

# A&B CITIZEN WINS BITCOIN BATTLE!

**PAGE 10**

## **INSIDE:**

- Illegal immigrants could be offered amnesty for post-COVID recovery
- Major AOSIS pilot project to be administered here
- CDB to provide Haiti with badly needed support

*Government House gifted with local painting: His Excellency the Governor General Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams were presented by artist Ambassador Bert Kirchner with a local painting for exhibition at Government House. The colourful piece, depicting three steelpan players, will be the first of many to hang on the walls of the property after renovation is completed. In addition to a museum – which will be open to the Antiguan and Barbudan public, as well as visitors – Government House is in the process of completing the Sir Selwyn Walter Art Gallery. The first exhibition is scheduled for the first quarter in 2022.*

# Omicron is sneaky: it could be fatal for us – or for our faith in government

The emergence and rapid spread of the Omicron Sars-CoV-2 variant feels like a flashback to last year's grim festive season when much of the world went into lockdown to avert the worst of the Alpha variant wave.

But though the sense of eerie, impending doom feels familiar, the epidemiological and political situations are different from one year ago.

The Omicron wave

represents a key turning point in the pandemic. But no plausible outcome looks particularly auspicious – it feels largely like a lose-lose deal. If it turns out to be roughly as severe as previous pandemic waves, it might normalise harsh mitigation measures and render the prospect of a return to post-pandemic normality fairly remote.

If it turned out to be

milder than feared, this

could spell the end of lockdowns with COVID-19 on its way into endemicity. The cost would be a loss of trust in political and public health authorities, which may make it difficult to deal with future threats.


Omicron is a different beast to the Alpha and Delta variants, which emerged in the pre-vaccine phase of the pandemic and spread in largely immunologically naive populations. Their threat came from the increased ability to replicate quickly within their host and their higher contagiousness. Both variants were associated with higher hospital admission rates and deaths. However, neither variant was good at escaping immune recognition, although each could cause occasional “break-through infections” in immunised people, with high contagiousness allowing these variants to barge through the first-line immune defence.

Omicron is different. Rather than just relying on brute force, as Delta did, it is far better at sneaking through im-

mune defences, thanks to a number of mutations that it acquired in key regions of its spike protein. These reduce the ability of neutralising antibodies to bind to it. As such, it spreads primarily by (re-) infecting previously immunised hosts.

The centre of the Omicron outbreak was Gauteng province in South Africa, which experienced a dramatic rise of nearly 400% in the number of cases in the first week of December. The Gauteng outbreak seems to be receding with its peak expected within a week or so. Other regions of South Africa also show signs of their epidemics slowing down despite no measures having been taken to suppress transmission.

Many countries are seeing rapid rises of Omicron cases, which are recorded as doubling every two to three days in the UK. But there is considerable uncertainty about the virulence of Omicron. Early, largely anecdotal, evidence from South Africa suggested Omicron might be milder. Such data has to be interpreted


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Wednesday, 15th December 2021	Section of Fitches Creek south of the church and Fitches Creek Drive	8:30AM - 11:30AM
Thursday, 16th December, 2021	Section of CHAPA Development of Radio Light House	8:30AM - 11:30AM
Friday, 17th December, 2021	Boggy Peak	8:30AM - 1:00PM
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ed carefully as, essentially, all infections start with mild symptoms and there is a time lag before severe disease develops. As additional data has landed in the past two weeks, the hypothesis of the Omicron wave being significantly milder becomes increasingly plausible. Reported deaths and hospitalisations in South Africa, in particular those requiring intensive care or ventilation, have remained far below numbers recorded during previous waves.

Virulence is not just a property of a pathogen but of the interaction with its host. Most populations on Earth have acquired high rates of immunisation through vaccination and prior infection. While Omicron can largely bypass neutralising antibodies, it remains well recognised by T-cells, which do the heavy lifting to control infections that can't be averted. As such, vaccines largely retain their efficacy against severe symptoms caused by the variant and a recent third dose still seems to provide significant protection against infection.

Irrespective of the relative virulence of Omicron, the large peak of cases anticipated over the coming weeks is expected to add further stress

to healthcare services, which no government can allow to become overwhelmed under its watch. A case for harsh mitigation measures based entirely on the protection of healthcare services might be less well received by many nearly two years into the pandemic, in particular given the uncertainty around the severity of Omicron.

A lockdown to deal with Omicron may be a more difficult sell as it comes with no obvious endpoint

The first lockdowns in early 2020 were generally well accepted by the population as a temporary measure in the face of an exceptional threat. Many

felt that later lockdowns were justified as a means to delay the epidemic until the population could be vaccinated. A lockdown to deal with Omicron may be a more difficult sell; it comes with no obvious endpoint besides its objective to "flatten the curve" and allow for a marginal increase in the number of people vaccinated or boosted before the peak of the wave.

Given the rapid rise in local community transmission of Omicron, those travel restrictions have lost all efficacy they might have had early on. Increasing the rate of vaccination, including third doses, in particular for those most at risk, should

make a real difference in terms of morbidity and mortality over the coming months, but time is rapidly running out given the remarkably fast increase in daily Omicron case numbers..

How effective those measures are at reducing viral transmission over the coming weeks will largely depend on the population's willingness to follow the rules. In the absence of a clear sense of fear and a possible loss of trust, adherence may be far lower. **(REPRINTED from The Guardian: the author, Francois Balloux is the director of the Genetics Institute at University College, London)**



# PM says illegal immigrants must be given a chance to contribute

by Shelton Daniel

Antigua and Barbuda “is currently on a good trajectory for a strong economic recovery in 2022”, according to Prime Minister Gaston Browne, speaking Saturday on his weekly radio program, *The Browne & Browne Show* on **Pointe FM 99.1**.

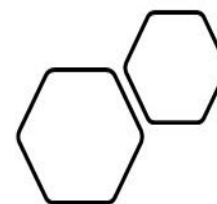
He said while his government

expects only modest economic growth for this year when the final figures are tallied – due to the challenges and ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic – the coming year is being anticipated for no less than 8%.

He said that would require everyone pitching in – “bending their backs” is how he put it – to ensure that the next two years would be

productive enough to recoup the losses wrought by the similar preceding period of the globally destructive viral disease.

“We are likely to see some sort of growth in 2021 of 1-2 percent, which I think in itself is remarkable, considering whence we came; considering that a year ago revenues were down as much as 50 percent and revenues are still



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down by about 25 per cent up to now.

“But notwithstanding that, we’ve been able to pull the country together and meet most of our obligations ... repairing the road network ...,” he said.

Providing a small peek of his New Year address to the nation, Prime Minister Browne said he would be calling on every citizen and resident to put in the required toil and sweat regardless of political and other differences or disagreements.

It was at this point he indicated that even those who are here illegally might be cut some slack in order to facilitate their contribution to the nation-building effort ahead.

“Even if you are not a citizen, even if you are an illegal immigrant, we want you to be part of this strong recovery. In fact, I’m contemplat-



**Prime Minister Gaston Browne.**

ing whether or not we should give an amnesty to the immigrants here who – for whatever reason – have been here illegally. We don’t want anybody to be in a situation where they cannot contribute if they live here permanently. So that’s a discussion I’ll be having with my colleagues – maybe next week – to determine whether or not we give amnesty to those who are here and their time may not be up to date.”

The Prime Minister stressed that he was “not encouraging people not to keep their status current”.

“But, at the same time, we live in a small society and we recognize [that] many of these individuals ... are well integrated in our society; they have homes, they work, they have children here. We have to be flexible enough to allow for some formal integration of these individuals into our society as we seek to get the contribution of all.”



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# No low-end hotels for Barbuda, says PM Browne

by Shelton Daniel

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has reiterated that his government does not believe the all-inclusive hotel model is good for Antigua and Barbuda's development.

Speaking Saturday on his weekly radio program, the Prime Minister said an all-inclusive hotel selling rooms to guests for US\$100 a night meant that very little could be left over to pay employees wages.

"That is why Jolly Beach, for example, has been a failed hotel ... Because when you have 500 rooms and you bring these people and they're paying a hundred US dollars a night, how much money can you make [from] that?"

According to the Prime Minister, "At least \$80 of that [goes] back out to the US to buy all the stuff that they consume," and by the time utilities and other expenses are paid for, the hotel would be at a loss – as has been the



Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

constant experience of Jolly Beach over the years.

"That low-end hotel product is not working for the Antiguan and Barbudan people ... We want a hotel work-

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er to be in a position where they can make about \$3,000 a month and they can command a mortgage for \$1,000 to \$1,200. Based on the wages that the average hotel workers make – taking out the top management – they may be taking home about \$2,000 a month. How are they going to sustain a mortgage on that type of pay?”

PM Browne said the low wages paid to hotel workers at all-inclusive properties was actually “perpetuating poverty within the society”.

He declared that, in light of such experiences, he is “determined that there should not be any low-end hotel development on [the sister isle of] Barbuda”.

Elaborating on this, the Prime Minister disclosed that he has “family members who have a lease on a parcel of land in Barbuda, and they have a few million dollars to invest in the project. They went as far as filing for drawings and so on at the DCA. They got them approved. In fact, they even have hundreds of thousands of dollars of completed steel work that they were going to ship to Barbuda.

“I said to them, ‘Let me tell you something: I don’t want that kind of project in Barbuda. Hold on. Let us try to get a better brand’ ... That is the only way we can increase incomes. When you look at incomes within the hotel sector over the last three decades, they have not increased because of all this all-inclusive stuff that is not working for us.”



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# US jury finds Antiguan citizen is sole creator of Bitcoin

A US federal court has declared Antiguan-Australian citizen Dr. Craig S. Wright to be the sole individual who can claim the mantle of Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous creator of Bitcoin. On December 6, the jury in the Florida civil trial *Kleiman v. Wright* returned a verdict rejecting arguments that Wright had help from his former friend and colleague Dave Kleiman in developing the Bitcoin technology.

The suit was brought by Ira Kleiman, brother of Dave Kleiman who died in April 2013.

Ira Kleiman also claimed his brother helped Wright mine over 1 million tokens in Bitcoin's early years and asked the court for a 50% share of these tokens.

But the jury similarly rejected this claim, concluding that Dave Kleiman and Wright had no partnership to mine Bitcoin and thus the Kleiman estate had no claim on Wright's tokens. Following his victory, Wright issued a statement thanking his supporters and expressing satisfaction for being "completely vindicated".

Wright, who earlier this year won a UK court judgment over his copyright in the Bitcoin white paper, said each legal victory "takes us

closer to a world where digital cash is used. Not a global casino, but real digital cash".

Satoshi Nakamoto released the Bitcoin white paper in October 2008, while the technology itself made its debut the following January. Wright stepped away from the project in the years following its launch, only to see his vision corrupted by developers who stripped Bitcoin of all its utility, resulting in the corrupted BTC technology that functions only as an inert form of 'digital gold'.

In response, Wright developed BSV (Bitcoin Satoshi Vision) which honors the white paper's vision of cost-effective micro-transactions while also serving as a powerful data management and valuation protocol. BSV's unlimited scaling capacity led MNP – one of Canada's leading accounting and business advisory service firms – to issue a paper this year hailing BSV as the world's most energy efficient blockchain.

Antiguan citizen Calvin Ayre has long been one of BSV's biggest supporters, including organizing the BSV Enterprise Blockchain Conference series (CoinGeek) which this year staged events in New York



***Dr. Craig S. Wright has been confirmed by a US Federal Court as the creator of Bitcoin.***

and Zurich.

Ambassador Ayre and Wright share both a disdain for the scam-plagued

'crypto' sector and a belief that BSV is the only public blockchain that offers practical utility.

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# A&B Gov't to administer and pilot climate partnership project



**Ambassador Walton "Aubrey" Webson.**

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has entered into a first-of-its-kind partnership with the Open Society Foundations which will counter the debilitating cycle of debt service payments.

To be implemented in partnership with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, a US\$500,000 grant from the Open Society for the Finance for Acting on Climate in the Eastern Carib-

bean (FACE) project seeks to alleviate an issue that is endemic to many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), focusing on Antigua and Barbuda as a pilot debt-for-climate-swap country.

In the Eastern Caribbean, total public sector debt amounted to US\$5.4 billion as of December 2020. This debt is exacerbated by repeated destruction of physical and social infrastructure, productive capacity, and developmen-

tal setbacks caused by climate impacts such as hurricanes and drought, as well as natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Every few years, Caribbean islands are confronted with disasters resulting in loss and damages in excess of 5% of GDP.

To cope with recovery from these continuous extreme events and climate change impacts, islands go further into debt. The FACE project will be administered by the Gov-

ernment of Antigua and Barbuda, as AOSIS Chair, and its activities aim to promote a just and inclusive response to the dual impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic on SIDS.

One avenue for SIDS to address debt challenges while also increasing resilience to climate change is debt-for-climate swap. In this arrangement, developing countries reduce their external debt while investing the liberated funds in national climate

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adaptation and mitigation programmes.

A debt-for-climate swap pilot programme in Antigua and Barbuda will be a key element of the FACE project, and will be a mechanism for scaling to the Eastern Caribbean. The debt-for-climate swap for Antigua and Barbuda will comprise approximately US\$245 million, or 20% of the country's public debt negotiated by the end of 2022.

An up-to-date general debt inventory for Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) member states and debt swap concepts are planned to be made publicly available by the end of 2022.

Additionally, the project provides a facility to advocate within the UN system to adopt a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for SIDS.

AOSIS has been driving the need to adopt a more comprehensive measure for financing that considers SIDS' unique set of vulnerabilities that impede their ability to sustainably develop.

"Caribbean SIDS are among the most heavily indebted per capita developing countries in the world, and some of the most highly vulnerable to climate change, yet climate finance is not adequately accessible," noted Ambassador Aubrey Webson. "The FACE

project supported by the Open Society allows us to engage in interventions aimed at sustainably reducing debt levels and safeguarding economic viability in countries that are among the most exposed to economic and climate shocks."

He added: "Public debt significantly inhibits SIDS' ability to pursue sustainable development, economic growth, or build resilience to climate change impacts. Grants of this nature are essential to build our capacity and combat growth inhibitors

such as climate change, a crisis we did not cause. Small island' inhabitants are ingenious, innovative people, and once empowered with the necessary resources we will forge our own path to a robust, sustainable future."

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# Rotaract Club shares Christmas cheer with children

On Saturday 11th December, as part of its *Charter Week of Activities*, the Rotaract Club of Antigua hosted one of its annual signature projects, **'Share the Cheer'**.

This year, the Club brought smiles and happiness to over 150 children throughout several communities across Antigua by gifting toys to them.

This initiative has been done in previous years and it is aimed at spreading Christmas cheer to different target groups. This year, the club targeted children two to 10 years old.

In a 'Secret Santa' style, members of the Rotaract Club and Assistant Governor Evangeline Allen journeyed with Santa Claus to spread Christmas cheer by surprising children in Cassada Gardens, Piggotts, Johnsons, Michael's Village, Nut Grove, Gray Hill, Grays Farm, Donovans, Five Islands, and Point.

On the way to the Point community, the Club and Santa also gifted toys to children on Market Street. Commu-

nity Service Director Dr. Namadi Belle described it as heartwarming to see how elated the children were to receive surprise gifts from Santa Claus. She also stated that the Club received an overwhelming amount of gift



donations through its businesses for support-toy drive, and thanked the individuals and ing the project.



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- Disaster Preparedness Management, an asset
- Logistics Management, an asset
- Project Management, an asset



# Politically Exposed Persons – Behold the Scale of Justice

by **Arvel Grant** (political and current affairs analyst)

Following PM Gaston Browne's removal of two ministers from his Cabinet because of criminal allegations against them – and the trial of three ministers of the former UPP administration for alleged conversion of buses reportedly intended for transportation of students – politicians on both sides of the political divide in Antigua and Barbuda seem to believe they are being uniquely targeted for prosecutorial and judicial attention.

Really?

In very recent times, the work of Jamaica's auditor-general and/or the country's powerful media, have led to no fewer than five elected officials of the governing Jamaica Labor Party being prosecuted or expelled from their party because of alleged criminal or perceived corrupt activities. These include at least two former ministers of the crown.

In recent months, no fewer than three major Statutory Boards in Jamaica have come under substantial scrutiny. Certain of their officials were forced to resign and maybe facing judicial processes because of alleged corrupt practices.

It is instructive to note that, in Jamaica, high officials in the former PNP administration are required to answer questions in court, relating to so-called Trafigura Affair.

Recently, US authorities charged and convicted a former minister of the crown (in Barbados) with criminal wrongdoings. Currently, at least one former minister of the crown (in Antigua and Barbuda) is believed to be under investigation by national crime authorities in the United Kingdom.

In Haiti, almost 50 people are in police custody because of the assassination of the country's President by an alleged coalition of political and criminal collaborators.

Truth be told, PEPs (politically exposed people) around the world are being held to increasingly higher standards of probity because of their potential to facilitate the takeover of their governments (or statutory bodies) by agents of organized crime and terrorist infrastructures.

In the prevailing international environment, politically exposed persons (PEPs) with a prima facie case made out against them, need not be surprised if they are called upon to face judicial proceedings. Further-

more, any politically exposed person who is under active national, regional or international investigation for alleged activities which could lead to criminal charges, should expect removal from office pending conclusion of any such investigations.

The world is desperately afraid of the possibility of having to deal with governments taken over by criminal or terrorist elements acting insidiously or otherwise. Furthermore, the plunder of State resources is a major

contributor to underdevelopment in communities and countries around the world. Over time, such plunder – left unchecked – will lead to failed states ... witness Haiti, a fellow CARICOM country.

Walk good and hold your government and opposition officials accountable. We are only safe if they are clean. *(Read more of Arvel's analytical pieces on [arvelgrant.com](http://arvelgrant.com) and [arvelgranttoday@facebook.com](mailto:arvelgranttoday@facebook.com))*

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# Guyana surpasses WHO's country COVID-19 vaccination target

**Guyana Chronicle** - GUYANA has surpassed the World Health Organisation's (WHO) mandate of inoculating 40 percent of the population with a COVID-19 vaccine by December 2021.

Minister of Health Dr. Frank Anthony said Guyana has thus far fully vaccinated 39.6 percent of the population. That percentage is expected to increase by the end of the year.

"So, you have a percentage of our population that we are not vaccinating as yet because of, one, unavailability of the vaccine and, secondly, in that low age category there is no vaccine available. Nevertheless, we're at 56.3 percent coverage for our population."

So far, Guyana had been able to vaccinate 435,085 people with a first dose, representing over 56 percent of the population.

Even though Guyana's vaccinated percentage is relatively high, it is the entire population of 772,975 people that is being



*Minister of Health, Dr. Frank Anthony.*

considered.

However, vaccines are only available for 512,983 people due to age eligibility; which means only 107,547 individuals who are eligible to take a COVID vaccine, have not.

The data shows that 79 percent of the eligible population have taken a stance against the spread of COVID-19 and have gotten the first dose of a vaccine, while 55.7 percent of that amount have returned for the second shot.

To further protect the population from the damaging effects of the disease, government has already begun the rollout of booster shots for persons 50 years and older, those 18 years and older with a comorbidity, and other adults.

Meanwhile, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said "inequalities have fuelled the pandemic and continue to do so."

Bachelet added that, by December 1, barely eight percent of adults had received one dose of vaccine in low-income families, compared with 65 percent in high-income countries.

However, Guyana is not included in the eight percent group due to the swift work of government in purchasing COVID-19 vaccines, acquiring vaccines from other friendly countries, and also through the COVAX facility.



# Barbados PM: inequity led to some vaccine hesitancy



**Prime Minister Mia Mottley.**

**BGIS** – Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley believes that inequity and discrimination in countries have led to much of the vaccine hesitancy being seen across nations.

Ms. Mottley is further of the view that the situation has been further fueled by the lack of trust among many citizens who, for a long time, have been left out of the “democratic deal” and

“bounty that comes by being a citizen”.

The Prime Minister expressed these views on Thursday when she delivered remarks at the Virtual Summit on Democracy hosted by the President of the United States of the America, Joseph Biden.

The Prime Minister told the audience that democracy must always be about people.

“It is ironic, therefore, that this pandemic has laid bare much of what must concern us today – the inequity and the discrimination. Indeed, the lack of trust that is further fueled by fake news and the invisible hands that influence what we view in our virtual world.

“We must learn why we cannot continue to ignore inequity or fail to summon the will to eradicate poverty,” she said.

Ms. Mottley stated that the pandemic and climate crisis had underscored why the democratic ideals must also underpin relations in the international community, and why leaders must seek to have global public goods.

“This lack of vaccine equity continues to put us all at risk. The possibility of climate refugees undermines democracies, not only in the countries from which those refugees will come, but the neighbourhood within which those refugees will travel. We must equally be concerned about the lack of democratic ideals in the international institutions to which we belong,” she stated.

The Prime Minister noted that freedom of the press, freedom of elections, freedom of movement, or freedom of association, were not really issues in the English-speaking Caribbean.

“Our issue in this part of the region, I believe, is more encouraging active citizenship to support the architecture of our democracy, recognising that democracy comes in many shapes and forms ...

“Our fight also relates to the elimination of corruption in high and low places. We must therefore have these conversations, and it is absolutely vital that we deconstruct and truly appreciate where our concerns are as small island developing states in the Caribbean, where we may strengthen what we are doing within our countries and across the global community of nations,” she said.

Ms. Mottley stated that Barbados was small in size but had played a significant role in the promotion, preservation and protection of democracy and democratic traditions for several decades.



# CDB to fund Haiti's insurance against natural hazards

**CARICOM Today** - The Board of Directors of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has approved funding for the full premium for natural hazard insurance for Haiti.

The Bank is providing US\$6.9 million as a grant on a one-time request by the Haitian Government to cover the premium of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company (CCRIF SPC) for the period 2021/22.

"Haiti faces serious challenges due to the combined shocks of natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, political instability, and the heightened insecurity in several parts of the country which contribute to financial uncertainty. The Caribbean Development Bank is supporting the Government and people of Haiti as they negotiate these times of unprecedented challenges," said CDB Vice-President of Operations Isaac Solomon.

Haiti suffered its latest disaster in August this year with the occurrence of a 7.2 magnitude earthquake, epicentred in the southwest peninsula close to Les Cayes.

The event resulted in 2,248 deaths while 12,763 persons sustained injuries and 329 are missing.

More than 52,950 houses were destroyed and over 77,000 were damaged in the three most affected areas: Sud, Grand Anse and Nippes.

In total, some 690,000 persons were displaced.



**CDB Vice-President of Operations, Isaac Solomon.**

This event triggered the largest single pay-out by CCRIF SPC, with a total of US\$40 million.

Having been a member of CCRIF SPC – co-founded by CDB – since its start in 2007, Haiti partly covered its annual insurance premium since 2018. However, the Haitian Government is unable to contribute to the payment of the CCRIF SPC premium this policy year due to the impact of the

ongoing COVID-19 pandemic among other social and economic challenges.

CCRIF SPC has enabled CDB's borrowing member countries to purchase catastrophe risk insurance at 40-50% less than the cost they would incur had they approached the insurance market individually.

Haiti is ranked among the world's most hazard prone countries, being at

risk for hurricanes, storms, floods, droughts, earthquakes, and landslides.

Having been affected by numerous major natural disasters, Haiti lost an estimated 2% of annual gross domestic product on average between 1976 and 2020; while nearly three in four households were economically impacted by at least one shock annually.



# Saint Lucia announces plans for 'Vaxxed 'Mas'

**Saint Lucia Times** - After several consultations between stakeholders and the Government Department of Creative Industries & Culture and the Department of Health, the Cabinet of Ministers has decided that the country will host Saint Lucia Carnival 2022 dubbed 'The Vaxxed Mas'.

The hosting of Carnival 2022 is subject to the full approval of the Ministry of Health, according to established health protocols. The name suggests everyone participating in Carnival 2022 – including revellers, patrons, support staff and service providers – must be fully vaccinated.

The aim is to create a bubble to ensure the safety of the general public and all carnival patrons.

Saint Lucia Carnival is one of the country's biggest cultural displays and has had a significant cultural and economic impact. Saint Lucia Carnival has grown to become one of the biggest carnivals in the region and, by all indications, was set to continue on an upward trend until the onset of COVID-19.



Dr. Ernest Hilaire – Minister for Tourism, Investment, Creative Industries, Culture &

Information stated: "As a carnival enthusiast who has been a part of carnival for the past 15 plus

years, it is critical that we continue to build on the hard work that was started by persons who have brought carnival to where it is now. "We must also ensure that we preserve the public health of Saint

Lucia while creating economic activity for our people to benefit from. Carnival is also a major part of our tourism product which sees thousands of visitors coming to our shores to enjoy our island and its wonderful experiences.

"Those in the creative industries use the carnival season as one of their avenues to showcase their talents, so we must continue to provide that platform to do so. It is even more important now after the almost two-year hiatus."

Carnival 2022 will not take place in its traditional form, but all the necessary steps will be taken to ensure that the true spirit of Saint Lucia carnival is preserved.

Strict guidelines and protocols will be implemented and the authorities will ensure strict adherence in an effort to safeguard the health and wellness of all participants.

The guidelines will be announced in due course following further working consultations between the Ministry of Health and stakeholders.

# France: 400 investigations into fake COVID-19 health passes

**Associated Press** - France has opened 400 investigations into networks providing fake COVID-19 health passes, the interior minister said Sunday, as virus-related hospitalizations rise sharply across the country.

The case of a woman with the virus who died in a Paris regional hospital after showing a false vaccine certificate has drawn attention in French media in recent days.

The hospital's intensive care chief said they would have given the woman immediate antibody treatment had they known that she wasn't vaccinated.

Authorities have identified several thousand fake COVID-19 health passes in use around France, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Sunday on RTL radio.

He said some 400 investigations have been opened

into peddling fake passes, including some "connected to health professionals".

He didn't say how many people have been arrested so far, or provide details.

The government is tightening the rules on the passes, required to enter all restaurants and a growing number of events and venues. To get one, people must show proof of full vaccination, a negative virus test less than 24 hours old, or recent recovery from COVID-19.

With more confirmed infections one day last week than at any point in the pandemic, France is accelerating efforts for booster shots in hopes that is enough to reduce pressure on hospitals.

Half of French intensive care units are occupied by virus patients, some regions are again delaying non-urgent surgeries, and more than 100 people with the virus



*People wearing face masks to protect against COVID-19 walk at Tuileries garden in Paris, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021.*

are dying every day.

The government closed nightclubs and tightened social distancing measures, but is trying to avoid a new lock-

down.

Health Minister Olivier Veran told newspaper Le Parisien that while "the epidemic wave is violent," there

are signs the rise is starting to slow.

He said 90% of people over 65 have had booster shots so far.



# Pandemic health costs pushed half-a-billion people into poverty

**Al Jazeera** - More than half-a-billion people globally were pushed into extreme poverty last year as they paid for health costs out of their own pockets during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

The pandemic disrupted health services globally and triggered the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, making it even more difficult for people to pay for healthcare, a joint statement from the two organisations said on Sunday.

"All governments must immediately resume and accelerate efforts to ensure every one of their citizens can access health services without fear of the financial consequences," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Tedros urged governments to increase their focus on healthcare systems and stay on course towards universal health coverage, which WHO defines as everyone getting access to health services they need without financial hardship.

Healthcare is a signifi-

cant political issue in the United States, one of the few industrialised countries that does not have universal coverage for its citizens.

Globally, the pandemic made things worse and immunisation coverage dropped for the first time in 10 years, with deaths from tuberculosis and malaria increasing.

"Within a constrained fiscal space, governments will have to make tough choices to protect and increase health budgets," said Juan Pablo Uribe, global director for health, nutrition and population at the World Bank.

According to a Pew Research Center study published in March, the pandemic has driven 32 million Indians out of the middle class, defined as those earning \$10 to \$20 a day.

It estimated the crisis has increased the number of India's poor – those with incomes of \$2 or less a day – by 75 million.

Meanwhile, a new report published on Thursday by the United Nations Children's agency (UNICEF) said 100 million additional children are estimated to now be

living in multi-dimensional poverty because of the pandemic, a 10% increase since 2019.

Henrietta Fore, the UNICEF's executive director, said the widespread impact of COVID-19 continues to deepen, increasing poverty, entrenching inequality, and threatening the rights of children.

"While the number

of children who are hungry, out of school, abused, living in poverty or forced into marriage is going up, the number of children with access to health care, vaccines, sufficient food and essential services, is going down. In a year in which we should be looking forward, we are going backward," she said.



***The pandemic disrupted health services globally and triggered the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, the World Bank and WHO say.***

# Spanish bishop loses church powers after marriage to erotica author

**CNN** - A bishop in Spain has had his clerical powers removed following his marriage to a “transgressive” author of erotica with satanic undertones.

The diocese of Solsona -- where Xavier Novell Goma has been serving as a bishop -- issued a statement on Saturday that said Novell is now forbidden from administering the sacraments and engaging in any active teaching, “both in public and private”, although he can still maintain his status as a bishop.

According to the statement, Novell -- bishop emeritus of Solsona -- entered into a civil marriage with Silvia Caballol on November 22, 2021, in the province of Barcelona.

The statement then refers to Canon 1394.1 of the Catholic Church, which states that “a clergyman attempting marriage, even if only civilly, shall be subject to suspension.”

Novell became Spain's youngest bishop in 2010, aged 41, when he was appointed to Solsona, a small city to the north of Barcelona in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region.

In September, Novell resigned as a bishop -- as the Vatican approved and



*The Cathedral of Solsona whose bishop of the town of Lleida, Xavier Novell Goma, has recently been stripped of his church powers.*

announced in its bulletin that month.

Now, following his marriage to Caballol, Novell is no longer able to “exercise the rights and functions inherent in the episcopal office”, the statement from his diocese said.

Neither Novell nor Caballol has yet issued a statement regarding the suspension of Novell's clerical powers or their recent marriage.

According to reporting by the BBC, Novell has supported gay conversion therapy and has also car-

ried out exorcisms.

Caballol, 38, began her career as a novelist in 2015, according to a profile on the website of her publisher, Lacre.

She is trained in clinical psychology as well as sexuality and yoga, the profile says, and has also studied Catholicism and Islam.

She is described on the publisher's website as “a person who longs to live to the fullest” and a “seeker of new emotions and sensations”.

Lacre also calls Caballol a “dynamic and trans-

gressive author who has carved a niche for herself in the thorny literary world to turn all our moral and ethical considerations upside down”.

One of Caballol's novels -- titled “The Hell of Gabriel's Lust” -- promises to transport the reader to a world where they will find “psychopathy, sects, sadism, madness, the unreality of immorality, and the crude struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan, and between the angels and demons”.



# US tornadoes: desperate search for survivors as death toll rises

**BBC** - A desperate search for survivors is under way in parts of six US states devastated by powerful tornadoes that have left at least 94 people dead.

Dozens more people are missing and entire towns were destroyed by about 30 tornadoes on Friday.

President Biden has declared a disaster in Kentucky, the worst-affected state.

At least 80 people have died in the state, including dozens in a candle factory, and the death toll is expected to rise above 100.

Kentucky Lieutenant Governor Jacqueline Coleman told the BBC the death toll was continuing to rise "with every hour".

"All of these numbers continue to unfold...", she said. "Our emergency response teams are still surveying the damage and knocking on doors and reaching out to folks trying to make contact to see who's alive."

Local congressman James Comer, working with rescuers in the ruined town of Mayfield, said the tornado there was the widest ever seen.



*Officials described Mayfield as the "ground zero" of the tornado events.*

"It's the most devastating storm damage I've seen in my entire life. We've had tornadoes that have been the same length as this tornado but we've never had one with the width of this tornado," he said.

Forty people have been rescued from the collapsed candle factory in Mayfield, but 60 more remain missing. Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, who has visited the scene, said it was unlikely there were more survivors.

He said no-one had been found alive since Saturday.

"There's at least 15ft of metal with cars on top of it, barrels of corrosive chemicals that are there. It'll be a miracle if any-

body else is found alive in it," he said.

One candle factory employee made a desperate plea for help on Facebook from under the wreckage as co-workers could be heard moaning in the background.

"We are trapped, please, y'all, get us some help," said Kyanna Parsons-Perez - who was later rescued - in the broadcast played on CNN.

Ivy Williams, whose wife was working a night shift at the factory, was speaking to her on the phone when the call cut out, he told the Washington Post. He said he had not heard from her since.

"I need people to help me find my wife, and be

honest with me, and let me know as soon as possible," he told the newspaper, in tears as he waited outside a counselling centre.

Mayfield resident Tony Meeker described the moment the tornado hit.

"Out of nowhere the sirens went off and then not long after that our ears popped. I mean it was like the pressure dropped. And then it felt like our house was about to just be gone, get carried off," he said.

"It looks like a bomb went off. I don't know how anybody could've lived. I feel bad for anybody that didn't make it or people who got stuck. I'm sure it was terrifying."

# **VACANCIES at OSEC**

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### **ASSISTANT BAR MANAGER**

Minimum 2 years' experience in a similar position within a hotel environment  
Tertiary qualification in Hotel or Bar Management or its equivalent from a recognized university  
Must be HACCP Certified | Must have current food & beverage handling licenses/permits  
Complete working knowledge of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages  
Must have a passion for teamwork and very strong leadership skills

### **ASSISTANT FOOD & BEVERAGE MANAGER**

Minimum 4 years' experience as a Food & Beverage Manager at a five star hotel  
Diploma/Degree in Hotel Management required | Second language would be an asset  
Must have a genuine passion for food and able to work within a busy environment & thrive under pressure  
Must be a team-player | Must be service-oriented  
Effective communication skills | Leadership/People Management skills

### **AUTO MECHANICS INSTRUCTOR**

Minimum 3-5 years' experience working in the Auto mechanic industry  
5 CXC Passes (including English & Mathematics) or Tertiary Level Completion  
Knowledge of career and technology skills and competencies in Auto Mechanics  
Experience in teaching in a classroom setting with diverse students is a plus

### **AUDIOVISUAL TECH/ IT SUPPORT**

Associate degree in instructional media and technology or related field in addition to a minimum of two years' professional audio-visual experience | InfoComm CTS certification highly desirable  
Advanced knowledge of circuitry, electricity, electronics, and the ability to read and follow schemata and technical manuals | Experienced with video recording, editing and production  
Strong working knowledge of AV switching control systems (e.g. Extron, Crestron)  
Superior interpersonal skills with demonstrated ability to work well with people.  
Excellent verbal and written communication skills | Must be available to work evening and weekend hours  
Must be able to lift and carry 50 pounds on a regular basis

### **BAKER'S ASSISTANT**

No experience required | High School Diploma with at least 4 CXC Passes  
Must be able to stand for long hours

### **BAKER/PASTRY MAKER**

Minimum 4 years' experience in a similar role | High School Completion  
Artistic and creative in decorating cakes and other confections including chocolate and sugar art decorations  
Must be physically fit  
Excellent knowledge in the use of patisserie and their various possible combinations

### **BARTENDER**

Minimum 1-2 years' experience in a similar role | High School Diploma  
Must be customer-service oriented | **MUST BE FULLY VACCINATED**

### **COLOUR MATCHING TECHNICIAN**

At least 2 years' experience in mixing paints  
Minimum five (5) CXC subjects including Math and English.  
Must pay attention to detail and have a good eye for colour  
Strive to provide prompt and professional service to customers  
Strong interpersonal skills and positive attitude  
A driver's licence and a vehicle would also be a plus



**COOK (RESTAURANT)**

Minimum 1-2 years' experience | Must be trustworthy & reliable

**CLEANER**

Minimum 2 years' experience

**CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER**

Minimum 7+ years' relevant experience in a customer focused environment with post-secondary degree or certifications with 5-7 years people management experience

University Degree or Tertiary education with experience

Strong leadership, analytical, communication and record-keeping skills | Must pay attention to detail

**DELIVERY TRUCK DRIVER**

Minimum 2-3 years' experience in a similar role | High School Completion

Must be able to drive and have a Class 3 Drivers' License

**DENTAL ASSISTANT/HYGIENIST**

5+ years' experience as a Dental Assistant/Hygienist | Good Understanding of Dental/Medical software

Ability to assist in making clinical diagnosis | Perseverance, Motivation, Confidence

Flexibility, Communication, Teamwork | Problem Solving, Leadership, Organization

General computer skills including Microsoft Suite & Google Docs

**FOREMAN**

Minimum 5 years' experience | Welding, Refrigeration & Electrical skills required

Must be bilingual (Able to communicate in English & Spanish)

**GARDENER**

Minimum 2 years' experience in a similar role | High School Completion

Must be physically fit and able to lift at least 60 lbs.

**GIFT SHOP ATTENDANT**

Minimum 1 year experience in a similar role

**GROUNDS SUPERVISOR**

Minimum 3 years' experience in a similar role

**HEAD CHEF (RESTAURANT)**

Minimum 5 years' experience in a similar role

**HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATOR**

Minimum 5 years' experience in a similar role | High School Completion

Good communication skills | Must be physically fit & able to operate heavy duty equipment

**HOTEL DRIVER**

Minimum 1 year experience in a similar role | Must have a valid Driver's License

**INSTRUCTOR/ ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY**

MD or PhD Degree

A minimum of five years teaching experience in the pre-clinical curriculum at an accredited university

Ability to supervise, advise and train students and faculty members

Ability to advise and train remediating students | Ability to foster a co-operative work environment

**KITCHEN ELECTRONIC & REFRIDGERATION TECHNICIAN**

Minimum 3 years' experience as a Kitchen & Refridgeration Technician at an international first class hotel

| Must be proficient in Basic MS Office

Must have knowledge dealing with Hydraulic Installations, Convection Ovens, Dishwashers, Fryers etc.

**KITCHEN STEWARD**

Minimum 1 year experience in a similar role

**LABOURER**

Minimum 3 years' experience in a similar role | Secondary School Completion | Must be physically fit

**LABOURER/GROUNDS ATTENDANT**

Minimum 5 years' experience in a similar role

Must have knowledge propagating and maintaining plants

Must be a team player & must have a Driver's license | **MUST BE FULLY VACCINATED**

**LINE CHEF (FINE DINING RESTAURANT)**

Minimum 3 years' experience in a similar role | Able to work unsupervised

Certificate from a Reputable Culinary School OR 5 years in Reputable restaurant

Food Handlers Certificate required | Must be punctual, motivated, passionate & disciplined

**MARKETING MANAGER (HOTEL)**

Minimum 5 year experience in a similar role | Minimum High School Diploma or equivalent

Must be able to perform job functions with attention to detail, speed and accuracy; Must be creative and a clear-thinker |

Must reflect a positive attitude at all times

Relevant Qualifications required | Must have a valid Driver's License

Proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite & Adobe Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, After Effects etc.) | Web design preferable

**MASONRY INSTRUCTOR**

Minimum 3-5 years' experience as a Mason

Technical Diploma and/or Certification in Construction trade | 5 CXC Passes (including English & Mathematics) or Tertiary Level Completion

Experience in teaching in a classroom setting with diverse students is a plus

**MECHATRONIC TECHNICIAN**

Experience in Blow Molding and Distillery applications | Plc experience

Ability to troubleshoot electromechanical system | Boiler overhauls and maintenance

Knowledge of Fiber Optic communications & VFD programming

Experience dealing with Pumps and motors repairs | Process Operations | Hi and low-pressure compressor process

**MULTILINGUAL BARTENDER**

Minimum 3 years' experience | Fluency in English & Additional Language required

**MULTILINGUAL CLERK**

Minimum 3 years' experience | Fluency in English & Additional Language required

**PLUMBING INSTRUCTOR**

Minimum 3-5 years' experience working in the Plumbing industry

5 CXC Passes (including English & Mathematics) or Tertiary Level Completion

Technical Diploma and/or Certification in Construction trade

**ROTI MAKER**

High School Completion

Must have a valid Food Handler's Permit | Must have knowledge of Roti preparation

**SALES CLERK (PET STORE)**

Minimum 1 year experience in a similar role | Must be customer service-oriented

Must like animals and willing to learn how to take care of them

**SECURITY OFFICER**

Minimum 2 years' experience as a Security Officer | Secondary School Completion



**SENIOR PROJECT DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT**

Minimum of 15 years hands-on experience in the development, management or overseeing of (multiple) major mixed-use real estate projects in the hospitality or leisure industry in the Caribbean  
Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree in the related fields of real estate, urban planning, architecture, construction management or civil engineering, business or finance preferred  
Experience negotiating, engaging, managing and directing third party consultants and contractors  
Strong analytical skills including financial analysis  
Working knowledge of land use and zoning processes  
Strong computer efficiency, written, oral communication and presentation skills

**SHAWARMA COOK**

Minimum 4 years' experience in a similar role  
High School Completion | Valid Food Handlers' Certificate required  
Good Communication and customer service skills  
Must be able to work under pressure

**SKILLED CARPENTER**

Minimum 10 years' experience as a Carpenter | Secondary/Vocational School Completion

**TILE SPECIALIST**

Minimum 3 years' proven experience as a Tiler

***DEADLINE FOR ALL APPLICATIONS is***

***Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2021***

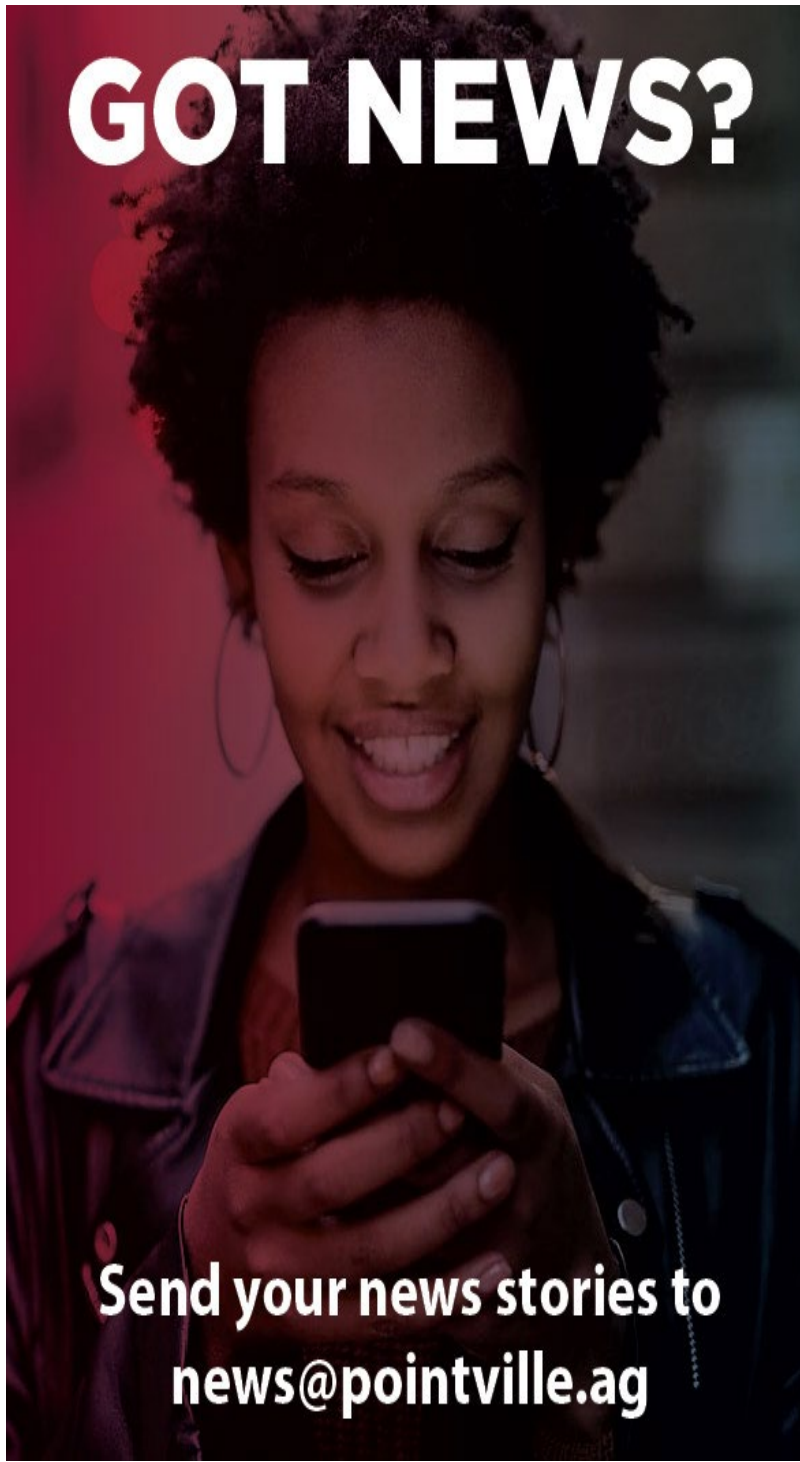
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# Chase, Cottrell and Mayers unavailable for T20I Series in Pakistan after COVID-19 positive tests

Following PCR tests administered on arrival in Pakistan, Cricket West Indies (CWI) has confirmed that four members of the West Indies touring party have tested positive for COVID-19 and will now undergo a period of self-isolation.

Left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell, all-rounders Roston Chase and Kyle Mayers, along with a non-coaching member of the team management unit returned positive tests in Karachi and will therefore be unavailable to participate in the upcoming Pakistan series. All four members are fully vaccinated and are without major symptoms.

According to Johnny Grave, CEO of CWI: "Our arrival testing protocols in Pakistan have confirmed four (4) COVID-19 positives. These were confirmed whilst the players and staff were still in room isolation, so despite this significant setback to our preparation plans, we are confident that the tour can continue as everyone else returned negative PCR prior to their arrival into Pakistan and two negative PCRs since they have been in Karachi.

"The risk of COVID-19 infection is impossible to remove completely from a cricket tour, in spite of the fact that many of our players have been living in bio-secure bubbles almost continuously since before the CPL.



*Sheldon Cottrell*

"This unusual loss of three players from our squad will seriously impact our team preparations, but the rest of the squad are in good spirits and will begin training today ahead of our first game on Monday."

All four individuals will remain isolated from the rest of the West Indies squad and are now under the care and supervision of the team's physician, Dr. Akshai Mansingh.

They will remain in isolation for 10 days and until they return negative PCR test results. The three-match T20I Series starts on Monday 13 December and will be played at the Karachi National Stadium.

## **TOUR SCHEDULE**

T20Is start at 6pm local time  
(9am East Caribbean/8am Jamaica)

ODIs start at 1pm local time  
(4am East Caribbean/3am Jamaica)

December 13 – 1st T20I, Karachi

December 14 – 2nd T20I, Karachi

December 16 – 3rd T20I, Karachi

December 18 – 1st ODI, Karachi

December 20 – 2nd ODI, Karachi

December 22 – 3rd ODI, Karachi

# Nico Ali Walsh captures first win at Madison Square Garden



*Ali Walsh won against Reyes Sanchez to improve to 3-0 overall for his boxing career, coming out on top through a majority decision.*

"Ali! Ali! Ali!" chants echoed throughout the Garden as Ali Walsh finished the second round in a flurry, tagging Sanchez with multiple body shots.

He seemed close to finishing Sanchez's night early, hurting him with a right hand with about 30 seconds left in the round, but the 29-year-old Sanchez survived to hear the bell.

Sanchez had the upper hand in the third round, as Ali Walsh ap-

peared fatigued going further into a fight than he had in either of his previous pro bouts, and admitted, "I did close to nothing."

He collected himself in the fourth and final round, however, finishing strong and leaving with a 38-38, 40-36, 39-37 victory.

It was a good test for Ali Walsh who feels he's being moved along in his career quicker than normal due to his last name.

"As much as I'm glad, I'm accept-

ing of it," Ali Walsh said. "I'm getting fast-tracked and I'm fighting better guys than a normal person with three fights would be fighting, but I just gotta learn quicker." Fifty years after his grandfather's famous "Fight of the Century" at MSG, another Ali has his Garden moment.

"It's amazing," he said. "It's a piece of history to be in here, let alone fight here."





# ITF backs WTA by suspending all events in China over Peng Shuai situation

According to credible reports, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) made a last-minute U-turn on its stance regarding the Peng Shuai situation by deciding to back the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and suspend all ITF events in the country next year.

Initially the organization said it will continue to monitor the situation, unwilling to ban all events in the country in order to preserve the game of tennis.

The decision kind of made sense, as the organization handles mostly junior events that allows aspiring young tennis players and kids from all around the world take part in a competitive format with prizes.

However, the organization seems to be making a U-turn on that by electing to suspend all events

in the country until the situation gets resolved. The change of heart is being reported by Reuters, although no official announcement has been made as of the writing of this article.

A source was quoted in the report by Reuters as saying: "No men's or women's ITF World Tennis Tour tournaments are scheduled to be played in China in 2022," without directly stating that it was to do with the Peng Shuai case.

When the official announcement will be made remains to be seen and how China responds to another ban will be interesting to observe.

Perhaps they will allow Peng to speak with the WTA Chief Steve Simon in person, as until now she was unable to do so.

## BENZEMA SCORES AS REAL WIN MADRID DERBY



*Karim Benzema (No. 9), with 13 goals, is three clear of Vinicius Jr and Real Betis' Juanmi in the La Liga top scorers chart.*

Real Madrid won for the 10th game in a row to beat neighbours Atletico Madrid and move eight points clear of Sevilla at the top of La Liga.

La Liga's top scorer Karim Benzema powered in a fantastic volley from Vinicius Jr's cross to give Carlo Ancelotti's side the lead.

And Vinicius picked out Marco Asensio to slot home their second.

Defending champions Atletico, who are 13 points behind Real, had chances but the clinical hosts

deserved the win. Real have only lost twice in 23 games - and none since 3 October - since Carlo Ancelotti replaced Zinedine Zidane in the summer.

Diego Simeone's Atletico, who sit fourth, look miles away from the team who won La Liga last season.

They did force Real keeper Thibaut Courtois into six saves, including to keep out Antoine Griezmann's free-kick.

A double change at the break and the introduction of Luis Su-

arez could not help them find a way through though.

Real deserved their win with Vinicius involved in both goals. Benzema's opener was his 13th La Liga goal of the season and his 36th for Real in all competitions in 2021, his best annual haul for the club. He was replaced by Luka Jovic at the break.

Barcelona are down in eighth, 18 points behind Real, after a 2-2 draw at Osasuna.

**DEWS**