



COVID-19: JANUARY COULD BRING NEXT DEADLY WAVE!

[SEE PAGE 5](#)

FUNCTIONAL AESTHETICS? RECREATIONAL UTILITIES? How do you describe essential and indispensable infrastructure that is so creatively conceived and innovatively designed to double as facilities for public relaxation, entertainment and meditation? No coincidence that it's the same minds of leadership and stewardship – synonymous with the current Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) administration – that continually churn out such brilliance: A new National Cemetery that will also serve as a New National Park of tranquility and quintessential quiet space – an open air sanctuary of peace and prayerfulness. In this case, our picture depicts an artistic impression of the Water Retention-Flood Mitigation Pond still under construction at Woods Estate with the exquisite park, playground, promenade and so much more that its banks and surroundings will be turned into. Oh, the wondrous gift of pragmatic (yet futuristic) governance with which we are so blessed through this Gaston Browne-led administration! MORE PICTURES INSIDE ON PAGES 6-7

- INSIDE:**
- UPP blasted for deceitful claims about farmers and taxes
 - PAHO launches project to curb alcohol consumption in C'bean
 - Missing Chinese tennis star reappears looking healthy and cheerful

ICU is full of the unvaccinated – my patience with them is wearing thin

The anonymous writer is a respiratory consultant with the National Health Service (NHS) and works across a number of hospitals in the UK.

In hospital, COVID-19 has largely become a disease of the unvaccinated. The man in his

20s who had always watched what he ate, worked out in the gym, was too healthy to ever catch COVID badly. The 48-year-old who never got round to making the appointment.

The person in their 50s whose friend had side-effects. The woman who want-

ed to wait for more evidence. The young pregnant lady worried about the effect on her baby.

The 60-year-old brought to hospital with oxygen saturations of 70% by the ambulance that he initially called for his partner – who had died by the time it ar-

rived – both believed that the drug companies bribed the government to get the vaccine approved.

All severely ill with COVID. All unvaccinated and previously healthy. All completely avoidable.

Of course, there are people who [get vaccinated] but still get

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sick. These people may be elderly or frail, or have underlying health problems. Those with illnesses affecting the immune system, particularly patients who have had chemotherapy for blood cancers, are especially vulnerable. Some unlucky healthy people will also end up on our general wards with COVID after being vaccinated, usually needing a modest amount of oxygen for a few days.

But the story is different on our intensive care unit. Here, the patient population consists of a few vulnerable people with severe underlying health problems and a majority of fit, healthy, younger people unvaccinated by choice.

Watching the mix of patients coming in with COVID, it feels to me like hardly anybody has been vaccinated nowadays.

Of course this is because the people that have been vaccinated are getting on with their lives at home. If everyone got vaccinated, hospitals would be under much less pressure; this is beyond debate. Your wait for your clinic appointment/operation/diagnostic test/A&E department would be shorter. Your ambulance would arrive sooner. Reports of the pressure on the NHS are not exaggerated, I [assure] you.

Furthermore, we have recently rolled out a new medication for patients without antibodies against COVID. It costs about £2,000 a treatment and is subject to a rigorous and time-consuming approval process for every case we treat. Guess which patients don't have these antibodies? (spoiler: it's not the ones who have been vaccinated).

Most of the resources that we are devoting to COVID in hospitals are now being spent on the unvaccinated.

Yes, vaccinations are unpleasant. They cause side-effects. They hurt. You may even still catch COVID afterwards. I have many colleagues who have felt awful after vaccination and a few who had to take a day or two off work. However, I have not heard of any who have been hospitalised with COVID afterwards or who have had severe side-effects.

The approvals process was incredibly stringent and we now have an unbelievable amount of real-world data that these vaccines work. The science that has been applied here is nothing short of awe-inspiring to me.

However, I realise that none of these rational arguments would change the mind of someone who is resolved

against having it, although I suppose it may push someone who remains undecided.

As a respiratory doctor, I have spent my whole career treating people whose lung diseases have been caused by smoking, including long after they knew the risks. I have spent countless hours with people who blame themselves for ruining their health. I have thought a lot about our personal responsibility for our health and to what degree we should be held accountable for our choices.

I personally – unlike some of my colleagues – have never felt any ambivalence about treating smokers without judgment in exactly the same way as people with diseases that are not seen as self-inflicted.

Enshrined in the way we protect patients' autonomy is the recognition that others may reasonably make decisions we may see as irrational or wrong. We are all products of our upbringing, education and opportunities, and I have been hugely fortunate that in my case these have led me to make decisions I value. Who is to say I wouldn't have made different choices in someone else's shoes?

Translating this to the choice not to take the vaccine, however, I find my pa-

tience wearing thin. I think this is for a number of reasons: Even if you are not worried about your own risk from COVID, you cannot know the risk of the people into whose faces you may cough. There is a dangerous and selfish element to this that I find hard to stomach.

Some of my frustration is directed upwards at the flagrant misinformation flourishing in certain places, and the utterly woeful example that our leaders continue to set. I have never heard a reason not to take the vaccine that I have agreed with. Most of all, however, I am now beaten back, exhausted, worn down by the

continuous stream of people that we battle to treat when they have consciously passed up the opportunity to save themselves. It does make me angry.

Despite this, I find the idea of NHS and care staff being forced to be vaccinated very difficult. I know that it is the right outcome, but I dislike the means of bringing it about. It is incredible to me that there is so much anxiety and falsehood around that this could possibly be necessary after the year we have all witnessed. How strong is the hold that this information has on people that it outweighs rational thought?

Maybe it's just that others have not seen what I have recently, or do not believe it, but even now we have nurses on our COVID ward who have not been vaccinated. I just hope we don't end up losing yet more staff.

Fundamentally, though, for me, it comes down to this: I can't think of a single case offhand of a person who was previously fit and healthy who has ended up needing intensive care after being fully vaccinated. It may not stop you from catching COVID, but it can save your life when you do. *(Reprinted from the UK Guardian newspaper)*



The advertisement features a yellow Suzuki Vitara SUV shown from a rear three-quarter view, driving on a road with orange and white diagonal stripes. In the top right corner, there is a logo consisting of two hexagons. The text on the right side of the ad reads: "Suzuki Vitara", "Fully Loaded All Grip 4WD", "Time to Play", and "Starting at \$76,600". At the bottom right, there is a logo for HADEED MOTORS LTD. with a stylized mountain and the text "Give us call 481-2500".

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Another wave of COVID and deaths could be on the cards for January

by *Shelton Daniel*

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has clarified that Cabinet's support for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine booster shots for those deemed to be in need of this reinforcement, is subject to the approval of the National Technical Advisory Committee chaired by pathologist Dr. Lester Simon.

Speaking Saturday during his weekly radio program, PM Browne stated as follows: "I know that, sometimes, some of these people on certain Boards and committees, they try to flex muscles. So, we're not directing them, but we want them to act expeditiously to get the approval process going so that people can start to get their booster shots in order to protect them."

The Prime Min-

ister added that he is "pretty sure that this winter season we will see an escalation in COVID cases", which he believes will be imported via visitors and returning nationals, regardless of them being vaccinated.

"So we can expect to see a spike, possibly in January, similar to what happened this year. But we're in a much better position today

because 60 percent of the country would have had at least a first [dose] of vaccination, and about 55 percent are fully vaccinated," said the Prime Minister during his Browne & Browne Show on *Pointe FM 99.1*.

He added: "I suspect that we have at least 20,000 adults who are still unvaccinated, and that represents a sizeable percentage of

the population in which COVID could continue to circulate and maybe result in another 50-75 deaths if we are not careful."

The Prime Minister reminded those still putting themselves at risk of contracting the disease that its harmful after-effects (Long COVID) could last indefinitely and significantly lower life expectancy.

WADADLI THROWBACK

A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON

The first Steel band competition was held in 1949. The venue was the St. John's Girl's School, now T.N. Kirnson School, then located on the site of the present Economic Development Building, at the corner of Independence Avenue and Queen Elizabeth Highway.

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A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board







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UPP all about mischief and misinformation, says the PM

by *Shelton Daniel*

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has laid into the chairman of the United Progressive Party (UPP) for what he considers to be her baseless castigation of his government.

During his weekly radio program on Saturday, PM Browne said D. Gisele Isaac – on a UPP radio station – had called on the government to use the taxes it collects from farmers to subsidize them.

The Prime Minister said it was yet another case of the UPP making pronouncements without any grounding in facts or reality.

“All the inputs for farmers come into this country free of all duties and taxes. Everything ... all inputs – fertilizer, any fencing wire, any capital purchases,

even the tractors and so on that they use on the farms – everything coming into the country free of all duties and taxes. They pay no taxes, they pay no coverage on taxes, so I don’t know what taxes she’s asking us to use to subsidize farmers.”

According to PM Browne, “This is the kind of mischief you get from these individuals. When they go [on their affiliated radio stations] they speak with passion and they will give you the impression that the government is doing so badly and we can do so much more; that here is a situation which we are charging taxes on all these agricultural items when we need to be subsidizing farmers with those taxes – knowing well that they pay no taxes.



UPP chairman D. Gisele Isaac.

“Even vehicles and they get them free so on that they are of all duties and bringing into the taxes. So they need country in order to to stop this type of use on their farms, misinformation.”

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‘Stop delaying vaccination to wait for specific brands’; stem cell therapy shows great promise in treating COVID-19

by Shelton Daniel

A man who was treated with stem cell therapy while seriously ill with COVID-19 has fully recovered, and the novel medical intervention seems to have played a big part in that outcome.

This is according to Prime Minister Gaston Browne who also said the unnamed patient responded so well to the cutting-edge procedure that he was taken off a ventilator to which he had been attached – a sure indication of how serious his condition had been.

Speaking Saturday 20th November on his weekly radio program, Browne said the man had started receiving stem cell treatment about a week-and-a-half ago, and it was the only

difference between him and other COVID patients that could account for his accelerated and remarkable recovery.

The Prime Minister explained that this was the inspiration for his government’s decision last Friday to commit \$100,000 for the purchase of stem cell courses of treatment equivalent to that value.

“We believe that we are on to something here and that is why we have invested these sums to acquire these stem cells as a possible treatment for individuals who are willing to take the stem cell treatment in order to address or to defeat COVID.”

At this point the Prime Minister was asked by one of the show’s panelists for

an update on a previous announcement that a donation of COVID vaccines was expected from Cuba which manufactures its own supplies under the Soberana brand.

Cuban medicine and healthcare is very respected and popular in Antigua and Barbuda, and several nationals of the twin-island state have been adamant about holding off on getting vaccinated until the Cuban product becomes available locally.

Prime Minister Browne pointed out that the Cuban vaccine – like the Sputnik 5 vaccine from Russia – is yet to receive official WHO approval. He said, based on recent experience, this could prove to be an impediment.

“If you know our Technical Committee – then there’s nothing that we can do in terms of making those vaccines available.”

He said although, from all indications, “The Cuban vaccines are efficacious [and] safe ... so are the other vaccines. So, these individuals who are ... waiting on the Cuban vaccines, they are defying logic [which] says that the best vaccines are the ones that are available. And we have many vaccines available [that] are just as efficacious. In some instances they are even more efficacious than the Cuban [vaccines], and I hope these individuals will stop holding out, because they may well be holding out to their own demise.”

The Prime Minister was careful to point out that he was “not [mentioning] this in any pejorative way [but just noting] how conservative they are in their decision-making.

“So, until such time as we get the approval – I guess starting with WHO and the subsequent approval of the



Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

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I, **Harrison Floyd**, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE, that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the Liquor Licence Court to be held at the Magistrate’s Court, Grays Farm, St. John’s Antigua on Thursday 6th January, 2022 next ensuing for a Tavern license in respect of premises known as “**Redz Bar**” situated Bethesda Village, in the Parish of St. Phillip’s, Antigua pursuant to section 11 (5) of the Licensing (Intoxicating Liquor) Act Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.

Dated the 17th day of November, 2021
Harrison Floyd
268-774-2953

PM encouraged by country's success in combatting pandemic

by Shelton Daniel

COVID continues to retreat in Antigua and Barbuda, according to Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who says he is encouraged by the progress this country has made in its fight against the global pandemic.

One more person – who the Prime Minister described as an elderly female patient who was “intubated” and in critical condition – unfortunately succumbed to the disease, bringing the total who have died from COVID in this country to

109 as of Saturday 20 November 2021. He however noted that this would likely change. “Apparently there were a few individuals who died at home and they were COVID-positive, so health officials are now doing the final investigations to validate the cause of death, to make sure that it was indeed as a cause of their positive COVID status. From all indications, several of them also died of COVID.” [Editor's note: Please see Ministry of Health statement concerning revision of COVID fatality figures, also published in this issue of

Pointe Xpress.]

According to the Prime Minister, “It seems as though they had stayed at home and they were using home remedies. We have to caution our people that these home remedies are not sufficient to protect you from COVID. We know there are some charlatans out there who continue to claim that they are using these naturopathic remedies to cure COVID. That is not true; it is a lie.”

Browne said he was not disputing that some naturopathic remedies may relieve certain symptoms of COVID. “But they do not cure COVID and they need to stop this misinformation. And I am going to continue to hit this gentleman, Mr. Luke, who goes on OBSERVER Radio on a Sunday evening, telling people he has a cure for COVID. ‘Mr. Luke, you are nothing but a charlatan. You need to stop it. You’re putting people’s lives at risk as you seek to enrich yourself’.

“Whereas we continue to encourage individuals to boost their immunity, to exercise, to diet and get adequate rest, these are not sufficient on their own to prevent individuals from succumbing to COVID. Our people need to continue to get vaccinated. The vaccines are es-

sential tools to assist us to address this COVID problem, along with the health protocols.”

Regarding the latter, PM Browne said despite heavy promotion of vaccination as a crucial pillar in fighting the pandemic, “Let us not forget the health protocols [because] those are what kept us safe from March of last year to March of this year. And so, for the first year, we were able to control the spread of COVID by adhering to those health protocols.”

He said it was possible that many have become weary of being continuously subjected to mask-wearing, social distancing and other measures, “But you can’t get tired from protecting yourself from hospitalization and death. Even the vaccines, which are efficacious in protecting us, we know – the science has proven – that after a while they start to wane and that would necessitate the need for booster shots.”

The Prime Minister said despite the continued obduracy against vaccination and other protective measures, his government would “continue going the extra mile to protect even the most ignorant among us to ensure that we encourage them to get vaccinated.”

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Update on COVID-19 related deaths in Antigua and Barbuda

The Ministry of Health, Wellness & the Environment continues to work with all of its healthcare stakeholders, both internal and external, to critically examine available data and provide timely and accurate reports on COVID-19 related deaths for both hospitalized and non-hospitalized individuals who succumbed to the disease. Upon verification and validation, both categories of deaths are included on the COVID-19 Dashboard produced by the Ministry. Standard protocols and guidelines are operationalized by the management of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) once a patient has been warded at the hospital.

Once a hospitalized patient who tests positive for COVID-19 succumbs to complications related to the virus, the information is shared with the Ministry's headquarters for



inclusion in the Dashboard, along with an official announcement by the hospital.

Cases relating to discharged patients and individuals discovered to have been ill but did not seek medical attention and later succumbed to their illness, are extensively investigated and reported on. In the first instance, a postmortem examination is conducted to determine the cause of death and a death certificate is issued thereafter. If it determined that the death is COVID-19 related, it is added to the Dashboard.

The principles of accountability and transparency are paramount to the Ministry of Health, Wellness

& the Environment as it seeks to maintain public trust and confidence while ensuring that the highest standards of safety are maintained for the citizens and residents of Antigua and Barbuda.

Once all the available information has been thoroughly processed by the respective health professionals and recommendations are made for the amendment of the Dashboard, immediate steps are taken to ensure that the accuracy of the information shared is uncompromised.

Consequently, eight (8) deaths which occurred in the community will be added to the subsequent dashboard.

Life | Medical

Davier Joseph

State stays true to their policies!

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French sending Special Forces to Guadeloupe amid COVID pass riots

(AP)—French authorities are sending police Special Forces to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, an overseas territory of France, as protests over COVID-19 restrictions erupted into rioting. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin denounced “unacceptable” violence in an interview with *Le Parisien* newspaper that was published Sunday.

He said 50 officers from police special forces are due to arrive in Guadeloupe.

They come in addition to 200 other police sent to the Caribbean island from France’s mainland.

The move comes after several days of protests and road blockades.

Following an emergency meeting on Saturday in Paris, Darmanin said “some shots have been fired against police officers” in Guadeloupe and there has been looting.

Videos posted on social media showed that street equipment, cars and some buildings have been set on fire.

French media said several buildings in the city centre of Pointe-a-Pitre, the island’s largest city,



*French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin gestures during a media conference at the Interior Ministry in Paris, May 25, 2021. Darmanin denounced “unacceptable” violence in an interview with *Le Parisien* newspaper that was published Sunday, November 21, 2021.*

have been destroyed.

Road blockades put hospitals in a “very difficult situation for a few hours” during which patients and supplies couldn’t reach hospitals, notably leading to meals not being served, Darmanin said on Saturday.

“The state will stand firm,” he said, adding that at least 31 people have been arrested by police.

Guadeloupe Prefect Alexandre Rochatte has imposed a nightly curfew from 6:00 p.m. to

5:00 a.m. since Friday.

Rochatte said in a statement Saturday some electrical facilities near dams have been damaged, which has caused outages to some customers.

He warned about the risk of electrocution for those staying near the dams and urged people never to touch electrical cables.

The protests have been called for by trade unions to denounce the COVID-19 health pass that is required to access

restaurants and cafes, cultural venues, sport arenas, and long-distance travel.

Demonstrators are also protesting France’s mandatory vaccinations for healthcare workers.

The pass shows that people are fully vaccinated, have had a recent negative test, or proof of a recent COVID-19 recovery.

Darmanin said about 80% of healthcare workers on the island have been vaccinated.

Pfizer's COVID-19 pill likely to be produced in Guyana once approved

St. Lucia Times-Guyana is open to the use of the Pfizer Covid-19 pill Paxlovid, once it receives approval.

Minister of Health Dr. Frank Anthony said Pfizer has signed an agreement with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) patent production office allowing countries to use its technology to manufacture the pill.

"We don't have manufacturing capacity in the public sector for pharmaceuticals. But here in Guyana there are private companies that would have the manufacturing capabilities. So if those companies work with the WHO patent office and are able to bring that particular medicine to Guyana, it is something that we will want to procure," the health minister said Thursday.

However, he noted that even if the drug is not produced locally, there is a high likelihood that the cost will be affordable.

"If that does not happen, then certainly

– with the amount of countries now that are going to be producing this medication – we are certain that we will be able to get the medicine at an affordable price once production has started. So it is something that we are looking at," he noted.

The minister noted that the efficacy of the medication was reviewed and it seems to be working "quite well".

"Therefore, as soon as it's made available and it's licensed, then that's something ... we would want to look at, and it's certainly a medication that we would want to add to

the meds that we already have been using to treat COVID-19," Dr. Anthony said.

He said the process is not complete and still has to go through the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA). "So they have to present the data, it has to

Pfizer Inc, earlier this week, announced that it is seeking US authorisation of its experimental antiviral COVID-19 pill that could cut the chance of hospitalisation and death by 89 percent.

The *New York Times* reported that, "Under

be reviewed, and once it is reviewed and they have accepted it, then they will give it emergency use authorization; so that has not been done as yet."

"I know they have promised to submit the data soon, so once that process is completed, I guess we will have better information being available."

the agreement, Pfizer will grant a royalty-free licence for the pill to the Medicines Patent Pool, a nonprofit backed by the United Nations, in a deal that will allow manufacturers to take out a sub-license. They will receive Pfizer's formula for the drug and be able to sell it for use in 95 developing countries."



Jamaican woman admits to attempted murder of man she married for US citizenship



Jamaica Observer - A Jamaican woman is facing 15 years in prison after slitting the wrist of her elderly American husband who she married to illegally obtain US citizenship.

Olivia Raimo, 30, pleaded guilty to attempted murder on Friday in a New York court.

According to US media reports, on January 24, 2020, Raimo was at her husband's New Rochelle home in New York when she pushed the 74-year-old man,

wedging him between the toilet seat and a wall before slitting his wrist with a straight razor.

Before the woman could flee the scene, her husband's home health aide arrived at the house. The aide was, however, refused entry by Raimo, according to reports.

The aide proceeded to contact the New Rochelle police who entered the home on their arrival after they heard the victim screaming from the bathroom.

The victim was reportedly rushed to the Jacobi hospital where he underwent two surgeries to reattach the tendons in his arm.

The attack resulted in the man losing all function in his hand.

Raimo was charged with second-degree attempted murder almost a month after the incident.

Westchester County District Attorney Miriam Rocah told the court that the incident happened after Raimo and

the victim met with an attorney to prepare for an interview with the US Citizenship & Immigration Services to demonstrate that their 2017 marriage was legitimate.

But, during the meeting, they were informed that they would have a "hard time passing their marriage interview".

According to her plea agreement, Raimo will be sentenced to 15 years in state prison with five years of post-release supervision.

PAHO launches project to decrease alcohol consumption in the Caribbean

LOOP CARIBBEAN - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has launched Pahola, the world's first digital health worker to specialize in alcohol and health, in an effort to help countries in the region reduce increasing rates of harmful drinking.

"Alcohol is the leading risk factor for premature mortality and disability among people aged between 15 and 49 years, so any and every tool that can help people to reduce their risk and lead a healthier life is welcome," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), in a video message at the webinar launch of Pahola.

"New technologies, including artificial intelligence, are powerful tools for expanding access to information and care, and we hope Pahola will be very successful in the Americas and around the world," he added.

Designed to be empathetic and free of judgement, PAHO said Pahola can provide general information about the risks of drinking and communicate interactively and confidentially with people.

PAHO said she can help assess users' alcohol-related risks using a series of questions.

"If people then decide to cut down on drinking, Pahola can help them create a plan that includes identifying triggers and figuring out how to cope with them," PAHO said.

"Available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, she can also refer people to alcohol treatment services."

"PAHO's goal with Pahola is to help people better understand the harms caused by alcohol

consumption, increase access to reliable information, facilitate self-assessment of alcohol-related risks, and take concrete steps to decrease alcohol use," said PAHO Assistant Director Dr. Jarbas Barbosa.

He added that Pahola is not intended to replace direct contact with health professionals but aims to encourage people to seek help.

PAHO said alcohol consumption takes a heavy toll in the Americas, leading to about 379,000 deaths annually from related diseases, injuries, intoxication, and poisoning.

Regular alcohol consumption also increases the risk for liver cirrhosis and some major forms of cancer and cardiovascular diseases, PAHO said.

It said between 8-10 percent of the over-18 population in the Americas, including the Caribbean, has an alcohol use disorder (AUD), defined as the harmful use of alcohol or alcohol dependence.

But about 80 percent of people who need treatment for AUD do not get it because services are poorly developed or unavailable, PAHO said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PAHO said AUD services have been further disrupted while alcohol consumption increased in several countries, aided by online sales and home deliveries.

Dr. Anselm Hennis, Director of Non-Communicable Diseases & Mental Health at PAHO, emphasized Pahola's capacity to meet health needs in the Americas.

"Pahola can simultaneously talk with millions of people who wish to assess the health risks of their drinking," Dr Hennis said. "She can significantly increase



the delivery of alcohol education in settings where we simply don't have enough health professionals to provide free or low-cost information and support. Many people can reduce their drinking with simple yet effective advice."

PAHO said Pahola complements other efforts to reduce risky drinking in the region. These include helping countries strengthen public policies such as effective taxation of alcohol, comprehensive restrictions on alcohol sales and marketing, and improving treatment interventions, PAHO said.

PAHO also launched the "Live Better, Drink Less" public education campaign to raise awareness about the harmful effects of alcohol in the Americas.

Pahola was created in collaboration with autonomous animation company Soul Machines and PAHO's creative partner, Rooftop.

The second digital person designed to combat preventable health issues, Pahola follows Florence which was launched in July 2020 by WHO quit tobacco initiative, PAHO said.

Anger, disappointment, joy: US reacts to Rittenhouse acquittal

Al Jazeera - Kyle Rittenhouse's acquittal for the fatal shootings of racial justice protesters last year has spurred powerful and divergent reactions from activists and lawmakers across the United States, highlighting the political symbolism of the trial and deep-seated divisions in the country.

Civil rights groups and Democratic activists decried the verdict on Friday as an example of white privilege and a miscarriage of justice, while Rittenhouse's supporters – including associates of former President Donald Trump – celebrated it as a victory.

Rittenhouse fatally shot two protesters and injured a third during chaotic demonstrations against police brutality in Kenosha, Wisconsin, after a white officer shot a Black man – Jacob Blake – in the back, paralysing him.

But in a trial that captured the nation's attention since early November, Rittenhouse and his lawyers argued that he acted in self-defence and only used his AR-style rifle to protect himself from demonstrators who were attacking him. Prosecutors had accused the teenager of provoking the deadly violence on August 25, 2020.

"You know damn well that if Kyle Rittenhouse were Black he would have been found guilty in a heartbeat – or shot dead by cops on the scene," former Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro wrote on Twitter.

"If you need a stunning example of white privilege, please see Kyle Rittenhouse's verdict," wrote Andy Levin, a Democratic con-



Kyle Rittenhouse, who fatally shot two racial justice protesters and wounded a third last year, was found not guilty on all charges by a US jury on Friday.

gressman.

President Joe Biden, who said earlier on Friday that he did not watch the trial, suggested that he accepted the verdict.

"While the verdict in Kenosha will leave many Americans feeling angry and concerned, myself included, we must acknowledge that the jury has spoken," Biden said in a statement. The family of Anthony Huber, one of the protesters fatally shot by Rittenhouse, said they were heartbroken by the jury's decision. "It sends the unacceptable message that armed civilians can show up in any town, incite violence, and then use the danger they have created to justify shooting people in the street," the family said in a statement, as reported by several US media outlets. "We hope that decent people will join us in forcefully rejecting that message and demanding more of our laws, our officials, and our justice system."

Kimberley Motley and Milo Schwab – attorneys for Gaige Grosskreutz who was wounded in the shooting; and the estate of Joseph Rosenbaum who was fatally shot by Rittenhouse – vowed

to continue the push for accountability.

"That night in Kenosha, Gaige Grosskreutz, Anthony Huber and many others acted heroically," the lawyers said in a statement.

"They did not seek violence, but to end violence. What we need right now is justice, not more violence. While today's verdict may mean justice delayed, it will not mean justice denied. We are committed to uncovering the truth of that night and holding those responsible to account."

Cori Bush, a Democratic congresswoman and Black Lives Matter activist, said she was "hurt", "angry" and "heartbroken".

"The verdict in the #KyleRittenhouse case is a travesty and fails to deliver justice on behalf of those who lost their lives as they peacefully assembled to protest against police brutality and violence," the NAACP, a racial justice advocacy group, said in a tweet.

Bernice King, racial justice activist and daughter of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr, tweeted a photo of a sign that reads, "The system isn't broken. It was built this way."

Huge protests across Europe over new COVID restrictions

BBC - Tens of thousands of people have been marching in the Belgian capital, Brussels, to protest against anti-COVID measures.

Some protesters threw fireworks at police officers who intervened with teargas and water cannon.

Demonstrators are mainly opposed to the use of COVID passes which stops the unvaccinated from entering venues such as restaurants or bars. This comes after fresh protests in the Netherlands against new lockdown rules.

On Saturday, people hurled fireworks at police and set fire to bicycles in The Hague, one night after protests in Rotterdam turned violent and police fired gunshots.

Thousands of demonstrators also took to the streets in Austria, Croatia and Italy as anger mounted over new curbs.

In Belgium, rules on face masks have been tightened, including in places such as restaurants where COVID passes are already required, and most Belgians will also have to work from home four days a week until mid-December. There are also plans to make vaccinations for health workers compulsory.

Earlier, the World



Health Organization (WHO) said it was "very worried" about rising coronavirus cases on the continent.

Its regional director, Dr. Hans Kluge, told the BBC that unless measures were tightened across Europe, half a million more deaths could be recorded by next spring.

"COVID-19 has become once again the number one cause of mortality in our region," he said, adding "we know what needs to be done" in order to fight the virus - such as getting vaccinated, wearing masks, and using COVID passes.

Many governments across the continent are bringing in new restrictions to try to tackle rising infections. A number of countries have recently reported record-high daily case numbers.

In the Netherlands, a second night of riots broke out on Saturday in several towns and cities.

Hooded rioters set fire to bicycles in The Hague as riot police used horses, dogs and batons to chase the crowds away.

Officials announced an emergency order in the city and at least seven people were arrested.

Police said a rock was thrown through the window of an ambulance carrying a patient.

Officers in the city tweeted that five police officers were injured, with one taken away by ambulance with a knee injury.

Elsewhere in the country, two top-flight football matches were briefly halted after supporters broke into the grounds and ran onto the pitch. Fans are currently banned from stadiums because of new coronavirus rules.

The unrest followed a night of riots in Rotterdam, condemned by the city's mayor as "an orgy of violence". Police fired warning shots and direct shots "because the situation was life-threatening", a police spokesperson told Reuters.

At least three demonstrators are receiving hospital treatment for gunshot wounds, officers said. Authorities have launched an inves-

tigation.

The Netherlands imposed a three-week partial lockdown last weekend after recording a record spike in COVID cases. Bars and restaurants must close at 20:00 and crowds are banned at sports events.

Tens of thousands of people protested in Austria's capital, Vienna, after the government announced a new national lockdown and plans to make jabs compulsory in February 2022. It is the first European country to make vaccination a legal requirement.

Brandishing national flags and banners reading "Freedom", protesters shouted "Resistance!" and booed the police.

The country will enter a 20-day nationwide lockdown from Monday, shutting all but essential shops and ordering people to work from home.

The mandatory vaccinations have been described as a "double-edged sword" by Andrea Ammon, director for the European Centre for Disease Prevention & Control.

Gas, inflation and time to hit the shops

(Reuters) – Rising geopolitical tensions across central and eastern Europe and climbing gas prices should keep markets on edge in the week to come.

US shoppers gear up for Black Friday while investors will scour inflation data and Fed minutes for hints on the impact of price pressures on interest rates. And, just how far will Kiwi rates fly?

Russia-West ties have been at their frostiest since the Cold War for a while – but could they turn hot? Russia's Vladimir Putin says the West is not heeding "red lines", warning against deploying NATO infrastructure in Ukraine. Russian troop movements at Ukraine's borders have led NATO to warn it was standing by Kyiv.

Ukrainian bond prices have slumped, Moscow's markets are waking up to fresh risk, Poland and Hungary have seen currencies and stocks fall hard.

But much of the conflict is playing out on natural gas markets where a 350% price surge this year will fan inflation and hurt growth.

Markets are also on alert for tensions flaring around Russia's \$11 billion Nordstream 2 pipeline, opposed by the US and Ukraine, supported by Germany. A suspension of its certification saw Russian gas flows to Europe ease, pushing prices back towards 100 euros a megawatt hour.

Minutes from the Federal Reserve's November meeting on Wednesday should provide clues on its take on inflation.

US consumer prices, rising at the fastest pace in more than three decades in October and accelerating inflation expectations, have lifted expectations that the Fed will need to speed up tapering of asset purchases and hike



rates faster-than-expected. The 5-year and 10-year breakeven rate – the yield spread between inflation-protected and normal Treasuries – stand at record highs. More fodder comes from Wednesday's reading of the October personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index – the Fed's preferred inflation gauge – expected to rise to 0.4%, according to a Reuters poll. Black Friday kicks off the key holiday shopping period and news has been mostly good for retailers in recent months as a vaccine-fueled US reopening sent shoppers back into stores.

That's been reflected in retailers' shares: The S&P 500 retailing exchange-traded fund is up 15% this quarter, compared with a 9% gain for the S&P 500. Consumer discretionary earnings growth – including many retailers – has risen to 14.5% from 8% at the start of October, Refinitiv data shows.

But global supply-chain bottlenecks, crimping inventories and pushing up prices, remain a worry: Walmart shares tumbled after high labour and supply chain costs ate into margins.

Soaring inflation also has markets worried about consumers tightening their belts. But recent retail sales numbers made for happier reading, showing October sales surging as Americans started shopping early to beat supply shortages. The flash November purchasing managers' index (PMI), a key forward looking economic indicator, is due out from a host of major economies in coming days – the United States, Australia, Britain and the euro area.

Market focus is on what impact price pressures and supply bottlenecks are having on business activity and whether these are abating. Euro area PMIs, which have held up well, could provide a sense of what toll a resurgent COVID-19 is taking.

Germany's Angela Merkel warns the coronavirus situation in the powerhouse economy is dramatic; the Netherlands is in partial lockdown, and pressure is mounting on Austria to do more.

But vaccine rollouts and the reassuring (and hefty) presence of ECB stimulus ease some of those worries.

Sudan's military chief reinstates prime minister ousted after last month's coup

(CNN) - Sudan's military chief on Sunday reinstated Abdalla Hamdok as prime minister, almost a month after he was ousted in a military takeover.

Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan appeared with Hamdok at a signing ceremony in the presidential palace, according to a live video broadcast on state television.

The deal agreed upon by Hamdok and Al-Burhan also includes the release of political detainees who were jailed following the October 25 coup, according to Mudawi Ibrahim, a prominent official in the National Forces Initiative which helped mediate the talks.

Hamdok becomes leader again of the transitional government which was first established following the ousting of former strongman and president Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

Hamdok and Al-Burhan also agreed on a power-sharing deal between civilian and military leadership, but it will include as-of-yet unspecified restructuring, according to Ibrahim.

Hamdok was released on Sunday from house arrest, under which he had been placed following the coup, according to a source within the National Forces Initiative. An eyewitness said security forces sur-

rounding Hamdok's residence since last month were withdrawn, but his personal guard remains in place.

The deal has met with resistance in Sudan. Police fired tear gas at a large group of protesters near the presidential palace in Khartoum on Sunday, according to eyewitnesses on the ground. The protests began in downtown Khartoum, then moved on to the presidential palace in the city center.

Reacting to reports on the deal, the Darfur Lawyer's Association said in a statement: "There is no bargaining again" and "the solution starts with holding Al-Burhan accountable for the crimes committed since October 25, 2021."

"The Association assures that any initiative or bargaining for a settlement between yesterday's parties to bring Hamdok or others (like him) back in to power will 'not bring any result' when the demands and rights of the people of Sudan are not met," the statement added.

The deal was rejected by Sudan's Forces of Freedom & Change coalition (FCC), which said on Sunday that there is "no negotiation, no partnership, nor legitimacy for the coup plotters".

They also said the crimes of the regime



A Sudanese anti-coup protester carries a portrait of ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok at a demonstration in Khartoum on November 13, 2021.

-- from dissolving the constitution to causing repression of and violence against the people -- must be brought to trial in order that justice be met.

The FCC outlined further allegations against the military in its statements, to which the military has not directly responded.

"We have nothing to do in any agreement with this brutal gang, and

we are working with all peaceful means to bring this (gang) down, working with all the forces of the revolution, professional groups, resistance committees, and all the honorable people," the FCC statement said.

The statement closed by calling for a "new and glorious revolution" that will "tighten the noose on those behind the coup and lead to their downfall".



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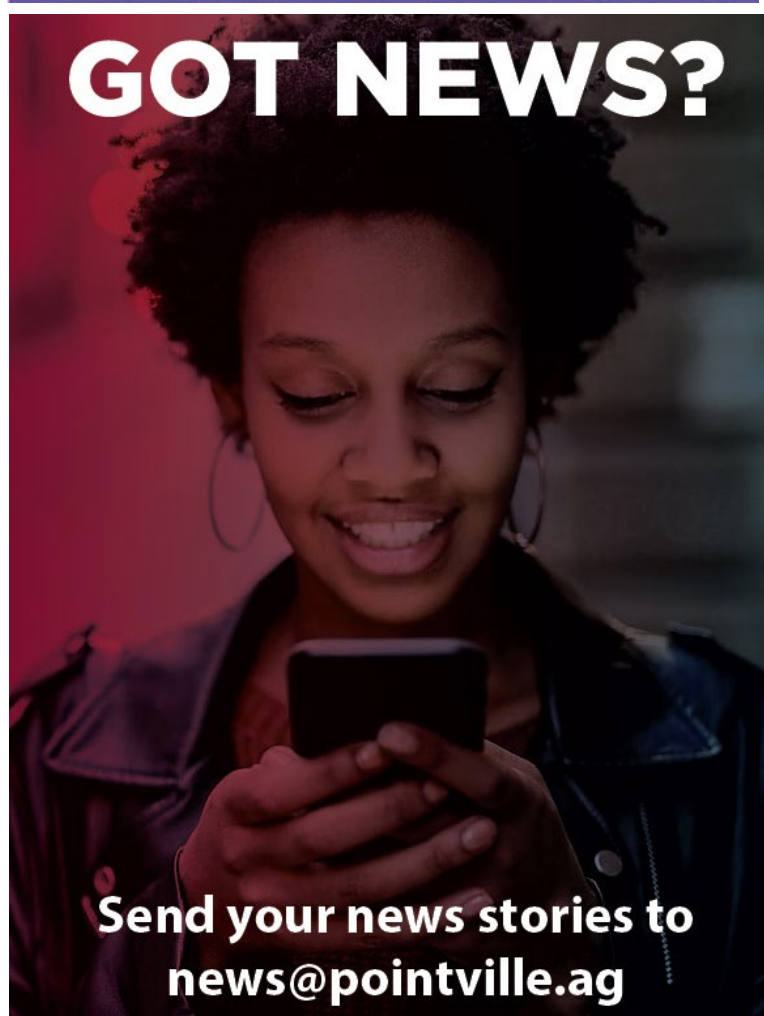
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Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai in video call says she is 'safe and well' but wants her privacy respected.



Images and video released on Saturday purportedly showing Peng Shuai (middle) in a restaurant where she appears to be smiling and having fun.

Peng Shuai says she is “safe and well” but wants her privacy respected, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said after holding a video call with the Chinese tennis player on Sunday.

A newly-released video – released earlier by Chinese state media – purportedly showed Peng, a former Wimbledon doubles champion, at a tennis tournament in Beijing on Sunday morning.

The safety of Peng, 35, has become a matter of international

concern since her disappearance after she made sexual assault allegations against former China vice-premier Zhang Gaoli two weeks ago. In a statement, the IOC said that at the start of the 30-minute call with its president Thomas Bach, Peng had thanked the IOC for its concern about her well-being. “She explained that she is safe and well, living at her home in Beijing, but would like to have her privacy respected at this time,” the IOC said.

“That is why she prefers to spend her time with friends and family right now. Nevertheless, she will continue to be involved in tennis, the sport she loves so much.”

IOC Athletes Commission chair Emma Terho and IOC member Li Lingwei were also on the call in what appears to be Peng’s first direct contact with sports officials outside China since her disappearance from public view on November 2. On Saturday, images supposedly showed Peng having dinner with her coach and friends in Beijing. France’s foreign minister had earlier called on the Chinese authorities to provide more reassurance around Peng’s well-being, echoing a statement by the Women’s Tennis Association on Saturday that the images were “insufficient”.

“While it is positive to see her, it remains unclear if she is free and able to make decisions and take actions on her own without coercion or external interference,” WTA chief Steve Simon said.

Peng’s allegation was made on Chinese social media site Weibo in early November, before the post was quickly taken down.

Neither Zang nor the Chinese government have commented on her allegation.

The UK government said it was following the case closely and remained “extremely concerned”.

The WTA has threatened to pull tournaments out of China and the men’s ATP has demanded clarity from Chinese authorities.

Serena Williams and Roger Federer are among a host of the sport’s biggest names to have raised concerns about Peng’s welfare.

In Warriors-Cavs game, Steph Curry did something no NBA player has achieved in 25 years

In the Golden State Warriors' 104-89 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Thursday, Steph Curry showed out with a historic performance that further adds to his early-season MVP case. Alongside his 40 points in total, Curry — as Elias Sports noted — became the first player in the last 25 seasons to score twice as many points and record twice as many assists in the fourth quarter of a game as the entire opposing team. The 33-year-old guard

put up 20 points and two assists in the final frame of the game, while the Cavaliers put up eight points and just one assist. Those numbers weren't garbage time stat-padding, either. Curry needed to put up ridiculous stats to get Golden State back into the contest. The Cavs had the Warriors out of sorts and locked down through three quarters, and they held an 81-68 lead going into the fourth.

Even players like Kevin Love, who has played in



Stephen Curry celebrates after scoring during the fourth quarter against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

just 112 out of a possible 263 games over the past four years, was making an impact. But that double-digit lead quickly disappeared as the Warriors went on a 17-0 run, with Curry scoring 13 points and assisting on one of those buckets.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that the Cleveland home fans would

have nothing to cheer for in a quarter where they saw their team get utterly demolished.

But after what Curry accomplished in that arena, the crowd eventually cheered again: this time, to break out into an "M-V-P!" chant for their more-than-worthy adversary.

A \$250,000 Usain Bolt statue to rise in Florida city: 'Ridiculous' or a 'World-Class' display?

MIRAMAR, Fla. — A monument to Usain Bolt will stand tall in South Florida, celebrating the champion sprinter who dominated for a long time in the Olympics.

The runner's statue will wind up costing much more than some Olympic gold: The tab for Miramar taxpayers will be a quarter-million dollars.

While some residents balk at spending \$250,000 — even calling the cost "ridiculous" — the city says it's worth the price for a sculpture of the super-fast athlete.

Bolt is a Jamaican superstar and the statue is a nod to diversity in South Florida.



Through the years, hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans have made their home across the tri-county region and Miramar also has a burgeoning number of families with ties to Jamaica.

The bill for the statue will be paid in four installments to artist Basil Watson who has been written about in Caribbean media and lauded by local officials.

"We wanted to make sure we had a world-class Olympian as part of the art in public places", said Alexandra Davis, a Miramar city commissioner.

The statue will be placed at the Ansin Sports Complex at 10801 Miramar Blvd. Davis hopes Bolt's statue will help draw more international, world-class athletic events in the region.

A statue of Bolt alone shows "minorities can rise above ... and shows we can achieve", said Miramar resident Doreen Lovell who was born in Jamaica. She said the statue helps "build up the image of the city. It's showing we are diverse".

There hasn't been total support

City Commissioner Winston Barnes calls Bolt "a phenomenon" but thinks spending \$250,000 for the statue is "ridiculous" and "a waste of taxpayer money". Miramar isn't

like Moscow which has a Usain statue of its own; Miramar is not attracting international tourists, he said.

"Attaching ourselves to monuments or icons is not going to make us a 24/7 city," Barnes said. "We're not a tourist city — come on." The money could be better spent for "the larger community" of Miramar residents, he said. "I do not think we have the luxury to try to create monuments of icons simply at the fancy of elected officials."

Exactly what the statue will look like isn't yet known, including what pose it would show Bolt striking. (Hint: It very well could be that lightning bolt pose he so often showcased while on the Olympic scene.)

Bolt, through his representatives, couldn't be reached for comment. But he likely would love the recognition. "I'm definitely a sprinter first, but I like to entertain because that's what people come out to see," he once told the news media. "That's why people love me so much."

Resident Chris Koval, who previously ran for City Commission, said the city's leaders could have had a more encompassing display.

Rather than all the money going to one person, Koval said, he would prefer to see

Native American and Black athletes who are both from United States and served as inspiration for Bolt — such as Jim Thorpe, Carl Lewis, Florence Griffith Joyner and Edwin Moses — as part of a larger garden of honorees.

"For the money they are spending [it could have been smaller statues of] the greatest Olympians of all time who happened to be American" while still recognizing Bolt as "crème de la crème," he said. "It would have been a more diverse display and nobody would have said 'boo'."

Miramar isn't the only city to remember people with statues. Margate has a life-sized statue of a hometown actress, the late Kaye Stevens. But in Margate's case, the cost was tens of thousands of dollars, not hundreds of thousands.

In some other cities, the art didn't come from taxpayer dollars. In Davie, a \$50,000 bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi has been up for years, paid for by a local Indian cultural group.

In Fort Lauderdale, a \$100,000 bronze sculpture was provided by the Venetian Arts Society, depicting a Seminole girl along the waterway where Indians long ago had paddled up in canoes to a trading post.



Jeremy Solozano (left) is stretchered off the field after being hit on the head while fielding at short leg when a pull from Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne struck the front of his helmet.

WEST INDIES DEBUTANT JEREMY SOLOZANO STRUCK ON HEAD WHILE FIELDING, SCANS SHOW NO STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

West Indies debutant Jeremy Solozano was taken off the field on a stretcher and transferred to a hospital from the Galle Stadium in an ambulance for scans, after being hit on the helmet while fielding at short leg.

The incident happened just before the lunch break on the first day of the opening Test between Sri Lanka and West Indies.

Solozano was taken to a hospital in Colombo, which is more than an hour away by road.

Later in the evening, Cricket West Indies tweeted that Solozano's scans

showed "no structural damage" but he would be kept at the hospital overnight for observation.

He was hit on the front of the helmet near the forehead on the fourth ball of the 24th over when Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne pulled a short ball from Roston Chase. The batter had muddled the ball and Solozano had barely any time to react or take evasive action.

Solozano lay still on the ground for several minutes after that, but appeared conscious as he got medical attention

and players of both teams surrounded him. He was also seen talking briefly before his forehead was covered with a towel, probably because of the heat as the mid-day sun was beating down hard.

A worried-looking Phil Simmons, the head coach, came down the dressing room stairs and stood near the boundary rope before Solozano was stretchered off the field and into the ambulance near the boundary.

Solozano – the 26-year-old left-hand batter from Trinidad, who had played 40 first-class games be-

fore this – was earlier handed his Test cap by Simmons before play and was set to open for West Indies later in the game.

He played in the 2014 Under-19 World Cup and has also represented West Indies A.

He scored 74 off 216 balls in the second of the two intra-squad "Best vs Best" matches in Antigua before the Sri Lanka tour, with lead selector Roger Harper praising his "application, patience and composure".

DEWS