally

of U.S. President Joe Biden.

Andrew Opie at the British Retail Consortium welcomed the delay. Other trade groups urged talks to improve relations.

"Until the infrastructure is in place, with IT systems ready and established processes for checks and paperwork, it would be foolhardy to introduce full requirements for EHC (export health certificate) documentation, pre-notification of imports, physical checks and more," Opie said.



# UN appeals for \$5.5 billion to avert famine for 34 million



“famine is already here” and “people are dying from hunger, and suffering critical rates of malnutrition.” “Parts of Yemen, South Sudan and Burkina Faso are in the grip of famine or conditions akin to famine,” he said. “More than 150,000 people are at risk of starving.”

Five years of conflict in Yemen have displaced 4 million people and left many “facing a death sentence as widespread hunger stalks their nation,” Guterres said. “Around half of all children under five -- 2.3 million -- are projected to face acute malnutrition in 2021. Some 16 million people face food insecurity.”

Ten years after South Sudan declared independence, he said 60% of the population is increasingly hungry, with chronic sporadic violence, extreme weather and the economic impact of COVID-19 pushing more than 7 million people into acute food insecurity. Food prices are so high, he said, that “just one plate of rice and beans costs

more than 180% of the average daily salary -- the equivalent of about \$400 here in New York.” Guterres said Congo, with ongoing conflicts in its mineral-rich east and elsewhere, “experienced the world’s largest food crisis last year, with nearly 21.8 million people facing acute hunger between July and December.” The U.N. chief said he had one simple message: “if you don’t feed people, you feed conflict.”

“We need to tackle both hunger and conflict if we are to solve either,” Guterres said.

He called on donors for \$5.5 billion for “the more than 34 million people who already face emergency levels of acute food insecurity.”

The secretary-general urged Security Council members to use their “privileged position to do everything in your power to end violence, negotiate peace, and alleviate the hunger and suffering that afflict so many millions of people around the world.”

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made an urgent appeal Thursday for \$5.5 billion to prevent a “catastrophe” for 34 million people in over three dozen countries who are just one step away from famine driven by conflict. The U.N. chief told a high-level U.N. Security Council meeting on conflict-driven hunger organized by the United States that more than 88 million people were suffering from “acute hunger” at the end of 2020 due to conflict and instability -- a 20 percent increase in one year -- and “projections for 2021 point to a

continuation of this frightening trend.”

“We face multiple conflict-driven famines around the world,” Guterres said. “Climate shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic are adding fuel to the flames.”

He warned that “without immediate action, millions of people will reach the brink of extreme hunger and death,” with projections showing that hunger crises are “escalating and spreading across the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, and accelerating in South Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan.” In some countries, the secretary-general said,

# Despite mounting COVID deaths Brazil plays on

In Brazil, the ball keeps rolling, even as the country experiences its most dramatic moment of the coronavirus pandemic yet, breaking national daily death toll records day after day.

The Paulista Football Federation (FPF) has ruled that San Paulo's State Championship will continue, despite pressure to suspend play. The organization met with the state prosecu-

tor's office hours before the government's announcement and defended their decision to continue on the ground that clubs are able to maintain a safe health protocol. The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has used similar arguments to support the continuation of games. Across, Brazil the state championship is under way. The dramatic situation had some



in the football industry questioning the sanity of playing on. "I'm appealing to the Brazilian FA to give the Brazilian Cup a break so we can postpone these matches for a little time," said America coach Lisca in a plea

to football authorities. "I am losing friends. I know that football is entertainment, and it is important for people at home. But our lives are more important, we are not superheroes," Lisca noted.

## LAKERS SET NBA SALES

### PACE WITH NETS AT THEIR BEST

LeBron James and the reigning champions Los Angeles Lakers were the top sellers in NBA jerseys and merchandise, with Brooklyn Nets rising to team-record sales levels.

The results, announced on Thursday by the league and players' union, were based on NBA store website sales for the first half of the 2020-21 NBA season, which concluded last week.

No sales figures were released, only rankings, which saw the Lakers superstar James listed atop the most popular selling jerseys, followed by Slovenian Luka Doncic of the Dallas Mavericks, Brooklyn's Kevin Durant, Golden State's Stephen Curry and Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks. The Nets were

the second highest team on the popular team merchandises sales list, thanks in part to three top-ten jersey sellers, including Durant, Kyrie Irving at sixth and James Harden at Ninth.

Brooklyn's figures also may also be bolstered by this week's signing of Blake Griffin who was bought by the Pistons.

Other top jersey sellers include Anthony Davis of the Lakers seventh, Boston's Jayson Tatum in eighth and Zion Williamson on the New Orleans Pelicans at a career-best tenth.

Golden State ranked third on the overall merchandised sales list, followed in order by the Boston Celtics, Philadelphia 76ers, Miami Heat, Chicago Bulls, Dallas Mavericks, Toronto Raptors and Milwaukee Bucks.





# SHAI HOPE STEERS WINDIES TO VICTORY

West Indies defeated Sri Lanka by eight wickets on Wednesday at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match One-Day International (ODI) series.

Batting first after winning the toss, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 232 with Gunathilaka leading the way with 55 before being given out in a controversial manner for obstruction. Karunaratne added 52 and Bandara contributed 50.

Jason Holder and Jason Mohammed bagged two wickets each to lead the Caribbean team's bowling attack. Captain Kieron Pol-

lard, Fabian Allen and Alzarri Joseph picked up a wicket each. Shai Hope returned to form, posting a stylish and composed 110; while fellow opener Evin Lewis made 65.

Darren Bravo added 37 as the Caribbean side got to their landmark in 47.0 overs. Dushmantha Chameera took 2-50 off his 10 overs. Hope was man of the match, after leading in an opening stand of 143, a record-opening stand for West Indies against Sri Lanka in the West Indies.

Hope also shared in a 72-run second wicket stand with Darren Bravo.



## CWI ANNOUNCES CHANGE IN START TIME FOR 3RD ODI



Cricket West Indies (CWI) announced a change to the start time for the third CG Insurance One-Day International between West Indies and Sri Lanka on Sunday. The match will now start at 9:30 a.m. at the Sir Vivian Richards Sta-

dium. It was originally scheduled to be a day/night fixture, starting at 1:30 p.m.

Today's second match will bowl off as originally scheduled at 9:30 a.m. at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.



## THOMAS BACH RE-ELECTED TO FOUR MORE YEARS AS IOC PRESIDENT

Sixty-seven-year-old German lawyer, Thomas Bach, was re-elected as International Olympic Committee (IOC) president on Wednesday during an IOC videoconference session.

Bach, who won fencing gold medal at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, was unopposed. He was

backed by nine-three of the ninety-four valid votes cast by his fellow IOC members, with one unidentified voter opposed.

There were four abstentions. The German will now serve a further four years until 2025. He was originally elected in Buenos Aires in 2013.



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