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FRIDAY 21TH MAY 2021

| ISSUE 231

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GUEST EDITORIAL

COVID-19 VACCINE A MARVEL OF MODERN MEDICINE... AND THE WORLD BREATHES AGAIN

One could sense the global sigh of relief and then the utter joy last week after the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance that fully vaccinated people could stop wearing masks in outdoor crowds and in most indoor settings.

It marked a major step towards returning to some semblance of life as we knew it before the novel coronavirus pandemic, and hope for an end to the long night of suffering and death that shook the world to its core and changed our lives forever.

The guidance still calls for wearing masks in crowded indoor settings like buses, planes, hospitals, prisons, and homeless shelters. But it will help pave the way for reopening workplaces, schools, and other venues, even removing the need for social distancing for those fully vaccinated — people who are two weeks

past their last required dose.

The guidance represents excellent news for Jamaica, particularly the tourism sector upon which our country depends so much for a huge chunk of our employment and the main foreign exchange earner, as its linkages run throughout the economy.

Americans will feel freer to travel without some of the restrictions, notably the need to self-quarantine, which can reduce the quality and length of vacation or business trips. Fully vaccinated Jamaicans, with proof, will not have to quarantine in the States — though a negative COVID-19 test is still required.

All this is thanks to the COVID-19 vaccine which will no doubt take its place among the modern marvels of 21st century medicine and open a new chapter in how to deal with epidemics, pandemics

and the vaccines which we use to fight them.

One of the key elements in the emergence of the COVID-19 vaccine is the speed of development — Operation Warp Speed, as the US Administration named it — such that anti-vaxxers were able to use that to scare off millions of people worldwide.

But it is that very speed which is now making it possible to begin the journey back, in what could be regarded as a relatively short time, after the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. The COVID-19 vaccine benefited from all the scientific work done over decades and got the tremendous funding needed to do the all-important human trials.

In the US, which bore the brunt of the impact, an aggressive vaccination campaign has resulted in pushing virus cases to their lowest rate since September, deaths to their lowest

point since last year April, and the test positivity rate to its lowest since the pandemic began.

With the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines the world now has a choice between waiting for herd immunity in the population through exposure to the disease and through vaccination. The World Health Organization, thankfully, supports achieving herd immunity through vaccination.

Vaccine sceptics would want the world to seek immunity by allowing a disease to spread through the population, with no concern about the resulting suffering from unnecessary cases and deaths.

What is the use of the explosion of knowledge to which we have access if it is not to be used against an enemy like a pandemic?

Reprinted from the Jamaica Observer (May 19, 2021)

BAR OWNERS URGED TO COMPLY WITH GUIDELINES

The Central Board of Health wants all bar owners in the country to comply with the guidelines that have been established, prior to opening their businesses to the public. Chief Health Inspector (CHI), Sharon Martin says, the decision by the Cabinet to approve the re-opening of bars and nightclubs was contingent upon these businesses undergoing an inspection from her department and receiving a 'clean bill of health' before business resumption.

Martin is reporting that her department has received less than the expected number of calls from bar owners to carry out inspections of their establishments. She is warning that if the department finds a bar in operation, prior to it receiving the greenlight to reopen, her intentions are to call the police and have the bar closed until it has passed inspection and then allowed to resume operations.

"The calls to conduct inspections have been very slow as



some bar operators may feel that because the government gave a date when these businesses may open (Wednesday May 19) there is a belief that undergoing the inspection is unnecessary," she explained.

The CHI reiterated the policy guidelines which govern the bars' reopening; they are first to undergo an inspection by the Central Board of Health (CBH) to ensure

cleanliness, proper sanitation, and posted signs indicating that masks are required prior to entry. Additionally, each bar must have a functional hand-washing station with a sign that says, 'Wash Hands Here!'.

According to Martin bar operators should not hesitate to call her department, because if everything is in order at the bar, the exercise should not take more than ten

minutes.

"People congregate at bars and their owners must understand that the health and safety of their patrons should be their paramount concern and it is our job to see that those precautions are put in place," she further explained.

There are close to two hundred bars operating in the country, but since the lockdown, health officials say they have

noticed that some have reopened as a bar and restaurant.

One week into the process, less than fifty bars have been inspected so far, but one health official said the number that needs inspection currently may not be that high as the department was conducting inspections in anticipation of the announcement from the government.

INTENSIFIED PUBLIC EDUCATION TO COUNTER VACCINE NEGATIVITY

By Shelton Daniel

Governmental and health authorities are not unmindful that people can still become infected with COVID-19 even after being fully vaccinated, and the effect this awareness can have in worsening the problem of vaccine hesitancy. But, Information Minister Melford Nicholas says this points to the need for increased and intensified public education. Medical experts have long explained that vaccination against the novel coronavirus does not prevent a person from contracting the pathogen. However, vac-

cination is a very strong and effective safeguard against the virus causing one to become seriously ill to the point of requiring hospitalization, or dying. Still, vaccine skeptics and anti-vaxxers have latched on to all available negative references – regardless of how infrequently they occur – to bolster their arguments against inoculation. These include cases of rare, but life threatening, blood clots and instances of people becoming ill after they have been fully vaccinated. Asked about the impact this could have in Antigua and Barbuda where public uptake of

the vaccine has slowed to a crawl over the past month following the international blood clot scare, and what Government plans to do in order to counter this, Nicholas replied: "I can tell you – as the Minister of Information with responsibility for public broadcasting – that I am keenly aware that these are some of the issues that we have to treat in the public education campaign; and so, no effort is going to be spared over the next week or two to ensure that the public is going to be bathed ... with more critical information." But Nicholas observed that, as he

put it, "Emotional responses to these issues are immune to facts; so we have to bear that in mind as well. But we will do our part in terms of persons who have fears that are born out of misinformation, if they get the correct information, then that will help them to overcome some of those fears." He however conceded that, "We can do nothing with persons who are motivated by other issues and believe in particular theories, etc.; adducing facts are not going to do anything with those particular persons. We have to use other methods of suasion to be able to change

the environment.” Nicholas stated further that “issues will begin to take shape when international travel becomes circumscribed by the need to have vaccines.

Persons who hold to those particular views about conspiracy theories will then be faced with the consequences of those beliefs.” He continued: “We have

to approach this thing in a multi-fangled way to understand that there are limitations to everything that we will do, but we will do everything that is within our control

and within our power to ensure that we bring back a degree of normalcy to the way we live with COVID.”



VACCINATING MINORS, DITCHING FACE MASKS NOT ON THE CARDS FOR NOW.

by *Shelton Daniel*

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is unlikely, at this time, to follow the United States’ lead in loosening the requirements for the public wearing of face masks as more people become vaccinated against COVID-19.

That was the response of Information Minister Melford Nicholas in answer to a reporter’s question during the weekly post-Cabinet

press briefing on Thursday morning.

Asked whether any further easing of restrictions was being considered by local health authorities, such as dispensing with masks as is being done in some parts of the US, Nicholas’s reply was quick and emphatic: “No, we’re not likely to follow the CDC [the United States’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] in that approach ... The suggestion was

raised by members of the public. But, looking at it, there is no easy way of defining – on the face of it – persons who would have completed the full dose of the vaccines, as opposed to another person who may just be not willing to wear a mask ... That would be a line of danger we would not cross.” Nicholas also replied in the negative to a question about whether any consideration was being given to inocu-

lating minors against COVID-19, given the recent approval in the United States for 12- to 15-year-olds to be vaccinated using the Pfizer-BioNTech jab.

“No, because none of the vaccines that are available at this stage within our jurisdiction have been tested among that level of the population,” he explained, “so it is not a consideration at this stage.”

According to the Minister, “We still have lots

of work to do among the adult population in terms of getting more persons to avail themselves of the first and even the second dose of the available vaccines. But, no, below the age of 18, no contemplation." Minister Nicholas was pressed as to whether such a consideration might not become necessary in light of the sluggish vaccine uptake among the currently eligible adult population and the jeopardy in which this vaccine hesitancy is placing the country's need to achieve herd immunity,

within a time frame that will soon elapse.

In addition to this, there is also the looming danger that a considerable portion of Antigua and Barbuda's vaccine stocks (obtained with some delay and difficulty) could expire as the supplies languish unused.

Said Minister Nicholas, in response: "What is within our immediate control is public education and exercise of more influence. And we would have again put some incentives on the table. Some people have called them bribes, unfortunately. There is

nothing untoward about the government's intention ... There are several persons who have indicated that the incentives which have been put on the table are, in fact, attractive to them."

Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph has reportedly requested more of the shopping vouchers that form part of the vaccination reward incentives, because the program has been effective, according to Nicholas. "In fact, he has actually called for more vouchers because what they had would have been expended,"

Nicholas stated, adding that "there are some incentives that seem to be working with parts of the population."

Nicholas feels "there needs to be some more public engagement, especially at the community level. Community leaders like myself, an MP, I have got some work to do in my own district ... Those things are within our control. What is not within our control is the clinical trials that are necessary to be done [within this under 18 age group] of the population."

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Ministry of Health Announces COVID-19 Vaccine Data Collection Exercise

With over 32,000 persons receiving their first dose of the Astra Zeneca Vaccine, The Ministry of Health has announced that they are intensifying their data collection exercise.

The data is being collected from persons who would have been immunized with their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, (AstraZeneca); with remarks stating that there is a likelihood that persons having received the vaccine may experience some side effects, which is a part of any vaccine administration. On this backdrop, the health ministry has indicated that individuals have been tasked with contacting persons who have been vaccinated, via telephone, to collect this information.

“It is important to note that data collection, post-vaccination, has been an ongoing exercise with the assistance of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHA/WHO) through which the Ministry of Health and by extension the government procures all vaccines used in the Expanded Program on Immunization,” The Ministry said.

Health authorities continued by stating, “the data collected will be analyzed by the Ministry of Health and shared with the public. The findings from the analyzed data will also be periodically shared with regional and international public health partners including the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization PAHO/WHO.”

Concurrently, the vaccination rollout has indicated that there has been increased foot traffic at the centers, highlighting that many persons are turning out to receive their second dose, while scores of persons are also turning out to receive their first dose.

The rollout team further indicated that the Vaccine Mobile Unit will be out this Saturday, May 22nd at the M&M service station from 6 am to 1pm.



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National School Meals Highlights the Importance of Serving Healthy Meals



in human nutrition, food security, and health, as well as in achieving the UN's sustainable development goals. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, QU

For the past several months, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Barbuda Affairs has collaborated with local departments, organizations, and agencies, promoting the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables initiative. 2021 has been designated by the UN General Assembly as the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV). The IYFV is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the important role of fruits and vegetables

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A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Dongyu, launched the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables on December 15th, 2020, with an appeal to improve healthy and sustainable food production through innovation and technology and to reduce food loss and waste.

Continuing the promotion of IYFV, the Agriculture Ministry teamed up with the National School Meals Programme to help bring awareness to the campaign. The Executive Chef of the National School Meals Pro-

gramme, Colleen Simpson, noted the importance of including fresh fruits and vegetables in the daily meals that are being served to the 6,000 students in some (twenty-eight) 28 primary schools and several secondary schools. She noted that it is vital for the program to make these commodities a part of the children's dietary intake in general. Admitting that it is sometimes challenging to get children to partake in healthier food options, the Executive

Chef revealed that fresh green salads and coleslaws were innovative additions to the dishes for consumption. The school-feeding program, which once came at a cost of one dollar, was made completely free during the current administration, according to sources. Simpson went on to inform that including healthier food options for meals, allows for the program to serve local dishes such as soup or pepper pot. According to the Agriculture

Ministry, the school meals executive chef said that she believes more education is key to help students better understand the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables. She suggests town hall meetings and educational drives as ways to build support. Simpson also believes that inviting nutritional health experts and local chefs to Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to make presentations and conduct demonstrations can also help.



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LOCAL CHICKEN FARMER RECOUNTS CHALLENGES

A local chicken farmer is counting down the days before his first batch matures and is ready for the market.

Owner and operator of Wadadli Dress Best Chicken, Leon Matthew, who with his wife, Shennese, of Upper Fort Road, started the business, said his chicks which

arrived in the country on May 2nd from Jamaica, should be mature in another three weeks.

Matthew said they decided to go forward with the project over a year ago when they encountered their first major challenge; acquiring the appropriate lands for the project. "It took us

nine months before we could get the land because hatcheries have to be located away from residential areas. After this was done, we had the arduous task of having to clear the land and to construct the buildings to house the chicks," he told PointeXpress newspaper.

Another of the challenges encountered by the couple was the difficulty in securing finance for the project. After exploring a number of options they were able to get a small loan from a bank.

"We made a determination to go into broiler chickens rather than egg produc-



tion as we feel that there is an abundance of eggs on the market at the moment, while not many people have entered into the broiler market. Securing the young chicks was another of the hurdles that we had to overcome. However, after some investigation we opted to get the chicks out of Jamaica which was a viable and cheaper option for us," he declared.


Although it is still a few weeks before the chickens are slaughtered for the local market, Matthew and his wife have already contacted a number of supermarkets, shops and individuals who have given them a commitment to purchase their chickens.

"Only one of the supermarkets that we approached did not respond positively. At


the same time, many people have been calling and placing their orders. We believe that this will be a viable business for our family now and in the future," he noted. The Wadadli Dress Best Chicken farm is located at Wickham

Estate, just east of Willikies village. Despite the many challenges, Matthew said he is very happy that shortly, his chicken farm will be producing meat for consumption on the local market. "We are doing our part with

the overall plan to help feed the nation," he declared.



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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

(Probate)

In the Estate of **KINGSLEY ISAAC** late of **CLARE HALL, ST. JOHN, ANTIGUA, Deceased**

ADVERTISEMENT OF APPLICATION FOR GRANT

FIRST PUBLICATION

TAKE NOTICE that an application has been filed by **SAMUEL ISAAC** a.k.a **BEN ISAAC** of Villa, St. John in Antigua for a Grant of Probate of the will of the above named deceased who died on the 11th day February of 2019 without revoking a will bearing the date of the 16th day of August 2018 wherein the applicant **SAMUEL ISAAC** a.k.a **BEN ISAAC** is named as the Sole Executor.

Any person having an objection to the application for the grant of Probate shall file an objection within 14 days of the publication of this Notice.

Dated this 21st day of May 2021

SAMUEL ISAAC a.k.a **BEN ISAAC**

Filed by **Arnelle T. J. Michael** Attorney-at-Law whose address for service is Montgomery Chambers Inc., All Saints Road, St. John, Antigua and gailchristian@lawyer.com and +1 268 562 5470.



Date for CSEC Awards Ceremony Announced

Students who performed well in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examinations in the last two years will receive their due recognition at an awards ceremony slated for June 24.

The Ministry of Education has set aside that date to honour students from the 2019 academic year, as well as the 2020 academic year. It is expected that more than three hundred and twenty (320) students will participate in the ceremony which will be held virtually.

However, head of the education ministry's broadcasting unit, Alicia Knowles shared that the top three students from each year, along with their parents will be invited to participate in the in-person portion of the ceremony, expected to be held at the St John's Pentecostal House of Res-

toration on Lauchland Benjamin Drive. Knowles shared that, in all 164 students from 2019 and 160 from 2020 will participate through virtual means. Students will receive awards in three catego-

ries: gold, silver or bronze; based on the number of subjects they passed and the grades they received. Other students will receive certificates. This ceremony is held annually, but due to the COVID-19

outbreak, many of the activities planned for the third term last year, were canceled; as the education plant was closed down as was many other institutions in the country.

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VACCINE REFUSAL IS AS DANGEROUS A PANDEMIC AS COVID-19



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)

Vaccine refusal is fast becoming as dangerous to human health

and to economies as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, even before the novel coronavirus was confirmed and began its spread around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed that vaccine refusals had led to a resurgence of diseases such as measles in countries that were close to eliminating them. The WHO identified vaccine refusal as one of the 10 leading threats to glob-

al health. At that time, complacency, inconvenience in access, and a lack of confidence were said to be the driving factors for people's refusal to inoculate against disease.

Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the problem has become worse and so widespread that a comprehensive approach by all governments and non-governmental organizations, globally, is now necessary to overcome it.

Promoted on social media platforms by far-right organisations and church groups in the U.S., the anti-vaccine propaganda has spread like wildfire, convincing persons at all levels of societies that they would either die from an inoculation or some harmful material would be injected into their bodies.

Religious groups in the Caribbean, influenced by fundamentalist U.S. churches, also encour-

age their followers not to vaccinate. Research done by the New York Times reported, on April 5, that "among evangelicals in the U.S., Pentecostal and charismatic Christians may be particularly wary of the vaccine, in part because their tradition historically emphasizes divine health and miraculous healing in ways that can rival traditional medicine". Charismatic churches also attract followers in the Caribbean.

The most popular social media platforms used by anti-vaxxers are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram which have all committed to banning anti-vaccine content. But, accounts on these platforms turn up as quickly as they are taken-down. In turn, the propaganda, which includes fabricated videos purporting to show actual events, are communicated tens of thousands of times

around the world on WhatsApp.

Governments and social media platforms, such as those named in this commentary, as well as organizations such as the WHO and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), must gather specialists together to find ways to counter the anti-vaccination propaganda campaigns and to strengthen educational programmes showing the benefit of vaccines. PAHO has started using Facebook to educate about the benefits of vaccines, but more effective communications techniques should be used, including dropping huge images of syringes and needles, that may be reinforcing reticence to inoculate.

Groups of persons in many parts of the world, who decline taking the COVID-19 vaccine, now pose a risk to themselves and the people with whom they come into contact, especially their families. They also pose a risk to the opening-up of the economies of

their countries.

Data, gathered worldwide, shows that the claims of the anti-vaxxers, concerning detrimental effects of the vaccine, are wrong. Figures confirm that the COVID-19 vaccine prevents severe infection and deaths at astounding rates.

Studies show that, in Israel for instance, vaccines prevented hospitalization among adults 65 and older by 94%. They also prevented symptomatic infection among health-care workers by 97% and blocked severe disease by 97.4% in Qatar. Dr. Monica Gandhi, an Infectious-Diseases Specialist, and Professor of Medicine at The University of California at San Francisco, reports that serious infections among vaccinated individuals are extremely rare. She points out that “of over 115 million vaccinated Americans, only 0.0009% contracted severe COVID-19 after vaccination despite the virus continuing to circulate in their communities. As she con-

cluded: “Vaccines truly defang the virus”. In the U.S. and Britain where (at the time of writing on 20 May) 48.09% and 55.49% of the populations have been vaccinated, data shows that vaccines also block transmission.

People, who have been inoculated against the coronavirus, are rightly concerned that, despite their responsible action in taking the vaccine, irresponsible persons are asserting their right to refuse it. The question that has to be asked is: whose rights are greater? Are the rights to safeguard lives and livelihood less than the right to put lives and livelihoods at risk by refusing to be vaccinated? This is not a moral dilemma; it is a common sense question, deserving a common sense answer.

However, no answer is being attempted as individual governments and their health authorities shy away from the question for political reasons. No ruling political party wants to risk losing electoral support to its rivals on

the back of an accusation of depriving people of their rights. Yet, when that right is upheld, it threatens others and entire societies. Just as measles has returned in countries where groups of people decline to be inoculated against it, COVID-19 will not be subdued or eliminated in countries where groups of people refuse to be vaccinated.

This conflict must be tackled and resolved by global agreement and action. No one country can act alone. Maybe the answer lies in an intense education programme globally constructed, financed, and implemented.

The mantra that “we’re all in this together” assumes a profound global relevance for maintaining life and sustaining livelihoods. Doing nothing is not a solution. The 74th World Health Assembly being held from May 24 to June 1, is the ideal place to start.

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

UWI VICE-CHANCELLOR DISCUSSES FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR VINCENTIAN

students during courtesy call with Prime Minister Gonsalves



Caption: Vice-Chancellor of The UWI, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles in dialogue with Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Hon Ralph Gonsalves during a visit to the islands on May 14, 2021.

The UWI Regional Headquarters, Jamaica. W.I. Thursday, May 20, 2021. —Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies (The UWI), Professor Sir Hilary Beckles has assured the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves of The UWI's continued support for the Government and people of the country,

following the series of explosive volcanic eruptions which began in early April. Vice-Chancellor Beckles was at the time on a courtesy call to Prime Minister Gonsalves, on a visit to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines last Friday, May 14, 2021. During the visit, the Vice-Chancellor disclosed to Prime Minister Gonsalves that The UWI, beyond the science-management of the natural disaster, has formulated a financial aid strategy for all new and returning Vincentian students of The UWI. He announced that in August this year Vincentian students on all campuses will receive a special provision of tuition and accommodation assistance for the academic year 2021/2022 of up to 50%, based on each campus' capacity and students' individual needs. Vice-Chancellor Beckles also identified that 30% of the proceeds from the New York and Toronto fundraising galas would be earmarked to provide specific financial support for students from Saint Vin-

cent and the Grenadines.

This financial aid package is estimated to benefit approximately 1,200 Vincentian students enrolled in programmes across all UWI campuses. The initiative is described by Vice-Chancellor Beckles as part of the University's overall monitoring and management of the affairs of students from the islands; those pursuing education online, from their homes; and those who will be returning to various landed campuses; and the new, incoming generation of students. In his dialogue with Prime Minister Gonsalves, the Vice-Chancellor also pledged The UWI's continued support in the management of the volcanic/seismic activity on the islands. To date, The UWI has provided a range of support including scientific support, mobilizing relief and financial resources towards health care, education and for students displaced by La Soufriere's eruptions. Vice-Chancellor Beckles took the opportunity to congratulate the tremendous

work of both The UWI Seismic Research Centre team on the islands since December 2020, and the relief support team coordinated by Dr. Francis Severin, Deputy Principal of The UWI Open Campus. He said the financial and material relief support through the "Rally Round SVG" initiative has amassed significant aid to the country, already Turning attention to the islands' recovery, Vice-Chancellor Beckles pledged his personal support to the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in negotiation and diplomacy with international agencies under the rubric of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to enable the country to get back on its feet after being knocked off its targeted development goals as a result of this seismic crisis.

Prime Minister Gonsalves, himself a UWI alumnus and former lecturer conveyed his satisfaction with the efforts of The UWI, and expressed gratitude on behalf of the nation.



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8	Earl Brooks Jr.	Trinidad and Tobago	People Make The World Go Round - The Stylistics
9	Mathieu Borgne	France	If It's Magic - Stevie Wonder
10	Dejean Cain	Trinidad and Tobago	Conga - Gloria Estefan

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The second staging of the international pan soloist's competition - the NCLB PanoGramma 2021- will reach its climax tomorrow night with the finals taking place virtually.

Trinidad and Tobago pannists have dominated the competition so far, with eight of the ten hailing from that country. The remaining two competitors will represent France and Barbados. Eight Antigua and Barbuda

pannists entered the competition with recorded submissions of their performance. Five made it to the preliminary round but only one Antiguan and Barbudan representative, Kevhani Greenaway, reached the semi-finals. Greenaway gave a good showing during his performance, where he added innovation, by having a young woman form part of the presentation. He improved his ranking in the semi-finals from 20th to 17th

place, but that was not enough to make it into the finals where only the top ten players were selected. The competition has come in for considerable praise from many across the region and internationally. Antigua and Barbuda's Director of Culture, Khan Cordice gave the competition an enthusiastic 'thumbs up'. Interested persons can follow the competition on YouTube tomorrow night starting at 8:00 pm.



Minister of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy Kirk Humphreys speaking with media representatives this week.

Change of system at Bridgetown Port

Barbados Advocate - As concern continues to swell amid recent complaints of missing items from shipments coming out of the Bridgetown Port, Minister of Maritime Affairs and the Blue Economy Kirk Humphrey has announced that there will be changes to the current system of clearing items from the Port, which would be taking effect from as early as Monday.

Noting that the government agency was taking the complaints seriously, the Minister explained that any matter with persons reporting missing goods was indeed a matter of concern for the Port and for him.

Stating that the issue was discussed at all levels in the organisation and plans laid for rectification of the problem, he said he has a lot of respect for the staff and Customs Officers who work

at the port.

"It would be very difficult for me to associate myself with any comments that seem to cast aspersions on the integrity of the staff in the Bridgetown Port. However, I also believe that the persons who are complaining about items missing from their barrels – they're not mad people – and that if they say items have gone missing, then they obviously have a legitimate reason to believe that," he said.

Going on to say that a decision was taken to examine the changes made in recent times because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that could possibly have led to the level of concern being exhibited, Humphrey said that the Port would be using the technology at its disposal to review the allegations. "We have an artificial intelligence system, a

camera system, that allows us to do that and we were able to track many of the barrels in the Port going back as far as four months and we had no reason to suspect that anything untoward occurred in any of these barrels. In fact, if you get technical, these barrels are so high that it is very difficult for anybody in the Port to access the barrels, but yet I say that cognisant of the fact that people are legitimately complaining that something has happened to their items by the time the items reach the house."

At present, the system does not allow for members of the public to go to the Port to clear their items in a bid to minimise the possibilities of infection, and as such the public have to secure the services of agents and freighting services to access their goods.

Dementia Foundation continues to heighten awareness



This Dominica Dementia Awareness poster is part of the awareness campaign

Dominica News Online - Founder of the Dominica Dementia Foundation (DDF), Rianna Patterson, has said that her organization will be collaborating with Amplify Caribbean and Nugen Care through a social media campaign to raise awareness of dementia during Dementia Week which is being observed from May 17th to May 23rd 2021. The Dominica-born Patterson resides in the United Kingdom. Since inception, the Foundation has taken part in various activities such as hosting Dominica's first World Alzheimer's Month, supporting Miss Dominica pageant contestant Jade

Romain by hosting an elderly appreciation day event, donating to care homes and families affected by Hurricane Maria in Dominica, and hosting a panel discussion on World Parkinson's Awareness Week in 2017. The foundation was also involved in a social media campaign called "Time to Talk" day, introduced by Time to Change United Kingdom (UK). Other past projects include a social media campaign with Sevensix Agency and Crisis Management during Hurricane Maria, through the support of the Queen's Commonwealth Trust. Patterson said in an interview with Domini-

ca News Online (DNO) that, currently, there is a Dementia Friends Dominica Programme and a virtual dementia support group. "We have families in the UK and Dominica who join us every Sunday to find resources and support for dementia care. We create a safe space for families to connect with each other. Some of our members also gravitated to our work based on personal experience, a desire to give back to the community," she stated. She hopes to continue building a sustainable organization that will be youth-led and provide support to the local community through

advocacy and support. Patterson's grandfather passed away with dementia in Dominica in 2013 when she was 16. After college, she decided to launch her own non-profit organization at the tender age of 18. The Dominica Dementia Foundation was founded on September 2nd 2016. Currently, she works as a marketing, business pathways and young adult programme lead at a tech company in England. Patterson was also given the Queen's Young Leaders award in 2017 for her work in her Foundation.



GRIEF IN ST. JAMES, JAMAICA

Two children burned to death; fire leaves major damage at Granville Police Station

BARRETT HALL, St. James (Jamaica Observer) — The death of two little boys in a fire at Barrett Hall, near Lilliput, and major fire damage to Granville Police Station caused much sadness in the St. James communities Wednesday.

The little boys, three-year-old Aden Flowers and his one-year-old brother Christopher Flowers, had been left alone in the family's one-bedroom wooden house when fire swept through the humble dwelling.

With tears streaming down her cheeks, Christian Johnson, mother of the children, said she had just gone to a nearby shop to purchase items to prepare a meal for

her two little ones when tragedy struck.

"Shortly after mi go to di shop mi hear mi brother-in-law calling me and shouting, 'Fire! Fire!' said the grieving Johnson. She pondered how the house could have caught fire when she made sure that the stove had been turned off and there were no lighters accessible to the children.

"This is unbelievable. The poor little children gone before they get to live any life," a female resident of Barrett Hall said.

Father of the two children who died in the fire, Omar Flowers, alleged that an arsonist was responsible for torching the house which resulted in the death of his

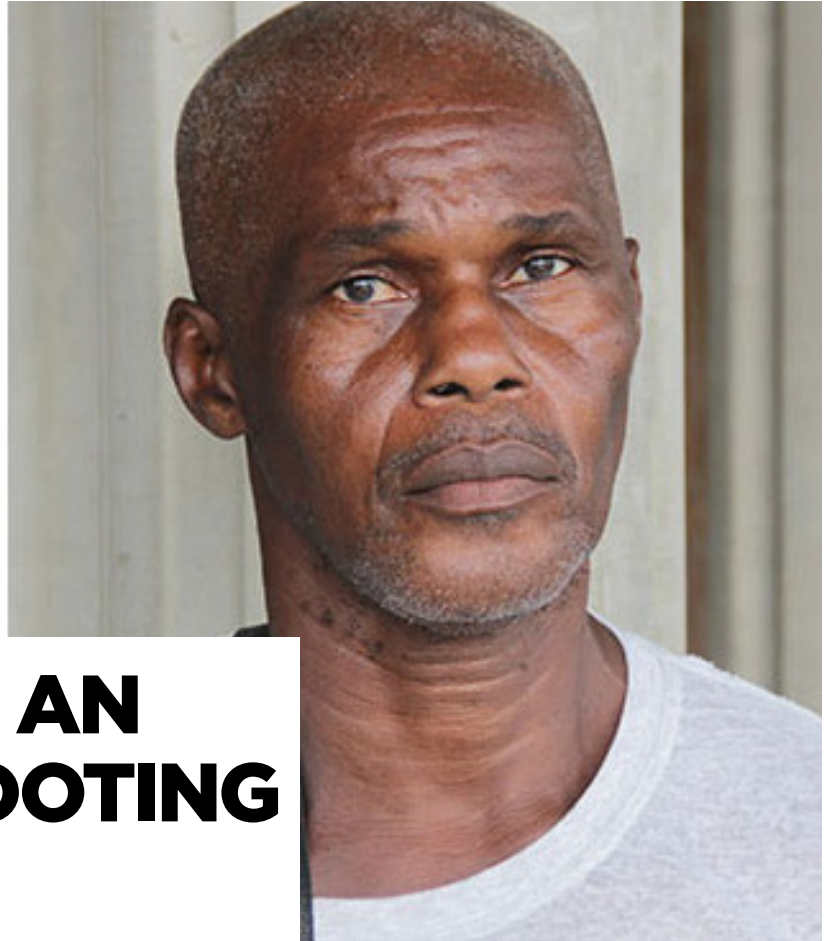
sons.

"Someone has done it, because there is no way the house could catch a fire. No lighter hanging around the house and no gas on, and nothing like that. The kids dem they [usually] stick to the window; if their mother goes out [the elder one] goes to the window and look out. I know how they operate in the house. The three-year-old always at the window looking out, either making noise or something, and the young baby just is [usually] calm and relaxed; him don't move much. But the other one always a look through the window. Mi sorry him never come through the window and done, but perhaps he went to save his

brother," he said.

"From morning me a cry; mi love me two children and mi a tell you it better it was my life dem tek," said the distressed father who said he makes a living as a landscaper.

"Mi can work hard and buy back any vanity, but mi two child just gone like that. Mi feel it. Mi two pickney dem give me the strength to go out and work," said Flowers. The St. James Division of the Jamaica Fire Brigade reported that about 9:10 a.m. a call was received that a house was on fire in Barrett Hall. Three fire trucks accompanied by an ambulance went to the scene, but firefighters said the house [was] fully engulfed when they arrived.



PM WAS MAKING AN EXCUSE FOR SHOOTING — VICTIM

PM Ralph Gonsalves (left) and shooting victim, Cornelius John

iWitnessNews SVG - Cornelius John, 60, the man who was shot at his Diamond home on April 13, says Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves' comment about what the opposition might have said had one of their members been involved is nothing but an excuse for the shooting. Ashelle Morgan, a senator for Gonsalves' Unity Labour Party, as well as Assistant Director of Public Prosecution Karim Nelson are "persons of interest" in the investigation, Commissioner of Police Colin John has told iWitness News. Three persons were present when John was shot at his home after

a verbal exchange with the trio which he said came to his house uninvited. Gonsalves has maintained that he was not making an excuse for the shooting when he commented on it on NBC Radio on May 4. A number of media outlets and commentators, as well as members of the public, concluded that Gonsalves was making an excuse for the shooting when he said: "If the shoe were on the other foot and it was an NDP woman, an NDP parliamentarian or high party member who had gotten involved in this, you know how the story was going to spin?

"So what you expect? There are two women. In this country, there is a lot of violence against women and it is a good thing to see somebody is standing up to defend women." The shooting victim, a long-time supporter of Gonsalves' politics, told iWitness News on Wednesday that his conclusions were the same as those of many other persons. "Yes, when he was trying to say woman defending — we should glad that woman come and defend woman because we have a lot of woman abused around the place," the shooting victim told iWitness News. "That, to me, sounds

like something you trying to whip up somebody, you're trying to activate people to say, 'Oh, yeah, woman abuse' and you're glad. That is something you are trying to activate. That's how I look at it. "He was making an excuse, but at the same time he making an excuse, he trying to get support from women to say, 'Oh, it's a good thing that women step up to support women — when there was no abuse,'" John said. He, however, said that when he was shot there was no cause for anyone to be defending a woman or anyone else.



Black fungus: Call to declare epidemic in Indian states

The rare infection is believed to be triggered by the use of steroids in severe COVID patients

India's states should declare an epidemic following a rise in deadly "black fungus" cases, the country's health authorities have said. The normally rare infection, called mucormycosis, has a mortality rate of 50%, with some only saved by removing an eye or jaw bone. But in recent months, India saw thousands of cases affecting recovered and recovering COVID-19 patients.

Doctors suspect there may be a link with the steroids used to treat COVID.

Diabetics are at particular risk, with doctors telling the BBC it seems to strike 12 to 15 days after recovery from

COVID. On Thursday, health ministry joint secretary Lav Agarwal wrote to India's 29 states to ask them to declare it an epidemic. By doing so, the ministry will be able to more closely monitor what is happening in each state and allow for better integration of treatment.

It is not clear exactly how many cases there have been across the country, which is currently in the grip of a deadly second covid-19 wave which has left tens of thousands dead.

Last week, Maharashtra's health minister, Rajesh Tope, said there were 1,500 cases of black fungus infection in the state, which is

one of the worst affected in the second wave of covid-19 in India. One hospital in its capital, Mumbai, told the BBC it had seen 24 cases in two months, as opposed to six for the whole of last year.

Doctors have also told the BBC of how they were forced to remove people's eyes and jaw bones, trying to stop the spread before it reaches their brains, but leaving the patient permanently disfigured.

The surge in cases has led to a shortage of amphotericin b, the drug used to treat mucormycosis, despite it being manufactured by many Indian firms. It has led to families turning to

the black market in desperation.

Mucormycosis is a very rare infection. It is caused by exposure to mucor mould which is commonly found in soil, plants, manure, and decaying fruits and vegetables.

"It is ubiquitous and found in soil and air, and even in the nose and mucus of healthy people," says Dr. Akshay Nair, a Mumbai-based eye surgeon. It affects the sinuses, the brain and the lungs, and can be life-threatening in diabetic or severely immunocompromised individuals, such as cancer patients or people with HIV/AIDS.



Israel, Hamas agree to cease-fire to end bloody 11-day war

A man inspects the rubble of destroyed residential building which was hit by Israeli airstrikes, in Gaza City

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel and Hamas agreed to a cease-fire Thursday, halting a bruising 11-day war that caused widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip, brought life in much of Israel to a standstill and left more than 200 people dead.

At 2 a.m. local time, just as the cease-fire took effect, life returned to the streets of Gaza. People went out of their homes, some shouting “Allahu Akbar” or whistling from balconies. Many fired in the air, celebrating the truce.

Like the three previous wars between the bitter enemies, the latest round of fighting ended inconclusively. Israel claimed to inflict heavy damage on Hamas but

once again was unable to halt the Islamic militant group’s nonstop rocket barrages. Almost immediately, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced angry accusations from his hard-line, right-wing base that he stopped the operation too soon.

Hamas, the Islamic militant group sworn to Israel’s destruction, also claimed victory. But it now faces the daunting challenge of rebuilding in a territory already suffering from poverty, widespread unemployment and a raging coronavirus outbreak.

Netanyahu’s office said his Security Cabinet had unanimously accepted an Egyptian cease-fire proposal after

recommendations from Israel’s military chief and other top security officials. A statement boasted of “significant achievements in the operation, some of which are unprecedented.”

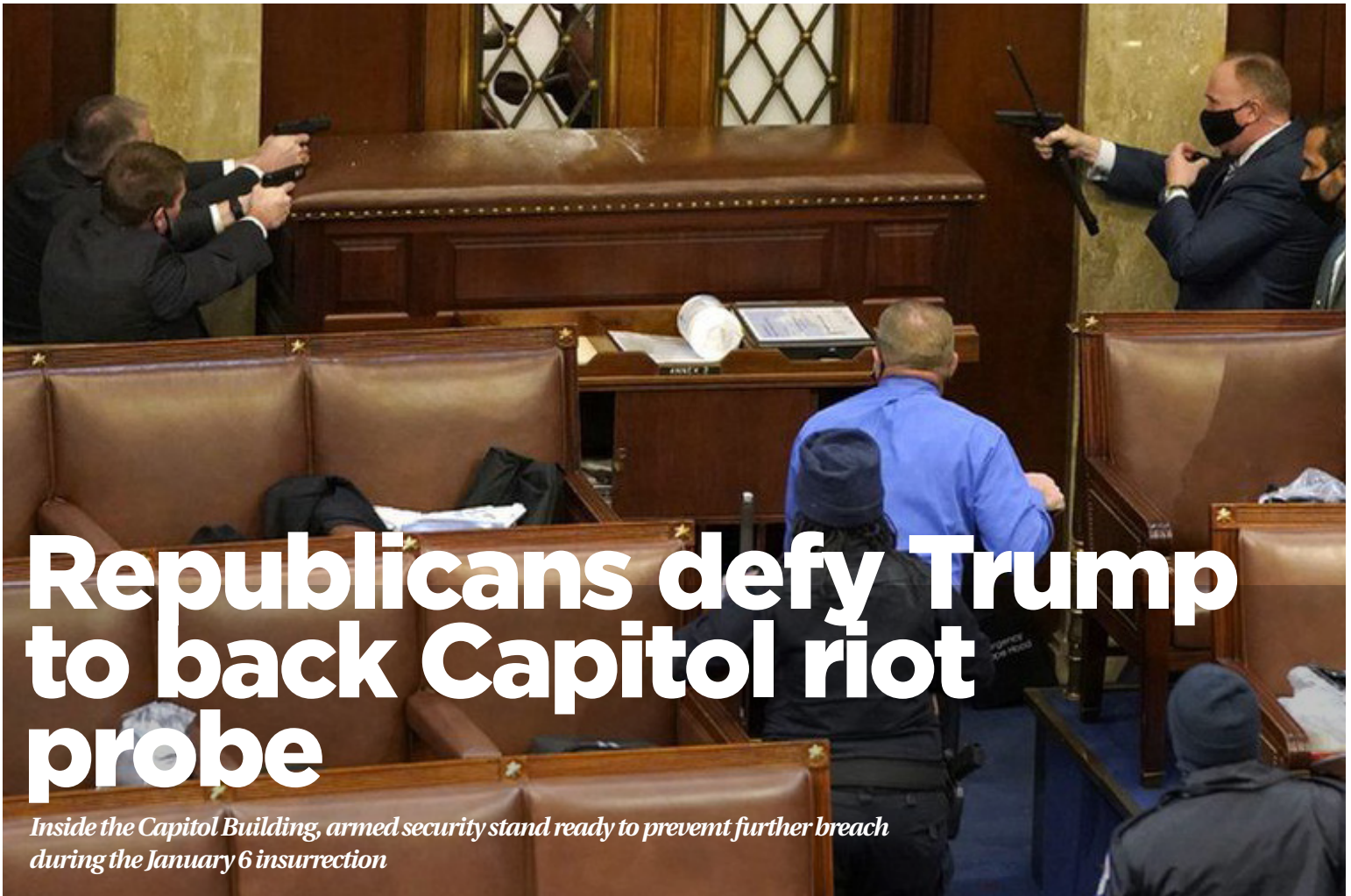
It also included a veiled threat against Hamas. “The political leaders emphasized that the reality on the ground will determine the future of the campaign,” the statement said.

The fighting erupted on May 10, when Hamas militants in Gaza fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem. The barrage came after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Heavy-hand-

ed police tactics at the compound, built on a site holy to Muslims and Jews, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinians by Jewish settlers had inflamed tensions.

The competing claims to Jerusalem lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have repeatedly triggered bouts of violence in the past.

Hamas and other militant groups fired over 4,000 rockets into Israel throughout the fighting, launching the projectiles from civilian areas at Israeli cities. Dozens of projectiles flew as far north as Tel Aviv, the country’s bustling commercial and cultural capital.



Republicans defy Trump to back Capitol riot probe

Inside the Capitol Building, armed security stand ready to prevent further breach during the January 6 insurrection

The Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives has voted, with Republican support, for a commission to investigate the Capitol riot. Thirty-five Republicans defied their party leaders and former President Donald Trump in siding with Democrats by 252-175 to establish the inquiry. Mr. Trump had urged Republicans to vote against the “Democrat trap”.

The bill looks unlikely to pass the upper chamber. Top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell called it “slanted”. The inquiry would be modelled on the commission that investigated the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. It would establish

a 10-member body – evenly split between the two main parties – that would make recommendations by the end of the year on how to prevent any repeat of the Capitol invasion.

Trump supporters stormed Congress on 6 January in a failed bid to thwart certification of President Joe Biden’s victory in November’s election. Wednesday’s vote was seen as a loyalty test to the former president for members of his party.

All 10 of the House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump in the days after the Capitol riot for incitement of insurrection were among the 35 who voted for the commission.

Republican House

Leader Kevin McCarthy dismissed the number of party defections in a weekly news conference on Thursday, saying: “I thought it would probably be higher.” He added that the idea of this Democratic-led House commission was “a lot of politics”, noting that committees in the Senate were already conducting their own inquiry. Asked if he was willing to testify about a conversation he had with Mr. Trump on the day of the riot, he responded, “sure”.

On Wednesday, New York congressman John Katko, who negotiated the legislation with Democrats, said: “This is about facts - it’s not partisan politics.”

Mr. Katko - the top Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee – said, “The American people and the Capitol Police deserve answers and action as soon as possible to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again”. But Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Georgia Republican, said the commission was a Democratic ruse “to smear Trump supporters”. Shortly before the vote, Tim Ryan, an Ohio Democrat, said on the House floor: “We have people scaling the Capitol, hitting the Capitol Police with lead pipes across the head, and we can’t get bipartisanship? What else has to happen in this country?”

US ENDS USE OF 2 IMMIGRATION JAILS ACCUSED OF MISTREATMENT

In a May 12, 2021, photo, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies before a Senate Appropriation Committee



WASHINGTON (AP) — A detention facility in Georgia where women claim they were subjected to unwanted medical procedures and a Massachusetts jail that has drawn complaints of inhumane conditions will no longer be used to detain immigrants, the Biden administration said Thursday.

The Department of Homeland Security said it would terminate contracts with the local government agency that runs the detention center in North Dartmouth, Massachusetts, and with the private operator of the Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia.

Any detainees who the U.S. believes should remain in custody will be

transferred elsewhere, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in announcing the move which had been sought by immigrant advocates.

Mayorkas said ending the use of the facilities is part of an effort to make “lasting improvements” to a detention system that advocates have long argued detains people for civil immigration offenses for too long and in inappropriately harsh conditions.

It also reflects a broader effort to roll back the anti-immigrant policies that characterized U.S. policy under President Donald Trump.

“Today’s announcements show the Biden administration’s willing-

ness to decisively break from the immigrants’ rights abuses of prior administrations,” said Naureen Shah, senior advocacy and policy counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union which recently called for the closure of 39 immigration detention centers around the country.

The Massachusetts jail was run under an agreement with the Bristol County Sheriff’s Office. The Georgia facility was run by a private company under contract with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Members of Congress and advocates have called for the closure of the Georgia facility since last year after women held there told

of being forced into unnecessary gynecological procedures with dirty equipment that led to serious infections. The conditions were so unsanitary that some women begged to be deported.

In addition, immigrants had broader complaints about overall conditions, alleging that authorities at the detention center failed to take adequate measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Immigrants held at the Massachusetts jail have also complained about a lack of COVID-19 precautions as well as overcrowding and excessive use of force.



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COMMUNITY NOTICE



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- COOK UP
- GOAT WATER
- SOLISE
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MONDAY 24TH MAY, 2021 - PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Persons who are scheduled to receive their vaccine on 24th May can access any one of the vaccination sites this week May 17 to 21, from 9AM - 5PM.



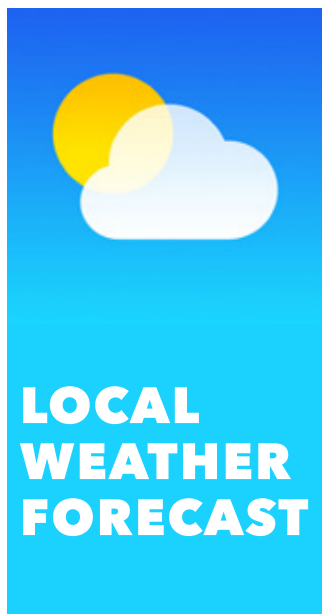
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VACCINATION SITES

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- Glenvilles Polyclinic
- Villa Polyclinic

Have your vaccination card with you and Government issued identification.

EACH VACCINATED, ALL PROTECTED. #GETTHEFACTS #GETTHEVAX



<p>Fri 21 30°/26° Partly Cloudy 8% E 24 km/h</p> <p>Fri 21 Day 30° Partly cloudy. High 30°C. Winds E at 15 to 30 km/h. Humidity 67% UV Index Extreme Sunrise 05:34 Sunset 18:33</p>		<p>Fri 21 Night 26° Mostly cloudy. Low 26°C. Winds E at 15 to 25 km/h. Humidity 76% UV Index 0 of 10 Moonrise 13:53 Moonset 01:48 Waxing Gibbous</p>	
<p>Sat 22 Day 30° Mostly cloudy. High 30°C. Winds E at 15 to 30 km/h. Humidity 68% UV Index 10 of 10 Sunrise 05:34 Sunset 18:34</p>		<p>Sat 22 Night 26° Cloudy. Low 26°C. Winds E at 15 to 30 km/h. Humidity 78% UV Index 0 of 10 Moonrise 14:50 Moonset 02:28 Waxing Gibbous</p>	

COMICS



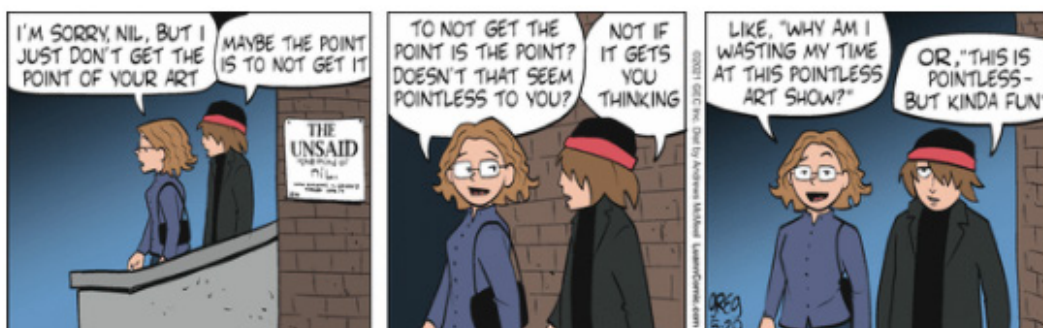
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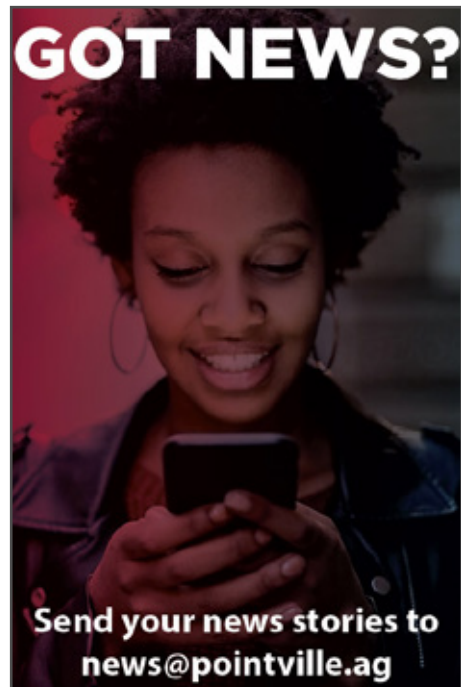
Luann

May 20, 2021



TELL US WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Submit community notices to news@pointville.ag



ENGLAND FAST BOWLER JOFRA ARCHER

WILL HAVE SURGERY ON HIS TROUBLESOME RIGHT ELBOW ON FRIDAY.

BBC Sports - The 26-year-old had an injection for the long-standing problem in March and has played only two matches since then. He managed just five overs in the second innings of Sussex's draw with Kent last week. A time-frame on his recovery is yet to be given in a year that includes the Twenty20 World Cup and an Ashes series in Australia. "Jofra Archer has been reviewed by a medical consultant in respect of his right elbow soreness. He will now proceed to surgery tomorrow," said an England and Wales Cricket Board statement. "Further updates will be released in due course." Archer has played 13 Tests, 17 one-day internationals and 12 T20s for England, and was part of the team that won the World Cup in 2019. He missed a number of matches on the tour of South Africa at the beginning of 2020 with the elbow problem then was also ruled out of the fourth Test against India earlier this year because of the same issue. The Barbados-born bowler sat out the aborted Indian Premier League, during which time he had an operation to remove glass from his hand, an injury he sustained when cleaning a fish tank at home.

He made his return this month, first in the Sussex second team then against Kent in the County Championship - and it emerged on Saturday he had told Sussex captain Ben Brown he was not fit to bowl. In all, his comeback consisted of fewer than 50 overs. Meanwhile, the ECB is yet to receive a formal request to rearrange England's Test series against India later this summer in order to accommodate a rescheduled Indian Premier League (IPL). The Times is reporting informal discussions have taken place between the ECB and the Board of Control for Cricket in India over the fifth and final Test, set for Old Trafford between 10-14 September. An ECB spokesperson said: "We talk to the BCCI on a regular basis about a wide range of issues especially as we address the challenges of Covid-19, but have had no official request to change dates and are continuing to plan for the five-Test series as is scheduled." Any change to the schedule would be problematic for the ECB, not only because of its packed nature, but also the desire to have as many England players as possible competing in the inaugural season of The Hundred, which begins in July.



LEBRON JAMES DELIVERS IN 'CLUTCH'

AS LOS ANGELES LAKERS TAKE 7TH SEED IN NBA PLAYOFFS



ESPN NBA (LOS ANGELES) -- The Los Angeles Lakers' postseason run opened with Wednesday's win-and-you're-in play-in game against the Golden State Warriors. And it took everything the defending champions had to win it, 103-100. LeBron James' 34-foot 3-point heave to beat the shot clock buzzer fell through the net with 58.2 seconds remaining, breaking a tie at 100 and giving L.A. the lead for good. James hit it with his old NBA Finals foe, Stephen Curry, a man who has made a name for himself on shots just like that, closing out on him on defense. "It was a great shot," Curry said. "That was a tough one because you don't

really expect it to go in. ... Everything changes when it goes in. All-time great players make great shots. That's what happens. "No different tonight, but it's a tough one." James, playing on a right ankle that caused him to miss 26 of the Lakers' final 30 games because of a sprain, finished with 22 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for the first play-in triple-double in the tournament's two-season existence. With the win, the Lakers claimed the No. 7 seed in the Western Conference playoffs, and they will face the second-seeded Phoenix Suns in the first round. L.A. opened as a -300 favorite to win the series, according to Cae-

sars Sportsbook by William Hill. It's the first time in at least the past 30 years that a 7-seed is favored over a 2-seed, according to ESPN Stats & Information research. "The West is a gauntlet of guards, starting tonight with Steph and obviously with our next-round matchup, Book [Devin Booker] and CP [Chris Paul]," said Alex Caruso, who led L.A.'s bench with 14 points and three steals. "It's going to be a handful." The Warriors will play the Memphis Grizzlies for the 8-seed tonight in San Francisco. Memphis defeated the visiting San Antonio Spurs 100-96 in Wednesday's other play-in game.

out the region. We are extremely grateful to have our governments and CARPHA who have been partnering with us to host cricket safely and to get our squads vaccinated." Dr. Joy St. John, Executive Director, CARPHA, said: "Cricket West Indies is leading the way in helping to raise awareness of the need to get vaccinated. They have been actively encouraging their players and staff to get vaccinated and we urge the people of CARICOM to follow them to safety by getting their vaccines as soon as possible."

EST INDIES MEN'S TRAINING SQUAD START TO R St Lucia's Chief

Medical Officer, Dr. Sharon Belmar-George of St Lucia added,

"The Ministry of Health and Wellness in St. Lucia is pleased to collaborate with CWI to facilitate the immunization of their players. Immunization is one of the most cost-effective public health measures in the management of infectious diseases. Cricket is an important sporting activity in the region and ensuring that it can be facilitated safely, is of importance to us in St. Lucia. We welcome the teams here and look forward to successful and safe activities over the coming weeks."

Eleven players and support staff received their first dose of the vaccine, along with two squad members who received their second dose. Several members of the training squad have already received their first doses in their home countries and will receive their second dose later in the summer.

The West Indies Men's squad is living and training in a bio-secure bubble environment ahead of their schedule of international home fixtures.

EIVE VACCINATIONS AGAINST COVID-19

WEST INDIES MEN'S TRAINING SQUAD START TO RECEIVE VACCINATIONS AGAINST COVID-19

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua - Cricket West Indies (CWI) confirms that 13 members of the West Indies Men's red ball training squad and management have received vaccinations against COVID-19 in St. Lucia, where they are preparing for the upcoming ICC World Test Championship Test matches against South Africa. CWI, in partner-

ship with the Government of St. Lucia, through the support of the Ministry of Health and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), has been able to secure COVID-19 vaccines for all interested squad members. CWI has been supporting the efforts of regional governments to encourage everyone to get vaccinated against COVID-19,

with the West Indies Women's training squad receiving their first doses while at their training camp in Antigua last week. CWI's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Israel Dowlal offered CWI's appreciation of the support received on the vaccinations and their importance to the squad. "CWI is fully committed to supporting the vaccination drive through-

Cont'd on pg 29

DEWS

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