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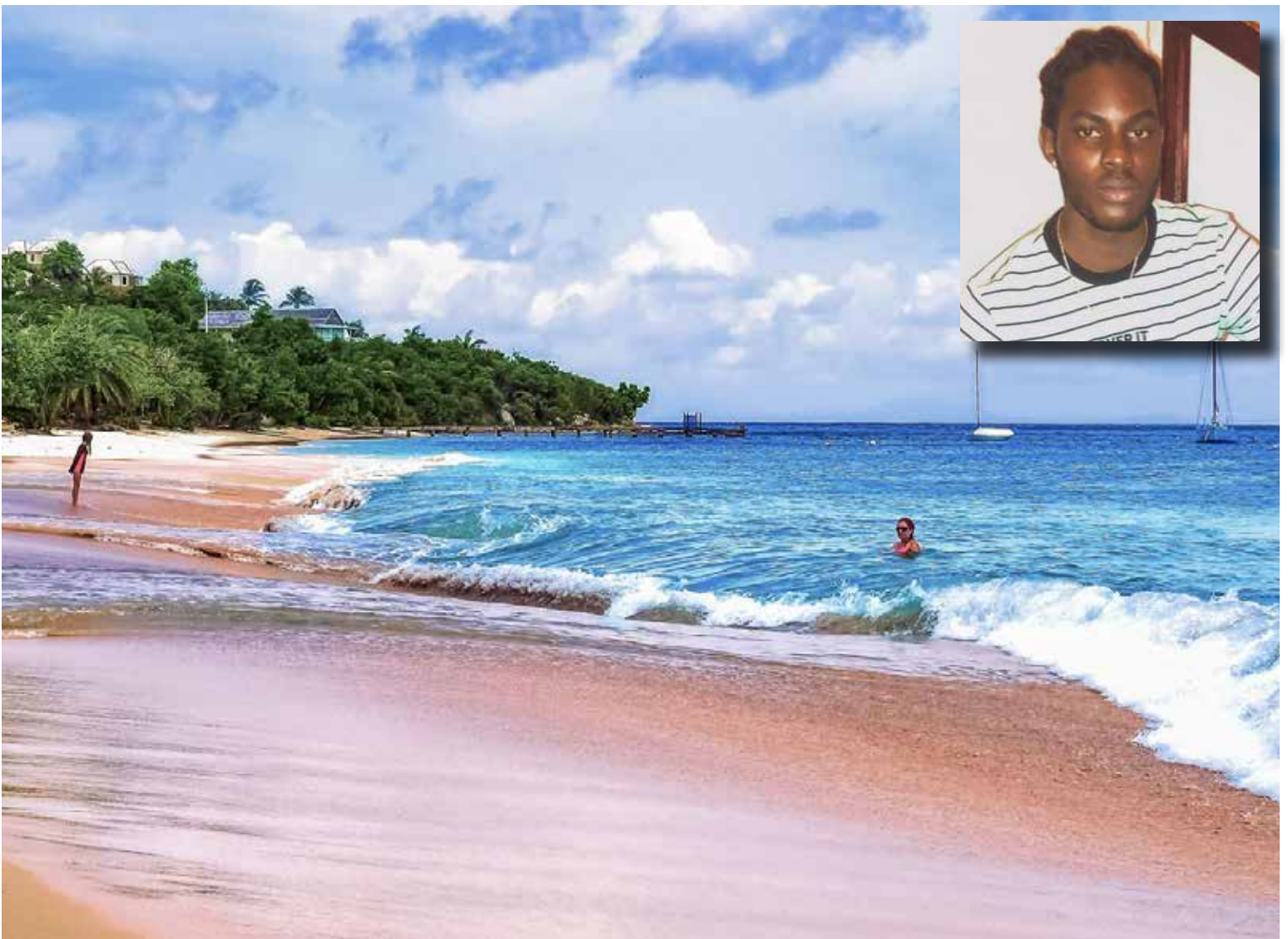
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TRAGEDY AT PIGEON POINT

23-year-old Swetes man drowns at popular beach



Beautiful Pigeon Point Beach was the scene of a heartbreaking tragedy on Sunday when 23 year-old Jahmali Smith, inset, drowned during a family outing. **Story on Page 3.**

PM aiming for double digit economic growth in 2022; thousands of jobs to be created

Prime Minister Gaston Browne says his government will in short order roll out a comprehensive economic recovery plan that will see the creation of several hundred jobs over the months ahead.

According to Antigua and Barbuda's finance minister, despite the challenges of the past two years; his government is confidently projecting an encouraging rebound in economic growth this year.

"In terms of the economy we expect to see stronger performance in 2022. We are projecting at least 8 percent growth and I'm even hoping that we can even do double digits. And the reason we think we can do double digits is the government is now shopping for a loan of about USD\$200 million.

"On the basis that we are successful in raising that money, then we can commit some of it towards some capital projects, including possibly two hotels and I spoke about us sinking some money into



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Jolly Beach to redevelop a part of that property; the Calaloo Cay project as well, we may just take over that completely and forget about our partners in that project, and by so doing, we will be able to increase the room count to put more people to work and at the same time to create some construction jobs as well.

"I know PLH for example, they have indicated

that they have about 500 full time employees and they are about to take on another 250 this year. And this doesn't include people who provide indirect services to the project," PM Browne explained.

Apart from employment generated in the hospitality industry, the prime minister added that thousands more jobs will be created with a view to put-

ting as many people back to work, who may still be displaced due to the pandemic.

"The intention of the government is to create at least a couple thousand jobs within the next few months in order to literally put everybody back to work.

"In fact we half suspect that with the buoyancy in construction that we may have a shortage of construction workers and I want to emphasise here – skilled construction workers – and even in terms of labourers, we may have to ask some females who are displaced to join the workforce as labourers in order to avoid bringing in new people into the country.

"We think that with about a half a billion dollars EC invested in capital projects by the government, plus all the other private sector projects that are taking place, we believe that we can do double digits. So that is why we are projecting, conservatively, 8 percent."

23-year-old Swetes man drowns at Pigeon Point

The pristine waters surrounding Antigua and Barbuda have tragically claimed their first life this year.

Jahmali Smith, 23, of Swetes Village lost his life in an apparent drowning at Pigeon Point Beach on 23rd January.

According to initial police reports, Smith visited the popular beach with members of his family at about 4:20 pm on Sunday. Some time after going into the water to bathe, his party became concerned after they were no longer able to spot him in the water.

A search was immediately launched to find him.

The Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force Coast Guard and the Antigua and Barbuda search and Rescue soon joined the search for the missing young man.

In a tragic twist, Smith's

lifeless body was retrieved in the shallows of Pigeon Point Beach at approximately 11:23pm.

The former Caribbean Water Treatment company employee was pronounced dead at the scene by a medical doctor shortly after 1am on Monday.

It is not yet clear what devastating turn of events led to Smith's demise, however police say they are investigating this case.

There was an outpouring of condolences and support for Smith's family on Monday across social media. The shock and disbelief felt by many was palpable.

The young man has been described by many as a soft spoken, exceedingly pleasant and funny person who was a pleasure to be around and who was always willing to lend a helping hand.





Jahmali Smith


Tue 25 | Day


82°  11%
E 12 mph

Sunshine along with some cloudy intervals.
High 82F. Winds E at 10 to 15 mph.

 Humidity
61%

 UV Index
9 of 10

 Sunrise
6:40 am


 Sunset
5:59 pm


Tue 25 | Night


74°  11%
ENE 12 mph

A few clouds from time to time. Low 74F.
Winds ENE at 10 to 15 mph.

 Humidity
74%

 UV Index
0 of 10

 Moonrise
--

 Moonset
11:52 am

 Last Quarter

Waiting period reduced for booster shots

The Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment has announced shortened times in which booster shots can be taken for two vaccines.

In a statement, it was revealed the COVID-19 Vaccination Technical Working Group has recommended that the interval for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine boosters should be changed from 6 months to 5 months after the second dose of the vaccine, while AstraZeneca booster is changed from 6 months to 3 months following the second dose of the vaccine.

The rationale given for the change is that documented data and published studies have shown that the Omicron variant, detected in Antigua and Barbuda, requires additional vaccine protection.

The changes are effective immedi-



ately and the booster shots are available at the Multipurpose and Villa Polyclinic vaccination sites and some health centers.

The Ministry of Health also announced yesterday that Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine boosters for 12 to 17 year olds are now available.

In the statement, the Ministry of

Health reminded that vaccination is one of the most effective measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic and persons are urged to get fully vaccinated and get their boosters utilising the AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines which are readily available in Antigua and Barbuda.



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Beijing 2022: Together for a Shared Future

By Her Excellency Madame Zhang Yanling, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Antigua and Barbuda

In less than ten days, the XXIV Winter Olympic Games will open on February 4th in Beijing.

In his 2022 New Year Address, President Xi Jinping of China announced that as the world is turning its eyes to China, and China is ready. The venues, facilities and supporting staff for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games are all in place. The Olympic villages will officially open on January 27, welcoming about 2,900 athletes from more than 90 National Olympic Committees.

Ever since July 2015, when Mr Thomas Bach, President of International Olympic Committee, announced that Beijing was awarded the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympic

Games, China has been making great efforts in advancing venue and facility preparation and ensuring operation capability and Games service of the highest standards, following a green, inclusive, open and clean approach to hosting the Winter Olympics.

Guided by the concept of hosting a green Olympics, the organising committee of Beijing 2022 set out a sustainable vision known as "Sustainability for the Future" to ensure that Beijing 2022 plays an active role in meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For this purpose, China has made best use of existing venues and facilities, most of which are 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic venues. The only newly-constructed facility is the National Speed Skating Oval- "Ice Ribbon".

The National Stadium, dubbed the "Bird's Nest," will stage the opening and



Chinese Ambassador, Her Excellency, Madame Zhang Yanling

closing ceremonies of the Winter Games. The National Aquatics Centre, known as the "Water Cube" during the 2008 Olympics, has become an "Ice Cube."

The Wukesong Sports Centre has been transformed for ice hockey events from a basketball stadium. All the stadiums are low-carbon and have met the green building standards. Carbon dioxide transcritical direct cooling ice-making technology will be used in the National Speed Skating Oval, resulting in near-zero carbon emissions. Beijing 2022 will be the first Olympic Games where all venues are powered by green electricity and the first to use CO2 refrigeration tech-

nology on a large scale.

Additionally, more than 80% of the vehicles during the Games will be energy-saving and clean energy vehicles will be used to build a low-carbon transportation system. With the above mentioned and other efforts, all the carbon emissions generated during Beijing 2022 will be neutralised.

Thanks to the strong support from the international community, the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2021 adopted by consensus the Beijing Winter Olympic Truce Resolution with 173 countries co-sponsoring, which was record high

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in terms of co-sponsorships for the truce resolutions for recent sessions of the Olympic Games.

The resolution reaffirms the important role played by sport in promoting peace and sustainable development and calls for the building of a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.

Indeed, the Olympic Games is a grand event for athletes. It serves as a stage for athletes from all over the world to gather for friendly competition and promote the Olympic spirit.

The principle of political neutrality of sports is affirmed in the Olympic Charter. We stand ready to join hands with people from all countries to register an objection to the politicisation of sports and to the despicable practices of exploiting sports and sportsmen for political agenda.

Rather, we shall work together to make the Olympic movement contribute to a peaceful future for all mankind through the educational value of sport, in particular youth.

Not long ago, under the auspices



Paintings by youth of Antigua and Barbuda

of the Antigua and Barbuda and China Friendship Association, young people from Antigua and Barbuda participated in the International Youth Painting Invitational Competition and Exhibition hosted by China, and won awards out

of more than 1,900 paintings created by youngsters from around 45 countries.

The works of the Antiguan and Barbudan participants, with rich colours and vivid strokes, reflected their understanding of winter sports and sportsmanship and are absolutely amazing.

These works not only conveyed the best wishes of the young people of Antigua and Barbuda for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, and also demonstrated once again the friendly relations between our two peoples.

I hope the Beijing Winter Olympics will be a new starting point for strengthening sports cooperation between our two countries.

A streamlined, safe and splendid Winter Olympic Games will be soon staged. It is our sincere hope that Beijing 2022 will provide an opportunity for all the countries and peoples to enhance mutual understanding, deepen friendship, promote cooperation and work together for a shared future.



National Speed Skating Oval "Ice Ribbon" using carbon dioxide transcritical direct cooling ice-making technology.

Director of Education: Education sector has fared well despite the current climate

Director of Education, Clare Browne, has given a satisfactory rating to the achievements of the education sector over the last year despite the challenges teaching and learning processes have continued to encounter.

Marking the observance of International Day of Education yesterday, Mr. Browne said the successes achieved are the result of dedicated teachers who continued to do their jobs in spite of the myriad of issues arising in this era of COVID-19 era and the commitment of parents who offered guidance to their children who were subjected to remote learning.

"I think we have fared in the situation fairly decently," he said.

Director Browne told state television that education systems have been resilient during the various stages of the pandemic and will continue to develop strategies in concert with the United Nation's theme for the day, 'Changing Course, Transforming Education'.



Director of Education, Clare Browne

According to the senior education official, around the globe including here in Antigua and Barbuda, major adjustments began taking effect this month at the commencement of the second term of the academic year.

"It is obvious that we have changed the strategy from shutting down as soon as it rains, to putting up an umbrella and going out in the rain, working little by

little with whatever the situation is," he said.

Mr. Browne assured parents, guardians and those with an interest in education that his technicians, along with other stakeholders, have crafted plans that are aimed at minimising the negative impact of the pandemic.

This includes the formulation of a risk assessment tool.

"So when a situation

arises in a school, instead of shutting down the entire education system, we work with situations as they arise in schools, using the risk assessment tool that was carefully developed. So we are wanting to make sure that in this second term and going forward that the education system remains up and running," Director Browne assured.

He agrees with the position taken by experts that the world must learn to live with COVID-19, therefore adjustments to the way things were done pre-pandemic are necessary.

"Education is fundamental to human existence. If you look at the powerful nations of the world, they have invested heavily in education.

"If Antigua is going to be sustainable, if Antigua is going to go anywhere, then we must invest heavily in education. We must continue to ensure that our children and young people receive the education that they so richly deserve," the director of education asserted.

UPP cranks up campaign machine

The main opposition United Progressive Party has announced the launch of its election campaign with a mega Drive-in Rally at Potters Playing Field on Thursday 27th January, 2022.

The party said it will officially present its 16 candidates and campaign message.

During Thursday's event, the UPP added it will propose urgent solutions for the improvement of the nation's healthcare system and share its plans to diversify the economy, thereby creating new opportunities in new sectors.

"With the unemployment rate estimated around 30%, the UPP will create hundreds of new jobs to bring economic relief and improve the livelihood of citizens and residents. Our team is energized and committed

to getting people back on track and back to work," says UPP political leader Harold Lovell.

"We are ready to lead this country safely out of the pandemic and revive the economy. We want to see our communities flourish and our people realise their full potential," says Hon. Jamale Pringle, Leader of the Opposition.

The rally will address issues that are foremost in the minds of voters. These include the lack of jobs, a worsening water crisis, the high cost of COVID-19 testing, crumbling infrastructure, the late payment of pensioners, and a burdened education system that must make up for time lost to the pandemic.

The Drive-In Rally will begin at 7:00 PM and will be broadcast live on several media platforms.



UPP political leader Harold Lovell.

Going forward, the UPP says it will continue to monitor the effects of COVID-19, and, if necessary, utilise a hybrid-event format throughout the campaign to engage voters both in-person and virtually.



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Feature

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Matthew Noyce: Walking in Faith

Anyone in Antigua and Barbuda who grew up in the 90s is well familiar with the era in which local fashion designers were revered as highly as anyone whose models graced Paris Fashion Week.

Calvin S. casual brand 'Black and Black' and Matthew Noyce's self branded 'Noyce' were household names and wearing those well loved local designers was a social symbol.

Fast forward 20 years and much has changed. Calvin S. is still Antigua's reigning King of the Runway, but Matthew Noyce has never been forgotten when people begin to reminisce about the good old days.

These days, he is the lead pastor of the Iron Sharpens Iron Ministries. For the last ten years since answering his spiritual calling, he has dedicated his life to sharing the word of God with those who follow his ministry and

to anyone else he is able to share the Word with.

This January officially marks one decade since he began the Iron Sharpens Iron Ministries and he has been on a nationwide media tour to share his milestone achievement with others.

On Monday, the Villa native spent some time with Pointe on De Streetz' Vernon Springer, where he shared a bit about himself.

Starting at almost the very beginning, Matthew explained that he was born into a humble family, and was never wanting. Therefore, it was a long time before he realised that his family was in fact poor.

This did not in any way hamper his creative streak. In fact, it fostered it as this was how, by happy mistake, he became a leading Antiguan and Barbudan fashion icon whose legacy remains today.

"I would sometimes go

to town and see fashion but was not in a financial position to purchase them. So what I would do, I would make little drawings and emulate some of these fashions I saw and carry them to a tailor.

"The tailor is actually from Villa, John Prince, and I would commission him to manufacture garments for me, with a little different touch. Everything [I designed] I would add my little different touch to it. And almost overnight, [the brand] began to gather much attention. And [through] I guess the law of supply and demand, I began to enlist the services of John and we began to start the little business," he said, explaining the origins of his Noyce label.

"As it would be," he continued, "the demand grew so great that I myself had to learn to cut and to



sew and for a season in my life there was a time when I was a tailor!"

He eventually went on to launch Noyce Clothing Company, a modelling group and won a regional fashion competition in Nevis and went on to become an immensely successful business man.

But as is always the case in these stories, the turning point in his life came in the unlikeliest of places: a dancehall concert he attended featuring Jamaican superstar, Bounty Killer.

Pastor Noyce explained that he did not grow up in an overly religious home and as a young man he never par-

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LIAT goes cashless, reducing environmental footprint

LIAT is implementing an innovative change to the way in which its customers are able to pay for services this week.

The airline has announced that it will transition to a cashless transaction system at the Princess Juliana International Airport in St. Maarten.

The new system comes into effect on 27th January.

According to the airline, moving away from cash transactions will allow for smoother operations, improved service and greater safety for both staff and customers.

It is also being implemented to reduce opportunities for physical contact between staff and travellers in order to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

For some time now LIAT's pas-



LIAT landing at the Princess Juliana International Airport in St. Maarten.

sengers have been able to pay baggage fees online by calling the airline's reservations centre.

Receipts for transactions are issued via email which supports the company's goals of reducing its en-

vironmental footprint and operational costs.

In the coming months, LIAT says it will implement its new cashless system across the ten destinations it now serves.

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ticularly paid attention to religion or church. However, while attending that event he ran into a friend who told him his sister wanted to see him.

Thinking the young woman was interested in him, he decided to visit but he was greeted instead by a church going, engaged young lady who said she had a message for him from God. She invited him to church and he accepted that invitation.

This led to a very uncomfortable experience which he said felt as though God was speaking to him directly through the message being delivered that morning. He continued to



go to church and welcome the new sense of purpose and conviction he experienced on his first visit and shortly after gave his life to the Lord.

It has now been more than 20 years since he made that life changing decision.

Along the way, he has found a life partner in his

wife with whom he shares two lovely children and an equally yoked love of God.

Today, he spends his time working with young people in particular and says he hopes to be a light in the lives of those he comes into contact with so that they too can find the joy that he has serving God.

"I work with young people, I work with old people, I work with anybody! Sometimes it's brutal; working with human beings, we are broken, we are flawed. It's heartbreaking at times, sometimes you don't get back what you invest. But by the grace of God, and being indebted to God, we continue to pour and hope our life - this short thing called life - counts for something.

"So I am trying my brother. I am mentoring. I always will be mentoring. As long as somebody wants to hear and I have breath and strength in my voice, I will continue to proclaim the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Be a safe pedestrian

Pedestrians often forget that they too have a responsibility to use roads safely.

This duty is not just the responsibility of drivers. Today, we share some simple steps we can all take as pedestrians to reduce our risk while out walking.

Pay attention to your surroundings

A lot of road safety is just plain common sense but sometimes we have other things on our minds and common sense takes a back seat!

When out near roads you have to keep your wits about you and not become distracted.

Many people use mobile devices when they are walking and these can seriously distract your attention from the road. Even just looking at other people can distract your attention from the road.

Ball games, such as football and tennis, should be kept for sports fields. Never play them on the road, even if there is very little traffic.

Simple steps to take

Although you can't be responsible for the way people drive, you can take a number of steps to make yourself safer as a pedestrian:

- Stop, look and listen
- Don't try to cross the road between parked



cars.

- If possible, cross at a pedestrian crossing or traffic lights
- Never cross at a bend
- If there is a footpath, use it
- If there is no footpath, walk/run/jog on the right hand side of the road, facing oncoming traffic and keep as close as possible to the side of the road
- Wear fluorescent clothing during the day and reflective clothing at night

Use the crossings

Safer places to cross include zebra crossings,

traffic islands, footbridges, subways and traffic lights. When using any type of crossing you should always check that the traffic has stopped before you start to cross.

Always cross between the studs or over the zebra markings. Do not cross at the side of the crossing or on the zigzag lines, as it can be dangerous. You must not loiter on zebra crossings.

Sobering facts

Drunken pedestrians are a danger to themselves and other road users. Alcohol slows reaction times, impacts upon your judge-

ment and decision making, including increasing risk taking behaviour. If you have had one too many, don't try to walk – use a taxi, public transport or get a lift from a designated driver.

Certain types of drugs can affect the central nervous system and/or can cause hallucinations. The ability of the brain to make decisions can become distorted.

You may not be able to judge the speed of vehicles or estimate their distance from you, all of which will increase your risk of injury on the road.

Crypto market lost \$1.3 trillion in 74 days - and it might not be over yet

By Luc Olingo

The ongoing crash in the crypto market has shed roughly \$1.2 trillion in value since Nov. 8 and could decline further as "crypto winter" takes hold.

Crash, rout, collapse: there are not enough words to describe the state of the crypto market since the beginning of the year.

Most crypto currencies have gone into free-fall following all-time highs reached in early November.

Market value has shrunk by more than \$1.3 trillion compared to Nov. 8. The world crypto currency market was worth more than \$3.1 trillion for the first time, according to CoinGecko, which tracks prices of thousands of tokens.

Its value has decreased to \$1.77 trillion as of Jan. 21.

Bitcoin's losses are even greater: the king of crypto has lost 46.8% of its market value since setting a new record at \$69,044.77 on Nov. 10. Bitcoin prices sit around \$36,886.32 as of time of writing, a sharp decline, even for a notoriously volatile financial asset.

Ethereum, the second

largest crypto currency by market capitalisation, which reached \$4,878.26, an all-time high, on Nov. 10, is currently trading at \$2,552.94, a drop of 47.7%.

This is the fifth consecutive week of decline for most crypto currencies.

Evangelists are reduced to reminding sceptics that a year ago crypto prices were much lower.

Why Does Crypto Keep Crashing?

Crypto crash coincides with the general decline in high-growth technology stocks, which is primarily the result of the Federal Reserve's plans to taper asset purchases and raise interest rates several times this year.

As the 10-year U.S. Treasury yield spiked earlier this week, rising rates have caused investors to shed their positions in riskier assets. Yields move opposite to prices.

A common investment case for Bitcoin is that it serves as a hedge against rising inflation as a result of government stimulus, but analysts are saying the risk is that a more hawkish Federal Reserve may take the wind out of Bitcoin's



Luc Olingo sails.

At the same time, many investors seem to be realising how volatile crypto can be, according to UBS's analysts. This is compounded by the limitations of block chain technology that could make it harder to scale due to its decentralised nature.

Increased regulation is another reason UBS's analysts believe that crypto is crashing. In fact, they said in their research note that crypto will "face bigger setbacks from authorities in the coming months."

China is completely

banning all crypto-related activities and U.S. authorities are also clamping down on certain aspects of the market.

Russia's central bank has called for a total ban over the use and mining of crypto currencies on Russian territory, claiming the digital currency poses a risk to "financial stability and monetary policy sovereignty."

Russia is among the top three countries for Bitcoin mining.

"The news about Russia potentially banning

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crypto mining is significant considering Russia's crypto trading volume last year was reportedly \$5 billion, and a ban will heavily impact this," explains Marcus Sotiriou from London-based Research firm Global-Block in a note on Friday.

He added, "I do not think they will be able to completely stop crypto trading activity in Russia though."

'Crypto Winter' Is Catching Up with Investors

Crypto winter is a term market participants use to define a sustained period of price crashes in the crypto market. Prices may fail to recover for years to come.

Interest rate hikes from the Federal Reserve this year will likely lower the appeal of Bitcoin and other crypto currencies in the eyes of investors, some experts say.

"If central banks are moving to

get a handle on inflation, then that damages the argument that investors should hold Bitcoin as protection against price rises," stated the UBS analysts.

And added, there is a "dawning realisation" among investors that Bitcoin is not actually "better money" given its volatility and limited supply, which makes it inflexible.

Crypto Exchanges such as Coinbase have recently reported a decline in trading volumes, suggesting individual investors are moving away from cryptos as the digital asset slump deepens.

Lately, crypto winter has become a topic of conversation for digital assets followers on social media.

Another user said crypto winter "is here", and warned there will be "a bloodbath".

"We view crypto coins and tokens as highly speculative, and we

think that investors should not build strategic exposure to them within their financial portfolios," advises UBS.

A Crypto Rebound This Year?

Despite Bitcoin's ebbs and flows, the crypto currency could reach \$100,000 — according to analysts at Goldman Sachs.

The investment firm said Bitcoin currently makes up about 20% of the so-called "store of value" market, a term used to describe gold, Bitcoin and other alternative assets like currencies and commodities whose prices — in theory — should not depreciate much over a long period of time.

Goldman Sachs believes Bitcoin could eventually make up 50% of the store of value market, which could push Bitcoin about 17% to 18% higher annually for the next five years to top the \$100,000 level.

Bond doesn't contradict training nurses for export statement, PM says

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves has defended his government's move to bond locally trained nurses, saying it does not contradict his statement some time ago that his government is training nurses for export.

"No, the bonding is not in contradiction of that because at the time — persons didn't listen to what I say, that we are producing more than enough for ourselves and to export. And that has been the case since 2002," he said on radio on Sunday.

Last week, the prime minister announced on state-owned radio that the bond would begin with the current cohorts of nursing students.

And, speaking on WE FM on Sunday, the prime minister noted that people who received national scholarships and bursaries are bonded, but it did not apply to nurses, who are also trained at the expense of the state.

"It's only our nurses, because we used to produce so many, and the demand had not grown as great. But now that the demand is very great, we have to give consideration to bonding them."

He said that Vincentian nurses are migrating be-



Prime Minister of St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves

cause of the high demand for nurses, particularly in Britain, but also in the United States.

"We need to keep some for ourselves," Gonsalves said, adding that the country had had an excess of nurses because it was training more than it needed, and even facilitated arrangements for them to work overseas.

"But now, there's a significant flight because of the demands, through COVID, in Britain, especially, but also the US. So we will have to do some, some temporary corrections in that regard," the prime minister said.

He said that he had spo-

ken to the chief personnel officer and also the director of the Community College in this regard.

"Because remember those students, we're giving them practically a free education, and also paying them \$1,000 a month while going to school.

"I don't think that they can complain if they have to do a few years before the time they consider to leave. I noticed when I made that announcement that some persons, for political reasons, pounced on me and attacked me. I don't know — people attack you for anything," he said.

The prime minister said there was "a huge shortage of nurses" when his government came to office in March 2001. Hence, in September 2001 it recruited 20 from Cuba, who stayed for two years.

That same month, his government began training 100 nurses per year, giving them a free education and an EC\$1,000 stipend per month.

There are people who oppose me doing that, you know," Gonsalves said.

"But I knew what we were doing — it's a poverty-reduction measure — poor people children, children of the poor, the working people, the farmers, could get an education nursing because it's an expensive programme; it's the most expensive programme of the programmes which are done locally."

He said the programme continued without any bonding of the nurses.

"I didn't see the sense in bonding the nurses because we were producing more than enough in terms of the supply and demand.

"In fact, there are some nurses who are qualified, couldn't get jobs because

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Discussion On 'Vaxxed Mas' Will Continue

St. Lucia Times - Dr. Ernest Hilaire, Minister for Tourism, Investment, Creative Industries, Culture, and Information, has disclosed on his official Facebook page that the discussion regarding Saint Lucia's Vaxxed Mas will continue.

The Castries South MP's remarks came Sunday while reporting on some of his official activities during the past week.

He said Friday's big issue was discussing how Vaxxed Mas would unfold.

"The discussions will continue and all stakeholders will now be further engaged to finalise preparations. Critical will be engaging the public health authorities to establish the parameters for its execution," Hilaire explained.

In December last year, the government first announced plans for the Vaxxed Carnival event explaining that the decision for the event came after several stakeholder consultations.

"The name suggests everyone par-



Dr. Ernest Hilaire

ticipating 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," a media release at the time stated.

The release also noted that the

hosting of Carnival 2022 is subject to the full approval of the Ministry of Health, according to established health protocols.

Saint Lucia is currently grappling with a fifth COVID-19 wave which has brought a new surge in infections.

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they weren't yet going overseas."

Gonsalves said that at that time, the British market was only accepting nurses with full degrees and not those with associate degrees or regional certification.

"Then they changed that as the demand became greater," he said, adding that the UK market began accepting graduates from the local nursing school and those with regional certification.

"And in order to move

the way in which countries are moving all over the world towards the degrees, we move towards the degrees," the prime minister said, adding that nursing degrees are being offered locally through the University of the West Indies.

The degrees, we're articulating the degree for UWI, Mona. You do the programme here but you get a degree from UWA, Mona.

The prime minister said that just before the coronavirus pandemic, SVG began to see an increase in the mi-

gration of nurses.

"In fact, I don't know if you noticed we had stopped for a few years doing the associate degree nursing programme.

"We're starting back because we had to make up time because of a growing shortage because of the numbers who are going and then that has accelerated since COVID because the British, they have a serious shortage, United States, too."

He said that individual nurses were seeing jobs

overseas and then recruiting their friends, while others were recruited through agencies.

"So, the circumstances have altered. And, therefore, you have to make sure that if you are given a free nursing education, or almost a free nursing education, we're paying \$1,000 a month to them — to the nursing students, surely you should get a few years back.

"There's not a contradiction. It's application of the same principle in a different situation," Gonsalves

T&T Culture Ministry labels 'Carnival is On' headline as misleading

Loop - The Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts said the "Carnival is On" headline in the Daily Express is misleading and has generated negative feedback from stakeholders.

The Ministry said it proposed a "Taste of Carnival" which would include specific types of Carnival activities for vaccinated persons only in safe zone arrangements deemed to pose the least risk from a public health standpoint in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

These Carnival-type activities include, Calypso, Soca, Extempo, Chutney, and Steel Pan shows and competitions usually held



Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Culture, Randall Mitchell

during the Carnival season. did it ever attempt to mis-

"The Ministry has not lead anyone as it pertains to proposed that Carnival in its proposal for safe Carnival its truest sense be held, nor activities to be held during

the Carnival season," the Ministry said.

"At the Ministry, we acknowledge the hardship being experienced by the events industry and by all culture workers as indicated recently by our valued stakeholders. And in that regard, we continue to work together, as we always have, to bring relief, and to consider and implement proposals for an early, but safe and cautious restart to the entire entertainment industry."

The Ministry acknowledged that these events as proposed in its Taste of Carnival 2022 proposal cannot and is not a replacement to the numerous opportunities and events that a full Carnival celebration provides.

Mas Domnik 2022 still largely undecided

Loop -Dominica's Prime Minister indicated that discussions are currently ongoing regarding the fate of the country's carnival celebrations this year.

With carnival celebrations to climax merely one month away in Dominica, there still seems to be indecision about whether there will be Mas Domnik this year.

On his most recent Anou Parle

weekly talk show, Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit indicated that "there is no firm decision from the government" on the hosting of Dominica's carnival this year.

The calendar of events that climaxes into two days of street jump-up usually starts in late December. Carnival Monday and Tuesday, should the event pull off, will take place on February 28 and March 1.



Prime Minister of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerit

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

Heidelberg shooting: One dead in gun attack on German students

A lone gunman has killed one person and seriously injured three others inside a lecture hall at Heidelberg University in the south-west of Germany, before shooting himself dead.

He was an 18-year-old German student. German police said the shooter, who was armed with two guns, had used a “long gun”, and fired shots around the amphitheatre “wildly”.

The bloodshed triggered a large operation at the university’s campus in the Neuenheimer Feld area.

Police asked people to avoid the area so rescue workers and emergency



Police officers examine a weapon near the crime scene at Heidelberg University [Photo credit:EPA]

services could move around freely.

German media reported that the gunman appeared to have no religious or political motive.

Police have searched his flat in the city of Mannheim, and found a WhatsApp message he had sent shortly beforehand, in which he spoke of punishing people.

Heidelberg is a university town with about 160,000 inhabitants.

The country has some of the strictest gun laws in Europe, and school shootings are rare. Anyone under 25 is required to pass a psychological evaluation before getting a gun licence.

Police initially said four victims had been wounded, with a later update confirming one had died in hospital.

Hundreds of children held by IS in besieged prison in Syria

Fears are growing over the fate of hundreds of children believed to be held by jihadist extremists inside a besieged prison in north-east Syria.

Nearly 850 children are inside Ghwayran prison in Hasaka, which was stormed by Islamic State (IS) group fighters on Thursday, triggering days of battles.

On Monday some 300 militants in the prison gave up, security forces said.

More than 150 people are reported to have been killed since IS launched its raid to try to free jailed fighters.

Thousands of IS suspects are held in prisons run by Kurdish authorities.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance, supported by US-led coalition forces, fought the IS group after it overran large parts of Syria several

years ago and declared its territorial defeat in March 2019.

However IS cells still operate and have mounted strings of deadly attacks against security forces and civilians.

The surprise assault on the prison by more than 100 IS fighters sparked fierce fighting inside and outside the facility, including US-led coalition air strikes.

A UK-based monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), said on Monday that 102 IS fighters, seven civilians and 45 Kurdish members of security forces and prison guards had been killed in clashes at the prison since Thursday.

The UN children’s charity Unicef said it was concerned for nearly 850 children held at the prison amid the fighting.



The SDF says its forces have the prison surrounded. [photo credit: REUTERS]

It said the safety of the children - some as young as 12 years old - was at “serious risk”. “As fighting continues, the risk for children increases including to be harmed or forcibly recruited,” it said, and called for their release.

The SDF said IS militants were holed up in a dormitory housing hundreds of children who had been detained for suspected links to IS.

It said they were being

used as “human shields” and warned it would hold “the terrorists accountable if the children are hurt”.

The SDF said its forces had sealed off the area around the jail and that “IS fighters located within the gates of the prison can no longer escape”.

Relatives of children held at the prison say they have been detained without proper evidence and for resisting forced conscription

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Assange wins first stage in effort to appeal US extradition

AP — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Monday won the first stage of his effort to overturn a U.K. ruling that opened the door for his extradition to the U.S. to stand trial on espionage charges.

The High Court in London gave Assange permission to appeal the case to the U.K. Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court must agree to accept the case before it can move forward.

“Make no mistake, we won today in court,” Assange’s fiancée, Stella Moris, said outside the courthouse, noting that he remains in custody at Belmarsh Prison in London.

“We will fight this until Julian is free,” she added.

The Supreme Court normally takes about eight sitting weeks after an application is submitted to decide whether to accept an appeal, the court says on its website.

The decision is the latest step in Assange’s long battle to avoid a trial in the U.S. on a series of charges related to WikiLeaks’ publication of classified documents more than a decade ago.

Just over a year ago, a district court judge in London rejected a U.S. extradition request on the grounds that Assange was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions. U.S. authorities later provided assurances that the WikiLeaks founder wouldn’t face the severe treatment his lawyers said



Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Photo credits:[AP News]

would put his physical and mental health at risk.

The High Court last month overturned the lower court’s decision, saying that the U.S. promises were enough to guarantee Assange would be treated humanely.

Those assurances were the focus of Monday’s ruling by the High Court.

Assange’s lawyers are seeking to appeal because the U.S. offered its assurances after the lower court made its ruling. But the High Court overturned the lower court ruling, saying that the judge should have given the U.S. the opportunity to offer the assurances before she made her final ruling.

The High Court gave Assange permission to appeal so the Supreme Court can decide “in what circumstances can an appellate court receive assurances from a requesting state ... in extradition proceedings.”

Assange’s lawyers have argued that the U.S. government’s pledge that Assange won’t be subjected to extreme conditions is meaningless because it’s conditional and could be changed at the discretion of American authorities.

The U.S. has asked British authorities to extradite Assange so he can stand trial on 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse linked to WikiLeaks’ publication of thousands of leaked military and diplomatic documents.

Assange, 50, has been held at the high-security Belmarsh Prison since 2019, when he was arrested for skipping bail during a separate legal battle. Before that, he spent seven years holed up inside Ecuador’s Embassy in London. Assange sought protection in the embassy in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of rape and sexual assault.

Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019 because so much time had elapsed.

American prosecutors say Assange unlawfully helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

Lawyers for Assange argue that their client shouldn’t have been charged because he was acting as a journalist and is protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees freedom of the press. They say the documents he published exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“He should not face criminal prosecution and decades in prison for publishing truthful information of great public importance,” said Barry Pollack, his attorney in the United States.

cont’d from pg 18

into the SDF, AFP news agency reported.

IS had a strategy of forcibly recruiting children, including those they abducted, and training them to carry out suicide bombings or kill prisoners. The children, dubbed Cubs of the Caliphate by IS, are held along with thousands of IS fight-

ers from more than 50 countries in Kurdish-run prisons in north-eastern Syria. The overcrowded site at Ghwayran housed 3,500 suspected IS members including some of its leaders, according to the SOHR.

Hundreds of jihadists who broke out following the IS attack have been recaptured, but some are still on the run, it said.

Brendan Taylor faces ICC ban for delay in reporting approach

Former Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor has revealed that the International Cricket Council (ICC) is about to "impose a multi-year ban" on his international career after he allegedly delayed reporting a corrupt approach by an Indian businessman".

Taylor met with the businessman in October 2019 after being asked "to discuss sponsorship and the potential launch of a T20 competition in Zimbabwe". Taylor delayed reporting the meeting in India because, he said, he wanted to protect his family.

He describes substance abuse having taken place during that meeting in a statement on Twitter, which he says led to him being allegedly blackmailed.



Former Zimbabwe cricket captain, Brendan Taylor.

"We had drinks and during the course of the evening they openly offered me cocaine, which they themselves engaged in, and I foolishly took the bait."

The men he had met, Taylor said, stormed into his hotel room the next day, and threatened to release video of the substance abuse unless he carried out spot-fixing for them. He was given

USD 15,000 which he said he took to flee India and told it was a deposit for a future payment once the fix was carried out.

"It took me four months to report this offence and interaction to the ICC," Taylor said.

"I acknowledge this was too long of a time but I thought I could protect everyone and in particular,

my family. I approached the ICC on my own terms and I hope that if I explained my predicament, my genuine fear for my safety and wellbeing that they would understand the delay.

"Unfortunately, they did not, but I cannot feign ignorance in this regard. I have attended many anti-corruption seminars over the years and we know that time is of the essence when making reports."

Taylor also said he had "never been involved in any form of match fixing."

"I may be many things but I am not a cheat."

The ICC has yet to comment on Taylor's statement, Taylor retired from international cricket in September last year, after a 17 year career.

Cameroon take victory over Comoros in Afcon



Martin Hongla of Cameroon on the attack during Africa Cup of Nations

Cameroon held on to beat 10-man Comoros, who had left-back in goal.

Comoros can be hugely proud after suffering from the curse of Covid-19 where over 10 of their players tested positive including their goalkeepers.

They had to name a defender in goal.

Cameroon 2 Comoros 1 with Toko Ekambi and Aboubakar on target for the host.

Joining Cameroon in the round of eight are Tunisia who edged out Nigeria 1-0, Gambia who inched past Guinea 1-0, and Burkina Faso who beat 10-man Gabon on penalties following a 1-1 draw.

Marais Erasmus named ICC Umpire of 2021

As part of the 2021 edition of the ICC Awards, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced Marais Erasmus as the ICC Umpire of the Year 2021.

Officiating in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final between Australia and New Zealand, Marais Erasmus has led the way in his officiating, earning the respect of his peers and the international cricket fraternity.

The 2021 ICC Umpire of the Year Award sits alongside his successive Dave Shepherd Trophies, won in 2016 and 2017. On top of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final, Erasmus has overseen 20 international fixtures across all the three formats in 2021.

Erasmus, a member of the Emirates

ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, recently officiated in his 100th ODI, when he took the field in the first ODI between South Africa and India in Paarl last week.

Commenting on receiving the honour Marais Erasmus, a member of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires, said: "Real honour to win the ICC Umpire of the year award. To be honoured by the ICC Match Referees and International Test captains is recognition for a year of hard work and I'm pleased to have performed under difficult circumstances with Covid-19 bubbles and long periods away from home.

"A massive thanks to my wife, Adèle, and boys, Chris and Geo, for their unwavering support as well as



ICC Umpire of the Year, 2021, Marais Erasmus [Credit: NurPhoto via Getty Images]

ICC Umpire coach Karl Hurter for his support of me and many other umpires."

Balotelli gets Italy recall ahead of World Cup play-offs

Striker Mario Balotelli has been recalled by Italy coach Roberto Mancini more than three years after he last played for the Azzurri for a training camp ahead of 2022 World Cup qualifying play-offs, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said Monday.

The 31-year-old Balotelli was one of several surprise call ups including Brazil-born Joao Pedro, now an Italian citizen, who was recently cleared to play for Italy.

Mancini intends to take advantage of the three-day camp at the national training



Mario Balotelli

centre at Coverciano, near Florence, ahead of tricky play-offs in late March against North Macedonia and, in the case of victory

either Portugal or Turkey.

Balotelli, who made the last of his 36 international appearances in September 2018 and has scored 14

goals for Italy, now plays for newly-promoted Turkish side Adana Demirspor.

Balotelli scored regularly for Nice for two seasons in France prior to a short spell with Marseille before moving swiftly on to Brescia back in Italy and then Monza in Italy's Serie B.

He previously played for both Milan clubs' winning three league titles with Inter, but disciplinary problems have dogged much of his career--though he starred for Italy in Euro 2012 and the same season the Premier League with Man City.

Romario Shepherd has IPL in his sights

Indian Premier League (IPL) owners, head coaches and general managers are afflicted by recency bias.

Whenever the time comes to sit down at the auction table, performances that are fresh in the memory are given greater weighting than those that happened several months ago.

It is no surprise given their usual windows in the calendar, that players who have performed well in the most recent Big Bash season tend to be popular at IPL auctions, regardless of the difference in standard and conditions.

It is a widespread, long standing cognitive bias-and one that cricketers themselves are fully aware of.

In that light, West Indies and England players know that they are not only playing for a series win and for long term retention in their respective XIs in Barbados this week, but also for a bigger bid at the auction.

And with a lot of seam bowling all rounders available in the auction short-



Romario Shepherd.

list, Romario Shepherd's fireworks on Sunday night have done his chances of a deal no harm at all.

Shepherd hit 44 not out from 28 balls from no. 7 to take West Indies within one run of England's total adding 72 off 29 in an unbroken ninth-wicket stand with Akeal Hosein to add a sense of jeopardy to what had looked like a cruise to

victory.

Thirty of his runs came in sixes, including two over the longer leg-side boundary off Chris Jordan and one off Liam Dawson that cleared the Garfield Sobers Pavilion.

"I try to focus on what is at hand right now and try and put my all in here," Shepherd, who entered February's auction with an

(\$100,000 USD base price, said.

"Eventually, if an IPL contract comes, that would be great for me. I'm not saying that I don't think about it, the Guyanese added. I do think about it, but I try not to think about it during a game. I just focus on wherever the game is and try to get ourselves out of a situation," he added.