

BARDUDA COUNCIL IN SAND MINING INSANITY!

SEE PAGES 6-7

THOSE WHO CRY WOLF the loudest are sometimes not looking to protect any sheep. Their false alarm is merely a disguise to prevent us from seeing that they are themselves the wolves, and by keeping us distracted with their bleeding-heart crocodile tears, they gain more time to continue ravenously devouring the hapless flock of gullible "sheeple". Prime Minister Gaston Browne rips the mask off these shifty would-be underminers who self-erode the (already sandy) foundations of their own opportunistic pretenses about environmental concerns. [PAGES 6-7]

INSIDE: Ivor Bird in traffic accident
COVID ventilator hook-ups rising!
Despite uncertainty, MP distributes schoolbags

Forge ahead in the new era and work together for a better future

by WANG Erdong

(Charge d'Affaires ad interim, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Antigua and Barbuda)

October 1st 2021 marks the 72nd Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

For the past 72 years, China has achieved a miracle in the history of human development. China's economic output has grown from over RMB 60 billion yuan in

1949 to 100 trillion yuan in 2020, making China the world's second largest economy.

Apart from being the world's largest trader in goods and second largest outward investor, China is also becoming the world's largest consumer market. For years,

China's annual contribution to global economic growth has been in excess of 30%.

China has built infrastructure of the largest scale and established the most comprehensive industrial system. A space station has been put into operation. Three Chinese

astronauts, the first sent to orbit for space station construction, have safely returned home after completing their three-month mission.

China has made headway in advancing major scientific and technological projects, including Mars exploration, and is

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leading the world in digital and information technology such as 5G.

Having successfully transformed itself from an ancient agricultural country into a modern industrial country, China is now marching with firm steps toward becoming an innovation-driven country.

Chinese people's livelihoods are continuously improving. In 2020, China's gross national income (GNI) per capita exceeded US\$10,000. More than 700 million Chinese people have been lifted out of poverty, and 400 million have joined the middle income group. A social security network covering nearly 1.4 billion people is in place. For the first time in its history, spanning thousands of years, China has built a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

China continues to put into practice our belief in the harmony between man and nature. We are actively implementing the Paris Agreement and have pursued a path of green, low-carbon and circular development.

In 2020, China's carbon intensity dropped by 48.4 percent over the

2005 level. Clean energy makes up 24.3 percent of China's energy consumption. China contributed 25 percent of the increase in global afforestation and 20 percent of the net restored land. Giant pandas, China's national treasure, are no longer classified as "endangered", and their wild population has grown to over 1,800.

In face of the COVID-19 pandemic, China upholds the principle of putting people and life first. The entire nation has rallied together behind one common purpose to fight against the pandemic. China was among the first to contain the virus, to carry out international cooperation against COVID-19, to safely reopen the economy, and to restore economic growth.

We have launched the largest global humanitarian campaign since the founding of New China, in which substantial amounts of anti-pandemic materials have been donated and nearly 1.2 billion doses of finished and bulk vaccines have been provided to over 100 countries and international organizations.

China always adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace, firmly upholds the international system centered on the United Nations and the international order underpinned by international law, earnestly practices multilateralism, and promotes peaceful settlement of disputes. We reject the malpractices by certain countries of using their own standards to decide which country is a democracy, forming cliques around the world and engaging in ideological marketing.

This year also marks the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Over the past 100 years, the CPC has traveled an extraordinary course to become one of the most experienced and capable ruling parties, with the longest consecutive ruling time.

The CPC is the source of national cohesion and mobilization. It is progressive, reflective, reformist, and willing to learn from others with an open mind. It never rests on its laurels or rejects change. Under its leadership, the Chinese people have embarked on a new journey toward the next

goal of fully building a modern socialist country by the mid-21st century.

Generation after generation of the Chinese people have made relentless efforts to pursue development, and scored substantial achievements. Nonetheless, we are fully aware that China still faces daunting tasks in its internal reform and development, and the external risks and challenges are severe.

We firmly believe that, in a globalized world, the destinies of all countries are closely linked. As China further develops itself, it shall naturally take on more international responsibilities, make greater contributions to the common wellbeing of the people of all countries, and work with other countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

During the past six months since taking office, despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, I have tried to connect with friends from various sectors in Antigua and Barbuda. At every opportunity and on every occasion, I have been greeted with profound expressions of appreciation for

the bilateral relations between our two countries, as well as high expectations for the future development of those ties.

The geographical distance has not prevented China and Antigua and Barbuda from being each other's close friends and reliable partners. "Good friends feel close even when they are thousands of miles apart"; this old Chinese saying best captures the relationship between our two countries. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on January 1st 1983, bilateral cooperation between China and Antigua and Barbuda has become increasingly close and mature. On the multilateral arena, our two countries are also close partners standing for our common interests. Our leaders have maintained regular exchanges and established good working relations.

Antigua and Barbuda pursues an independent foreign policy and is currently exploring a development path that suits its own characteristics. When getting along with such a sincere friend like Antigua and Barbuda, China values good faith, appreciates friendship and advocates for moral justice.

Facing the sudden onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, China and Antigua and Barbuda have been standing in solidarity and supporting each other. China has actively assisted Antigua and Barbuda in the fight against the pandemic, including by donating several batches of anti-pandemic supplies and 20,000 doses of Sin-

oPharm vaccines. For China, one way to gain is by giving, by extending a hand of help and showing a gesture of goodwill.

Due to the external environment, Antigua and Barbuda has suffered from economic downturn and financial shocks in recent years. Against this backdrop, China will continue to provide assistance to Antigua and Barbuda and enhance bilateral economic and technical cooperation.

In particular, every effort will be made to advance projects that involve construction of infrastructure and people's livelihood, thereby helping to boost the economy of Antigua and Barbuda and create a better life for its people. We are pleased to see that the renovation and extension project of St. John's Port is progressing steadily and expected to be completed in the first half of next year.

Phase I of the China-Aid Agro-Tech Project has yielded fruitful results and the planning of Phase II is being stepped up. The two sides are also actively exploring the possibility of cooperation in blue economy and other areas.

In addition, cultural and people-to-people exchanges continues to make progress. Established at the end of 2019, the Confucius Institute of Antigua and Barbuda (CIAB) has been committed to teaching Chinese language and promoting Chinese culture. CIAB is now an important platform for Antiguan and Barbudan friends to learn about China and study Chinese language.

The 1st Chinese Proficiency Competition for Secondary School Students in Antigua and Barbuda took place last July and proved to be a big success. Also, nine students from Antigua and Barbuda have been awarded Chinese Government Scholarships and will study in well-known universities in China.

As President XI Jinping stressed in a video speech delivered to the 6th CELAC Summit on 18 September 2021, the China-LAC relations have entered a new era featuring equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness, and tangible benefits for the people. China stands ready to work with LAC (Latin American and Caribbean) countries to get through difficult times, foster new opportunities, and jointly build a shared future.

The difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are temporary and the cooperation between our two countries is long-term and real. It is fair to say that China represents opportunity and the future, as it is redoubling its efforts to foster a new development paradigm and continuously deepen reform and opening-up.

"Each Endeavoring, All Achieving," is the national motto of Antigua and Barbuda. It is my firm belief that with the joint efforts of the two governments and peoples, the bilateral cooperation between China and Antigua and Barbuda will yield even more tangible results, and we will together create a brighter future.

PLH alarmists are true destroyers of Barbuda environment – says PM

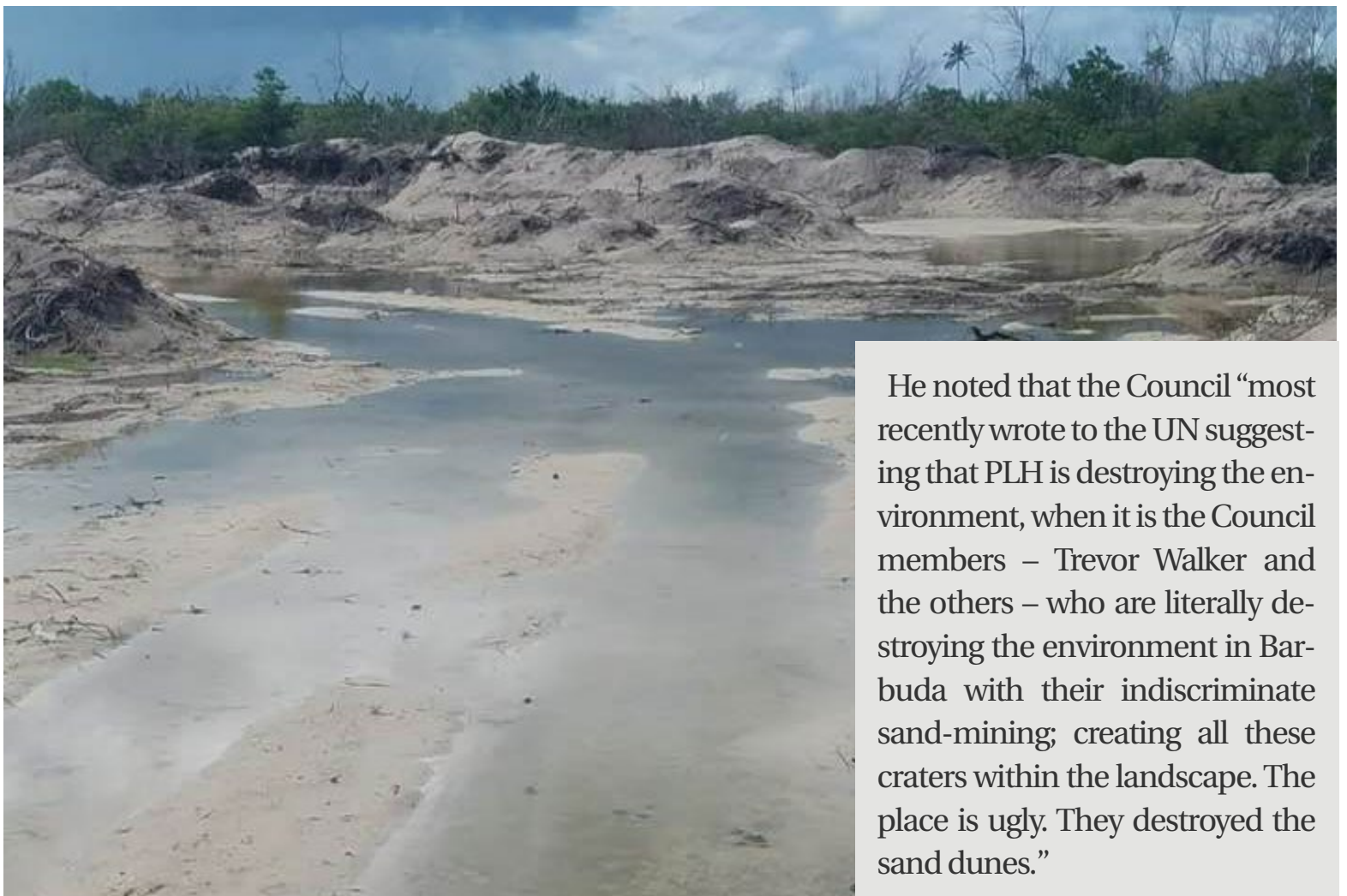


by Shelton Daniel

The PLH project on Barbuda currently employs over 400 workers, and the nation's leader says this was one of the main reasons why his government stoutly resisted recent efforts to halt the development on the pretext that it was contributing to the

spread of COVID-19 on the sister isle. Prime Minister Gaston Browne said when opposition Barbuda MP Trevor Walker and the opposition-dominated Barbuda Council "recently tried to use the COVID situation to shut down the country and to shut down the project, we had to intervene because they would

have put over 400 workers out of employment". Browne said his government's position on the matter was all about protecting jobs. He said Walker was well aware of that, "But because they have blood in their eyes for the Barbuda project, they continue to operate as obstacles."



He noted that the Council “most recently wrote to the UN suggesting that PLH is destroying the environment, when it is the Council members – Trevor Walker and the others – who are literally destroying the environment in Barbuda with their indiscriminate sand-mining; creating all these craters within the landscape. The place is ugly. They destroyed the sand dunes.”

On his personal Facebook page, Prime Minister Browne wrote the following – backed up with pictures – on Saturday evening:

Trevor Walker & BPM members ripping up the landscape in Barbuda. Environmental genocide. There're murdering the environment, practically butchering it to death.

Where are John Mussington, the Department of the Environment, Environmental Awareness Group, Adele Blair and all the environmental activists?

Where are your voices, your consciences and consistency -

you conveniently buried them? Instead, some of you weaponise environmental arguments to stop, or undermine sustainable economic projects, with limited environmental impact.

Beware of the opportunism and professional prostitution of Environmental Mercenaries for partisan political gain.

The photographic evidence proffered by the PM with his post are reproduced in this edition of Pointe Xpress for the benefit of our readers.

On the other hand, PM Browne stated, it was the PLH developers who had undertaken miti-

gation measures “to protect the landscape against storm surges” and conserved native flora by replanting several species of indigenous trees and other plants.

“It is going to be a spectacular golf course,” he declared. “In fact we have been told by many professionals that the only golf course in the Caribbean that will come close to that golf course at Palmetto (in Barbuda) is the one in the Dominican Republic. So it will be a great selling point for Antigua and Barbuda ... that we have one of the finest golf courses in the entire world.”

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Address by Honorable Gaston A. Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda at the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), September 25th 2021



Your Excellency Abdulla Shaid; Secretary-General; Excellencies; Distinguished Delegates:

Mr. President, I congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this 76th Session of the General Assembly. Antigua and Barbuda assures you of our fullest cooperation

as you steer our collective work in what will be a challenging year.

Mr. President, I agree wholeheartedly with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that the international community is failing to deliver policies to support peace, global health, the viability of our

planet and other pressing needs. I also agree with him that the lack of a global response and vaccination programme to end the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear and tragic example of such failure.

If developed countries had acted in a manner that allowed for

the proper access to vaccines and medical supplies at the onset of the pandemic, globally we would be in a better place.

Developing countries were not seeking handouts. Many of our countries paid into a global system that promised early access to vaccines.

But it could not deliver because, the majority of the vaccines from the major pharmaceutical companies had been bought or contracted and hoarded by a few wealthy nations, leaving the rest of the world bereft of the means to save their people.

This selfish nationalism forced most nations to rely on vaccine charity which, in itself, has not solved the problem of large numbers of people remaining unvaccinated throughout the world.

No country wanted charity; no country wanted to beg for vaccines that should be a global good accessible to all. We were ready to pay. But the vaccines were hoarded, and the pharmaceutical companies demanded prices beyond the capacity of countries whose economies were already decimated by the economic effects of the pandemic.

Mr. President, the world should not witness such a spectacle again.

What is significant about the COVID-19 pandemic is that years of warnings of an inevitable pandemic threat were not addressed and there was inadequate funding and stress testing of preparedness.

The nations that must bear the burden of responsibility for this lack of preparedness must be those who

control the world's health systems and who did nothing to put in place the resources necessary to, at least, alleviate the effects of the pandemic when it came.

What was also troubling was the absence of coordinated, global leadership. Instead of cooperation, the world witnessed finger-pointing and conspiracy theories about where the novel coronavirus originated and who was responsible. The resulting global tension undermined multilateral institutions and cooperative action. The World Health Organization became the scapegoat even though it was not the management of the Organization that caused it to be under-funded and under-resourced. Blame was cast at the WHO, as if it is not the representatives of powerful governments who set its priorities and determine how and where its money should be spent and on what.

Developing countries, and especially small states, Mr. President, have to be absolved from responsibility for the lack of response, because they neither control the decision-making bodies, nor do they have the power to allocate funding. Often the cries of small countries are either ignored or discarded, even on the few occasions when we actually get a seat at the table. There was no dedicated fund of the size necessary to supply medical equipment and to ensure vaccines would be available to all. International financing, when it came, was too little and too late.

Nothing has changed since then.

International financing to stop COVID, and to deal with its impact both on health and economies, is still too little. COVID-19 is still infecting people all over the world, every minute of every day. People are still dying every minute of every day. Economies are still being ruined every minute of every day. And the prospect of recovery recedes every minute of every day.

Mr. President, US President Biden is to be congratulated for convening, this week, a Global Summit on COVID 19. He has shown great leadership, and we are grateful that the United States has committed an additional \$250M in the first instance to establish a pandemic fund at the World Bank to proactively address future biological threats and pandemics.

But more is needed, and a more organized global machinery is needed, under the auspices of this UN Organization. In my own participation in President Biden's Summit on COVID, I made it clear that the pandemic has wrecked economies in small island states including CARICOM countries. In some states, more than 20 percent of Gross Domestic Product [GDP] has been lost; unemployment has risen; poverty has expanded and demands on the State has multiplied, even as revenues have declined steeply.

I told the Biden summit that, for our small countries, recovering from the economic effects of COVID-19 will be protracted because hard-won economic progress has been greatly reversed. Therefore, building

back will be longer and harder for small island states than it will be in larger economies with greater resources. Thousands of our people have been infected and thousands have died – many who had not yet begun to enjoy life, and others who had much to contribute! I emphatically stated that the disease must be stopped.

Mr. President, we must stop behaving as if the Pandemic has ended; it has not. I quote Secretary-General Guterres again, because he is perfectly right when he says: “The longer the virus circulates among billions of unvaccinated people, the higher the risk that it will develop into more dangerous variants that could rip through vaccinated and unvaccinated populations alike, with a far higher fatality rate.”

A high rate of inoculations by rich countries with both the vaccines and the money must not be regarded as a great success, not even for those countries, because, today, there is no greater truth than the mantra that no country is safe until all countries are safe.

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to a global drive to inoculate 70 percent of the world’s population by September 2022. My government has taken the action to make inoculations against COVID-19 mandatory for all public sector workers to protect the lives of all, including tourists who visit our shores. We are determined to overcome the baselessly flawed arguments of those who promote resistance to vaccines

despite the fact that, sadly, the number of COVID victims rise daily.

We will educate and inform our people at home. But, Mr. President, we will continue to raise our voice internationally for the equitable distribution of vaccines at affordable prices and for the reduction in the pricing for COVID testing. Vaccines are a global good; they should not be a commodity for profit at the expense of human life.

We are also committed to work for better global planning and preparation for any future pandemic. But while we will play our part utilizing our scarce resources, we will continue to argue for the provision of resources to poor and vulnerable countries.

We didn’t start the pandemic. And no virus has ever originated in Caribbean countries or being spread from it. We have been – and are – victims of others who must recognize their responsibilities and act on them. In this connection, my government is extremely disturbed about incidents in which some countries have not recognised vaccines administered in Caribbean countries, and have forced fully vaccinated travellers into quarantine.

Governments cannot urge people to get inoculated on the basis that the best vaccine is the available vaccine, and yet discriminate against vaccines that were not manufactured directly in North America and Europe. This would not only be a form of vaccine apartheid, it would defeat the objective of inoculating

70 percent of the world’s people by this time next year. This discrimination must cease now before it becomes a norm by some developed countries. It is wrong, unjust, and patently unfair.

Mr. President, my government will cooperate with all governments to protect our world, giving our young people the chance to live a safe, secure, and enjoyable life. But stopping the COVID-19 pandemic still is a global responsibility and the burden of sharing its cost must be borne equitably.

Antigua and Barbuda warns now that the international system has to prepare for future pandemics which are surely coming, particularly as action on climate change has also been a failure. The impact of climate change will undoubtedly bring new vector borne diseases and viruses that jump from animal to man. The World Health Organization, the IMF, the World Bank and this very United Nations organization must start gearing up now to prepare for the pandemics of the future.

The UN Security Council should be treating pandemics as major security risks to the world, and it should act accordingly to use the full powers of the Council to meet these global threats. Never again, Mr. President, should the world be caught unprepared to manage and end a pandemic swiftly. Never again should millions of people be killed by a disease that could have been stopped earlier. And never again should there be such a selfish dis-

play of nationalism as we witnessed in the response to a global threat.

The same argument applies to climate change. Mr. President, Antigua and Barbuda hopes that COP26 in Glasgow, at the end of October, will be an inflection point at which all nations will commit themselves to saving the planet. There is no Planet B. The consequences of climate change will be catastrophic. For some small island states, it already is. Recent research, published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, reveals a dire situation for the world unless action is taken now by the world's greatest polluters to significantly reduce their CO2 emissions.

I highlight some of the findings in the report: By 2040, almost 700 million people each year will likely be exposed to prolonged severe droughts of at least six months' duration. Many millions will die. Experts are concerned that climate change is likely to increase the prevalence of emerging infectious diseases and vector-borne diseases. They argue that climate change disrupts ecosystems and increases the risk of diseases jump-

ing to new hosts. Scientists have been warning for many years of the probability of pandemics increasing as a result of climate change.

In 2008, a study published in the journal *Nature*, found that over the previous decade nearly one-third of emerging infectious diseases were vector-borne, with the jumps to humans corresponding to changes in the climate. For instance, insects such as infection-bearing mosquitoes follow changing geographic temperature patterns. According to the research, interconnections between shifting weather patterns, resulting in changes to ecosystems, and the rise of pests and diseases, combined with heatwaves and droughts, will likely drive unprecedented crop failure, food insecurity and migration of people. All this, the report argues, could result in the potential breakdown of governance and political systems as societies become increasingly unstable due to lack of income, as well as competition, over limited food supplies.

The report says that experts are concerned that such situations could

lead to a rise of extremist groups, paramilitary intervention, organized violence, and conflict between people and states. That should be a scenario that worries us all, for, as we have seen in recent times, no nation is immune from violent strife.

Mr. President, it is evident that global solidarity and firm commitments are required; commitments that will result in emission cuts to reduce global temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels. Equally vital is access to quality financing and climate technologies in order to save our planet. And, contracting debt to pay for recovery from the effects of climate change and to build resilience is not the answer to the problems of small states that are already burdened by debt and are the worst affected. Funding packages for Small Island Developing States should include a significant amount of official development assistance – in other words, grants not loans. Most states have significant debt overhang. They are simply not in a position to assume more debt, especially after the economic devastation of

the COVID-19 pandemic. And, Mr. President, the ODA component in funding for SIDS should not be seen as a gift or charity.

Let me here thank the Government of Denmark that has announced its proposal to significantly increase its contribution to climate aid. The Danish government wrote to me, a few days ago, to say that it has earmarked 60 percent of its annual grant for adaptation and resilience initiatives, especially in the most vulnerable countries. Note that Denmark is giving a grant, not a loan.

Mr. President, the news that Denmark will contribute more than 1% of the global collective target for climate financing is welcome with deep appreciation. It is my hope that Denmark's action will help to galvanize others to contribute their fair share to the collective efforts required to address climate change at COP26.

Mr. President, industrialized countries have an obligation to assist the states most affected by climate change because they created a problem in the first instance. Climate ODA should be seen as a form of climate repara-

tions to compensate for past climate damage. In addition to official development assistance, debt swaps, and debt cancellation; climate-related debts would help small states to build financial capacity to accelerate the transition into renewable technologies.

No new or significant sums of monies would be needed to achieve these debt cancellations; they would be mere book entries that will bring significant relief and sustainability to SIDS, while at the same time not creating any significant financial pressures for the industrialized countries. This is a non-confrontational form of climate justice.

The alternative is, that affected states may be forced to take legal action in the international courts to seek compensation for provable damage. Such a course is not one that small states would take with alacrity, but some of us may have to do so from necessity. If nothing is done by the major polluting countries, both to cease their destructive actions and to help to repair the damage that they are causing, we may be left no choice. That is not our

preference. We want global solidarity in the face of global adversity.

Mr. President, there is an obvious need for a realignment of the international financial architecture to accelerate the global transition into renewables in order to achieve a carbon neutral world within the next two decades.

Let me point out one serious anomaly: While developed countries in North America and Europe are urging small and vulnerable states to transition to alternative energy, they are providing US\$1.6 trillion annually to subsidize fossil fuel businesses. By contrast, the sum being made available to developing countries is a mere US\$2 billion a year.

If developed countries simply shifted their spending from providing subsidies to fossil fuel businesses to helping developing countries to cope with the impact of climate change, not only would they not have to spend one additional cent, they would also create greater opportunities for renewable energy in their own countries. The world would also be less polluted, and climate change

would retreat.

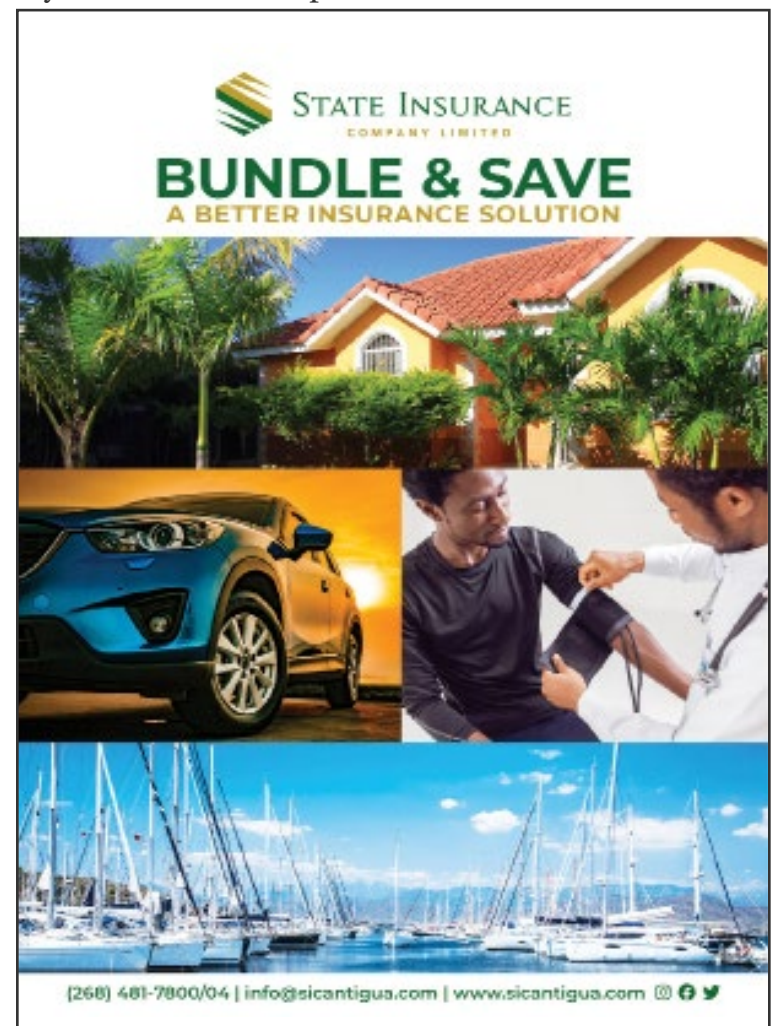
Mr. President, I want to remind everyone that investments in nuclear armaments and other weapons cannot sustain the planet, but investment to combat climate change will certainly save our Earth, our single homeland and our human civilisation. That is why we should all work diligently at COP26 in Glasgow to strengthen everyone's commitment to 1.5 degrees Celsius for us all to stay alive.

Mr. President, I have concentrated my statement at this year's assembly on the COVID-19 pan-

demic and climate change because they are the two overarching issues that confront mankind. Dealing with them successfully is what will give future generations a chance to live in peace, prosperity and safety. Those generations are our children and grandchildren.

So what future do we want for them? Should we not act to give them the glorious future we want for them, and that they deserve? We certainly should.

I thank you



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COVID patients on ventilator life-support increasing!

by *Shelton Daniel*

The number of COVID patients on ventilator life-support at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center (SLBMC) rose to 12 by Saturday 25th September 2021, according to Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

He made the disclosure during his weekly radio program, The Browne & Browne Show on *Pointe FM 99.1*, citing a briefing he received previously that same day from the hospital's medical director, Dr. Albert Duncan.

"I spoke to Dr. Duncan this afternoon and he told me there are 12 individuals on ventilators. When I spoke to him two days ago, there were 10; so not only would we have had seven more deaths, but more individuals would have found themselves on ventilators; they have been intubated."

Prime Minister Browne noted that, "Generally speaking, when a person

finds himself or herself on a ventilator ... there is an 80 percent possibility that the person will die; so at least 10 of the 12 will not come off the ventilators and are likely to die."

The grim prognosis of which he had been informed, sadly, did not end at that: "I'm told that at least two of the 12 – their vitals are so poor – that unless something miraculous happens, they are expected to die within ... a day or two."

Prime Minister Browne said, at the time, that the last person to die was an unvaccinated 60-year-old.

"We have a situation developing in which a woman in her 30s who is 26-months pregnant is now fighting for her life, and if [the doctors] are unable to rescue the child ... we may end up having our first mother-and-child fatality ... Her situation is not good at all ... but we hope that it im-

proves and both herself and her child will make a strong recovery ... These are the things we are trying to avoid by getting people vaccinated."

The Prime Minister urged all pregnant women to urgently consult with their doctors in order to determine if they can be vaccinated and the safest timing for inoculation.

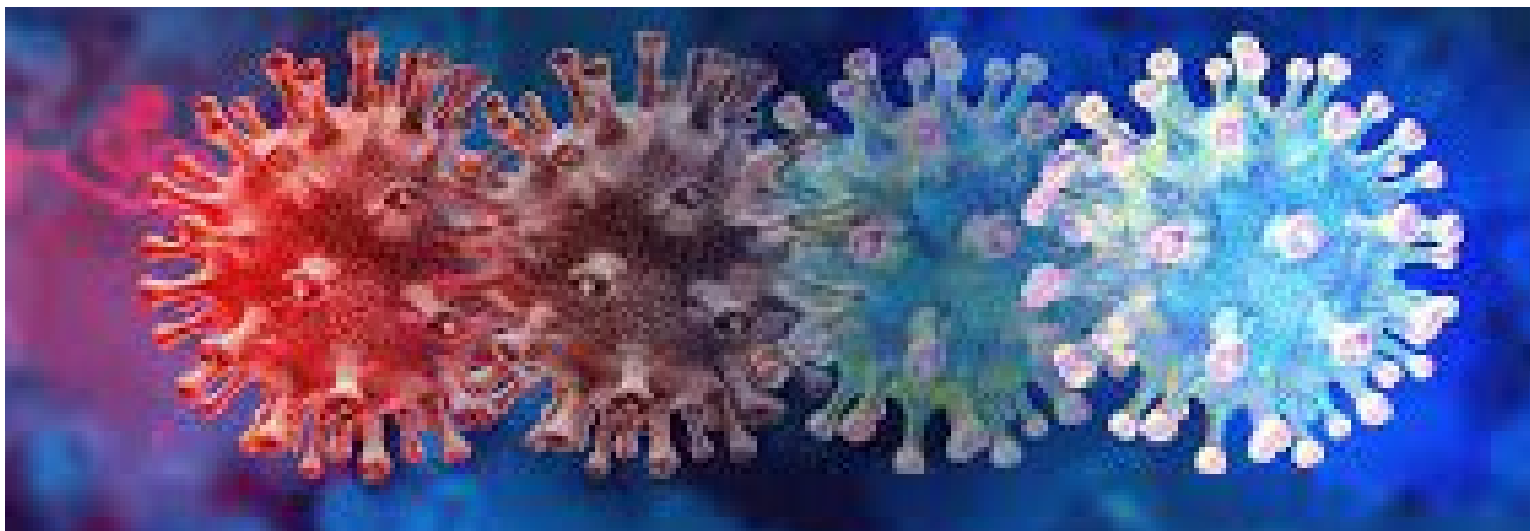
He also called on members of the Rastafarian community, despite the religious exemption from mandatory vaccination granted to them, to still consider exercising their private options and get vaccinated once it was otherwise safe for them to do so.

Prime Minister Browne said "government has done all that is required of it", including "acquiring sufficient vaccines to inoculate the entire population and expanded the health infrastructure to three beds per 1,000

which is one of the highest in the region".

The Prime Minister disclosed that he has so far taken three shots of the two-dose Moderna vaccine. "The reason I took the third or booster shot is because I'm one of the high-risk persons in the country ... I have a lot of engagements with foreigners flying into the country to meet with me for various reasons; so I have to make sure that I protect the office of the Prime Minister, rather to be careless and to plunge the country into a leadership crisis."

Browne referred, in passing, to anecdotal reports of enhanced virility among vaccinated men, saying that even if these remain unproven, there is clear evidence that COVID can inflict long term damage on the sexual and reproductive health of both men and women.



‘Utilize the vaccines before new COVID variants emerge’ – says PM Browne

by Shelton Daniel

The slowness in achieving herd immunity, globally, could allow time for the emergence of far more debilitating and deadly mutations of COVID-19 than the currently prevailing Delta variant.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has pointed out that this is what scientists are predicting and the main reason why his government has been so insistent in urging eligible residents of Antigua and Barbuda to get vaccinated post-

haste. Speaking on his weekend radio program, The Browne & Browne Show, PM Browne repeated his oft-stated warning that “the unvaccinated are not only putting themselves at risk, they are also putting [those who have been vaccinated] at risk.”

Elaborating further, he said this was because, “If they [those currently unvaccinated] fail to get vaccinated and you have this deadly strains emerging, then all of us will be at risk; because what will happen, the vaccines that we

have taken, it means that they will not be effective against these new and deadly strains.”

He went on: “So, it is also in the interest of vaccinated persons to push the unvaccinated to get vaccinated ... If you have anyone in your house who is unvaccinated, they represent a significant risk to you even if you are vaccinated, because of the potential for them to contract a new variant and passing it on to you – passing on a new variant to which you may not have the necessary immunity.”



APUA ELECTRICITY MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

These planned outages are necessary for our continuous upgrade and maintenance programme to provide reliable and consistent service to our customers.

Monday, 27th September 2021	Tuesday, 28th September 2021	Wednesday, 29th September 2021	Thursday, 30th September 2021
Section of Blue Waters, Ocean Lane 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Section of Cassada Gardens west of Robert's Construction 8:25 AM - 11:30 AM	Section of Cassada Garden west of Telecoms Building 1:25 PM - 3:30 PM	Section of Cobbs Cross near the school and Monks Hill 8:25 AM - 11:30 AM
Western section of Cashew Hill 8:25 AM - 11:30 PM			Small section of Swetes near St. Ann Road 8:25 AM - 11:30 AM
			Free Trade Zone, AUA, Camp Blizzard and ABIIT 8:25 AM - 11:30 AM

Kindly note that this schedule is subject to slight variation. Changes will be communicated on the APUA Facebook page. Any service disruptions outside of this schedule were not anticipated. For further information and updates please call 311.

Is this really a Christian country?

Dear Editor: Is Antigua really a Christian country? Just listen to the nastiness, vitriol and rudeness displayed on the local talk shows. Social Media is even more enlightening; as, there, we can access the person's profile.

I have seen persons who list themselves as Seventh Day Adventists attack, in the most vicious and vile manner, their own president – Carson Greene of the South Leeward Conference of Seventh Day Adventists – because he issued a statement on behalf of the church in support of vaccines.

I have seen persons attack the Prime Minister and the Government in the rudest and most violent language, while calling themselves Christian. In fact, every other post on the Facebook pages of one of these so-called Christians displays bible verses.

So I ask the questions: Are these even one day Christians? Are they convenient Christians? Do they live by the teachings of the Good Book? I have a friend who always tells me that they are Christian on their Sabbath as an excuse not to work, but they are sleeping with somebody's husband. How do these professed Christians reconcile these anti-Bible and anti-Christ behaviours with being a Christian? Does being a Christian just mean dressing up and going to church?

The Bible teaches love, charity, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, peace.

How many Christians do you really know? Do you know any?

Maybe we call ourselves Christian so that we can be differentiated from being Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim. Then we come to two

preachers who just attacked the government. One of them opened a Church and is a self-appointed Bishop. The other one is the Trinity in One. You just have to watch him on TV on Sunday mornings and you will see. He is the self-appointed Lord of all. Parents and teachers will tell you, if they were not so scared, that students, teachers and parents were instructed to vaccinate so that the high school could be re-opened.

I leave two commandments with you: Commandment 1 – I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me; Commandment 8 – Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

**Denzil Warner,
Old Road.**

New 2022 Nissan Frontier PRO4X.....Leader in Quiet Cabin

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Ivor Bird, in this picture dated 21 May 2019 on his personal Facebook page.

Ivor Bird hospitalized following traffic accident

Founder of popular radio station, ZDK, Ivor Bird, is currently hospitalized following a traffic accident at Marble Hill Road on Sunday afternoon. Director of Operations at Glenville Radio, ZDK, Clarence 'CJ' Derby Jnr. has confirmed that Bird was the person depicted in a photo laying on the ground and in obvious pain.

He reported that Bird, who is semi-retired, was taken to the hospital by an EMS team.

Derby could not give any further details about Bird's condition. Calls to his son, Sean Bird, have not been answered.

Bird is the fourth son of VC Bird, Father of the Nation.



Hundreds of families receive back-to-school supplies from MP Fernandez

This year will mark the eight years that the Parliamentary Representative for St. John's Rural North, Hon. Charles 'Max' Fernandez, embarks on his annual back-to-school donation initiative without fail.

With the prolonged effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this year's initiative had some drawbacks at first. However, the constituency representative remarked that despite the uncertainty of face-to-face schooling, education and the tools for education remain paramount.

The annual back-to-school backpack initiative, led by MP Fernandez, rolled out over the weekend with bag distributions in Cedar Grove and parts of Yorks communities. The distribution will continue in the coming days, as the team is ensuring all items are received, properly sanitized, and all COVID-19 protocols maintained during distribution.

The school package includes an assortment of pens, school bags, pencils, lunch kits and/or water bottles, geometry sets, sharpeners, paint sets, coloring books, rulers, face shields, and a special message from Hon. Charles Max Fernandez, MP. According to the team, "All packages were sanitized to ensure health and safety." In a personal message to each student, MP Fer-



MP Fernandez hands over a backpack containing school supplies to an appreciative student.

nandez wrote, "The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been greater than many expected. However, the importance of education, your education remains consistent and your health and protection remain a priority. Have a safe, happy, productive and successful school year!"

Minister Fernandez remarked that though the shipment of items arrived later than expected, based on shipping issues, he is happy that they arrived just in time for the possible reopening of face-to-face schooling. Nonetheless, he noted, whether by face-to-face learning

or through remote learning, school tools are vitally important.

One parent, while accepting the items said: "I wanted to say a big thank you to Minister Fernandez. He has always supported us and we do appreciate the items. Thank you so much." Community team members are also expressing gratitude to the youth in the communities for assisting in packing the bags ahead of time. The distribution is set to be continued.

More pictures of MP Fernandez distributing the school bags are published in this edition of *Pointe Xpress*.



Rural North MP proceeds with donations of school bags and supplies to constituents, despite lingering uncertainty about reopening.

Barbados could soon include Blue Economy in schools' curriculum

Barbados Today - Minister of Maritime Affairs & the Blue Economy, Kirk Humphrey, [on the weekend] shared his expectation during the handing over of seven Open Skiff sailboats at the Barbados Yacht Club, Bay Street, St. Michael.

Humphrey disclosed that his Ministry had been working with the Ministry of Education, Technological & Vocational Training in its 'Swim For Life' initiative, and there were discussions about including teaching about the blue economy in schools in the near future.

"We're also talking to the Ministry of Education about a bigger understanding of the blue economy so that the curriculum, not only in terms of its actual sports, sailing and swimming and the physical activities, but that the actual curriculum reflects a Blue Economy understanding.

"So what is happening with our coral? What is happening with our biodiversity?



Why do we need to have marine-protected or marine-managed areas to a certain extent? Why do we need to look out for the parrot fish, the turtles and those kinds of things? And so, that kind of education is now being contemplated in terms of how do we incorporate that into the overall curriculum, and I hope to see it in all its fullness over time."

Humphrey also noted that the Ministry of Maritime Affairs & the Blue Economy has

been having discussions with the Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Empowerment in an effort to receive assistance with its "We Sea, We Life" programme.

He said that, through the National Sports Council, assistance has been received for the 'Swim For Life' initiative, and the Council has provided information about persons who are able to participate in the Sail For Life programme.

He added that he

would be deepening his discussions on sailing with the Minister of Sports, so that more young people could be trained to a certain level, and that it would move beyond "being an introductory sailing programme to being a real programme that puts Barbados back competitively on the map".

Mr. Humphrey also said he plans to have talks with the Sports Ministry about beach sports such as volleyball and water polo.

Haiti's leader: Migration won't end unless inequality does



Haiti's Prime Minister, Dr. Ariel Henry.

Jamaica Gleaner - Amid an outcry over the US treatment of Haitian asylum-seekers, the Caribbean country's embattled prime minister [has] pointedly ... said inequalities and conflict drive migration. But he stopped short of directly criticising Washington over the issue. "We do not wish to challenge the right of a sovereign state to control the entry borders into its territory, or to send back to the country of origin those who enter a country illegally," Prime Minister Ariel Henry said in a video speech to the UN General Assembly's annual meeting of world leaders.

"Human beings, fathers and mothers who have children, are always going to flee poverty and conflict," he added. Henry urged the international community to move fast to improve living conditions in the countries that refugees are leaving for political or economic reasons. "Migration will continue as long as the planet has both wealthy areas, whilst most of the world's population lives in poverty, even extreme poverty, without any prospects of a better life," he said.

Henry spoke as his country reels from its president's assassination, an earthquake and the migration

crisis — all in the last three months. His government is facing increasing turmoil with presidential and legislative elections set for November 7.

Confusion about US immigration policies and misinformation on social media propelled thousands of Haitians to the US southern border in recent months. A massive migrant camp — largely made up of Haitians, many of whom had been in Mexico or other Latin American countries for years — sprouted in the town of Del Rio, Texas, peaking last week at over 14,000 people hoping to gain entry to the US.

Images of US border patrol agents using horses to block and move migrants sparked outrage, the resignation of the US special envoy to Haiti, and an ongoing investigation.

President Joe Biden called the agents' tactics "horrible," "dangerous" and "wrong."

The camp has now been cleared.

Some people have been deported; about 12,400 migrants have been allowed into the US, at least temporarily, to pursue their claims to stay, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said.

Henry noted that the images "shocked many people", but he didn't specifically say more about how the United States handled the situation. He noted, however, that many countries which are prosperous today have been built through successive waves of migrants and refugees. Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, has long struggled with political instability, violence, natural disasters and environmental crises. But this summer's series of blows has been especially difficult for the Caribbean nation as it also contends with the coronavirus pandemic. Fewer than 1 in 100 of its people have had at least one dose of a vaccine.

President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated July 7.

Little over a month later, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake killed over 2,200 people, injured more than 12,000 and destroyed nearly 53,000 homes, according to Haiti's Civil Protection Agency.

Nearly 350 people are still missing, Henry said.

This month, Haiti's now-former chief prosecutor asked a judge to charge Henry in Moïse's assassination.

The prosecutor said the prime minister spoke to a key suspect twice in the hours after the killing.

Henry's office says he got lots of calls and didn't take them all.

Henry fired the prosecutor and the justice minister last week.

Another top official resigned, accusing the prime minister of trying to obstruct justice.

Henry told the General Assembly he is striving to bring the culprits to justice, and he asked for "mutual legal assistance" to do so.

Royal Navy seizes £17m of cocaine in Caribbean drug bust

The St. Kitts-Nevis Observer - COCAINE worth more than £17 million has been seized by the Royal Navy's Caribbean Task Group – less than 24 hours into the first drugs patrol of their deployment.

Support ship RFA Wave Knight intercepted the suspect craft as it transited international waters near South America.

Despite efforts by the suspected traffickers to dump their cargo overboard, eight bales were recovered from the sea. Weighed and tested, they proved to be 216kg of cocaine with an estimated UK street value of £17.28 million.

Armed Forces Minister James Heappey said: "This successful operation, which deprived criminal gangs of over £17 million, is another example of the determination, versatility and effectiveness of the Royal Navy wherever it is deployed around the world. "Whether protecting the UK's shores, providing hurricane and disaster relief for the people of the Caribbean, or working with our US partners to prevent international drug traffickers plying their deadly trade, our brave servicemen and women prove their worth time and again."

The bust began when the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ship launched her Wildcat helicopter – call-sign Knightrider – on a



routine patrol.

Minutes later, Knightrider's crew reported a small craft with three people on board and large objects on deck. Having been ordered to stop by Knightrider, the suspected drug-runners then began throwing bales overboard.

The ship closed in and launched her smaller sea boat, carrying the embarked US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET), to intercept the vessel and detain its occupants.

More than 200kg of drugs were recovered and the crew of the boat detained. They will be handed over to the US authorities.

The vessel was then destroyed to prevent it becoming a danger to other seafarers.

Captain Simon Herbert RFA, Commanding Officer of RFA Wave Knight at the time, said: "I am extremely proud of the professionalism and dedication of all on-board RFA Wave Knight – that includes 213 Flight, Royal Marines, Royal Navy and the US Coast Guard LEDET – which led to the seizure of these illegal drugs.

"In doing so they've contributed to the reassurance and protection of UK Overseas Territories, as well as keeping these narcotics off the streets of the UK." RFA Wave Knight is deployed as part of the UK's Caribbean Task Group, working alongside the patrol ship HMS Medway, which is the UK's permanent presence in the region.

The ship's main role is to

provide support to British Overseas Territories in the event of a natural disaster, with peak hurricane season running from August to November. This year, RFA Wave Knight has already delivered over 75 tonnes of aid to St. Vincent & the Grenadines following the volcanic eruption in April.

The task group also works alongside regional navies, authorities and police forces – especially the US Coast Guard – to tackle criminal activity across the Caribbean.

Last year, Royal Navy ships and helicopters in the Caribbean – again working side-by-side with US authorities – seized cocaine worth nearly £400 million.

SVG: 93 children COVID-19 positive in 1 week

IWN SVG - One in every five people who tested positive for COVID-19 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, during the week ended Tuesday Sept. 21, was under 18 years old.

The figure translates to 93 children, or about 22% of all cases, data released by epidemiologist Tamara Bobb at a Ministry of Health press conference on Thursday, show.

This comes a mere two weeks before schools in the country are scheduled to reopen for the first time since December 2020.

However, the number of students who have tested positive for COVID-19 could be much higher. The 15-22 age group accounted for 87 cases or 19.68% of those recorded in the seven-day period.

Medical Officer of Health Dr. Roger Duncan told the press conference that health officials were discussing its recommendations to the government on the reopening of school.

"I think one thing we're certain about, almost, is that schools wouldn't open as usual, so that there won't be the full student body attending schools," Duncan said.

"But in the final details of what modality that would take and how that would look, we should be able to communicate that early in the upcoming week."

The situation comes amidst a surge of COVID-19 cases, which has seen the number of active cases in the country rise to 777 on Sept. 23, up from 37 one month earlier. Since Sept. 9, a further five persons have died of COVID-19, bringing the total to 17. Meanwhile, Minister of Health St. Clair "Jimmy" Prince said that following the



COVID-19 protocols is important to stemming the surge and ensuring that the nation's children can safely return to school.

"We have to focus on children at this time, because it is obvious the school year is going to start soon. We have been focusing on the elderly, moreso because of their inherent vulnerability, etc., but we need to talk about the other set of people who may not become ill but who are suffering anyway because of the COVID-19," the health minister said. The minister said while there has been an uptick in COVID-19 vaccination, "it is still extremely low at this point."

"It is important to note that all hospitalised cases of COVID-19 are among those unvaccinated with pre-existing conditions," Prince said. "I have no qualms in repeating this all the time. It is no coincidence that the majority of persons who have been hospitalised here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who have gotten ill in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and who have died, have been unvaccinated. No coincidence at all in that area."

He noted that the COVID-19 vaccines available in SVG are the Sputnik V, AstraZeneca and Pfizer.

"Of course, Pfizer is available for children 12 years and older. Currently, all vaccines are free of charge. Vaccines are accessible, they are available, and they are safe. Most of all, they work. We continue to advise you to take them."

The minister said that at no time in the history of the nation has the health ministry's slogan, "Your health – a shared responsibility", been more relevant than in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

"This deadly viral infection has impacted directly health, and indirectly all of the social determinants of health, including education, literacy, income, social networks, and the opportunities for healthy child development."

He said the tools available to effectively control the spread of COVID-19 are old and proven.

They are rapid identification through testing, containment through isolation and quarantine, the correct use of masks, the sanitisation of hands, physical distancing and vaccination.

Iceland elects Europe's first female majority parliament

BBC - Iceland has made history by becoming the first European country to elect a female majority to parliament.

Some 33 of the 63 seats in the Althingi parliament, or 52%, have been won by women. This marks an increase of nine seats from the last election in 2017.

No other European country has breached the 50% threshold, with Sweden coming closest at 47%, according to data from the Inter Parliamentary Union. Unlike some other countries, Iceland does not have legal quotas on female representation in parliament, though some parties do require a minimum number of candidates be women.

"In a historical and international light, the most significant news is that women are now first time in majority in the Icelandic parliament, and a first in Europe. This is good news," President Gudni Johannesson told broadcaster RUV.

The country has long been consid-

ered a leader in gender equality and was ranked the most gender-equal nation in the world for the 12th year running in a World Economic Forum report released in March. It offers the same parental leave to both men and women, and its first law on equal pay for men and women dates back to 1961. It was also the first country in the world to elect a female president in 1980.

One of those elected was Lenya Rún Taha Karim of the opposition Pirate Party, who, at just 21, becomes the youngest MP in the country's history. "I just woke up not so long ago - I'm not going to lie about it - and turned off the phone in airplane mode and it was all exploding," she told reporters. "Full, full, full of messages and I managed to look in one message and it said: Congratulations, so I assumed I had gotten in." Just five other countries currently have parliaments where women hold at least half the



Iceland's Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir casting her vote on Saturday.

seats. Rwanda leads the way, with women making up 61.3% of the members of its lower house.

It is followed by Cuba on 53.4%, Nicaragua on 50.6% and Mexico and the United Arab Emirates at 50%. Women make up just 34.2% of the members of the United Kingdom's House of Commons and just 27.6% of the House of Representatives in the United States.

Meanwhile, yesterday's election saw the incumbent left-right coalition government, led by Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir, increase its majority.

However, her party, the Left Green Movement, looks set to lose several seats,

while her right-wing partners gained five MPs, casting doubt over her future as prime minister.

Opinion polls had predicted that the coalition would fall short of a majority but a surge in support for the centre-right Progressive Party, which won five more seats than in 2017, pushed the coalition's total seats to 37, according to RUV. The current government, which consists of Ms. Jakobsdóttir's Left-Green Movement, the conservative Independence Party and the centrist Progressive Party, said before the election that they would negotiate continued cooperation if they held their majority.

UK gas stations run dry as trucker shortage sparks hoarding

(AP) — Thousands of British gas stations ran dry Sunday, an industry group said, as motorists scrambled to fill up amid a supply disruption due to a shortage of truck drivers.

The Petrol Retailers Association, which represents almost 5,500 independent outlets, said about two-thirds of its members were reporting that they had sold out their fuel, with the rest “partly dry and running out soon”.

Association chairman Brian Madderson said the shortages were the result of “panic buying, pure and simple”.

“There is plenty of fuel in this country, but it is in the wrong place for the motorists,” he told the BBC. “It is still in the terminals and the refineries.”

Long lines of vehicles formed at many gas stations over the weekend and tempers frayed as some drivers waited for hours. Police were called to one London gas station Sunday after a scuffle broke out. Police said a man was arrested on



A view of a sign at a petrol station in Bracknell, England, Sunday Sept. 26, 2021. In a U-turn, Britain says it will issue thousands of emergency visas to foreign truck drivers to help fix supply-chain problems that have caused empty supermarket shelves, long lines at gas stations and shuttered petrol pumps.

suspicion of assault.

The haulage industry says the UK is short tens of thousands of truckers due to a perfect storm of factors including the coronavirus pandemic, an aging workforce, and an exodus of foreign workers following Britain's Brexit departure from the European Union last year.

Several countries, including the United States and Germany, also are experiencing a shortage of truck drivers. The problem

has been especially visible in Britain where it has contributed to empty supermarket shelves and shuttered gas pumps.

After weeks of mounting pressure, the UK's Conservative government announced Saturday that it will issue thousands of emergency visas to foreign truck drivers to help prevent a Christmas without turkey or toys for many British families. The government said it would issue 5,000

three-month visas for truck drivers starting in October, and another 5,500 for poultry workers.

Industry groups welcomed the new visa plan, although the British Retail Consortium said it was “too little, too late”.

Ruby McGregor-Smith, president of the Confederation of British Industry, said the announcement was “the equivalent of throwing a thimble of water on a bonfire”.



Several dead as Amtrak train derails in US state of Montana

Al Jazeera - Several people have died in the United States when an Amtrak train went off the rails in the state of Montana, according to an official.

Starr Tyler, dispatcher at the Liberty County Sheriff's Office, told the Associated Press news agency that at least three people were killed in Saturday's incident.

She did not have more details.

Amtrak said it was "deeply saddened" by the deaths, adding there were also multiple injuries.

It said the Empire Builder train had about 147 passengers and 13 crew on board when five cars derailed near the town of Joplin at 4:00 p.m.

"Amtrak is working with the local authorities to transport injured passengers and safely evacuate all other passengers,"

it added. The cause of Saturday's incident was not immediately clear. US media reported the train was headed for the western city of Seattle from Chicago.

Photos posted to social media showed several cars on their sides. Passengers were standing alongside the tracks, some carrying luggage.

The images showed sunny skies and it appeared the accident occurred along a straight section of tracks.

Megan Vandervest, a passenger on the train who was going to visit a friend in Seattle, told the New York Times that she was awakened by the derailment.

"My first thought was that we were derailing because, to be honest, I have anxiety and I had heard stories about trains derailing," said Vandervest, who is

from Minneapolis.

"My second thought was 'that's crazy. We wouldn't be derailing.' Like, that doesn't happen."

She told the Times that the car behind hers was tilted over, the one behind that was entirely tipped over, and the three cars behind that "had completely fallen off the tracks and were detached from the train".

Speaking from the Liberty County Senior Center, where passengers were being taken, Vandervest said it felt like "extreme turbulence on a plane".

The National Transportation Safety Board said it will send a 14-member team, including investigators and specialists in railway signals and other disciplines, to investigate the derailment.

Freed from Canada, Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou hailed as hero upon return to China

(CNN) - Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, who spent nearly three years in house arrest in Canada, returned home late Saturday, ending a prolonged extradition fight with the United States and sparking an outburst of national pride in China where her release has been portrayed as a diplomatic victory for Beijing.

Meng, who was wanted by US federal prosecutors for fraud charges related to alleged Iran sanction violations, was arrested in Vancouver in December 2018. Beijing called it a political arrest by the former Trump administration and repeatedly demanded she be released.

Her legal battle strained relations between China, the United States and Canada, especially after Beijing detained two Canadians following Meng's arrest – a move widely interpreted as political retaliation.

On Friday, Meng was allowed to go home after reaching an agreement with the US Department of Justice to defer her prosecution until late 2022, after which her charges could be dropped. Hours after her release, the two Canadians detained by China, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, were also freed.

On Saturday evening, the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, where the tech giant Huawei is headquartered, rolled out a red carpet welcome for Meng who arrived on a flight chartered by the Chinese government.



Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou waves as she steps out of an airplane after arriving at Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport in Shenzhen, China, on September 26.

Wearing a red dress, Meng emerged from the plane without a face mask and waved to a crowd of more than 100 people waving Chinese flags and shouting "welcome home".

"I'm finally back home!" Meng said in a brief speech to those assembled on the tarmac, expressing gratitude to her "great motherland", the ruling Communist Party and, specifically, Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"As an ordinary Chinese citizen who had suffered this plight and been stranded abroad for three years, there was never a moment where I did not feel the care and warmth of the Party, the motherland and the people," said Meng, who is the daughter of Huawei's founder, Ren Zhengfei. "Chairman Xi cares about the safety of every Chinese citizen, and he also keeps my situation on his mind. I am deeply moved."

Meng ended her speech vowing to uphold the leadership of Xi and the party, and pledging

loyalty to her country.

"Where there is a Chinese flag, there is a beacon of faith," she said emotionally. "If faith has a color, it must be China red."

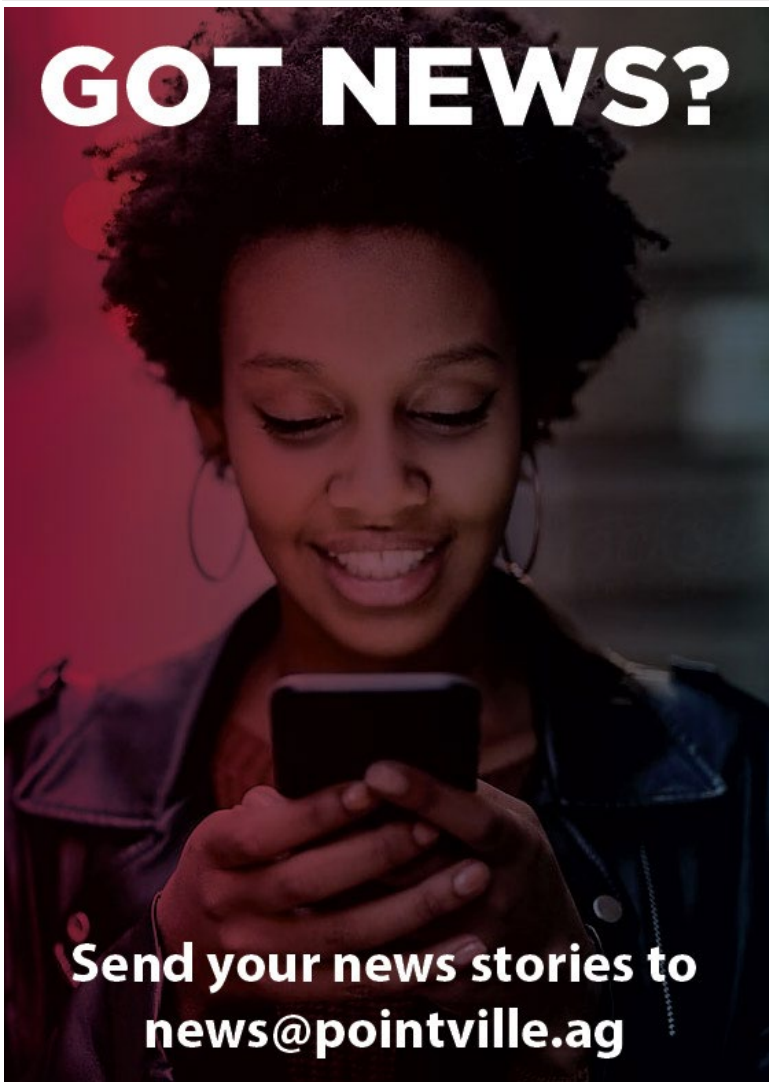
While Meng had repeatedly called herself an "ordinary Chinese" in the speech, the grand reception for her was anything but ordinary.

As her plane descended toward the airport, it was greeted by a special message from the control tower: "Here is China's Shenzhen Baoan Airport. The motherland is forever your most powerful support. Welcome back, Ms. Meng Wanzhou!"

Inside the arrival hall, hundreds of people gathered to welcome Meng. Holding national flags, flowers and banners, the crowd erupted in national pride, shouting slogans including "long live the motherland" and belting out patriotic songs.

Downtown, Shenzhen's tallest skyscrapers lit up with the message: "Welcome home Meng Wanzhou!"

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Afghanistan want to host Pakistan for cricket series



Afghanistan Cricket chairman said they want to host Pakistan for cricket series.

Newly appointed Afghanistan cricket chairman Azizullah Fazli said Wednesday he would visit neighbouring Pakistan later this week to invite the side for a One-Day series.

The war-torn nation has steadily risen in international cricket over the past few years, with stars such as the world's top spinner Rashid Khan, but there have been calls for a boycott of the men's team after the hardline Taliban's takeover last month. The change of government has called into question the future of Afghanistan's participation in Test matches, as under International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations, nations must also have an active women's team.

The Taliban are yet to announce a policy on women playing sport, but a senior official has said it would be "not necessary".

Avoiding commenting on the latest developments, Fazli said he planned to visit other regional cricketing powers.

"I am taking a tour of Pakistan from September 25 and then will go to India, Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates to meet officials of cricket boards," he told AFP over the phone from Kabul.

"We are seeking to improve Afghanistan cricket so that will come with cooperation from other

countries," Fazli added.

Raja confirmed Fazli would visit Pakistan.

Fazli, in his second term as chairman after serving the board from September 2018 to July 2019, said he was committed to improving facilities in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan are in Group 2 of the Super 12 stages of the Twenty20 World Cup due to start from October 17 in the United Arab Emirates.

Australia has threatened to cancel a Test match with Afghanistan in Brisbane in November unless the Taliban allow women to play cricket.

Fazli said he would meet new Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja, "and offer to host Pakistan for the series which we were due to play in Sri Lanka in September".

The three-match One-Day series between Pakistan and Afghanistan was cancelled over logistical problems and a COVID-19 outbreak in Sri Lanka. It was part of a One-Day league which is a qualification process for the 2023 World Cup.

The new rulers on Tuesday sacked Hamid Shinwari as Afghanistan Cricket Board chief executive, replacing him with Naseeb Zadran Khan, linked to the Haqqani network, which is responsible for some of the worst attacks in the country's history.



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Aston Villa's Leon Bailey (right) scores during the English Premier League match between Aston Villa and Everton at Villa Park, Birmingham, England, last Saturday.

BAILEY OUT FOR THREE WEEKS

Jamaica will be forced to continue their World Cup qualifying campaign without the services of national winger Leon Bailey.

The Aston Villa midfielder has been officially ruled out for at least the next three weeks because of a thigh strain suffered in their 3-0 win over Everton last Saturday.

Bailey, 24, scored his first English Premier League (EPL) goal during the game as a second-half substitute. However, he lasted only 21 minutes before coming off the field with the winger saying in his post-game interview that the injury came from the goal that he scored which saw Aston Villa go to 10th place in the league table.

The Everton game was Bai-

ley's second appearance for Aston Villa since returning from a hamstring injury two weeks ago. The strain caused him to miss two games before the September window. The injury also resulted in him missing Jamaica's first three qualifying matches earlier this month.

Aston Villa manager Dean Smith said that while they are hopeful that he will be able to return to action as early as October 16, they will be monitoring the situation to see where he is leading up to their first game after the October window.

This means that Bailey will be unavailable for Jamaica's next set of World Cup qualifiers against the United States on October 7, Canada on Oc-

tober 10, and Honduras on October 13.

The Reggae Boyz are already facing injury concerns as striker Shamar Nicholson suffered a broken jaw while in action for his Belgian club Charelari on September 18, in a 1-0 defeat to reigning champions Club Brugge. Nicholson underwent surgery yesterday to correct the issue and in an interview with the Gleaner on Wednesday said that he should be good to go for Jamaica's next set of qualifying matches.

Head coach Theodore Whitmore recently underlined Bailey's importance to Jamaica's cause and had revealed that the player was named to the final roster for the upcoming games.

Naomi Osaka on future in tennis: 'I know I'm gonna play again ... probably soon'

Three weeks after announcing she was stepping away from tennis for the time being, Naomi Osaka addressed her potential return.

Appearing on HBO's *The Shop*, Osaka said she's certain about playing again and "probably soon".

"For sure, I love the sport," she explained. "I know I'm gonna play again, probably soon because I kind of have that itch again. But it wouldn't really matter to me if I won or lost. I'd just have the joy of being back on the court. Just to, like, you know, that I'm doing it for myself."

After losing to Leylah Fernandez in the third round of the U.S. Open on Sept. 3, the 23-year-old said through tears at her press conference that she needed to take a step back.

"I feel like for me, recently, like when I win, I don't feel happy. I feel more like a relief. And then when I lose, I feel very sad," Osaka said. "I don't think that's normal."

Speaking on the show, Osaka noted it's important for her "to feel like I'm playing for myself" when she returns to the court:

"And I started to feel like that power was being taken away from me. And the way that I felt, like, I wasn't playing to make myself happy and I was more concerned

about ... what would people say about me.

"I used to love the competition and just being competitive. Like if I were to play a long match, the longer it was the more fun it was for me. And then I just started to feel—recently—the longer it was the more stressed out I became. But I just needed a break to go within myself."

Osaka took a two-month break earlier this year after withdrawing from the French Open prior to her second-round match against Ana Bogdan. Her decision came after saying before the tournament began that she was going to skip the post-match press conferences.

The four Grand Slam tournaments responded in a statement, saying Osaka would be fined if she didn't take part in the press conferences.

Osaka made her return to competition at the Olympics in July. The Japanese star was one of the torchbearers at the Tokyo Games. She also played in the Western & Southern Open and US Open before taking a sabbatical.

The WTA has four events remaining in 2021 before the end of the season. The 2022 Australian Open is scheduled to begin Jan. 17.



The West Indies Cricket Board has decided to honor the commitment to play in Pakistan.

West Indies refuse to go the way of England and New Zealand; ready to play in Pakistan

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has received two major blows after the cancellation of the New Zealand and England tours. The cricket was finally coming to Pakistan but the two cancellations have put Pakistan's future in doubt.

Apart from the financial losses, cricketers have been denied an opportunity

to play in front of the local fans. Meanwhile, the West Indies Cricket Board has decided to honour the commitment to play in Pakistan.

"At this stage, our intention is to fulfill our touring obligations. We've got a pretty clear process that we go through with independent security experts, as we did in 2018," CWI Chief Executive

Officer Johnny Grave was quoted as saying by Trinidad Newsday.

Since the resumption of international cricket in Pakistan, West Indies have played in the country.

"We will follow that process, the board of directors, WIPA (West Indies Players' Association), as well as the players themselves will review the plans and our reports, including

the independent security advice. Most of our women's and men's players have played in Pakistan in the last few years," Grave said.

The West Indies will play three T20Is and three ODIs in Pakistan. Both the men's and women's teams will play in the sub-continent country.

DEWS