



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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FRIDAY 30TH APRIL 2021

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BAR OWNERS TO MAKE CASE

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NICHOLAS UPBEAT ABOUT TELECOMMUNICATIONS
BILL GOING TO PARLIAMENT

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PLANNING FOR HURRICANE IN COVID-19

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was a record for named storms – thirty in all. Seven, or twenty-three per cent of the storms, developed after September, of which five were hurricanes, four of them major ones. Indeed, by 20th September, with twenty-one named storms having already formed, and the pre-season list of names already used up, meteorologists had to reach for the Greek alphabet to name new storms. Happily, Jamaica suffered neither a direct hit nor a sideswipe from the plethora of storms. Which does not mean that the island was not affected. Indeed, between late October and early November, which should have been the tail end

of the season, hurricanes Zeta and Eta, respectively, dumped millions of tonnes of rain on the island, causing flood and landslides as well as damage to property, infrastructure and agriculture. Even before these events, earlier in the seasons, heavy rains, associated with lower-pressure systems, also caused infrastructure damage and agricultural loss. The scale of the October-November event, however, appeared to concentrate the minds, although only two people died – a man and his daughter, when their home at Shooters Hill, north of the capital, was buried by a landslide. It, however, could easily have been many

more. At Bull Bay, in the east, overflowing rivers reclaimed their floodplains, destroying homes built on them. At informal hillside settlements, homes collapsed or were left perched precariously at the edge of newly sculpted precipices. In some places, historic mountain roads were washed away, marooning communities.

“I am just sounding the alarm,” Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in relation to some of the squatter and informal communities in the aftermath of the landslides and floods. “... We cannot have some of these communities continuing to exist in these areas in the face of the weather effects

that are projected to happen on a cyclical basis. At some point, the nation will have to confront this thing, that because of political expediency, we have allowed some communities to exist, but now these communities are at risk.”

The government has, perhaps, been distracted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Which might explain why, except for insubstantial remarks by the housing and climate change minister, Parnell Charles Jr, so little has been said about policy for at-risk communities in the time since Prime Minister Holness’ parliamentary statement last November.

The distractions of the COVID-19 not-

withstanding, it is important that Jamaica begins aggressively to address the dangers Jamaica's many unplanned and informal settlements might face from severe weather events, which are increasingly likely as a consequence of global warming.

But the country will, especially in the short term, have to address these issues in difficult and complex circumstances. The Government, therefore, should be planning for all eventualities. We are, therefore, surprised that after last year, and with only two months to the start of the 2021 Atlantic hurricane season, so little has been made of it by the Government and its disaster preparedness and mitigation officials. Articulated differently, we expected to have heard by now how the Government is planning for the hurricane season in the context of the pandemic.

It is true that COVID-19 was around during last year's hurricane season. But at

the start of June 2020, Jamaica had five hundred and eighty-eight confirmed COVID-19 cases and nine deaths. At the hurricane season's official end on 30th November, there were ten thousand, eight hundred and ten cases and two hundred and fifty-eight deaths, an expansion helped by last September's general election, the campaign for which became a superspreader event. By the start of this week, the COVID-19 cases had risen to over forty-five thousand, with more than seven hundred and sixty deaths, an increase of more than thirteen hundred and fifty-one per cent respectively.

The upshot: Jamaica will face significant logistical and public-health challenges should a weather event in the coming hurricane season forces the Government to relocate people and place them in shelters. Indeed, despite this week's receipt of fifty-five thousand doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, a shortage of

a drug means that relatively few people will be inoculated against COVID-19 by the start of the hurricane season. If the new delivery is put in people's arms in short order, fewer than two hundred thousand people would still have received a single dose of the two-dose vaccine. And there is some uncertainty, in the short term, where the additional doses will come from to meet the Government's target of fully vaccinating around 1.9 million people,

or around two-thirds of the population, by next March in order to achieve herd immunity against COVID-19. Against this backdrop, the Government has to be careful that activities relating to hurricane mitigation do not translate to superspreader events. Preventing this has to be part and parcel of mitigation planning. Such matters, therefore, cannot be left for the last minute.

Reprinted from the Jamaica Gleaner

JOB VACANCY

IT SUPPORT



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APPLICATION DEADLINE
30TH APRIL, 2021

We are seeking to fill the above named position. The successful applicant will join the team in the IT Department.

<p>REQUIREMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Typing and Data Entry Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 WPM and above • Data Entry Experience • Attention to Detail • Communication Skills • Customer Service • Clerical and Administrative Skills • Written Communication • Completion of Network Administration Tasks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Configure and maintain the organization's computer network including both software and hardware such as routers and switches. • Setting up user accounts, assigning privileges and passwords for the organization's employees. • Monitor the usage of network by the organization's employees • Examine the network for any performing issues, such as a system crash, and then troubleshoot and document the identified issues. • Coordinate with employees in other departments and teams. • Planning future IT solutions. • Checking and ensuring that all equipment follows the industry standards. 	<p>REQUIREMENTS (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Security • Knowledge of IP addressing, subnet and some common networking protocols like IPv4 and IPv6. • Knowledge of the common operating systems such as Windows. • Knowledge of ISP/Communication Providers and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). • Microsoft Office Suite • Proficiency in the following – Access, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Publisher and Word; others a plus. • Desktop Management of Microsoft Windows 10 • Microsoft Server 2012 and/or 2016 • MySQL and/or SQL Database Creation and Querying • Other related duties that may be assigned.
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Human Resources Manager
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Redcliffe Street, St. John's, Antigua

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ECCB ALERT: BITCOIN ATM'S NOT REGULATED

Three major financial institutions have issued a joint statement, urging Antigua and Barbuda residents not to utilise the Bitcoin ATMs that have been established at several places on Antigua. "The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), the Eastern Caribbean Securities Regulatory Commission (ECS-RC) and the Financial Services Regulatory Commission (FSRC) of Antigua and Barbuda have been made aware of the establishment of Bitcoin Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) which allow for the purchase of fractions of Bitcoin



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or Bitcoin Cash up to a daily limit of USD\$900 (EC\$2,430), at various locations in Antigua and Barbuda,” the statement noted.

The three institutions say they are advising the public that these Bitcoin ATMs and the services provided are not currently regulated by the ECCB, the ECSRC or the FSRC of Antigua and Barbuda. It added that in recognition of the prerequisites for the transition to a digital economy, the ECCB launched a project for the development of a legislative framework for the regulation of virtual assets and other fintech initiatives. Through the collaboration with member governments and national regulators across the Eastern Caribbean Currency

Union (ECCU), a “Virtual Assets Bill” was developed. This legislation was approved by the Monetary Council and recommended for enactment in member countries in February 2021. “We refer the public to the 6th April 2021 notice on virtual assets issued by the FSRC, which was carried in the local news, circulated in the local newspapers and shared with each financial institution in Antigua and Barbuda,” the statement added. In Antigua and Barbuda, the Digital Assets Business Act, which aims to regulate digital asset companies and provide protection for digital asset exchanges and their clients, was passed in 2020. This Act gives the FSRC authority

to enforce the legal framework among the relevant companies, but the infrastructure, especially the regulations, are not yet in place to comprehensively regulate the activities of Bitcoin and other virtual assets and entities. These regulations are currently being prepared. Until the appropriate legislative arrangements are completed and in place, it is recommended that members of the public proceed with caution when engaging with Bitcoin and other virtual assets and entities. Before involvement with these initiatives, citizens are advised to consider the following questions: What do I know about this service provider and the services being offered?

Do I understand both the opportunities and the risks?

Is this service provider regulated and by whom? Does this service provider have appropriate anti-money laundering (AML) controls?

What dispute resolution mechanisms exist if there is a dispute with this service provider?

The ECCB, ECSRC and FSRC of Antigua and Barbuda recognise that financial innovation is essential; however, the appropriate legal and regulatory framework is necessary to protect the integrity of the financial system and investors and consumers alike. Members of the public are asked to be guided accordingly.

STARTING POINT

ON AIR

with **Shelton Daniel**

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

8:30am-10:30am

POINTE FM

POINTE FM 99.1
BROADCASTING FROM THE POINT COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY BASED... GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
99.1 FM

Fully vaccinated arrivals to quarantine for 7 days



By Shelton Daniel

Growing confidence of Antigua and Barbuda's success in bringing the COVID-19 pandemic under control was unveiled on Thursday morning in the weekly post Cabinet communications.

People arriving here from overseas—whether visitors or returning nationals – may now be required to spend only one week in quarantine, instead of the mandatory fortnight that has until now been mandatory. But to be cut such slack, the arriving persons must satisfy certain conditions, as spelt

out in the post Cabinet briefing notes.

“Those entering Antigua and Barbuda who can demonstrate that they have received two jabs of the vaccine and also have a COVID-19 negative certificate will now be required to spend no more than seven days in quarantine, down from fourteen days.

“A COVID-19 test will be administered on the fifth day of the quarantine, and a negative test result will cause a release upon receipt, two days later.”

Also announced on Thursday morning, “Cabinet is giving consideration to provid-



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ing ... youth who have taken the vaccine, a barcode sent to their smartphone which would allow them entry to certain establishments that will require evidence of vaccination to enter." Quizzed about this during the live media briefing, Information Minister Melford Nicholas said the proposal was under consideration but no firm decision has been tak-

en with regard to any time frame for roll-out. But he said much of the data required for this 'Vaccine ID' of sorts would have already been entered in the national database of persons presenting themselves for vaccination. "What this means is that the government has in fact captured and retained much of the information about persons who have been vac-

inated. And where those yellow cards have been issued to persons, that information is also transcribed and stored in the electronic database. It sets up an arrangement where ... persons are going to be able to get a digital representation of their certificate ... It will be able to show with a barcode, meaning that it is incontestable; one is not going to be able to

forge it ..." The minister said this could become a requirement for admission to mass crowd events, while reiterating that "these are some of the things we are looking at; no decision has yet been made, but we did discuss the framework for such a development." He did however declare that "this is the new normal, this is going to be the new normal going forward."

NICHOLAS UPBEAT ABOUT TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL GOING TO PARLIAMENT

By Shelton Daniel

Parliament will convene next Thursday, according to yesterday's weekly post Cabinet media briefing, which disclosed that the 6th May 2021 sitting is "to consider a number of new bills and amendments to existing legislation."

Information Minister Melford Nicholas noted that Parliament should have met Thursday morning instant, but was post-

poned by one week "for the purposes of ensuring that there is adequate preparation and circulation of the documents for consideration ..."

He revealed that there will be two items on the Order Paper for debate at next week's sitting. "Hopefully one of them will be the Telecommunication Bill for 2021," Minister Nicholas stated.

He added, "We would have had a discussion,

a very exciting and fruitful conversation yesterday at Cabinet, about the Telecommunications Bill and its impact and ramifications and the effect of it all on the telecommunications sector, not least of which will be the potential impacts that it will have on the APUA (Antigua Telecommunications Authority) which is a central underpinning of the government's approach to this matter of regulating this sector."

Nicholas said Cabinet "will have a further conversation next week prior to Parliament" where he, as the Minister for Telecommunications, would present the Bill. "Hopefully we will get to a final debate and an enactment in the not too distant future."

He said "many persons in the society have been clamouring for this," but government has "taken [its] time to get to this po-

sition, because ... we needed to have some time for the renovation of our own telecommunications entity, APUA, which was in tatters when we came to government; and so we had to give them the opportunity and the support and the resources for them to be able to get up to the level where they are effectively an active and profitable participant in this sector."

The minister – who also holds the portfolio for information technology – observed that telecommuni-

cations "is a very rich sector. Next to tourism and ... the petroleum industry, telecommunications is ranked third globally of all economies, and we want to ensure that as much ... of those profitable revenues gets retained in the society ... We think we are approaching that particular point, and the Telecommunications Act is only going to provide the regime for the regulation of the sector."

He said the sector has been open to competition "from as far back

as 1989 when ... the first mobile telephone licence was issued ... to a company called Boat Phone that emanated out of the British Virgin Islands ... Since that time there has been a pattern of consolidation and new entrants, but we have not had the corresponding regulatory framework to govern all of those particular elements."

Nicholas described himself as having "been at the forefront of trying to drive this change. Others have tried before and have

been unsuccessful. I was encouraged by yesterday's discussion that we ... are on the cusp of getting to that position where we have consensus within the Cabinet ..."

He admitted that much of his utterances at the end of the post-Cabinet briefing on Thursday morning were "my own enthusiasm coming out here. But it's been a long time ... and I'm trying to whet the appetite of the public to something I think they are all looking forward to."

DATE SET FOR CRUISE TOURISM RE-START



The long-awaited restart of cruise tourism in Antigua and Barbuda has been set for 20th July 2021.

General Manager of Antigua Cruise Port (ACP), Dona Regis, who made the announcement, said

that the date when the first vessel, the Odyssey of the Seabourne Cruises will arrive in the St. John's Harbour on that date signalling the restart of the season.

Regis said the vessel is part of Seabourne

luxury cruises with smaller numbers of passengers than the more popular cruises lines such as Carnival and Holland America cruise lines.

However, the official sees this as a positive for the country. "We

are restarting the industry after a year and four months closure and with the pandemic still raging. We need to start with a smaller vessel with less passengers so that we are able to work out the kinks ahead of

the arrival of the larger vessels which will bring upwards of two thousand passengers at a time," Regis explained.

The Odyssey will be homeporting in Barbados from where the cruise will originate. Several cruise lines have relocated to the Caribbean from where they are initiating cruises because of ongoing restrictions placed on their oper-

ations by the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

Meanwhile, the Celebrity Edge, which moved to Antigua from Barbados where it was laid-up waiting for the restart of the season, has extended its stay in the country for a further three days. Regis said the vessel was originally due to leave today (30th April) but instead it will leave on

Monday. "The vessel is undergoing maintenance while here which are ongoing. The operators had anticipated that the maintenance would have been completed in ten days, but they needed extra time to complete the task," she further explained. While the ship's visit was not a regular cruise call, the ACP general manager is of the view that the visit

has generated some economic activity for the country. "While here they purchased fuel from the West Indies Oil Company, purchased food and other supplies from local supermarkets and even the doctors shared in the benefits as the crew members had to be tested after they arrived and this was carried out by doctors," she noted.

BAR OWNERS TO MAKE CASE



Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph

Owners of bars and nightclubs whose businesses have been shuttered because of the recent spike in COVID-19 cases earlier in the year will have an opportunity to put their cases directly to senior government officials at a specially convened meeting today.

Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph and other

JOB VACANCY UNDERWRITER

JOB PURPOSE
To evaluate applicants for insurance, and determine whether or not a prospective customer should be insured and, if so, recommend an appropriate premium to take on that level of risk.

RESPONSIBILITIES

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- Underwrite new and renewal business under supervision by the Senior Underwriter
- Prepare policy documentation
- Issue non-binding/indicative terms
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REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum of two (2) years Industry Underwriting experience
- Recognized insurance diploma or certification
- Associates degree in Business Administration, Finance or related

Bachelors in administration, finance or related field an asset

SKILLS AND ADDITIONAL COMPETENCIES

- Effective verbal and written communication skills
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- Critical thinking skills
- Excellent customer service skills
- Ability to work independently and as a team member
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Proficiency with MS Office

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 30TH APRIL, 2021

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officials of his ministry, as well as a sub-committee of the Cabinet, are holding a special consultation with the business operators via the virtual platform ZOOM. On Thursday, teams from the ministry spent several hours making contact with the bar owners/operators through various means to invite them to the meeting. A spokesman said the consultation is to hear from operators a pathway where the government feels confident that it can give the green light for the bars to reopen.

Over 50 bar owners and operators were contacted to join a virtual consultation on charting the way forward for the reopening of bar operations. The consultation, which is set to take place today, from 11:00 am will see owners and operators from some of the most popular bar spots, as well as small community based bar entertainment spots engaging in a meeting with health officials.

Though an agenda for the meeting has not been disclosed, it is expected that issues such as sanitation, health and safety protocols, vaccination concerns

and health protocols expectations are likely to be raised.

"The officials will receive from the bar owners the safeguards which they will put in place in order to ensure that, should bars be granted permission to reopen, their proposed safeguards would protect employees and patrons from contracting and spreading the virus. This will be a first step towards reopening, not unlike what was done by restaurateurs," according to Wednesday's post Cabinet Notes.

The move to stage the consultation has received strong support from bar owners and

operators who have been lobbying the government to approve their reopening.

Many have stated that the bars comprise their only source of income and that their closure for upwards of two months has had a debilitating impact on their finances and their ability to support themselves and their families.

It is likely that following the meeting, Sir Molwyn will hold discussions with his Cabinet colleagues to provide them with feedback from the bar operators. Final determination on when the bars will open is the sole prerogative of

the Cabinet. Details of how the bar owners can participate in the consultation have been circulated to them by the ministry. With over 30,000 citizens and residents vaccinated since the beginning of the national vaccination programme, the country has seen a gradual return of normality. As numbers continue to grow for vaccination and with the rate of COVID transmission trending downward, the reopening of bars, an economic activity of much value which has been adversely affected, may see some form of operational return.

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A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

MOBILE VACCINATION UNITS MOVE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE



The Ministry of Health is intensifying its efforts to reach people wherever they are as it continues the roll-out of the vaccination programme. Two weeks ago, the ministry launched a mobile vaccination exercise at the Public Market in St John's on a Saturday morning, its busiest time during the week. Several hundred persons were vaccinated then. Based on the success of this programme, the ministry has announced that on Thursday a similar exercise was conducted in All Saints, with another one planned for the Princess Casino in Jolly Harbour tomorrow, Saturday 1st May. Today, Friday 30th April, the mobile unit moves to the Woods Center parking lot.

A ministry statement said this new initiative is being done in recognition of the need to decentralise the COVID-19 vaccination centers for easier access

across the island. The ministry said these sites were selected for their strategic locations with significant population traffic. "The success of the mobile vaccination drives at the public market over the last two Saturdays influenced the ministry to stage additional mobile vacci-

nation events this week. Minister of Health Sir Molwyn Joseph says it is important to bring the COVID-19 vaccination programme into the community and the familiar spaces of the people to facilitate ease of access to the vaccines," the statement added. The mobile vac-

cination unit will return to the public market shortly. Additionally, the mobile unit will be moving again next week Saturday to a venue to be announced.

Application Deadline
30th April, 2021

We are seeking to fill the above named position. The successful applicant will join the team in the General Insurance Department.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Review applications for compliance and adherence
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- Negotiate terms of insurance policies with policyholders and or brokers
- Develop and maintain a profitable portfolio
- Review existing products and identify new products to drive new and renewal business
- Manage client renewal lists
- Train and mentor team members in Underwriting and other techniques
- Any other duties as assigned by the Executive Manager

REQUIREMENTS

- Decision making skills and attention to details
- Team player with excellent interpersonal skills and communication skills
- Negotiation skills and problem-solving ability
- Time and priority management skills
- Excellent computer skills
- Leadership skills

EXPERIENCE

- Minimum of 5 years industry underwriting experience

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Recognized insurance diploma or certification
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- Knowledge of insurance laws and practices



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AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Instructed by the **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA DEVELOPMENT BANK** of 27 St. Mary's Street, in the City of Saint John, in the State of Antigua and Barbuda, I will sell by public auction on Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 10:00 a.m. on site, the under mentioned property owned by Ms. Laura Nicholas of Cedar Grove, St. John's, Antigua.

The property is located at Mount Pleasant, St. John's, Antigua and consists of a vacant parcel of land of an area of approximately 11,835.22 sq. ft. / 0.27 Acre.

The service lines for potable water, electricity and telephone which are provided by A.P.U.A are accessible to the property.

The land is registered under the Registered Land Act, 1975 as follows:-

REGISTRATION SECTION:
Hodges Bay & Thibous

BLOCK:
43 1896A

PARCEL:
643

Parcel No. 643 of Block No. 43 1896A is bounded by the following:
On the North by: Parcel 560 ;
On the South by: Public Road;
On the East by: Parcel 644 ;
On the West by: Parcel 642

Particulars of the sale can be obtained from:

Mr. Trevor 'Teddy' Santos
Licensed Auctioneer
Office: (268) 562-7653

Cell & WhatsApp: (268) 464-7653

Email: info@go-going-gone.com

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Facebook: Auction Antigua

MINISTER BENJAMIN DEMANDS REMOVAL OF FALSE STORY AND AN APOLOGY



Attorney General Steadroy Benjamin

Attorney General Steadroy Benjamin is vehemently denying claims made by an online publication, WIC News, that he is involved in a 'cash for protection' scheme involving wealthy business persons.

In addition, Benjamin is demanding that the news portal remove the offending article immediately as well as publish an apology. These were contained in a press release issued by the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs on Thursday afternoon. The full text of the press release is published below.

"This is an obvious malicious endeavour that is politically motivated and groundless in fact." That's the robust response of Steadroy 'Cutie' Benjamin, Antigua and Barbuda's Minister of Legal Affairs, to an online publication today. The Minister has taken swift action in defence of himself, his public office and the image of the nation of Antigua and Barbuda. His lawyers have

advised the publishers of WIC News that the story must be removed from its website and an apology issued or immediate legal action for libel will ensue.

Among the false and defamatory allegations, the WIC News story stated that Minister Benjamin "broke a deal with a wealthy businessman by providing safe heaven (sic) in exchange for a regular inflow of cash as protection money". The Minister responded that "this malicious libel will be met head-on, if the publication does not remove the story and apologize. Should the publishers wittingly or unwittingly, continue to participate in this political smearing, I will not hesitate to invoke all legal measures for remedial action".

Minister Benjamin also stated that "Antigua and Barbuda has a legal system, not controlled by any one person. Moreover, there can be no evidence to substantiate the allegations, because they

are blatantly false". Stating that he has always advocated a free press and has acted as Attorney-General to preserve and protect this right, Minister Benjamin notes that the "WIC story is not representative of a free press, but of political scandal mongering that demeans journalistic standards".

"I have given the publishers of WIC News a fair opportunity not to be used as a political football and to act properly. I sincerely hope they will do so, or necessary legal action will be taken", the Minister said.

Benjamin added that "I am taking the matter to court in England and will be seeking substantial damages. The Extradition process is governed by the Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

St John's, 29 April... "This is an obvious malicious endeavour that is politically motivated and groundless in fact". That's the robust response of Steadroy 'Cutie' Benjamin, Antigua and

Barbuda's Minister of Legal Affairs, to an on-line publication today. The Minister has taken swift action in defence of himself, his public office and the image of the nation of Antigua and Barbuda. His lawyers have advised the publishers of WIC News that the story must be removed from its website and an apology issued or immediate legal action for libel will ensue.

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LOCAL HOTELS IN 'HOLDING PATTERN'

Local hotels in 'holding pattern'
The local hotels sector is awaiting word from the major source markets about their reopening following the coronavirus pandemic, before being able to make any definitive predictions above the future.

That is the assessment of President of the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourist Association, Alex DeBrito.

"We are currently waiting for word from the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, on the reopening of the UK. Our information is that he is set to make the announcement in the middle of May on the lifting on restrictions on foreign travel for UK residents," he remarked.

The hotelier said there are now two flights per week between the UK and A&B – both operated by British Airways, and the expectation is that these flights will increase should the lifting of the restrictions take place as expected. He also anticipates that Virgin Atlantic will also return once the demand for travel returns.

Under the regulations, UK residents are only allowed to travel for business purposes for health reasons.

DeBrito reported that only visitors from the United States are currently staying at local hotels as the Canadian government has also banned overseas travel for its nationals.

During this 'down time,' DeB-

rito said those hotels with the resources have been carrying out enhancement of their properties ahead of the reopening of the hotels sector. Most hotels he revealed are either close or are operating at fifty per cent or less of their capacity. Some are as low as twenty per cent.

The problem has also been compounded by the problems currently encountered by LIAT, with the recent closure of its southern corridor because of the ash fallout from the La Soufrière volcano in St Vincent and the Grenadines. According to DeBrito, that development has also impacted the hotels as there were no visitors coming from across the Caribbean to Antigua.

ACCUSED PLEADS NOT GUILTY FOR THE MURDER OF FEMALE FRIEND



By Phil George

Murder accused Kasroy Simon has pleaded not guilty in the High Court for the February 2019 killing of a Jamaican woman he befriended. The suspended police constable entered the plea on Thursday morning, when his matter came up for hearing. He was charged in Feb-

ruary 2020 with the death of Nicoma McFarlane, a woman, who in the initial stages of the investigation into her death, was believed to have committed suicide. However, her cause of death was listed as strangulation. McFarlane was discovered by her mother in their Freemans Village

home on 7th February 2019. Her wrist was slit and a bottle of bleach was found beside her. Reports are the woman allegedly knew Simon before arriving in Antigua to assist her mother, who was scheduled to undergo a medical procedure. It is alleged she was not interested in entering a relationship with the accused.

McFarlane's body was discovered by her mother on arrival home from work. In November 2020, Magistrate Ngaio Emmanuel-Edwards in the All Saints Magistrate Court ruled during a committal hearing there was enough evidence for the case against Kasroy Simon to be tried in the High Court.

SMALL STATES MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE RIVALRY OF LARGE STATES FOR 21ST CENTURY DOMINANCE



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)

US President Joseph Biden's address to a Joint Session of the US Congress on April 28

was strikingly different from the speeches of his predecessor, Donald Trump.

The address was free of the bombast and repeated references to the exceptional qualities that Trump ascribed to himself, including the frequent claim that he had either done more than any other President or that he had more knowledge of everything than anyone else.

Biden succeeded in presenting an image of 'father of the na-

tion'. He was calm in his presentation, measured in his remarks and open-handed to his political opponents, many of whom were seated in the hall. Unlike Trump, while he was firm that the US would act to prevent excesses by China and Russia, he did not adopt a tone of belligerence to these two top rivals for global political, economic, and military dominance.

Equally impressive was President Biden's participation in the "Summit of 40 Leaders on Climate" that he organized on April 22 and 23. Except for one brief period, when he personally excused himself to all the delegates present, he sat through every session, participating actively far beyond any expectation. If his deep involvement in the discussions is a measure of the seriousness of his stated desire to tackle Climate Change robustly, then the world might yet be at what he calls

"a great inflection point in history". He offers hope that greenhouse gas emissions can be dramatically reduced, global warming can be tempered and sea-level rise can decline – all of which would be immensely beneficial to small states.

Of course, as Biden pointed out to the Congress, the US accounts for "less than 15% of carbon emissions". He went on to state that even if the US does "everything perfectly, it's not going to ultimately matter" because "the rest of the world accounts for 85%". This latter statement is an oversimplification of the situation. Fifteen percent of carbon emissions is a high figure for one country, and it needs to be reduced; so US emissions do ultimately matter. At the Climate Summit of 40 Leaders, the President committed to reducing US emissions by 50%-52% below its 2005 emissions levels by

2030. However, no concrete plans to achieve this has yet been revealed. These plans must be rolled out publicly and soon if the US is to be credible as a global leader on Climate.

And while it is statistically true that the rest of the world accounts for 85% of the carbon emissions, it is misleading for it to be stated in this way. For instance, as Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, pointed out at the summit, the 44 small island and low-lying states of the world "collectively emit just 1.5 % of the emissions of industrialized nations". The main contributors, apart from the US are China (28%), India (7%), Russia (5%) and Japan (3%). These five countries account for 58 % of global emissions. The remaining 42% comes from 188 countries.

It was, therefore, important that Biden include the other big emitters in his Climate Summit to try to reach a consensus on the way forward. Whether such a consensus was

achieved will be better measured in the coming months, leading to the global Climate meeting, COP26, in Glasgow in November. But it should be clear that large carbon emissions in the five countries come from industrial production and lifestyles. It is cheaper for the offending countries to continue this pattern in order to be competitive in the global economic market. So, no one should hold their breath for dramatic change unless these countries are pushed.

Biden's policies look set to be the push factor. The President has tied reducing carbon emissions to a massive economic programme, providing jobs and massive new infrastructure in the US. His success in growing the US economy, increasing employment, and retaining the US competitiveness, is now tied to his Climate programme.

He emphasised in his address to Congress that "the most important word when it comes to meeting the climate crisis is 'jobs'." Earlier, at the Summit on Cli-

mate, he stressed that: "Within our climate response lies an extraordinary engine of job creation and economic opportunity ready to be fired up. That's why I've proposed a huge investment in American infrastructure and American innovation to tap the economic opportunity that climate change presents our workers and our communities, especially those who have been, too often, left out and left behind".

This is the circumstance that, realistically, should give small states, that are the worst victims of the effects of Climate Change, the greatest reason for hope. President Biden contemplates spending US\$2 trillion on his "American Jobs Plan", creating tens of thousands of jobs, many of them linked to clean energy projects. It will not be easy. Accounting shows that 29% of US emissions comes from transportation and a further 23% comes from electricity generation. Americans are accustomed to driving cars for long distances and to air-conditioned

homes, offices and vehicles; they will have to be convinced of the benefits of changing from their traditional sources of energy.

But the political fortunes of President Biden's administration are now tied to achieving this goal. Therefore, he and his team will work hard at accomplishing their objectives across all sectors of the society. At the same time, they will not yield their competitiveness to China or Russia, as the President told the US Congress. Consequently, the world should expect that the US Government will do everything within its power to push its rivals to cut their emissions.

In this regard, this may be one of the few cases in world history, when small countries might truly benefit from the rivalries of large and rich nations. For this reason, President Biden's Climate plan, tied to his "American Jobs Plan", should be given every support by small states. Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com



RIHANNA SEAN PAUL NICKI MINAJ BUJU

IN CONCERT FOR RAVAGED SVG

(Trinidad Guardian) Over a dozen major artistes will take part in a virtual fundraising concert to assist the volcano-ravaged St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG.) The concert,

carded for May 23, features artists such as Rihanna, Sean Paul, Nicki Minaj, Buju Banton, Koffee, Dwayne Bravo, Usain Bolt, Alison Hinds, Kees Dieffenthaler and others. It is being organ-

ised by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Nicole Dyer-Griffith's O2N Foundation and OMG Media. The concert was announced Wednesday during an OECS virtual

meeting of the leadership of the Global Coalition in support of SVG to discuss the relief efforts to assist the SVG.

Since the La Soufriere volcano in St Vincent



began to explosively erupt on April 9, over 20,000 people have been displaced from their homes. The volcano's last eruption was on April 22, but it remains on alert level ed and experts from the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre say it can erupt again at any time. One of the most critical needs on the island has been water, as ash fall from the eruptions contaminated most of the island's potable water supply. The country has been tentatively trying to recover from the over-30 explosive eruptions but it will take a long time for life on the island to return to normal. The OECS' head of Development Cooperation Resource Mobilisation Unit, Lisa Taylor-Stone said the OECS launched the Stronger Together campaign on April 12 to raise funds for the SVG. Since then, a number of corporate entities, including Microsoft have come on board. Taylor-Stone said Microsoft

has pledged to match all donations from its staff and the Jamaican Stock Exchange has also been trying to get its members to donate. She said to-date, the campaign has received \$70,000 US in pledges, with \$40,000 US of that already handed over. She said in the coming days, the campaign will be rebranded and relaunched. The concert is also called "Stronger Together." "It is a Call to Action for St Vincent and the Grenadines, we are using making May 23rd to make a clarion call to people worldwide to join forces and deliver this much needed relief," Taylor-Stone said. One hundred per cent of the funds raised from the event will go to the SVG, Taylor-Stone said. The concert will also feature messages from the heads of Governments from several Caribbean countries, including the SVG, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago.

FUCHA KID:

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA'S MUSICAL AMBASSADOR



Fucha Kid (Feds Boss)
Fucha Kid - Work

Fucha Kid "Feds Boss" is the stage name for Antigua-born multi-faceted, multi-talented artist, Karl Edwards, who is a 'fusion artist' and who sings any genre of music. He learned the music business from Corporal Montana of African Treasure. Even while still going to high school, Corporal Montana introduced him to a few producers and DJ links in Jamaica. Fucha Kid then started his solo Career in 2006 and travelled to Montserrat, Trinidad and then to St Kitts for Gem Family Rave where he came into contact with Omari Harrigan of Chosen Sounds Studio. Upon returning to Antigua, Fucha Kid signed a deal with Chosen Sound Studio from which he was able to study the music business with Omari Harrigan. Fucha Kid was based at Chosen Sounds from 2006 to 2010, before moving on to his now label 'Federation Family Studio'

which he now runs with his business partner, Kevin Abbott. After his 2014 cross-over tour in the USA, Fucha Kid linked up in Miami with Zack Cohen of Foxfuse NY, where he is now currently signed for six years. He has also just entered into a three-year agreement for South American Tours with Baco, a marketing and production group based in Chile. Fucha Kid's hit single "Work," which was only released on 17th March this year from his upcoming album, is blazing up the charts globally. Currently it is only a sneeze from getting to number one, and it is the artist's intention to stay number one for as long as he can. His songs 'Pretty Picture' as well as 'Grim Reaper' are also climbing the international charts. To fully capitalise on the momentum and rewards of such a powerful message in the song 'Work,' we bringing awareness

to the local population, as many people have not yet heard of the song despite its popularity internationally. Fucha Kid's management team has another plan to fully mobilise this song by creating a fitting music video for Work as well as the other two songs on the charts. This they hope to complete as soon as possible. They are in the process of procuring sponsorship for those music videos. "We're looking forward to readily capturing some interest as we've offered in return to have sponsors' logos placed on our promo materials. Additionally, we encourage potential sponsors by utilising their products during sets, as well as send shout-outs on set/stage and on social media. Those interested in being sponsors in keeping this Antiguan Musical Ambassador ride the global airwaves may express interest by sending their emails to

djempresmonalisa@gmail.com," one member of the management team stated Musical facts: • Regarding Fucha Kid, also known as Feds Boss. His unnamed, soon to be released new, album has several singles that have been creating waves and keeping Antigua on the musical map.

- Work has been released for one month now and it has been on the charts since then. Work peaked at number eleven on Apple Music international Reggae chart and peaked at number forty on Antigua and Barbuda Apple Music chart. Work has also been jumping on and off the top 100 U.S, Anguilla, Grenada and European Reggae Charts.

- Pretty picture peaked at number six on Audiomack International Reggae chart and it is on its way to one million views.

LABOUR DAY ESSAY COMPETITION

Open to students 12-21 years, enrolled in a learning institution in Antigua & Barbuda

Trade Unions paved the way for the success of political parties in the Leeward Islands and beyond. These collective bargaining institutions created leaders who challenged the colonial systems that controlled English-speaking Caribbean countries post-1834.

Write an essay at least 500 to 750 words that explains:

- Why did Trade Unions so easily nurture political parties in Antigua and Barbuda after their founding?
- List several important Dates and Unions.
- Who are the most noteworthy leaders emerging from the Unions after 1939?
- Are Trade Unions playing the same roles today in 2021?

Note that 70 years have passed since the first labour day was celebrated.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
MAY 4 2021

Submit in a Sealed Enveloped addressed to:
AT&LU (Essay Competition)
46 North Street
St. John's, ANTIGUA



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2nd Prize | \$500 Educational Gift Certificate

3rd Prize | \$250 Educational Gift Certificate

16 - 21 YEARS

1st Prize | 1 Laptop

2nd Prize | \$500

3rd Prize | \$250

Winners will be announced on
Monday 10 May 2021 on ABS TV

Growing concern about volcanic mudflows going into hurricane season



Dr. Erouscilla Joseph

BY: KRYSTAL PENNY BOWEN

Barbados Advocate - A regional scientist is concerned about the possible increase in lahars or volcanic mudflows in St. Vincent as the island approaches the hurricane season. Yesterday, The Barbados Advocate spoke to Director of The UWI Seismic Research Centre (SRC), Dr. Erouscilla Joseph, about the matter via Zoom. The volcanologist noted with

the rainy season and the large deposits of ash in red and orange zones, these materials will be remobilised for months. "[This can cause] continued lahars or mudflows in these areas and this will definitely impact the infrastructure ... that has already been damaged in the red and orange zones," said Dr. Joseph. She added that another concern is these mudflows will prevent her team from accessing the area to maintain or

repair equipment that is in these critical areas. Dr. Joseph indicated that hurricanes can destroy the monitoring equipment. But the SRC is using other tools such as remote sensing tools, satellite imagery and other apparatus around La Soufrière to gather information.

She emphasised that the scientists will have to improve their network to collect information, but it may call for additional support. Dr. Joseph noted that the cost of the equipment can be a setback due to limited resources. Presently, SRC is supported by teams on the ground, Montserrat Volcano Observatory and its Trinidad-based teams. These are different times for volcanology. The scientist also outlined the differences in the style and response of volcano eruption today and volcano eruption that occurred during the early 20th century.

She explained that in 1902, there was no monitoring of the volcano like now. There was no agency recording data on the activity and there were

only residents on the island who documented their observation. Dr. Joseph said that in recent times, there have been many researchers who have studied volcanic activity on St. Vincent. Today, scientists can analyse materials or products from active volcanoes.

"These products, not just dating them but determining the type of deposits as well as how far they reached and thickness and so on, would have shed light on what kind of eruption would have needed to happen to generate those types of products," said Dr. Joseph.

The scientist noted that there are several differences between the volcanic activity now and in the past. She noted in the past, there was a crater lake (there was no lake this time) and how La Soufrière of 2020/2021 started effusively and then had explosive events. She told this newspaper that the current eruption style of the volcano is similar to the behaviour of the 1902 eruption.

Lockdown as T&T records highest COVID spread



Areas at a restaurant blocked off at the Town Centre Mall

Trinidad Guardian - Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley has announced new regulations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago.

It comes as T&T records its highest number of

cases announced in any one day, 328.

The following are the new regulations;

- As of midnight Thursday night, all restaurants and bars will be closed
- All malls will be closed
- All places of worship

will be closed

- All gyms and fitness centres will be closed
- All spas and beauty dispensing areas will be closed
- Casinos, cinemas, theatres, clubs will be closed
- Public Service will operate on 'essential

service only

- Tobago would be isolated by limited 3 flights per day and sea-bridge will operate at 25 per cent
 - All tours to various areas of recreation will end
- All this until May 23, 2021.

Five COVID-19 cases at emergency shelter; occupants resisting testing



iWitnessNews - Five COVID-19 cases have been confirmed at an emergency shelter in Stubbs, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves confirmed on radio on Tuesday.

He said that shelter occupants were refusing to take COVID-19 tests despite confirmed and suspected cases, including a woman who collapsed and died last week, but was later found to be COVID-19 negative.

Gonsalves, speaking on NBC Radio, noted that SVG has recorded its eleventh COVID-19 death.

"This is an elderly gentleman who was in the isolation centre -

eighty-seven years old. And, of course, he had certain severe comorbidities, certain preexisting conditions," the prime minister said.

"And that reminds us that COVID, though it is not an almost automatic death sentence, like, for instance, Ebola and HIV and AIDS in the earlier period before they got the requisite medication to help to make persons with HIV and AIDS live a long time, but it can kill."

He said that even if COVID-19 does not result in death, long COVID can affect the heart, lungs, accelerate diabetes "and can create difficulties even in relation to cancer of the mamma-

ries, I have been so advised. So that we have to be careful with it."

He said that long before St. Vincent and the Grenadines obtained COVID-19 vaccines, his government was repeatedly making the point that to address COVID properly, there has to be early identification, testing, contact tracing, quarantine or isolation.

He said that the government has tested about forty-five thousand persons, including people who have come into the country.

"There are persons in shelters who are refusing to be tested. I say to you, this is something dangerous, your refusal is dan-

gerous to your health, to that of the community. I am not getting yet to vaccination. I am talking about testing."

He said that half of the people who have COVID do not have symptoms.

"So I am urging everybody to get tested and especially in the shelters. I was amazed to find out that there is someone who was doing a karaoke who has some preexisting condition, danced and fell and died.

"Persons said that it was COVID but it was not COVID. The person did not die of COVID because the PCR test showed that the person didn't have COVID. But even while that rumour swirled and people in the particular shelter where this person died, it was amazing that people were there refusing to take the test. I am not talking yet about vaccination.

"We have seen at Stubbs, two days ago, there are five persons at the shelter tested positive. Four person in the shelter and one who is not at the shelter all the time, who goes and comes, given his own duties."

Fire flattens Sharon's Mall

Dozens of businesses, law offices destroyed



Sharon Mall engulfed in flames

Guyana Chronicle - A MASSIVE blaze on Wednesday night has left the owners of the Sharon's Mall and numerous entrepreneurs and lawyers in distress. The four-storey building located at King and Charlotte Streets, Georgetown, was completely gutted by a fire suspected to be electrical in origin and has left in its wake, millions of dollars in damage. Smoke was first spotted around 5:00 p.m. but fire fighters who responded were unable to access the building for about two hours. Flames were spotted around 7:00 p.m.. Guyana Chronicle understands that over thirty business owners occupied the building and very few were able to salvage valuables which

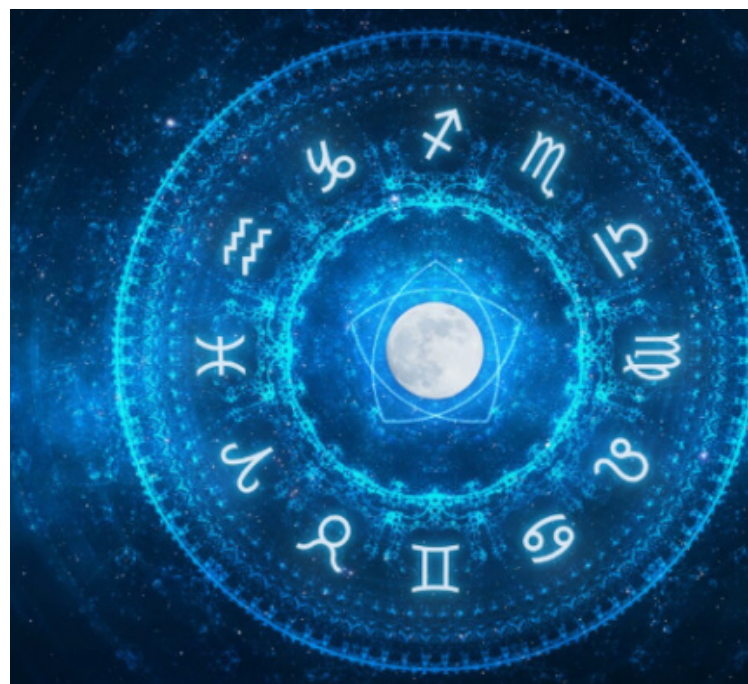
included documents, appliances, clothing and equipment. Aside from clothing stores, the mall housed offices of several lawyers, salons, toy stores and stationery businesses. This publication understands that a staffer recalled smelling smoke around 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday but passed it off as a smell coming from somewhere outside of the building. By 5:00 p.m., the building was filled with smoke and persons who were still there were forced to hurriedly evacuate the building. A call was placed to the Guyana Fire Service at 5:00 p.m. and several fire tenders were dispatched to the scene. Up until 7:00 p.m. thick dark smoke was seen emanating from the building. Sud-

denly, the glass of several windows were shattered and flames were spotted. Within minutes the third and fourth floors were engulfed in flames. Dawn Blackman who owned a stationery store in the building described the situation as "devastating." She noted that her losses are estimated to be in excess of five million dollars. She recalled that when she arrived at the scene, she was able to save two printers. The majority of stationery items were destroyed, she said. Blackman stated that the fire had grown "tremendously" since it was initially noticed, and had left everyone, including the firefighters, in shock. "When I came, one of the firefighters was coming from the

back and he mumbled something to an officer in khaki. The officer in khaki turned around and saw me with the second printer. By then I started to choke with the smoke ...he ran up the stairs to the second flat and he ran down back because the smoke was so black. He ran down the stairs, so, for me, in my estimation, it's worse now than when I came," the businesswoman stated. Meanwhile, Home Affairs Minister Robeson Benn told the media at the scene that initial investigations indicated that it was difficult for the firefighters to properly access the fire as it was running through the ceiling vents and along the electrical wiring in the building. "They may have thought they had it under control but the wiring of the building ... the fire was moving along that through the floor and the drop ceilings so it was difficult to ascertain where the fire was exactly at the point that they would have arrived," said Benn. When this newspaper made checks at 8:45 p.m., the fire was still raging.

QUICK CROSSWORD

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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.

GOT NEWS?

Send your news stories to
news@pointville.ag

LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST

<p>Fri 30 Day</p> <p>29°  9% E 23 km/h</p> <p>Mostly cloudy. High 29°C. Winds E at 15 to 30 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 65% UV Index 9 of 10</p> <p>Sunrise 05:42 Sunset 18:26</p>	<p>Fri 30 Night</p> <p>24°  15% ENE 14 km/h</p> <p>Mostly cloudy. Low 24°C. Winds ENE at 10 to 15 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 76% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise 22:31 Moonset 08:49</p> <p>Waning Gibbous</p>
<p>Sat 01 Day</p> <p>28°  23% E 16 km/h</p> <p>Partly cloudy. High 28°C. Winds E at 10 to 15 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 68% UV Index 10 of 10</p> <p>Sunrise 05:41 Sunset 18:27</p>	<p>Sat 01 Night</p> <p>24°  24% E 14 km/h</p> <p>Partly cloudy. Low 24°C. Winds E at 10 to 15 km/h.</p> <p>Humidity 80% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise 23:32 Moonset 09:51</p> <p>Waning Gibbous</p>

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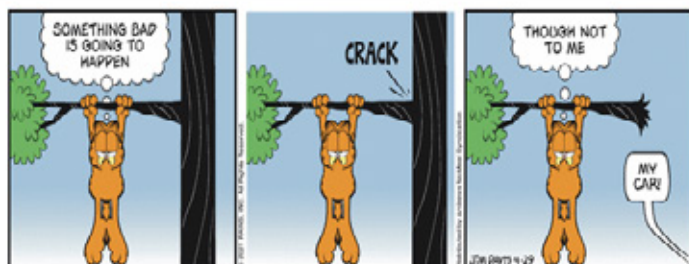
Dilbert

April 29, 2021



Garfield

April 29, 2021



Luann

April 29, 2021



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH,
WELLNESS & ENVIRONMENT**



**COVID-19 VACCINATION
COMES TO THE PUBLIC MARKET!**

**FIRST DOSE
ASTRAZENECA VACCINE**

DATE: SATURDAY 1ST MAY 2021

TIME: 9:00 AM TO 3:00 PM

VENUE: GRAND PRINCESS CASINO

WHO: 18 YEARS AND OLDER

Benefits of being vaccinated:

✓ **Prevent Covid-19 illness and death.**

✓ **Protect your family from Covid-19.**

EACH VACCINATED, ALL PROTECTED. #GETTHEFACTS #GETTHEVAX



US recovery from pandemic recession is showing momentum

WASHINGTON (AP) — Powered by consumers and fueled by government aid, the U.S. economy is achieving a remarkably fast recovery from the recession that ripped through the nation last year on the heels of the coronavirus and cost tens of millions of Americans their jobs and businesses.

The economy grew last quarter at a vigorous 6.4% annual rate, the government said Thursday, and expectations are that the current quarter will be even better. The number of people seeking unemployment aid — a rough reflection of layoffs — last week reached its lowest point since the pandemic struck. And the National Association of Realtors said Thursday that more Americans signed contracts to buy homes in March, reflecting a strong housing market as summer approaches.

Economists say that widespread vaccinations and declining viral cases, the reopening of more businesses, a huge infusion of federal spending and healthy job gains should help sustain steady growth. For 2021 as a whole, they expect the economy to expand close to seven per cent, which would mark the fastest calendar-year growth since 1984.

The gains have become increasingly evident in recent weeks. In March, U.S. employers added 916,000 jobs — the biggest burst of hiring since August. At the same time, retail spending has surged, manufacturing output is up and consumer confidence has reached its highest point since the pandemic began.

“We are seeing all the engines of the economy rev up,” said Gregory Daco, chief economist at

Oxford Economics. “We have an improving health environment, fiscal stimulus remain abundant and we are starting to see rebounding employment.”

The speed of the rebounding economy has been particularly striking given the scope of damage the pandemic inflicted on it beginning in March of last year. With businesses all but shut down, the economy contracted at a record annual pace of thirty-one per cent in the April-June quarter of last year before rebounding sharply in the subsequent months.

For all the economy's gains, it still has a long way to go. More than eight million jobs remain lost to the pandemic. And while most college-educated and white collar employees have been able to work from home, job cuts have fallen disproportion-

ately on low-wage workers, racial minorities and people without college educations. In addition, many women, especially working mothers, have had to leave the workforce to care for children.

In its report Thursday, the government said the nation's gross domestic product — its total output of goods and services — accelerated in the January-March quarter from a 4.3% annual gain in the last quarter of 2020. It was the first of three estimates of growth last quarter; the government will revise the figure twice in coming weeks.

Some economists say growth in the current April-June period could reach a ten per cent annual pace or more, driven by a surge in people traveling, shopping, dining out and otherwise resuming their spending habits.

People of colour more exposed than whites to air pollution

AP - Across America, people of colour are exposed to more air pollution than whites from industry, vehicles, construction and many other sources, a new study has found. Using government air pollution and census data, researchers found that disproportionate numbers of non-white people were exposed to potentially hazardous fine particle pollution from nearly all major U.S. emission sources, regardless of where they live or how much money they make.

The study, published Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*, also found that Blacks were the only group disproportionately exposed to each of the pollution sources examined. Researchers found that on average Black, Hispanic and Asian people were exposed to higher than average levels of fine particle pollution, while white people were subjected to lower than average levels. "It doesn't matter how poor, it doesn't matter how wealthy, the racial disparities exist for all African-Americans and other people of colour," said Paul Mohai, a professor of environmental justice at the University of Michigan who was not involved with the study. He has researched racial disparities in the distribu-

tion of hazardous waste dumps, industrial facilities and air pollution at schools — and why and how these disparities exist. "When you look at the impact of air pollution in the U.S. from all the sources that contribute to fine particulate matter in the atmosphere, there is an overall systemic bias against people of colour," said study co-author Jason Hill, a biosystems engineering professor at the University of Minnesota.

Fine particulate matter comes from a variety of sources, including coal-fired power plants, diesel trucks and farms. Past re-

search shows associations between exposure to particulate matter and health problems such as premature death in people with heart or lung disease, heart attacks, irregular heartbeat and asthma.

While other studies have shown that non-white people are exposed to more air pollution compared to white people, and that Blacks and Hispanics breathe far more air pollution than they make, this new study breaks it down by source of pollution.

The researchers sorted the Environmental Protection Agency's emissions inventory of over

five thousand types of fine particulate matter into fourteen sources such as industry, passenger cars, diesel trucks, construction and agriculture. Then they modelled exposure to those pollution sources by calculating average ambient air quality levels for racial groups based on their residential locations in 2014. "Given that we have this national inequity in pollution exposure, what (sources are) actually driving that?" Hill said. "What this paper shows is that it's pretty much everything."



A file photo of a palyground outside Prince Hall Village Apts. is empty near a petrochemical facility in Port Arthur, Texas.

Kremlin critic Navalny defiant but gaunt after ending hunger strike

Reuters - Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin as a “naked, thieving king” on Thursday, looking gaunt but defiant in a courtroom video link from prison, his first public appearance since ending a hunger strike last week.

Navalny's comments were piped into a hearing in a Moscow courtroom, where he lost his appeal against a fine for defaming a World War II veteran.

He faces further legal pressure, with his team saying he was hit with new criminal charges. Allies were forced to disband his network of regional campaign offices, which the authorities are seeking to ban as “extremist.”

His head shaven, Navalny said he had been taken to a bathhouse to look “decent” before the court hearing. He undid his prison uniform to reveal a T-shirt that barely hid his thin torso.

“I looked in the mirror. Of course, I'm just a dreadful skeleton,” he said. One of his lawyers said he had lost twenty-two kilograms (nearly fifty pounds) since January.



Navalny's appearance via video-link from a penal colony was the first since he ended his hunger strike

Later in the hearing, Navalny, forty-four, went on the attack against Putin and the Russian justice system.

“I want to tell the dear court that your king is naked,” he said of Putin. “Your naked, thieving king wants to continue to rule until the end ... Another ten years will come, a stolen decade will come.”

Addressing his wife Julia, who was in court, he said he missed her

and asked her to stand so that he could look at her. Describing how he was gradually ending his more than three-week hunger strike, he said he had eaten four spoonfuls of porridge on Wednesday. Requests for carrots and apples had not yet been granted.

Navalny is serving a two-and-half-year jail sentence for parole violations on an earlier embezzlement conviction

that he says was politically motivated.

He declared his hunger strike on 31st March to demand better medical care for leg and back pain.

On 23rd April he said he would start eating again after getting more medical care. Russia has said he is receiving the same treatment as any other prisoner and accused him of exaggerating his health needs for publicity.

Indians turn to black market, unproven drugs as virus surges

NEW DELHI (AP) — Ashish Poddar kept an ice pack on hand as he waited outside a New Delhi hospital for a black market dealer to deliver two drugs for his father, who was gasping for breath inside with COVID-19.

But the drugs never arrived, the ice that was intended to keep the medicines cool melted and his father died hours later.

As India faces a devastating surge of new coronavirus infections overwhelming its health care system, people are taking desperate measures to try to keep loved ones alive. In some cases they are turning to unproven medical treatments, in others to the black market for life-saving medications that are in short supply.

Poddar had been told by the private hospital treating his father, Raj Kumar Poddar, that remdesivir, an antiviral, and tocilizumab, a drug that blunts human immune responses, were needed to keep the sixty-eight-year-old man alive.

Like most hospitals and pharmacies in the Indian capital, stocks



Indians queue for the anti-viral drug Remdesivir in this April 8, 2021 photo

had run out. Desperate, Poddar turned to a dealer who promised the medicines after taking an advance of almost one thousand dollars.

"It's nearby" and "coming" read some of the texts that Ashish received as he waited.

"I wish he had at least told me that he isn't going to come. I could have searched elsewhere," the grieving son said.

India set another global record in new virus cases Thursday with more than 379,000 new infections, putting even more pressure on the country's overwhelmed hospitals. The country of nearly 1.4 billion people has now record-

ed over eighteen million cases, behind only the U.S., and over 200,000 deaths — though the true number is believed to be higher.

Death is so omnipresent that burial grounds are running out of space in many cities and glowing funeral pyres blaze through the night.

The few medicines known to help treat COVID-19, such as remdesivir and steroids in hospitalised patients, are scarce. The most basic treatment — oxygen therapy — is also in short supply, leading to unnecessary deaths. Even hospital beds are scarce. There were just fourteen free intensive care beds available

in New Delhi, a city of twenty-nine million people, on Thursday morning.

India's latest treatment guidelines mirror those of the World Health Organisation and the United States with a key exception: India allows mildly ill patients to be given hydroxychloroquine or ivermectin, drugs used for certain tropical diseases.

There is little evidence they work against COVID-19, and the WHO strongly recommends against hydroxychloroquine's use for COVID-19 of any severity and against using ivermectin except in studies.



TEGLA LOROUPE

SAYS ATHLETES USING HIGH-TECH SHOES ARE 'CHEATING'

Tegla Loroupe held the women's marathon world record for three-and-a-half years

Athletes using new running shoe technology are “cheating” and it is “almost like doping”, says ex-marathon world record holder Tegla Loroupe.

The growth of high-tech shoes has coincided with a number of world records being set in endurance races in recent years.

Critics argue such shoes give the wearer an unfair advantage and Kenya's Loroupe believes they should be banned.

“I'm not a fan of that

because there is no human energy,” she told BBC Sport.

“You are cheating, you are not a hero because you don't use your own strength.

“You can have a faster shoe [but] what about those who cannot afford, it's almost like doping, for me there is no difference between doping and having a faster shoe.”

In March, Welsh marathon runner Dewi Griffiths told BBC Sport Wales the advancements in shoe technol-

ogy gave runners “free time” in races.

In 2020, World Athletics tightened its rules around high-tech shoes, including banning the Nike ‘Alphafly’ prototype shoes worn by Eliud Kipchoge when he became the first athlete to run a marathon in under two hours in October 2019.

Former British Olympic marathon runner Mara Yamauchi previously told BBC Sport that “we no longer truly have fair competition”.

Nike has said it “re-

spects the spirit of the rules” and does not “create any running shoes that return more energy than the runner expends”.

Loroupe, who will be the chef de mission for the refugee team at the Tokyo Olympics this summer, said: “[It's] good to have shoes but to have this element that other athletes cannot afford, it's wrong. For me, the shoes should be banned so that people can trust themselves, they can train and see that I am able to do.

Dr. J has some controversial opinions on modern players

JULIUS ERVING LEAVES LEBRON

JAMES OFF HIS ALL-TIME LINEUP, RELEGATES MICHAEL JORDAN TO SECOND TEAM

Cue your “old man yells at cloud” memes because yet another older NBA legend has fired off a take that doesn’t exactly paint the modern game in the best light.

Former Philadelphia 76ers forward Julius Erving appeared on Chris Haynes’ *Posted Up Podcast* and picked his all-time team, and, unsurprisingly, leaned heavily on players from previous generations.

His first team consisted of Jerry West, Oscar Robertson, Elgin Baylor, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell. All five of those players retired by 1974, when Erving was still in the ABA. His second team gets slightly more modern, but not by much: Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Karl Malone and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Malone lasted the longest out of that group as he retired in 2004.

You might have noticed one rather conspicuous absence: At no point did Erving list Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James. To that, he offered a somewhat perplexing explanation.

“When you look at LeBron and anybody he sort of picks with him ... he played with so many guys. He’s the guy who has led the charge in terms of super teams being put together. When he put together the team in Miami, he put together that team in Cleveland as well and put together a team in Los Angeles. So he can pick his own team, I’m not going to pick his team. I’m not saying nothing bad about LeBron.” James was a pioneer in

the player empowerment era, but to suggest that he alone led the charge on the creation of super teams is simply inaccurate. Ignoring the fact that James built his Miami roster to oppose another one that had been built in Boston three years earlier, it could be argued that Erving himself played for a super team in Philadelphia. His 1981-82 76ers reached the NBA Finals, and then, in the very next offseason, they signed reigning MVP Moses Malone in free agency. That gave the 76ers four All-Stars in Erving, Malone, Maurice Cheeks and Andrew Toney. Bobby Jones was nearing the end of his career, but he was also a Hall of Famer. That team won 65 games and went 12-1 in the playoffs to

win the championship. Whether a super team is defined by success, talent or how its best players were acquired, those 76ers check practically every box.

But older legends frequently leave James off of lists like this. Even some of his former contemporaries have as well. Paul Pierce did when he shared his all-time team in 2020. It is practically an inevitability at this point. But seeing Jordan relegated to second-team status is new, and Malone, with no championships to his name, rarely draws this kind of recognition. Erving apparently holds a great deal of respect for the players who came before him. That’s the simplest possible explanation for some of these bizarre choices.



T20 WORLD CUP COULD BE MOVED TO UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, SAYS BCCI

This year's Twenty20 World Cup could be moved to the United Arab Emirates if India continues to suffer with a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The tournament is due to begin in October, but the Covid death toll in India has passed 200,000, with at least 300,000 new infections every day in the past week.

Last week, India joined the UK's travel red list - effectively banning travel to and from the country. Other countries - including Australia - have also closed

their borders to India.

Speaking to the BBC's Stumped podcast, Dhiraj Malhotra, from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said he is hopeful India could still host the T20 World Cup.

"I've just been named one of the tournament directors, so I'm doing everything we can to make sure it happens," said Malhotra, who is general manager for game development with the BCCI.

"We will be doing normal scenario, and worst case scenario, so with all that we're talking to the ICC at

the moment." Australia will host a T20 World Cup in 2022, postponed from last year due to the pandemic.

When asked whether there is a country earmarked as the contingency, Malhotra said: "It would be the UAE. We're hoping again that it would be done by the BCCI. So, we'll take the tournament there, but it'll still be done by the BCCI."

Meanwhile, Malhotra says India's cricket governing body will go with "common sentiment" on whether the Indian Pre-

mier League continues.

The IPL - the world's richest Twenty20 league - is currently taking place in India with the final set for 30 May.

Australia cricketers Andrew Tye, Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson have withdrawn from the IPL and the tournament has faced calls for a suspension.

"There's not been any clear implication of any clear directive that it is bad to host the IPL, or good to host the IPL," Malhotra added.



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