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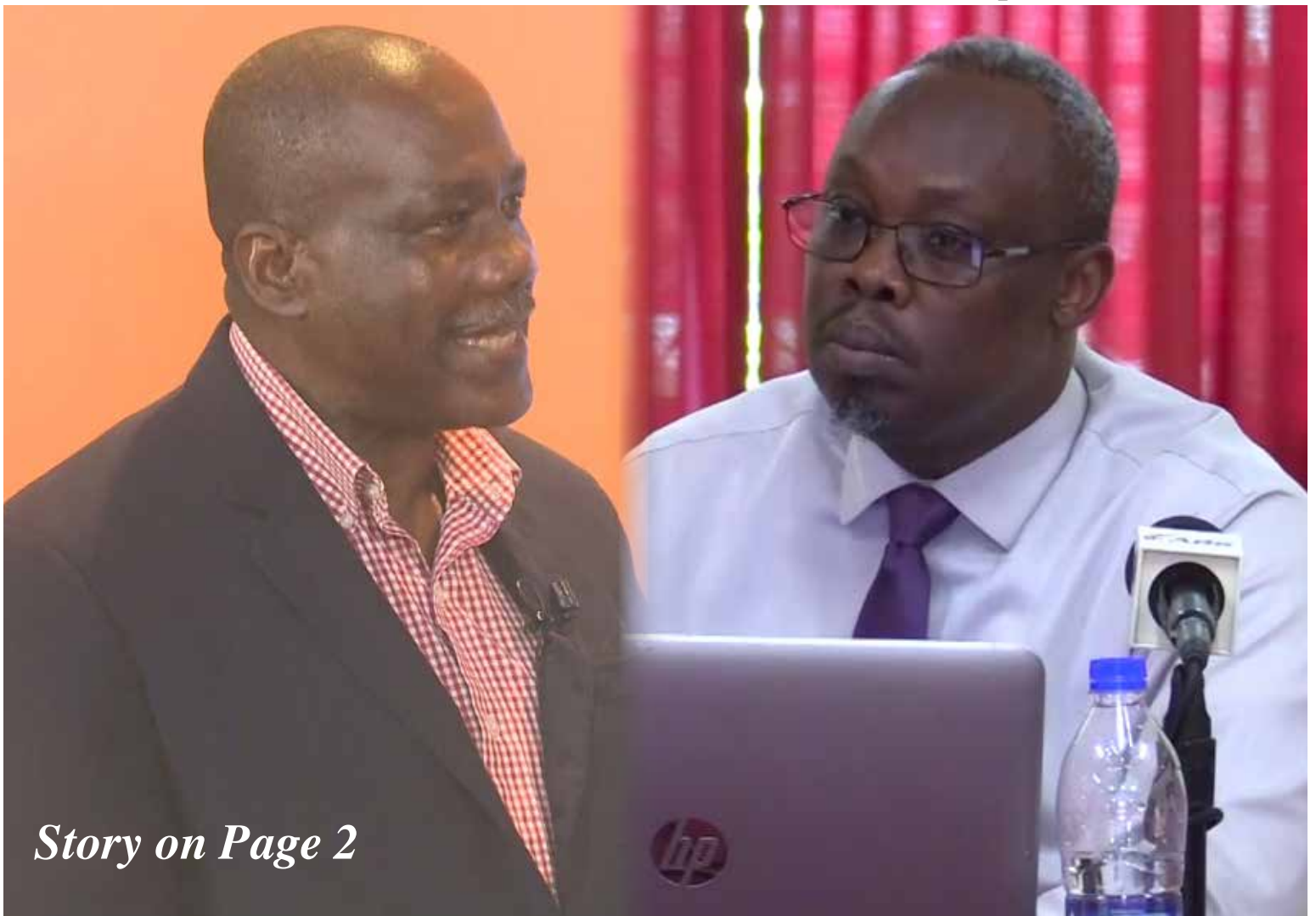
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AT&LU OFFICIALS LOCK HORNS

as vaccine mandate causes deep division



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AT&LU President Wigley George

AT&LU General Secretary Hugh Joseph

AT&LU officials lock horns as vaccine mandate causes deep division

Growing discord between two high ranking executives of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union boiled over yesterday over a breakdown in communication and today's annual conference.

President Wigley George and General Secretary Hugh Joseph are at odds, with the latter contending there are important details regarding the special conference that are yet to be determined by the executive.

According to Hugh Joseph, the constitution outlines that a single issue of importance allows for a special conference to be convened.

However, a communiqué from the president outlined two reasons for today's gathering; one being to reaffirm the commitment and viability of the union to its members, and an address from George, during which it is believed he will announce his resignation.

The general secretary



contended his responsibility was to inform the union's membership of the upcoming event and, while preparing the notification on 6th February, 2022, he was unsure of what should be included in the correspondence.

Joseph told reporters that he approached President George for more infor-

mation and requested that an executive meeting be held to that effect.

In his attempt to do so, Joseph relayed that he received no further information and was later informed that he had been stripped of that specific responsibility.

"I was subsequently advised by the president some time after that he had taken

on the responsibility to circulate the invitations to the membership to attend the conference," Joseph pointed out.

Subsequently, communication between the two men deteriorated, with the general secretary claiming he was placed in a position that made it impossible to provide answers to those who asked questions relating to the conference.

The union's executive members are split in their support for the AT&LU President Wigley George and General Secretary Hugh Joseph.

Those who have sided with the general secretary turned out to lend him their support when he met with

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<p>Wed 23 Day</p> <p>81° </p> <p>9% NNE 11 mph</p> <p>Abundant sunshine. High 81F. Winds NNE at 10 to 15 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 66% UV Index Extreme</p> <p>Sunrise 6:29 am Sunset 6:12 pm</p>	<p>Wed 23 Night</p> <p>72° </p> <p>14% N 9 mph</p> <p>Clear skies. Low 72F. Winds N at 5 to 10 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 74% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise -- Moonset 11:21 am</p> <p> Last Quarter</p>
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reporters on Tuesday.

At the core of the divide is the government's now ended vaccine mandate for public sector workers that was implemented last year.

"We seem to be somewhat as a body, split down the middle as it relates to that [mandate], and there are those who would have taken one position not aligning to the position that myself as general secretary and other members would have taken, and they seem to be holding one particular side and hence, I suspect they think there is a need for a special conference."

Hugh Joseph said efforts to ascertain whether the conference was "to fulfill the private and public threats that have been made against myself and other members of staff and the executive" have proven unsuccessful, and argued the membership has every

right know.

The press conference yesterday detailing the sequences of events was interrupted by President George, who barged in and demanded to know who authorised the gathering. George chided his subordinate for revealing the union's internal affairs.

George further informed Joseph that he had received legal advice on what was taking place and ominously declared, "Wherever the chips fall, let it be!"

Evidently, there exist deep divisions within the AT&LU, which is the bargaining agent for thousands of non-established workers in the public service.

Despite the difficulties being experienced, the union's general secretary was adamant that there will be no separation of the AT&LU from the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party.

"The Antigua Trades and Labour Union and the Antigua Labour Party will always have that relationship, will always have that connection, and so there are those who are spewing the narrative that there's an attempt to break the party away from the union. That is the greatest fallacy there is!

"If it is that anybody is trying to break anything, it is them by their negative and false narrative that is causing disruption between both institutions," Joseph asserted.

General Secretary Joseph described the treatment being meted out to him as disrespectful.

He also maintained that the positions he has taken on the matters at hand, while not personal, do reflect for better or worse on the executive.

Joseph noted if the meeting proceeds today, it will be in violation of the union's constitution.

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Refunds offered for contaminated baby formula

The Prices and Consumer Affairs Division says persons who discover that they have purchased the contaminated formula will be reimbursed in full, once they are able to produce their purchase receipt.

On Tuesday, the division said they received several complaints from consumers who were experiencing challenges obtaining redress after learning they were in posses-

sion of the recalled formula brands.

These consumers are now being advised to take their original purchase receipt, back to the location where the purchase was made, along with any of the used or unused product for a full refund.

Persons who do not have a receipt will need to return any used or unused canisters of the contaminated products,

to the distributor, Caribbean Pharmaceutical Supplies Ltd. which is located on the Sir George Walter Highway.



Once the distributor verifies the retailer from which the purchase was made, and any other information, the distributor will compensate the consumer the full amount of the product plus 15 percent.

Consumers requiring assistance with the redress process are asked to contact the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division at 462- 4347.

Meanwhile, the division continues to strongly urge consumers to discontinue use of the powdered infant formula brands Similac, Alimentum and EleCare if the first two digits of the code are 22 through 37, the code on the container contains K8, SH or Z2, and the expiration date is 4-1-2022 (APR 2022) or later.

To find out if the product you have is included in this recall, visit similacrecall.com and type in the code on the bottom of the package.

Consumers are also being advised to contact their physician or paediatrician if they have questions or concerns or have experienced problems related to the use of the implicated infant formula products.

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PTU denounces attack on AUA student, calls for stronger regulations

The Public Transportation Union (PTU), an amalgamation of the nation's many transportation service providers, is condemning the recent beating of an American medical school student.

On Tuesday, the PTU issued a statement in which it condemned "the recent attack on an AUA student by an unlicensed taxi operator".

The PTU continued, "This incident highlights the need to improve the laws of Antigua and Barbuda to make conducting taxi operation without the proper license a punish-



Taxi operators in queue to pick up passengers at the V. C. Bird International Airport [Photo: United Taxi Company Ltd.]

able offense. Once stronger laws are implemented, strict enforcement must follow.

"We call on the Transportation Board and the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda to be-

gin consultation to achieve these improvements."

The union went on to urge persons desirous of operating car services to become properly registered and trained.

"The PTU further encourages all individuals desirous of joining the taxi trade to become properly licensed and to take advantage of all available training.

"Service excellence in the transportation business is a matter of national pride and is critically important to the success of tourism, our number one industry," said the PTU.

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Sir Gerald responds to Asot Michael's "minion"

21st February, 2022
The Editor
Antiguanewsroom.com

Dear Editor,

Permit me to respond to a letter appearing on your news site under the title, "Speaker invokes rarely used standing order against MP Asot Michael". The letter is clearly written by one of MP Michael's paid minions, on his behalf.

In any event, the writer is not only a liar, but shows himself or herself, to be ignorant of the Standing Orders of the House and of Parliamentary Procedure. The letter also levels accusations against the Speaker of "using the Speaker's Chair to spread hate and wage his personal vendettas" without offering any evidence to support this blatant lie.

My reason for responding is to nail the writer's lies, and inform right-thinking members of the public as to the truth and facts. In so doing I will resist the temptation to respond to those faceless, nameless Facebook fools, who commented on the letter, as I have no inclination to engage with persons of questionable intellect.

The facts are as follows. For several DEBATES (my emphasis as it is a DEBATE, not a speech reading session), I have observed that a small minority of the Members have taken to reading their presentations both during the Budget Debate, and when debating Bills. Standing Order 39 (10) of the Standing Orders strictly forbids the reading of speeches. Indeed, the Standing Order uses the word, "shall not", which indicates that the Standing Order is mandatory.

On the second day of the Budget Debate, the Member for St. John's Ru-

ral North, was seen to read his entire speech. I did not interrupt him because up to that moment I had not enforced the rule and it would have been unfair to do so without a warning to the member. At the end of the Honourable Member's presentation, I informed the House that it was my intention to begin to enforce Standing Order 39 (10), against the reading of speeches. It is to be noted that MP Michael was present when this statement was made. While I have never prevented the member from reading his speech, I have always been irked at the practice. Mr. Michael, as a member of the House for several terms, ought to know that he was in violation of the Standing Order. I am also reliably informed that former Speaker D. Gisele Isaac, asked him to refrain from doing so on more than one occasion.

The writer, in support of his/her dishonest opinion, goes on to state that "a few days ago he saw the Lands Minister Maria Browne reading her speech". This is a barefaced lie as the Member for Rural East debated the bill and only referred to facts and figures to support her presentation. This is absolutely permissible under the Standing Order.

He claims that "Foreign Affairs Minister Chet Greene read a substantial part of his debate". In fact, The Member for St. Paul always seeks permission to read certain parts of his presentation, which includes much information and data, which is too much to keep in his head. Before and after that he debates the Bill.

The writer then makes the most idiotic and astounding statement, "that the three-hour budget statement itself was read from a teleprompter. Not a word from Speaker Watt". It is un-

believable that this writer does not understand that the Throne Speech and the Budget Speech, are read by the Governor General and the Minister of Finance, respectively; THEN debated. Any school child knows that this statement is embarrassingly dumb, it is therefore no wonder that the writer is unwilling to identify himself/herself.

As to the writer's accusations of hassling and bullying MP Michael, and "acting out of a personal dislike for the duly elected member of the House" (and which sounds suspiciously as coming from MP Michael, in his usual whining and playing the victim role), liking or disliking MP Michael has nothing to do with my duties as Speaker. The writer is at liberty to like, love, fawn over and brown-nose to his/her heart's content. My duty is to ensure that he familiarizes himself with the Standing Orders, follows them and conform to rulings by the Speaker. If the writer is angling for an invitation to sip Grey Goose at Side Hill, I am not.

For the writer's information, my performance as Speaker is to be judged by the members of the House, who elected me as Speaker. If the House was not satisfied with my performance, I would not have been elected for a second term. I am also heartened by the scores of persons who either call, message or meet me, and offer congratulations on my performance in the Chair.

I am grateful for the support of the public and I will continue to serve my country as I have done for the greater part of my life.

Sir Gerald Watt KCN QC
Speaker of the
House of Representatives.

DNA leader scoffs at alliance with UPP

Political Leader of the Democratic National Alliance (DNA), Joanne Massiah, has stated unequivocally that her party has no intention of joining forces with the United Progressive Party (UPP).

Massiah shot the notion of an alliance between the two parties down as a means of consolidating divided UPP votes ahead of general elections which are constitutionally due in 2023.

Her response followed a news report on a local, opposition aligned media house

which implied a “coming together” of the parties was under discussion. Massiah said, “I can confirm that there has been no correspondence from the UPP requesting any meeting with the DNA. I certainly have not been contacted by, or spoken to, anyone in the UPP.”

Further shutting down the murmurs of a merger, Massiah suggested that real change was not possible under a UPP government.

“In 2017, when the DNA was launched, we promised the people of Antigua and



Political Leader of the Democratic National Alliance (DNA), Joanne Massiah

Barbuda a party which was new, fresh and dynamic, one which would bring transfor-

mational leadership in its approach to governance generally.”

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Visit by the Members of the International Steering Committee, COBE

The Department of the Blue Economy within the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy is presently hosting a visit by the International Steering Committee (ISC) for the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) that will be established at the Five Islands Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI). The visit which started on Monday 21st February will conclude on February 25th.

In October, 2020, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda announced its support for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) at the UWI which is to be housed at its Five Islands Campus in Antigua and Barbuda. The Centre's aim is to advance intellectual progress, promote economic opportunities and strengthen institutional capacity in areas related to marine science and the blue economy.

Following this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, The University of the West Indies and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in January, 2021. The objective of the MoU is to formalise a non-exclusive framework of cooperation and to facilitate collaboration on research, teaching and other initiatives in support of the establishment of the aforementioned Centre.

Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy, the Hon. Dean Jonas, serves as the Chairman of the Committee. The Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs at The University of the West Indies, Dr. Stacy Richards-Kennedy, serves as the Co-Chairperson.

The mandate of the ISC is to provide strategic direction for the suc-



Minister of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy Dean Jonas

cessful establishment of the Centre. Minister Jonas sees Antigua and Barbuda as well-positioned to move this programme forward and will continue to share key updates as the process of establishment develops.

As Co-Chair, Dr. Kennedy emphasised, "The UWI is fully committed to building robust partnerships that will not only strengthen the foundation for the COBE, but also facilitate the execution of the roadmap to its full establishment. By working in concert, the ISC brings tremendous value and will support the achievement of the objectives of the Centre.

The ISC is composed of members from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CEWIC), The University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission (London). Senior representatives

from each of these organisations currently serve on the Committee which meets monthly and provides strategic direction to progress the establishment of this Centre.

Commenting on the importance of the Centre, Professor Densil A. Williams, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal of The UWI Five Islands Campus asserted: "A Centre for the Blue Economy will be a big step in diversifying the economies of the region as we look for new growth poles to drive sustained and equitable growth. The traditional sectors of commodities and low value services will not be able to deliver the kind of growth needed to lift more people out of poverty and allow our citizens to live a decent life. The blue economy on the other hand, has vast potential to generate mass employment given its proclivity to scale."

The primary purpose of this visit is for the ISC to engage with a range of stakeholders and discuss plans for the establishment of COBE at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Five Islands Campus. During the visit, the ISC will meet with key stakeholders from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Education. They will also be meeting with the Department of Environment, the Fisheries Division, the Ocean Governance Committee, Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority, various Development Agencies, Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations. The delegation will also be paying a visit to the Five Islands Campus of The University of the West Indies. Additionally, a presentation will be made to the Cabinet.

Dr. Joanna Newman, CEO and Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities has advised: "The ACU is pleased to be working with ACU members, The Universi-

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Nicholas Andrew granted bail for AUA student beating

Nicholas Paul Andrew was granted bail when he appeared in Court Tuesday on a battery charge.

He stands accused of beating an AUA medical student with a stick that was studded with nails during a fare dispute.

Before Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh, the Clare Hall resident was bailed in the amount of \$ 10,000, with a cash component of \$ 5,000.

He must surrender his travel documents and report to the closest police station three days a week until he returns to court on 2nd March.

The prosecutor told Chief Magis-



trate Walsh that they intend to review the battery charge and may upgrade it. Therefore, a request was made for the current charge not to be read to Andrew.

Police are said to be awaiting a report from Indraganti's doctor before making a decision to move ahead with upgrading the charge.

Mahesh Indraganti allegedly sustained injuries about his body, including his head, from the beating he received at the hands of Nicholas Paul Andrew.

An argument erupted last weekend after the student forgot his personal items at a restaurant and requested that the driver, who was en route to Langfords, turn around.

An agreement was made about how much it would cost Indraganti. But things went downhill when the driver allegedly changed his mind and wanted to charge his passenger three times the fare they had settled on earlier.

Antigua and Barbuda participate in Caribe Wave Tsunami Exercise

Antigua and Barbuda participate in the annual "Caribe Wave Tsunami Exercise" on 10th March 2022.

The exercise, which includes a number of other countries in the region, will test each nation's preparedness for the eventuality of a tsunami.

The Caribe Wave Tsunami Exercise is conducted by the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for

Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and coordinated through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

The test will also serve as a measure of the effectiveness of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) App which



NODS has been encouraging residents to download on their cell phones. A mock

alert will be broadcast on the day of the test.

People who have downloaded the app will see the alert "EXERCISE!! EXERCISE!! EXERCISE!!". It will end with the same message.

NODS has said it hopes that schools, businesses and other organisations will use the tsunami test as an opportunity to ensure that their tsunami evacuation plans are effective.

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ty of the West Indies and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to develop a research and development Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) at UWI's Five Islands Campus. Oceans are central to sustainable development globally and COBE will harness the power of our oceans with the strength of collaboration between ACU's internation-

al network of 500 universities across the Commonwealth to support a more sustainable future for the Caribbean region."

Appreciation is extended to all who made this visit and week of activities a possibility. We hope that it will be both an enjoyable and productive one. It is envisioned that many relationships and partnerships will be formed and that this will be the first of many visits.

Tech innovators participating in Climate Resilience Data Challenge

University students and private sector practitioners working in the field of data science and artificial intelligence (AI) are midway through completing their submissions for the Climate Resilience Data Challenge.

The Climate Resilience Data Challenge is a component of the 6th Growth and Resilience Dialogue organised by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) in collaboration with the OECS Commission, The World Bank, and University of the West Indies.

Participants will channel their proposed AI digital solutions to overcoming identified data challenges into specific prototypes and accompanying project summary.

The scope of the challenge involves:

- Developing new or improving existing data collection applications.
- Designing technology platform



ECCB Governor Timothy Antoine

solutions that enable the collection/generation, analysis and curation of data.

- Create collaboration and participation frameworks to enable problem solution success.

Participants have been challenged to focus on the development of potential technology solutions, drawing on capabilities in artificial intelligence, data science and data analytics, as well as relevant data governance and policy frameworks regarding data portability, data privacy and data security.

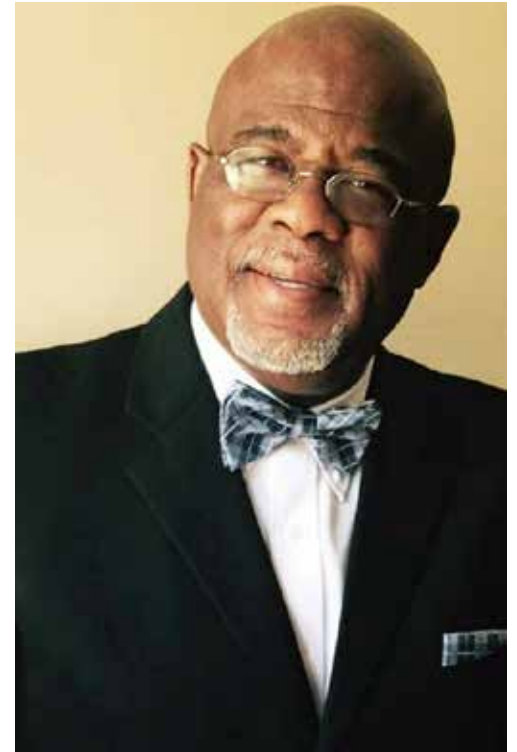
Commenting on the importance of Caribbean participation at the start of the challenge in January, Dr. Curtis Charles, Director of Academic Affairs in the School of Science, Computing and Artificial Intelligence at The University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus said, “The cavalry is not coming to save Small Island Developing States from this worsening climate crisis. The burning urgency is now for us to gain deep insights from the data.

“For many of these islands, tourism is the backbone of their economy. Without tourism, their economy is gonna die.

“But for all of us, [the] ocean is a life line that connects us; this ocean captures 90 percent of greenhouse gases.

“With all the advances in Artificial Intelligence and breakthroughs in machine learning, we now have the opportunity to solve our own problems.

“What the COP26 [2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference] has taught us, is that the cavalry is not coming to save us, so we need to take it into our own hands - use the data, use the AI - so that we can make predictions about our lives and our future.”



Director of Academic Affairs, UWI , Five Islands Campus, Dr. Curtis Charles

The ECCB’s Governor Timothy Antoine also emphasised the importance of the Caribbean voice in global discussions about climate change as the region stands the most to lose from its impact.

“The Caribbean is among the lowest emitters of carbon but among the hardest hit.

“The Caribbean is [also] the most tourist dependent region in the world, and most of our tourism assets are along our coasts. So you could understand the vulnerability of that sector to climate risks.

“[Additionally], the frequency and ferocity of storms have increased. Evidence has indicated that there’s not just increased frequency of hurricanes, but since 2001 we have had some of the warmest years on record,” he said.

The GRD Climate Resilience Data Challenge was launched on 25 January 2022 and four (4) finalists will be

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Sandals recognizes medical team for stellar work during COVID-19 pandemic

Five nurses, two doctors and medical administrative staff were recognised by Sandals Grande Antigua Resort and Spa for outstanding service, support and professionalism to the resort's guests, team members and the community during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Last Thursday, a special dinner reception was hosted in honour of the hard-working team of medical professionals. The team has been working around the clock with the support of the Health Ministry to ensure guest and team members receive the highest level of education and care as needed since the start of the pandemic.

Resort General Manager, Matthew Cornall, said, "On behalf of our Executive Chairman, Adam Stewart, who recognised over 300 Caribbean-wide healthcare workers for their efforts during this pandemic, I am very pleased to add even more accolades to these local Antiguans. Over the last two years, we know that our nurses and physicians locally are deserving of a stand-



Sandals Grande Antigua General Manager Matthew Cornall poses with resort medical team, Environment, Health and Safety Manager Aliyah Ramdin and Hotel Manager Leighton Josephs at appreciation dinner.

ing ovation. Today, we're talking about how we can encourage and applaud our medical team for their stellar work that has not gone unnoticed. We here at Sandals are truly grateful for the level of commitment and professionalism our medical team has delivered amidst stress, anxiety, loneliness, and burn-out."

"It is definitely commendable what the medical team has done as together we all put in a lot of work. We had to figure out how to manage the ever changing health protocols alongside our own Sandals Platinum

Protocols of Cleanliness. It was a learning experience and a journey on how to manage a crisis and how to be agile and deliver immediate responses at a moment's notice, but we were able to pivot and execute successfully," Environment Health and Safety Manager Aliyah Ramdin added.

Resident Nurse Angelina Boyd said, "It felt really nice to dress up and be appreciated for the work we do daily. We sacrifice our own health and time to ensure we provide quality care and education to our guests and team members. In addition

to dealing with the regular health issues, we had to adapt, learn quickly and transition into new roles with the onset of the pandemic but we have managed it well."

"As the time went by, we adapted and we got comfortable dealing with certain situations. Teamwork was very important and played a major role. We did have some rough patches but we were able to be resilient." Administrative Assistant Chante Alexander commented.

The medical team in attendance at the dinner expressed gratitude to the Sandals Antigua team for taking the time to recognize their hard work and show appreciation in such a meaningful way.

"To all Sandals leadership, managers and team members who took the time out to shower us with their appreciation, we say thank you." Nurse Boyd said.

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shortlisted (following assessment of project summary submissions) at the end of March 2022.

All shortlisted finalists will be invited to present at the GRD 2022, 6 - 7 April 2022 in a competitive format with the individual/team associated with the winning selection awarded US\$10,000 along

with the possibility of an invitation to the winning solution team to explore ways to collaborate in validating, implementing or scaling the project's reach with an expert in the respective field.

Judges for The Challenge will be drawn from regional and international universities, as well as other public and private sector organisations.

The real workplace pandemic isn't Covid-19

If you are a Human Resource (HR) professional during this time you've undoubtedly had your hands full dealing with the pandemic. If you're an HR professional who sees beyond the surface levers you may have realized that the real problems associated with the pandemic are not all entirely related to the pandemic but are being brought to light by the said pandemic. Below are my thoughts on the real issues plaguing workplaces that are likely to continue even after we turn the corner from this pandemic.

The Inability of Employers and Employees to Discern Between Facts and Fiction. With the proliferation of the virus into our homes, school, churches, grocery stores, and everywhere else mankind congregates, so too did misinformation. As quick-

ly as the virus spread so too did the falsehoods about the said virus. What we saw to come was fearmongering, doomsday preaching, and a list of far-right rhetoric that put conspiracy theorists at the head of the class. The sad reality was that the workplace was not vaccinated from the differing and cascading viewpoints of employers, employees, and everyone in between. It was bad enough for HR to wage war against an invisible viral threat, but it also had to wage war against a visible one and in some cases, it was also the one doing the spreading. Now two years later though somewhat under control, HR Professionals still need to be vigilant about

Reasonableness As a Guide to Good Decision-making. We are all aware that the present pandemic has



affected our lives in every single way imaginable. Covid has also exposed that not only do politicians have a tough time making the right decisions for the masses but also do employers. With information coming at them 100mph at the start of the pandemic, owners/managers had to make decisions about terminations, layoffs, work from home, and everything else that came their way in a flurry. How-

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ever, what was quickly evident is that not all persons can handle the pressures of demand decision-making. This lack of grit for good decision-making had its share of calamities that caused rifts between management and the workforce.

The need for senior personnel to include empathy and reality in their decision-making was very evident in the CEO who thought it ok to fire 900 employees via a zoom call. The false security of virtual meetings could never replace the harsh realities of the need for decision-makers to embrace various approaches to problem-solving as opposed to a blanket one size fits all endeavor.

Flexible Policies. With work from home mandates being the first craze, many employees soon realized how ill-fitted their organizations were to adopt (especially in the Caribbean). In the instances where it was applicable, policies were quickly put in place to protect property and confidentiality.

The intrusion into the home environment and the blurring of the lines between home and work would have caused some workers even more strain than their daily commutes.

It was quickly evident again that all policies and procedures are not created equal and that the reality of individual situations such as an ailing parent, children, poor connectivity, and oth-

ers needed to be taken into consideration to allow for maximum productivity to be obtained.

Mandatory vaccinations also stormed their way into the room causing quite the stir. Decision-makers may have seen it as the silver lining behind the dark clouds of covid and an opportunity to lighten the headcount.

Even in the best interest of the whole rather than the sum of its parts, such policies would have needed to give way to persons with legitimate medical, religious and personal apprehensions. For employees who freely entered into the working relationship, the sudden move to an ultimatum may have triggered combative responses to any policy that threatened their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

Using scientific data in collaboration with acceptable standards to create carve-outs that would allow employees to be able to continue their functionalities would always be the preferred modus operandi.

A physical virus may still be rampaging through our islands, towns, cities, and lives and maybe a present threat to our way of life for the near and distant foreseeable future. However, it is up to those of us who have the powers to ensure that the virus does not attack our powers of discernment, reasonableness, and flexibility.

This article was originally written by one of our members, Shawn Maile and published on LinkedIn on January 24, this year. We share with you today in this space as it espouses a few

thoughts that we can support.

The Human Resource Professionals of Antigua and Barbuda (HRPAB) is a registered non-profit, professional association dedicated to the advancement of the HR profession for national development. We began informally from 2009 and legally registered in 2011. HRPAB's growing membership represents private and public organizations as well as independent consultants specializing in one or more areas of human resource management and development. Membership is offered for three categories: professional, non-professional, and honorary. You may contact us via email at hrpro.ab@gmail.com or on Facebook and Instagram @HRPro268.

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UPDATED SCHEDULE

Bitcoin could be laid low by miners' malady

By Medha Singh and Lisa Pauline Mattackal

Bitcoin miners are feeling the heat - and the pain's rippling downstream to pressure prices. The cryptocurrency's spectacular rally in 2021 drew thousands of entrants into mining, or producing new coin. As a result the hashrate, or combined computational power used by bitcoin miners globally, has roughly quadrupled over the past six months to blow past 200 million "terahashes" per second. But what's that got to do with the price of bitcoin?

A rising hashrate makes it harder for miners to earn coin and cover their costs of hardware, electricity and staff - so many are more likely to sell, rather than hold, their newly minted cryptocurrency, exerting a bearish force on the market.

"Running costs are a major factor in miners' decision to hold or sell newly acquired coins. They are the first and most natural sellers in the crypto space and so definitely impact prices," said Justin d'Anethan, institutional sales director at crypto financial services firm Amber Group.

The total value of coins held in miners' wallets has fallen to around \$75 billion from \$114 billion at the start of November, as their profitability has been squeezed by the rising hashrate as well as falling prices, according to



A representation of the virtual cryptocurrency Bitcoin is seen in this picture illustration taken October 19, 2021. [Photo credit: REUTERS/Edgar Su]

Oslo-based crypto research firm Arcane Research.

Miners have been transferring more coins to exchanges than adding to reserves, according to crypto industry analytics firms, a sign of selling or intent to sell.

Such flows are adding to pressures facing bitcoin, whose drift towards the mainstream has seen it caught up in a selloff in global markets driven by tensions on the Ukraine border and the Federal Reserve's policy tightening. The world's dominant cryptocurrency is trading at about \$37,854, which is 45% below its Nov. 10 high of nearly \$69,000.

WHAT IT COSTS

Bitcoin mining, in simple terms, is the process by which a network of computers checks and validates a block of transactions that then get added to the blockchain. Miners get rewarded for completing a block.

It's an expensive busi-

ness, though, requiring not just sophisticated and fast "rigs" costing upwards of \$10,000, but also a huge amount of power. And it's getting pricier.

The seven-day average of total mining cost per transaction validated has fallen to \$176.8 from a record \$235.57 hit in May last year, data from blockchain.com shows.

"As more miners join the network, each individually earns fewer bitcoin. This is because network difficulty increases in order to slow the issuance of new bitcoin," said Joe Burnett, analyst at infrastructure and mining firm Blockware Solutions.

Waning mining profitability is also hitting the broader market because some institutional investors, who are unable or unwilling to invest directly in cryptocurrencies, instead buy shares of listed miners or ETFs that track miners as an alternative way of gaining access

to the young industry. Shares of U.S.-listed crypto miners Marathon Digital Holdings (MARA.O) and Riot Blockchain (RIOT.O) have plunged 66% and 52% respectively since early November.

The Valkyrie Bitcoin Miners ETF (WGMI.O) is meanwhile trading at a roughly 5% discount to its net asset value since the fund's launch in early February, and the Viridi Clean Energy Crypto-Mining & Semiconductor ETF has lost 23% since the beginning of the year.

THE LAST BITCOIN

Some of the pressures on miners flow from bitcoin's inherent structure. The decentralised blockchain was created anonymously with a final limit of 21 million coins, of which nearly 19 million has already been minted.

It takes around 10 minutes to mine one block and the reward for miners - who currently get 6.25 bitcoin per block - is halved about every four years.

"There could be one miner or a million, it doesn't change anything. There's only one block and a set number of bitcoins issued," said d'Anethan at Amber Group.

A final note: don't lose sleep fretting about what will happen when the last bitcoin is mined - that's not expected until the middle of the next century, about 2140.

AstraZeneca boosts oncology credentials with breast cancer trial success

By Ludwig Burger

AstraZeneca (AZN.L) said its Enhertu cancer drug has been shown to significantly help women suffering from a type of breast cancer that leaves them with poor treatment options, opening the door to a much larger potential patient group.

AstraZeneca, which is working on the drug with Japan's Daiichi Sankyo (4568.T), said on Monday that Enhertu prolonged survival and slowed the progression of metastatic breast cancer with low levels of a protein known as HER2.

The improvement was "clinically meaningful" when compared with standard chemotherapy, it said, adding that detailed results of the late-stage trial would be presented at an as-yet undisclosed medical conference.

The company said it would reach out to regulatory agencies to enable a speedy review of a wider use for the drug.

While the study was limited to low-HER2 patients whose tumours had spread to other parts of the body, analysts have said a positive trial read-out could portend future use at earlier stages of the disease with potentially hundreds of thousands of new eligible patients per year.

The read-out is set to bolster the Anglo-Swedish company's status among analysts as one of the world's fastest growing major pharma groups, thanks to a high success rate in cancer drug development.

It has forecast higher group revenues for 2022, despite a decline in sales of its widely used COVID-19 vaccine, driven by cancer drugs such Tagrisso



Test tubes are seen in front of a displayed AstraZeneca logo in this illustration taken, May 21, 2021. [Photo credit:REUTERS/Dado Ruvic]

against lung tumours and treatments for kidney disease and rare conditions.

The company's shares were up 2.1% at 1044 GMT, outperforming a 0.15% increase in the STOXX Europe 600 Health Care index (.SXDP) and extending a 5% gain over the previous four trading sessions.

"HER2 low is a large and previously unaddressed patient pool in breast cancer," analysts at Credit Suisse said in a note, adding they saw a 50% probability of \$3 billion peak sales potential from the new patient group.

AstraZeneca secured rights to the Daiichi Sankyo compound three years ago in a deal worth up to \$6.9 billion. Enhertu has since been shown to help women with metastatic breast cancer characterised by high levels of HER2 when compared to Kadcyla, the ADC drug from Switzerland's Roche - the world's biggest cancer drug maker.

"This is about redefining the categorisation of breast cancer and increasing the number of options for women," said Susan Galbraith, Astra's head of

oncology research and development.

She added that, while the new study had focused on women that had exhausted three to four earlier therapies, more trials would in future test Enhertu on women during earlier stages of the disease, both with high and low HER2, which would be a much larger patient group.

Enhertu belongs to a promising class of therapies called antibody drug conjugates (ADC), which are engineered antibodies that bind to tumour cells and then release cell-killing chemicals.

This led to initial market approval in late 2019. A further clearance was won for HER2-driven gastric cancer. The drug is also being tested against other forms of gastric, lung and colorectal cancers.

Roche's established Herceptin drug is also based on the HER2 receptor but Enhertu is designed to pack a much larger cell-killing punch so that even low levels of HER2 enable treatment.

Black innovators who reshaped American gardening, farming

By Jessica Damiano

The achievements of George Washington Carver, the 19th century scientist credited with hundreds of inventions, including 300 uses for peanuts, have landed him in American history textbooks.

But many other agricultural practices, innovations and foods that travelled with enslaved people from West Africa — or were developed by their descendants — remain unsung, despite having revolutionised the way we eat, farm and garden.

Among the medicinal and food staples introduced by the African diaspora were sorghum, millet, African rice, yams, black-eyed peas, watermelon, eggplant, okra, sesame and kola nut, whose extract was a main ingredient in the original Coca-Cola recipe.

Whether captives smuggled seeds and plants from aboard slave ships or captains purchased them in Africa for planting in America, key components of the West African diet also journeyed along the Middle Passage across the Atlantic.

After long days spent working on the plantation's fields, many enslaved people grew their own gardens to supplement their meagre rations.



This 1902 portrait provided by The Library of Congress shows George Washington Carver, front row, centre, seated with other staff members on the steps of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. [Photo credit: Library of Congress via AP]

“The plantation owners could then force them to show them how to grow those foods,” said Judith Carney, a professor of geography at UCLA and co-author of *“In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World”* (University of California Press, 2011).

“Those crops would then become commodities,” said Carney, who spent a decade tracing such

food origins by reconciling oral history with written documents.

It’s no coincidence, then, that “many of the agricultural practices seen in Africa were also happening in the South,” said Michael W. Twitty, culinary historian and James Beard-winning author of *“The Cooking Gene”* (Amistad, 2017).

Multicropping (growing different types of plants in one plot), perma-

culture (emulating natural ecosystems) and planting on mounds (arguably the precursor of berms) can be traced to African agricultural practices, said Twitty, who partnered with Colonial Williamsburg last year to establish the Sankofa Heritage Garden, a living replica of the type of garden grown by enslaved people during that era.

History did not record many inventions of

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enslaved Africans, in no small part because slave owners often claimed credit. Some, however, were recognized, as were the accomplishments of many who came after them.

Here are five early Black innovators whose contributions reshaped the agricultural landscape:

Henry Blair (1807-1860)

Only the second Black man to be awarded a U.S. patent (Thomas L. Jennings, who invented an early method of dry-cleaning clothes in 1821, is believed to be the first), Blair designed a wheelbarrow-type corn planter to help farmers sow seeds more effectively. Two years later, he received a second patent for a mechanical horse-drawn cotton planter, which increased yield and productivity.

Details about the Maryland farmer and inventor's personal life, including whether he was born into slavery, are scarce.

George Washington Carver (circa 1864-1943)

Peanuts, believed to have originated in South America, were brought to Spain by European explorers before making their way to Africa. They then traveled back to the Western Hemisphere aboard slave ships in the 1700s. By the late 1800s, the legume had grown from a Southern regional crop to one with national appeal across the United States.

It was around that time that Carver, who was born into slavery in Missouri and freed as a child after the Civil War, earned a master's degree from Iowa State Agricultural College.

As head of the agriculture program at Alabama's Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (today's Tuskegee University), Carver gained fame for his peanut research and invented hundreds of peanut-based

versions of products, including flour, coffee, Worcestershire sauce, beverages, hen food, soap, laxatives, shampoo, leather dye, paper, insecticide, linoleum and insulation.

He also devised alternative uses for other crops, and is credited with discovering the soil-rejuvenating benefits of compost and promoting crop rotation as a means of preventing the depletion of soil nutrients.

Frederick McKinley Jones (1893-1961)

With a background in electrical engineering, Jones is credited with many inventions — from a portable X-ray machine to a broadcast radio transmitter — but one in particular made a drastic impact on the modern American diet: mobile refrigeration technology.

Jones, who was born in Cincinnati and settled in Minnesota, developed a refrigeration system that was installed in trucks, train cars, airplanes and ships, enabling the safe transport of perishable foods around the world.

Booker T. Whatley (1915-2005)

An Alabama horticulturist and agriculture professor at Tuskegee University, Whatley introduced the concept of "clientele membership clubs" in the 1960s to help struggling Black farmers, who often were denied the loans and grants afforded to their white counterparts.

The farmers would sell prepaid boxes of their crops at the beginning of the season to ensure a guaranteed income. In many instances, customers would harvest their shares themselves, which saved on labour costs.

Today's Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and U-Pick farming enterprises grew directly from Whatley's ideas, as, it can be argued, did the farm-to-table and eat-local movements.

Whatley also pioneered sustainable agriculture and regenerative

farming practices to maximise biodiversity and keep soil healthy and productive. His handbook "How to Make \$100,000 Farming 25 Acres" (Regenerative Agricultural Assn. of Rodale Institute, 1987) is still regarded as an important resource for small farmers.

Edmond Albius (1829-1880)

Although not American, Albius, who was enslaved as a youth and living on the French colony island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean, is responsible for the worldwide distribution of vanilla.

The plant had been brought from Mexico to Europe by the explorer Hernán Cortés but did not produce beans there due to the absence of a specific pollinator bee indigenous to Mexico.

A man named Ferréol Bellier-Beaumont, who lived on Réunion, had come to own Edmond and taught him from a young age how to care for his many plants.

One of those lessons included instruction for hand pollination, manually transferring pollen from male flowers to female flowers to produce fruit.

In the 1840s, 12-year-old Edmond examined Bellier-Beaumont's vanilla vine flowers, which had been growing without yield for two decades, and observed that their male and female reproductive organs were not on separate flowers but contained within a single flower, separated by a flap-like membrane.

He moved the flap and, beneath it, spread the pollen from the stamen to the pistil. Before long, the plants were producing beans.

Word spread, and Réunion began cultivating vanilla and exporting it overseas. Within 50 years, the island had surpassed Mexico in vanilla production. Albius' pollination technique reshaped the vanilla industry and remains in use worldwide.

St. Maarten begins transitioning into endemic phase of COVID-19

Loop -Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labour, Omar Ottley announced that Sint Maarten will begin transitioning into the endemic phase of COVID-19.

The minister stated that recently the word ‘endemic’ is being used as a term to reference exiting the pandemic. Minister Ottley stated that misconceptions about the word endemic may encourage misplaced complacency.

He further stated that entering into the endemic phase of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus doesn’t mean that COVID-19 will come to a natural end and that it just means the virus will now be considered an endemic infection, one in which overall rates are static — not rising, not falling.

“This is why we have been working on policies to shape the years to come. These policies, continued health hygiene measures



St. Maarten to regain normalcy [Photo credit: [istock]]

and individual behaviour will determine what form the endemic COVID-19 takes.”

With that being said, the Minister elaborated on the first transitional steps to be taken in his back to normalcy strategy. As of February 25, the nightlife business hours will be extended to 3 am.

The minister also notifies the local population

and the rest of the world that as of March 1 2022, Sint Maarten will revert to allowing persons who received their booster shot or two (2) doses of an approved vaccine, two (2) weeks or more prior to travelling, to enter the country without requiring a test.

Persons who have recovered from COVID-19 up to nine months post-in-

fection will also be allowed entry to the country without requiring a test.

“These first steps are a phased approach towards the normalcy strategy,” said Minister Ottley. It was stated that in the next phase other mandates and restrictions will be lifted in a careful and safe manner to ensure a safe and effective transition into normalcy.

T&T lost US billions in potential revenue from LNG exports

Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley joined other leaders at the Sixth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) on Tuesday.

Rowley delivered a national statement in which he called on members to further deepen their collaborative

efforts.

The Prime Minister said, “if we are to maintain our leading position in the global gas market in this changing environment there must be meaningful collaboration and cooperation at all levels. Given what is at stake I am confident that we will coalesce and continue as a cohesive force in this dy-

namic environment.”

Rowley told his colleagues that “...the country lost US billions in potential revenue from LNG exports.”

He explained that as a result, his “Government has been having dialogue with companies to ensure a more equitable sharing of LNG revenues.”

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Guyana: Search continues for capsized trawler, 3 feared dead

CMC - Authorities in Guyana searched desperately for three fishermen missing since Sunday when their trawler capsized with rescue teams Monday spotting the net of the trawler.

Public Works Minister Deodat Indar speaking on News-Talk Radio Guyana 103.1, said the rescue teams “saw the net floating in the general area where the trawler sank” but that the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) Coast Guard members were unable to dive on Monday to reach the trawler, “Worldfriend 307” owned by Noble House Seafoods.

Those missing and feared dead are the vessel’s Captain, Harold Anthony Damon, 45; Ronald Burton, 78; and 46-year old Winston Sam. Winston Dazzell, who escaped in a lifeboat, said he was rescued by fishermen and taken ashore after which he reported the incident to police and Noble House Seafoods.

On Monday, Agriculture Minister Zulfikar Mustapha said he remained hopeful that the three fishermen



Family of 3 missing men fears the worst [Photo credit: Loop]

would be found alive.

Mustapha met with the relatives of those missing as the government also announced “an immediate and thorough investigation” into the circumstances surrounding the reported capsizing of the trawler in Coastal waters, some 18 miles off Mahaicony

Director-General of the Maritime Administration (MARAD), Captain Stephen Thomas said emergency re-

sponders were unable to reach the distressed vessel because the company did not relay there was a problem to MARAD, the Boathouse or the Lighthouse after receiving information.

Further, Thomas said the captain did not communicate any difficulty on the emergency radio communication channel to other vessels so that they could have responded.



Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley

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Adding, “We now have an opportunity to correct this inequality consequent on the pending expiration of LNG licenses and plans to restructure the LNG business in Trinidad and Tobago.”

“It is in situations like this that the value of the membership of Trinidad and Tobago in the GECF takes on added significance. The experience of the Forum which possesses 70% of the world’s proven gas reserves,

44% of its marketed production, 52% of pipeline, and 51% of LNG exports in the world is formidable and can be of immeasurable benefit to members.”

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Rowley met with the Amir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Dr Rowley also participated in bi-lateral discussions with the President of the Republic of Mozambique, His Excellency Filipe Nyusi.

Boris Johnson announces UK sanctions against Russia

BBC- The UK has announced a series of sanctions against Russia after it ordered troops into two rebel-held regions of eastern Ukraine.

Five banks have had their assets frozen, along with three Russian billionaires - who will also be hit with UK travel bans.

Boris Johnson said Russia's actions amounted to a "renewed invasion" and the sanctions were a "first barrage".

He stressed these could be extended - but faced calls for tougher action now.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered troops into the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk on Monday, after recognising them as independent.

President Putin said the troops would be "peace-keeping" in the breakaway regions - a claim dismissed by the United States as "nonsense".

Mr Johnson announced the sanctions against Russian individuals and banks in a statement to MPs, after an emergency meeting early on Tuesday.

The effort comes as part of a co-ordinated Western response to the crisis, which has also seen the EU and US impose sanctions of their own.

The Foreign Office later announced the UK



Boris Johnson says Russian actions in Ukraine are a "renewed invasion of that country. [Photo credit: BBC]

would also sanction Russian parliamentarians who voted to recognise the two-rebel held areas as independent last week.

The sanctions will be similar to those already imposed on the three billionaires, but could take weeks to enforce as new legislation will be required.

The department said that in the coming weeks British firms would also be prevented from doing business in the two breakaway areas - similar to Crimea, a region Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

It added "unprecedented" measures targeting the Russian financial sector had been prepared if Russia went further, and

threatened to stop Russia issuing sovereign debt on UK financial markets if it did not "de-escalate".

Mr Johnson accused the Russian president of denying Ukraine's statehood, and "establishing the pretext for a full-scale offensive".

He said Russian tanks had already been "spotted" in the breakaway regions, amounting to a "renewed invasion" of Ukraine after the 2014 crisis.

The EU has also announced plans to target members of the Russian parliament, as well as banks financing Russia's military.

Germany has also said it would freeze approval

of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to Russia - a move welcomed by Mr Johnson.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer welcomed British sanctions, but said the UK "must be prepared to go further".

He called for Russia to be excluded from the global SWIFT payment system, the banning of trading in Russian sovereign debt and action to prevent Russia "broadcasting its propaganda around the world", a reference to the RT news channel.

Sir Keir said he understood the government wanted to delay introducing some sanctions as a tactic to deter a Russian inva-

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Burkina Faso gold mine blast kills 60 people

BBC—About 60 people have died after an explosion at a makeshift gold mine in a village in south-west Burkina Faso, local officials say.

The blast happened in a market at the gold-mining site when dynamite stored there caught fire, witnesses said.

“There were bodies strewn everywhere. It was an explosion that managed to uproot trees and bring down houses,” a judicial source told Reuters.

Dozens of injured people have been evacuated to the nearest hospital.

It is thought women and children are among the casualties, the AFP news agency reports.

An investigation was opened into Monday’s incident, after the regional prosecutor visited the scene near the town of Gaoua.

One person has been arrested, and is being held for questioning.

The goldmine has since been closed until further notice according to Burkina Faso’s news agency, AIB.

The explosion has been described as destroying “everything on its path,” according to a local news reporter from RTB TV.

Many of the miners at the site are displaced people from elsewhere in



A local resident describes the scenes of wreckage as horrific, according to the AFP news agency. [Photo credit: BBC]

the country, local leader Sansan Urbain Kambou told Reuters.

Burkina Faso is one of Africa’s biggest gold producers, with many mines run by international firms, as well as informal ones without little oversight or regulation.

BBC West Africa correspondent Nicolas Negoce says that since 2009, gold has become Burkina Faso’s leading export, overtaking cotton.

In 2020, the country produced 54 tonnes of gold, compared to 45 tonnes in 2019, an increase of 20%, according

to the ministry in charge of mines and quarries.

About a quarter of the total output is from unauthorised mines, which provide work for around 1.5 million people, the ministry estimates.

Deadly accidents such as roof collapses frequently happen at informal mines in many African countries.

Last month, at least 13 people were killed in a huge blast in neighbouring Ghana after a truck carrying explosives to a gold mine collided with a motorbike.

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sion of the rest of Ukraine, but without a “full set of sanctions now” President Putin would conclude that “the benefits of aggression outweigh the costs.”

Senior Labour MP Margaret Hodge said there were “serious flaws” in the new sanctions regime, and expressed concern it would

not affect “oligarchs close to Putin who do not hold an official position in a company”.

Former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith and Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey were among MPs who welcomed the sanctions announced, but also urged the prime minister to go further.

Mr Johnson later said he thought further sanctions were “inevitable” given the situation in Ukraine.

He also suggested Russia should be stripped of hosting this season’s Champions League Final.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said she had “serious concerns about

the sporting events due to be held in Russia” and would be discussing the subject with sport’s governing bodies.

Russia’s ambassador to the UK Andrei Kelin was told his country would “pay the price for its actions” after he was summoned to the Foreign Office.

Hong Kong orders mandatory COVID-19 tests for all residents

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong will test its entire population of 7.5 million people for COVID-19 in March, the city's leader said Tuesday, as it grapples with its worst outbreak driven by the omicron variant.

The population will be tested three times in March, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said.

She said testing capacity will be boosted to 1 million a day or more.

"Since we have a population of some 7 million people, testing will take about seven days," she said.

Hong Kong has reported about 5,000 new daily infections since Feb. 15, with the cases threatening to overwhelm its healthcare system. Since the current surge began at the beginning of the year, the city has recorded nearly 54,000 cases and 145 deaths.

The order for citywide testing comes after mainland Chinese authorities dispatched epidemiologists, health workers and other medical resources last week to help contain the outbreak in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Hong Kong has largely aligned itself with mainland China's "zero-COVID-19" policy, which aims to totally stamp out outbreaks, even as many other countries are shifting their approach to living with the virus.

Lockdowns of entire cities have been imposed in a number of areas of the mainland, but Lam said no such measure is currently being considered in Hong Kong because it is "not realistic."

She also denied that the central Chinese government is giving instructions to Hong Kong on how to handle the epidemic.

"I reiterate that the central government never issued any instructions on our anti-epidemic work," she said.



Residents line up to get tested for the coronavirus at a temporary testing center despite the rain in Hong Kong. Hong Kong will test its entire population for COVID-19 in March, the city's leader said yesterday, as the city grapples with its worst outbreak driven by the omicron variant. [Photo caption: AP]

"The central government will offer support as needed or upon our request, but of course we will always exchange our views."

The "zero-COVID-19" strategy means that Hong Kong authorities often take measures such as locking down residential estates for mass testing when positive cases are detected, imposing strict quarantine requirements on travelers and ordering the shuttering of businesses.

The rapid surge of infections in the city has threatened to overwhelm its healthcare system.

Health officials said last week that hospitals were already at 90% of capacity and isolation facilities were full. People who test positive for the virus in Hong Kong must either be admitted to a hospital or a quarantine facility.

Lam acknowledged on Tuesday that the city's isolation facilities are "severely inadequate" and that it is "working very hard with the full sup-

port of the central authorities" to build more.

Current social-distancing measures, such as a ban on dining at restaurants after 6 p.m. and the closure of businesses such as gyms and bars, will be extended until April 20.

"This is not good news to the sectors affected, but really at this stage of the pandemic we have no choice but to take these measures," Lam said.

She said the city hopes to boost its vaccination rate to 90% by early March.

Other measures announced Tuesday include ending the school year early and moving the normal July-August summer holidays forward to March and April so that schools can be turned into facilities for testing, isolation and vaccination.

Flight bans from countries classified as high risk, including Australia, Canada, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Britain and the U.S., will be extended to April 20.



No “Jimbo” in CWI squads

The Cricket West Indies (CWI) Select Panel on Tuesday named the West Indies Men’s squad for the first Apex Test match against England, as well as the CWI President’s XI squad for the four-day warm-up match.

The first Test will be played at the Sir. Vivian Richards Stadium from March 8-12, following the warm-up match at the Coolidge Cricket Ground from March 1-4.

The West Indies squad will assemble in Antigua from February 25 for a training camp ahead of the Apex Test series. Shane Dorwich the Barbadian wicketkeeper batsman has been named as captain of the CWI President XI with Ramon Reifer vice-captain.

Lead selector, the right Hon. Dr. Desmond Haynes, said “I expect us to be very competitive against England. This should be a very excit-

ing series, with a lot of players who are out to make their mark. We have a squad that has some experienced players, as well as some exciting young players and we expect them to equip themselves well and do the job.”

West Indies Test squad includes: Kraigg Braithwaite (Captain) Jermaine Blackwood (Vice Captain), Nkrumah Bonner, Shamarh Brooks, John Campbell, Joshus De Silva Jason Holder and Alzarri Joseph, Also included are Kyle Mayers, Veerasammy Permaul, Anderson Phillip, Kemar Roach and Jayden Seales. The CWI President’s XI squad Shane Dorwich (Captain), Raymon Reifer (Vice Captain), Colin Archibald, Alick Athanaze, Keacy Carty, Bryan Charles, Shermion Lewis, Preston McSween, Shayne Mosley, Jeremy Solanzo, Shamar Springer and Devon Thomas.



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ABABWF hosts first Train for Success Seminar this weekend

The importance of diet as it relates to athletes training will be brought into focus when the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Bodybuilding & Weightlifting Federation (ABABWF) host its first 2022 online Training for Success Seminar via zoom meeting on Saturday, 26 February, starting at 7pm.

Public Relations Officer of the ABABWF, Melissa Seaforth, who is also a national bikini fitness athlete, said the organization's first educational installment for 2022 'Train for Success' will be facilitated by Physiotherapist Gregson Mathews and International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness (IFBB) Elite Pro Randy Christopher of Antigua.

Christopher, who is a classic bodybuilding competitor, earned his IFBB Elite Pro Card at the Miami Grand Prix in Florida in August 2021.

Seaforth said the ABABWF will be hosting the seminar as part of its objective to educate its members and the general public.

"Education in the federation is now headed by our Madame President Hazel Went so this is her baby and I know she is putting a lot of effort into this training seminar.

"Education is our focus because we want our members to be educated in this field so this is something that is being put on to give back, not only to our members but the general public, and for a reasonable price," Seaforth said, during an interview on Sportoverflow on Pointe FM Radio.

"This year the ABABWF is actually doing something expanding our reach in terms of education. We are actually going to be putting on a seminar that is going to be focused on training for success and there is a diet component in that training session.



Public Relations Officer of the ABABWF, Melissa Seaforth.

"We don't want our athletes preparing for the stage, especially our novice athletes, first timers, even if you have competed, maybe two, three times before, not knowing about the importance of diet as it relates to their training.

"Maybe you have not zeroed in on the nutrition aspect of the sport so in that training session we are going to be talking about diet as it relates to training, switching your diet as you prepare for a competition prep and the different factors that affect diet cycling.

"A bodybuilder's diet changes. It has two distinct seasons, an improvement season where the calories are up and you are eating a bit more freely. Tracking your macros are important but not as strict as when you are going into the cutting phase where you are going to be shedding all that extra body fat to showcase your physique in the best way.

"So we want to make sure our membership or anyone for that matter who are interested in learning about it. Maybe you are just attending the gym and you want to know how to shed those few pounds, this is the seminar that would be really beneficial to you



International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness (IFBB) Elite Pro Randy Christopher of Antigua will be one of the facilitators of the ABABWF's Training for Success Seminar on Saturday, 26 February, 2022. (Photos courtesy Facebook)

and we are only offering the seminar for 25 EC dollars.

"For 25 EC dollars you are going to walk away with a wealth of knowledge, and we are not putting on anything that is low budget. We actually have our very own IFBB Elite Pro Randy Christopher. He would have won his pro card in 2021 and he will be assisting as a facilitator in the seminar as well as physiotherapist Gregson Mathews.

"So you are getting the information from the pros, you are getting the information from the professionals and so it is going to be a great session. I am definitely encouraging, not only our members, but the general public to participate in the seminar.

"It is going to be on the 26th of February and it is going to be via zoom so you don't have to leave the comfort of your own home and for 25 dollars, I don't think you can get any better than that."

Interested persons can call 764-6234 to register and get more information about the event.

Horse racing set to return to Cassada Gardens this weekend



Horse owner, trainer and President of the Antigua Turf Club, Neil Cochrane, right, standing next to a horse with a jockey at the Cassada Gardens Race Track. (Photo courtesy Neil Cochrane Facebook)

The Antigua Turf Club (ATC) will host its first race meet in over two years this weekend.

President of the Antigua Turf Club, Neil Cochrane, said the race meet, which is scheduled for Sunday, 27th February, will mark the end of a two-and-a-half-year hiatus for horse racing in Antigua.

“The last two and half years has been very difficult for our sport and all of our stakeholders. Having to endure significant costs to maintain our animals while not being able to watch them compete and generate revenue for their upkeep has been financially and mentally devastating,” Cochrane stated in a press release.

“However, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we are getting closer to the day when we experience that adrenaline rush, that day when we battle against each other for pride and bragging rights,” he added.

Cochrane said five races are scheduled on a race card which will see a moderate number of horses participating in this highly anticipated re start of horse racing on island.

“We expect to see at least 6 or sev-

en horses make their debut this coming Sunday including Leche D Baba, the offspring of champion half Bread Fresh Milk (deceased), locally bred thoroughbred Tanya, and one of the new imports in Unruly Union

“Also expected to form part of the race card are three of the more popular horses in the 2016 Black Pineapple Stakes and Dr. Cutwin Lake’s Super Sprint Lynn’s Image, Chief of Staff and 2019 Black Pineapple Stakes and Governor General’s Cup winner Syrian Soca,” Cochrane stated.

Sunday’s first race is expected jump off at 3:30pm following tributes to fallen contributors of horse racing, including, Former Executive Member, Owner, trainer and Attorney for the ATC Mr. Ralph Francis, Champion Jockey Clair Wilkins and trainer Joseph Tony Samuel.

A special admission of \$10 for adults and \$5 for children will be implemented. Gates will open from 2pm. All Covid-19 pandemic health protocols will be enforced. Horse racing was last held at the Cassada Gardens race track on June 27th, 2019.

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I will be joining back up with the guys very shortly.

“We have a few gigs lined up for cricket because you know the Test match will be here on the 8th to the 12th of March and we have had a lot of interests, especially from people coming from overseas who want see the band play. So I am looking forward to that and I am looking forward to entertaining our visitors and add to the general lively, exciting atmosphere whenever

there is cricket in Antigua and Barbuda,” he said.

“The organization will be putting on a charity event at Catherine’s Café in the form of a fundraising dinner. Hopefully, people will turn out and support the worthy cause.

“The funds raised will definitely be spent on getting cricket gear for the children in Antigua and Barbuda. This is to make sure that many kids as possible are facilitated with cricket equipment here in Antigua and Barbuda.”



Former West Indies captain Sir Richie Richardson is also the lead guitarist for Spirited Band, which will be performing live during a fundraising dinner for Children’s Cricket Charity at Catherine’s Café at Pigeon Point in English Harbour on March 8, 2022. (Photo courtesy Spirited Band Facebook)

Cricket charity to donate more gear to schools in Antigua

Several schools across Antigua and Barbuda are expected to receive cricket gear from Children's Cricket Charity as part of the organization's Cricket Kindness Project, next month.

Sir Richie Richardson, one of several current and former international cricketers who serve as ambassadors of Children's Cricket Charity, said the founder of the United Kingdom-based non-profit organization, Australian Tamara Lowe, will be visiting Antigua and Barbuda to distribute the cricket gear next month.

Lowe began the Cricket Kindness Project as the Caribbean Children's Cricket Charity in early 2016 in her then homeland of Sydney, Australia.

In 2018, the organization was renamed and became the Children's Cricket Charity, expanding its reach to providing cricket goodwill to disadvantaged children throughout New South Wales, Australia, as well as continuing to donate mass quantities of cricket goodwill to needy communities in the Caribbean, Sri Lanka and the South Pacific.

In mid-2019, Lowe relocated from Sydney to live in London, England, and the



Cricket Kindness Ambassador, Sir Richie Richardson, centre foreground, and founder Tamara Lowe, right foreground, present equipment to Principal of Clare Hall Secondary School Ashworth Azille, left foreground, in Antigua during the inaugural Cricket Kindness Mission in 2017. (Photo courtesy Cricket Kindness Project)

Australian-registered Children's Cricket Charity wound down its registration as a not for profit association.

Sir Richie, who is also a musician and lead guitarist for the Spirited Band, said the distribution of the cricket gear will coincide with Antigua and Barbuda's hosting of the First Cricket Test between the West Indies and England at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Grounds (SVRCG) from March 8th to 12th.

Speaking on Sportoverflow on Pointe FM Radio, Sir Richie said Spirited will also be performing live during a fund-raising dinner for Chil-

children's Cricket Charity at Catherine's Café at Pigeon Point in English Harbour on March 8, 2022.

"We have a charity event at Catherine's Café for a cricket charity foundation of which I am an ambassador. The charity founder Tamara Lowe is an Australian, now based in the UK," Sir Richie said.

"I met her several years ago when I was in Australia. She came to me with the idea that she wants to help young cricketers in the West Indies, and one of the means is to collect cricket gear and ship them to the Caribbean.

"I remember, once, we were in Australia and we sent an entire container of cricket gear from Australia to the Caribbean. Now she is in the UK and on a regular basis, almost every year, we distribute cricket gear to the schools in Antigua and Barbuda.

"She will be coming to Antigua early next month and we will be going around to a few of the schools distributing cricket gear and to promote the game of cricket amongst the youngsters to keep them enthused, keep them lively and involved and enthusiastic about the game of cricket."

Sir Richie admitted other commitments have kept him away from playing music with the Spirited but he will be rejoining the band shortly. He is also appealing for persons to support the fund-raising dinner for Children's Cricket Charity at Catherine's Café on March 8th.

He said the funds raised by the Children's Cricket Charity will be re-invested back into the Antigua and Barbuda community.

"Recently, because of travelling and other commitments, I have not been playing (music) with the band but

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