

# COVID RESTRICTIONS MAY LAST LONGER

PAGES 10-11



*Prime Minister Gaston Browne is off to Dubai today – he told us on the weekend – where he will seek investment for a third high value hospitality development on Barbuda that he hopes will be a serious game changer for employment and earnings of people on the sister isle. Our picture is not from Dubai but the Faroe Islands where they have succeeded in generating electricity from seabed currents using some rather innovative technology. Given our own push to develop clean/renewable energy and an ocean-based (blue) economy, our PM can be counted on to always be on the lookout for those who can help us and who we can emulate in the pursuit of sustainable development. PAGES 2-3*

- INSIDE:**
- HIV cases on the rise again!
  - Medical doctor could be ABLP candidate for Barbuda!
  - COVID Omicron variant sparks expanding chaos and panic!

# Clean Energy from a Blue Economy: we say let's also give it a try

A pair of sleek, winged machines are “flying” - or at least swimming - beneath the dark waters of the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic.

Known as “sea dragons” or “tidal kites”, they look like aircraft, but these are in fact high-tech tidal turbines, generating electricity from the power of the ocean.

The two kites - with a

five-metre (16ft) wingspan - move underwater in a [specific] pattern, absorbing energy from the running tide. They are tethered to the fjord seabed by 40-metre metal cables. Their movement is generated by the lift exerted by the water flow - just as a plane flies by the force of air flowing over its wings.

Other forms of tidal power

use technology similar to terrestrial wind turbines but the kites are something different.

The moving “flight path” allows the kite to sweep a larger area at a speed several times greater than that of the underwater current. This, in turn, enables the machines to amplify the amount of energy generated by the water alone. An on-board comput-



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er steers the kite into the prevailing current, then idles it at slack tide, maintaining a constant depth in the water column. If there were several kites working at once, the machines would be spaced far enough apart to avoid collisions.

The electricity is sent via the tethering cables to others on the seabed, and then to an onshore control station near the coastal town of Vestmanna.

The technology has been developed by Swedish engineering firm Minesto, founded back in 2007 as a spin-off from the country's plane manufacturer, Saab.

The two kites in the Faroe Islands have been contributing energy to Faroe's electricity company SEV, and the islands' national grid, on an experimental basis over the past year.

Each kite can produce enough electricity to power approximately four or five homes.

But according to

Minesto chief executive, Martin Edlund, larger-scale beasts will enter the fjord in early 2022.

The 17 inhabited Faroe Islands are an autonomous territory of Denmark. Located halfway between Shetland and Iceland, they are home to just over 50,000 people.

The hope for the underwater kites is that they will help the Faroe Islands achieve its target of net-zero emission energy generation by 2030. While hydro-electric power currently contributes around 40% of the islands' energy needs, wind power contributes around 12% and fossil fuels - in the form of diesel imported by sea - still account for almost half.

The Faroe Islands' drive towards more environmental sustainability extends to its wider business community. The locals have formed a new umbrella organisation - Faroese Business Sustainability Initiative. It currently has 12 high-profile

members - key players in local business sectors such as hotels, energy, salmon farming, banking and shipping.

The initiative's chief executive - Ana Holden-Peters - believes the strong tradition of working collaboratively in the islands has spurred on the process.

Back in the Faroe Island's fjords, a firm called Ocean Rainforest is farming seaweed.

The crop is already used for human food, added to cosmetics, and vitamin supplements, but the firm's managing director Olavur Gregersen is especially keen on the potential of fermented seaweed being used as an additive to cattle feed.

He points to research which appears to show that if cows are given seaweed to eat it reduces the amount of methane gas that they exhale.

"A single cow will burp between 200 and 500 litres of methane every day, as it digests," says

Mr Gregersen. "For a dairy cow that's three tonnes per animal per year.

"But we have scientific evidence to show that the antioxidants and tannins in seaweed can significantly reduce the development of methane in the animal's stomach. A seaweed farm covering just 10% of the largest planned North Sea wind farm could reduce the methane emissions from Danish dairy cattle by 50%."

The technology that Ocean Rainforest uses to farm its four different species of seaweed is relatively simple. Tiny algal seedlings are affixed to a rope which dangles in the water, and they grow rapidly. The line is lifted using a winch and the seaweed strands simply cut off with a knife. The line goes back into the water, and the seaweed starts growing again.

**[REPRINTED / ABRIDGED FROM BBC NEWS]**

# HIV cases on the rise

Activities marking HIV/AIDS week, which include World AIDS Day on Wednesday, begin today across Antigua and Barbuda with reports from the AIDS Secretariat indicating that HIV positive cases in the country are on the increase.

Additionally, the secretariat is reporting that too many people who test positive are relying on natural or home-made remedies rather than seeking help from the established healthcare system.

The announcement comes as the AIDS Secretariat is issuing a reminder to members of the public that the disease is still a health concern for the country.

National HIV/AIDS Programme Manager Delcora Williams says while the national spotlight has shifted to the COVID-19 pandemic, her department has been continuing its mandate to educate the public about HIV/AIDS and the need for individuals to practice measures to avoid contracting or transmitting the disease.

She reported that since it was first detected in Antigua back in 1985, a total of 1,355 persons have tested positive for the disease.

Of that total, there are 907 who are alive, described as Persons Living with HIV.

So far this year, there have been 40 confirmed new HIV cases with three deaths. There were 29 new positive cases in 2020.

Last year, there were seven HIV/AIDS deaths, down from 17



*National AIDS Program manager, Ms. Delcora Williams.*

for 2019.

Williams explained that when a person tests positive for HIV the department starts what it calls a 'care and treatment programme'. However, she acknowledged that many persons do not present themselves for treatment, but instead rely on natural remedies.

When these fail and they become quite ill, it is only then that they seek care from the health system.

Currently, there are 376 persons in the care and treatment programme.

Scientific developments in the fight against HIV/AIDS have reduced the disease to one that is treatable, but patients must adhere to rigid health protocols in order to maintain good health and longer lives.

These are people who follow-up their treatment on a regular basis.

Williams also reported that, so far, approximately 100 HIV patients have presented themselves for COVID 19 vaccinations. These have gone well with no reports of side effects.



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# Shortage of nurses affecting new top-of-the-line polyclinics



*by Shelton Daniel*

The Glanville Polyclinic will be opened shortly,” Prime Minister Gaston Browne has assured, explaining that the only holdup is a shortage of nurses and other personnel to staff the facility.

He said the same issue has been affecting the similar state-of-the-art modern clinic at Blackburn Park, Villa in his own constituency of St. John’s City West.

The two expansive, fully equipped, and technologically advanced community medical facilities are gifts from the People’s Republic of China that were completed and handed over last year to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

“A decision has been taken to reopen them,” PM Browne said. “It’s not an issue of money. It’s an issue of finding nurses because there is a shortage of nurses globally. If we can get some nurses right now from any country within the Caribbean or maybe even Antiguans and Barbudans within the diaspora who are nurses and would like to return here – even temporarily – we will take them on. We are even looking extra-regionally to source nurses. Even Cuba is having some difficulty supplying at this point.”

The Prime Minister rounded off his comments on this matter by referring to “some boy in the UPP” who was reportedly “trying

to make an issue, saying that they’re going to protest the opening”.

Offering some advice to the unnamed ‘UPP boy’, Prime Minister

Browne suggested, “He can be more constructive by helping us to get the nurses. We’ll hire them and put them in there.”

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Claudine Benjamin

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# Medical doctor favored to contest next election for ruling party

by Shelton Daniel

A medical practitioner could be the governing Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party's (ABLP) next election candidate – should he accept that invitation – according to the party's political leader and the nation's Prime Minister.

Hon. Gaston Browne described Dr. Jeremy Deazle as the person who the opposition Barbuda People's Movement (BPM) and its political leader, Hon. Trevor Walker – the current national Member of Parliament (MP) for the sister-isle – “are mortally afraid of”.

Dr. Deazle is the resident medical doctor on Barbuda where he has often been lauded for effective management of health-care – including, and especially, the COVID-19 pandem-

ic.

His name has until now not been publicly associated with any political alliances or aspirations, and Prime Minister Browne disclosed that the ruling party's preference for him – in its bid to recapture the island constituency it lost to Walker in 2018 – is not yet a sealed deal.

Browne said, “Many Barbudans, including BPM members, have gotten on to me and they have said to me, ‘You know what? We tired of Trevor. We tired of the relationship that he and his council has with the government. It's not helping us. We can't get paid. This acrimony is not helping us. They're not raising any money. They're not coming up with their part of the funding to make salaries and wages. We are 30-something



**Dr. Jeremy Deazle: will he throw his hat in the ring for the ABLP?**

weeks in arrears. We can't go any further with the Council; we can't go any further

with Trevor Walker.' And they actually ask me to talk to Dr. Deazle and to get him to

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Dated the 25th day of November, 2021



run.” Browne said the Barbudans urging him to persuade Dr. Deazle to contesting the next polls on behalf of the ABLP had with near unanimity described the popular physician as “one of Barbuda’s brightest sons”.

The Prime Minister praised Dr. Deazle for “almost single-handedly [getting] 95 percent of the people in Barbuda vaccinated. So Barbuda has achieved herd immunity long ago – one of the highest percentages in the world.”

But concerning Dr. Deazle’s own inclinations where politics is concerned, Browne said he did not know if the

devoted medic would agree to an elective run.

“It seems as though he is the man. But assuming that he is not interested in running, we have five other candidates. We have Senator Knacyntar Nedd as a prospect, and we have three others who have [applied] to become the candidate.”

Of those who had formally applied in writing, the Prime Minister mentioned former Barbuda Council member Mackeisha DeSouza.

He also identified another former councilor, Ricardo Nedd, who – although he has not yet conveyed his interest

formally – is expected to do so in due course, having long been considered a bright and promising prospect.

Prime Minister Browne further revealed that the engagement of a new candidate for St. John’s Rural West is at an advanced stage, as the ABLP incumbent – Deputy Speaker Londell Benjamin – has asked the party to seek a replacement, as he does not intend to stand for re-election at the end of this term.

“We have an excellent prospect [who] we have already polled,” said the triumphant political leader.

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# Removal of curfew uncertain



*by Shelton Daniel*

Government could be forced to revisit its recently announced decision to lift the COVID-19 State-of-Emergency two days before Christmas because of a worrying new variant of the coronavirus that has

emerged in South Africa and subsequently detected in a several other countries.

This possibility has been conceded by Prime Minister Gaston Browne in light of travel restrictions being imposed by several countries such as the UK, Can-

ada, the US and a few European continental states - major source markets for stayover tourism which is the top revenue earner for the twin-island Caribbean nation.

He noted that with the Omicron variant "already in the UK, you can be sure that

if there is any significant spread in the United Kingdom, it will end up here in the Caribbean; it will end up here in Antigua and Barbuda. Interestingly, Antigua and Barbuda could be one of the first countries [because] right now we have relatively



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good UK traffic.”

PM Browne said, “We have to monitor the development of this particular strain within the coming weeks. Certainly within the next 2-3 weeks we have to look at the situation in the UK to see whether this strain has emerged as a significant strain; and if it has, then we are going to have to make some changes.”

He went on to spell out what those “changes” might involve and their implications for Antigua and Barbuda: “Even the relaxation of the curfew and the State-of-Emergency, we may have to reconsider our position ... This is something the Cabinet is monitoring very closely so that we can make a final determination within a couple of weeks whether or not we will honour that initial ... pledge to end the State-of-Emergency and the curfew [because] these are

measures that are required to manage any escalation of curfew.”

The Prime Minister added that although the country is now in a much better place where the management of COVID is concerned, “The situation is very fluid and could change in a couple of weeks. As it stands now, that policy initiative to lift the State-of-Emergency and the curfew on the 23rd still stands. But it could be reviewed and reversed [should there be] any significant spread of this new variant.”

PM Browne then spoke of what appears to be a rather scary feature of the new COVID variant, its ability to “shake-off” the vaccinations currently in use – vaccine evasion.

“If this particular variant could escape the current vaccines, then it creates a fundamental problem for the entire planet. It means

that all of us will be practically unvaccinated and will have to get vaccinated again by some new vaccines or some variants to the existing vaccines.”

The Prime Minister said this is a signal moment for persons within the country who have not been vaccinated “to do so as soon as possible ... and at the same time continue to practice the various health protocols, because those are what kept us safe when we

didn’t have any vaccines. Those protocols are even more important today because we could end up with a variant that is able to evade the vaccines.”

He encouraged frontline workers such as those in the medical field and port employees to be especially vigilant – as well as to ensure they are vaccinated – especially during the festive season when the risks of transmission would be heightened.



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- Logistics Management, an asset
- Project Management, an asset

# Resumption of fetes up in the air because of new COVID variant

by Shelton Daniel

The holding of fetes during the Christmas-New Year Season is another planned loosening of COVID-19 control measures that could be rescinded should the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus become especially problematic.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne expounded on this aspect of the now-in-doubt lifting of the national State-of-Emergency on

December 23rd, which would include an end to 20 months of nonstop curfews plus elimination of entertainment events and other crowd gatherings.

Having already indicated that his government's intention to abandon the curfews may now have to be revisited, PM Browne had this to say apropos of fetes:

"Even the hosting of fetes will be reconsidered if Omicron becomes a significant



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threat. The idea of having these fetes or even having large socializations, those could go out the window ... But assuming it doesn't, then these fetes will operate under strict protocols, and one of the new protocols that we will introduce is the testing of all patrons before they enter the venue."

Elaborating further on this, he said: "The government will be purchasing some test kits that we can get for about EC\$10, and the whole idea is to retail them at cost to these

operators; so all they need to do is to add maybe \$5 or \$10 dollars to each ticket in order to cover the testing. So you not only have to be fully vaccinated, but you also have to test in order to enter the venue."

Noting that "surveillance now has to be increased in light of this new variant," Prime Minister Browne said the low-cost test kits would also be made available to individuals "so they can test at home on a routine basis".



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# COVID Dashboard Update for November 27th 2021

The most recent report received by the Ministry of Health, Wellness & the Environment revealed ZERO (0) new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Friday 26th November 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

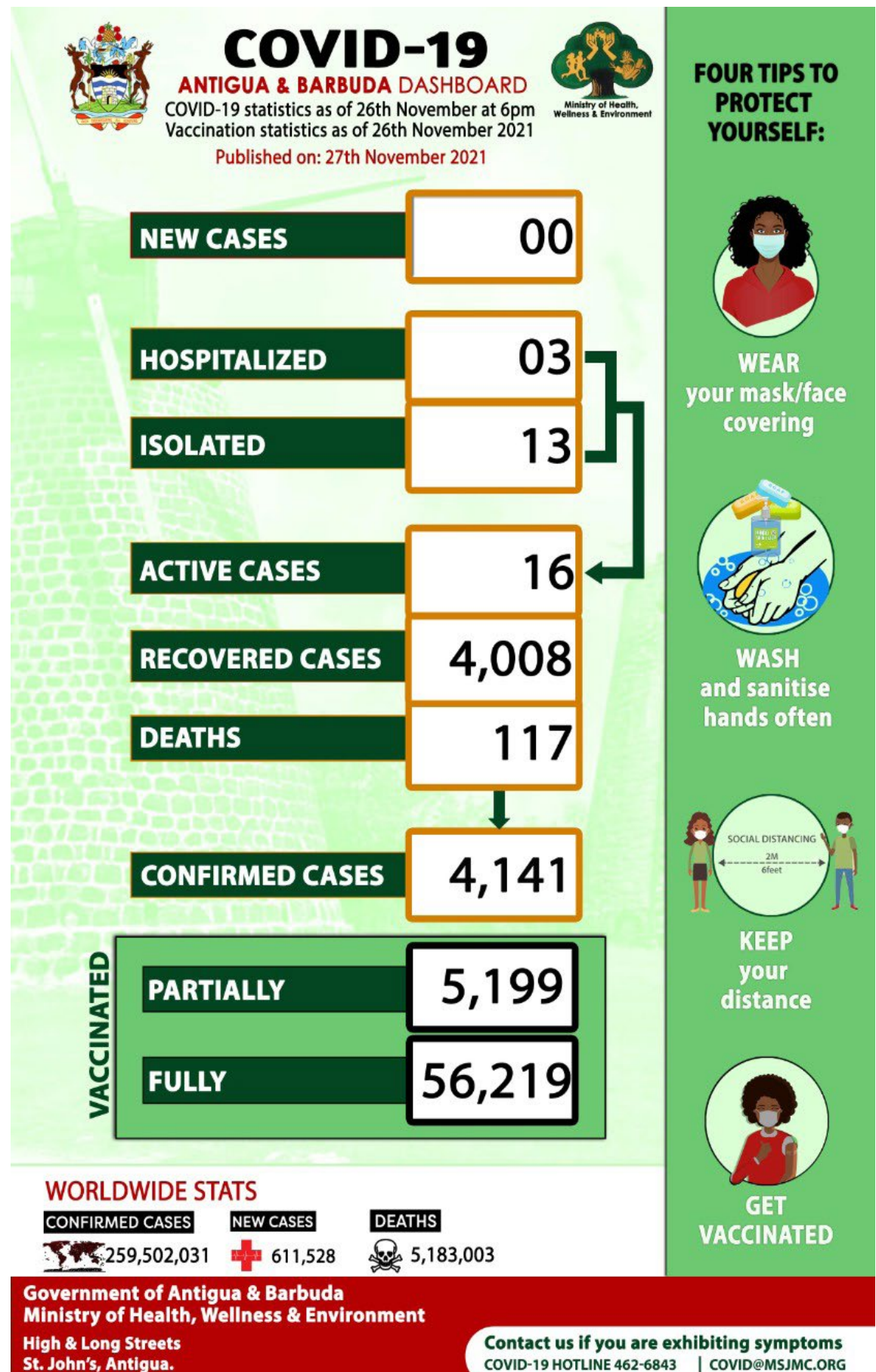
Two hundred and one (201) samples were processed.

Consequently, the total number of persons who have had laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda is 4,141 – inclusive of 16 active cases.

There are three (3) hospitalized cases – two (2) mild and one (1) severe.

Meanwhile, Antigua and Barbuda has fully vaccinated 56,219 individuals, while 5,199 have only received their first dose.

The dashboard has been updated to reflect these changes.





# Bahamas gov't seeking to acquire pediatric Pfizer vaccine

*EW News* - Sourcing has been the challenge to acquire the Pediatric COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine that would allow children ages five through 11 to become inoculated against the coronavirus in The Bahamas, according to Press Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, Clint Watson.

"We're looking into it," Watson said when prompted on whether The Bahamas was considering allowing children in that age group to become vaccinated.

"We believe it is important to have that option for Bahamians should they want to go that way.

"The challenge we're having – and Dr. Darville will tell you this – is sourcing it. There are so many countries around the world that are trying to do the same thing.

"And, of course, larger countries always seem to be the priority countries. We are trying to find a way that we can source this so we can get it here as soon as possible so that the option is available for Ba-



hamians and their children."

If sourced, elementary school children and junior [high schoolers] will be able to become vaccinated against COVID-19 as thousands prepare to return to face-to-face learning in the New Year once the COVID epidemiology remains within manageable parameters, according to officials.

Pfizer pediatric vaccine differs from the adult vaccine, of which The Bahamas has a surplus due to donations from the United States.

The pediatric dose is a third of the dose given to adults – 10 micrograms.

According to research and clinical studies,

the immune response in children in that age group were comparable to those of individuals 16-25 and the vaccine was found to be just under 91 percent effective in preventing COVID in children 5-11.

The vaccine's safety was studied in around 31,000 children who received the vaccine with no serious side effects detected.

Last month, the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the emergency use of the Pfizer vaccine for the prevention of the virus to include children ages 5-11.

The authorization was based on the FDA's "thorough and trans-

parent evaluation" of the data that included input from independent advisory committee experts who overwhelmingly voted in favor of making the vaccine available to children in that age group.

Just over a week ago, Canada approved the Pfizer vaccine for children aged 5-11.

In a recent interview with Eyewitness News (EWN), Canadian High Commissioner to The Bahamas, Emina Tudakovic said adults have a responsibility to get vaccinated to protect those who cannot — children under 12 who are expected to return to school sometime in the New Year.

# Guyana: locals account for majority of private investments in 2021



(L-R) CEO of Go-Invest, Dr. Peter Ramsaroop; Minister of Public Works Juan Edghill; Corporate Secretary of Cardinal Investments Inc., Denise Bassoo; representative of the Marriott Group, Eduardo Reple; CEO of Cardinal Investments Inc., Roy Bassoo; and project advisor Winston Brassington – with the US\$20 million Courtyard by Marriott Hotel construction agreement in March 2021.

**Guyana Chronicle** - With Guyana positioned to become a hub for major investments, the government is keen on keeping its promise of allowing locals to benefit from the vast opportunities available here.

Reflective of this commitment is the fact that 65 percent of the private investments made this year were from locals.

Speaking during a recent interview on Globespan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest), Dr. Peter Ramsaroop said that even as the economy continues to grow, President Dr. Irfaan Ali and, by extension, the government is committed to having Guyanese benefit from the investment opportunities that are available locally.

“So, when people think the foreigners are com-

ing in and benefitting, I can say that 65 percent of my signatures on investment opportunities this year through the Senior Finance Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, have been local businesses,” Dr. Ramsaroop said.

“We’ve got another 10-20 percent from CARICOM, which we are proud of, too; and then the rest come from the rest of the world. But it will change over time,” he added.

In March 2021, Guyanese-owned Cardinal Investments Inc. positioned itself to absorb the imminent opportunities by completing arrangements with Marriott International for the construction of a US\$20 million Courtyard by Marriott Hotel next to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA).

The agreement – signed by the company’s owners, Roy and Denise Bassoo

– cleared the way for the construction of the 140-room facility which, when completed, will be the second Marriott hotel brand in Guyana.

The six-story hotel will be a one-minute drive from the entrance of the CJIA and is expected to accommodate airline crews and staff, business personnel, diplomats, and other travellers.

The Go-Invest CEO further said the government has been implementing systems to provide incentives to all investors, whether large or small. He reminded his audience that, outlined in the government’s plans, are opportunities for persons to become investors and benefit from opportunities across several sectors.

“But what I want the smaller, middle-level businesses to know is that there are incentives no different than what we would give to large investors. You have to study the President’s plan and how he outlines the initiatives.

“If you look at the first phase, it is significant infrastructure. The second phase is you bring energy. And if you look at, for example, the manufacturing industry, with cheaper energy coming to our shores in 2-3 years, you could now be able to have textile factories,” Dr. Ramsaroop reasoned.

In October, Guyanese merchant bank Smart City Clearing Company Limited facilitated a partnership between Guyanese-based engineering, procurement, and construction firm Global Infrastructure Solutions Guyana Inc. and Undiome Global DWC LLC – an Emirati-owned company – for a US\$5 million investment to develop a 20,000 square foot manufacturing facility here.

The facility is intended to produce bi-axial voided slab technology in Guyana. The partnership marked the first manufacturing international joint-venture partnership and investment between Guyana and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Another local company, Arimu Investments, last November joined other local investors who are set to benefit from Guyana’s vast opportunities for investment, with the construction of a \$3 billion world-class hotel in the heart of Georgetown.

The indigenous company – which owns the Innovations America store and has a stake in gold mining and real estate – will be looking to expand its horizons with the construction of an over 100-bedroom Sure Stay Plus Hotel, a franchise of the world-renowned Best Western Hotels & Resorts.



# Jamaica: Holness would support death penalty for gun crime convicts



PM Holness: 'That's how strongly I feel about it'

**Jamaica Gleaner** - If Prime Minister Andrew Holness were to have his way, criminals convicted for illegal possession of a firearm would be liable to face the death penalty.

"That's how strongly I feel about it," Holness said Sunday at the Jamaica Labour Party's Annual Conference at the National Indoor Sports Centre in St. Andrew. Capital punishment remains on the

books in Jamaica but may only apply in certain aggravated murder convictions.

However, there have been no executions since 1988.

In 1993 the UK-based Privy Council ruled that it was inhumane to execute convicts who had spent more than five years on death row.

With gun crimes seeing worrying increases over the past decade,

Holness said penalties for firearm offences should be harsh.

He said convicts should only benefit from a lighter sentence when they provide actionable information on their accomplices.

"They should start at the highest level; they shouldn't get automatic plea bargaining. No, those who perpetrate this should face the most severe consequence," the JLP leader insisted.

Meanwhile, Holness said the government is in talks with a French security firm to help Jamaica in its response to crime through the use of technology.

The Prime Minister did not provide details on the engagement.

During the conference, Prime Minister Andrew Holness said there are no immediate plans for local government elections.

Local government elections are constitutionally due by February 27, 2022 after they were postponed in 2020.

Addressing Jamaica Labour Party supporters at the 78th anniversary conference, Holness said with a new COVID variant and all the pressures of the virus, the time is not appropriate for politics and elections.

"It is a miserable time," he said.

Holness said as a result of the impact of the pandemic, Jamaicans are faced with high costs for goods and services.

But Holness said he is confident that the JLP will win the next local government elections.

An election this year would coincide with Holness' 10th year as JLP leader.

Earlier, JLP chairman Robert Montague said the party was prepared and ready for the local government elections.

He also took a jab at the People's National Party, saying it was not brave enough to face the people at the polls.

The JLP's 78th annual conference in Kingston was streamed to 10 satellite locations across the island.

# Former Prime Minister urges St. Lucia to move towards Republican status



*Former Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony*

**CMC** - Former Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony has called on the Government of St. Lucia to follow in the footsteps of Barbados and move toward becoming a republic.

In a message posted on his Facebook page, Anthony also pointed to constitutional reform – stating that “over the past few years, Barbados has achieved two constitutional milestones which have surprised me. It has done the unthinkable – first, it jettisoned the Privy Council as its final Court of Appeal and adopted the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ); then secondly, it replaced the British Monarchy as its Head of State in favour of a Republican President.”

According to the former Prime

Minister, the actions were “un-thinkable” for the reason that for years the wider Caribbean treated Barbados as the “most Anglophile nation” in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

“We ridiculed Barbados whenever we had the opportunity. There is no hope for ‘Little England’ we would say. Yet, among the nations of the region, Barbados in recent times has chosen to be the most courageous.”

In the case of St. Lucia, Anthony questioned whether the current administration has the courage to take the first step like Barbados – “replace the Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice as our final Court of Appeal?”

He noted that St. Lucia’s Par-

liament now has the two-thirds majority specified by the Constitution to amend the section of the constitution allowing appeals to the CCJ. He added that the local Court of Appeal, “by way of an advisory opinion of a majority, does not need a referendum to take that step”.

“For my part, we should tarry no further and, collectively, act together in unison to commence the process to repatriate our Constitution to where it belongs – in the sovereign will of our people.

“Surely, we have a duty to make final appeals in judicial matters accessible to the vast majority of our population, not only to the few who can afford it before the Privy Council,” he said.



# New York declares State of Emergency to hike hospital capacity ahead of Omicron variant



*Governor of New York, Kathy Hochul*

**Huffington Post** - New York Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) on Friday declared a state of emergency aimed at increasing hospital capacity and addressing medical staffing shortages as the nation braces for the new *Omicron* variant of the coronavirus.

The new protocols will take effect Dec. 3 and the order will remain in place at least until Jan. 15 when it will be re-assessed.

The emergency declaration will allow the State Department of Health to limit non-essential and non-urgent hospital procedures in situations where a hospital has less than 10% staffed bed capacity.

The order will also expand state purchasing capability to ob-

tain emergency medical supplies.

"We've taken extraordinary action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and combat this pandemic. However, we continue to see warning signs of spikes this upcoming winter, and while the new Omicron variant has yet to be detected in New York State, it's coming," Hochul said.

"In preparation, I am announcing urgent steps today to expand hospital capacity and help ensure our hospital systems can tackle any challenges posed by the pandemic as we head into the winter months," the governor said.

"The vaccine remains one of our greatest weapons in fighting the pandemic. I encourage every New Yorker to get vaccinated and

get the booster if you're fully vaccinated," she added.

President Joe Biden announced Friday that travel to the US from South Africa and seven other countries in the region would be restricted beginning Monday.

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced Friday that the highly transmissible Omicron variant has a "large number of mutations", including some that are "concerning".

It has been detected in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, Malawi, Israel and Hong Kong. The first European case has been identified in Belgium.

# 'Absolute chaos' in South Africa as flights grounded over Omicron

**Al Jazeera** - Disbelief and confusion washed over South Africa as the announcement of the discovery of the Omicron COVID-19 variant grounded flights and raised fears of a hard lockdown in Africa's most developed economy.

Flights from the country to the United States, United Kingdom, and nations in Europe were swiftly banned after South African scientists officially announced the discovery of the virus strain on Thursday.

"This is absolute chaos. Nobody can tell us what is possible in terms of travel at this point," said Steve Lawrence, a stranded traveller at O.R. Tambo, one of Africa's busiest airports.

"Things are changing by the minute and we are left in the lurch. We had planned to stay in the United States for the month of December – and now we are stuck."

Daily coronavirus infections have risen 13-fold since early November, with 3,220 new cases reported on Saturday. Eight deaths brought the total to 89,791 in South Africa since the onset of the pandemic.

About 600 passengers on two KLM flights from Johannesburg to Amsterdam were left



*As the world grapples with the emergence of the new variant, scientists in South Africa are scrambling to combat its spread*

stranded on the runway at Schiphol Airport after panic set in following the announcement.

"It's naïve for developed countries to believe they can stop the spread of this variant with a blanket ban on countries in southern Africa. The virus has already found

its way into these societies from individuals that haven't even travelled to or come into contact with anyone from southern Africa," Shabir Madhi, a South African vaccinologist, told Al Jazeera.

"The fact it was discovered here does not

make it a South African variant – it was merely discovered here. In South Africa we have one of the globe's best COVID sequencing capacities based on our experience with treating HIV and TB. We have been ahead of the game for a while now and we are thus a victim of our success."

The abrupt grounding of flights has spooked the tourism industry, with booking cancellations increasing directly following the announcement.

"I'm absolutely shell-shocked. When we woke up on Friday morning everything was fine – now within 48 hours we have been banned and we are experiencing multiple cancellations," Manuela Pallamer, owner at Mziki Safari lodge in the North West province, told Al Jazeera.

The South African tourism sector lost out on \$10bn in bookings in 2020 because of a drop in foreign visitors, and is estimated to lose about \$10m every week flights are suspended from key overseas tourist markets.

"We have a good local tourist market, but if all of our foreign tourists cancel we'll be truly devastated," Pallamer added.



# Woman sets fire to Australia quarantine hotel



**BBC** - A 31-year-old woman in Australia has been charged with arson after a fire destroyed part of a COVID-19 quarantine hotel in Cairns, Queensland.

It is alleged she lit a fire under a bed in the room she had been sharing with two children on Sunday morning.

More than 160 people were evacuated as fire took hold in the 11-storey Pacific Hotel.

No-one was injured.

It came as Australia confirmed two cases of the new coronavirus variant which is prompting new restrictions.

Omicron was first reported by South Africa and has been classified as “of concern” by the World Health Organization (WHO) with early evidence suggesting a higher re-infection risk.

The government in Canberra has an-

nounced a suspension of flights from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, the Seychelles, Malawi, and Mozambique.

Non-Australians who have been in those countries in the past two weeks are now banned from entering Australia.

Australians have spent 20 months under some of the world’s strictest border rules in an effort to keep out COVID.

It is not clear whether the new variant will mean a roll-back of some relaxations that began early this month.

A surge in vaccinations has allowed some Australian states to end their strategy of eliminating all cases.

But unvaccinated travellers are obliged to quarantine for 14 days in hotels in the country.

# Omicron variant puts world in a 'race against time' – EC president

**CNN** - The world is in a "race against time" with the Omicron coronavirus variant, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday, warning during a visit to Latvia that scientists and manufacturers will need weeks to fully understand the new variant.

As more cases are identified and governments around the world mobilize to respond to Omicron, an urgent meeting of G7 health ministers will be convened on Monday, the United Kingdom said. It also announced on Sunday new domestic public health rules requiring face coverings in shops and on public transport starting this week.

Omicron was first identified by scientists in South Africa who, on Thursday, raised alarm over its unusually high number of mutations. Since then, at least a dozen other countries have confirmed cases of the new strain, with several others reporting suspected cases.

Apart from South Africa, the variant has been found in Botswana, Belgium, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Czech Republic and

Hong Kong.

On Sunday, Dutch authorities announced that at least 13 people had tested positive at Amsterdam Schipol airport after traveling from South Africa. The Netherlands' National Institute for Public Health & the Environment (RIVM) said in a statement that the variant had been detected through the sequencing of 61 positive COVID-19 samples that were obtained at the airport on Friday.

It is "possible that the new variant will be found in more test samples", the institution noted.

Bio-statistician professor Sheila Bird said the test results from Amsterdam were concerning, but more data was needed.

"There may be household clusters among the 13 Omicron positives or clustering may have been induced by where passengers were seated on the flight from South Africa," she told the Science Media Centre, adding that the vaccination status and age distribution of those infected will also need to be considered before any conclusions are made about the variant.

The situation should be seen with "alert rather than alarm until more is



known", she said.

Canadian health officials also confirmed the country's first two Omicron cases in Ottawa on Sunday. Both individuals carrying the variant had recently traveled from Nigeria, according to a joint statement by Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliott and Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Ki-

eran Moore.

"We continue to urge the federal government to take the necessary steps to mandate point-of-arrival testing for all travelers, irrespective of where they're coming from, to further protect against the spread of this new variant," the joint statement also said.




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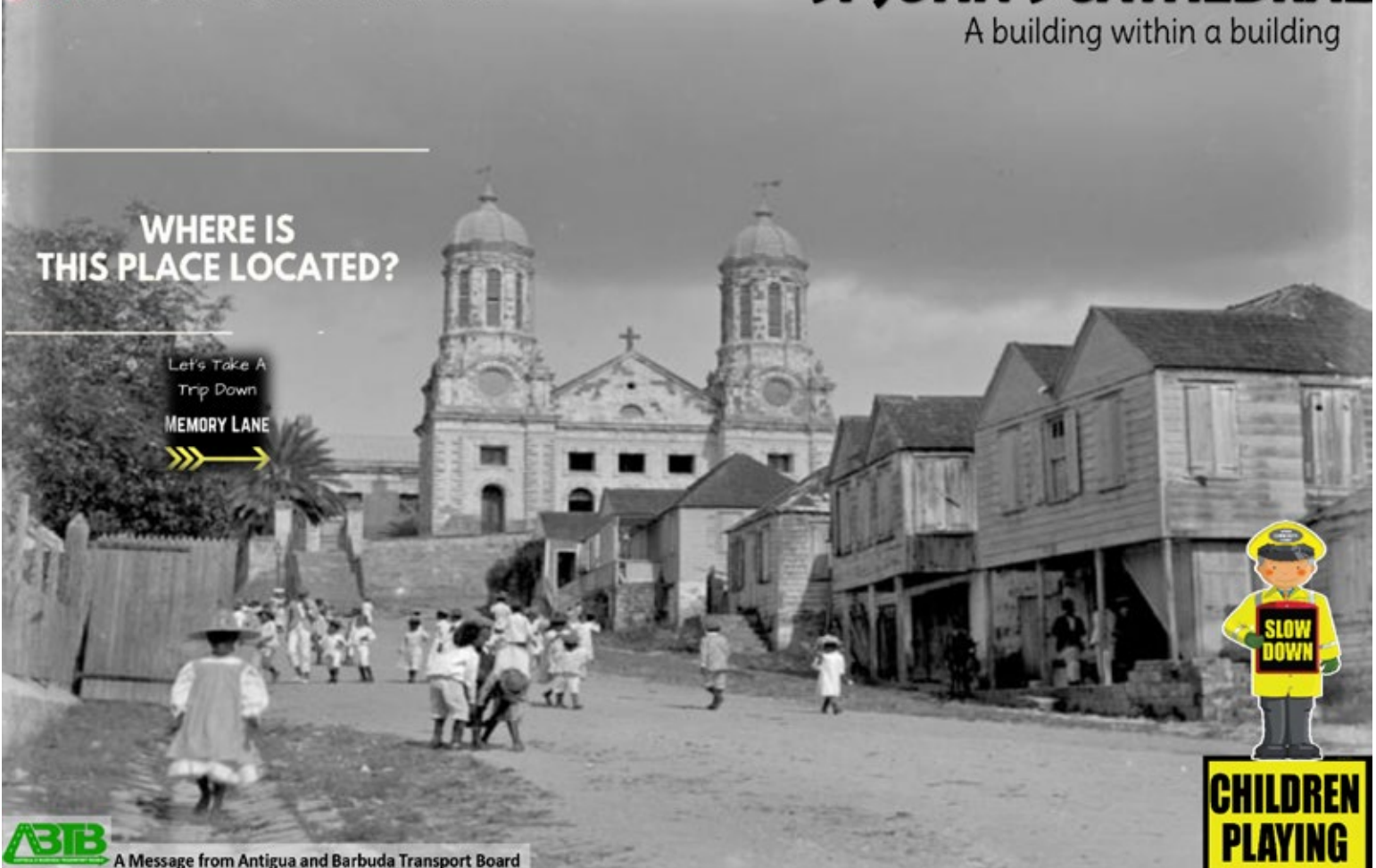
**WHERE IS THIS PLACE LOCATED?**

Let's Take A Trip Down  
**MEMORY LANE**

**ST JOHN'S CATHEDRAL**  
 A building within a building

**CHILDREN PLAYING**

**ABTB**  
 A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board



Jacob Kiplimo won the World Half Marathon Championship title in 2020 and took Olympic bronze in the 10,000m this year

# Jacob Kiplimo: Ugandan sets new half marathon world record

Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo has set a new world record for the half marathon, shaving one second off the previous best time. The 21-year-old clocked 57 minutes 31 seconds as he won the Lisbon Half Marathon road race on Sunday.

Kiplimo, who won bronze in the 10,000m at the Tokyo Olympics this year, broke the previous record set by Kenya's Kibiwott Kandie in Valencia in 2020.

Kiplimo looked set for a sub-57 minute finish when he reached the 15km mark at 40:27.

But he still won the race by more than two minutes, with Ethiopia's Esa Huseyidin Mohamed second in 59:39.



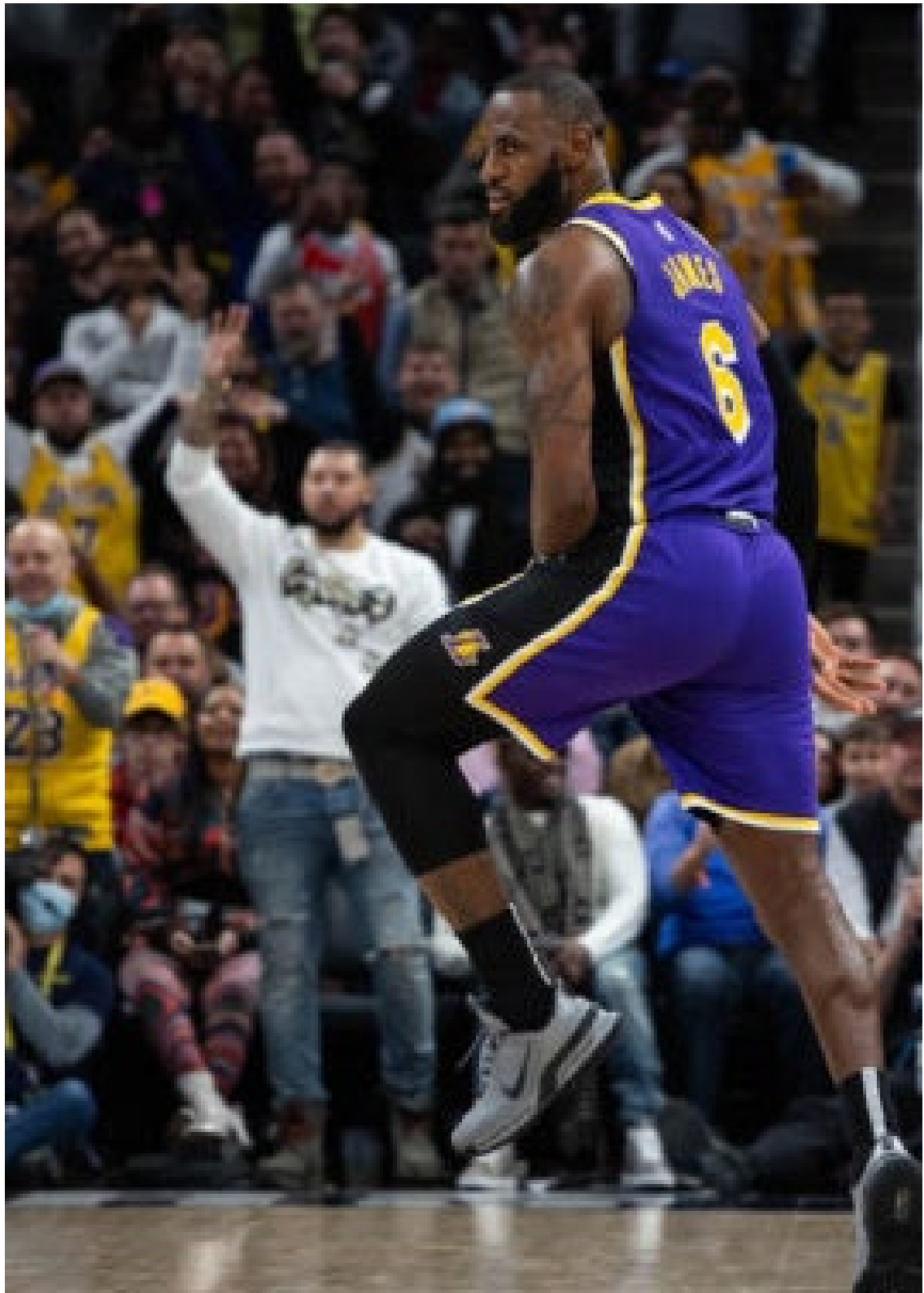


# LeBron James fined \$15,000 for obscene gesture

Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James has been fined \$15,000 for making an obscene gesture during a game and was also warned for using profane language during a media availability, the National Basketball Association (NBA) said on Friday. Late in the fourth quarter of the Lakers' overtime win against Indiana on Wednesday, James made a deep three point shot and then performed a celebration colloquially known in NBA circles as the "Big Balls Dance".

As the four-times NBA Most Valuable Player (making his return from a one-game suspension) made his way back down the court, he gestured with a hand below his groin in a cupping motion while bouncing from foot to foot.

The warning for using profane language stems from a post-game media availability on Sunday when James was discussing a one-game suspension he received for hitting Detroit Pistons



***Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James celebrates his go ahead basket in the overtime against the Indiana Pacers at Gainbridge Fieldhouse.***

centre Isaiah Stewart in the face. James was suspended for what the

NBA called "recklessly hitting" Stewart, who had blood streaming

down his face, but later said the hit was accidental.

# New faces in WI white ball squads

The high-profile trio of Andre Russell, Evin Lewis and Shimron Hetmyer have opted out of the upcoming tour of Pakistan “due to personal reasons” in the wake of the West Indies’ ICC T20 World Cup debacle last month.

Also missing from the T20 Internationals (T20Is) squad announced yesterday by the Cricket West Indies (CWI) selection panel are left-hander Chris Gayle – whose place in the side has been questioned in recent months – and Ravi Rampaul who was controversially selected to the World Cup squad.

Meanwhile, Romario Shepherd and Odean Smith have also been included in the T20 team after being omitted from the World Cup from which defending champions West Indies were eliminated in the second round.

Several players have also earned call-ups for the series that will feature three One-Day Internationals (ODIs) and three T20Is from December 13–22 at the National Stadium in Karachi.

The uncapped players for the ODIs are: batters Justin Greaves, Shamarh Brooks; left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie who was a travelling reserve for the recent ICC T20 World Cup; and fast bowling all-rounder Smith.

Smith and Motie were also selected for the T20I squad for the first time, along with left-arm fast bowling all-rounder Dominic Drakes.

Drakes and Smith were net bowlers before the start of the tournament.

CWI lead selector Roger Harper said he had high expectations of the additions to both squads.

“There are a number of talented newcomers in each format that

will have the opportunity to show what they are capable of at the international level.

“Justin Greaves is a very talented player, had a good CG Insurance Super50 tournament and performed well in the President’s XI match against Ireland in 2020.

“Odean Smith really grabbed our attention in the last CPL. His pace was never in question. However, he has added greater control and has displayed the ability to be a wicket-taker,” Harper said.

“Shamarh Brooks batted well in the CG Insurance Super50 Cup and followed that up with good performances in the CPL. He will lend greater depth to the batting line-up. Gudakesh Motie has been rewarded for his outstanding performance in the CG Insurance Super50, followed-up by his showing in the CPL. Dominic Drakes has the potential to be an outstanding all-rounder as he displayed during the last CPL.”

The ODIs in Pakistan are part of the ICC ODI Super League where points gained work towards qualification for the ICC World Cup 2023.

Harper said those matches were, therefore, “very important to us and are being treated as such”.

Meantime, former captain Jason Holder is being rested for this tour “due to workload management” while Fabian Allen and Obed McCoy are unavailable due to injury and rehabilitation, CWI said.

The ODI series will be West Indies’ fourth series of 12 in the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup Super League in which the top seven teams can secure automatic qualification for the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup 2023 in India. West Indies currently lie in eighth position out of 13 teams and have the

opportunity to move above Pakistan into seventh position.

Full squads:

ODIs: Kieron Pollard (Captain), Shai Hope (Vice-Captain), Darren Bravo, Shamarh Brooks, Roston Chase, Justin Greaves, Akeal Hosein, Alzarri Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Anderson Phillip, Nicholas Pooran, Raymon Reifer, Romario Shepherd, Odean Smith, Hayden Walsh Jr.

T20Is: Kieron Pollard (Captain), Nicholas Pooran (Vice-Captain), Darren Bravo, Roston Chase, Sheldon Cottrell, Dominic Drakes, Shai Hope, Akeal Hosein, Brandon King, Kyle Mayers, Gudakesh Motie, Romario Shepherd, Odean Smith, Oshane Thomas, Hayden Walsh Jr.



**PICKED FOR ODIS AND T20S:** Odean Smith in action here for the Guyana Amazon Warriors during the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) in September.





*Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai*

## WTA STILL 'DEEPLY CONCERNED' OVER TENNIS STAR PENG SHUAI

The head of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) "remains deeply concerned" about Chinese star **Peng Shuai** following her accusations of sexual assault against a powerful politician, a spokesperson told AFP on Saturday.

WTA chairperson Steve Simon "has reached out to Peng Shuai via various communication channels. He has sent her two emails, to which it was

clear her responses were influenced by others," she said.

"He remains deeply concerned that Peng is not free from censorship or coercion and decided not to re-engage via email until he was satisfied her responses were her own, and not those of her censors.

"The WTA remains concerned about her ability to communicate freely, openly, and directly."

Peng – a 35-year-old Wimbledon and French Open doubles champion – was not seen for more than two weeks following her allegations that former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli, now in his 70s, forced her into sex during a years-long on-off relationship. On Sunday, official photos of a Beijing tennis tournament showed Peng among attendees and she participated the same day in a

video call with the head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The European Union, the United Nations, the United States and Britain have all called for proof of Peng's whereabouts and well-being.

China's foreign ministry has said that "people should stop deliberately and maliciously hyping up" the controversy around Peng.

**DEWS**