

MINOR PREGNANT AFTER GANG RAPE BY SAVAGES



End
Child
Abuse

*Minister Melford Nicholas has called for interagency cooperation in raising greater awareness about Antigua and Barbuda's laws that protect children from all forms of abuse. **Story on Page 2.** [Photo: Mariella Furrer]*

MP Nicholas wants public education campaign launched following minor's gang rape

Government has expressed concern over a disturbing report of a minor girl being savagely raped by a group of adult men.

The shocking report has prompted key agencies to take immediate action on the matter.

While the details of the incident are unknown, there are strict laws that prevent the identity of minor victims from being revealed in accordance with the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003, 27 (2) (a) and (b). The identities of the accused are also protected until there is a conviction.

Attorney General Steadroy Benjamin informed Cabinet of the matter during their weekly meeting on Wednesday. He also revealed that the minor is now pregnant as a result of the attack.

Cabinet Spokesman Melford Nicholas con-



firmed yesterday an investigation is underway, involving officials from the Ministries of Social Transformation, Sports, Health, along with other government agencies and law enforcement.

Labelling it an "insidious development", Nicholas stated many appear oblivious to the Child Protection Act and appealed for





officials to launch a public campaign aimed at educating citizens and residents on the laws regarding children, and the consequences for those who act in a manner contrary to them.

At the same time, the Cabinet spokesman reminded that it is incumbent on all of society to play a role in nurturing children.

"The responsibility of

raising our children is not the sole responsibility of the parents, but we have a number of other agencies including the churches, including the ministry with responsibility for social transformation, teachers and the wider society in general.

"And so, we have certainly asked the Ministry of Social Transformation to lead the conversation going forward about the mass sensitization of the society, and I would even go as far as to say the conscientisation of the society, in terms of what needs to happen not only in terms of the lawful protection, but what the society can do as a whole in raising these children," Minister Nicholas posited.

<p>Fri 04 Day</p> <p>82° </p> <p>22%  E 15 mph</p> <p>Generally sunny. High 82F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 70% UV Index Extreme</p> <p>Sunrise 6:23 am Sunset 6:14 pm</p>	<p>Fri 04 Night</p> <p>75° </p> <p>23%  E 14 mph</p> <p>Mostly clear. Low around 75F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 78% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise 7:48 am Moonset 8:10 pm</p> <p>● Waxing Crescent</p>
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Dominican national charged with Smithers' murder

Police have charged Berle Wallace with the murder of Christopher Smithers of Friars Hill Development.

Both men were involved in an altercation outside Pita Pocket on St. John's and Popeshead Streets on 1st March.

While the details that led to the incident remain unclear, during the altercation, 36-year-old Smithers, a Canadian national was stabbed around 6:23pm on Tuesday.

Smithers was pronounced dead at 6:45pm at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre.

38-year-old Wallace, a Villa resident, will appear in St. John's Magistrates' Court today. He will not be required to plead to the indictable charge, nor will the Court be able to grant him bail.

Wallace Jr. will be remanded to Her Majesty's Prison after the Court decides when he will return for the preliminary inquiry to begin.

Reports are the alleged murderer may have substance abuse issues and may be a vagrant.

Smithers' murder is the second on record since the



start of the year.

The certified fitness trainer moved here in 2011 after he was invited to visit the country by an Antiguan and Barbudan university classmate. In his eleven years residing here, Smithers report-

edly only returned home to Canada once, for the funeral of his mother a few years ago.

He was a well-liked and very popular trainer at Xtreme Fitness who also regularly facilitated community fitness programmes.



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Full implementation of CSME critical to regional economic recovery

Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Gaston Browne has issued a call for regional governments to fully functionalise the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Now more than ever as the challenge of regional economic recovery in the aftermath of COVID-19 looms, the former CARICOM chairman says it is critical that the Caribbean's leaders take action.

"The full operationalisation of the CSME is re-

quired for the transformation of our economies and to fight for a robust post COVID recovery.

"CARICOM needs to be able to shift gears and close its project implementation gaps, to ensure the full operationalization of the CSME," said PM Browne as he addressed a CARICOM Heads of Government meeting this week.

Beyond the continuing threat COVID-19 continues to pose to the region,



Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

the prime minister said unity among Caribbean nations is also vital in confronting the global challenges they face.

"We must, however, continue to be vigilant in managing the threats of de-risking, the proposed global minimum corporation tax and sanction-listing of so-called uncooperative jurisdictions by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and European Union.

"We must also enhance our negotiations with the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement), to ensure that it delivers the promised benefits to all its members, including the LDC's (less developed countries) within CARICOM," PM Browne said.

Browne also addressed the need for cooperation on the issues of the development and affordable availability of telecommunications and information technology infrastructure in order to facilitate regional economic expansion.

"These and other realities," said PM Browne, "should encourage us to move more urgently with the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

"We can no longer afford the luxury of delaying approval of key instruments such as the Financial Services Agreement, Investment Policy, Incentive Regimes and the Development and Regulation of a Regional Securities Market."

Notice

To: Your Worship
St. Johns Magistrate Court
Gray's Farm
St. Johns
Antigua.

To: The Commissioner of Police
Police Headquarters
American
St. Johns
Antigua.

Dear Sir/Madame,

Re: Notice- Application for Tavern Licence

I, Quincy Stowe of Gray Hill with registered business situated at Valley Road St. Johns Antigua and Barbuda **DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE** that it is my intention to apply at the next sitting of the liquor licensing Court to be held at the Magistrate's Court, Gray's Farm, St. John's, Antigua on Thursday 7th April, 2022 next ensuring for a Liquor Licensing Pursuant to section (11) (5) of the Licensing (intoxication Liquor) Act Cap. 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda 1992 Revised Edition, in respect of premises known as "**XO TYRE SHOP AND ENTERPRISE**" situated at Valley Road in the parish of St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda.

Dated the 3rd day of February, 2022

Further ease in restrictions expected as COVID numbers decrease

Government has signaled that favourable epidemiological conditions are behind its decision to relax the COVID-19 restrictions that have been in place for the last two years.

The decision making body has agreed to discontinue the requirement that persons entering government buildings show proof of vaccination.

While social distancing and hand washing requirements will remain in place, consideration is being given to making mask wearing optional. If this moves ahead, Antigua and Barbuda will likely be the first country in the English-speaking Caribbean to do so as that particular mandate is maintained with rigidity in other states.

These moves are being driven by the low COVID-19 positive figures being returned following testing.

“The EP conditions at the moment favours that there is a vast reduction in



Information Minister Melford Nicholas

the number of persons becoming infected. In fact, the chief medical officer through her minister, has indicated that the vast majority of the more recent infections were of the Omicron variant and if anything, it would have led to a bit more of the society having a level of immunity, even for an abbreviated period of time,” Information Minister Melford Nicholas said.

He noted that numbers are low with no hospitalisations.

More COVID-19 data is expected to be submitted to the Cabinet that will

aid their decision making related to the relaxation of additional restrictions.

A return to full time face-to-face learning in schools and the discontinuation of bi-weekly testing for unvaccinated students and public sector workers will also be reexamined. While he did not confirm that these mandates will be dropped, Minister Nicholas indicated the Cabinet appears inclined to do so.

“We have asked the Cabinet Secretariat to pull together all of the protocols that we had in place, including those governing public transportation and those affecting those who are plying their trade, to the tourism trade as well for us to look at all of them as a collective, and make a determination next week, as to which ones we will do away with or suspend if you will, and how we can continue to embrace the future with a new degree of normalcy,” the information minister told reporters.

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Committal hearing for Zorina Benjamin's killer set for May

The 38-year-old man accused of murdering his girlfriend, Zorina Benjamin, last year will have his committal hearing on 11th May.

Delon Charlery is alleged to have killed the former Customs Division officer who was found in her Golden Grove home with a gunshot wound to the head on 22nd November, 2021.

The accused, a national of St. Lucia, has lived in Antigua and Barbuda for the last twenty years.

His appearance on Wednesday before Magistrate Conliffe Clarke was his second since being remanded to Her Majesty's Prison in November.

The prosecution was not yet ready to present its evidence to the court.

This vital step in the justice system examines the prima facie evidence in order to determine if the matter will proceed to the High Court.



Zorina Benjamin

The matter was therefore adjourned to later this year in May. It is expected that the prosecution will proceed at this time. Charlery is represented by Wendel Robinson.

After Benjamin's execution style murder, there were concerns that her slaying may be in some way connected to the attacks on Customs officers, Cornell Benjamin, who survived being shot in 2019, and Nigel Christian who was



Delon Charlery

kidnapped from his home, shot to death and dumped in New Winthropes in 2020.

Another female Customs officer, Margaret Harris, was also found murdered in mid-October, approximately five weeks before Benjamin was killed.

It was quickly determined however, that Benjamin's death was the tragic outcome of domestic violence and not in any way connected to her job.

Zorina Benjamin was the mother of one child.

BLACK GIRL MAGIC

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ATB

A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board

Unvaccinated will be allowed to attend fetes

Members of the public who are unvaccinated will not be excluded from fetes which are an integral part of Antigua and Barbuda’s Carnival celebrations.

Questions had been raised over what would happen to unvaccinated persons this coming carnival season.

While it remains unclear if they will be able to participate in the mass activities planned by the Carnival Committee, the Gaston Browne Cabinet has agreed that they should be allowed to attend privately organised fetes. Fetes were allowed to resume on 1st March 2022.

The decision was taken after Cabinet considered the contents of a report presented by Minister of the Creative Industries and Innovation, Michael Browne. The report was prepared by the working group that is responsible for overseeing the entertainment sector.

Consultations were also held at the end of February with mas and j’ouvert troupes, bands and event organisers that may have influenced the Cabinet’s decision.

Following Wednesday’s meeting, Chief of Staff in the Prime Minister’s Office, Lionel Hurst, noted that unvaccinated persons will need to present a negative PCR test or Antigen test to access events.

Hurst continued however, “We encourage those who have not taken the vac-



Sir Rupert “King Swallow” Philo at Breakfast Fete 2019 giving one of his last major performances before his passing in 2020. [Photo: Gemma Hazelwood]

cine to proceed to do so as quickly as possible, and of course, to abide by the protocols that have thus far been very useful to Antigua and Barbuda.”

According to the Ministry of Health, as of 2nd March, 2022, 61,327 people are fully vaccinated with 2,377 partially vaccinated.

For Antigua and Barbuda to be considered to have achieved herd immunity against COVID-19, 70,000 to 80,000 people will need to become fully vaccinated.

Meanwhile, the entertainment working group is now preparing recommendations concerning the number of patrons who can safely be allowed into fetes based on the size of the venue.

“If the Sir Viv Richards stadium that can hold 15,000 people, we wouldn’t allow 15,000. The whole idea is to enable large gatherings, but

with conditionalities, and those conditionalities very much depend on keeping us away from the hospital and keeping us healthy,” Hurst stated.

**ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
THE REGISTERED LAND ACT, CAP 374**

Section 34 of the Act

REGISTRATION SECTION	BLOCK	PARCEL
Falmouth & Bethesda	34 2682 A	26

NOTICE OF APPLICATION TO REPLACE LOST OR DESTROYED LAND CERTIFICATE

TAKE NOTICE that an application was filed in the Land Registry on the 28th day of February, 2022 by Cosbert Cumberbatch of Cumberbatch & Associates of Upper Long Street, St. John’s, Antigua on behalf of **DELVINE HEWLETT and JULIE HEWLETT**, the Applicants herein for the replacement of Land Certificate No. HL280422315 dated the 7th day of April, 2014 issued to **DELVINE HEWLETT and JULIE HEWLETT**, being the owners of the above-mentioned property, which has been lost or destroyed.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that anyone who objects to the issue of a new Land Certificate or who has knowledge of the original Land Certificate must within the period of one (1) month from the Second Publication of this notice in the newspaper inform the Registrar of Lands in writing.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that in the absence of any objection or information as to the existence of the original Land Certificate within the time specified the Registrar of Lands may proceed to cancel the original Land Certificate and issue a new Land Certificate in its place without further notice.

Dated the 28th day of February 2022

Registrar of Lands

Local News



A&B to host RORC 600 for 4 more years

The Ministry of Tourism and the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority have signed on to host the prestigious Royal Ocean Race Club (RORC) Caribbean 600 for another four years.

A signature race for true sailors and professional yachtsmen, the renewal means that the destination will continue to attract sailing's elite and promising newcomers, building Antigua and Barbuda's reputation as the 'Sailing Capital of the Caribbean'.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Tourism and Investment, Charles Fernandez, CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda



Minister of Tourism Charles Fernandez with the RORC CEO, Jeremy Wilton.

Tourism Authority, Colin C. James, and CEO of the RORC, Jeremy Wilton.

The continued partnership is in keeping with the Tourism Ministry and the Tourism Authority's strat-

egy for the development of the sailing and yachting sector as a means of economic development.

Minister Fernandez said, "We continue to globally promote and position

Antigua and Barbuda as a safe and picturesque location for the sailing community to enjoy local, regional and international regattas throughout the year.

"We are also thrilled to have opportunities where we can expose our Antiguan and Barbudan talent and spotlight their performance, as was seen in this year's race."

The 2022 RORC Caribbean 600 attracted 74 teams with 738 sailors from 32 different nations, setting a record for the most impressive fleet in the 14-year history of the race.

The event culminated on February 25, with a prize giving ceremony.



ACP Cruise Ship

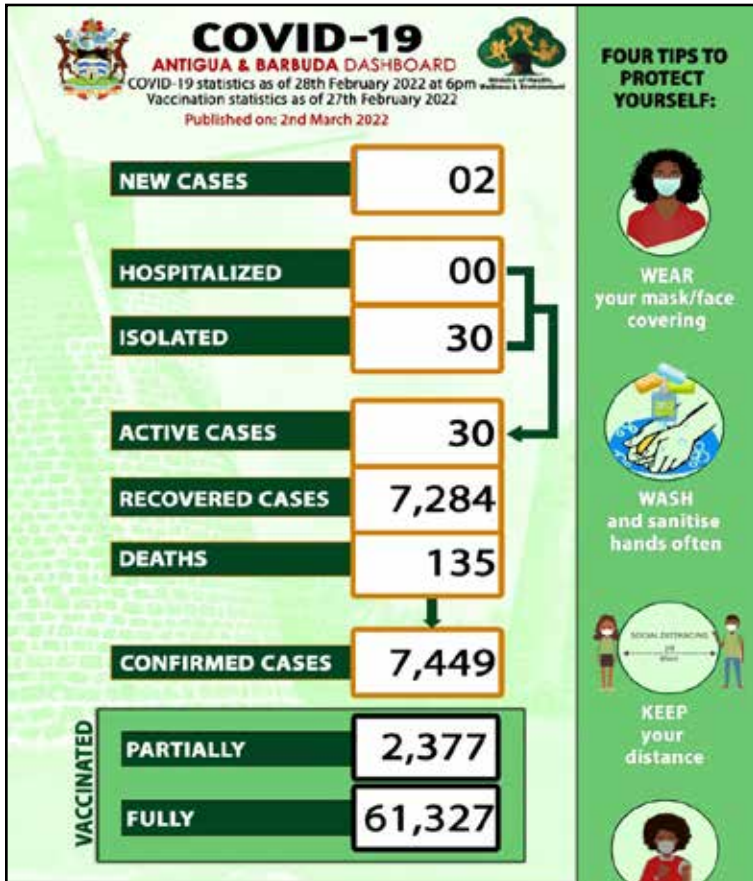
Calendar

Updated on February 25, 2022

March

Date	ETA	ETD	Cruise Ship	Cruise Line	Capacity*	Type	Assigned Berth*
1-Mar-22	8:00AM	5:00PM	AIDAprera	AIDA	3,250	T	Heritage Quay
1-Mar-22	7:00AM	5:00PM	MS Marina	Oceania Cruises	1,258	T	Nevis Pier
2-Mar-22	9:00AM	11:00PM	Silver Moon	Silversea Cruises	691	O	Nevis Pier
2-Mar-22	7:00AM	6:00PM	Club Med 2	Club Med	392	T	Falmouth
2-Mar-22	8:00AM	6:00PM	Costa Deliziosa	Costa	3,000	T	Heritage Quay
3-Mar-22	7:00AM	6:00PM	Club Med 2	Club Med	392	T	Barbuda
3-Mar-22	7:00AM	11:00PM	Silver Spirit	Silversea Cruises	540	T	Heritage Quay
4-Mar-22	8:00AM	6:00PM	Star Pride	Windstar Cruises	204	T	Falmouth
4-Mar-22	8:00AM	5:00PM	Oceania Riviera	Oceania Cruises	1,258	T	Nevis Pier
4-Mar-22	9:00AM	6:00PM	Enchanted Princess	Princess Cruises	4,402	T	Heritage Quay
4-Mar-22	8:00AM	5:00PM	Celebrity Silhouette	Celebrity Cruises	2,866	T	Heritage Quay
5-Mar-22	7:30AM	5:00PM	Viking Sea	Viking Ocean Cruises	930	T	Nevis Pier
5-Mar-22	8:00AM	5:00PM	Spirit Of Adventure	Saga Cruises	999	T	Heritage Quay
5-Mar-22	7:00AM	7:00PM	Norwegian Gem	Norwegian Cruise Line	2,873	T	Heritage Quay
5-Mar-22	7:00AM	6:00PM	Club Med 2	Club Med	392	T	Barbuda

Only 2 new COVID-19 cases since the start of March



The most recent report received by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment revealed two (2) new laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in Antigua and Barbuda as of Monday 28th February, 2022 at 6pm.

One hundred and seven (107) samples were processed.

Eight (8) 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 forty-nine (7,449); which is inclusive of thirty (30) active cases. There are no hospitalised cases.

Notice

The Financial Services Regulatory Commission (The FSRC) wishes to inform all Licensees, Registered office and Agents, clients, stakeholders and the general public that our office will be closed on **Monday 07th March 2022** out of respect for our late colleague Joycelyn Martin.

Kindly note that normal operation is scheduled to resume on Tuesday 08th March 2022, 8:00 a.m.

In the event you need to contact us during the time of closure kindly call 764-3344.

Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

The Board, Management and staff of the Financial Services Regulatory Commission apologize for any inconvenience caused.

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No busting of sanctions against Russia

By Sir Ronald Sanders

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

The Caribbean cannot escape the economic and financial consequences of the Russian Federation's invasion of the sovereign, independent nation of Ukraine.

The effects of these consequences are already being felt in higher oil prices (at the time of writing, on March 3, the global oil benchmark, rose to \$113.94 a barrel, the highest since June 2014), and they will intensify if the Russian action continues, forcing the world community to show its displeasure through the many sanctions that have been imposed on Russia, not only by countries but also on bodies responsible for international sport.

Rightly, Caribbean countries have participated fully in expressing their disapproval of Russia's infringement of the United Nations Charter, the Charter of the Organization of American States and of international law by its unlawful, unjustified, and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

On February 24, all CARICOM states jointly issued a statement, making it clear that "the hostilities against Ukraine go counter to the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of another sovereign state and the prohibition on the threat or use of force, and the peaceful resolution of

disputes, which are the bedrock of this Community".

On February 25, all but four CARICOM countries, joined in co-sponsoring an OAS Declaration by more than two-thirds of its member states, led by Antigua and Barbuda and Guatemala, that "strongly condemn(ed) the unlawful, unjustified, and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and call(ed) for the immediate withdrawal of the military presence and the cessation of any further military actions in that country".

On that same day, the UN Security Council failed to issue its own condemnatory resolution because Russia, exercised its veto, as one of five permanent members, to stop the resolution. The continued existence of a veto by any one of only 5 countries is a serious anomaly in today's world. Each of these countries can halt binding UN action against their own violations, crippling the ability to censure them, as is evident from the Russian veto.

After hesitation by some CARICOM countries to participate in the UN General Assembly meeting on Ukraine two days before the invasion, all of them were among the 141 nations at the Special Emergency Session, on March 2, that deplored "in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine" and demanded "that Russia "immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders".

It is, of course, right that CARICOM countries should adopt a strong position on any country that violates international law by invading other na-



Sir Ronald Sanders

tions, and by seeking to alter the settled borders of countries by force. Within CARICOM, Venezuela threatens Guyana's territorial integrity and Guatemala threatens Belize's. In the case of Guatemala and Belize, they have both agreed to seeking a peaceful settlement through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and Guatemala has led from the front in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, Venezuela has refused to accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ, and its President is reported to have stated his support for Russia's unlawful actions against Ukraine.

At the meeting of the OAS, where the overwhelming number of countries made a declaration condemning the Russian invasion, I stated on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda the following: "Small and military powerless states depend upon adherence and respect to the agreed and settled principles that are set out in the UN Charter and in international law. When these principles are flouted and international law is violated, small states are obliged to speak out loudly in our own interest as much as in the interest of nations that are the actual victims of aggression".

And, that is the crux of the matter. When international law is breached, the wall that safeguards the interest of small states crumbles, exposing them to the aggression of oth-

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ers; and that aggression can come in many forms, not only military.

In any event, the action of Russia in the Ukraine is now so vicious, so inhumane and so alarming that no right-minded society anywhere in the world can do anything but forcefully condemn it. Innocent people, including children and babies, are being killed in their homes as Russia bombards them with long-range missiles in the Russian government's attempt to seize control of their country. Nothing could justify such brutal and cowardly behaviour.

In standing up for an

immediate end to the unjustified violence and slaughter in Ukraine, and for the sanctions that have been imposed on Russia, the 141 countries that voted at the UN, and the 25 that voted at the OAS, including all CARICOM states, were also standing up for the protection of themselves from the tyranny of more militarily powerful countries.

They were standing up for human values of the right to life and the right to live in peace within secure borders.

In every society, there are those who seek to gain from misfortune and misery. Sadly, there is already some speculation in the Ca-

ibbean that governments should allow private companies to profit from busting sanctions against Russia by accommodating, for instance, the yachts of the Russian Oligarchs who have become billionaires through their cosy relationships with the Russian government.

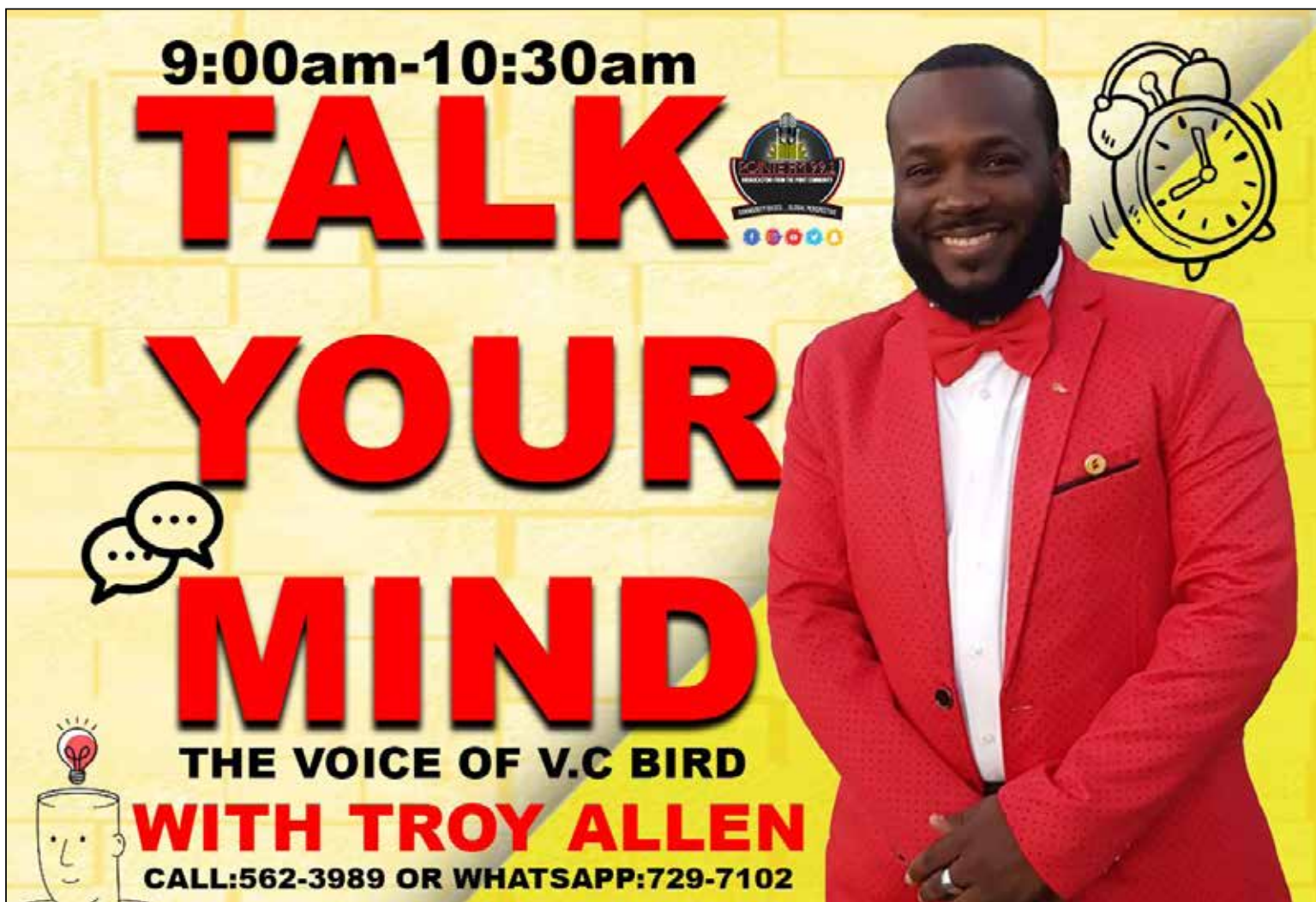
Still others complain about the higher prices that they will have to pay for commodities, such as oil and its related uses. But such persons should be reminded that freedom and the protection of human life and dignity comes by defending what is right and by some sacrifice.

Higher prices will have to be paid for a time, but it

is worth the freedom and rights that all humanity deserves. To see the sacrifice for rights and freedom, we need look no further than the courage of the Ukrainian people – men, women and children – who are confronting Russian military tanks and weaponry with nothing in their hands but the flag of their besieged nation.

In the Caribbean, we should remind those, who advocate sanctions busting for short term gain, of the biblical admonition: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul".

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com



9:00am-10:30am

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Raspberry (Gooseberry) Jam Recipe

By Eboni Brandon

I didn't know the proper name for the berries I grew up calling "raspberries" until I was maybe 9 or 10 years old. Before then, to me and most any 80s baby who spent summer days outside eating what was in season and playing until "night start dusk een", the tart, green gooseberries were just one of the snacks you would look forward to gorging on.

I've never liked anything sweet. Especially after my whole body broke out in spots that took years to fade after inhaling sweetened Dutch Lady condensed milk like water one summer when I was about 8. You remember the tiny little cans they used to sell for 60 cents? Those devils! So bribing me with dessert to finish my vegetables was never a thing.

Sour foods are more up my alley, therefore tamarind, raspberries and similar tart fruits, along with anything produced from them, have always been favourites of mine.

I especially enjoyed getting raspberry jam from a lady named Patsy who used to sell snacks out of the trunk of her Nissan Sentra at the back of the Junior 5 block at J.T. Ambrose school in All Saints Village. Whenever the berries were in season, you could

count on her to have 50 cent or \$1 cups of jam.

To be honest, buying jam was a lesson in sharing because EVERYBODY, friend or friend not, would come over, palm outstretched, asking you to "gimme likkle bit please!"

Writing pieces like this always takes me to a happy place, because for me, food is not only an opportunity to nourish my body, or to be quite honest, just gorge on tasty treats; it is an experience. So many of my favourite meals and snacks come along with memories of the not so long ago days of my childhood that I cherish most.

As with my baking and a desire to capture the flavours of home, I'm happy to share with you my very easy raspberry jam recipe. I hope you delight in it as much as I do when the season rolls around.

Gooseberry Jam

Ingredients

4 cups gooseberries, thoroughly washed
 4 cups brown sugar*
 1 tsp ground ginger
 1 tsp ground nutmeg
 1 cinnamon stick
 1/8 teaspoon allspice (optional)
 3 1/2 cups water (you may need slightly more)



The Method

1. Add all the ingredients to a heavy bottomed pot, place on the stove top on medium heat and simmer until the sugar is completely dissolved. The aim is to dissolve all the sugar and reduce the liquid without coming to a strong boil which will cause the sugar to crystallize.

2. Continue to cook on medium heat, stirring the pot and checking frequently to ensure that it does not boil over or stick to the bottom. It may foam a bit. Skim this off as you go. It will eventually become clear and glossy as the jam darkens in colour.

3. Allow the liquid to reduce until it forms a thick syrup. Stir continuously. At the right consistency, it should form a thick coat on the back of a spoon and remain separated when you run a finger through it. It will thicken even more as it cools.

4. Place in sterile jars.

5. Enjoy

*This can be prepared with white or brown sugar but please, PLEASE, trust me, use the brown! The hint of molassasses it imparts to this treat is absolutely worth it.



How mindfulness can make you a darker person

By David Robson

Mindfulness is thought to have multiple benefits – but it can also make you less likely to feel guilty about wrongdoing and derail your moral compass.

Whether you are a school teacher, a hospital worker, a Google programmer, a soldier or even a politician, you'll have been encouraged to embrace mindfulness by colleagues and supervisors. Even my smartwatch regularly reminds me to take a "mindful minute".

The immediate outcomes of this popular form of meditation are meant to be reduced stress and risk of burnout. But listed alongside these benefits, you'll often find claims that mindfulness can improve your personality. When you learn to live in the moment, the proponents say, you will find hidden reserves of empathy and compassion for those around you. That's certainly an attractive bonus for an organisation hoping to increase co-operation in its teams.

The scientific research, however, paints a more complicated picture of mindfulness's effects on our behaviour, with emerging evidence that it can sometimes increase people's selfish tendencies. According to a new paper, mindfulness may be especially harmful when we have wronged other people. By quelling our feelings



of guilt, it seems, the common meditation technique discourages us from making amends for our mistakes.

"Cultivating mindfulness can distract people from their own transgressions and interpersonal obligations, occasionally relaxing one's moral compass," says Andrew Hafenbrack, assistant professor of management and organisation at the University of Washington, US, who led the new study.

Such effects shouldn't discourage us from meditating, stresses Hafenbrack, but may change when and how we choose to do it. "While some have viewed it as a panacea, mindfulness meditation is a specific practice with specific psychological effects," he says. And we need to be a bit more... well, mindful

about those effects.

Calm and callous?

There are many forms of mindfulness, but the most common techniques involve either focusing on your breathing or paying intense attention to the sensations in your body. There is some good evidence that these practices can help people to cope better with stress, yet a handful of studies over the past few years have shown that they can also have some unexpected and undesired effects. Last year, for example, researchers from the State University of New York showed that mindfulness can exaggerate people's selfish tendencies. If a person is already individualist, then they become even less likely to help others after meditation.

Hafenbrack's new study

examined whether our state of mind at the time of meditating, and our social context, might influence its effects on our behaviour.

In general, mindfulness seems to calm uncomfortable feelings, he says, which is incredibly useful if you feel overwhelmed by pressure at work. But many negative emotions can serve a useful purpose, particularly when it comes to moral decision making. Guilt, for example, can motivate us to apologise when we have hurt someone else, or to take reparative action that might undo some of the damage we've done. If mindful meditation leads us to ignore that emotion, it could therefore prevent us from righting our wrongs, suspected Hafenbrack.

cont'd on pg 14

The Way We Think



cont'd from pg 13

To find out, he designed a series of eight experiments involving a total sample of 1,400 people using a variety of methods. In one, the participants were asked to remember and write about a situation that had made them feel guilty. Half were then asked to practice a mindfulness exercise which directed their focus to their breathing, while others were told to allow their minds to wander freely.

Afterwards, the participants were asked to take a questionnaire that measured their feelings of guilt. They also had to imagine that they had been given \$100. Their task was to estimate how much they would be willing to donate to the person they had wronged for a birthday surprise.

As Hafenbrack had suspected, the participants who had done the mindfulness meditation reported less remorse – and they were substantially less generous towards the person they had wronged. On average, they were willing to donate just \$33.39, while those who had simply let their minds wander were willing to give \$40.70 – a nearly 20% difference.

In another experiment, Hafenbrack divided participants into three groups. Some practised mindful breathing, while others were told to let their minds wander and a third group browsed the web. The participants were then asked to write a letter of apology to a person they had wronged, which two independent judges then rated, according to whether the individual took responsibility for the actions and whether they offered to make up for the wrongdoing. (A high-quality heartfelt apology would include both elements.)

In line with Hafenbrack's hypothesis, the people who had practised mindfulness offered less sincere apologies than those in either of the control conditions. This again suggested that the practice had muted their feelings of guilt and, as a result, their willingness to make

amends.

The remaining experiments suggest that this is true in many different situations, including business decision making that might affect social justice. The participants in one experiment, for example, had to imagine that they were the CEO of a chemical company that dealt with hazardous materials. They were then asked to state their endorsement for a new environmental policy that would help to reduce air pollution. Participants who had just practised mindfulness were much less likely to support the reparative measure.

The Buddha pill

It's important to recognise that these studies examined the effects of mindfulness exercises in very specific contexts, when guilt was salient in the participants' minds. "We shouldn't over-generalise and conclude that mindfulness makes you a worse person," Hafenbrack says.

His results might, however, encourage us to be a bit more thoughtful about when we apply it. We should think twice about using it after a disagreement with a friend or colleague, for example, particularly if you already know that you were in the wrong. "If we 'artificially' reduce our guilt by meditating it away, we may end up with worse relationships, or even fewer relationships," he says.

Miguel Farias, an associate professor in experimental psychology at Coventry University, UK, says that he welcomes any studies that carefully and precisely detail the effects of mindfulness.

"I certainly think that we need to start looking at the nuances."

In his book *The Buddha Pill*, co-written with Catherine Wikholm, he describes how mindfulness interventions in the West are often presented as a "quick fix", while ignoring much of the ethical guidance that was part of the original religious tradition – which may be important for ensuring that the practice brings about the desired changes to people's behaviour.

Working with Ute Kreplin at Massey University in New Zealand, Farias recently examined the available studies on meditation's consequences for altruism and compassion, but found limited evidence for meaningful positive changes across individuals.

"The effects are much weaker than had been proposed." Like Hafenbrack, he suspects the practice can still be useful – but whether you see the desired benefits may depend on many factors, including the meditators' personality, motivation and beliefs, he says. "Context is really important."

At the very least, Hafenbrack's research suggests that casual meditators might turn to other contemplative techniques besides mindful breathing and body scans during times of interpersonal conflict. He's examined a technique known as 'loving-kindness meditation', for example, which is inspired by the Buddhist practice of *Metta Bhavana*. The practice involves contemplating people in your life – from friends and family to acquaintances and strangers – and cultivating good wishes and feelings of warmth for them.

In his study on guilt, Hafenbrack found that – unlike mindful breathing – loving-kindness meditation increased people's intentions to make amends for their wrongs. "It can help people feel less bad and focus on the present moment, without having the risk of reducing the desire to repair relationships," he says.

Humans are complex beings with many different needs; it is only right that we should use multiple techniques to shape our emotions and behaviour. Sometimes that involves looking inwards, to ground our thinking in our bodies, and other times we need to look outwards, and remind ourselves of our essential connections to the people around us. There really is no other way to take responsibility for our behaviours and ensure that our relationships continue to flourish.

Machel Montano moves India to the sound of soca

Soca king Machel Montano had Indians dancing to soca music as he graced the stage at Sadhguru's MahaShivRatri celebrations in India on Thursday.

Montano started his four-song set with "Come Awake", a song he made for the launch of Sadhguru's Save Soil campaign.

The singer, who is celebrating 40 years in soca this year, then urged the massive audience to stand up as he launched into "Dance With You" one of his hits from the early 2000s.

Even Sadhguru got up and danced happily to the infectious beat.

Montano introduced himself to the audience, stating that he is from Trinidad and Tobago in the West

Indies and schooled them on the origins of soca, how Ras Shorty I blended East Indian and African rhythms to create the genre.

He then introduced Shorty's daughter Marge Blackman, who joined him on stage for the premiere of a new song, "Touch the Ground" from the Save Soil Riddim produced by DJ Private Ryan.

Montano ended his set with his 2015 song "On My Way".

MahaShivRatri is one of the largest and most sacred festivals in India, and the gathering at Isha Yoga Center attracted more than 120 million people, in person and online in 2021.

For the past seven months, Montano has been



Marge Blackman and Machel Montano at MahaShivRatri

in India participating in a yoga programme (Sadhanapada) at the Isha Yoga Center, under the tutelage of Sadhguru, Yogi, mystic, and one of the most influential visionaries of our time.

In addition to this global performance at MahaShivRatri, Montano will collaborate with the students of the Isha Home School on March 5 in a mu-

sical performance to raise awareness of the Save Soil movement.

Later, in mid-March, Montano will join Sadhguru on a visit to the Caribbean including visits to Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana and Belize where they will meet with government leaders from across the region to discuss and collaborate on the Save Soil movement.

John DiMaggio will return for the 'Futurama' revival on Hulu

By Marianne Garvey

"Futurama" is bringing back cast holdout John DiMaggio.

With the recent announcement that Matt Groening and David X. Cohen were bringing back the beloved animated series to Hulu in 2023, it was initially moving forward without DiMaggio, who plays foul-mouthed robot Bender, while he negotiated his contract.

But DiMaggio took to Twitter on Tuesday with news of his return, writing, "I'M BACK, BABY!"

During his contract negotiations, DiMaggio had explained to fans on



John DiMaggio [CNN]

twitter, "Bender is part of my soul and nothing about this is supposed to be disrespectful to the fans or my Futurama family."

With an update he added, "It's

about self-respect. And honestly, being tired of an industry that's become far too corporate and takes advantage of artists' time and talent."

Futurama tells the story of 25-year-old pizza delivery boy Philip Fry, played by Billy West, who accidentally freezes himself in 1999 and wakes up 1,000 years later.

The show keeps getting new life in renewals. It originally aired on Fox before being canceled, then it was picked up by Comedy Central and then canceled. It was announced three weeks ago the latest version of the show would be airing on Hulu.

Samuel L. Jackson is not here for Joe Rogan's n-word apology

By Lisa Respers France

Samuel L. Jackson doesn't seem to be buying host Joe Rogan's apology for his past use of the n-word on his podcast.

"He is saying nobody understood the context when he said it," Jackson told *The Times* in a recently published interview, reportedly rolling his eyes as he said it. "But he shouldn't have said it."

Rogan apologized in February after a compilation video of him using the racial slur made the rounds on social media.

"I know that to most people, there's no context where a White person is ever allowed to say that, never mind publicly on a podcast, and I agree with that," Rogan said at the time.

In his interview with *The Times*, Jackson dismissed that.

"It's not the context, dude — it's that he was comfortable doing it," he told *The Times*.

"Say that you're sorry because you want to keep your money, but you were having fun and you say you did it because it was entertaining."

Jackson added that "It needs to be an element of what the story is about. A story is context — but just to elicit a laugh? That's wrong."

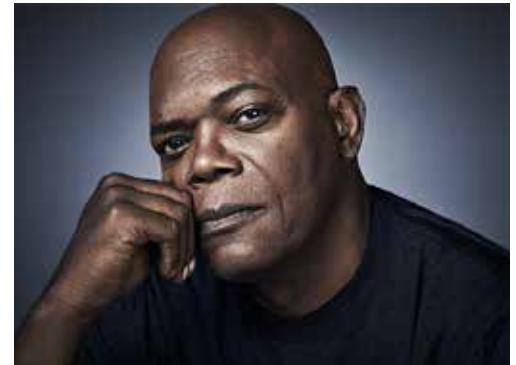
He also discussed director and writer Quentin Tarantino, who has used the word in several of his films, including "Pulp Fiction" and "Django Unchained." Jackson starred in both projects.

The actor recounted that when filming "Django Unchained," his co-star Leonardo DiCaprio expressed during rehearsals that he was uncomfortable using the slur as many times as was required by his charac-

ter in the script.

"Me and Quentin said that you have to. Every time someone wants an example of overuse of the n-word, they go to Quentin — it's unfair," Jackson said.

"He's just telling the story and the characters do talk like that. When [fellow director] Steve McQueen does it, it's art. He's an artiste. Quentin's just a popcorn filmmaker."



Samuel L. Jackson

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS													DOWN												
1) Practice in the ring	40) Small digit	1) Fit the sound to the action																							
5) Stable occupants	41) Sounded like a dove	2) A three-of-a-kind beats it																							
10) Unaccompanied efforts	42) Bookbinding leather	3) Part of aka																							
14) Eli's school	43) Smidgen of smoke	4) Put out more of																							
15) What some skip church to do?	44) Assembled masses	5) Courage and fortitude																							
16) Muslim holy man	46) Be successfully educated	6) Honolulu hello																							
17) Not yet final, legally	49) Lightly hit single	7) Galley worker																							
18) Namely	51) It leads water to dry land	8) Cast-of-thousands movie, e.g.																							
19) Startled sound	57) Bakery goodie	9) Eve's third son																							
20) One way to get to England	58) Done with	10) Turn indicator																							
23) Type of energy	59) Put in the smokehouse	11) Gulf Arab																							
24) Supermarket section	60) The state of Deseret, now	12) Surgical light tool																							
25) Bamboozle	61) Canada and snow	13) Say without saying																							
28) Snake shape	62) In the blink of an orb?	21) Greenskeeper's supply																							
30) One of the Great Lakes	63) Sit for photos	22) Bye-bye, in Marseilles																							
31) Fifth Avenue sight	64) It's placed in a restaurant	25) Garage band's tape																							
33) Not he	65) Track sections	26) "___ go brag"																							
36) What one with impure thoughts has		27) Script unit																							
		28) Kind of softball team																							
		29) Suffix in many Internet addresses																							
		31) Halt																							
		32) Title starter, often																							
		33) Pack away																							
		34) Beer topper																							
		35) Sea eagles																							
		37) Cake decorator's material																							
		38) Toddler's responses, often																							
		39) Like some paradises																							
		43) Squirm in pain																							
		44) Hold a meeting																							
		45) "Spare the ___, spoil the child"																							
		46) Like the Las Vegas strip																							
		47) Greek Muse of lyric poetry																							
		48) Wall hanging with pictorial designs																							
		49) ___ one's time (was patient)																							
		50) Not tight at all																							
		52) Jason's ship																							
		53) Wedding cake level																							
		54) Sandwich fish																							
		55) Farmer's pride																							
		56) Feathered layers																							

IN THE TRENCHES													By Jerry Berns												
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48		
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65									

Viola Davis on playing Michelle Obama: There was 'a huge amount of fear'

By **Sandra Gonzalez**

For those wondering, yes, even one of America's most decorated modern actresses still gets butterflies when stepping into a new role, especially when she's playing one of the most iconic women in American history.

In a conversation with media on Wednesday, Academy Award-winning actress Viola Davis said playing former first lady

Michelle Obama in Showtime's upcoming limited series "The First Lady" involved "a huge amount of fear."

"You don't want to insult them by your portrayal," she said during a panel for the show at the Television Critics Association press tour.

Obama is one of three first ladies portrayed in the series.

It also features Michelle



Viola Davis as Michelle Obama in "The First Lady," an upcoming Showtime series. [Showtime]

Pfeiffer as Betty Ford and Gillian Anderson as Eleanor Roosevelt in roles that are sure to get awards attention come Emmy season.

As the only actress playing a first lady who is still alive on the show, Davis was asked if she felt extra pressure knowing Obama might see her work.

Davis said not only does she acknowledge that fact, but "it keeps you up at night."

That said, Davis added, "that's what we live for as artists."

"It's a huge exercise in letting go, and it's a huge exercise in transformation," she said. "But, to answer the question: Te-rrri-fying."

As Obama, Davis was challenged with capturing not just the woman people saw in front of the camera but also putting into the performance her essence.

In her experiences meeting Obama, Davis said, she was struck by her "sense of worth" and "sense of belonging."

"[She] seemed like a rooted tree, a rooted oak tree," she said. "There was nothing about her that felt secondary, that she was the woman behind the man. She absolutely seemed like a person who has a sense of self."

Davis added: "Barack doesn't make her someone; she was someone from the moment she came out of her mom's womb."

The stories told on "The First Lady," from executive producers Cathy Schulman ("Crash") and Susanne Bier ("The Undoing"), span 120 years, but have threads that narratively connect the tales.

It premieres April 17 at 9 p.m. ET/PT on Showtime.

MARCH PROMOTION

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Montserrat's local COVID-19 outbreak declared over

Montserrat's Ministry of Health and Social Services has declared that the local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) is over.

Wednesday marked 31 days since the last locally transmitted infection was detected.

The outbreak began on 31, December 2021 and peaked with 67 confirmed infections.

The ministry expressed gratitude to residents for



following the protocols

which allowed Montserrat

to rise above the wave that

was driven by the delta and

omicron variants.

Residents are urged to

continue to practice good

hand hygiene, social dis-

tancing, wear a face covering and vaccinate themselves.

“While this achievement is cause for celebration, officials cautioned that continued vigilance was necessary particularly as travel to and from the island has increased and imported cases of the virus continue to occur as evidenced by the case reported by the Ministry on 26 February 2022,” the ministry stated.

Tears of joy as 20 Jamaican students return home from Ukraine

Jamaica Gleaner - There were tears of joy outside the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, St James Wednesday evening as 20 Jamaican students who were studying in the crisis-hit Ukraine, arrived from Frankfurt, Germany.

The students fled Ukraine amid tensions with Russia that escalated with a military invasion on February 24.

“You could see the relief on their faces, as soon as we were told that we are about to land in Jamaica,” said a German traveller who identified himself only as Lukas.

Back in Frankfurt, he said a few of the students embraced each other, as they boarded the aircraft.

“I never knew who they were until we arrived in Jamaica,” he said.

The students were greeted at the Sangster International Airport by State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Leslie Campbell.

Only the state-run Jamaica Infor-



One of the students who arrived at the Sangster International Airport is hugged by her relatives at the arrival section [Photo: Ashley Anguin]

mation Service was allowed in the VIP lounge for a brief welcome ceremony.

The plight of the students grabbed national attention after the Jamaican government offered a loan for them to purchase their airline tickets to travel

home.

The government has since said it is not offering loans.

The students were in Poland for the past two days after walking more than 20 kilometres from Lviv to the Polish border.

CARICOM Services ministers to meet next week

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) ministers with responsibility for the services sector will meet next week March to approve regional strategic plans for four Services sub-sectors.

The Guyana-based CARICOM Secretariat said that the March 8 meeting will also chart the region's course in the Services Sector for 2022.

It said ahead of the special meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) dedicated to Services, stakeholders met last month on the issues that are to be placed before the ministers for decision.

The Secretariat said various regional SWOT analyses; a COVID-19 Services Action Plan; and

a Community Master Strategy and Implementation Plan are among the items to be discussed.

The Services Sector is the largest in the economy of CARICOM countries, accounting for almost 70 per cent of the total regional output estimated at US\$65 billion based on 2018 figures.

Deputy Programme Manager for Services at the CARICOM Secretariat, Timothy Odle said about 77 per cent of the region's workforce is involved in the Services Sector.

Figures for 2018 indicate that that translates to more than a million persons, the majority of whom are females.

Odle said the sector represented the value of human capital investment



and is "the value-added created or consumed by humans.

"It accounts for a wide array of activities through the value chain from weeding and trichology to aeronautical engineering and neurosurgery.

"Statistics from 2018 indicate that the distributive sector which includes

hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail sales, was the highest performing area.

"The second-best performing sector was financial services that include real estate and technical business services, while the third included human health, healthcare and education sector," Odle added.

The Secretariat said that like practically all segments of economic activity globally, the CARICOM Services Sector, its tourism industry in particular, is adversely impacted by the continuing pandemic and the measures countries are taking to confront it. But it is showing the capacity for resilience in the face of external shocks.

It said while the tourism industry, on which many of the member states depend for economic survival, is hard hit by the pandemic, digital services grew as technology became vital, especially for remote work, schooling and shopping.

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UPDATED SCHEDULE

Trinidad-based regional pollster to appear in Suriname Court

The Trinidad-based regional political analyst, Derek Ramsamooj is to appear in a Suriname Court “in the coming days” after being detained in the Dutch-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country for more than 500 days, CARICOM Chairman Prime Minister John Briceno has confirmed.

Briceno, speaking at the news conference on Wednesday night, following the two-day CARICOM Inter-Sessional

Summit, said that he had discussed the matter with the Suriname President Chandrikapersad “Chan” Santokhi, who takes over the chairmanship of the regional integration movement in July.

“Yes I did raise it with President Santokhi and he (Santokhi) has been in touch with his Attorney General and they are saying now that the case will go to court in the next coming days, 12 or so days from now. So it will be in

court,” Briceno said.

Asked whether Ramsamooj, 60, who had been in custody since October 6, 2020, and released on December 22 that year had been charged, Prime Minister Briceno responded by saying “yes he has been charged, the President is telling me, yes, he has been charged”.

In December 2020, Ramsamooj, a “diabetic”, who had threatened to go on a hunger strike after claiming that the authorities had given him no indication as to why he had been detained, told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that while he had been released from custody, he was not granted permission to leave the Dutch-speaking CARICOM country.

“They have my computers, phone and passport,” he said, adding that his priority now was to ensure that he gets back to health.”

He said then he was looking forward to a trial, as this would indicate what were the reasons behind his detention.

Ramsamooj, who has worked as a political analyst in the Caribbean including Jamaica, Guyana, Grenada, Suriname, St Lucia and St Kitts-Nevis, was told by Suriname police on October 6, 2020 that they



Derek Ramsamooj

wanted a statement or evidence to support an inquiry into operations at the Surinamese Post Savings Bank (SPSB).

According to the accusations by the Suriname police, Ramsamooj conducted for the SBSP at their request, existing customer and potential customer surveys as well bank employee surveys in addition to conducting two country risk assessments of Suriname in his capacity as a political analysts and researcher. The activities were paid for by the financial institution.

The authorities are also probing Ramsamooj, who developed and worked alongside strategic partners in Suriname to create and manage the global high forest low deforestation conference (HFLD conference) at the request of Suriname in February 2019.



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Russia agrees need to create humanitarian corridors

BBC - Russian and Ukrainian negotiators have made limited progress at ceasefire talks, agreeing on the need for humanitarian corridors for civilians.

A senior Ukrainian official said that despite this outcome, the talks had not led to the results Kyiv was hoping for.

They came as Russian President Vladimir Putin defended the invasion of Ukraine, saying it was “going to plan”.

But a humanitarian crisis has been growing in Ukrainian cities under intense Russian bombardment.

Mr Putin also spoke by phone for 90 minutes to French President Emmanuel Macron.

An aide to Mr Macron told reporters the French president expected that the worst was still to come, after Mr Putin told him Russia would continue its campaign in Ukraine until it had fulfilled its goals.

Mr Macron told his Russian counterpart the invasion was a serious mistake, and that his views did not correspond with reality.

At talks from an undisclosed location, the second this week, Russian and Ukrainian delegates agreed to possible temporary ceasefires.

But the truces would only be in places where humanitarian corridors were



A humanitarian crisis is growing, with many cities under intense bombardment

being set up and for the duration of civilian evacuations, Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said.

“To our great regret, we did not get the results we were counting on,” he added.

Several Ukrainian cities are currently surrounded or almost surrounded by Russian forces.

The situation is particularly intense in the southern port city of Mariupol, which has been under relentless bombardment with almost no respite for several days.

Hundreds of people are feared dead in the city.

Ukraine’s second-largest city, Kharkiv, has also been under a fierce aerial assault. Its mayor told the BBC shelling and cruise missile strikes were hitting residential areas and inflicting heavy civilian casualties.

On Wednesday Russian tanks entered the port town

of Kherson, a provincial capital home to about 250,000 people. It is the first major Ukrainian city to fall in more than a week of fighting. The US said the situation on the ground was changing rapidly, with fighting ongoing.

Ukraine reports that more than 2,000 civilians have died since the invasion began last Thursday. The conflict has also caused more than a million people to flee Ukraine, according to the UN.

ICC WOMEN'S CWC 2022

WEST INDIES SCHEDULE

3 MARCH	v	🇺🇸	BAY OVAL
8 MARCH	v	🇬🇧	UNIVERSITY OVAL
11 MARCH	v	🇦🇺	SEDDON PARK
14 MARCH	v	🇳🇿	BASIN RESERVE
17 MARCH	v	🇳🇿	BAY OVAL
20 MARCH	v	🇳🇿	SEDDON PARK
23 MARCH	v	🇳🇿	BASIN RESERVE



IT'S OUR GAME

US to beef up staffing at Havana embassy to ease visa backlog

AlJazeera - The United States embassy in Cuba has announced it will increase its staffing and resume some visa processing, several years after the administration of former President Donald Trump slashed personnel numbers following a spate of unexplained health incidents.

The top US diplomat in Havana, Timothy Zuniga-Brown, made the announcement at a news conference on Thursday.

The embassy “will begin the limited resumption of some immigrant visa services, as part of a gradual expansion of the embassy’s functions”, Zuniga-Brown said.

The deployment of additional consular officers to Havana is a result of President Joe Biden’s ongoing review of Cuba policy. It will begin to address a more than four-year backlog of requests for immigration visas by Cubans with family in the US.

It also marks a rare step by the Biden administration to ease restrictions on Cuba that were imposed by Trump, who rolled back the historic rapprochement overseen by his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama.

The scaled-back operations delivered a major blow for Cubans wishing to emigrate to the US as it forced most people to travel to Georgetown, Guyana for interviews.

Amid the worst economic crisis in Cuba in 30 years due to the coronavirus pandemic, many Cubans hoping to emigrate to the US have either taken boats headed to Flori-



US diplomat Timothy Zuniga-Brown says the embassy in Cuba ‘will begin the limited resumption of some immigrant visa services’ [Amanda Perobelli/Reuters]

da’s coast or trekked through Central America in an attempt to cross through the US-Mexico border.

But the US has sent the majority back to Cuba under a pandemic-era health order.

A US Embassy statement issued after Zuniga-Brown’s announcement stressed a “limited resumption of some immigrant visa services” in Havana.

It added that Cuban immigrant visas will still be processed mainly at the US embassy in Guyana, while Havana will focus on other consular services and “limited emergency non-immigrant visa processing”.

Trump sharply scaled back embassy staff in the Cuban capital in

2017 after some became ill with what has become known as “Havana syndrome”.

The unexplained illnesses first affected US employees in Havana but later cropped up in other parts of the world. The Cuban government has long denied any involvement or knowledge of the incidents.

Ahead of the US announcement on Thursday, the Cuban government issued a statement slamming the Trump-era policy as unjustified and harmful to US-Cuba ties.

“Over five years, that decision has had very damaging consequences for the entire Cuban population, as well as for Americans,” the statement said.

Libyan parliament swears in new PM as crisis deepens

AlJazeera - A standoff between two rival governments in Libya risks resulting in the territorial division as the parliament in the east swore in a new administration while the incumbent in Tripoli refused to cede power.

The cabinet appointed by the prime minister of the new rival government, Fathi Bashagha, was sworn in later on Thursday, though not all ministers attended.

After taking the oath, Bashagha told the Tobruk-based parliament that armed groups had abducted the newly appointed ministers for foreign affairs, culture and technical education and shot at others who were on their way to the swearing-in ceremony. The reports could not be independently verified.

“Some are trying to drag us into war and infighting but we will not give them such a chance.

“We will not spill a single drop of blood,” Bashagha said. “We will study all options so that we can take over power in Tripoli by force of the law and not by force.”

Bashagha had submitted his cabinet list to the House of Representatives based in eastern Libya on Tuesday and 92 out of 101 legislators in attendance backed it.

Gamal Salem Shaaban, who had been appointed



Fathi Bashagha's cabinet has been sworn in, in Tobruk, Libya [Media office of the new government via Reuters]

economy and trade minister, announced his resignation in a video posted on social media.

“That session lacked transparency and integrity and did not meet procedural standards,” Shaaban said. “There is no honour in being part of a cabinet that will bring about war and destruction.”

The United Nations also issued a statement voicing concerns that the voting on the new cabinet was flawed.

Libya's embattled Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who, like Bashagha, hails from Misrata, has remained defiant against replacing his government.

The east-based parliament condemned the alleged abductions and held Dbeibah's government responsible for the safety of all new ministers.

The legislators also renewed their calls for Dbeibah to cede power peacefully.

The appointment of the rival body to the country's Tripoli-based authorities has raised fears of more strife after nearly 10 years of civil war that saw the country split between parallel administrations in the east and the west.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising removed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The country was

subsequently split between rival administrations based in Tripoli in the west and a Tobruk-based parliament in the east.

Presidential elections scheduled for December 24 last year that intended to replace the transitional government headed by Dbeibah were postponed indefinitely following disagreements over eligible candidates and the ground rules for holding the vote.

On February 10, the parliament appointed Bashagha to form a new government. It said elections should be held within 14 months. Dbeibah refused to step aside, pledging to hold on to power until elections take place.

Ukraine requests postponement of World Cup qualifier

Ukraine has requested a postponement of their World Cup play-off semi-final against Scotland.

The nations were due to meet at Hampden on 24th March, but football in Ukraine has been suspended following Russia's invasion of the country.

The winners will play either Wales or Austria for a place at Qatar 2022. Football's World Governing Body, FIFA, says they are working with UEFA and the Scottish Football Association to find an appropriate solution.

Confirming the request, a spokesperson added: "Fifa expresses its deepest solidarity to everybody affected by what is happening in



Ukraine. A further update will be provided in due course."

Earlier this week, Scottish FA president Rod Petrie wrote, "Football is inconsequential amid conflict," in a message to his Ukraine counterpart.

Petrie said he had written «to send a message of support, friendship and unity».

The World Cup draw is scheduled to take place on 1st April, with the tournament starting on 21st November.

Scotland has three Nations League Group B fixtures in June, with Ukraine again involved in those, along with Armenia and Republic Ireland. Those fixtures could well be rearranged if an alternative date is needed for the play-off semi final.

Russia to appeal football ban

The Russian Football Union has said it will go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to appeal against its ban from international competitions after the country's invasion of Ukraine.

On Monday, Russian football clubs and national teams were suspended from all competitions "until further notice" by FIFA and UEFA.

The union said it would file one lawsuit against football's world and European governing bodies, demanding Russia's men's and women's national teams be allowed to compete.

Russia wants its national teams reinstated to play their men's World Cup play-off matches next month and the women's team once again included in this summer's Euro 2022 competi-



tion in England. The union also said it could ask for the suspension of competitions they were originally scheduled to compete in if unsuccessful.

"If FIFA refuses such a procedure, a requirement will be put forward for the introduction of interim measures in the form of suspension of FIFA and UEFA's decisions, as well as competitions in which Russia teams were supposed to participate," Russian football

authorities said.

Russian club Spartak Moscow was also kicked out of the Europa League and their last 16 opponents RB Leipzig will advance to the quarter-finals.

A statement from Russian football authorities said it "believe that Fifa and Uefa did not have a legal basis when deciding on the removal of Russian teams.

"The Russian Football Union was also not given the right to present its position, which violated the fundamental right to defence," the statement continued.

FIFA and UEFA intervened after Russia, supported by Belarus, launched a military invasion of neighboring Ukraine last Thursday.

Sir Andy: Windies fast bowlers not quick enough

Legendary West Indies fast bowler, Sir Andy Roberts, is unimpressed with the pace of the present crop of West Indies seamers.

In his glory days, Sir Andy formed a deadly partnership with fast bowlers such as Michael Holding, Joel Garner, Colin Croft, and Malcolm Marshall, who all had a reputation of destroying their opposition with destructive deliveries.

Roberts admitted that some of the present bowlers have genuine pace, however, they are not consistent over long enough periods.

“What we lack is genuine fast bowlers who can put fear in the opposition,” the former Leeward Islands player noted.

“We have not had real fast bowlers for many years, and I believe it has to do with the workload required to develop sustained pace,” Roberts said on the Mason and Guest programme.

Sir Andy added that fast bowling is hard work that requires dedication.

“Our fast bowlers can't bowl fast for more than 2 or 3 overs because they are not strong enough,” he contended.

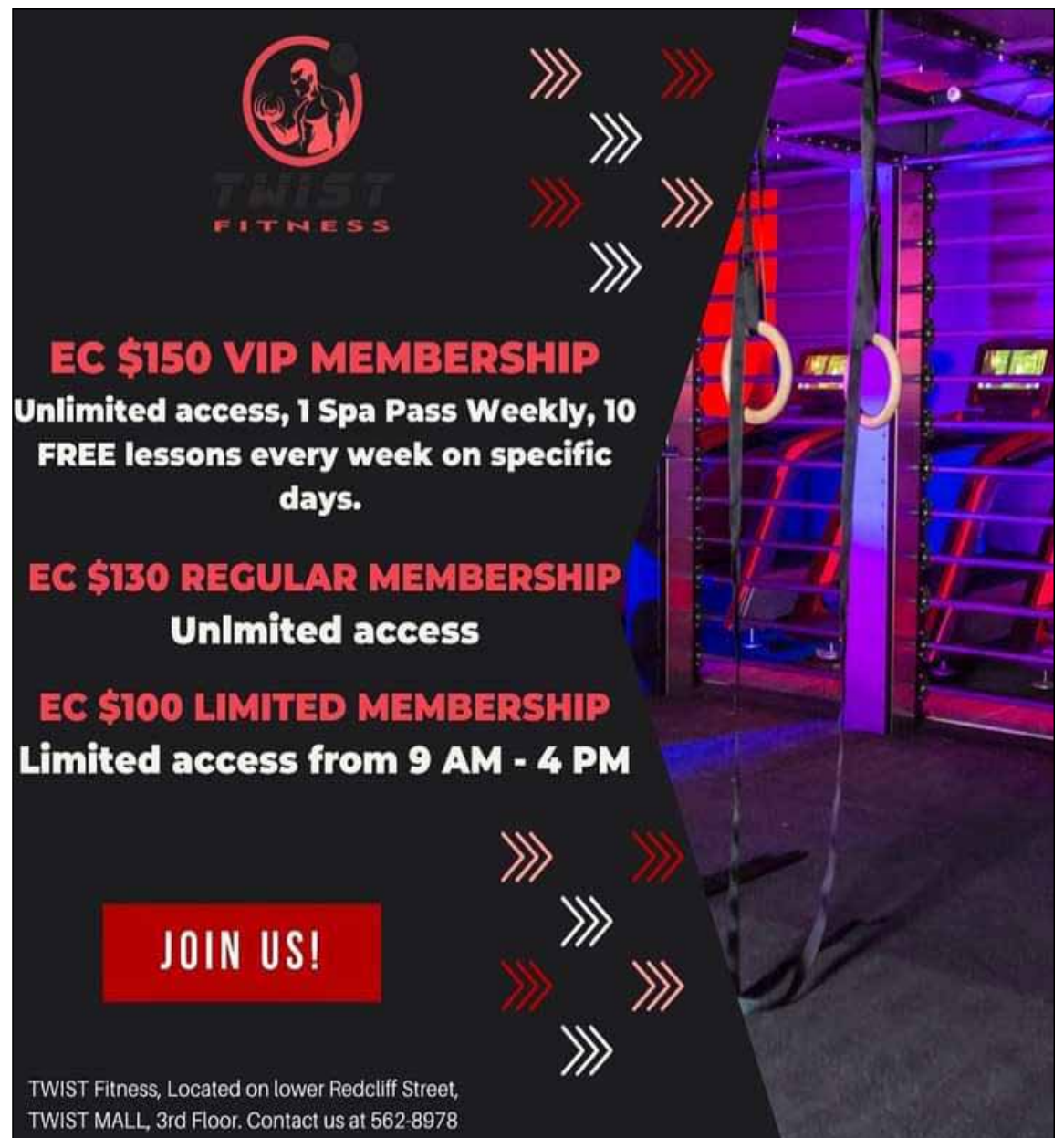
Trinidadian Shannon Gabriel is presently considered the region's fastest bowler, but Roberts

believes even Gabriel has issues with pace the longer the match goes on.

According to Roberts, lower body strength and stamina are required to take a bowler through a match with constant pace and in his view, Gabriel does not have what it takes physically to last the long haul.



Sir Andy Roberts



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ABCA to select cycling squad to prepare for Commonwealth Games

The Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation (ABCF) will soon select the cyclists who will begin preparing for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England, this summer.

Birmingham 2022 will feature four cycling disciplines – mountain biking, road, track and time-trial - the same as three years ago at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia.

President St. Clair Williams said the ABCF is now identifying the cyclists who will eventually represent Antigua and Barbuda.

“We have to select a long-list team in the next week or two for us to start looking at our cyclists that will be representing Antigua and Barbuda at the Commonwealth Games,” Williams said. “So we are going to be asking all the different clubs who have the elite riders, or the sub-23 riders, to let us know of the availability of their cyclists, so we can identify them and let them know what they need to do leading up to the Commonwealth Games, so that we could narrow down that as we get closer to that event.”

The cycling federation will also select a squad of cyclists from which



Cyclists participate in a road race in Antigua and Barbuda in September 2020. (Photo courtesy ABCF)

a team will be chosen to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the inaugural Caribbean Games in Guadeloupe from June 29 to July 3rd this year.

“Don’t forget that we have coming up in June, the Caribbean Games, and that is supposed to take place in Guadeloupe. So that will be targeting the Sub-23 or Under-23 cyclists,” Williams said.

Meanwhile, the ABCF will soon distribute ten bikes and five smart trainers it received via the world governing body for the sport, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), to mem-

ber clubs in Antigua and Barbuda.

He said clubs can make their requests for the bikes and smart trainers by completing a written application to the ABCF.

“We still have to let the clubs know that they have to submit the names in writing for us to formally acknowledge the distribution of the bikes that we got through the UCI’s Solidarity Programme,” Williams said.

“It is not only the bike we have to distribute, but we also have to identify persons who we think can benefit from use of the smart trainers that we have.”

Djokovic likely to defend French Open Title

Novak Djokovic now seems likely to participate in the French Open after France loosened COVID-19 restrictions.

Prime Minister Jean Castex announced that vaccine passports will no longer be required as of 14th March. The French Open, where the unvaccinated Djokovic is the defending champion, begins on 22nd May.

Djokovic, 34, was deported from Australia due to his vaccination status just before the start of the Australian Open in January.

The Serbian star later said he was will-

ing to skip future grand slam events rather than get the COVID-19 vaccine.

“That is the price I’m willing to pay,” Djokovic told BBC last month.

With France now rolling back its protocols, Djokovic could head to Roland Garros looking for a record-tying 21st grand slam title.

Spain’s Rafael Nadal won his 21st at the Australian Open. Djokovic slipped to No. 2 in the world rankings released Monday, with Russia’s Daniil Medvedev taking over the top spot.



Novak Djokovic

Nanton expresses disappointment with ABBA's failure to stage women's league

Out-going President of the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA), Kebra Nanton, has said not being able to stage the traditional women's league is one of the greatest disappointments of her 2018 to 2022 tenure.

On October 23, 2018, Nanton was elected to the helm of the current executive, becoming the first woman to head the organisation.

The former national athlete announced earlier this year, however, that she would not be seeking re-election on March 22 during the association's Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM is constitutionally due to be held before December 31st 2022.

Due to the pandemic, the ABBA executive was unable to stage domestic league competitions in 2020 and 2021, and a major surge in COVID-19 infections in Antigua and Barbuda at the start of this year, further curtailed plans to commence competitive basketball.

Nanton said ABBA's quest to fulfil a mandate by the world governing body, the Federation of Interna-

tional Basketball (FIBA), to push 3x3 basketball contributed to ABBA's inability to stage its traditional 5x5 team women's basketball league during her term.

While ABBA was able to successfully stage women's 3x3 competitions, Nanton has said not enough women are showing interest in the sport. This, she continued, contributed to the association's inability to organise the 5x5 league.

"It's been a challenge to get a female league in the old format of 5x5 because the reality is, we don't have that many young girls who are into the sport so it's going to take some time to build it.

"We have a few clubs around the island who consistently have training and development, and we have the school programme. Typically what happens in basketball in the past years is that after high school there isn't any place else for young girls to play basketball.

"Sometimes I think that causes persons to lose interest," Nanton told Sports Overflow which airs on Pointe FM.

"For us, when we start-



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association Kebra Nanton. (Photo courtesy ABBA)

ed, we recognised that it is very difficult to get young girls into basketball and at the same time FIBA wanted to push 3x3 basketball. So we decided to use 3x3 as an opportunity to try to build the interest of young girls in the sport.

"We were able to have in 2019, and also in 2020, young girls travel and represent Antigua and Barbuda in 3x3 basketball. We were also able to have some 3x3 competitions here locally, but with COVID-19 happening, unfortunately we were just not able to use those numbers that we

would have built from the 3x3 to then put it into the 5x5 model because that was the intention.

Nanton is hopeful, however, that more girls and women will take up basketball and says while she is stepping away from leadership, she still intends to play a role in the development of new players.

"I think it will still happen. I would love to see that happen and maybe as time passes and things get better, I might even dedicate myself to helping the association develop female basketball," she said.