

Car crash leaves sisters in **CRITICAL CONDITION**



An accident on Wednesday morning landed three women in hospital. The impact of the crash was so severe that the car's engine was thrown out the body of the vehicle, landing several feet away. *Story on Page 3.*

Local News



A&B challenges US decision to penalise CIP nations

Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States, Sir Ronald Sanders, today wrote members of two Committees in the US House of Representatives, questioning an Act directed at Citizenship by Investment Programmes.

On March 3rd, three Representatives introduced the "No Travel for Traffickers Act" designed to penalise countries that operate citizenship by investment programmes, including by revoking their eligibility for U.S. Visa Waivers and by working on the United Kingdom and the European Union to eliminate visa-free travel in the Schengen area.

Antigua and Barbuda is one of several Caribbean countries and others in Europe and North America that operate Citizenship by Investment programmes which play a significant role in their government's earnings and in their gross domestic product.

In his letter to the members of the House of Representatives Committees on the Judiciary and Foreign Relations, Ambassador Sanders said that the Antigua and Barbuda Government "fully

agrees that measures should be taken against any country whose government abuses its citizenship and residential programmes, such as the US EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program, to allow criminal activity of any kind".

He explained that it is because "Antigua and Barbuda strongly opposes the abuse of citizenship and investor programmes" that he thought it appropriate to clarify that the Antigua and Barbuda programme "ensures no abuse by criminals, no opportunity for human trafficking, and no tolerance for any person who may pose a threat to our neighbours, such as the US, or to the global community, or ourselves".

The Act was introduced to the US House of Representatives by Congressmen Burgess Owen (Utah), Steve Cohen (Tennessee) and Tom Malinowski of New York.

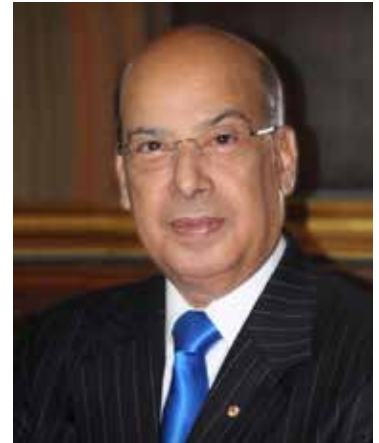
In introducing the Act, the Congressmen claimed that "these schemes require little vetting and are notoriously abused by human traffickers, international criminals, and corrupt oligarchs. Russia is one of the world's worst offenders when it comes to

using these golden passport schemes as a back door into other countries".

In his message to the members of the two Committees, Sir Ronald said, "when the Russian Federation invaded the sovereign state of Ukraine, my Government immediately banned all Russians and Belarusians, whether or not on a list of persons subject to sanctions, from being considered for access to our Citizenship by Investment Programme. That policy position was taken on March 4th and communicated to all agencies concerned with the Programme. It has been strictly enforced by the Police, Immigration Control, and the Citizenship by Investment Unit".

The Antigua and Barbuda Ambassador also told the US House Representatives, including the three who introduced the Act, that "every person who applies for consideration under our Citizenship by Investment scheme is subject to several layers of intense investigation.

These include but are not limited to: a police report from their country of origin and their country of



Ambassador to the United States, Sir Ronald Sanders

residence; clearance from INTERPOL that they are not wanted by any country in the world and are not fugitives from justice; and a full review of their financial background, companies and businesses with which they have been associated by international due diligence companies".

Therefore, Ambassador Sanders argued, "it would not be correct to suggest that the Citizenship by Investment Programme in Antigua and Barbuda "require(s) little vetting" or that it is "abused by human traffickers, international criminals, and corrupt oligarchs" as is suggested by the three Congressmen.

In offering to provide any further information, including by testifying before the US House Committees, Sir Ronald urged the US Congressmen to "examine carefully the operations of the Antigua and Barbuda Citizenship by Investment Programme before taking legislative action that would be extremely harmful to a consistent ally of the United States even before the independence of both our countries".

Thu 10 Day		Thu 10 Night	
82°		74°	
24%	E 20 mph	24%	E 17 mph
Sunshine along with some cloudy intervals. High 82F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.		Partly cloudy skies. Low 74F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.	
Humidity 71%	UV Index Extreme	Humidity 76%	UV Index 0 of 10
Sunrise 6:18 am	Sunset 6:16 pm	Moonrise 11:46 am	Moonset 12:29 am
		First Quarter	

Siblings critical following Friars Hill Road accident

The three women involved in an accident on Friars Hill Road early Wednesday morning are said to be in critical condition at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre.

Police are yet to reveal the details of what happened, but Pointe Xpress has learnt the women are biological sisters.

Their white Honda Fit motor car was heading south on Friars Hill Road around 1am Wednesday when the driver lost control of the vehicle that crashed into the wall at Premier Beverages.

The occupants were reportedly thrown from the car.

Images of the accident emerged on social media, and people have expressed alarm over the damage to the vehicle. Its engine was torn out and landed on Premier Beverages' property.

Unconfirmed reports indicate the women were heading home to Old Road after socialising at a popular hangout spot on Friars Hill Road.



Photo Credit: Sadique Armstrong

Recently, head of the Traffic Department, Assistant Superintendent of Police Rodney Ellis cited the need for stiffer penalties for drivers whose licenses are suspended for causing accidents. He said despite the efforts of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda to educate drivers on how to navigate the roadways safely, the number of accidents remain high, creating frustration within Traffic Department.

As a solution to this problem, ASP Ellis has suggested that drivers with suspended licenses should be subjected to a driving test which they must pass to have their driving privilege restored.

Wednesday morning's accident comes more than a week after a white sports car travelling on Market Street crashed into the Newgate Street traffic light, destroying it, before bursting into flames.

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Local News



ABLP Chairman: Hurst's ban flagrant violation of media freedom

The chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, E. P. Chet Greene says he isn't buying the explanation given by Observer Radio's Managing Director, Algernon 'Serpent' Watts, that Chief of staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Lionel 'Max' Hurst, was not banned from the station.

After announcing last weekend that a ban would be imposed on Ambassador Hurst over "misinformation" being peddled on Observer Radio, Watts appeared to fold, saying his statement was misinterpreted. He claimed Hurst was not banned from the opposition aligned radio station entirely. Rather, he would be barred from appearing on their prime time programme on Monday mornings.

Watts said the Chief of Staff could still call in to any other programme on the radio station.

But in a statement issued on 9th March, the ABLP's Chairman Greene said Watts did ban the government's spokesperson and described the action as "the most flagrant violation of media freedom that must be noted by regional and international bodies".

Mr. Greene said, "I rely on The Daily Observer, one of the tools of the Observer Media Group, for understanding Mr. Watts' role in Observer radio, and there he



Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party, E. P. Chet Greene

is frequently described as the Observer's "boss".

"I am also aware that Mr. Watts is a declared candidate for the United Progressive Party (UPP) in the next general elections.

"I am forced to conclude that Mr. Watts' ban of a government spokesperson is, therefore, a willful abuse of media control for a political purpose.

"Both on Observer Radio, and in The Daily Observer, Serpent is clearly heard, and reported, stating on Saturday, March 5th that 'he (Lionel Hurst) nah come back here'.

"That is a grave violation of press freedom and free speech which warrants the strongest censure from the regional and international bodies that monitor and report on the freedom of the press, and

I hope all of them have taken due note of the clear and unequivocal statement of the Observer boss", the ABLP Chairman declared.

He added: "I have taken note that Mr. Watts' attempted, half-heartedly, to walk back the full ban on the Government's spokesperson by saying that he was "free to call in and contribute like everyone else". However, an authorised government spokesman, providing information to the public, and in the public interest, to the media is not "like everyone else", and should not have to "call in" to make that information available.

"By banning Mr. Hurst and requiring him to "call in like everyone else", the Observer Radio boss diminishes the important function of providing information to the

public.

"As Chairman of the ABLP, I deplore and condemn Mr. Watts' arbitrary, high-handed and wrongful ban on Mr. Lionel Hurst and I call for an immediate public withdrawal of his statement without any slipperiness. Observer Radio must publicly revoke the ban on Mr. Hurst in the name of the freedoms enshrined in our nation's constitution and in the many treaties and Charters to which our country is signatory", Greene said.

He continued, "If, as Mr. Watt alleges, Mr. Hurst has spoken any untruth, then Observer Radio should welcome him unto all of its programmes so that they can question him concerning any alleged untruth.

"The fact that, instead, the Observer boss chose to ban Mr. Hurst, suggests it is the truth that is revealed, not a lie that hurts.

"The Board of Directors of the Observer Media Group must act to stop immediately this serious violation of media freedom and to advise the public what remedial measures they have taken".

Chairman Greene's statement appears to have done little to get Watts to change his mind. He has reportedly doubled down and is maintaining his stance that Ambassador Hurst will not be allowed to return to the Monday morning slot, but may call in to other programmes.

Pares secondary students demand better treatment from principal

Pares Secondary school students were back in their classrooms yesterday after holding a demonstration outside of the school on Tuesday to draw attention to matters that are affecting them.

This was not a mock exercise they were involved in as part of a lesson. The students were demanding better treatment from the school's principal.

Among the issues raised by the students were frivolous detentions and suspensions over small disciplinary infractions. Additionally, the students claim their level head was removed from her position

by the principal and they are demanding her reinstatement.

Reportedly, the female teacher is highly respected by students, but tensions between the school's management and faculty are boiling over and students have taken note.

Holding placards, the students, believed to be fifth formers, chanted "No justice, No peace", registering their disappointment at the decision.

Some of the placards read: "Madam Principal, since when caring for a student has become a crime?" "Build kindness not walls" and, "Respect goes both



ways".

The students say the principal's style of management is draconian and relations have become strained.

This forced the students to take matters into their own hands on Tuesday, after they learned of a disagreement between the principal and their level

head, who has responsibility for all classes that make up a specific form.

The students' demonstration went viral, resulting in Ministry of Education officials convening a meeting at Pares Secondary School yesterday morning.

Up to press time, however, the outcome of this meeting was unknown.

Face-to-face learning resumes on Monday

Public schools are returning to full face-to-face learning from Monday, ending the hybrid system implemented to reduce the number of students in classrooms in accordance with COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

Information Minister, Melford Nicholas, is expected to inform the nation that the tier two system implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sports, that includes face-to-face and virtual classes, will end as the government lifts further restrictions due to the low number of positive COVID-19 cases.

The education system in Antigua and Barbuda has experienced drastic changes since the pandemic was declared almost two years ago - from online learning, delayed reopenings, and blended learning - as officials took steps to protect thousands of students



Director of Education, Clare Browne from becoming infected with the virus.

Ahead of today's expected announcement, an emergency meeting was convened yesterday afternoon by Director of Education, Clare Browne, with education officers to discuss the return of face-to-face learning.

Private schools in the country are mainly operating at full capacity, with strict measures in place to guard against the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Earlier this week, Director Browne indicated the Ministry of Education's readiness for the return of all students to school.

He stated that the pandemic has taught education officials important lessons, and continued that a return to the previous system of learning will prove counterproductive.

"We have to come out of the pandemic better. The education system must come out of the pandemic better than how we went in," Mr. Browne stated.

"There are many, many things that we would have learnt to do better, inclusive of the mixed modality of in-

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(From left to right) His Excellency Scott Fursessedonn-Wood, British High Commissioner; Mrs Denise Mills, Senior Education Officer-Secondary Schools; Patrice Skerritt, Royal Commonwealth Society Director; His Excellency Sir Clare Roberts, Deputy Governor General; Her Excellency Lindsay Thompson, Resident British Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda; Deandre Farrell, Secondary School Commonwealth Competition Winner; Honourable Daryll Matthew, Minister of Education & Sports; Desryn Collins, Education Officer; Commander Chris Hollingworth, HMS Medway's Captain.

British High Commission, HMS Medway celebrate cricket test match and Commonwealth Day

On 7th March, British Royal Navy ship HMS Medway hosted a reception on its flight deck to celebrate the West Indies/England test match and Commonwealth Day, which falls on 14th March.

This is the first reception that HMS Medway has been able to host in Antigua and Barbuda since the start of the pandemic.

While standard COVID-19 protocols were observed, the celebration

marked the strong commitment and bond that HMS Medway shares with Antigua and Barbuda as the nation serves as a regular port of entry and business centre.

In collaboration with the British High Commission, the reception hosted Deputy Governor General Sir Clare Roberts, the Honourable Daryll Matthew, senior government officials, representatives from non-governmental organisations and winners of a Common-

wealth Secondary Schools Competition hosted by the British High Commission.

His Excellency Scott Fursessedonn-Wood, British High Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda, was present for the celebrations. During his remarks, H. E. Fursessedonn-Wood noted the importance of the Commonwealth family of nations and its shared values of democracy, prosperity, and peace.

HMS Medway's Cap-

tain, Commander Chris Hollingworth, expressed his thanks to Antigua and Barbuda for its continued support to the ship, and the country's warm welcome to its crew.

These sentiments were echoed by the Deputy Governor General Roberts as he extended greetings on behalf of Their Excellencies Governor General Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams, who are abroad on official duty.

Sir Clare said, "Antigua and Barbuda can proudly do its part in ensuring that the millions of global citizens of the Commonwealth can continue to look forward to a bright and sustainable future."

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struction, inclusive of our hygienic practices.

"Many things, many simple things that we would have learned, and so we're not going back.

"The Rasta man says forward ever.

And so, we are going forward. We are going forward with a bigger, better education system.

"We want to ensure that our children have the best possible chance of emerging on the world stage, being competitive in the global marketplace," he concluded.

Women on Water launches

In recognition of International Women's Day, Antigua Sailing Week (ASW) has announced the launch of Women on Water, an inclusive weekly activity to inspire women to get involved in sailing.

Over the last year, ASW has worked with the National Sailing Academy and the Antigua and Barbuda Sailing Association on a fledgling Women's Mentorship Programme with the objective of gaining gender equality in the sport of sailing.

President of Antigua Sailing Week, Alison Sly-Adams, said, "For year two, our focus is simply to introduce as many women as possible to grass-roots sailing in an enjoyable atmosphere."

"Dinghy sailing is fun, and lessons learned provide a solid foundation for moving onto other vessels. After that, it's up to the individual. If they want to further develop their interest either as recreation, sport or business, through their industry connections, our mentors will be able to advise and help with that development."

Meeting at the National Sailing Academy on Saturday afternoons, women of different ages and mixed abilities, from experienced to newcomers, will head onto the water in dinghies with one objective - to have fun.

The experience will take place in the safety of



RS Venture sailing during 2021 Steering the Course. ©Ed Gifford

Falmouth Harbour with a coach boat present. After sessions, the sailing teams can relax together dock-side.

A success in year one last May, was Nerissa Allen who first attended the Try Sail events for Steering the Course held at the National Sailing Academy. She signed up on the mentor programme with Elizabeth Jordan as her mentor. Elizabeth worked with Nerissa and encouraged her to complete the Competent Crew Course and STCW with Ondeck Antigua.

As an aircraft engineer employed by LIAT, she expressed an interest in learning about marine engines. She is now completing an internship at Ondeck assisting with their maintenance programme.

According to Nerissa, "So far, the experience in the marine industry has been very exciting. Every day I learn something new about boats, not just the ability to do maintenance

on them but also learning the basic concepts of sailing. I look forward to expanding my knowledge further in the industry".

Rana-Jamila Lewis, ASW Events and Marketing

Manager said, "In the run up to the first Antigua Sailing Week Women's Race Day, which is to be held on Thursday, May 5, 2022, organisers will be celebrating women already involved in sailing in Antigua and Barbuda therefore exposing the different opportunities within the sport."

Key roles across the industry are already held by women and yet the grass-roots programmes are still not balanced between male and female numbers.

Women on Water starts on Saturday 12th March at 4pm. To register call or whatsapp +1 268 780-1345 or email watersports@nationalsailingacademy.org.

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Local News

COVID-19 cases stay low as fete season starts

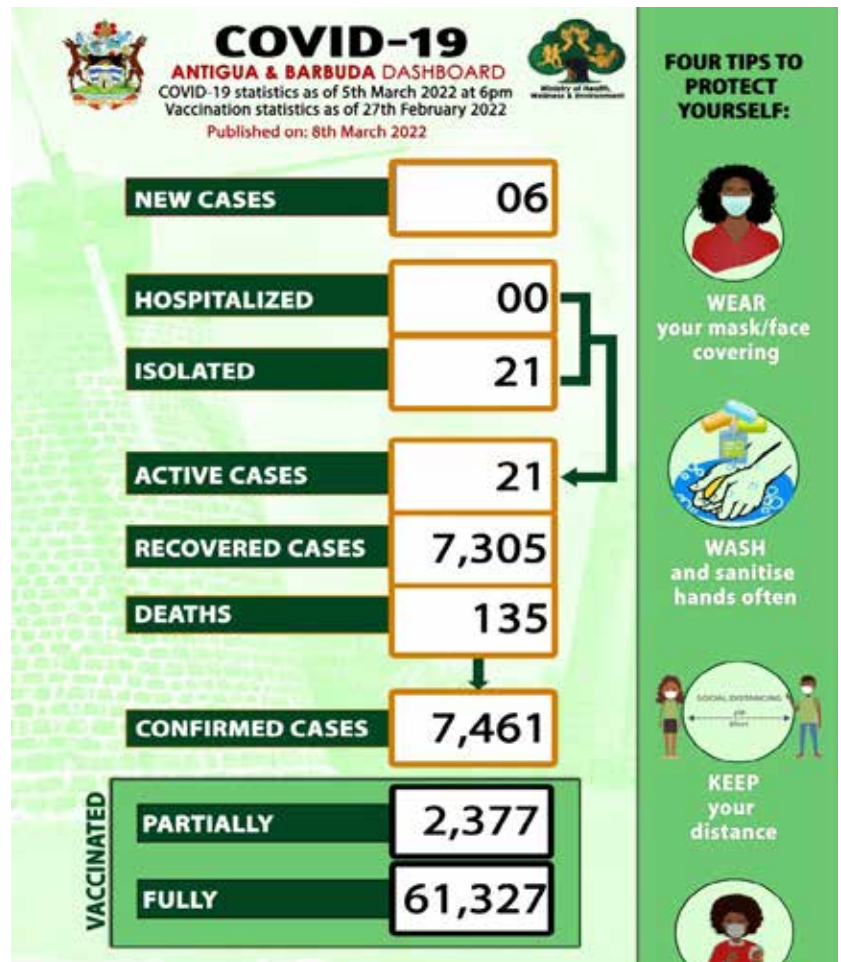
The most recent report received by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment on 8th March revealed six (6) new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Saturday 5th March, 2022 at 6pm.

Four (4) of the cases were recorded on March 4th and two (2) on March 5th.

One hundred and three (103) samples were processed.

Four (4) recovered cases were recorded.

Consequently, the total number of persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda is seven thousand four hundred and sixty-one (7,461); which is inclusive of twenty-one (21)




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Why are we so bad at dealing with risk? How familiarity breeds a false sense of security

By Perry Carpenter

One of the challenges of risk is that our response to it over time becomes automatic. We react but don't realise how we're reacting, or how that reaction might not be fully protecting us.

Consider playing catch. It looks simple enough, but playing catch involves processing countless calculations relating to distance, force, mass, velocity, trajectory, arc, coordination and all sorts of impossible physics. We do these calculations by instinct, of course, and sometimes we make mistakes—we miss the ball or, worse, we get hit. But a miscalculation when playing ball has far less serious results than a miscalculation related to an important business decision.

And yet, even with important business decisions, we're often acting based on past habits, experiences, beliefs and opinions that we've developed over time.

Unfortunately, those unconscious behaviours often lead us astray. We aren't adept at recognizing and managing risk, and the results of these failures surround us, most notably relating to security breaches and data theft.

Michele Wucker coined the term "gray rhino" to refer to everyday factors that bombard us all the time, forcing us to decide whether or not to



[Photo: Getty Images]

respond, and if so, how; we often make this decision unconsciously. Gray rhinos are risks that we can see and/or anticipate, but all too often choose to ignore. When they impact us, they feel both surprising and inevitable.

Contrast gray rhinos with black swans. We can't anticipate black swans because we don't believe they exist—that is, until we find ourselves face to face with one. We can only analyse them in hindsight.

It can be helpful to use processes that help you deliberately and methodically find and analyse risks. That's where models like FAIR (factor analysis of information risk) come in.

FAIR is a process for helping organizations think through the types of risks

they face, the assets they have, the types of loss they could suffer and the possibilities associated with each. FAIR leads us through a logical progression of risk-related considerations requiring us to become aware of, and think objectively about, the risks we face and how we might address those risks.

How We Respond To Risks Is As Unique As We Are

Humans, says Wucker, leave behind "risk fingerprints." Our responses to risk are unique and based on genetics, personalities and life experiences. Individuals, all with unique risk fingerprints, come together to form large organizations where the risk implications of various decisions become exceedingly com-

plex.

That sheer complexity is one of the reasons people and institutions are so bad at understanding risk. But there are plenty of others.

Why Don't We Understand Risk?

Information overload is another reason we're so bad at understanding risk. We all process far too much information daily.

Experts estimate we process about 35,000 remotely conscious decisions every day—everything from what shoes we're going to wear to what we're having for lunch to the myriad of decisions we make while doing our jobs.

Another reason we're bad at understanding risk—specifically, risks related to technology—is the technol-

cont'd on pg 10

Business

cont'd from pg 9

ogy itself. We've been conditioned to believe that technology is here to make things less risky.

But the inherent risks we face from technology are actually being hidden from us—both intentionally and unintentionally.

Relevant to this is a design term called skeuomorphism. In digital design, this is when a user interface icon looks like its real-world counterpart.

An envelope icon might represent email, or a trash can icon might represent deleting a file. We're all familiar with these symbols and their meaning.

The problem with skeuomorphism is that simplifying technology in this manner hides the element of complexity and risk underlying it.

When you put an email into your trash and then click "empty folder" to

delete it, you might assume that email is gone, as it would be if a garbage truck took away your physical trash. But it's not; it's still on the server. There's still a risk that that information could be accessed by others. That risk degree grows when the email contains sensitive information.

Paying Attention To Risk

When it comes to managing risk, one of the most important things we can do is recognize the risk all around us—become attuned to the presence of risk and avoid any tendency to ignore it. We must also prioritize risk, of course, because not all risks are created equal.

And we need to do this consciously, making reasoned business decisions about how to handle each risk—transfer it to a service provider? Insure against it?

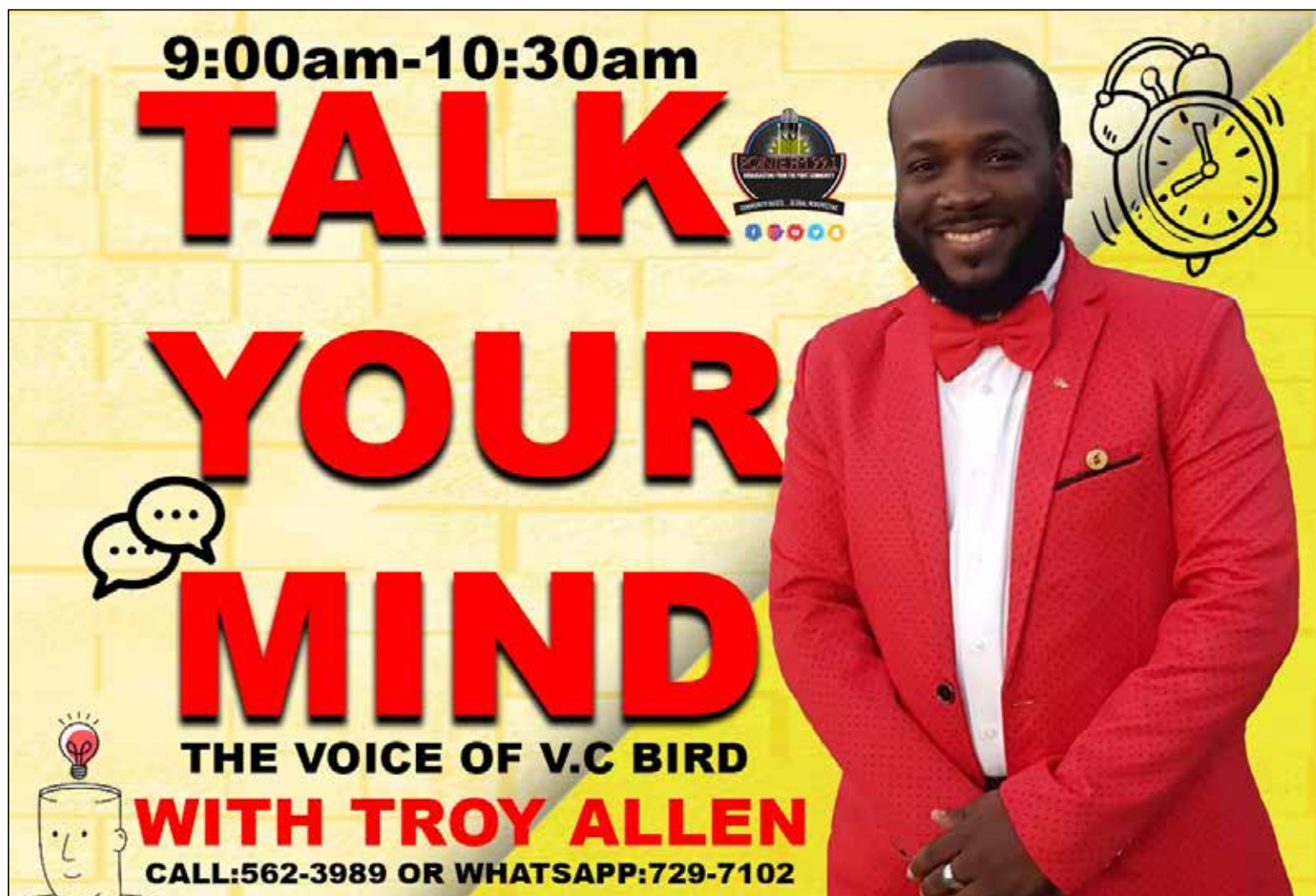
Mitigate it with internal or exter-

nal controls? Or accept it as an appropriate risk for our organization (and our people) to assume?

Risk is fundamental to human nature, but our perception of risk is individualized. It's shaped by our surroundings, our culture and our lifetime of experiences.

While we're not necessarily rational in how we evaluate risk, we're fortunate to have tools and processes to help us fill in our knowledge gaps, combat our biases and mitigate at least some of the risks posed by various threats.

We'll never be able to mitigate every threat because to live is to experience risk—even to be an agent of it. But we can find ways to see risks more clearly, measure and manage them, thrive in our businesses and enjoy our lives. That's what managing risk is really all about.



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'A century of oil, a future of options'

By Dr. Devon Gardner, Head of Technical Programmes - Caribbean Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Energy is among the top strategic issues shaping the global agenda; the uncertainty and impact of energy and commodity price volatility has now established itself as the number one issue for energy leaders worldwide.

A history of unpredictable global oil price spikes has consistently impacted negatively on the sustainability of economic growth in the majority of Caribbean countries; when oil prices are high, as they *currently* are, the economic challenges that are being faced by the region are typically aggravated and exacerbated.

Unpredictability in oil price, resulting from rapid changes (up or down) over short time spans, is bad news because oil, and more broadly fossil fuel, is the commodity that is central and critical to the operation of a majority of economies, *and the potential wealth generating opportunities*, within the region.

As commerce thrives best when the costs of doing business can be anticipated and hedged against, unexpected swings in oil price continue to destabilize the business environment within the countries.

Though lower energy prices, at times, provide temporarily relief to consumers, the economy does not do well "when the rug is unpredictably, pulled from under its feet" by the constant large and unexpected changes in the cost of energy.

A result of this situation is that the cost of energy within the region has been mostly high and persistently unpredictable over the past two and a half decades, which has eroded competitiveness.

In turn, these problems have



Dr. Devon Gardner

contributed to, *among other things*, the region's high cost of doing business, have increased external sector vulnerabilities, and have undercut growth in many economies within the region. In particular, high and generally unpredictable oil prices have consistently compromised the efforts of CARICOM Governments to stimulate economic growth in the productive sectors, such as: agriculture and fisheries; tourism and services; and industries.

It is no surprise, therefore that region continues to recognize the economic value of alternative and sustainable energy options, *especially from cost effective, indigenous renewable energy sources*, that are predictable in pricing and supply.

It is no surprise, also, that the region is exercising a leadership role within a global marketplace that is demanding cleaner energy, all precipitated by *better* and *cheaper* technologies and an international agenda that

promotes sustainable development and climate management.

The region's aspirations are among the highest, several Member States' target of 100% carbon neutrality by the year 2030.

Despite a variety of opinions and analyses of the target, the Caribbean countries are firmly committed to an ambitious energy transition.

But what might corporate entities stand to gain from the development and implementation of sustainable energy projects?

The fact is that low-carbon energy transitions are already happening, globally, in many countries. This is, oftentimes, due to economic factors inasmuch as it is accelerated by environmental and climate change policies.

Many of the technologies – from utility scale and rooftop solar, to utility-scale wind, to battery storage, to electric vehicles, have already tak-

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Energy



cont'd from pg 11

en hold globally and are increasingly penetrating CARICOM markets.

There are new, profitable business opportunities for Caribbean companies that opt to participate in the sustainable energy sector.

The emerging paradigm is one wherein the electricity sector is no longer focused on establishing large central power generation plants and the laying of wires.

This is being replaced with an architecture that is encouraging and rewarding *experimental*

tion and *product development* among multitude players within a vibrant, robust marketplace.

The effect is expected to be transformative, portending enormous improvements in energy efficiency and, with them, significant reductions in carbon emissions and improvement in reliability, including resilience to the impacts of natural disasters and other externalities on the conventional grid.

This is part of a more general resilience model for the energy sector wherein resilience to multiple

vulnerabilities, including the effects of weather and climate, is being simultaneously enhanced whilst countries transition to “lowcarbon” systems.

Within the emerging energy future for the Caribbean, many companies are already increasing the profitability and improving the environmental, social and governance consciousness of their businesses by developing innovative products, offering new services, and creating more jobs.

There is cognizance that many businesses do

not possess the internal expertise nor the financial resources to undertake the gamut of actions that are necessary to conceive, develop and implement, *successfully*, a sustainable energy project.

This is part of the *raison d'être* for the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE), which is a Barbadosbased institution of CARICOM that was established by the Conference of Heads of Government in 2017.

The Centre, in November 2020, established a Project Preparation Facility (PPF) to, among other things, provide project preparation assistance to the regional private sector.

The PPF deliberately targets the “most significant barrier” that is continuing to impede the ability of Caribbean businesses to confidently and successfully pursue projects and businesses in renewable energy and energy efficiency; that is, an unavailability of technical and financial resources to develop ideas and concepts into “bankable” outcomes that can secure the investment and other financing that is necessary for their implementation.

Through a combination of standard and bespoke services, the PPF is *already* delivering preparation assistance to projects in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname.

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CDB president proposes more concessional funding for the Caribbean

CGN - Noting that development financing needs in the Caribbean are clearly not aligned with the current framework to access concessional finance, the president of the Caribbean Development Bank, Dr. Hyginus 'Gene' Leon, proposed to use a forward-looking approach – CDB's Recovery Duration Adjuster – to make more concessional funding available for Caribbean countries.

Speaking on innovative financing for recovery and sustainable development at today's kick-off of the 5th Meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2022 in San José, Costa Rica, the CDB president stated: "Finance eligibility criteria and systems are often not suited to the unique challenges and constraints of small states.

"Given our vulnerabilities, it remains a fact that even when small states have achieved high levels of gross national income per capita, and graduated from access to concessional finance, they still face significant challenges after the occurrence of exogenous shocks, in particular natural hazard events."

While modifications to the eligibility criteria have been tried, the existing vulnerability framework has not garnered consensus and still has many deficiencies, Dr. Leon highlighted. Existing vulnerability indices are

backwards-looking in calibration and therefore unable to incorporate the evolution of vulnerability and forward-looking dynamics of the economies.

To address the structural and vulnerability factors that constrain growth and development, as well as distinguish the magnitude and impacts of shocks, the CDB head proposed the use of the Recovery Duration Adjuster as a forward-looking concept that takes into account internal resilience capacity, which should underpin access to concessional finance.

Illustrating the diverse recovery duration of a developing country like Dominica compared to an advanced economy like the State of Florida in the United States after a Category Five hurricane hits, the Bank President showed that the magnitude



Dr. Gene Leon, President of the CDB

of impact from such a shock differs significantly, as Dominica exhibits more deficient infrastructure, limited access to finance, lower levels of capital efficiencies, and limited institutional capacity.

Therefore, the duration of recovery for Dominica will be significantly longer than for Florida, which can access resources from the Federal government in the US.

As the gross national income is an inadequate in-

dicator for access to concessional finance aftershocks, Dr. Leon said: "We propose instead an internal resilience capacity-adjusted gross national income measure – the Recovery Duration Adjuster – that adjusts the gross national income on the basis of duration to recovery, which we believe is a more appropriate and equitable measure for use in classifying countries for access to concessional finance."



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Regional News



Maduro signals interest in better Venezuela, US relations

AP - Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro signalled an interest in improving relations with the United States following weekend talks with high-level American officials prompted in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and concerns of rising gas prices in the US.

Maduro, in a televised meeting with cabinet members late Monday, did not provide details of the discussions. Neither did a White House spokeswoman earlier.

But he seemed to indicate he was willing to accede to US demands that he resume negotiations with his opponents as a first building block for any relief from US sanctions that have been punishing the OPEC nation for years.

"We have agreed to work on an agenda going forward, issues of interest," Maduro said. "It seemed to me very important to be able, face to face, discuss issues of maximum interest to Venezuela and the world. And I ratify, as I said to the delegation, all our will to advance in an agenda of well-being and peace through diplomacy, respect, and the highest hope for a better world."

The discussions come a little more than three years after the US broke off relations with Maduro and recognised opposition leader



President Nicolas Maduro

Juan Guaidó as the country's legitimate leader. They came together after months of quiet back channel talks by intermediaries – American lobbyists, Norwegian diplomats and international oil executives – who have been pushing for US President Joe Biden to revisit the so-far-unsuccessful "maximum pressure" campaign to unseat Maduro that he inherited from the Trump administration.

But the impetus for a risky outreach to Maduro – who has been sanctioned and is indicted in New York on drug trafficking charges – took on added urgency following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ensuing US sanctions there, which promises to reshuffle global alliances and add to rising gas prices driving inflation already at a four-decade high.

Powerful Democrats and Republicans alike on Capitol Hill last week began

voicing support for a US ban on Russian oil and natural gas imports as the next step to punish Russia President Vladimir Putin for the invasion.

Venezuela is Putin's top ally in Latin America and a top oil exporter. Its re-entry into US energy markets could mitigate the fallout at the pump from a possible oil embargo on Russia. But the discussions in Caracas were quickly condemned by top Democrat and Republican senators.

US Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Biden's efforts to unite the world against Putin "should not be undercut by propping up" Maduro, whose government is under investigation by the International Criminal Court for possible crimes against humanity committed against protesters in 2017.

"If the reports are true that the Biden administra-

tion is brokering the purchase of Venezuelan oil, I fear that it risks perpetuating a humanitarian crisis that has destabilised Latin America and the Caribbean for an entire generation," the Democrat said in a statement. "... As such, I would strongly oppose any action that fills the pockets of regime oligarchs with oil profits while Maduro continues to deprive Venezuelans of basic human rights, freedoms, and even food."

Republican US Senator Marco Rubio, one of the architects of the regime change policy, also criticised the discussions, tweeting that they represent a "demoralising betrayal of those who have risked everything to oppose Maduro".

Venezuela has been going through a deep political, social, and economic crisis for years, which critics attribute to a drop in oil production from rampant mismanagement by socialist governments. The government largely blames US economic sanctions.

Millions of people have fallen into poverty, pushing many to migrate. The United Nations has estimated that more than 6 million Venezuelans have left the country in recent years, more than 10 percent of the population.

Maduro broke off di-

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Guyana looking to tap into the multi-billion-dollar hemp industry

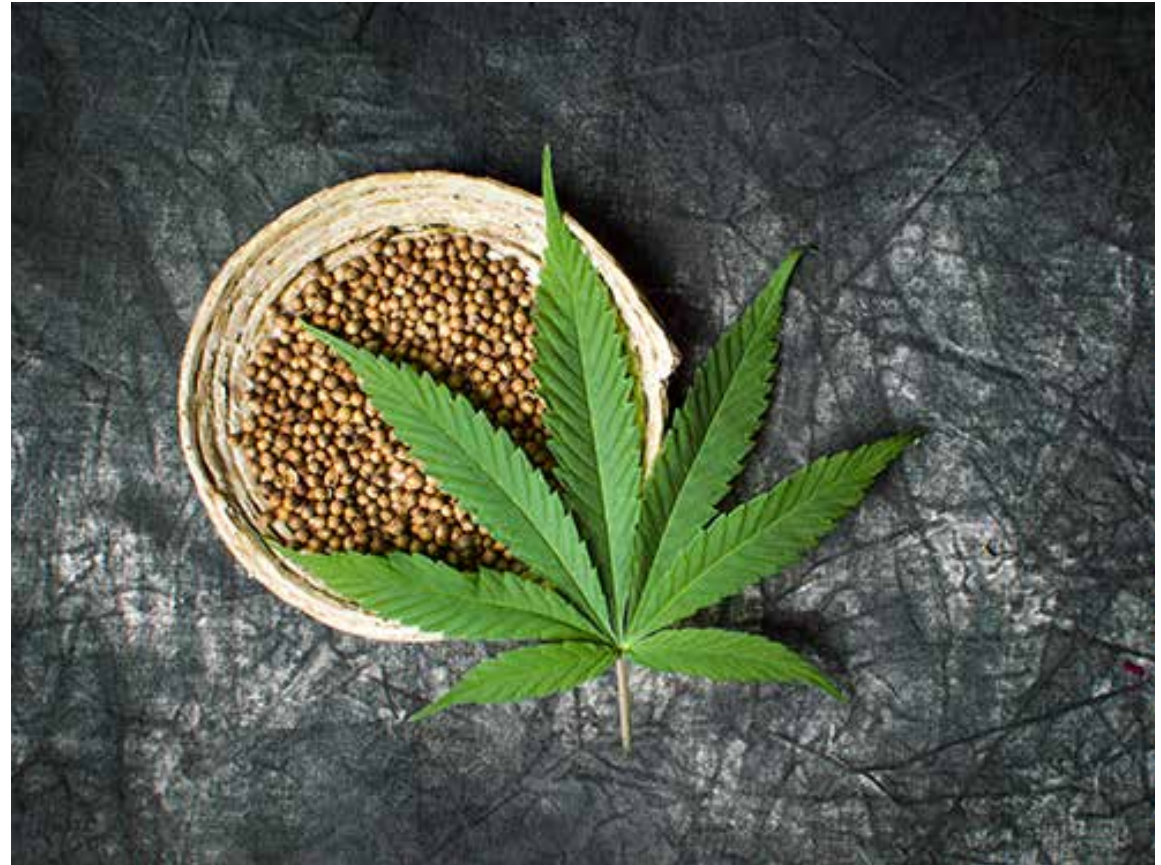
DPI – Guyana is exploring tapping into the lucrative hemp industry, His Excellency, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali disclosed on Sunday at a press conference hosted at State House.

“There is a great opportunity that lies ahead in terms of the hemp industry and what it can do in terms of the technological push and construction material, pharmaceuticals,” the president highlighted.

President Ali said the numbers he has seen on the return per acre in the hemp industry are unbelievable. The results of the 2021 Hemp Acreage and Production Survey in its National Hemp Report, which shows data of hemp grown in the open and under protection in the United States, stated that the value of US hemp production in the open totalled \$712 million. The value of production for hemp that was grown under protection in the US totalled \$112 million.

According to the Global Industrial Hemp Markets Report 2021-2028, published by GlobeNewswire in November 2021, the global industrial hemp market size is expected to reach US\$12.01 billion by 2028 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 16.2 percent from 2021 to 2028.

It is also projected that the upscaling utilisation of



hemp oil in food and beverage products for its dietary benefits is expected to increase the demand for hemp over the forecast period.

Population growth, coupled with the rising per capita disposable income, is expected to result in the increased demand for high-quality cosmetics, personal care products, protein supplements, and other health food products. These factors are expected to drive the market over the projected period.

Meanwhile, President Ali said he will be engaging marijuana farmers on the possibility of them taking advantage of this industry.

“I intend to have very soon, a meeting with all the

marijuana growers in this country,” he noted.

Aside from the economic benefits of hemp cultivation, President Ali said he hopes the engagement would deter persons from planting the narcotic that has social consequences.

“I intend to have a meeting and to let them understand that there is a viable future in the hemp industry and bring them into that discussion and move away from the marijuana that has social consequences and come into the mainstream economic activity that does not have that impact, that will give them more returns.”

The head of state said he is realistic and would not

be naïve to the fact that the marijuana farmers possess the ability to help the industry flourish.

“They already have the experience in growing... they come with the technical skills frankly speaking,” the president stated.

Some of the uses for hemp include rope, textiles, clothing, shoes, food, paper, bioplastics, insulation, and biofuel. This is in addition to a number of medical purposes.

Hemp seeds are particularly rich in healthy fats, including omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Both fats are known for improving heart health by reducing cholesterol, blood pressure, and triglycerides.

Regional News



World Bank approves additional financing of US\$90M for Haiti's education sector

The World Bank's board of executive directors has approved additional grant financing of US\$90 million to the Republic of Haiti for the Promoting a More Equitable, Sustainable and Safer Education Project (PROMESSE), which is expected to benefit about 150,000 students of whom about 69,000 will be girls. The project will also support targeted interventions to help at least 1,500 girls stay and advance in school.

"The World Bank is committed to helping Haiti overcome the multi-faceted effects caused by the political, social and economic uncertainty, coupled with the devastating impact of the 2021 earthquake and other natural disasters. One urgent need is a coordinated medium-term approach to transforming the Education sector as the average Haitian student is only retaining a total of 6.1 years of schooling, when adjusted for quality," said Laurent Msellati, World Bank Country Manager for Haiti.

"This additional financing constitutes a further in-



vestment in human capital to support the government's effort to improve learning outcomes by building a more equitable, modern and resilient education system, as well as putting children back to school in the Southern Peninsula affected last year by the Earthquake."

The additional financing (AF) of US\$90 million from the International Development Association (IDA) includes US\$40 million from the IDA Crisis Response Window (CRW) that will enable the continuity of schooling in areas affected by the August 2021 earthquake. The funds will allow to reconstruct and rehabilitate school infrastructure and provide nutritional support and improved learn-

ing conditions for children. The project will support 262 public schools by funding grants to support their operations, the delivery of kits with teaching and learning materials, training and support to teachers and administrators, and support to students' reading in early grades.

The project will also support access to 126 non-public primary schools and improve their teaching and learning environment through a results-based tuition waiver financing mechanism. Furthermore, the AF will be used to improve infrastructure investment planning and upgrade permanent school infrastructure in the longer term to 'build back better' with

improved earthquake and climate change resilience. The school infrastructure plans will include gender sensitivity and accessibility for persons with disabilities, planting trees on school campuses to promote water infiltration and natural shade and cooling, and the use of water-efficient technologies and renewable energy.

The parent project, Promoting an Efficient Education System in Haiti Project, was a US\$15.6 million project funded by the Global Partnership for Education with the aim to improve the Ministry of Education's planning and regulatory functions and the learning assessment system. The AF of US\$90 million will bring the total project amount to US\$105.6 million and will build upon the parent project's efforts to strengthen capacity of the ministry at the central and departmental levels, and support data collection to inform better decision-making, in synergy with the school-level supports mentioned above.

cont'd from pg 14

dialogue with his opponents last fall after one of his key allies was extradited from Cape Verde to the US on money-laundering charges.

The US-backed faction of the opposition did not immediately comment on the remarks by Maduro, who also called on reformatting the dialogue that had tak-

en place in Mexico under the guidance of Norwegian diplomats.

"We have decided in this meeting to reactivate with great strength the process of national dialogue with all the political, social, economic, religious and cultural factors of the country," Maduro said. "... If we are asking for dialogue for the world, we have to set an example in the country."

Australia floods: PM Morrison to declare a national emergency

BBC - Australian PM Scott Morrison says he will declare a national emergency over flooding in two states.

The disaster in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland has killed 20 people and inundated thousands of homes in the past two weeks, after record rains.

Federal and state governments have faced anger for not acting faster to help residents.

Mr. Morrison's declaration - a national first - will allow federal authorities to intervene more directly.

He made the announcement on Wednesday in the town of Lismore, saying it had endured a "once in a 500-year event". Four people died in flooding there last week.

"What has been seen here is nothing



[Photo credit: Getty Images]

more than heart-breaking. You have to see it, you have to smell it, you have to feel it," he said.

The national emergency powers

were established after Australia's 2019-20 bushfires and aim to "cut through any red tape" to deliver services and support,

cont'd on pg 19

Mexico finds 11 bodies in clandestine pits near US border

AP - Authorities in northern Mexico say volunteer searchers have found 11 bodies in clandestine burial pits just a few miles from the U.S. border.

The government of Sonora state said late Monday the bodies included nine men and two women.

Sonora has been locked in a bloody three-way turf battle between rival factions of the Sinaloa cartel and gangs allied with fugitive drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero.

On Tuesday, those gangs left three bodies — one hanging from a highway overpass — in three different cities in



Sonora. The bodies were left near banners accusing authorities of protecting one of the Sinaloa factions.

In the case of the clandestine graves, investigators used backhoes Sunday and Monday to excavate a series of pits, many holding several bodies, in San Luis Rio

Colorado, across the border from Yuma, Arizona.

The state prosecutors' office said the bodies were "badly decomposed" and would be subject to genetic and specialized forensics tests to identify them.

Volunteer search teams made up of relatives of dis-

appeared people led authorities to the pits in a stretch of desert near a garbage dump.

Relatives of the disappeared have to conduct their own searches in many parts of Mexico, because police are unable or unwilling to do so.

Mexico has more than 98,356 disappeared, according to government data. Most are thought to have been killed by drug cartels, their bodies dumped into shallow graves, burned or dissolved.

The government has struggled to identify even the bodies that have been found. Some 52,000 await identification.

Ukraine civilians flee towns near Kyiv after more Russian shelling

BBC - Convoys of civilians are due to leave several towns near the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, according to regional leader Oleksiy Kuleba.

Ukraine says it has agreed a 12-hour ceasefire with Russia for six routes in the war zone, and Mr. Kuleba said the first groups had already left.

Russian shelling has continued with further reports of civilian deaths.

Russian forces surrounding the southern port city of Mariupol have destroyed a maternity hospital, Ukraine says.

Olena Stokoz of Ukraine's Red Cross said "the whole city remains without electricity, water, food, whatever and people are dying because of dehydration.

"We will continue trying to organise that [evacuation] corridor," she told the BBC.

A local Ukrainian official, Pavlo Kirilenko, posted video on Facebook which he said showed the ruined hospital - gutted, smoking buildings and debris.

Earlier Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said "almost 3,000 newborn babies lack medicine and food" in Mariupol, and "Russia continues holding hostage over 400,000 people" there.

Ten people died in Severodonetsk in the east



One of the routes for civilians was from Irpin outside Kyiv which has faced repeated bombardment [Photo: Getty Images]

and five people were killed in Malyn near Kyiv, Ukraine says.

Sumy governor Dmytro Zhyvtskyi said a night air raid on Monday flattened six houses and three children were among 22 people killed. «Three bombs in one evening... It was a terrible night,» he said.

Fighting is continuing north and north-west of Kyiv as Russian forces continue their offensive. Ukrainian MP Inna Sovsun told the BBC that the Russian military was struggling to make significant progress. Air raid sirens were heard again in cities across Ukraine on Wednesday.

Ukraine's armed forces agreed to stop firing on

Wednesday along six evacuation routes for 12 hours, from 09:00 to 21:00 local time (07:00 to 19:00 GMT). They urged Russian forces to fulfil their commitment to the local ceasefires.

Mr. Kuleba, who heads Kyiv's regional administration, said civilians were due to leave towns such as Bucha and Hostomel to the north-west of Kyiv, several of them under Russian occupation. "I really hope everything will be fine and we'll look after our people."

Police said convoys of buses and other vehicles were on their way and they asked residents to follow their instructions. In a separate incident they said a policeman had been shot

dead by Russian forces as he helped evacuate civilians from the town of Demydiv north of Kyiv.

The mayor of Russian-controlled Enerhodar in the south said civilians had begun boarding buses to leave, but in the north-east officials said another key corridor from Izyum, south-east of Kharkiv, had to be halted because of Russian bombardment.

Ukraine managed to carry out its first mass evacuation on Tuesday, bussing an estimated 5,000 civilians from Sumy to Poltava, in the centre. The convoy took almost 12 hours to reach the city, forced to drive a long way round areas of active fighting.

COVID-19 cases, deaths continue to drop globally, WHO says

AP - The number of new coronavirus cases and deaths globally have continued to fall in the past week, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, with only the Western Pacific reporting an increase in COVID-19.

In its latest report on the pandemic issued on Wednesday, the U.N. health agency said new COVID-19 infections dropped by 5% in the last week, continuing a declining trend that started more than a month ago. Deaths were also down by 8% and have been falling globally for the last two weeks.

Only the Western Pacific saw a rise in coronavirus cases, reporting a 46% increase. In the last week, Hong Kong has been recording about 150 deaths per day, giving it the world's highest death rate per 1 million people, according to data from Oxford University.

The highly infectious omicron variant has recently overwhelmed the semi-au-



Elderly couple and medical staff walk out from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Hong Kong, Wednesday, March 9, 2022. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Wednesday that there is "no specific time frame" for the testing exercise, as authorities focused their efforts on reducing the number of COVID-related deaths in the city during its worst outbreak to date. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

tonomous Chinese city, prompting mass quarantines, supermarket panic buying and even the city's morgues are overflowing, forcing authorities to store bodies in refrigerated shipping containers.

Elsewhere, COVID-19 is falling significantly; the biggest declines were seen in the Middle East and Africa, where cases dropped by 46% and 40%, respectively.

"The mildness of the

omicron wave, its low death toll and the fact that it is rapidly disappearing, has created the widespread impression that COVID-19 is over," said Salim Abdool Karim of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. He said it's still unclear when the pandemic might end, but said the low death toll during the omicron surge was striking.

Many scientists have credited that to the booster immunization programs un-

dertaken in numerous rich countries, which have broken the connection between COVID-19 infection and severe disease.

Earlier this week, an expert group convened by WHO said it "strongly supports urgent and broad access" to booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine amid the global spread of omicron, capping a reversal of the U.N. agency's repeated insistence last year that boosters weren't necessary for healthy people.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus pleaded with rich countries not to offer boosters and to send doses to Africa instead, saying there was no scientific justification to warrant boosters for healthy people. Numerous scientific studies have since proven that booster doses of authorized vaccines help restore waning immunity and protect against serious COVID-19, especially amid the global spread of omicron.

cont'd from pg 17

the prime minister said.

He said flood-hit locals and businesses would be able to access additional relief payments. Australian Defence Force soldiers can also be more widely deployed to mop up towns.

But Mr. Morrison faced a hostile welcome from some locals and climate campaigners.

In some communities, rescue efforts have largely relied on volunteers rather than authorities, and many people have been forced to live in temporary accom-

modation or cars.

"We were stranded on a roof for 16 hours in the rain with a two-year-old child and seven adults. Emergency services were so overwhelmed we just couldn't get through," one local, Stacey Gordon, told the ABC last week.

While waters have receded in some areas, there are still major flood alerts for places north of Sydney. The city experienced widespread flash-flooding on Tuesday.

To become official, the national emergency needs to be signed off by

state premiers and the country's governor general, which Mr. Morrison said should happen by Friday.

Experts say the flooding emergency has been worsened by climate change and a La Niña weather phenomenon.

A La Niña develops when strong winds blow the warm surface waters of the Pacific away from South America and towards Indonesia. In their place, colder waters come up to the surface. In Australia, a La Niña increases the likelihood of rain, cyclones, and cooler daytime temperatures.



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Bonner, Holder push back on England attack on Day Two

Two key partnerships at either end of the day pushed West Indies closer to parity with England on the second day of a to-and-fro Test in Antigua.

This match has had not so much the twists and turns of a helter-skelter, but the slow, loping swings of a pirate ship ride after England's recovery from 48 for 4 to a respectable 311 built on Jonny Bairstow's century followed by the West Indies' rapid response via Kraigg Brathwaite and John Campbell as the visiting bowlers failed to penetrate with the new ball.

As Shamarh Brooks took West Indies into the nineties with consecutive boundaries off Overton, Ben Stokes entered the attack to bowl for the first time since suffering a side strain during the fourth Ashes Test in Sydney.

A single off Stokes' first ball brought up Brathwaite's fastest Test fifty off just 62 balls, but Mark Wood, whose pace and reverse swing kept West Indies' batters on their toes, ended Brathwaite's knock on 55, the West Indies captain chasing a wide delivery that went directly to Overton at gully.

Stokes then removed Brooks, edging to Joe Root for a simple catch at slip, and suddenly West Indies were wobbling.

Foakes put down a difficult chance diving low to his left off Blackwood, who was yet to score, when he got an inside edge to a Wood delivery which found the keeper's glove but failed to stay there as he went to the ground.

Blackwood, eventually caught in the gully by Overton, was given not out by umpire Joel Wilson amid hearty appeals from the England side, who swiftly reviewed. UltraEdge confirmed Blackwood had indeed laid bat on the ball before it struck his thigh pad and looped into the air as West In-



Nkrumah Bonner

dies lost a fourth-wicket for 44 runs.

West Indies were enjoying all the fun of the fair at 44 without loss by lunch, Brathwaite going along at a run-a-ball, but by tea they were 127 for 4 and England had wrested back some control. Then Nkrumah Bonner and Jason Holder combined for an unbroken 75-run partnership for the fifth wicket that kept their side in the contest.

Leach bowled nine maidens in all - seven of them on the trot in the evening session - in an excellent comeback from a chastening Ashes tour as Holder and Bonner chose their moments well in a sensible, steadying effort. Holder led the way, picking off six fours and a cracking six - over long-on off Root - to close on 43 not out, with Bonner on 34.

Earlier, England resumed at 268 for 6 with Bairstow on 109 but, with the ball, only six overs old, West Indies had designs on wrapping up the innings quickly. They did so before lunch, but not before Bairstow had reached 140 and taken the England to-

tal into the elusive territory - past the 300-mark for the first time since August 2021.

Jayden Seales came on in the fifth over and struck with his fourth delivery, an excellent short ball that touched Woakes' glove and sailed through to keeper Joshua Da Silva, ending his seventh-wicket stand with Bairstow at 71. Seales then made it two in three balls when Overton stabbed a length ball towards short leg, where the crouching Bonner took a roundabout catch via his midriff, thighs, and eventually hands.

Bairstow continued to accumulate, driving Holder with aplomb through cover moments before feeding him a return catch that bobbled out of Holder's hands. Bairstow was eventually the last man out, top-edging Alzarri Joseph high over backward point, where Holder scrambled around and pouched an excellent catch.

Stumps West Indies 202 for 4 (Brathwaite 55, Holder 43*, Bonner 34*) trail England 311 (Bairstow 140, Seales 4-79) by 109 runs

Sports News



CPL in advance plans to stage annual T20 tournament

Organisers of the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) are well advanced in their plans to stage this year's West Indies domestic Twenty20 competition.

Caribbean Premier League Limited and Cricket West Indies formed a partnership to stage the annual competition which was inaugurated in 2013, and the organisers are well into plans to stage the 10th edition of the tournament later this year.

Chief Executive Officer of the Caribbean Premier League, Pete Russell, said this year's tournament will once again be played in the months of August to September.

"The 30th August is the start date, so that's when everything kicks off. We haven't yet got the final date, but it will probably be the 29th or 30th September," said Russell during an interview on Pointe On De



St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots won their first Caribbean Premier League title last year by recording a three-wicket win over the St. Lucia Kings in the final at Warner Park, St Kitts on 15th September, 2021. (Photos: CPLT20)

Streetz on Pointe FM.

The 2020 tournament was hosted by Trinidad and Tobago, while the 2021 championship was staged in St. Kitts and Nevis.

St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots won their first CPL title by recording a three-wicket victory over the St. Lucia Kings in the final of the 2021 tournament which took place at Warner Park

from 26th August to 15th September.

But Russell said the competition is returning to the pre-pandemic format of matches at different venues.

The United Kingdom-based Russell, who served as the Chief Operations Officer of CPL before being appointed to his current role in 2021, said he is currently in the Caribbean to confirm the three venues that will join St. Kitts and Nevis as host in the 2022 tournament.

"We are going to change the structure from our normal structure so I think what Covid-19 taught us was that we could still play in fewer venues, but keep the audience across the Caribbean engaged, which is of course important," he said.

"So, we are playing in

four venues, but those are still to be determined although we definitely will be playing in St Kitts and Nevis.

"We are looking at St. Lucia, obviously, Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados, and Jamaica. So we don't yet know what the makeup will be, but that's really the reason for my trip down here. It's to get more clarity on that and we'll make some decisions in the next few weeks.

"So yes, we are sort of excited about the season. It's good because we are moving around again. Hopefully by September, we will have crowds obviously, and we'll get that CPL buzz back.

"My feeling is the tournament length is about right. You want people to leave the tournament, or the

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Chief Executive Officer of the Caribbean Premier League Pete Russell.

It's uncertain if Djokovic will be able to enter the United States

All eyes were on Tuesday's unveiling of the men's draw at the BNP Paribas Open to see if Novak Djokovic, now ranked No 2 in the world, would pop up in the tournament bracket.

Sure enough when the draw ceremony started by listing the top-four seeds, Djokovic's name was there as the No. 2 seed, continuing an interesting saga that technically keeps the door open to Djokovic playing in Indian Wells, California, though it is unlikely.

Famously unvaccinated, the question was always how Djokovic would get into the United States, as foreigners who have not received the



Novak Djokovic

COVID-19 vaccine are not allowed to enter the United States.

Players do not need to be vaccinated to play in the BNP Paribas Open, but they obviously have to get into the country to play in the tournament.

It was not immediately clear on Tuesday how Djokovic would work around that mandate if he is to play.

The BNP Paribas Open has, however, released a statement on Djokovic's status.

"Novak Djokovic is on

the tournament entry list, and therefore is placed into the draw," the BNP stated.

"We are currently in communication with his team, however, it has not been determined if he will participate in the event by getting CDC approval to enter the country. We will provide updates in the future as we learn more."

His first match would be Saturday or Sunday so there is still time, but if he does wind up withdrawing, it will cause a ripple effect throughout the tournament.

Djokovic, who has won this event five times - 2008, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 - did not play in October 2021.

cont'd from pg 22

tournament to end, with people wanting more, and I think we sort of got that balance about right so far now. Six teams is what we will run with."

Russell said the six teams will be able to retain four players and the drafts in order to add more regional and international players to this year's CPL which is set to begin in May.

"The draft will be at the end of May. It's either the 26th or 27th of May, yet to be confirmed, but the teams have already been working hard. Retentions have happened so we will be announcing those next month," Russell said.

"There is another window for more retentions as well, so by the time we get to draft date, the majority of the structure of the teams will be pretty well set, I would say."

Russell said although hosting tournaments over the last two years of the

pandemic were challenging, the CPL has been able to record an increase in its television audience.

"It's been tough as it has been for everyone. They are two years none of us will look back favourably on. From an early position, we sort of looked at 2020 and said "Can we play the tournament or can't we?" We just thought for the brand it made sense for us to try and do it.

"Obviously, we got the support of the Trinidad government to play in a safe and secure environment, and we were the first cricket league back playing, so that was a challenge, but in the end it was a successful one," Russell said.

"Then we played in St. Kitts last year. It was a similar thing with a very tight bubble and all games played under very strict observation although we did have some crowds in. But you have to remember, there was a third

wave in St. Kitts at the time when we played, so it was challenging for everyone, both within the bubble and outside. But we were delighted with the results; over half a billion viewers worldwide, so all very successful.

"Across both years we broke through the half a billion barrier. The year 2020, I could sort of understand, because a lot of people were at home and we were sort of the only cricket really that was being played, so I expected the numbers to rise dramatically in 2020. But what was encouraging for us, is that we maintained that growth in 2021 with half a billion viewers.

"The big engagement is coming from India, as you would probably imagine, so it worked very well for us. We try and give all our partners, governments, and tourist authorities as much exposure as we can during the games so everyone did quite well out of it."

Sports News



West Indies Women beat England by seven runs

West Indies Women have recorded two consecutive wins in the ICC World Cup after beating England by seven runs on Tuesday.

The defending champions missed six chances in the field, conceded 23 runs in wides, then made a mess of chasing 226 for their second loss in as many games.

They were given hope by a ninth-wicket stand of 61 between Kate Cross and Sophie Ecclestone, only for Cross to be run out backing-up for 27. That left nine to win and, one run later, number 11 Anya Shrubsole was bowled by Anisa Mohammed to give West Indies their first win over England at the World Cup.

West Indies had earlier been reduced from 81-0



to 98-4, in a stand of 123 between Shemaine Campbelle and Chedean Nation which lifted them to 225-6. And, even though West Indies dropped three catches of their own, they ultimately squeezed England for a famous win.

With the top four from the eight team group going through to the semi-finals, England's defence of the trophy they won in 2017 is far from over, but they now have little margin for error.

West Indies have added this scalp to their victory

over hosts New Zealand and are in a strong position for a tilt in the semi-finals.

Scores in the game West Indies 225-6 (50 overs): Campbelle 66, Nation 49, Ecclestone 3-20. England 218 all-out (47.4 overs) Beaumont 46, Connell 3-38.

British businessman to buy Chelsea

British businessman Nick Candy is "actively exploring a number of options for a potential bid" to buy Chelsea.

Candy, a boyhood Chelsea fan, is trying to form a consortium with a number of international investors.

Roman Abramovich put the club up for sale last week amid the ongoing crisis in Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

Candy, 49, believes his background as a property developer could give him an advantage with any plans to rebuild Stamford Bridge.

There are 20 credible interested parties being handled by the US-based Raine Group, with a deadline of 15th



Nick Candy

March before assessing a handful of final bidders.

"Nick Candy is actively exploring a number of options for a potential bid for Chelsea," his spokesperson said in a statement.

"Any bid would be made in conjunction with another party, or con-

sortium, and we have serious interest from several international partners.

"Mr. Candy has a high affinity with Chelsea. His father was asked to play for the club and he has been watching matches at Stamford Bridge since the age of four."

Chelsea announced plans for a new 60,000 seat stadium on the Stamford Bridge site in 2015, but the project was put on hold indefinitely three years later.

"The club deserves a world-class stadium and infrastructure and Mr. Candy's unique expertise and background in real estate would be a hugely valuable asset to delivering this vision," added the statement.

Athletes seek qualification at ABAA's development meets

Track and field athletes in Antigua and Barbuda have been trying to achieve qualifying times to represent the twin-island nation at three major regional and international meets scheduled to take place by summer of this year.

Antigua and Barbuda's track and field athletes are expected to attend the 49th CARIFTA Games, scheduled to take place in Jamaica from 16th to 18th April, the inaugural Southern Games in Guadeloupe from June 29th to July 3rd, and the 22nd Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England, from July 29th July to August 8th.

Since the start of the year, athletes from seven affiliated clubs have been participating in a series of development meets which are being staged by the national governing body for track and field, the Antigua and Barbuda Athletics Association (ABAA), in their quest to attain the qual-



Athletes competes during the Antigua and Barbuda Athletics Association's Development Meet at YASCO Sports Complex on Sunday, January 23, 2022. (Photo courtesy Antigua Local Sports)

ifying standards to attend the three competitions.

Athletes from Hurricane Power Athletics Club (HPAC), Phoenix Athletics Club (PAC), Paramount Performance Club (PPC), Panthers Elite Athletics Club (PEAC), Power Speed Endurance (PSE), SupaNova Athletics Club (SAC) and Wings Sports Club (WSC), along with other athletes who are not attached to a club, have participated in the five

development meets staged this year.

According to First Vice President of the ABAA, Richard Lindsay, no one has yet qualified for the CARIFTA Games in any of the five development meets, the latest of which was held at the recently laid and IAAF approved Mondo Track at the YASCO Sports Complex on 6th March, 2022.

Lindsay said while the recent development meets are

primarily for athletes eligible for CARIFTA, it also presents an opportunity for other athletes to qualify for other regional and international competitions.

"Primarily, for the athletes eligible for CARIFTA, it is a means to establish who has or may obtain the qualifying standards," Lindsay said.

"As the season progresses, it is also a means that the older and more elite athletes can sharpen their races for the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games. All these games have qualifying standards.

"Once we have started our calendar of events, we use the development meet results to assess all individuals selected to attend any meet.

"Thus, for the Caribbean games, the guidelines and standards set by the host country will determine how many athletes qualify. It is the same process for all games," Lindsay added.

Warne memorial service to be staged at MCG

A memorial service to honour the life of Shane Warne will be staged at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 30th March. Australian legend Warne died at the age of 52 last Friday after suffering a suspected heart attack while on holiday in his villa on the island of Koh Samui.

Tributes poured in from all over the world for the sporting icon, who took a remarkable 708 Test wickets during his 15 year career - second only to Muttiah Muralitharan.

Warne's family accepted the offer

of a state funeral, and Victoria premier, Dan Andrews, on Wednesday confirmed a service will be held at the cricketer's home ground.

Flowers, cricket shirts, photographs and beer have been left where Shane Warne's statue stands at the MCG. The Great Southern Stand and the famous ground will be renamed to the S.K Warne Stand in tribute to the late, great spinner. "There is nowhere in the world more appropriate to farewell Warnie than the 'G'", Andrews wrote on Twitter.



Shane Warne

Cornelius wants more participation in schools' track and field

President of the Antigua and Barbuda Athletics Association (ABAA), Everton Cornelius, wants to see an increase in participation in the Inter-Schools' Track and Field Championships.

Cornelius, who was re-elected for a second four-year term as president of the ABAA at its Annual General Meeting on 24th February, said the inter-schools' competition will likely be held sometime this year.

"I think that this year we would definitely have the inter-schools' championship. I think that we need to take a more in-depth look at greater participation coming from all the schools," he said.

"I don't think that we are getting from the inter-schools' championships exactly what we are looking for as a national association."

Cornelius, who is also an athletics coach, said a national policy which would ensure that track and field becomes an integral part of schools' sports curriculum, will lead to increased participation.

"I would put it in this way: there is not a clear policy when it comes to sports, as far as I am concerned, within the schools, especially when it comes to athletics.

"Yes you may see something happening with football, you see something happening with cricket, football, basketball, track and field and that's where it stops with schools' sports.

"What we need to have within the school system as it pertains to track and field, just as the schools have a cricket team, a football team and a basketball team, they should also have a track and field team. I think that would make our track and field programme a lot stronger," Cornelius asserted.

"We can take a look back into the



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Athletics Association Everton Cornelius. (Photo courtesy ABAA)

1970s and 1980s when we played multi-sports. Today, what I find, a lot of the young people are specialising in an event too early. Our children, who are 13, 14 or 15-years old, just want to only play basketball. They don't want to play cricket, they don't want to play football, they only want to play basketball.

"I think once we have that ingrained into the schools' programme, in terms of each school having a track, basketball, cricket and a football team, I think you will find the students playing multiple sports.

"There will come a time when you want your school to be the number one school so you will bring whatever talent you have to bear on the programme, and then we can judge from that those who [have] the talent or the ability to be good track and field athletes, good footballers, good cricketers and good basketballers going forward.

"The athletes should be guided accordingly by the coaches, or the Physical Education (PE) teachers in the system,"

he added.

The Coca Cola National Inter-schools' Track & Field Championship, which was last held at the YASCO Sports Complex in March 2017, has developed into a popular annual event on Antigua and Barbuda's sporting calendar.

Clare Hall Secondary School captured the boys' division title of the 2017 championship while the Princess Margaret School repeated as girls' champions.

But the event has not been staged since 2017 due to the resurfacing of the YASCO Sports Complex and the subsequent arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project, a collaboration between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC), was supervised by the Ministry of Sports while the civil engineering involved in putting down the new Mondo track - a trademarked synthetic surface used for track and field athletics - was paid for by the Ministry of Finance.

Mondo track is developed by Mondo, a world leader in track and field surfacing, while funding for the YASCO project was facilitated via the ABNOC.

Although the repairs were disrupted by the arrival of the pandemic, Mondo technicians started working on the facility in 2020 and completed the track in March 2021.

Almost four months later, the track at YASCO received certification as an International Amateur Athletics Federation's (IAAF) approved facility on 21st July, 2021.

The certification was issued in accordance with the World Athletics Certification System and signed by IAAF's Chief Executive Officer Jon Ridgeon.