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ALL HAIL THE KING!

FAREWELL KING FRANK-I! BLESSED LOVE.



Pg 3

Today, Antigua and Barbuda bids farewell to outstanding Son of the Soil, His Excellency, Ambassador Lennox Franklin Francis. For most of his adult life, Ambassador Francis championed the rights of the Rastafarian community of which he was an Elder. He was also on the frontlines of the fight to legalise marijuana. King Frank-I was also a well loved member of the local and regional media fraternity where he led the field particularly in sports. His contributions to education and the arts will not be forgotten. Journey well King! Journey home!

King Frank-I to be interred in the Motherland

The West African nation of Ghana will be the final resting place of His Excellency, Ambassador Lennox Franklin Francis.

King Frank-I, as he is more popularly known, passed away on 6th December, 2021. Today the nation of Antigua and Barbuda will pay final respects to the Rastafarian Elder during an official funeral at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium at 10 a.m.

His daughter, Denise Francis, told this publication that following the funeral, her father's body will be flown to neighbouring Saint Kitts and

Nevis for cremation. The urn containing his ashes will then return to Saint John's where they will be kept until a date is decided for it to be flown to Ghana for internment.

Denise explained it was King Frank-I's wish to be buried in Ghana beside his younger brother and the family will honour his request.

Following his passing, the government announced it would accord the Antiguan and Barbudan ambassador to Ethiopia an official funeral, but the decision to accept the honour rested with his family.

"He belongs to Antigua and Barbuda as much as he



H.E. Ambassador Lennox Franklin Francis on radio during his days as one of Antigua and Barbuda's leading sports journalists

belongs to us, his family. So we thought that Antigua and Barbuda would want to be part of his farewell," Denise Francis said as she explained the reason for the family's acceptance of the government's offer.

Today's funeral is a celebration of life and will be a departure from what is expected during such occasions.

There will be no singing of hymns, neither will there be a priest or pastor to offer prayers or deliver a sermon. Instead, there will be chants and scripture readings along with tributes on pan, in poetry, song and dance.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Cricketing Legend, National Hero Sir Isaac Alexander Vivian Richards and Dorene Omarde will join Frank-I's siblings, children, relatives and other representatives drawn from the media fraternity to pay tribute to a

diplomat known for his significant contributions to the Rastafarian movement, education, sports and culture.

In reflection, Denise Francis said she will remember her father for "his humour, sarcasm and his love for family, especially his grandchildren."

She added he was one of the lead figures who kept the family together.

A graduate of the University of the West Indies, King Frank-I lobbied on the frontlines for the government to legalise the use of cannabis for health and sacramental purposes.

He was also one of several people who argued for reparations on behalf of Rastafarians for the atrocities committed against them.

His official funeral is being held on the day Ethiopians celebrate Ethiopian Christmas.



Officials confirm Omicron variant present in Antigua & Barbuda

The Ministry of Health Wellness and the Environment has received confirmation from the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) of the Omicron variant strain of the SARS CoV-2 in Antigua and Barbuda.

While Ministry of Health officials have suspected the presence of Omicron in Antigua and Barbuda, this is the first official confirmation of the variant's presence.

The Omicron variant, first identified in South Africa in November 2021, was found in a set of samples sent to CARPHA in December 2021. The Delta variant, first identified in Antigua and Barbuda in July 2021, was identified in the other samples.

The Omicron variant is identified by multiple spike protein mutations. Experts believe that it is more trans-

missible than other VOCs. However, it may cause more less severe disease, less hospitalizations and deceased intensive care unit (ICU) admissions and deaths.

The World Health Organization has so far confirmed five variants of concern circulating globally. Antigua and Barbuda has been sending samples to CARPHA for genomic sequencing to detect variants since October 2020. As a result of the Ministry of Health's increased surveillance, all five VOCs have now been identified in Antigua and Barbuda.

This present wave of rising infections is the first spike of concern since the last surge in November 2021. This, authorities say, reinforces the fact that the public must continue to adhere to the public health measures to prevent and control the disease. These include physical and social distancing, using



face masks and practicing hand hygiene and cough etiquette.

The public is further reminded that vaccination is one of the most effective measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Persons are therefore urged to get fully vaccinated and get their boosters utilising the AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines readily available at clinics and health centres across the country.

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Governments must act urgently to end embarrassing UWI spectacle

By Sir Ronald Sanders

(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the US and the OAS. He is also Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London and Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are his own.)

No individuals are greater or more valuable than Institutions.

The University of the West Indies (The UWI) is the longest thriving and most successful institution of the 16 countries of the West Indies – 13 of them being member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The UWI, established in 1948, is the cradle of West Indian scholarship that rose from being a distant offshoot of the University of London, to its present position among the leading 1% of Latin American and Caribbean Universities. Among 30,000 universities and elite research institutes globally, The UWI is ranked among the top 1.5%. To all West Indians, The UWI is more than a University; it is the honoured soul of West Indian scholastic achievement.

This is why the participating Caribbean governments in The UWI must act swiftly to end the embarrassing spectacle that is tarnishing the image of this great West Indian Institution.

Ever since the Report of the Chancellor's Commis-

sion on Governance of the UWI was published in July 2020, tales have circulated of the dissatisfaction of the Vice Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles. There has even been an unsubstantiated and disgraceful suggestion of racist motivation by the Chancellor, Mr Robert Bermudez.

However, when, on December 5, 2018, Bermudez established "The Chancellor's Commission on the Governance of the UWI", he did nothing more than follow a system, enshrined in the University's procedures to conduct such a review approximately every 10 years. It is most unfortunate, therefore, that our greatest West Indian institution, through whose revered halls, have passed West Indians of every colour and ethnicity in our multi-coloured society, should be lowered to such an unfounded discourse.

Significantly, all that has been said about UWI's governance came from the Commission, not Bermudez. And no one on that Commission could possibly be accused of doing the bidding of Bermudez or any other person, so great is their integrity in public life.

It is well to recall that the Commission's Chair was Sir Dennis Byron, who held many distinguished posts including the Presidency of the Caribbean Court of Justice. The other members were: Professor Nigel Har-



ris, former Vice Chancellor of UWI; Sir Elliott Mottley Q.C, a most distinguished Barbadian Attorney-at-Law and Caribbean Judge; Dr Didacus Jules, the Director-General of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS); Mr. Richard Byles, Governor of the Bank of Jamaica; Ms. Angela Hamel-Smith, Judge of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago; Dr. Beverley Pereira, Former University Counsel, The UWI; and Ms. Jacqueline Sharp, The UWI Alumni Association.

Apart from their personal standing, the qualifications of the Commission members for carrying out the mission are beyond question. Additionally, in the course of their work, they carried out a governance survey across four campuses of UWI, involving students, staff and external stakeholders.

Moreover, the Commission reviewed many

reports of committees within The UWI, including the 2019 report of the University's Management Audit department, which "identified weaknesses in the University's corporate governance system including: (a) potential conflict of interest arising from the chairmanship by the Vice Chancellor at the regional level and Campus Principals at the campus level, of many layers of committees which report ultimately to decision-making committees also chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principals; (b) a weak and under-resourced risk management system; (c) the absence of a whistle-blower policy; and (d) chronic absenteeism at the meetings of key governance bodies such as the Finance and General Purposes Committees (F&GPC) at both the regional and campus levels".

These observations were

cont'd on pg 5

Country's oldest citizen, 105, passes away

Antigua and Barbuda's oldest citizen has died.

105 year-old Raymond Hughes died yesterday morning at the Infectious Disease Center (IDC) after ailing for a period.

While health officials are yet to confirm any additional COVID-19 deaths, reports are the Seaview Farm resident fell ill after the Christmas holidays and was subsequently hospitalised at the IDC.

Mr. Hughes, who was born on

14th June, 1916, became the country's oldest living citizen following the death of 107 year-old Hyacinth Mottley on 5th July, 2021. He worked at the Antigua Sugar Factory and was also a farmer.

In an interview in 2013, he revealed he traveled to Florida when he was in his thirties, and again in his fifties, to cut cane.

In 2020, the street on which he lived in Seaview Farm was renamed Raymond Hughes Drive in his honour.



Raymond Hughes

cont'd from pg 4

sufficiently significant to warrant attention in any Institution; they could not have been ignored by the University's governing Council, which includes representatives of Caribbean governments, and they should have received the immediate attention of the Vice Chancellor and the Campus Principals. The issues could not have been brushed aside by a Commission charged with examining "the performance of The UWI in relation to its objects as stated in clause 2(a) and 2(b) of the 1972 Charter, including its Report of the Chancellor's Commission on the Governance of The UWI July 2020 management practices and its features of transparency and accountability within the University system".

It was the Commission that concluded, based on the facts before its members, that: "The review of the University's corporate governance system revealed serious challenges. The University's own documentation shows that many of these challenges have been discussed over the years and that recommendations have been made to address them. However, such recom-

mendations, even when accepted and approved, are not always implemented".

The Commission made various recommendations for improving the governance of the University. In none of the recommendations did the Commission denigrate the role of the Vice Chancellor or promote a greater role for the Chancellor. It did recommend greater oversight and monitoring functions by the governing Council (largely comprised of government ministers) through the formation of smaller working committees of the Council "suitably composed, conferred with appropriate delegated powers and supported by strong advisory committees". There is nothing wrong with that – UWI is in a critical financial situation. For the period 2018-2019, it recorded a deficit of BDS\$91.57 million or roughly US\$45 million.

In the midst of all this, despite reports which suggested that the representatives of the Governments of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago objected, Sir Hilary's contract as Vice Chancellor was renewed in April last year. The appointing authority is the University Council.

Nonetheless, in a curious development, Sir Hilary has established a Committee, comprising of employees of the UWI (his subordinates) to report to him, to investigate the part played by Mr Bermudez in the circumstances under which his contract was renewed.

In effect, the Committee is investigating the actions of the governing council of the UWI. Remarkably, it is now in the regional press that the Committee has posed several questions to the Chancellor and given him a deadline to answer.

This behaviour contrasts sharply and troublingly with the conduct of former Vice Chancellors of The UWI, and the relationships they established with their Chancellors and the University Council, which have contributed to the University achieving the great reputation that it now enjoys.

Caribbean governments need to act swiftly to end this haemorrhaging of The UWI's standing and to stop it from hurting the University irreparably. The Council must put machinery in place to repair this damage and such action must be taken now.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com

First COVID-19 statistics for 2022 released

The most recent reports received by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment covering the period January 1st through to January 4th 2021 at 6pm revealed two hundred and twenty-nine (229) new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda.

The new cases are as follows: ten (10) on January 1st, one hundred and twenty-two (122) on January 2nd fifty-four (54) on January 3rd and forty-three (43) on January 4th.

Five hundred and sixty-eight (568) samples were processed.

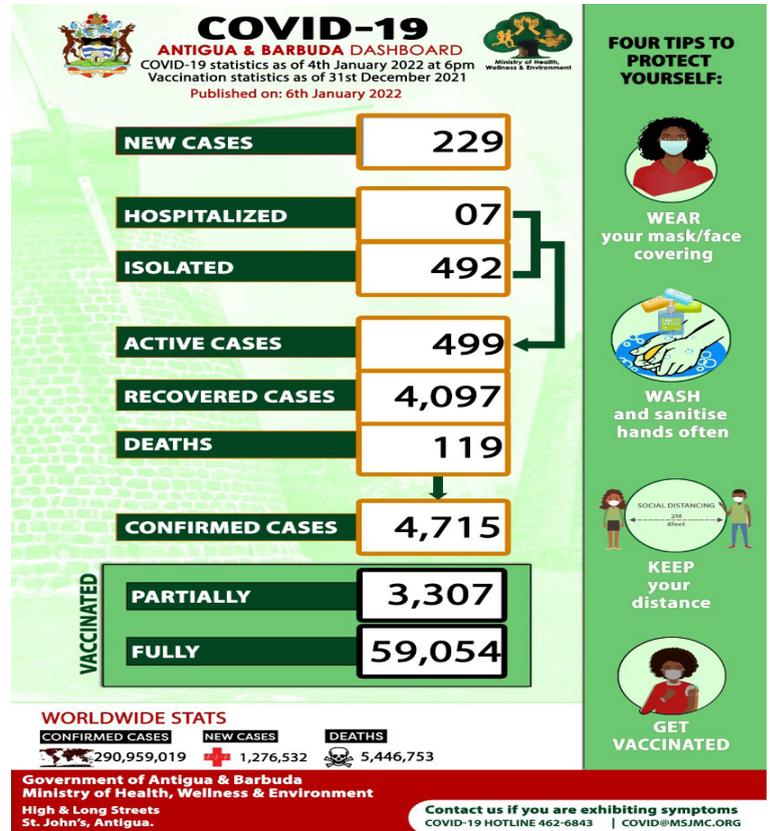
There were twenty-one

(21) recovered cases recorded during the same period as follows: two (2) on January 1st and six (6) on January 3rd and thirteen (13) on January 4th.

Consequently, the total number of persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda is four thousand seven hundred and fifteen (4,715); which is inclusive of four hundred and ninety-nine (499) active cases.

There are seven (7) hospitalised cases; four (4) moderate and three (3) mild.

The dashboard has been updated to reflect these changes.



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VACANCY – ELECTRICITY PLANT ENGINEER

BARBUDA POWER STATION

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority is now seeking applications from suitably qualified persons for the above position within the Electricity Business Unit:

Overview: The Green Barbuda Power Plant will be commissioned in Barbuda shortly. The Plant Engineer will be based in Barbuda and responsible for managing all aspects of the operation and maintenance of this Solar Hybrid Power Plant.

Key tasks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing day-to-day oversight of the technical and administrative functions of the plant.
- Ensuring the plant meets the required availability, reliability, efficiency & safety targets.
- Managing the maintenance program including breakdown, preventative and predictive maintenance.
- Maintaining adequate inventory levels of fuel, spare parts, tools and equipment.

Suitable candidates for the Electricity Plant Engineer role should possess the following:

- A Minimum of a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering from a recognized tertiary institution.
- A minimum of ten (10) years' experience in supervising the operation and maintenance of a Power Plant.
- Experience in Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) Systems within a Power Plant or similar operation.
- Experience in the operation and maintenance of a Solar Plant.
- Demonstrated knowledge of Electrical and Mechanical Generation principles.
- Knowledge and working experience with Battery Systems within a Solar Plant would be an asset.

Additionally, the role requires candidates to have:

- Strong communication, analytical, critical thinking, strategic and report writing skills.
- The ability to provide guidance and supervision to a large team. This includes identifying training needs, motivating & inspiring the team to meet unit goals and objectives while managing performance in accordance with the set guidelines of the Authority.
- The ability to effectively prepare management documents including budget estimates and monthly reports
- The ability to multitask and work under pressure to set deadlines.
- The ability to work flexible hours, if required, including weekends and holidays
- The physical and mental ability to withstand the rigors of the role.

Interested persons are asked to apply in writing to:

The Human Resources Manager
Antigua Public Utilities Authority
P.O. Box 416
Independence Ave. & High Street
St. Johns, Antigua

or Email: hr@apua.ag

Deadline for application is **Monday 10th January, 2022**

** Only suitable applicants will be acknowledged **
"APUA is an equal opportunity Employer"



VACANCY – WATER PLANNING ENGINEER

The Antigua Public Utilities Authority is now seeking applications from suitably qualified persons for the above position within the Planning, Standards, Maintenance & Construction (PSMC) Department:

OVERVIEW This role actively engages in engineering works and provides direction, coordination and oversight within the PSMC Water Planning Section. This includes producing engineering solutions and supervising and scheduling a variety of water utility engineering tasks using Computer Aided Designs (CAD) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to assist with water infrastructural development in Antigua & Barbuda. The role is also responsible for forecasting distribution demands, liaising with contractors and developers on water requirements and responding to public enquiries and requests.

Key tasks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Observing developmental trends, contacting and communicating with private and public developers, contractors and relevant authorities.
- Identifying, coordinating and planning water source development.
- Producing detailed and finished drawings for water facilities from preliminary sketches and field notes.
- Researching, updating and digitizing water facility records and data.
- Upgrading engineering plans & records, conducting investigations and collecting data.
- Preparing engineering designs, costing and scheduling projects.
- Maintaining up to date information and trends related to GIS and CAD software for water systems design and modelling.

Suitable candidates for the Water Planning Engineer should possess the following:

- A Bachelors' degree or equivalent in Civil/Agricultural Engineering, Geography or Environmental Engineering along with certification in GIS.
- A Masters' degree in any of the above mentioned fields would be an asset.
- A minimum of three (3) years' experience in coordinating water distribution development, CAD drafting & design, and demonstrated leadership skills.

Additionally, the role requires candidates to have:

- Strong communication, analytical, critical thinking, strategic and report writing skills.
- The ability to provide guidance and supervision to a large team. This includes identifying training needs, motivating & inspiring the team to meet unit goals and objectives while managing performance in accordance with the set guidelines of the Authority.
- The ability to effectively prepare management documents including budget estimates and monthly reports
- The ability to multitask and work under pressure to set deadlines.
- The ability to work flexible hours, if required, including weekends and holidays
- The physical and mental ability to withstand the rigors of the role.

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Immigration Department HQ closed due to COVID-19 outbreak

The Antigua and Barbuda Department of Immigration has closed doors to the public temporarily due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the department.

On Thursday, a statement from the department indicated that a number of its staff who are stationed at its headquarters have tested positive for the disease.

As a result, the office will remain closed to the public until 10th January, 2022.

As is protocol in cases such as this, the building will undergo thorough

cleaning and sanitisation during the period of closure.

Some services will remain available to the public, however these will be performed on a case by case basis and by appointment.

The Department of Immigration further advised that inquiries related to extensions, residency, emergency travel documents and citizenship can be directed to its Facebook page, Antigua and Barbuda Department of Immigration or via email at anumigration@gmail.com. Persons can get information by calling 268-764-3241.



AHTA warns COVID-19 will negatively impact 2022 first quarter

Rapidly rising COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda's major source markets have negatively impacted occupancy rates and booking trends nationally.

The Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association is predicting the trend is likely to continue until virus cases are controlled in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

In a statement, AHTA detailed "Many resorts across Antigua and Barbuda are seeing a trend of cancellations which has affected December occupancy and now, January and February booking trends," and can potentially impact the high season months of January through April.

"These cancellations



are being forced by potential visitors exhibiting some hesitancy for immediate travel and are opting to re-book for future dates. Re-bookings is a positive sign and a glimmer of hope in this current environment, as it could translate to a strong performance in the summer months."

Executive Chairman of

ABHTA, Vernon Jeffers, while remaining hopeful is cautioning that a further decline can negatively impact all aspects of the local tourism industry.

"We will continue to keep an eye on the performance of our members, understanding very well that we are a long way from full recovery. The volatility of

this period is all too evident as we continue to fluctuate between uncertainty and optimism. Should cancellations continue at this pace, we will see the effects trickling down to employees in the sector where reduced work weeks and rotations will have to be employed. This is a fear we do not want to see realized."

In an effort to cushion the shocks to the industry, ABHTA has appealed to hospitality partners to place emphasis on vaccination, which it noted is almost 100 per cent in the sector and observing COVID-19 protocols to ensure the safety of those who rely on tourism for their livelihoods. They believe such steps are critical to keeping the sector operating.

Montserrat and Antigua still enjoy strong relationship

Premier of Montserrat, Joseph Easton Farrell, says a cordial and harmonious relationship still exists between the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda and the Emerald Isle.

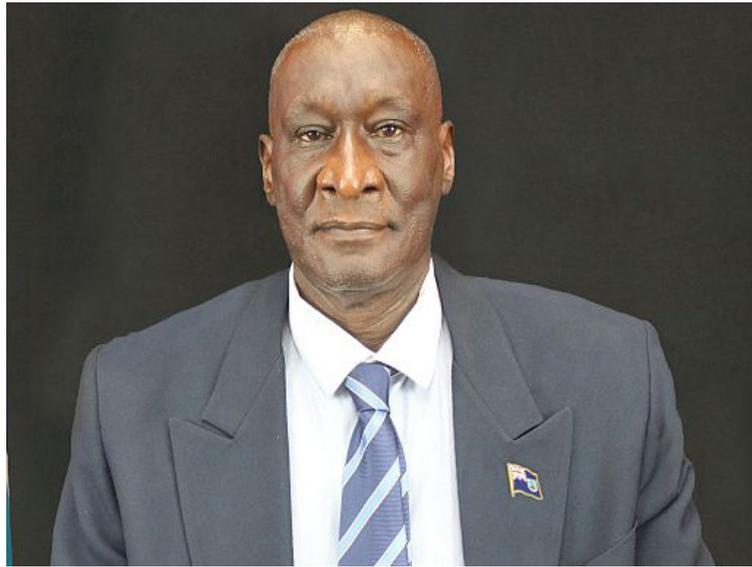
Both countries, located approximately 30 square miles apart from each other, have worked together as close allies for decades.

Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat became almost inseparable when in August 1997 an influx of evacuees from the neighbouring island sought refuge in Antigua and Barbuda during the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano. This resulted in the largest wave of immigration in Antigua and Barbuda's history.

Just over two years after the previously dormant Soufrière Hills volcano initially erupted on July 18, 1995, more than 3,000 Montserratians - one of Britain's overseas territories - resettled in Antigua.

While many eventually took advantage of offers by the British government to relocate to the United Kingdom following the disaster, many Montserratians remained in Antigua or opted to return to their homeland.

Antigua and Barbuda has remained Montserrat's gateway to the world with the establishment of daily flights and ferry services



Premier of Montserrat, Joseph Easton Farrell

which accommodate transportation between the islands.

Premier Farrell says Montserrat continues to work closely with Antigua and Barbuda.

Farrell, who successfully led the Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCAP) to victory in the 18 November 2019 Montserrat general elections, said he also enjoys a good working relationship with Antigua and Barbuda's prime minister, Gaston Browne, who has been at the helm of the ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party government since 2014.

"Prime Minister Browne and I have a very good working relationship. I do call him and we meet on a regular basis at heads meeting at CARICOM and OECS. Historically, Antigua and Montserrat have

had this working relationship. We even think that we belong to each other. We are partners," Premier Farrell said.

"During the peak of the volcanic crisis Antigua was our shopping ground. We go over on a regular basis, we had a regular ferry from Montserrat to Antigua five days a week, maybe six.

"And so there is a very good relationship between Prime Minister Browne and myself. If I need something done, I will call him and get his opinion or asked him to do something.

"We get on very well. There is no antagonistic relationship between the government of Antigua and the government of Montserrat."

Montserrat is the only full member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean

States (OECS) which does not have complete sovereignty.

Farrell says Montserrat has been unable to significantly increase its population which fell to a mere 2500 inhabitants after the great migration that occurred following the volcanic eruption in 1995.

He said although efforts have been made to attract inhabitants to the 39-square-mile island, Montserrat's current population has been hovering around 4,900 people in recent years.

"The population at the moment is about 4,900 or 4,800 sometimes. It fluctuates. We have a census coming up shortly and we will have the true figures," Farrell said.

"At the peak of the volcanic activity and crisis in 1995/96, the population fell to about 2,500. Since then we have not been able to get it back up to what it was.

"We have a target of 9,000. We are trying to do as much as we can. We have open up to our CARICOM brothers and sisters and some have come.

"What we don't have is a stable population because people are coming and people are going and so at the moment the current population is about 4,900. Figures would vary a bit around that number," he added.

Calypso Fraternity Pays Homage To Kenny J & The Mighty Bomber

By **Nekisha Neicy Cyrus**

Caribbean Entertainment Hub - Tributes continue to pour in from the Calypso Fraternity as they celebrate the legacy and cultural contributions of the late Kenrick "Kenny J" Joseph and Clifton "Mighty Bomber" Ryan who both passed away at the beginning of the new year.

Trinidadian Calypsonian composer extraordinaire, living legend, cultural icon, and mentor to many, Mighty Bomber who would have celebrated his 94th birthday this month on January 30th, 2022 passed away on January 1st, 2022, New Years Day. His death was confirmed via Facebook by his son, Sherwin Ryan.

The Mighty Bomber, a

Grenadian-born calypsonian migrated to Trinidad in 1956. At the time of his death was the oldest living calypsonian. Some of his calypso classics include 'Proverbs', 'Mr. Unfortunate', 'Juvenile Delinquency', 'Despers vs Bunters', 'Animal Cricket Match', 'The Godfather', 'Professor Broomes', and 'Land Of Spice'.

And while the shocking news of the Mighty Bomber was still being processed, the Soca Parang & Calypso Fraternity was further grief-stricken as the news of Kenny J's death began circulating. Kenny J, a 69-year-old retired police officer, lost his battle with COVID-19. Kenny J, who was fully vaccinated, passed



Kenrick "Kenny J" Joseph

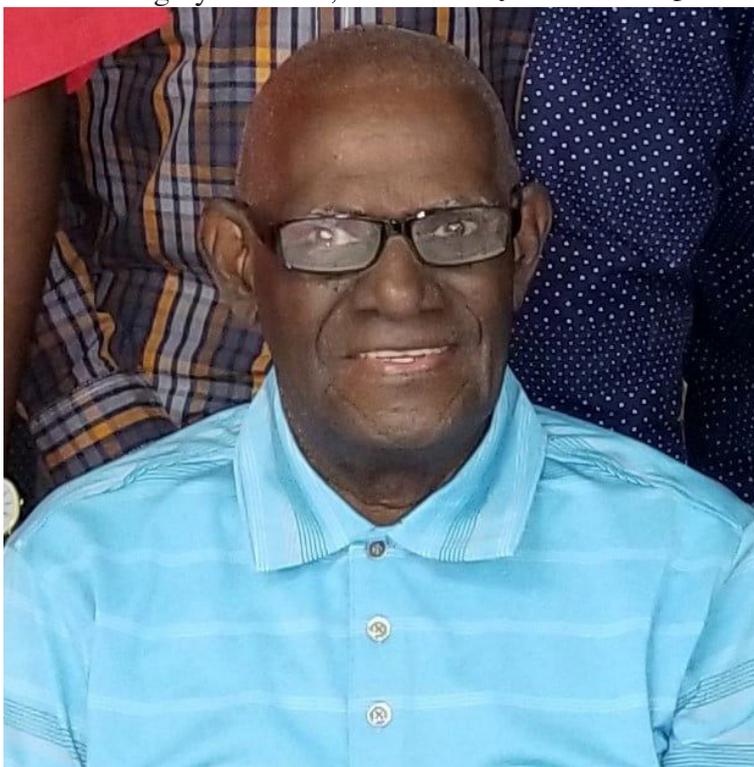
away while being treated in ICU for COVID-19 after being warded for a few days.

Well-known for his sweet voice, witty parang soca renditions, and his ability to captivate any audience, Calypsonian Kenny J was famous for his 1990's soca parang timeless classics such as 'The Paint Brush' and 'Alexander'. Some of his popular Calypso releases also include 'Addicted to Sweet Soca', 'Leave She', 'Praying for T&T', and 'Drug Abuse is Destructive'.

The news of the passing of Calypso and Soca Parang cultural icons continues to be met with tributes as many celebrate and share their beloved memories including the Minister of Tourism,

Culture, and the Arts, Randall Mitchell who hailed the deceased calypsonians for their contributions to TT's culture.

The National Carnival Commission (NCC) also joined in celebrating the lives of the Mighty Bomber and Kenny J. Hailing them as musical icons and titans who paved the way for the future, not only through their contributions to their fields but also in serving as mentors for a generation that must now bear the torch for others. The National Action Cultural Committee (NACC) also shared their condolences remembering both icons and their huge contribution and impact to not only calypso but the art-form and culture.



Clifton "Mighty Bomber" Ryan

Larsa Pippen and Scottie Pippen's divorce has been finalised

TheDailyMail - The divorce between Larsa Pippen and Scottie Pippen has been finalised.

Attorneys for both parties took part in a virtual hearing Wednesday putting the finishing touches on the split, which The Real Housewives of Miami personality, 47, initially filed for in November of 2018.

'I can confirm that Scottie and Larsa Pippen are now divorced, and that the divorce was finalised on December 15, 2021,' lawyer David J. Glass told Us Weekly in a statement Wednesday.

Glass continued: 'All issues were resolved amicably. The parties are now focusing [on] successfully co-parenting their remain-



The divorce between Larsa Pippen, 47, and Scottie Pippen, 56, has been finalised after their attorneys took part in a virtual meeting in LA Wednesday

ing minor children.'

'Larsa is relieved to have the entire process behind her and is happy that she and Scottie managed to keep their private lives

largely private,' Glass told Hollywood Life.

Last August, Larsa and the Chicago Bulls icon, 56, came to an accord on terms of the split, at which point

a judge needed to authorise it.

The former couple initially exchanged vows in 1997 and are parents to four children: Scotty Jr., 21, Preston, 20, Justin, 17, and Sophia, 14.

The former pair said they were separating in 2016, but got back together briefly until Larsa's filing in November of 2018.

Larsa in December of 2019 that she and Scottie remained focused on co-parenting in the wake of their split, describing their relationship as 'best friends.'

According to The Blast, details of the financial settlement the former couple made were kept confidential.

Grammys, gigs and West End theatre shows - the latest events called off due to the spread of Omicron variant

Sky News - The Grammys, gigs and more West End shows have become the latest events cancelled or postponed due to rapid spread of the Omicron variant of coronavirus.

With rising COVID-19 cases over the past few weeks, many events have been forced to make changes as high numbers of people isolate.

In the UK, the West End productions of Mary Poppins and Phantom Of The Opera have been forced to scrap two shows a week and bands such as Wolf Alice have called off gigs.

Due to take place in Los Angeles at the end of January, the Grammy Awards - America's biggest music ceremony, with

artists including Billie Eilish, Olivia Rodrigo, Justin Bieber and Lil Nas X up for gongs - have been pushed back to a date to be announced.

Organisers the Recording Academy saying pressing ahead this month "simply contains too many risks" given the current uncertainty about the Omicron variant.

A statement shared online said: "The health and safety of those in our music community, the live audience, and the hundreds of people who work tirelessly to produce our show remains our top priority."

The decision was made following discussions with city and state officials, as well as health and safety experts, or-

ganisers said, and a new date will be announced in due course.

Postponing the huge awards ceremony follows a similar decision by the Critics' Choice awards, which announced just before Christmas that the show, originally due to take place this Sunday, would be pushed back.

It will be the second year of delays for the major awards shows, with the Grammys moved back to March in 2021.

The BAFTAs and the Oscars are already set to take place later than usual in 2022, with both scheduled for March.

Jon Stewart denies accusing JK Rowling of anti-Semitism

BBC - US chat-show host Jon Stewart has denied accusing Harry Potter author JK Rowling of anti-Semitism in comments he made on a podcast last month.

The satirist compared goblins who run Gringotts bank in the series of fantasy novels and films to characters in a 1903 anti-Semitic publication.

He has now said the conversation played on the podcast was meant to be "light hearted" and he "does not think the Harry Potter movies are anti-Semitic".

Rowling has not responded.

The US comic, who used to host The Daily Show, now presents the Apple TV series The Problem with Jon Stewart and its accompanying podcast.

In a December episode of the podcast, Stewart discussed scenes from the Harry Potter film series, set in the magical bank Gringotts.

In Rowling's hugely successful books and the subsequent films, the goblins who run the bank are depicted as ill-tempered, diminutive creatures who are the guardians of the gold.

The first book describes one as "about a head shorter



Jon Stewart hosted The Daily Show for 16 years and now fronts an Apple TV current-affairs programme than Harry".

"He had a swarthy, clever face, a pointed beard, and Harry noticed very long fingers and feet," it says.

Accusations the characters



Harry Potter author, J. K. Rowling

are anti-Semitic have rumbled on for several years.

Some have suggested the depiction is based on caricatures of Jews from The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, first published in 1903, which purports to reveal a Jewish plan for world domination.

Speaking on the podcast, Stewart said he had had conversations about the book with people reluctant to acknowledge the resemblance.

"[People think,] 'Oh, that's a character from Harry Potter,' [and] you're like, 'No, that's a caricature of a Jew from an anti-Semitic piece of literature.' JK Rowling was like, 'Can we get these guys to run our bank?'" Stewart said.

"It was one of those things where I saw it on the screen and I was expecting the crowd to be like, 'Holy [expletive], she did not, in a wizarding world, just throw Jews in there to run the underground bank.'"

Rowling, who has previously spoken out against anti-Semitism, was actively involved in the film series and has a producer credit on the final two films, as well as the Fantastic Beasts spin-offs.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

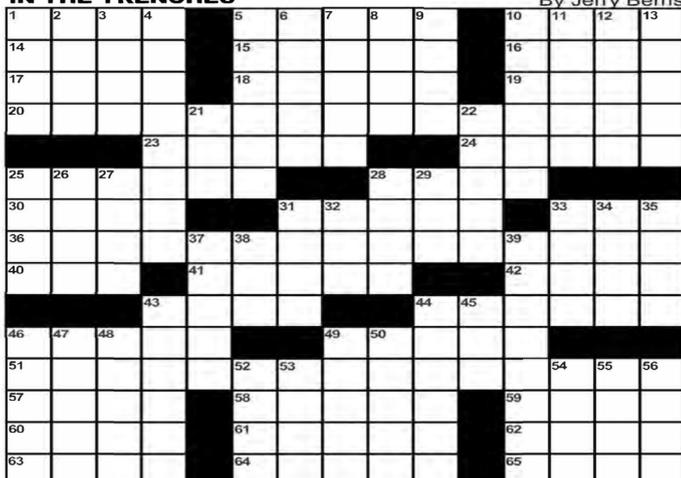
- 1) Practice in the ring
- 5) Stable occupants
- 10) Unaccompanied efforts
- 14) Eli's school
- 15) What some skip church to do?
- 16) Muslim holy man
- 17) Not yet final, legally
- 18) Namely
- 19) Startled sound
- 20) One way to get to England
- 23) Type of energy
- 24) Supermarket section
- 25) Bamboozle
- 28) Snake shape
- 30) One of the Great Lakes
- 31) Fifth Avenue sight
- 33) Not he
- 36) What one with impure thoughts has
- 40) Small digit
- 41) Sounded like a dove
- 42) Bookbinding leather
- 43) Smidgen of smoke
- 44) Assembled masses
- 46) Be successfully educated
- 49) Lightly hit single
- 51) It leads water to dry land
- 57) Bakery goodie
- 58) Done with
- 59) Put in the smokehouse
- 60) The state of Deseret, now
- 61) Canada and snow
- 62) In the blink of an orb?
- 63) Sit for photos
- 64) It's placed in a restaurant
- 65) Track sections

DOWN

- 1) Fit the sound to the action
- 2) A three-of-a-kind beats it
- 3) Part of aka
- 4) Put out more of
- 5) Courage and fortitude
- 6) Honolulu hello
- 7) Galley worker
- 8) Cast-of-thousands movie, e.g.
- 9) Eve's third son
- 10) Turn indicator
- 11) Gulf Arab
- 12) Surgical light tool
- 13) Say without saying
- 21) Greenskeeper's supply
- 22) Bye-bye, in Marseilles
- 25) Garage band's tape
- 26) "___ go brag"
- 27) Script unit
- 28) Kind of softball team
- 29) Suffix in many Internet addresses
- 31) Halt
- 32) Title starter, often
- 33) Pack away
- 34) Beer topper
- 35) Sea eagles
- 37) Cake decorator's material
- 38) Toddler's responses, often
- 39) Like some paradises
- 43) Squirm in pain
- 44) Hold a meeting
- 45) "Spare the ___, spoil the child"
- 46) Like the Las Vegas strip
- 47) Greek Muse of lyric poetry
- 48) Wall hanging with pictorial designs
- 49) ___ one's time (was patient)
- 50) Not tight at all
- 52) Jason's ship
- 53) Wedding cake level
- 54) Sandwich fish
- 55) Farmer's pride
- 56) Feathered layers

IN THE TRENCHES

By Jerry Berns



Solutions to our crossword puzzles will be printed in the Monday edition of the paper.

Visualising Apple's \$3 trillion market valuation

The tech giant is the first company to hit a market capitalisation of \$3 trillion. How do its closest competitors stack up?

By Mohammed Hussein

It took just 17 months for Apple Inc's stock market valuation to surge from \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion. Shares of the iPhone maker briefly hit \$182.88 during trading on Monday – enough to secure Apple the coveted crown of becoming the first publicly traded company on the planet to cross the \$3

trillion market capitalisation mark.

Market capitalisation or “market cap” is a measure of a company's total market dollar value based on its stock price, and is calculated by multiplying the total number of a company's outstanding shares by the current market price of one share.

If Apple was a country

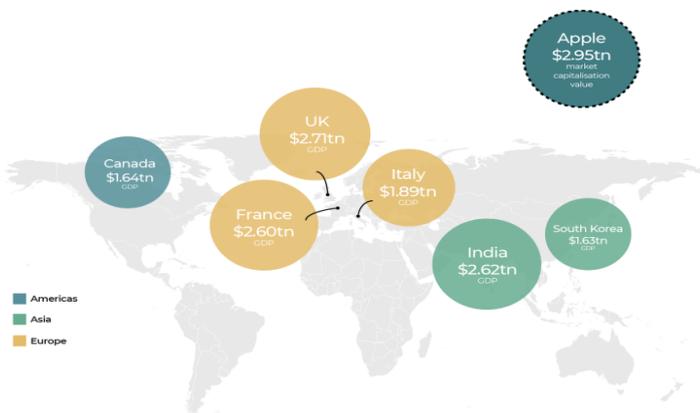
Since January 2007, when the late Apple co-founder and CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the first iPhone, shares of the Silicon Valley giant have gained 5,800 percent.

Hitting \$3 trillion is another historical moment for Apple. To put that into perspective, Apple's value now surpasses the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of six of the world's top 10 economies, including the United Kingdom (\$2.71 trillion), India (\$2.62 trillion), France (\$2.60 trillion), Italy (\$1.89 trillion), Canada (\$1.64 trillion) and South Korea (\$1.63 trillion).

APPLE

If Apple was a country

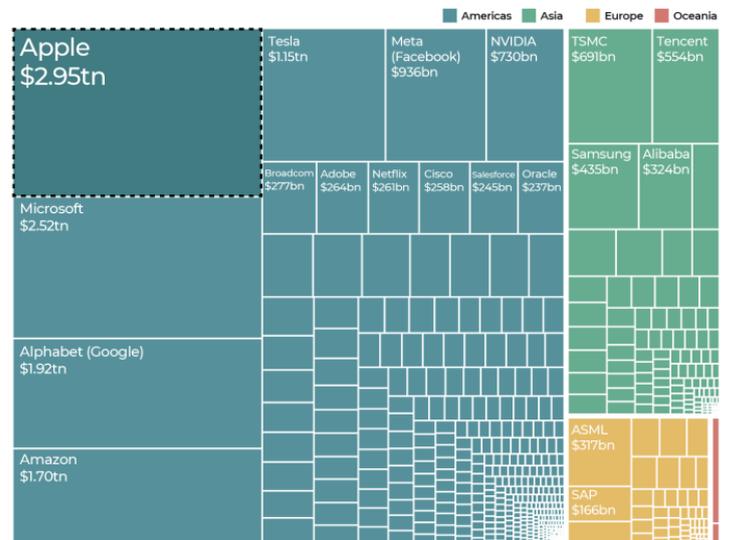
Apple's market value surpasses the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of six of the world's top 10 economies including the United Kingdom, India, France, Italy, Canada and South Korea.



APPLE

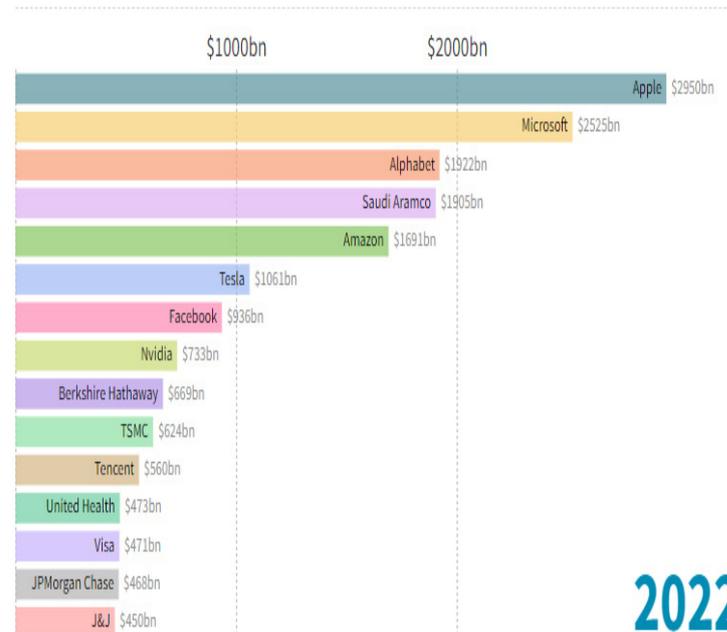
The biggest tech companies in the world

Apple is the world's most valuable company with a market value of almost \$3 trillion, followed by Microsoft, then Alphabet (Google)



How Apple has grown (2001-2022)

Market capitalisation of the most valuable companies around the world



2022

Haitians run aground in SKN, investigation launched

Charlestown, Nevis - Police in St. Kitts and Nevis are investigating an incident in which several persons entered the Federation via Nevis illegally on January 2, 2022, on a vessel that ran aground at Bath Village.

Later that same day, seventeen nationals of Haiti comprising eleven males, four females and two juveniles were taken into Police custody and were placed in quarantine.

The vessel, which does not bear a name, was also seized.

Following an operation conducted on a home in Nelson's Spring on January 3, an additional seven persons – two nationals of St. Kitts and Nevis and five nationals of Haiti, two of whom currently reside in the Federation – were also taken into custody and placed in quarantine. Authorities say the captain and mate of the vessel are still at large.



Every year hundreds of Haitians take their chances, risking death on treacherous seas, trying to escape their poverty plagued country

Baptist minister, activist want rivers reopened for religious practices

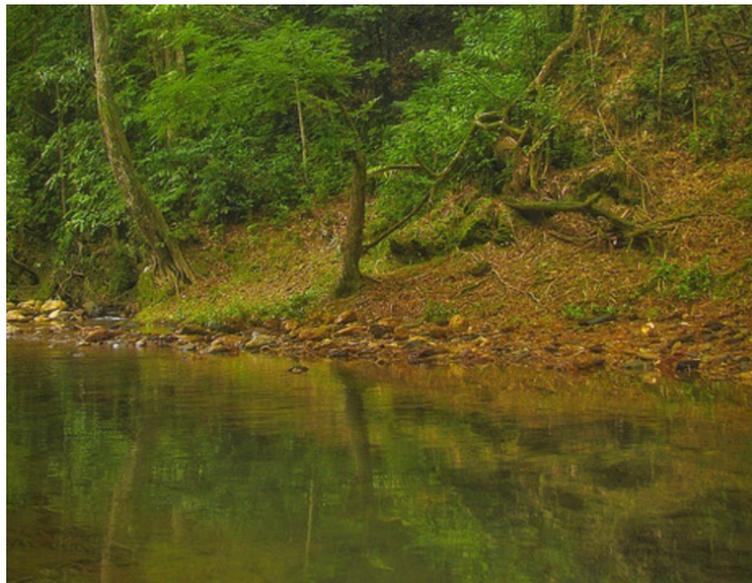
T&T Newsday - A United National Congress candidate for the 2020 general election and a social activist have written to the solicitor general calling for the reopening of rivers and watercourses so that religious rituals can be done.

Attorneys for Kareem Baird, the UNC's candidate for Laventille/East Morvant, a Spiritual Baptist bishop, and activist Ravi Balgobin Maharaj say they intend to challenge the Government's refusal to reopen watercourses for religious use.

In March 2021, beaches and watercourses were included in pandemic restrictions and ordered closed to mitigate the spread of covid19.

On December 20, beaches were partially reopened, from 5 am-noon each day.

The pre-action protocol letter said while the Prime



Rivers, like Caura River (pictured) and beaches have been closed in Trinidad and Tobago since April 2020

Minister explained this partial reopening, no indication was given why rivers, streams, ponds, springs or similar bodies of water were not reopened, or when they would be.

The letter, written by attorney Vishaal Sieusarran, pointed to regulation 4(3), which provided for the conduct of religious activities and services, but said it did

not create an exemption to carry out religious activities at bodies of water other than the sea. He described the distinction as discriminatory and unconstitutional.

He wrote: "Trinidad and Tobago has been described as the Caribbean's 'melting pot' as a number of diverse ethnicities mix into a recognisable cultural identity.

While traditions among

groups differed, "The use of natural materials and landscapes for worship by the different groups is well-accustomed locally. Importantly, watercourses such as rivers, streams, ponds are integral for the performance of worship in the Shouter Baptist, Orisha and Hindu faiths.

His clients were of the opinion the prohibition on non-beach watercourses was unconstitutional, he said, as the Constitution gave all citizens the right to freedom of religious belief and the ability to practise it without fear.

Sieusarran said the prohibition also affected a significant part of the lower-income population who relied on rivers for everyday household use in areas which have no water and a scarce truck-borne supply. He also said beaches are not equally available and accessible to everyone.

Barbadian nurses protest

Barbados Today - Scores of nurses marched through Bridgetown on Thursday to pressure the government into addressing their long-standing grievances.

Loudly chanting "All I want to say is that they don't really care about us", the group led by the leader of the Unity Workers Union Caswell Franklyn started their march from Cheapside onto Broad Street and ended at Freedom Park.

Franklyn told reporters: "I think we had a good day. We were restricted by the COVID unit, the amount of people that we had, and we tried very hard to make sure we didn't break any rules.

"You will see it was not a political march but



Nurses in Barbados took to the streets on Thursday to demand better working conditions from the government.

nurses crying out for what they have been fighting for years."

The nurses are pressing the government to address concerns including the need for better working conditions and increased pay, health insurance, improved nurse-to-patient ratios, re-

muneration for degrees and continuous training.

Franklyn said while he had repeatedly expressed his willingness to continue negotiations with Director General, Human Resources, Ministry of the Public Service Gail Atkins, she has not been forthcoming. Atkins'

office has responsibility for human resource functions, including negotiations, for all departments in the civil service.

"People think that every time an election is on that the country stops working. The country doesn't stop working because of an election. MTW [Ministry of Transport and Works] still works, Transport Board still works, doctors at the hospital, the police still arrest people for crime, the courts work, everything works," he said. "So, there is nothing to stop the negotiations in the public service from going on while an election is on. The civil service is still functioning and so too should the director general."



the happier life.

Be happy...
not because everything is good
but because you can see the good
in everything.

Barbuda's Pink Sand Beach

Anytime you are driving, keep your
Eyes on the road. Hands on the wheel. Mind on Driving.

ATB
Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Africa CDC says severe lockdowns no longer tool to contain COVID-19

Reuters - Africa's top public health official said on Thursday that severe lockdowns were no longer the best way to contain COVID-19, praising South Africa for adopting that approach when responding to its latest infection wave driven by the Omicron variant.

"We are very encouraged with what we saw in South Africa during this period where they look at the data in terms of severity (of infections)," John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), told a news conference.

"The period where we are using severe lockdowns as a tool is over. We should actually be looking at how we use public health and social measures more carefully and in a balanced way as the vaccination increases."

South Africa experienced a steep rise in COVID-19 infections from late November, around the time it alerted



Dr. John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

the world to Omicron, with new infections peaking in mid-December at an all-time record.

But new cases have since fallen back, and the government did not resort to strict restrictions as it did during previous infection waves given early signs that the bulk of Omicron infections had been mild. It even loosened rules before New Year's Eve.

Nkengasong added that he feared that COVID-19 could become endemic on the continent given the slow pace

of vaccination — a prospect many global scientists already talk of as a given.

"Unless ... by the end of this year the continent actually scales up its vaccination to above 70 percent or 80 percent, my worry is that we might ... be into a scenario where COVID becomes endemic," he said.

Experts believe COVID-19 cannot be eliminated and will likely become endemic, meaning it will always be present in the population to some degree, such as the flu or chickenpox.

Less than 10 percent of Africa's population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the latest Africa CDC figures show, with many countries initially struggling to access sufficient shots and later battling to get them into arms. There has been a 36 percent average increase in new cases reported in Africa over the last 4 weeks, with an 8 percent average increase in new deaths.

Dutch government ends funding to Palestinian civil society group

Ramallah, occupied West Bank (AlJazeera) – The Dutch government has said it will no longer fund one of the six major civil society and human rights organisations in Palestine which Israel banned as "terrorist groups" in October 2021.

In a statement denouncing Wednesday's decision, the Ramallah-based Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) – for which the Dutch government has been the lead donor since

2013 – said "this is the first time a government ends its funding for Palestinian civil society based on political conditionalit

The UAWC provides hands-on aid to Palestinians, including by rehabilitating land at risk of confiscation by Israel.

It helps tens of thousands of farmers in Area C – the more than 60 percent of the occupied West Bank under direct Israeli military control, and where most illegal Israeli settlements and



Rally Held in Netherlands in Support of Palestine

their infrastructure are located.

The group said it would consider legal steps to chal-

lenge the Dutch government's "harmful and unfair decision", which, it warned,

cont'd on pg 17

Ghislaine Maxwell to seek new trial after juror reveals he was victim of sex abuse

CBS - Ghislaine Maxwell, convicted last week of conspiring to recruit and groom teenage girls to be abused by Jeffrey Epstein, plans to request a new trial after a juror in her case revealed he was a victim of sexual abuse, her defense lawyers said Wednesday.

The lawyers said in a letter to U.S. District Judge Alison J. Nathan that “based on undisputed, publicly available information, the Court can and should order a new trial without any evidentiary hearing.”

The judge late Wednesday set a schedule for the defense to ask for a new trial, saying it should make the request by Jan. 19, with prosecutors replying by Feb. 2.

She asked them to address whether “an inquiry of some kind” is permitted or required. Nathan also said she will offer a court-appointed lawyer for the juror.

The judge’s order came after defense lawyers said Maxwell “intends to request a new trial” with a submission that will include all known undisputed remarks of the juror, along with recorded statements and the questionnaire all jurors filled out.

“It is clear to Ms. Maxwell that based on this record alone a new trial is required,” they said, urging that all trial jurors be examined to evaluate their conduct if a hearing occurs.

In interviews published by Reuters, The Independent and the Daily Mail, one juror described a moment during the deliberations when he told fellow jurors in Maxwell’s trial that, like some of the victims of the late financier Epstein, he had been sexually abused as a child. And he said he convinced other jurors that a victim’s imperfect memory of sex abuse doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.

“I know what happened when I was sexually abused. I remember the color of the carpet, the walls. Some of it can be replayed like a video,” he said he told the jury, according to The Independent. “But I can’t remember all the details, there are some things that run together.”

The judge denied a request by another defense lawyer who wrote a separate letter asking her to suspend all other post-trial motions in the case.

In their own letter to Nathan, even prosecutors said those reports “merit attention by the Court.”

The juror was identified only by his first and middle name in the articles.

Prosecutors suggested in their letter that Nathan schedule a hearing in about one month, along with a schedule for lawyers to file briefs regarding the applicable law and the scope of the hearing.

Potential jurors in Maxwell’s case



Ghislaine Maxwell

were asked to fill out a questionnaire asking: “Have you or a friend or family member ever been the victim of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault?”

Quoting from the press reports, prosecutors said the juror asserted that he “flew through” the questionnaire and didn’t recall being asked if he’d been a victim of sex abuse.

No sentencing date has been set after the conviction of Maxwell. She faces a maximum sentence of 65 years in prison on the counts that she was convicted of.

Maxwell still faces a second trial on two counts of perjury that were contained in her initial indictment, which allege that she lied under oath about Epstein’s sexual abuse as part of accuser Virginia Guiffre’s 2016 civil case against the wealthy financier.

cont’d from pg 16

was “likely to resonate far beyond our organisation”.

In October 2021, Israel banned six organisations as “terrorist groups” under the pretext that they are affiliated with the left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The move was widely condemned by the international community and rights groups as “unjustified” and “baseless” as the Israeli government has provided no evidence to substantiate its claims.

Israel’s designation tied the six organisations to the

armed wing of the PFLP, which was active as an organised body in the second Intifada (2000-2005) when it carried out attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets.

Five of the organisations are Palestinian: the Addameer prisoners’ rights

group; Al-Haq rights group; the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC); the Bisan Center for Research and Development; and the UAWC. The sixth is the Palestine chapter of the Geneva-based Defence for Children International organisation.

South Africa record series levelling win over India

JOHANNESBURG (AP) - Dean Elgar made a magnificent unbeaten half-century as South Africa levelled the Test series at 1-1 with a historic seven-wicket win over India on a rain-affected day four at the Wanderers yesterday.

The Proteas reached their victory target of 240 after a long rain delay to set up a decider at Newlands, captain Elgar leading the way with a brilliant 96 not out.

India only claimed one wicket after play got under way following an early tea break in Johannesburg yesterday, Mohammed Shami sending Rassie van der Dussen on his way for 40

Captain Temba Bavuma hit 23 not out to provide further support for the obdurate Elgar, who showed great temperament and technique to guide his side to a first Test win over India at this venue.

Elgar and Van der Dussen were finally able to head out to the middle for a 3.45pm start local time with South Africa on 118 for two, needing a further 122 runs for victory.

The tenacious skipper brought up his half-century by driving Ravichandran Ashwin wide of mid-on for a boundary before Shami ended a stand of



Dean Elgar, second left, celebrates with captain Temba Bavuma, left, after leading South Africa to victory over India at the Wanderers in Johannesburg, South Africa, yesterday. (Gettys Images)

82, Cheteshwar Pujara taking the catch at first slip after the seamer drew an edge from Van der Dussen.

Bavuma was given a lifeline before he had got off the mark when Shardul Thakur failed to take a sharp chance off his own bowling.

The battling Elgar dispatched Shami for back-to-back boundaries and the runs flowed for an in-form Bavuma as India's hopes of wrapping up the series deteriorated rapidly.

Words were exchanged in the middle as the game slipped away from India and Elgar flicked Ashwin for his 10th boundary before punching the air as South Africa celebrated a huge win.

South Africa suffered their first Test loss to India at SuperSport Park in the first match of the series and were then rocked by Quinton de Kock's shock retirement from Test cricket.

Elgar issued a rallying cry after that loss in Centurion and he vowed to take as many blows as required from the India bowlers in order to keep the Proteas in the series.

The gritty left-hander stepped up under huge pressure after such a long time in the pavilion on day four, grinding out a 19th Test half-century to make it all to play for in the third Test in Cape Town next week.

The tourists must have fancied their chances of

securing a first Test series win in South Africa when play got under way in what looked like bowler-friendly conditions.

India were unfortunate that Mohammed Siraj could only bowl six overs in the second innings due to a hamstring injury, but a lack of potency with the ball must have been a concern for Virat Kohli as he watched on after being ruled out with a back spasm.

South Africa comfortably completed their highest successful run chase in a Test at the Wanderers and the third-best by any team, beating India for the first time in the longest format at this ground at the sixth attempt.

Nash and Durant hail Irving's Nets return

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) --Kyrie Irving made his return to the Brooklyn Nets side for the first time in seven months on Wednesday night, but you would not know that according to head coach Steve Nash and teammate Kevin Durant.

The pair were full of praise for 29-year-old Irving who had not played all season due to his vaccination status, which meant he would be unavailable for home games in New York City, with the Nets not wanting him on a part-time basis.

The franchise changed their tune a fortnight ago, permitting him for road games, amid a COVID-19 outbreak which depleted their playing stocks.

Irving had returned to practice and found his fitness before he played for the first time this season in Wednesday's 129-121 win over the Indiana

Pacers.

Irving was on court for 32 minutes, scoring 22 points making nine-of-17 from the field along with three rebounds, four assists and three steals. The win also halted the Nets' three-game skid.

"He looks like himself," Nash said at the post-game news conference.

"Not a big surprise watching him play in practice, he's so gifted and talented, you could see the rhythm was there. But it's still an adaptation. We've got to give him some space as he transitions back to playing but tonight he was big."

Durant scored 39 points with eight rebounds and seven assists as the Nets improved to 24-12 to sit second in the east behind the Chicago Bulls (25-10).

"It was amazing to have him out there," Durant told reporters.



In his first action this season, Kyrie Irving scored 22 points for the Nets in a win over the Indiana. (Reuters)

"I missed his presence around the locker room, his energy and his vibe around the team.

"On top of that, his game is just so beautiful. He makes the game so much easier for everybody out there.

"I'm sure he was a bit nervous but he got comfortable. He made some athletic plays. It looked like he'd be around for a while."

CWI appoints Dr Desmond Haynes as lead selector

Legendary West Indies opening batsman Dr Desmond Haynes has been appointed as Lead Selector of the West Indies Senior Men's Team.

Dr Desmond Haynes confirmed his appointment during a meeting of the Cricket West Indies (CWI) Board of Directors yesterday.

Along with his most outstanding cricket credentials, Dr. Haynes was recently honoured by the University of the West Indies with an Honorary Doctorate Degree and is a former Senator in the Parliament of Barbados.

CWI President, Ricky Skerritt, said, "I am delighted to confirm that the Most Hon. Dr. Desmond Haynes has agreed to re-join the CWI cricket system as the Lead Se-



Legendary West Indies opening batsman Dr Desmond Haynes. (cricinfo)

lector. His cricket knowledge and experience are second to none, and I am confident that Desmond is the right man for the right job, at the right time.

"On behalf of our Board of Directors and all stakeholders, I wish Desmond every success as he commences his important Lead role, which starts immediately.

"I want to also take this

opportunity to thank Roger Harper and Miles Bascombe for their commitment and integrity whilst they served on the Panel over the past two years."

In response, Dr. Desmond Haynes stated, "I would like to thank President Skerritt and the CWI Board of Directors for giving me the opportunity to serve West Indies cricket once again. Being a selector is a thankless task, but a critical role in our cricket system and I am honoured to be appointed.

"I have always indicated that I would assist West Indies cricket in anyway possible and I see this as an opportunity to do just that. I pledge to carry out my duties in a fair and professional manner."

Dr Haynes will lead the

West Indies Men's Selection Panel until June 30, 2024, a period that includes four ICC Global Events, two T20 World Cups (2022 & 2024), the Cricket World Cup (2023) and the World Test Championship Final (2023).

Dr. Desmond Haynes played 116 Test matches and 238 One-Day Internationals for the West Indies between 1978 and 1994.

He scored 7,487 runs in Tests, including 18 centuries and 8,648 runs in ODIs, including 17 centuries.

He captained the West Indies in four Test matches. He was a member of the West Indies team which won the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 1979. He was inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame in June, 2021.(CWI)

Djokovic medical exemption sparks Australian Open debate

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) - With so much focus on getting the medical exemption he needed to fly into Melbourne to defend his Australian Open title, it seems Novak Djokovic may not have paid enough attention to his visa.

The medical exemption allowed the top-ranked Djokovic entry to the tournament regardless of his vaccination status for COVID-19, a subject he has declined to clarify amid months of speculation he could miss the season-opening major unless he can prove he's had two doses of a coronavirus vaccine.

But it wasn't everything he needed to enter Australia, which has strict border regulations in place for the pandemic.

Melbourne's The Age newspaper reported that Djokovic had landed yesterday before midnight local time at Tullamarine Airport, but his entry was delayed because of a mistake with his visa application. Two hours later, local media reported he still hadn't cleared the border.

Speculation of a possible issue with the visa emerged while Djokovic was in transit and escalated with mixed messages from federal and state lawmakers.

Djokovic's revelation on social media that he was heading to Australia seeking a record 21st major title sparked



Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic. (Getty Images)

some debate and plenty of headlines yesterday, with critics questioning what grounds the nine-time Australian Open champion could have for the exemption and backers defending his right to privacy and freedom of choice.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley defended the "completely legitimate application and process" and insisted there was no special treatment for Djokovic.

The Victoria state government-mandated that only fully vaccinated players, staff, fans and officials could enter Melbourne Park when the tournament starts on January 17.

Only 26 people connected with the tournament applied for a medical exemption and, Tiley said, only a "handful" - estimated at about five - were granted.

The names, ages and nationalities of applicants were redacted for privacy reasons before each application for a vaccine exemption was assessed by two independent panels of experts, and Tiley noted Djokovic is under no obligation to reveal his reason for seeking one.

But, he suggested, it would be "helpful" if Djokovic chose to explain it to a Melbourne public still getting over months of lockdowns and severe travel restrictions imposed at the height of the pandemic.

Among the reasons allowed for those applying for a vaccination exemption can include acute major medical conditions, serious adverse reaction to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, or evidence of a COVID-19 infection within the previous six months.

Djokovic tested positive for the coronavirus in 2020 after he played in a series of exhibition matches that he organized in Serbia and Croatia without social distancing amid the pandemic.

It's not inconceivable that the 34-year-old Djokovic, who finished one win short of a calendar-year Grand Slam in 2021 when he lost the US Open final to Daniil Medvedev, could have been infected again.

The decision on whether to elaborate now is in Djokovic's court.

Aubameyang tests positive for coronavirus



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival at the Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon. (Gettys Images)

CAMEROON (AP) - Gabon captain and star player Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival at the Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon.

The Arsenal striker was one of three members of the travelling Gabon party to produce a positive result af-

ter the team's flight landed in Yaounde.

It means the Premier League star is set to miss his team's opening Group C game against Comoros on Monday.

The Gabon Football Federation issued a statement on its official Facebook page, with a headline of "Au-

bameyang, Lemina and Yala positive."

The statement read: "Arriving this morning at Yaounde on a special flight, the Panthers of Gabon submitted, like all delegations, to an antigen COVID-19 test at the Nsimalene airport.

"Captain Pierre-Emerick
cont'd on pg 21

City concerned about escalating coronavirus cases as Pep tests positive

MANCHESTER (AP) - Manchester City assistant Rodolfo Borrell is concerned about the escalating number of coronavirus cases within the club, but is hopeful today's FA Cup third-round tie with Swindon Town will go ahead as planned.

The Premier League leaders confirmed yesterday that manager Pep Guardiola and assistant Juanma Lillo are among those to have tested positive for COVID-19.

Twenty-one members of City's first-team bubble – seven players and 14 backroom staff – are isolating and will miss the trip to fourth-tier Swindon.

That match is still scheduled to go ahead as planned, though that may yet change depending on how the coronavirus situation develops ahead of the game.

Following the fixture with Swindon, City are scheduled to face second-placed Chelsea in the Premier League at the Etihad Stadium on January 15.

Borrell will take charge of City on Friday and says it is a case of taking it one game at a time.

"At the moment we have seven players unavailable and up to 14 staff, so it's quite a big outbreak," he said at a pre-match news conference yesterday.

cont'd from pg 20

Aubameyang, Mario Lemina and assistant coach Anicet Yala have not escaped [COVID-19].

"But as required by the health protocol in this area, they subsequently underwent a PCR test, the results of which will confirm or deny the status of the latter."

Lemina is another key player for Gabon, with the midfielder having played for Juventus, Southampton,

day.

"Pep is fine. He has the virus but he hasn't got a lot of symptoms. We are permanently in touch. We communicate by calls and technology.

"We will play with the ones we have available. We don't have much more, but our aim is to keep playing as much as we can, trying to respect all competitions.

"At this moment we can fill the team. I don't know what will happen in the following days, but right now, it's an easy line-up to decide.

"We will play with what we've got. We have some first-team players and some others that will come from our second team."

Asked if he is confident the Swindon game will definitely go ahead, Borrell replied, "We have prepared mentally for the game. We have to prepare for the game to happen.

"This is what we have done until now and we'll keep going this way. If then tomorrow for whatever reason it's not possible because of more news, this is out of our reach to know.

"But right now, yes, we are prepared to play the game and we are mentally ready for it."

Borrell did not disclose which players have tested positive for coronavirus, but the outbreak is serious Fulham and now Nice.

Aubameyang missed the start of the Premier League season after testing positive for coronavirus.

More recently, his Arsenal future has become clouded by uncertainty after he was stripped of the club captaincy and dropped by manager Mikel Arteta following a disciplinary breach.

Gabon are also due to face Ghana on January 14 and Morocco four days later.



Manchester City's manager Pep Guardiola has tested positive for Covid-19. (Gettys Images)

enough for City to have to turn to their youth squad.

City have won 13 of their last 14 matches in all competitions ahead of their first meeting with Swindon in any competition since a 2-0 FA Cup third-round win in January 2002.

The Citizens have come out on top in 10 of their last 11 meetings with Swindon, with these matches taking place between 1988 and that most recent game 20 years ago.

Though City have progressed from their last seven FA Cup ties against sides from the fourth tier or lower, last losing against Blackpool in January 1984, Borrell is taking nothing for granted this weekend.

"You know better than me that lesser teams beat big opponents [in this competition]," he added.

"It creates a great atmosphere, everyone wants to make their village, town or city proud.

"There is a difference in terms of quality of players, this is obvious, but in these games everything gets very close.

"The FA Cup is very special. This is one of the titles we are most proud of achieving in the last six years.

"It's important to do well and get into the next stage. It will be very close, like any other tie in this competition."

Sports

2022: The “Year of Sports Tourism”

By Elwin Francis

Capitalising on the sports tourism market will be the major focus of Antigua and Barbuda’s Department of Tourism this year.

According to Minister of Tourism, Charles ‘Max’ Fernandez, 2022 is being branded The Year of Sports Tourism.

Fernandez says the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA) has invested in marketing materials to promote the twin-island state as a major sports tourism destination.

He said Antigua and Barbuda’s sport tourism product will also be able to attract visitors because of continued investment in the upgrade of sporting facilities including the Yasco Sports Complex, the creation of a golf course in Barbuda and plans to develop the golf course at Cedar Valley.

“We have decided that 2022 would be our year of sports tourism and of course in 2023 we are looking towards health tourism. As a matter of fact, we already have an (advertisement) done. I have already seen a preliminary of it, a very exciting ad. It is going to promote sports in Antigua and Barbuda, and at the same time, of course you will see in the background the beautiful



International cricket being played at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium in Antigua. (Getty Images)

beaches and so on,” Fernandez said.

“But the idea is to expand tourism, not just to be coming for the sea and the sun and so on, which is wonderful in and of itself. But let people realise out there in the world that Antigua also has great sporting facilities.

“As you know, the Yasco grounds are completed now. That is now a world class facility.

“In 2020, we were looking to do a kitesurfing week, that is something that we are now looking to put back on the calendar. We have been told that Antigua has the best facility for sailing and yacht racing.

“All of these are very exciting ideas. In Barbuda, the world class golf course is being completed and I know that the one in Antigua is being upgraded. As we speak, the

plans are there to upgrade it,” he added.

The tourism minister said the ABTA will seek to attract visitors to the islands to witness some major events on the 2022 Antigua and Barbuda sporting calendar.

They include The Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, which has already started, and will see its first sailors arrive at the historic Nelson’s Dockyard this month.

Also, in January, the country will host matches in the ICC Under 19 Men’s Cricket World Cup, followed by a test series between the West Indies and England in March.

The Antigua and Barbuda International Kite Show, is slated for April, as is Antigua Sailing Week which is considered one of the world’s most prestigious regattas.

Minister Fernandez continued that the ABTA will be

collaborating with the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Creative Industries and Innovation to showcase and capitalise on Antigua and Barbuda’s sports tourism products.

“So the Ministry of Sports is working very closely with us. I met with the (sports) minister Daryl Matthew as he came in (from recent overseas travel) and told him to let us see how closely we can work together to harmonise our ministries because we believe that working together we can benefit each other,” the tourism minister said.

“So we have been working, not only with sports but also with culture, to ensure as well, the expansion (of ideas). What we have also done is that we have this new exposition in Dubai and we have all kinds of videos there with posters of Sir Viv (Richards). Sir Viv is also supposed to be visiting there in person.

“So I think we are in a good place in terms of sports tourism and we are really, really pushing to allow for that to work its way through.”

Tourism is the country’s most important revenue-earning sector, accounting for over 60 per cent of Antigua and Barbuda’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).