

MONDAY 11TH APRIL 2022

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 71

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PM BROWNE CONTRACTS COVID-19



Prime Minister Gaston Browne addressing a gathering during a recent visit to Dubai. *Story on Page 2*

Local News



PM still COVID-19 positive

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has reported that he is feeling better after testing positive for the COVID-19 virus for three consecutive days. PM Browne announced his condition to the nation during his Saturday afternoon show on Pointe FM.

He said he first tested positive on Friday and notified those whom he may have encountered. He said his symptoms have been mild, except for slight congestion. His senses of smell and taste have not been affected, nor is he feeling weak.

On Sunday, the prime minister performed a rapid COVID test which returned a positive result.

“On Monday, I will be doing a PCR test and see



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

what happens. I am, however, feeling ‘fine’. My oxygen level has been recorded at 99 percent, which is even higher than it did on Saturday,” PM Browne told Pointe Xpress newspaper on Sunday after-

noon.

He credits the fact that he is both vaccinated and boosted for the mild symptoms he has experienced.

The prime minister, calling himself ‘very exposed’

said he believes he may have picked up the virus during his recent travels abroad.

“I see many different people every week as prime minister, and each visit is a potential risk and that’s why I availed myself of the vaccines as soon as they were available. That is to protect me, and the office, from possible infection,” he explained.

The prime minister said members of his family have been tested and are negative.

He will remain isolated until he returns a negative test result.

Mon 11 Day		Mon 11 Night	
83°	22% E 11 mph	75°	7% ENE 10 mph
Partly cloudy skies. High 83F. Winds E at 10 to 15 mph.		Clear skies with a few passing clouds. Low around 75F. Winds ENE at 10 to 15 mph.	
Humidity 69%	UV Index Extreme	Humidity 76%	UV Index 0 of 10
Sunrise 5:54 am	Sunset 6:22 pm	Moonrise 1:56 pm	Moonset 2:26 am
		☾ Waxing Gibbous	



APUA ELECTRICITY MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

These planned outages are necessary for our continuous upgrade and maintenance programme to provide reliable and consistent service to our customers.

Monday, 11th April 2022	Tuesday, 12th April 2022
Section of Patterson south of the Horse Stable	Section of Cedar Valley Garden
8:30 AM - 11:00 AM	8:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Section of Lightfoot south of the Pond	—
8:30 AM - 11:00 AM	

Kindly note that this schedule is subject to slight variation. Changes will be communicated on the APUA Facebook page. Any service disruptions outside of this schedule were not anticipated. For further information and updates please call 311.

No UK request made for intervention on suspected Abramovich yachts

Antigua and Barbuda has not received official communication from Britain regarding two yachts docked in Falmouth Harbour linked to Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

Recently, Information Minister Melford Nicholas said Attorney General Steadroy Benjamin had not indicated the receipt of any communication from UK officials with respect to the yachts.

“While the Antigua and Barbuda government itself has not sanctioned any of these persons, the whole question [is] of us recognising our role in this particular endeavour, securing our own jurisdiction from any potential post liabilities that may occur with these matters. We have to tread carefully,” Nicholas said.

Nicholas, one of the government’s official spokespersons, added however, Antigua and Barbuda can pursue action in the event the UK clearly states its position on the yachts in respect of the international sanctions against Abramovich.

“The most that can happen in the circumstances, and I speak guardedly, is that if it comes to a point where if there is any requirement for the UK government to pursue these boats, we may just ask them to leave our borders.

“In that case, we would have discharged our obligation based on where we would have made those commitments,” Nicholas said.

The vessels, the *Garcon*, a mega-yacht supply carrier, and the *Halo*, are registered to a British Virgin Islands based company suspected to be owned by Abramovich.

This remains the assertion of UK authorities who shared correspondence with Antigua and Barbuda’s foreign affairs officials, which purports that Abramovich is in fact the beneficial



The 57 metre Halo, now moored in Falmouth Harbour along with the Garcon, is believed to be owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich who is the subject of sweeping international sanctions.

owner of Wenham Overseas Limited to which the yachts are registered.

Senior Antigua and Barbuda diplomat Sir Ronald Sanders in an appearance on British television Channel 4, confirmed receipt of this correspondence from the British High Commission.

“The letter was not to Antigua. The letter from the Financial Services Agency from the British Virgin Islands was sent to the National Crime Agency of the United Kingdom. It was not addressed to Antigua. That letter was passed on to us by the British High Commission representative in Antigua.

“But that’s all that was done. A letter was passed on. It didn’t say we the British government put our full faith and credit behind this letter, so we still do not have enough information to take this matter further,” said Ambassador Sanders.

He went on however that other information made available to Antigua and Barbuda indicates while Abramovich may have owned Wenham Overseas Limited at one point,

it has not been established that he remains the company’s principal.

“What is significant is that a German firm called Ince has presented to the government of Antigua testimony, and the law firm states categorically that [Wenham Overseas Limited] is not owned by anybody on a sanctions list.

Meanwhile on Saturday, Foreign Affairs Minister E.P. Chet Greene in an appearance on Pointe FM also confirmed that the government has not received a request from the UK under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT).

Minister Greene said the government must be certain concerning the beneficial ownership of the vessels as action taken prematurely could expose Antigua and Barbuda legally.

While the government will take no actions which may expose Antigua and Barbuda to risk, Greene added that the country stands with the international community and will cooperate with the imposed international sanctions once all the necessary information has been obtained.

Local News



Man dies after being shot by police

A 40-year-old man is dead after being shot by police in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The police have identified the victim as Andrew Noyce of an unknown address.

According to reports, Noyce was allegedly shot by the police during a confrontation near the vegetable market in St. John's shortly after midnight on Saturday.

The incident stemmed



from a report of larceny made by a vendor who operates a shop in the area.

The police responded to

the report and found Noyce armed with two knives and making threats.

It is further reported that Noyce launched an attack on the police while wielding both weapons.

Police say numerous attempts were made to persuade Noyce to surrender, however, he continued ad-

vancing towards them.

After being shot, he was transported to the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center, where he succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced dead at 2:59am.

Both weapons were recovered from the scene and the Serious Crimes Unit is investigating the matter.

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Agenda

Day 1:	Day 2:
April 8th 2022 One on One Consultations 10:30 am to 3:00 pm	April 9th 2022 Workshop: <i>Professionalism: A Necessity for Business Success</i> 9:00 am to 10:00 am
Workshop: <i>How to Start and Manage Your Own Business</i> 3:15 pm to 5:00 pm	One on One Consultations 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Facilitators:
Garfield Joseph: MBA, Program Director, EDP
Ian Ireland: Former Banker, Business Advisory Officer, EDP
Mrs. Dorothy Peters-Nicholls: MSc, BA, C. Director

Meeting Location:
Abundant Life Ministries Church
Codrington, Barbuda

An initiative of the Government of Antigua & Barbuda in conjunction with Knacyntar Nedd, Parliamentary Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Barbuda Affairs

Overtime payment for quarry workers this week

Quarry workers are resuming duties today after withholding their services for most of last week, after getting a commitment that they will receive some of their outstanding overtime payments this week.

Citing failed promises by the Works Department to honour their overdue payments, and with the approval of their bargaining agent Antigua Trades and Labour Union, the workers staged industrial action.

Reports indicate that at the end of a meeting on Friday with Labour Minister



Bendals quarry workers during industrial action [File photo]

Steadroy Benjamin, it was agreed that payment will be made this week to reduce the outstanding balance owed.

It has been suggested

that the workers are owed more than one million dollars in overtime, although this figure has not been verified.

On Thursday, Prime

Minister Gaston Browne said his government is expected to draw down this week on a bond it had floated. This he said, will aid in making a dent in overtime arrears.

According to Prime Minister Browne, consideration is being given to reducing outstanding overtime owed to public sector workers by fifty percent.

The workers say if the commitment made by the government does not come through, then they stand ready to take further industrial action.


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Local News



CARICOM remains divided on Commonwealth Secretary General

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders remain divided on their support for the two candidates for the position of Commonwealth secretary general, agreeing instead to appoint a sub-committee to delve further into the matter.

A three-paragraph statement issued following their deliberations on Wednesday indicated that the CARICOM leaders were still divided on whether to support the incumbent, Baroness Patricia Scotland, who has been nominated by Dominica, or Jamaica's nominee, Kamina Johnson Smith, the island's foreign affairs and foreign trade minister.

Scotland was elected to the post at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta in 2015 and her re-election is scheduled to take place during the June 20-25 Commonwealth summit in Kigali, Rwanda.

The Dominica-born Scotland is the second secretary-general from the Caribbean, and the first woman to hold the post.

According to the statement, the regional leaders, who met virtually in caucus "reaffirmed the obligation of member states to coordinate foreign policy as outlined in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas" which governs the 15-member regional integration grouping.

It said they noted the upcoming election for the Com-



Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Patricia Scotland (left) and Jamaica's Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Senator Kamina Johnson-Smith (right)

monwealth secretary general and re-affirmed the turn of the Caribbean for a second term in accordance with the tradition of the Commonwealth.

"They noted that two member states of the Community had nominated two eminently qualified candidates for the post of secretary-general of the Commonwealth and agreed that a sub-committee of heads of government comprising The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica will meet with the two candidates, Baroness Patricia Scotland, QC and Senator Kamina Johnson Smith," the statement said without indicating when and where the meeting with the candidates will take place.

On Tuesday night, Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness defended the decision of his government to nominate Johnson Smith, saying that towards the latter part of the initial term of the current secretary-general, several countries, including

Jamaica, were approached regarding the possibility of nominating a candidate for the post.

"Jamaica took the view at that time that whatever the issues that gave impetus to members seeking alternative candidates, the first order of response would be to resolve, with dialogue, to avoid disruption," said Holness.

Holness said it was clear that the impetus to seek an alternative candidate strongly persists, noting that since then, Kenya nominated a candidate before withdrawing, with the tiny territory of Tuvalu, population less than 12,000, formally launching its candidature in London on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Minister without portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, Robert Morgan, said there is no chance that Jamaica will withdraw its nominee for the position.

"Jamaica is a sovereign democracy. What that means is that Jamaica has a right, a responsibility towards its cit-

izens and itself to push forward an approach that is in the interest of Jamaica. That interest also takes into consideration the regional associations and international associations we're a part of," Morgan told the post-Cabinet news conference, adding "and I don't think there's any evidence of a division in CARICOM".

But Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who has described the Jamaica position as a "monumental error" warned those who seek to divide and rule, are encouraging Jamaica to present a candidate in opposition to the current secretary general, who is serving on a CARICOM rotation".

Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit in a March 23 letter to all Commonwealth leaders urged the re-election of Scotland, writing that she had a mandate "to reform the Commonwealth Secretariat and to advocate and to be a voice for those of our countries without a voice.

"In her first term she delivered on reform and on change; she delivered on partnerships and innovation for the benefit of our countries; she delivered on good offices and democracy.

"She successfully braved the challenges of the climate crisis and of the COVID-19 pandemic and has laid a solid foundation to look at solutions for our countries in the future," Skerit said in his letter. (CMC)

Expanded healthcare services begin at Villa Polyclinic today

The Villa Polyclinic will introduce new services to people living in the community beginning today.

Acting Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Teri-Ann Joseph, said prior to its formal commissioning last Thursday, the clinic played an essential role in healthcare delivery services, particularly in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

“Nonetheless, the time has come for this facility to be used for its full purpose and to serve the community for which it was built. Beginning on Monday 11th April, in addition to COVID-19 vaccinations and tests, this facility will provide general and specialist examinations and treatments, such as internal medicine, paediatrics, dental and ophthalmology; maternal and child health services, screening for non-communicable diseases and dietary counselling,” she



Acting CMO Dr. Teri-Ann Joseph disclosed.

Additionally, she noted, diagnostic testing to include electrocardiogram, and ultrasound and as well as pharmaceutical and environmental health services will be available.

According to the acting CMO, the Villa polyclinic has been serving the

people of Antigua and Barbuda over the past year. It played a particularly important role in the nation's response to COVID-19.

“From this impressive Health Facility, we were able to administer more than 20,700 doses of the COVID-19 vaccines and over 9,300 COVID-19 tests to unvaccinated public servants and students,” Dr. Joseph stated.

She added that strengthening primary healthcare, and the attainment of universal health coverage, are important health policy initiatives for the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment.

“They both aim to ensure access to essential health services and safe, effective and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for our people,” she remarked.

UTILITIES ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

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Local News



Questions raised over suitability of investigator in Joanne Walsh probe

Issues surrounding the investigation into the Acting Director of Public Prosecution have arisen even before the commencement of the probe.

The Saint Lucia based Judicial and Legal Services Commission has appointed Deputy Registrar of the High Court, Kayode O'Marde to investigate misconduct claims made by transgender woman, Washington Bramble, against Joanne Walsh.

Bramble has accused Walsh of abusing the powers of her office to discriminate against, victimise and harass her for years.

Most recently, Bramble claimed Walsh was behind her March, 2022 detention by police, over statements she made on social media which, police alleged contravened the Electronic

Crimes Act.

No charges have been filed against Bramble.

The JLSC has moved to investigate the complaints made by Bramble, but potential anomalies have arisen, with O'Marde at the centre of them all.

According to reports, despite O'Marde's position, he cannot investigate Joanne Walsh based on her seniority. Before her elevation to the position of Chief Magistrate, Mrs. Walsh worked as Crown Counsel within the office of the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) to which O'Marde was also assigned, but in a lower position.

The potential conflict of interest also extends to the complainant.

Bramble and O'Marde are famil-

cont'd on pg 9



LGBTQ activist Washington Bramble has accused Acting DPP Joanne Walsh of harassment and discrimination triggering the launch of an investigation by the St. Lucia-based JLSC into the allegations.

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LIVE

Island Scholar is future mechanical engineer

With a keen interest in STEM, Island Scholar Mya Symister plans to read for a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Bristol in England. The former Antigua State College student was named the 2021 Island Scholar in an announcement made by the Ministry of Education and Sports late Friday afternoon.

Symister obtained distinctions in Applied Math, Pure Math, Computer Science, Physics, and a Grade two (2) in Communication Studies. The Island Scholar award is determined based on students' performances at



Mya Symister

CAPE in two units of a two-year programme.

Mya said she is elated over her latest academic achievement, having worked hard for such a moment.

"I am indebted to my family for the unlimited love and

support they have extended to me during my studies that includes dragging me outside to take a break. Personally, I see my future grounded in Science, Technology and Math, and I will be pursuing an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering. I am truly grateful for this opportunity, as it has brought me one step closer to realizing that dream," Symister said.

Mya is the daughter of Attorney at Law, Leon 'Chaku' Symister. While he said this latest achievement does not come as a surprise because of the level of dedication his daughter has displayed, Mr. Symister underscored the

importance of parents supporting their children.

"There are times that you may not be able to give the financial support, but let them know that you are standing behind of them and as I have always said to Mya and to all of my children, do your best. Once you go out there and do your best, and you're satisfied that you have done your best, the other things will fall in place. So a simple message, support what your children want to be." Mr. Symister noted. Mya Symister will receive US \$20,000 (E.C \$54,000) per annum through the Board of Education, toward higher education.

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iar with each other having attended Antigua Grammar School where they both graduated at the same time. They moved on to the A-Levels Department of Antigua State College where they were classmates.

The belief is that the prevailing circumstances make the Deputy Registrar of the High Court unsuitable to execute the duty which he has been appointed to perform.

It is unclear whether the Judicial and

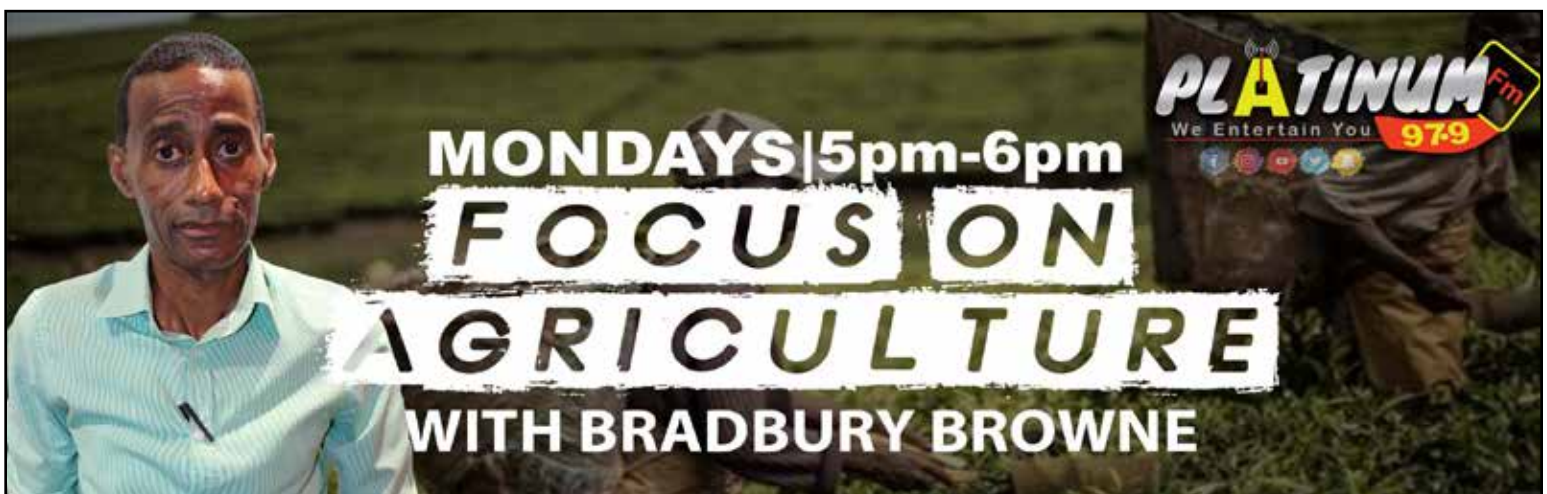
Legal Services Commission (JLSC) had knowledge of O'Marde's association with both Walsh and Bramble before appointing him to probe the complaints.

A formal letter is expected to be dispatched to Castries today, outlining the irregularities that exist in the JLSC's decision to name Deputy Registrar O'Marde as sole investigator.

A legal source told Pointe Xpress it will be difficult to find someone in Antigua and Barbuda to investigate the matter who won't face objection; there-

fore, it is likely that the JLSC may have to revisit its decision and look outside of the country for assistance.

Another revelation was that in addition to the investigation ordered by the Judicial and Legal Services Commission from the complaint made by Washington Bramble, a civil suit was also filed by the complainant for compensation with respect to the same issues, leaving many to question whether the lawsuit and investigation can proceed simultaneously.



MONDAYS | 5pm-6pm
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Guest Opinion



For whom the church bells toll

By Tony Deyal

A pastor discovered his bicycle had been stolen. He decided to use it as inspiration for that week's sermon and began writing about the Ten Commandments, especially "thou shalt not steal." When he got to "thou shalt not commit adultery", he remembered where he left his bike. Another pastor was fired when a parishioner asked him, "Who came first? Adam or Eve?" The pastor responded, "That depends on how good they were in bed." Then there is the killer of all pastor and priest jokes, "A pastor, a scammer and a child molester walk into a bar."

I tend to think that whether it is about the removal of a government or the decline of an institution, the jokes come first and last (very long at that). I was right. What led me here was a newspaper report, "Jamaican Pastor Arrested for Allegedly Performing Human Sacrifices and 'Cult-Like' Rituals." It was enough for me and many other Caribbean people to wonder where Christianity is heading, or beheading, and whether it is as dead or dying like those "human sacrifices" made in the name of God.

A paper by the Institute for Social Research, Centre for Political Studies, University of Michigan states that from about 2007 to 2019, the overwhelming majority of the countries studied—43 out of 49—became less re-

ligious. The decline in belief was not confined to high-income countries and appeared across most of the world. Growing numbers of people no longer find religion a necessary source of support and meaning in their lives.

Christianity Today (January 4, 2019) headlined the findings of a Gallop-poll with, "The 7 People Christians Trust More Than Their Pastors: Gallup's latest poll finds Americans now believe clergy (at a record low) are nearly as honest and ethical as journalists (at a record high)." Nurses topped the list followed by Medical Doctors, Pharmacists, High School teachers, and, surprisingly (to me and many other Caribbean people), Police Officers. Then come Accountants and even Funeral Directors ahead of the Clergy. Following the religious rejects were Journalists with Members of Congress last on the list, lower than even bankers, lawyers, labour union leaders and car salespeople.

Why is this so? An article in "CHURCH LEADERS" started a list of "5 Reasons Why People Have Stopped Attending Your Church Even Millennials" with, "The church is irrelevant, the leaders are hypocritical and leaders have experienced too much moral failure." This, and as a way of dealing with the Jamaican and other murders, is why the jokes and



Tony Deyal

comments flow, like "Being a pastor doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car", or "It is easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one."

Then there is, "I just told my family about my secret sex life as a pastor...They now know about my altar ego." And another, "Why did the female church secretary go to bed? It was pastor bedtime." In fact, ads for women to work in different church positions demand, "Must be a church member in good standing." I thought that only applied to the Pastor.

The BBC ran an article by Vicky Baker, "The preachers getting rich from poor Americans" and it started with, "Televangelist, Dr Todd Coontz, has a well-worn routine: he dresses in a suit, pulls out a Bible and urges viewers to pledge a very specific amount of

money. 'Don't delay, don't delay,' he urges, calmly but emphatically." The article adds, "Crucially, he always refers to the money as a 'seed' - a \$273 seed, a \$333 seed, a 'turnaround' seed, depending on the broadcast. If viewers 'plant' one, the amount will come back to them, multiplied, he says. It is an investment in their faith and their future."

The other televangelists who insist they are not con-men (or women) but are merely doing God's work include Jesse Duplantier who explained that God had told him to buy a Falcon 7X (his fourth private jet) for US \$54m because "Jesus wouldn't be riding a donkey", and Creflo Dollar who asked his congregation to each donate \$300 to buy him a \$65million Gulfstream Jet so he could travel comfortably to spread the gospel. Dollar is also among

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Guest Opinion

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the list of outrageously wealthy preachers who are supposedly under Federal Investigation. In a USA Today article entitled "Fraud, private jets and a Lamborghini: 10 evangelists who have faced controversy" as well as on other similar lists the names that come up are Jim Bakker, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland (the richest and most popular Pastor in the world) and his wife Gloria Copeland (also a preacher), Franklin Graham, Pat Robertson, Joel Osteen, John Gray, Robert Jeffress, John Hagee, Jesse Duplantis (also a jet-setter), Randy and Paula White, plus Eddie Long (who said Jesus wasn't broke, and leaders of churches shouldn't be either). Flipping through television sets in many Caribbean countries, Osteen seems to be extremely popular here in the Caribbean. He earns US\$55 million per year, has a \$10.5 million mansion in Houston and his net-worth exceeds \$100 million.

Ted Haggard, the pastor of a Colorado mega-church, had a relationship with a gay prostitute and was forced to step aside and let his wife become pastor. Bishop Eddie Long was accused by several boys of sexual abuse; and Jimmy Swaggart had to step down because he confessed to "moral indiscretions and incidents of moral failures."

America is not the only place that has a pastor for

every sore. Pulse Nigeria in an article by Inemesit Udodiong makes the point, "So called Men of God in South Africa have succeeded in making a lot of us wish we were not Christians". He lists a few like Pastor Lesego Daniel who claims to have put a "gay" spirit into a young man, and Pastor Penuel Mguni who orders female members to strip and walks over them during deliverance. However, the worst of all was Prophet Lethebo Rabalago who used "DOOM" insecticide to heal cancer and HIV.

Outside of South Africa, Pastor Lazarus Mouka of

Nigeria sold reflector jackets to his church members saying they had spiritual powers of being bullet proof and offered divine protection. Adekunle Kayode of "Jesus Is the Way Evangelistic Ministry" in Nigeria inserted his finger into a female member's genital in a bid to check if she was still a virgin. Bishop Daniel Obinim of International Godsway Ministries in Ghana was captured on tape stepping on the abdomen of a woman, who was reportedly pregnant, to exorcise evil spirits. He was also videotaped grabbing men's genitals to heal them of erectile

dysfunction. However, as we say in the Caribbean, "God don't sleep" and he got his way on Alfred Ndllovu who tried to fast for forty days and dropped dead on the 30th day of "dry" fasting. Another wanted to show how God would save him if he approached a group of lions but ended up with a mauled behind. He and religion both seem to have reached rock bottom.

**Tony Deyal was last seen commenting on a South African movie about an illegal immigrant from Zimbabwe being attacked by a Pastor. It's named, "Alien vs Predator".*



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Opinion

Antigua and Barbuda: The republic

By Dorbrene E. O'Marde

This island – Antigua – has been colonised by Britain since 1632; Barbuda since 1678. That is without doubt a long time, centuries. And since then, our Head of State, the person with ultimate responsibility for the goodwill of its peoples has been the monarch of Britain.

The present reigning monarch is Queen Elizabeth II whose royal style and title here is 'Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, Queen of Antigua and Barbuda and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth'. Respect!

This reign has been so long that there are many interesting things that have not been carefully noted. This reign has been so long and mind-numbing that persons in this country, some who now see themselves as political saviours, still cling to colonial doctrines and structures.

Our Head of State is also the Head of State of the United Kingdom, described as a 'parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy'. In this bastion of democracy, one that launches military might in protection of democracy, its Head of State is not elected.

He or she maintains reign through the virtue of blood, blood dating back



Dorbrenne E. O'Marde

to William the Conqueror of 1066, I guess. This I find strange.

The English or is it the British people – all sixty-seven million of them – in a supposed democracy, do not have a say in who their Head of State is. Unlike them, we – one hundred thousand of us – do. But we have to surmount the challenges with which the colonialist intentionally bound us called 'entrenched clauses' in our Constitution.

Our Head of State has not been here, on this island, since nineteen sixty-six – fifty-six years ago.

Our Head of State has not seen the remnants of colonial rule; she has not seen the magnificent efforts our leaders and people have

made to clean the mess her British left here.

That I find strange, especially in a country where people call for new elections if they do not see their parliamentary representative for a month! But then, these parliamentary representatives that we must see very regularly, swear allegiance to this absent Head of State (and her successors), not to us. This too I find strange and perhaps on second thought, I understand their absentee tendencies.

I must interpret the prolonged absence of our Head of State as either She is too busy or uncaring.

Out of respect I opt for the former, since it is common knowledge that She assigns and delegates her

responsibility to a Governor General. We may be lucky that the present holder of that office is of us, knowledgeable and caring about us. But what I do find strange is that we employ him, her representative, at a cost of approximately two million dollars annually. Shouldn't that be her expense? Strange!

The consideration of expense leads to other thoughts...like, I wonder when last has our Head of State used or even touched money (notes, coins) – you know, like paid a bill, bought something, waited for change.

And so, I am sure you will join me in finding it strange that someone who

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has no relationship to money (notes, coins) sits royally, bejewelled on our money.

I have been careful to qualify what I mean by money because as far as money-money is concerned, our Head of State is personally worth around six hundred million US dollars and rules over the assets of the Crown Estate estimated at twenty-eight billion US dollars. The source of this wealth is a topic for another article and perhaps will explain why there is no need to touch money - or postage stamps for that matter?

The historical moment for the realisation of our full sovereignty is upon us. Generations before ours fought for the abolition of British enslavement, others for the attainment of adult suffrage and the rejection of colonial rule, others for independence. It has been a long struggle. This is a call for its acceleration. It is our turn to complete

the achievement of full political emancipation.

The issue of republicanism must now be placed on our agenda and that of most of our CARICOM countries. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and recently Barbados have attained that status.

The existing colonies in the region should give serious consideration to the Dominica model – republicanism was negotiated as part of its independence attainment. The transformation of the three other countries represents a conscious rejection of the colonial order. Jamaica's feeble crawl towards such is noted. The recent comments coming from St. Lucia are heartening.

This issue is not necessarily new in Antigua and Barbuda although I am yet to find written documentation. At least one knowledgeable source has indicated that discussion of republicanism took place in the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party around the

2014 election. We are aware that the opposition United Progressive Party succumbed to the intellectual indecency of the short-sighted in its midst and led the call for the rejection of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

An election is around the corner and the anti-colonial conscious voters of this country will base their ballot decisions on the unequivocal manifesto stands on the CCJ and now republicanism taken by the two main parties and the Democratic National Alliance.

I make this call to the leadership of our political parties because – and I repeat myself here – I think that in the absence of active civic conscientization, popular decisions on matters such as republicanism will not be made independent of the positions of the major political parties.

There is a telling African proverb which simply says 'all things must end'. It is time to 'stop loitering on colonial property'.



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Letter to the Editor



Twenty-four hours later

Dear Editor,

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude for the overwhelming outpouring of love to us as a family. In these dark moments I am again reminded of how much we need each other. I have spent the last twenty-four hours in thought and contemplation, many thoughts and emotions flooding my mind and heart.

As my phone rang in the early hours of Saturday 9th April, I had no idea of what news awaited on the other side. Minutes later I stood over the lifeless body of my brother of 40 years. The shock of sudden death, coupled with the sight of bullet

holes scattered throughout his body, shook me incredibly.

The words I whispered once again exiting my vehicle came out: "Strength Lord Strength". Words not unfamiliar to me but in that moment knowing my supply was terribly insufficient.

I didn't know in that moment how to respond, and even now a day later I am uncertain. I didn't know what to do but I knew what I would not do.

I would not allow the brevity of the situation and the raw emotions to overwhelm me to a point where I could no longer be objective. I live my life trying very hard to be objective as I believe it is the only way

for us to be truly constructive.

I know my brother was shot and killed by the police. As of this moment, I don't know the circumstances that led to his death, nor do I know what happened in that alley. I am not excusing the actions of the officers but rather am waiting on more light to be shed before making assumptions. The question of "why" is synonymous with death, and is even now, is shouting in my head. But louder is the voice of restraint and reason to allow the process and the facts to emerge.

I have many law enforcement friends, some who comforted me yesterday. Hard working and honest in this needed yet heavily criticized field. I believe the criticism to be warranted as to whom much (power) is given much is required.

A pillar of the Christian faith is justice and rest assured justice will be met out whether in this life or the next. Justice, like my morning sandwich, I prefer timely and hot. But as a recipient of the unfathomable mercy of God, I am grateful daily that mercy and great patience were afforded me. I am learning as I grow not to be so quick to throw stones.

It is said hurting people, hurt people. Many are hurting now. Many have been hurting and the last few years have intensified much suffering. I feel the volatility of the time now

both in and around me. Almost like a ticking bomb and have made many appeals for us to diffuse the situation with excess grace, love and kindness in this season.

Life is tough and as I shed tears yesterday thinking how out of character that was for me (tough guy). I was reminded that just the day before, in the privacy of my office, I was also shedding tears. This time watching the news at a train station in Kramatorsk, young and old lying dead on the ground. Just suddenly ushered into eternity. Realizing the problem we have is one of the heart which is desperately wicked!

As a believer in the Christian faith persuaded that this short life is not all, that this oh so short life is but a coma (to be continued) in the vastness of eternity. I must remind myself the priority is not when we leave this earth or perhaps how we leave the earth but where we go after this life.

As I bring my rambling to a close, I again want to thank so many for their outpouring of love and prayers, the phone is buzzing even now. My prayer to an incredible God whose ways are higher than mine is that some good may come from this horrible situation. That if we are to emerge from a season of immense testing, we would be wiser, stronger, more loving and ultimately closer to Him as a society.

Matthew Noyce
A Minister Musing

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Climate crisis: We are whistling into the abyss

By Andrew Mitrovica

We have what amounts to a nano-second in human history to save ourselves and everyone who may or may not come after us.

I have to interrupt your regularly scheduled stuff to issue this dire warning: You, me and the rest of the world are whistling into the abyss.

The damning fact is that once I finish writing this column and you finish reading it, you, me and the rest of the world will likely return to our regularly scheduled stuff while we keep whistling towards a dead end – literally.

The other damning fact is that we have been too busy whistling as this on-life-support planet we call home hurtles towards extinction borne of our stupidity, hesitancy, greed, addictions, and complacency.

We have been teetering at the edge of the abyss for a long time. Scientists have told us that we have what amounts, in human history, to a nanosecond to save ourselves and everyone who may or may not come after us.

As always, most of us refuse to listen or act. Worse, too many scientifically illiterate dolts remain convinced that since they can still make snowballs or ski, the human-made climate catastrophe is a human-made hoax.

So, they prefer to gorge on their convenient comforts rather than confront the discomfort of making the urgent and necessary changes and sacrifices we ought to have made years ago to stop the earth from burning.

These days, we prefer to talk or read about a slap at the Oscars rather than talk about, let alone read, another



'If you, me and the wealthy nations who are most guilty of killing the planet degree by rising degree don't do anything about global warming today, not tomorrow, well, that's it.' [Kevin Frayer/Getty Images]

er thick report which joins a bookcase of other thick reports that make a familiar point: if the rich, “developed world” does not cut the carbon pollution it spews into the atmosphere, then we will tip into the abyss and no one – however rich or comfortable they may be – will be able to find the emergency exit door.

On Monday, a legion of smart, careful scientists got together again to shout their much more learned variations of “fire”. This time, it took a few thousand pages for them to do it.

Of course, the smart, careful scientists who collect the facts to show us how and why the planet is burning and what we must do about it – today, not tomorrow – are sober, responsible people. They are not in the habit of actually yelling “fire” in a crowded planet.

Maybe they should start.

In the meantime, the smart, careful scientists use nice, diplomatic language to tell us the planet is on fire. They use phrases like the world is

“facing a moment of reckoning” or we need the “political courage...to look beyond our current interests”.

It is not working or penetrating enough minds to make a tangible bit of difference.

If I were one of those smart, careful scientists, I would have ditched being nice and polite in 1999.

This is how I would have begun Monday’s press conference unveiling the most recent “now or never” study: Thank you for joining me today, everyone. The planet is on fire. Let me repeat that. The planet is on fire. By the way, did I mention that the planet is on fire?

Then, I would have added: Look, here’s the life-or-death deal. If you, me and the wealthy nations who are most guilty of killing the planet degree by rising degree don’t do anything about global warming today, not tomorrow, well, that’s it.

The planet is going to die and that means, eventually, all life on this

cont’d on pg 16

Environment



cont'd from pg 15

big, sometimes wondrous, often ugly, blue and white marble will die, too. Oh, so you know, before that happens, there will be bigger, longer and deadlier floods, wildfires, tornadoes, typhoons, cyclones, hurricanes, and droughts. Guaranteed.

And in some parts of the globe, sea levels will go up by several metres, in other parts of the globe it will drop. Scores of once vibrant, coastal cities will disappear beneath the waves as Edgar Allan Poe foreshadowed in his poem, *The City in the Sea*.

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne

*In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the
worst and the best*

Have gone to their eternal rest

I do not know whether UN Secretary-General António Guterres reads Poe. I do know that he came as close as any diplomat has come to shouting not only “fire,” but, “Hey, wake the hell up.”

Guterres stabbed an incriminat-

ing finger at the “developed world” after the release of the UN’s latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (IPCC) which found that industrial powers are responsible for 57 percent of all greenhouse gases emitted by humans since 1850.

“Some government and business leaders are saying one thing – but doing another. Simply put, they are lying,” Guterres said.

“High-emitting governments and corporations are not just turning a blind eye; they are adding fuel to the flames. They are choking our planet, based on their vested interests and historic investments in fossil fuels.”

Isn’t it refreshing when diplomats put things simply?

In any event, the UN’s top diplomat ended his blistering indictment by describing the IPCC findings as a “file of shame... cataloguing empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unlivable world”.

The numbers are as clear-cut as they are pressing. If you, me and the “developed world” do not cut carbon emissions by 47 percent by the end of

this decade then you, me and the “developed world” will not be able to cap warming at 1.5 degrees.

If you, me and the “developed world” fail to do the above – it is sayonara planet Earth.

Alas, editors who make decisions about what is news buried the IPCC report. Wars sell. Reports do not. The 24-hour news cycle matters. Something that could or could not happen by the end of the decade, does not.

If so-called “responsible” journalists adopt this ostrich-like attitude to the looming peril, is it any wonder that myopic politicians do the same?

Last year, US President Joe Biden said global warming was the challenge of our time. His “ambitious” legislative agenda to address it is DOA – dispatched by a member in-name-tag-only of his party who is wedded to the coal and fossil fuel industry like a conjoined twin.

The US Congressional mid-terms are approaching and rising prices at the pump – triggered, in large part, by a war criminal in the Kremlin – have emboldened some craven Democrats and the entire Dumb-as-A-Pet-Rock Grand Old Party to resurrect the insipid clarion call: “Drill, baby, drill.”

If that does not prompt you to curl up into a ball of existential angst and despair, consider this: the “former guy” who looks poised, at the least, to become the future Republican nominee for president dismissed global warming last month as “a thing called the weather.”

In mid-March, the “former guy” told members of the Dumb-as-A-Pet-Rock Grand Old Party at a rally in South Carolina not to spend any of their single-digit synapses worrying about melting glaciers and ice sheets because rising sea levels would “create more oceanfront properties.”

They roared.

OK. I am done. You and I can go back to our regularly scheduled stuff.

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Authorities concerned at upsurge in Cubans illegally entering Belize

CMC - The Belize government says it has seen an “upsurge” in the number of Cubans entering the country illegally since reopening the land borders on February 7, hoping to make their way into the United States.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration said the Cubans are among other nationals, entering Belize via irregular means.

“To date, the department has seen a total of 39 Cuban nationals whose primary aim remains to reach the US-Mexico border using Belize as a transit point,” the statement said, noting that most recently, “the Mobile Interdiction Team of the Belize Police Department apprehended 18 persons who entered via irregular means and handed them over to Immigration.

The group, which comprises sixteen Cubans and two Nicaraguan adults, was held in a cane field near the outskirts of Carmelita Village in Orange Walk District. The operation on Tuesday night was carried out by members of the Mobile Interdiction Team, as well as customs officers. The foreign migrants were accompanied



Hundreds of Haitians in dangerously overlaid boats have been intercepted at sea this year.

by three Belizeans. Under interrogation, the Cubans said they flew to Nicaragua and travelled along a terrestrial smuggling route until they arrived in Benque Viejo where they were met by a pair of Nicaraguans in Calla Creek Village. According to the migrants, they were en route to the Mexican border where they would have proceeded to the United States

“These Cuban nationals are utilising the Refugees Program to avoid repatriation and are being handed over to Help for Progress,” the foreign affairs minister said.

It said the assistant director with responsibility for enforcement was informed by a representative from Help for Progress that the 13 Cubans, who were released to the Human Rights Commission of Belize as a result of a Supreme Court Ruling on March 18, 2022, and that of the Belmopan Magistrate Court Ruling on March 23, 2022, respectively, are no longer at the shelter.

“The ministry reiterates its commitment to the Global Compact for safe, regular, and orderly migration,” the statement added.

Suriname confident it can supply meat to Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados

CMC - Suriname says it remains confident it can meet the “huge demand” for meat for its regional neighbours, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.

Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Minister, Prahla Sewdien, said he held talks with his Barbadian counterpart, Indar Weir and the Trinidad and Toba-

go junior Agriculture Minister, Avinash Singh, during the just concluded 37th Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Ecuador.

Sewdien said there is a “huge demand” for meat in both markets and he be-

cont'd on pg 18



Suriname's Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Minister, Prahla Sewdien

Regional News



US Virgin Islands one step closer to allowing Caribbean Nationals Visa Free Travel

CNW - The US Congress House Judiciary Committee approved The Virgin Islands Visa Waiver Act, if this bill is approved it would allow visitors from the Caribbean to receive a non-immigrant visitor visa exemption to enter the US Virgin Islands, for up to 45 days.

The amendment to the Act would apply only to the U.S. Virgin Islands and does not allow entry into other parts of the United States.

The Act was first presented to the Committee for amendment in September 2021 by Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett, a native of the US Virgin Islands.

A press release from the Congresswoman's office did not state specifically which countries will benefit from the amendment to the Act.

The scope of the amendment will, however, be limited to the Caribbean community and other countries permitted by the Department of Homeland Security.

The amendment is similar to the limited visa waiver programme which



allows citizens of some countries to visit overseas US territories, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands by completing a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Form I-736 prior to arrival and presenting their country's passport on arrival. The Visa Waiver Act is also expected to be an impetus for increased visitors and economic activity in the US island territory.

Congresswoman Plaskett, who serves on the US Congress Ways and Means Committee, stated in a news re-

lease, "This legislation would extend this same programme to the U.S. Virgin Islands. This limited visa waiver programme would better enable the Virgin Islands to compete economically with other islands and nations in the Caribbean community."

The Ways and Means Committee gives recommendations to the House on all revenue-raising channels. The committee is the primary source of legislation on international trade agreements, customs, and taxation.

cont'd from pg 17

lieves Suriname can meet this need.

Figures show that on an annual basis, the demand from the two CARICOM countries is estimated at approximately 5,000 tons of meat, and Suriname says it will establish and execute a programme to increase livestock and meat production.

Sewdien said the ministry will invite cattle farmers

interested in participating in the programme, and arrangements will be put in place to deal with both the technical and phytosanitary aspects of the initiative.

Sewdien also said there are opportunities for certain types of fruit and vegetables from Suriname to be exported to Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.

The state-owned Food and Agriculture Industries

(FAI) company already exports eight to ten containers of bananas to both islands weekly, and Sewdien said the export of pork to Barbados has also got off to a good start.

Sewdien said Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation Minister, Albert Ramdin, and Finance and Planning Minister, Armand Achaibersing, are now on a

working visit to Barbados.

He said they will further discuss agreements previously made between the governments of the two countries under the 'Brokopondo Program for cooperation that they signed in November 2019. Under the agreement, Suriname will provide lands to Barbadian investors for the production of Blackbelly sheep and other agricultural activities.

French polls: Macron, far-right rival Le Pen to eye runoff

AP — French polling agencies projected Sunday that incumbent Emmanuel Macron and far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen are heading for another winner-takes-all runoff in the French presidential election, with their fierce political rivalry and sharply opposing visions pulling clear of a crowded field of 12 candidates in the first round of voting.

If confirmed by official vote counts expected later Sunday night, the pollsters' initial projections mean France is teeing up for a repeat of the 2017 head-to-head contest that put Macron into power — but there is no guarantee that this time the outcome will be the same.

Macron, a 44-year-old political centrist, won by a landslide five years ago to become France's youngest president.

But Macron is bracing for a far tougher runoff battle this time against his 53-year-old political nemesis who is promising seismic shifts for France — both domestically and internationally — if elected as the country's first woman president.

The projections showed both Macron and Le Pen on course to improve on their 2017 first-round showings, signalling how French leadership politics have increas-



People queue to vote for the first round of the presidential election at a polling station Sunday, April 10, 2022 in Marseille, southern France. French voters headed to polling stations nationwide Sunday for the first round of the country's presidential election, one that seemed for months like a shoo-in for French President Emmanuel Macron but is now a tossup amid a strong challenge from the far right's Marine Le Pen. (AP Photo/Daniel Cole)

ingly become polarised. The projections showed Macron with a comfortable first-round lead of between 27%-to-29% support, ahead of Le Pen, who is expected to capture 23%-to-24% of the vote. The projections showed hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon — one of half a dozen candidates on the left — falling short of the runoff, heading for third place.

The election's result will impact Europe's direction as it tries to contain the havoc wreaked by Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine.

France's April 24 pres-

idential runoff appears set to pit the centrist president seeking to modernise the economy and strengthen European cooperation against the nationalist Le Pen, who has sought to soften her party's racist reputation.

Le Pen this time tapped into the foremost issue on many French voters' minds: living costs that have soared amid the disruptions of war in Ukraine and the economic repercussions of western sanctions on Russia.

Pollsters suggest that just a few percentage points could separate the familiar foes in the second-round vote. That nail-biting sce-

nario sets up a runoff campaign likely to be far more confrontational and volatile than during round one, which was largely overshadowed by the war in Ukraine.

With its potential to reshape France's post-war identity, the election has wide international significance. A Macron victory would be seen as a defeat for European populists.

It might also not be cheered in the Kremlin: Macron has strongly backed European Union sanctions on Russia, while Le Pen has worried publicly about their impact on French living standards.

Pakistan's PM vows to fight on after Parliament ousts him

AP - The ouster of Prime Minister Imran Khan in a parliamentary no-confidence vote early Sunday set Pakistan on an uncertain political path, with his supporters taking to the streets in protest and the political opposition preparing to install his replacement.

Tens of thousands of Khan supporters marched in cities across Pakistan, waving large party flags and vowing support. The youth, who make up the backbone of Khan's supporters, dominated the crowds.

In the southern Arabian Sea port city of Karachi more than 20,000 shouted slogans promising Khan's return to power. In the capital of Islamabad, the lights from thousands of support-



Supporters of an opposition party celebrate the success of a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Imran Khan, in Karachi, Pakistan, Sunday, April 10, 2022. Pakistan's political opposition toppled Prime Minister Khan in a no-confidence vote in Parliament early Sunday after several political allies and a key party in his ruling coalition deserted him. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan)

ers lit up the night sky as Khan made his way through

the crowd atop a brightly coloured truck.

Khan was brought down after a day of drama and often vitriolic remarks. His supporters accused Washington of orchestrating his ouster and his party walked out of Parliament shortly before the vote. In the end, 174 lawmakers in the 342-seat Parliament voted to depose him, two more than the required simple majority.

Khan's successor is to be elected and sworn in by Parliament on Monday. The leading contender is Shahbaz Sharif, a brother of disgraced former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Shahbaz Sharif heads the largest party in a diverse

alliance of opposition factions that span the spectrum from the left to radically religious. Khan's nominee for prime minister will be his foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

In an interview on a local television channel Qureshi said the party was still debating whether its lawmakers will resign from Parliament after the prime minister's vote is taken.

Khan's ouster comes amid his cooling relations with the powerful military and an economy struggling with high inflation and a plummeting Pakistani rupee. The opposition has charged Khan's government

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Weekend Puzzle Solution

MEASURE UP

By Richard Auer

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42	O	R	E		43	H	O	R	N		44	T	R	A	I	N	
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Mexicans vote on whether president stays or goes

AP - Mexicans voted Sunday on whether their popular president should end his six-year term barely midway through or continue to the end.

Strangely, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was the one who pushed for the first-ever referendum of its kind in Mexico.

It was considered a safe bet. The referendum is only binding if at least 40% of the country's electorate votes — something experts believe unlikely — and López Obrador has maintained approval ratings around 60%.

With that in mind critics have decried the exercise as a waste of money — almost \$80 million — and just a way for López Obrador to rally his base midway through his time in office.

For someone known as an eternal campaigner the expected reaffirmation of support makes sense, but for a president outspoken about austerity it raised questions.

López Obrador voted early Sunday in downtown Mexico City, urging others to vote.

"There always has to be democracy in the family, in school, in work, in the unions, of course in public life and you have to participate," the president said.

Some in the opposition have called for voters to boycott. López Obrador's Morena party has been active in en-



A man casts his ballot during a national referendum on whether Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador should end his six-year term barely midway through or continue to the end, at a polling station in Mexico City, Sunday, April 10, 2022. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)

couraging the president's base to vote. The president has faced criticism that government officials and resources have promoted the referendum.

How many voters will turn out has been the overriding question.

Patricio Morales, an analyst at Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education, said the lack of awareness about the referendum

and potential disinterest among voters could weigh on turnout.

He noted that only 7% of voters participated in another referendum last year asking whether former presidents should be prosecuted.

The referendum fuelled a feud between López Obrador and Mexico's respected elections authority.

Lawmakers from his party cut the National Electoral Institute's budget and the institute said it didn't have the money to pull off the referendum originally estimated to cost more than \$191 million.

It refused to move ahead until the Supreme Court ruled that it must. Adjustments lowered the expected cost to \$78.2 million.

cont'd from pg 20

with economic mismanagement.

Khan has claimed the U.S. worked behind the scenes to bring him down, purportedly because of Washington's displeasure over his independent foreign policy choices, which often favour China and Russia.

He has occasionally defied Amer-

ica and stridently criticized America's post 9/11 war on terror. Khan said America was deeply disturbed by his visit to Russia and his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Feb. 24, the start of the devastating war in Ukraine.

The U.S. State Department has denied his allegations.

Lewis says shortage of coaches hinders Primary School volleyball

The shortage of coaches is the main reason being attributed to the absence of a volleyball programme in primary schools in Antigua and Barbuda.

While a volleyball programme has been well established for many years at the secondary school level, a similar exercise is yet to materialise at the primary level.

Coordinator Rosalie Lewis said with only four coaches employed by the volleyball unit in the Ministry of Sports, getting a primary school programme launched has been a major issue.

The former national player said a pilot volleyball programme was initiated at two primary schools in 2019, but that was curtailed by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"To be honest we had a pilot programme before COVID-19. We had started in Villa Primary and T. N. Kirnon.

"These were two pilot schools that we decided to run our programme in. During the day, all the coaches would have two days at Villa and two days at T. N. Kirnon," Lewis said.

"All of the coaches would gather all the balls that we have and we would take a Physical Education class. So it would be a particular day, the PE teach-

er would organise for us when we would come and then we would teach them the sport. But because it was only two schools we had that programme in, we didn't go about to arrange any competition...and the programme eventually fell off due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

The pandemic also affected the secondary schools' volleyball programme, but it has since resumed with the staging of an advanced level competition which was completed last week at the YMCA Sports Complex.

Lewis said thoughts of a primary school volleyball competition this year were abandoned due to the shortage of coaches.

"We actually wanted to be able to put on competitions at the primary schools level, but because we are already using all the coaches in the secondary schools, it would be too much of a burden to do both," Lewis said.

"There are only three volleyball coaches and myself. We need maybe another two to three coaches in that unit and only then I can see the volleyball unit running a successful primary school competition."

Lewis said years of pleading for more coaches has gone unanswered, therefore the available volleyball coaches continue



Coordinator of the Inter-Schools Volleyball Programme Rosalie Lewis. (File photo)

to do their best with the available resources.

"For years we all know what we are faced with... and so we just do what we have to do because...we are not going anywhere," she said.

"We in the volleyball unit have come to terms with what we have to work with here in the Ministry of Sports and we know we need man power, but right now it is not happening."

Lewis commended her colleague coaches for their positive attitude, support and commitment to the schools' volleyball programme.

"We worked, we doubled up at the various secondary schools and we have been making it work,

and so for us to sit back and complain about not being able to do this or that, we don't think about that," Lewis said.

"I have some very positive people working with me. We have Irvin Lewis, Olson 'Karat' Joseph, Michael St. Jean and myself. They are all very dedicated to the sport, so whatever it takes to make things happen, these guys got my back.

"So I have no issues. If I say, 'Guys we are going to try and run around Antigua today,' they would say 'Okay, what time you think is best?' so they always come out with some positivity, so I don't have any stress when it comes to my unit."

Twelve teams to get automatic entry into 2024 men's T20 World Cup

CricInfo - Twelve teams will qualify automatically for the 2024 men's T20 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the West Indies and the USA. The qualification process for the two other marquee events, the women's T20 World Cup in 2024 and the women's ODI World Cup in 2025, have also been finalised by the ICC, which concluded its meetings in Dubai on Sunday.

For the 2024 men's T20 World Cup, which will comprise 20 teams for the first time, the qualification process is that the top-eight teams from the 2022 edition (to be hosted in Australia this October-November) along with the two hosts - West Indies and the USA - will get automatic berths for the league phase. The remaining two slots, via the automatic-qualification route, will be taken by the next-highest-ranked teams on the ICC T20 rankings as of November 14 this year.

In case West Indies finish in the top eight in this year's World Cup, then the top-three teams based on their ICC rankings on the cut-off date will make the grade. If West Indies fail to finish in the top eight at the T20 World Cup this year, then the top-two teams in the rankings table will qualify for the 2024 edition. The eight remaining slots will be filled via the ICC's regional qualifiers comprising the top-two teams from Africa, Asia and Europe, along with one team each from the Americas and the East Asia Pacific groups.

A similar qualification process will be adopted for the women's T20 World Cup in 2024, which will comprise ten teams. Eight teams will take the automatic route: the top-three teams from each of the two groups in the 2023 edition, scheduled in South Africa, along with the tournament host and the next-highest-ranked team on the ICC wom-



The 2024 T20 World Cup will be held in the West Indies and the USA [ICC via Getty]

en's T20 rankings on a predetermined cut-off date. If the hosts are among this group of top-six teams, the next two highest-ranked teams on the table will qualify automatically. The remaining two teams will emerge from a global qualifier.

The 2022-25 cycle of the ICC Women's Championship will play a key role in determining the teams for the next Women's World Cup, which will be an eight-team tournament. The ICC is yet to finalise the venue for this event, but it will be played in 2025 and is part of the next cycle of global tournaments between 2024 and 2031.

The top five at the end of the Women's Championship cycle, along with the hosts, will gain automatic qualification for the ODI World Cup. For the remaining two spots, a qualifying event will be held, which will have the four teams that finished at the bottom of the championship cycle along with two more sides based on the ICC ODI rankings at a predetermined cut-off date.

A key update to the process, however, came at the meeting as the board approved a recommendation for ODI

status to be extended to a number of Associate Member women's teams to allow them to progress to global qualifying events based on ODI rankings. Hosts New Zealand had qualified automatically for the 2022 event along with Australia, South Africa, England and India after finishing in the top five of the 2017-21 Women's Championship. Pakistan, West Indies and Bangladesh qualified by virtue of their rankings after the qualifier in November 2021 was cancelled after the Omicron variant of Covid-19 hit Southern Africa.

Thailand missed out on qualification because of that cancellation in heart-breaking circumstances: they were top of their group when it was called off and because they didn't have ODI status, had no way of making it to the World Cup.

Meanwhile, it was also decided that the inaugural Under-19 Women's World Cup would be held in South Africa in January 2023, with 16 teams participating in it. It will be held before the Women's T20 World Cup that South Africa is slated to host from February 9 to 26.

Sports News



Djokovic is motivated to compete again for biggest titles

AP - Novak Djokovic is ready to move on from the controversy surrounding his refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

"I miss competition," the Serbian tennis star said Sunday on the opening day of the clay-court season at the Monte Carlo Masters in Monaco. "I still feel motivation to be on the tour and compete... and try to challenge the best players in the world for the biggest titles."

The 20-time Grand Slam champion has played only one tournament so far in 2022, losing to Jiri Vesely in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Championships.

Djokovic could not defend his Australian Open title in January after he was deported from the country for not being inoculated.

More recently, he had to skip tournaments in Indian Wells, California, and Miami because he couldn't travel to the United States for the same reason.

He has declared that he would not get the vaccine in order to be able to compete.

It has been a turbulent start to 2022 for Djokovic, who went through detention and a court case during an 11-day saga in Australia before he was sent home and not allowed to defend his title at



Novak Djokovic (AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia, File) Melbourne Park.

Rafael Nadal went on to win the Australian Open for his 21st major trophy, breaking a tie with Djokovic and Roger Federer.

At the end of February, Djokovic lost his No. 1 ranking for the first time in two years, sliding to No. 2 behind Daniil Medvedev, before reclaiming top spot.

And on March 1, Djokovic announced that he and coach Marian Vajda were splitting after 15 years together.

"The last four, five months have been really challenging for me mentally and emotionally but here I am and I try to leave all that behind and move on," Djokovic said on Sunday.

Djokovic said what happened in Australia has not impacted his ability to win.

"I don't feel like it has left huge scars on me that I'm unable to train or participate in tournaments or live my life," Djokovic said. "I will try to use that as a fuel for what's

coming up."

His opening match in Monaco is scheduled for Tuesday.

The authorities in France and Monaco lifted most COVID-19 restrictions last month, allowing people who aren't vaccinated into the country and back into restaurants, sports arenas and other venues.

With his French Open title in 2021 still fresh in his mind, Djokovic proclaimed that the clay in Monaco is the best surface to stage his comeback even though "historically it has not been my most successful surface."

"I will try to use (the French Open title) as an inspiration to kick-start the clay court season the best possible way," Djokovic said. "I understand that I probably won't be at my best, particularly at the beginning."

He added that "it will take some time, some matches to really get in the groove."

The French Open starts on May 22 in Paris.

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Leclerc wins Australian Grand Prix as Verstappen retires again

Reuters - Ferrari's Charles Leclerc claimed his second win of the Formula One season with a thumping, pole-to-flag victory at the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday as Red Bull's world champion Max Verstappen suffered "deja vu" with another retirement.

Leclerc's car was dominant on the upgraded Albert Park circuit as the Monaguesque sealed his fourth career win more than 20 seconds ahead of Red Bull's runner-up Sergio Perez.

Third-placed George Russell grabbed his second podium and first for Mercedes in an encouraging day for the struggling constructors' champions.

"What a race and what pace," said a thrilled Leclerc on the team radio, having finished more than 20 seconds ahead of Perez in the 58-lap race.

"The car was incredible today, well done guys."

Winner of the season-opener in Bahrain, 24-year-old Leclerc has now built a 34-point lead over Russell to emerge as early favourite for the drivers' championship.

Ferrari's celebrations were tempered by Carlos Sainz crashing out shortly after the start, while four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin crashed his car on his return after missing



Ferrari's Charles Leclerc celebrates his victory on the podium after the 2022 F1 Australian Grand Prix. Photograph: (AFP)

the opening races due to COVID-19.

Verstappen was second behind Leclerc when his RB18 car suffered a reliability problem and rolled to a halt during his 39th lap with smoke billowing.

"I smell some weird fluid," said the Dutchman before coming to a stop at turn two.

Yet he would have had little hope of reeling in Leclerc.

"I knew I could not fight Charles so there was no point to try and put pressure on him," Verstappen told Sky.

"But we didn't even finish the race so it's pretty frustrating and unacceptable."

It was a similar outcome

to the season-opener in Bahrain, where Verstappen retired three laps from the end while on course for a second-place finish.

Lewis Hamilton finished fourth for Mercedes after starting fifth on the grid, having been passed by Russell due to a safety car deployment.

McLaren's Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo finished fifth and sixth respectively as the team showed improvement after a poor start to the season.

Sainz, who started ninth on the grid after set-up troubles in qualifying, had a dreadful start then skidded into grass before spinning across the track, somehow missing oncoming traffic before coming to a stop in

gravel at turn 10.

Vettel later locked up on a kerb at turn four before shunting his Aston Martin into a wall and leaving a trail of debris across the track.

Vettel's crash saw the safety car deployed again, and Russell capitalised by pitting before rejoining in third place ahead of Perez and Hamilton.

Leclerc's lead was wiped out by the safety car and nearly taken out as Verstappen swooped after the restart but the Monaguesque saw off the Dutchman and built his lead to the finish.

Alex Albon started 19th on the grid but finished 10th, grabbing a first point for Williams after managing his hard tyres virtually to the finish.

Police claim first Parish League title of the season

Police maintained their unbeaten record to capture the first Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League title of the 2022 domestic season.

They claimed the Dave Joseph Limited Overs Championship by pulling off a six-wicket victory over Freetown in the final at the Police Recreation Grounds on Saturday.

Batting first, Freetown were bundled out for a paltry 71 with West Indies Women's pacer, Sharnisha Hector, grabbing 3 for 12, Lashorn Barnarde snatching 2 wickets for 1 run, female off spinner Jenisen Richards picking up 2 wickets for 6 runs and right-arm off-spinner James Cornelius taking 2 for 18.

Clever Martin top scored for Freetown with 26 and Vance Nathaniel contributed 18.

Police wrapped up the match by securing victory at 74 for 4 with Malique Gerald getting 25, Captain Derek Mourillon 12 not out and Hector scoring 12 runs. Martin captured 2 for 13.

As expected, Mourillon was elated with his team and with their overall performance so far this season.

"It's a great feeling. We have been playing good



Captain of the Police team, Derek Mourillon, left, accepts the Dave Joseph Limited Overs Championship trophy from ACB Caribbean Parish League representative Earl 'Mandela' Richards after the final at the Police Recreation Grounds on Saturday, 9th April, 2022. (Photo: Elwin Francis)

cricket throughout the season thus far and in every game we have improved in strength. However, I keep reiterating to my teammates that we should not take any team for granted and each game, let us start fresh and take each one as it comes and work towards that win," Mourillon said.

The Police skipper said dismissing Freetown for less than 100 runs for the second time this season is the result of their opponents' succumbing to the pressure applied by the law officers' bowling and fielding.

"It is more crumbling under pressure than batting poorly. I mean, when we played them in the preliminaries we bowled them out

for 58 and it was the same concept of bowling dot balls," he said.

"Dot balls build pressure no matter how great a batsman you are. When you see in a one-day competition that wickets are falling, no runs on the board, it plays on the mind and that usually results in getting dismissed cheaply so I think that is what happened again to Freetown in this final today."

Mourillon's opposite number, former Leeward Islands batsman, captain Austin Richards Jr., admitted that Freetown's batting was dissatisfying. He said, however, Freetown was missing a few players for Saturday's final which affected their batting line-up.

"To be honest, our batting was very disappointing, but these things do happen in cricket. We were missing a few of our key batters who scored runs coming into this final. This forced us to change the whole arrangement of our batting line-up and unfortunately, it didn't work out for us today," Richards said.

"I myself didn't stand up today, you know, but that is cricket. Good balls bowled and you can't do much about it sometimes."

Richards, a police officer in the fire service, commended Police for their outstanding performance this season.

"To be honest, Police have been playing good cricket. Their batting normally struggles at the start of their innings and then pick up in the back end, but you can't take away anything from them. They have been training even before the season started and you could see their hard work is paying off," Richards said.

"But this is just one tournament and we still have quite a few more to come so we will likely be seeing each other again throughout this season and over the years, Freetown and Police always have a good rivalry."

Police investigating Ronaldo after he appears to break fan's phone

BBC - Merseyside Police are investigating an alleged assault after Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo appeared to break a 14-year-old fan's phone.

Footage was shared on social media alongside comments claiming he smashed the device as he left the pitch after his side's 1-0 loss at Everton.

Ronaldo, 37, later apologised on social media.

Merseyside Police said they were investigating "reports of an alleged assault" at Goodison Park on Saturday.

A spokesperson said they were liaising with both Manchester United and Everton.

"As players were leaving the pitch at 2:30pm, it was reported that a boy was assaulted by one of the away team as they left the pitch," they added.

"Inquiries are under way and officers are currently working with Everton to review CCTV footage and are carrying out extensive witness enquiries to establish if an offence has taken place.

"Anyone with information on this incident is asked to contact Merseyside Police social media desk via Twitter MerPolCC or Facebook Merseyside



Ronaldo appeared to knock a young fan's phone to the ground as he walked down the tunnel at Goodison

Police contact centre quoting reference number 228 of 9 April 2022."

Manchester United said they were aware of "an alleged incident" and would "co-operate with any police inquiries".

The result damaged United's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League and came against an Everton side who had been one point above the relegation zone before kick-off.

"It's never easy to deal with emo-

tions in difficult moments such as the one we are facing," said Portugal international Ronaldo.

"Nevertheless, we always have to be respectful, patient and set the example for all the youngsters who love the beautiful game.

"I would like to apologise for my outburst and, if possible, I would like to invite this supporter to watch a game at Old Trafford as a sign of fair play and sportsmanship."

cont'd from pg 28

hanced the schools' football programme during that time," Benjamin said.

"I had to prepare my team at Liberta, the coach at Bolans had to prepare his team to take them down to Grays Greene to play in the Shipwreck league during the summer.

"Sometimes matches are played well past the summer because when school would have re-

opened in September, matches in the Shipwreck league would still be playing on Saturdays. So, that means because of the Shipwreck league, there was a lot of coaching and a lot of football. Now we are not seeing that and this is what is needed," he said.

"That is why you see some communities are stronger in sports than others because you have individuals who make that

special effort to invest and give back to their communities.

"Yes, it is a thankless job, because you are not getting paid to do that in the community, but it is the love for the sport and the community why you do it. It is also the same children you will be seeing showing up at the school practice.

"When I started playing cricket and football for All Saints Secondary, I

was playing it in my community before I started attending that school and most children, they learn to play sports in the community, not at school.

"When they get to the school, they get some more coaching and they play in competitions and stuff like that, so we have to go back to that. It is hard work, it is not easy and it is very tiring, but it is something that has to be done."

“Porridge” wants football coaches to invest more in players, communities

Coordinator of the schools’ football programme, Rohan “Porridge” Benjamin, believes Ministry of Sports coaches in the football unit can do a lot more to develop school athletes and at the community level.

“If a coach working within the Ministry of Sports, being paid by the government of Antigua and Barbuda and that coach cannot see it fit to have some sort of youth programme within the community, they are in the wrong job or they are in the wrong place,” Benjamin said.

Referencing former national forward, Oslyn “Pigeon” Gregory, one of several coaches in the Ministry of Sports’ schools’ basketball unit, Benjamin said coaches in the football unit, which he leads, should follow his example.

“Take for instance, (Oslyn) ‘Pigeon’ Gregory in basketball. Now he has a wonderful programme on Saturday mornings. I am going to Liberta for my nine o’clock training with the youngsters and he is already there, starting at



Villa (green jersey) and Pigotts compete during a match in this year's Primary School Cup football competition at the T. N. Kirnon School. (File photo)

8:30 with sometimes 30 to 40 kids there.

“Now where are these players coming from? Gregory is the basketball coach for All Saints Secondary and the surrounding feeder or primary schools like Cobbs Cross, J. T. Ambrose, John Hughes and so forth. So Gregory makes it his business to train and prepare these players on a Saturday morning. Now coaches have to look at that,” Benjamin said.

“We cannot just focus on working with the players on a particular day at school because we have limited time in which to operate on a school day.

Sometimes we get to work with the players during a school day for about an hour and a half. That is really not enough time. So we must put in the work, and we can do so by working with the school players on weekends in the mornings, where we can have access to all these children and that is why ‘Pigeon’ Gregory is doing so well with his basketball programme.

“Most of the players in Gregory’s programme are females within the lower age bracket, but it is not him alone, because other basketball coaches have similar programmes and

that is how they are able to keep up or sustain the basketball programme within the schools.”

Benjamin also made reference to a former community football league in Gray’s Green that was created by Stanfield “Shipwreck” Joseph in the 1980s.

Benjamin said the Shipwreck League played an integral role in the development of players in the schools’ programme during its existence.

“The reason why I am saying this is when you look at the Shipwreck League, that league en-

cont’d on pg 27