

# PM: QUARRY WORKERS TO BE PAID, BUT AT&LU UNREASONABLE

*Story on Page 2*



A group of local women participate in the National Sailing Academy's Women on Water which takes place every Saturday at Falmouth Harbour. Women on Water was launched this year to mark International Women's Day on 8th March. It is designed to encourage more women to become involved in sailing and provide a solid foundation for those desirous of advancing beyond dinghies to larger vessels. [Photo: Ed Gifford]

# Local News



## PM Browne: Union's position on overtime payment unreasonable

While reiterating his government's commitment to paying overtime to public servants, Prime Minister Gaston Browne believes the demand of the union representing quarry workers is unreasonable.

Employees of the Bendals and Burma quarries along with those employed at the hot mix plant downed tools earlier this week,

displeased that promises made to them have not been fulfilled, even though they have received a fraction of the monies owed to them.

While assuring the government stands committed to settling its arrears, Prime Minister Gaston Browne said the Antigua Trades and Labour Union's position isn't practical.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Reportedly, the quarries' bargaining agent wants the overtime owed to their members to be paid in full.

"Now that is not an equitable position. I mean there are many other public servants who are owed overtime, and what we have to do is to address all of them and to reduce the arrears," the prime minister contends.

"But for one entity to go to the front of the line and to collect all of their overtime that is not an equitable position."

Mr. Browne, who also holds the portfolio for finance and the economy is hoping good sense will prevail and that the AT&LU will review its position.

He said the government anticipates that by next week, it will be able

to reduce the amount of overtime owed to workers throughout the public sector.

"We would have floated a bond. We continue to remain hopeful that by next week, we should be able to draw down on that bond, and we will address the issue of overtime right through the system.

"We hope to make a significant dent, possibly to pay up to fifty percent of outstanding overtime, so that the overtime buildup during the time of COVID that we can reduce the amount outstanding."

The prime minister reminded that COVID-19 had negatively impacted the economy, which is only now rebounding. Therefore, it would have been difficult to honour outstanding payments to government workers.

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## Drowning victim identity revealed

Police have revealed the identity of the man who is believed to have drowned at Fort James on Wednesday evening.

He is 50-year-old Wendel Joseph of Skerrits Pasture.

According to police reports, Joseph reportedly went for a swim at Fort James Beach along with a female companion around 6:30pm.

As Joseph and his companion prepared to leave the beach, he returned to the water and disappeared.

Help was sought from a passer-by, however, Joseph's body was later found floating face down.

He was pulled ashore, and efforts were made to resuscitate him, but they were to no avail.

He was pronounced dead by a



medical doctor around 9:05 pm.

It is expected that an autopsy will be conducted to determine his exact

cause of death.

Police say they are probing the incident.



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# Local News



## Major improvements to health sector underway

The health sector in Antigua and Barbuda is in for major improvements that will bring world-class care to nationals and residents.

The announcement came on Thursday at the formal launch of the Villa Polyclinic, where both Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph spoke of the specialised services that will soon be offered locally.

Sir Molwyn revealed that despite much scepticism when it was first announced, the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre has successfully completed six kidney transplants with another due in the next two months. He said the Renal Centre, which is to be opened at the re-purposed Holberton Hospital, will soon be ready.

The renal care facility at the SLBMC will be converted into a cardiac care facility.

“As I speak today, I will be meeting later this afternoon with a group of neurosurgeons which is interested in offering their services here in Antigua and Barbuda. This level of services is not currently available anywhere in the OECS,” Sir Molwyn stated.

He said these form the foundation of the secondary and tertiary health care services which the government will make available.



Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph

“We are negotiating all these services to eliminate the need for nationals to have to travel abroad for specialised healthcare. Just this week, there were five cases that came before the Cabinet seeking assistance to pursue health care overseas. We are working for the day when this will no longer happen,” the health minister declared.

Sir Molwyn disclosed that over the past eight years, the Gaston Browne administration has spent more on healthcare than any preceding it.

With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sir Molwyn praised the efforts of health care workers, who were largely responsible for the management of the cri-

sis. Antigua and Barbuda currently ranks number one in the rate of vaccination among English-speaking Caribbean countries.

Prime Minister Browne, the parliamentary representative for the area, also spoke of developments in the health sector. He said already, expenditure on health care takes the largest slice of the government’s budget when combined with expenditure by the Medical Benefits Scheme.

The next step, PM Browne continued, is the transformation of the MBS into a national health insurance company.

According to the prime minister, primary health care factored highly in his

government’s overall developmental plan and this accounts for the huge expenditure.

“We continue to build out the healthcare facilities to the point where we now have one of the highest beds per thousand of the population anywhere in the Caribbean at 4 beds per 1000,” he disclosed.

PM Browne added that the government’s policy of bringing health care closer to the people has driven its efforts to decentralise healthcare.

He revealed that the stem cell research centre currently offers specialised care to persons visiting the country for medical treatment.

Overtime, Browne said additional cutting-edge health care services will be made available to nationals.

“Our aim is to have Antigua and Barbuda as a primary centre for healthcare delivery services in the Caribbean,” he added.

The polyclinic was a gift to the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda by the government and people of the People’s Republic of China.

China’s Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Zhang Yanling, said her country remains committed to the development of Antigua and Barbuda.



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# Local News

## St. John's, Havana celebrate 28 years of diplomatic relations



Antigua and Barbuda and the Republic of Cuba are celebrating 28 years of diplomatic relations and both countries are looking ahead to further strengthen the relationship.

On the observance of the day on Wednesday, Foreign Affairs Minister, E. P. Chet Greene highlighted in a letter to his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodrigues Parilla, the role Cuba has played in Antigua and Barbuda's development by

providing support in key sectors.

Greene continued that he anticipates further collaboration in the future in the areas of climate change and sustainable development.

Minister Greene said the assistance provided to Antigua and Barbuda by the Cuban Government during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the deep bond between both countries.

"Our relationship has evolved into one of trust and solidarity in an increasingly uncertain world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cuba has provided generous assistance to Antigua and Barbuda by deploying the Henry Reeve Brigade to bolster the nation's response to the disease. As a result, Antiguan and Barbudan and Cuban healthcare professionals worked alongside one another on the front lines in a

spirit of fraternity."

Foreign Minister Greene went on, "Antigua and Barbuda continues to actively condemn the protracted imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo, which is contrary to International Law, the United Nations Charter, and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations between states."

Cuban Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Maria Ester Fiffie Cabreja, described the diplomatic relations between the countries as one "characterised by respect, brotherhood, solidarity and cooperation".

Antigua and Barbuda's late Prime Minister Sir Lester Bird and late Cuban President Fidel Castro established diplomatic relations between both nations in 1994 in New York.

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# Local News



## Project to offer certified training for nationals launched

A project that will offer vocational training and certification for Antigua and Barbuda nationals enabling them to take advantage of the opportunities of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) was formally launched on Thursday.

Trade Minister, E.P Chet Greene, under whose portfolio implementation of the project falls, said he was pleased that the long-awaited implementation of the Technical Vocational Training framework is finally here.

He noted that as a full signatory of the CSME, Antigua and Barbuda is committed to the principles and goals of the Free Movement of Skills regime, an essen-

tial part of the CARICOM Treaty. Twelve categories of workers were approved by the Community to move and work freely within the region. However, these workers were required to possess Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) and other certification to qualify.

“To enable the movement of Community Nationals, Member States were required to establish the necessary national infrastructure to certify and issue CVQs in the identified categories. It is no secret that Antigua and Barbuda, due mainly to the lack of internal capacity, was unable to meet its regional commitment for the movement of Community Nationals,” Greene re-

vealed.

He credits the Office of the National Authorising Officer (ONAO) to have recognised this need and to secure the funding to make it a reality.

“Therefore, the implementation of this project will establish an operational framework to allow the Antigua and Barbuda National Training Agency (ABNTA) and the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) to work together in the promotion, coordination and management of the technical and vocational training system, to ensure an adequate supply of trained employees in areas relating to our national development needs and



Trade Minister, E.P Chet Greene

CSME commitments,” he declared.

The trade minister added that as Antigua and Barbuda work towards closing its CSME implementation gaps, the execution of this project over the next two years would provide a much-needed impetus to achieve this goal.

The “Enhanced Technical Vocational Education Training Framework for Certification in Antigua and Barbuda”, as the project is dubbed, has as its primary objective improving the regulatory and strategic framework for the development of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system.

The project is being funded by the European Development Fund through the Caribbean Development Bank to the value of two hundred and fifty-seven thousand, five hundred and thirty-five Euros (EUR257,535), which would cover a period ending March 30th, 2024.

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## NSWMA refutes waste collection failure claim

The National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) is refuting a widely circulated social media claim that it was delinquent in coordinating waste collection in Bendals.

Last week, opposition Senator Johnathan Joseph claimed that no garbage collection had taken place in the Bendals community for a month and that the situation presented a health hazard to residents. He gave the authorities an ultimatum that if the refuse were not collected by 1st April, he will spearhead an effort to have it done.

While the NSWMA admitted to "organizational and operational challenges" which have "on occasion [resulted in] periodic delays", the authority said "on Friday 1st April, there were no such challenges with the collection of waste in Bendals".



"Collection services were scheduled, and the two contracted haulers assigned to Bendals and surrounding communities were carrying out their duties in the area at the very time the private citizen claimed he was providing the service," the NSWMA said in a press statement.

"The action of the individual added much confusion and sought to politicise a very basic public service while the Authority worked to com-

plete the collection schedule for that community in a timely manner.

"Secondly, the individuals Safety & Health could have been compromised considering appropriate personal protective attire was not evident when undertaking this specialised activity," the NSWMA continued.

The National Solid Waste Management Authority is the agency mandated by law to collect, transport, and dispose of solid waste in Antigua and Barbuda.

Meanwhile, the authority says residents who are concerned about delays or missed collection of their residential waste are encouraged to contact their office via the hotline number 562-1347. The assurance was given that they will act promptly to respond to reports of uncollected refuse.

## Department of Environment to begin work in Cashew Hill area

The Department of Environment (DoE) is set to begin work in the Cashew Hill community and adjacent communities, intended to alleviate some outstanding concerns and to beautify the area.

According to the DoE, the exercise will place priority on reducing flooding and the presence of mosquitoes.

There are also plans to construct a foot bridge over a waterway which runs through the community.

Residents in the community constructed a concrete access path over the waterway, however, the DoE says this will have to be removed

and reconstructed to "accommodate the works and create the most resilient design possible to protect the community in the long run".

The DoE has said it is their hope to carry out the project in cooperation with the community's residents and encourages them to contact their office for guidance or to share any concerns related to the work that will be carried out.

Over the next several weeks, the work to be carried out will involve the removal of the standpipe from the bridge to an adjacent location, which will make water more readily available to the



DEPARTMENT of  
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 Antigua and Barbuda

community; the construction of a new bridge near the community standpipe and the construction of footbridges in five areas along the waterway that will allow for persons, including those with disabilities, to move about freely, while also allowing for unobstructed water flow.

Several mosquito control

and monitoring systems will also be established.

According to the DoE, it is also expected that people in the community will be able to find employment. Once the work is completed, opportunities will be created, as it will be necessary to keep the waterway free from grassy overgrowth and refuse.

## Those who damage legal international order must be held to account

**By Sir Ronald Sanders**

*(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States of America 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)*

Over the last few weeks since the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the world has witnessed the greatest weakness in the machinery entrusted with maintaining international peace and security.

That machinery is the UN Security Council in which 5 permanent members each have a power of veto over all decisions. The weakness is the inability of the Council to function in the global interest when one of the five exercises a veto.

The five permanent members are: Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States of America. During the last seven decades, each of the 5 has exercised the veto with Russia casting more than any of the other four. Altogether, Russia accounted for 49 per cent of the vetoes; the US, 29 per cent; Britain 10 per cent; and China and France 6 per cent each. In every case, the country that cast the veto did so to protect its own interest and not that of the global community.

In most cases, the threat to use the veto is enough to paralyze the UN Security Council from taking any action, however grave may be the circumstances that demand such action. Recently, Russia has used that threat in relation to its invasion of Ukraine and its violation of international law and the principles set forth in the UN Charter.

This immobilization of the Security Council caused the President of

Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to ask its members at a meeting on April 5, "Where is the security that the Security Council must guarantee?". In an emotional address in the aftermath of evidence of atrocities in Ukraine by the Russian military, including the slaughter of civilians who were shot in their heads while their hands were tied behind their backs; the rape and murder of women; and the cutting off of limbs and tongues, Zelenskyy told the members of the Council "to dissolve yourselves altogether" if they could not stop Russia from "blocking decisions about its own aggression".

The Ukrainian President's anger and frustration is understandable, especially by militarily powerless countries that could also be the victim of aggression and who depend on the Security Council to safeguard their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Without action by the Security Council, no country is safe from a determined predator nation with the military power to enforce its ambitions.

It is important to note that Russia has not only severely damaged the international legal order, it has also undermined confidence in it. Worryingly, it has also violated the established rules of war. And, yes, even for war, there are internationally agreed rules that are set out in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the First Additional Protocol to the Conventions and customary international law.

The laws of war prohibit willful killing, rape and other sexual violence, torture, and inhumane treatment of captured combatants and civilians in custody, pillage and looting. Yet, from the evidence gathered by authoritative international agencies, including the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and re-



*Sir Ronald Sanders*

vealed on global television images, all these laws have been broken by Russian forces in Ukraine.

Russia's claim that the images from Ukraine are fake caused UN Human Rights Offices to explain that its investigators "followed painstaking forensic procedures to ensure the veracity of any video or photographing emerging from scenes of possible war crimes".

Paralysis of the Security Council forced the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to act twice concerning the devastating situation in Ukraine. On March 1, the Assembly adopted a resolution deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine and demanding the withdrawal of its military forces. Russia ignored the General Assembly's resolution and escalated the violence, and its attendant atrocities. Then, on April 7, the UNGA, expressing "grave concern at the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and reports of human rights and violations of humanitarian law", decided to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council – a huge

*cont'd on pg 12*

# Guest Editorial



*cont'd from pg 11*

step against a powerful nation.

The suspension of Russia showed a clear determination by the majority of the world's nations to rebuke the Russia government for its disregard of international humanitarian law and the rule of international law.

Ninety-three countries voted in favour of the decision and 58 abstained, even though the Russian government had publicly threatened that it would regard abstentions as "unfriendly".

Russia's response to the suspension was to announce that it was leaving the Human Rights Council altogether. However, despite its disdainful public reaction, the Russian government can

hardly be comfortable with its increasing isolation in the global community.

It is significant that, for the most part, the 23 countries that supported Russia in rejecting its suspension are ruled by like-minded tyrannical regimes.

These include North Korea, Iran, Syria, Belarus, and the Central African Republic.

For the rest of the world, particularly small developing states in the Caribbean, the words of UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, echo with significance.

He says, "the full-fledged invasion of Ukraine is one of the greatest challenges ever to the international order and the global

peace architecture". Small states need global peace in which to develop and grow. They also need secure global economic conditions.

In a policy document to be discussed in a month's time, the IMF and World Bank have identified the adverse effects of the war in Ukraine on Caribbean economies.

These effects include higher prices for oil and food; significantly increased costs for transportation by sea, air and road; a negative impact on tourism; and importation of inflation from trading partners where costs have rapidly risen.

These conditions will lead to demands for fiscal strategies that could include

demands for increased government revenues by more taxes and for reduced expenditure at a time when more spending is required on infrastructural investment, rebuilding crucial productive industries, and education and health.

To avoid this, the developing world needs global peace and stability.

For all that to be achieved, the war on Ukraine must end, respect for the international legal order must be restored and growth of the global economy must resume – and all who disregard the international legal order must be held to account.

*Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronaldsanders.com](http://www.sirronaldsanders.com)*

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## Meta: Russian invasion driving more disinformation online

By David Klepper

Hackers aligned with Russia broke into the social media accounts of dozens of Ukrainian military officers and were working to upload videos of defeated and surrendering Ukrainian soldiers when the plot was disrupted, according to a report Thursday from Meta that details a troubling increase in social media disinformation this year.

The report from the owner of Facebook and Instagram found a surge in content linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as new cases of domestic disinformation and propaganda in countries around the world, suggesting that tactics pioneered by foreign intelligence agencies are now being used more widely.

"While much of the public attention in recent years has been focused on foreign interference, domestic threats are on the rise globally," said Nick Clegg, Meta's president for global affairs and a former British deputy prime minister.

Russia and its allies are major players, according to the report, with groups linked to the Kremlin spreading disinformation about its invasion of Ukraine while amplifying pro-Russian conspiracy theories at home.

Meta traced the effort to take over the social media accounts of dozens of



*In this Oct. 28, 2021, photo, Facebook unveiled their new Meta logo on a sign at the company headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif. A new report from Meta finds a big jump in disinformation and propaganda linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The company, which owns Facebook and Instagram, said its review of the first quarter of 2022 also found an increase in domestic disinformation and propaganda in countries around the world (AP Photo/Tony Avelar, File)*

Ukrainian military leaders back to a shadowy hacker organisation known as Ghostwriter, which previous research has linked to Belarus, a Russian ally. Ghostwriter has a history of spreading content critical of NATO, and also has tried to hack email accounts.

"This is a tried-and-true thing that they do," said Ben Read, director of cyberespionage analysis at Mandiant, a prominent U.S. cybersecurity firm that has tracked Ghostwriter's activities for years. Last year Mandiant said digital clues suggested the hackers were based in Belarus, though EU officials have previously blamed Russia.

Belarus and Russia have not responded to the claims.

The report outlined other disinformation efforts

tied to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including one involving dozens of fake accounts that spread anti-Ukrainian rhetoric. Another network filed thousands of fake complaints about Ukrainian Facebook users in an effort to get them kicked off the platform. That network hid its activities in a Facebook group supposedly dedicated to cooking.

Within Russia, the Kremlin has blocked hundreds of news sources and websites, including Facebook and Twitter, and threatened jail time to anyone who tries to report on the war. In the place of accurate journalism, the state-controlled media have pumped out discredited conspiracy theories about Ukrainian Nazis or secret U.S. bioweapon labs.

Meta and other big tech

companies have responded by removing or restricting Russian state-run media, by targeting disinformation networks and by labelling content it does not remove. Twitter this week announced it would also label state-controlled media from Belarus.

The prevalence of Russian-linked propaganda and disinformation on social media shows that a more aggressive response is needed, according to the Center for Countering Digital Hate, a London-based nonprofit that supports greater social media regulation. A study by the group found numerous Facebook mentions of Russia's discredited bioweapon conspiracy theory.

"Despite taking action against state channels under enormous pressure, Meta is failing badly to contain major disinformation narratives that benefit Putin's regime," said Imran Ahmed, the centre's CEO.

Meta said it would be rolling out additional policies in the coming weeks and months to make sure it stays ahead of groups looking to exploit its platforms. Nathaniel Gleicher, Meta's head of security policy, noted that groups looking to spread disinformation and propaganda are adapting their tactics too.

"We would expect them to keep coming back," Gleicher said.

# Environment

## Four major hurricanes forecast for 2022 Atlantic hurricane season - Colorado State University

By Erwin Seba

The 2022 Atlantic hurricane season is expected to include four major hurricanes with sustained winds of at least 111 miles per hour (178 km per hour), forecasters at Colorado State University said on Thursday.

A total of 19 tropical storms with winds of at least 39 mph (63 kph) and nine hurricanes with winds of at least 74 mph are forecast to appear in the Atlantic

Ocean, Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, according to the university's Tropical Meteorology Project.

"Again, an above-normal hurricane season in 2022," Phil Klotzbach, who leads Colorado State's hurricane season forecasting team, said at the national Tropical Weather Conference, which was broadcast online.

The average for tropical cyclones in the Atlantic



Satellite image of Hurricane Sam in Sept. 2021. (NOAA)

between 1991 and 2020 is seven hurricanes, three of them major, and 14 tropical storms, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

CSU's forecast is in line with private forecasts issued so far this year.

Privately held AccuWeather Inc forecasts the formation in 2022 of between three and five major hurricanes out of six to eight named tropical storms.

Private forecaster DTN said it expects 21 named storms, eight of which will be hurricane strength and four will be major hurricanes of Category 3 or above.

All point to two factors for the forecasts: The absence of an El Nino weather pattern and higher than expected temperatures for seas in the Atlantic Ocean.

El Nino weather patterns send high winds across the southern United States that can break up hurricanes.

"We don't see any big trends that make us think we're going to flip to an El Nino any time soon," Klotzbach said.

If the forecasts bear out this year, 2022 will be the seventh straight above-average hurricane season.

"It seems it has been busy, it's because it has," Klotzbach said.

## Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

### ACROSS

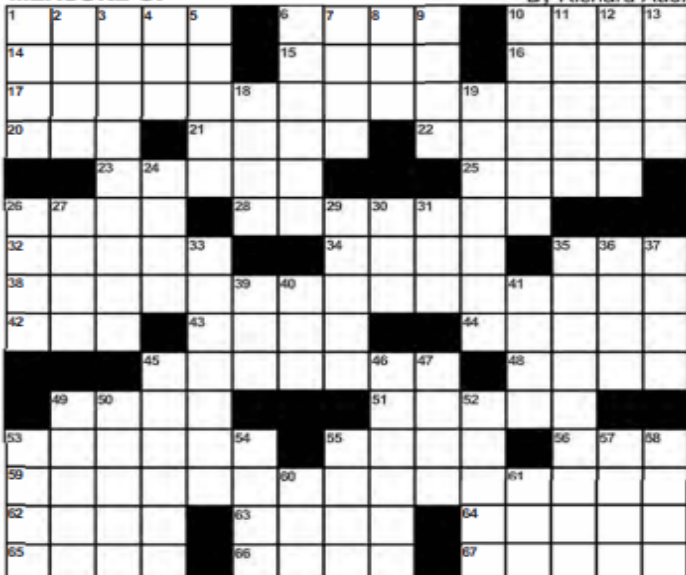
- |                              |                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Increased                 | 42) Bonanza find                    |
| 6) Person of action          | 43) Feature of 32-Across            |
| 10) Fairy-tale beast         | 44) Coach                           |
| 14) Anklebones               | 45) Insomniac's symptom             |
| 15) "Cogito, ___ sum"        | 48) ___-European                    |
| 16) Face-to-face exam        | 49) London hoosegow, once           |
| 17) How some lay it on?      | 51) Class reminders                 |
| 20) Tailor-made line         | 53) Resolve, as a dispute           |
| 21) Sporty headgear          | 55) "___ little spice to your life" |
| 22) Pats down                | 56) Word with "jam" or "roll"       |
| 23) Type of alcohol          | 59) It's overwhelming               |
| 25) Sugar bowl marchers      | 62) Very thin, as a line            |
| 26) ___ von Bismarck         | 63) Computer info                   |
| 28) Matching audio to video  | 64) Dine at home                    |
| 32) Zoo heavyweight, briefly | 65) Perfect place                   |
| 34) Goals                    | 66) Use a coffee spoon              |
| 35) It's on the streets      | 67) Brings about, biblical style    |
| 38) Tremendously, slangily   |                                     |

### DOWN

- 1) Ogden's state
- 2) Blanched
- 3) Watchful hours?
- 4) Low or high end?
- 5) Abandon
- 6) With all one's heart
- 7) Dog bowl bits
- 8) It might need a boost
- 9) Good vantage point
- 10) Showing awe, perhaps
- 11) Matter for the mill
- 12) Sets up, as pool balls
- 13) Moose cousins
- 18) \_\_\_ down a bunt (sacrifices)
- 19) Word with "mass" or "rapid"
- 24) Vocal sound
- 26) About
- 27) God with a hammer
- 29) Mary Poppins was one
- 30) Oft-mooched item, briefly
- 31) "This tape will self-destruct ..." org.
- 33) Desdemona's man
- 35) Exchange words?
- 36) Battery contents
- 37) Nevada city
- 39) Coal carrier
- 40) Anger
- 41) A Great Lake
- 45) Definitely not ripe
- 46) Ingratiate oneself
- 47) Creates an instant lawn
- 49) Ice-cold
- 50) Pay reparations, e.g.
- 52) Sealed, as a package
- 53) Strongbox
- 54) Discontinues
- 55) Not backing
- 57) Name on elevators
- 58) Dapper fellow
- 60) Cereal morsel
- 61) Doctor in a 1964 movie

### MEASURE UP

By Richard Auer



## Backlash against SOJA's Reggae Grammy win unjustified, says musicologist

By Claude Mills

Most Jamaicans reacted with anger and disdain at news that SOJA, a predominantly all-white reggae band, had won this year's Reggae Grammy with their album, 'Beauty in the Silence'. However, one industry expert, Dr Dennis Howard, an ethno-musicologist, believes that the anger of Jamaicans is unjustified.

According to Howard, the backlash is a knee-jerk reaction and has little bearing on the harsh realities that dictate the economics of world music: Jamaica no longer has a monopoly on reggae.

"It is no surprise that SOJA won the Best Grammy album. While the other artists in the category had some relatively good projects, SOJA's album is more in keeping with the US reggae scene, labelled modern reggae. It was their third nomination, and the album was a critical success. They also pay tribute to Jamaican culture in the song Press Rewind," Howard noted.

Howard said that the Virginia-based band SOJA, though relatively unknown in Jamaica, is a big deal in the international music space.

"SOJA is no minor deal on Spotify alone; in 2021, they had 106.5 million streams and 7.7 million listeners in 178 countries. Their live shows are usu-



Members of reggae band SOJA pose with their Grammy trophies on Sunday.

ally sold out, where they do well with merchandising and selling their music. The Grammys is about the American music scene, which includes the various bands based in the US, including Rebelution, Common King, Collie Buddz, Konkarah, J Boogs and the Elovaters," Howard added.

Among the many Jamaicans expressing outrage at SOJA's Grammy win was dancehall superstar Bounty Killer, who labelled the selection by the Recording Academy as a "sell-out".

"What a big piece a sell out gwaan ya so white folks winning best reggae album over Jamaicans wtf," the Warlord posted on Instagram.

Producer Cordel 'Skatta' Burrell posted a sobering message immediately after SOJA's surprising win.

"Jamaicans upset that an



Musicologist Dennis Howard

American white group just won Best Reggae album when we ourselves don't even cherish reggae music enough to ensure it remains relevant amongst the youths of this nation. We are doomed as a nation because we don't value the very things that make US great," Skatta, known for the hit Coolie Dance rhythm, said.

Burrell also added a Marcus Garvey quote that mirrored his current frame

of mind: "A people without the knowledge of their past, history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."

Not everyone met the SOJA victory with doom and gloom. Well-known A & R executive Cristy Barber, embraced SOJA's win on Instagram with a post that noted: "It was such an HONOUR to work this record with my @sojagram Boyz. It's been a minute

*cont'd on pg 16*

## Academy moves up meeting to decide on Will Smith sanctions

By *Chloe Melas and Lisa Respers France*

The Board of Governors for the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences has moved up its planned date to decide on possible sanctions against Will Smith for slapping Chris Rock at this year's Oscars ceremony.

"I am calling a board meeting for this Friday morning, April 8, at 9:00 am PT, rather than the previously scheduled April 18 meeting, to address possible sanctions for Will Smith in response to his actions during the Oscars broadcast on March 27," Academy president David Rubin stated in a letter obtained by CNN Wednesday.

"The April 18 date was set in accordance with Cal-



Will Smith

ifornia law and our Standards of Conduct because our agenda included possible suspension or expulsion of Mr. Smith from membership," the letter reads. "We were required to provide Mr. Smith notice 15 days prior to the board meeting at which such action might be taken, and also give him the

opportunity to provide the board a written statement no less than five days prior to that meeting.

According to the letter, in light of Smith resigning from the Academy last Friday, "suspension or expulsion are no longer a possibility and the legally prescribed timetable no lon-

ger applies."

"It is in the best interest of all involved for this to be handled in a timely fashion," Rubin wrote.

Smith slapped Rock after the comic and actor made a joke from the Oscars stage about Jada Pinkett Smith's close-cropped hair.

"Jada I love you, 'G.I. Jane 2,' can't wait to see it," Rock said while presenting the award for best documentary.

Smith then walked on stage, struck Rock, walked back to his seat and yelled at the comic to "Keep my wife's name out of your f\*\*\*ing mouth!"

Not long after, Smith won the best actor Oscar for his role in the film "King Richard."

*cont'd from pg 15*

since we've been chipping away at this and now, FINALLY the win! #superproud."

Meanwhile, regular Jamaicans are not exactly convinced at the authenticity of SOJA's brand of reggae music.

No shrinking violets, they did not see the beauty in remaining silent. Some were almost apoplectic with rage in their rants on social media, making wild claims of cultural appropriation and race-based favouritism.

One Twitter user, Gerald Lindo said: "I'd encourage everyone to listen to that SOJA album before rushing to negative judgement. I cued it up on Tidal just now and I can honestly say I didn't make it past track two, because it was hot garbage. But now at least I

\*know\* I'm right."

Another user, ms.ann\_cella was slightly more magnanimous, posting on Instagram, while making a not-too-subtle stab at 'trap dancehall':

"I do hope artists start to take their craft more seriously! Gun lyrics and trap music cannot pass the airport ..... Congratulations to the winner."

Famed reggae producer Gussie Clarke congratulated SOJA on their win, calling it a victory for the popularity of the craft internationally.

"Reggae is not owned and unique to Jamaica or Jamaicans, reggae is world music, congratulations to the winners," Clarke told OBSERVER ONLINE.

Clarke called on reggae's standard-bearers to get back to the 'spirit

of collaboration' that had made reggae and dancehall such a force in the international marketplace in the 1980s and 1990s.

"Look, reggae is the most successful cultural item that this country has ever innovated, we must go back to a place where we respect and appreciate music so we can encourage the next generation of innovators. The greatest era of music was made through collaborations we've innovated. Now, we have artistes who endorse the me factor: me write it, me produce, me sing it, me ah the manager, me do everything. We have to get back to the point where people recognise that there are competent persons who can add value to the craft through their own skills and innovations."

## ‘Morbius’? More like moribund. This is just batty!

By Mark Kennedy

The latest hero from Marvel is hard to explain. He’s a man and yet also a bat. No, not Batman. Let me try again: He’s a day-walking vampire, but, no, not that cool cat Blade.

This guy is good but also very bad. Look, he’s clearly got an identity crisis and his film is equally in trouble.

“Morbius” is a forgettable, often laughable, entry in Sony’s attempt to fill its own Spider-Man-adjacent cinematic universe, a poorly edited, derivative time suck — pun intended.

It wastes the considerable talents of Jared Leto, who is often left here looking like the snarling lead singer of a death metal band. So confused is the film’s execution that it more closely resembles a horror movie than a superhero flick.

Leto stars as Dr. Michael Morbius, a frail, brilliant and wealthy biochemist with a rare blood disease whose desperate search for a cure leads to a serum that makes him strong but also turns him into a vampire with a thirst for blood.

After a hit of serum, he goes from needing crutches to swinging midair on pipes like an Olympic athlete.

“I don’t know what I’m capable of,” he says. One downside: He has to chug



*This image released by Sony Pictures shows Jared Leto in a scene from “Morbius.” (Jay Maidment/Sony Pictures via AP)*

blood bags, so there’s that. He also seems to be able to turn into a bat and fly but why he hasn’t flapped his way out of this film is unfathomable.

The filmmakers — director Daniel Espinosa, hobbled by a meandering script from Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless — simply do not know what to do with this creature once they’ve given us his backstory.

They throw in a rivalry with his best friend (Matt Smith) and a love interest (Adria Arjona) hoping to reach something Shakespearean, but they’re treading water.

Instead of a seamless, tight visual style, we are given jiggly camerawork and a buffet of previous films — “The Matrix,” “American Psycho,” “The Usual Suspects” and “An American Werewolf in London.”

Typical Marvel violence is unleashed, including so much muscle that our hero smashes through New York City concrete streets to the subway system below.

What’s astonishing is that despite a whole movie, we know very little about Morbius. He is so principled that he turns down a Nobel Prize but perfectly OK slaughtering henchmen.

He makes delicate origami animals for sick kids and, despite having oodles of cash from inventing artificial blood, wears a cheap Casio watch.

At one point, Morbius loses focus as the main guy when Smith’s rival character hijacks the film entirely.

The special effects team work overtime to give Leto, unfortunately wearing a messy man bun throughout the film, a sort of bat-ness — his pupils cloud and his ear hairs vibrate like he’s

using sonar.

His skin will suddenly stretch over bone and he snarls a lot, too. For some reason, whenever he leaps, he is enveloped by a viscous cloud.

He can also slo-mo and duck bullets and the action sequences build to moments when everything is suddenly stylistically still and quiet, like inside a hurricane’s eye.

“It’s a curse,” Leto declares at one point and you wonder if maybe he’s talking about the role and its place in his career. But he’ll be fine.

He just has to ignore moments like when Morbius is chained to a desk in a police department’s interview room and says: “I’m starting to get hungry and you don’t want to see me when I’m hungry.”

There will be a lot of debate over where “Morbius” sits in the Marvel canon. There are clues that he has a future fighting Spider-Man but maybe the best thing for our vampire anti-hero is just to ignore him or swat at him like a wayward bat.

“Morbius,” a Sony Pictures release slated for theatres today, is rated PG-13 for “intense sequences of violence, some frightening images, and brief strong language.” Running time: 104 minutes. One star out of four.

## Chief medical officers from across the Caribbean to meet in Trinidad and Tobago

CMC - The chief executive director of the Trinidad-based Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Dr. Joy St. John Wednesday praised regional chief medical officers (CMO) for the role they played during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that killed and infected thousands of people in the Caribbean.

"This is my first opportunity to tell you CMOs to your faces, how proud I am of the world-class achievement in public health that the CARICOM region has attained and demonstrated repeatedly in these two harrowing years," Dr. St. John said at the opening ceremony of the two-day Chief Medical Officers COVID-19 Meeting.

CARPHA said that the high-level meeting will seek to provide an update on the regional and national COVID-19 response. Additionally, it will discuss safe and sustainable strategic initiatives in the new era of COVID-19 and advise on optimal ways of working and responding to the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and the resultant effects on the health status of their countries.

The CARPHA executive director told the meeting that she was pleased with the turnout for the event saying the meeting was taking place in Trinidad and Tobago "because it is safe".

She said that the CARICOM region remains one of the most tourism and travel dependent regions in the world and the economic fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic "would have placed extra pressure on you to find the right balance between lives and livelihoods in dealing with the

SARS-CoV-2 virus and all of its variants".

She said the pandemic allowed the Caribbean to engage in regional solidarity adding "your reliance on each other at many critical points was necessary to help overcome the unrelenting pressures. CARPHA was pleased to be of service to you

Dr. St. John said that over the next two days, delegates will focus on COVID-19 by providing updates on the international, regional and national COVID-19 response; discussing safe and sustainable strategic initiatives in the new era of COVID-19 and advising on optimal ways of working and responding to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

"This is in order to provide the foundation for the CMOs' decision making on the public health recommendations on the way forward to avoid and mitigate resultant negative effects on the health status of CARICOM.

The meeting is being funded by the European Union and in his address, Trinidad and Tobago Health Minister Terrance Deyalsingh said while the region has not escaped unscathed, "the monumental threat of COVID-19 to the people, economies and our way of life in the Caribbean has been significantly reduced due to the diligent leadership of the region's CMOs.

"The progress made in the fight against COVID19 by individual countries and as a region is in no small measure due to these men and women born and bred in this region. The people of this region truly owe



*Dr. Joy St. John*

you and your teams a great debt of gratitude," Deyalsingh added.

He told the meeting that the vaccine inequity that afflicted the Caribbean should never occur again.

"As CARICOM attempts to recover from the financial impact of the virus, CMOs are now being called upon to go a step further by providing clinical guidance to their country's leadership as they navigate a safe transition out of the pandemic, toward COVID-19 endemicity and the prospect of living with the virus."

Deyalsingh said that the health of a region remains a fundamental determinant of the quality of life of its people and directly influences expenditure, productivity, and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

## US military official warns that authoritarianism is on the rise

CMC - A senior United States military official said the recent crisis in Europe will undoubtedly impact the Caribbean and other regions in the world, such as increasing energy prices and supply chain disruptions.

But the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Commander U.S. Army General, Laura Richardson, said she is also aware that the Caribbean faces unique cross-cutting threats in an ever-changing security environment.

Addressing the opening of the two-day Caribbean Nations Security Conference (CANSEC), Richardson said with authoritarianism on the rise, protecting human rights, and helping democracies deliver for the people of the region is more important than ever before.

“We gather here at a critical moment in world history. Last month, the world witnessed Vladimir Putin start an unprovoked and horrific invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine. It was the most flagrant violation of the most fundamental principles the international community established after World War Two: self-determination and national sovereignty.”

Richardson said that for decades, Caribbean countries have long been champions of these sacred principles, adding that a threat to

democracy anywhere, is a threat to democracy everywhere. “CARICOM added their voice to the chorus of peace-loving democracies around the world condemning Russia’s invasion and calling for an immediate ceasefire. This region truly is a “Zone of Peace,” as all CARICOM members so eloquently stated last month. What we’re doing right here at CANSEC is working together to keep the Caribbean a Zone of Peace.”

SOUTHCOM and the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) are co-hosting the two-day CANSEC that is being held under the theme “Multinational Cooperation in a Changing Operational Environment”.

According to a statement issued by the organisers, the aim of CANSEC is to promote regional and hemispheric security cooperation through expanding networks and to build enduring partnerships among military, industry and government officials.

Richardson told the conference that while the recent crisis in Europe will undoubtedly impact the Caribbean and other regions in the world, the region is also facing unique cross-cutting threats in an ever-changing security environment.

“Stronger hurricanes and rising sea levels caused by climate change are destroy-



*General Laura Richardson*

ing lives and livelihoods, tearing up family homes and reversing decades of growth,” she said, adding that what’s worse, the poverty and job loss caused by natural disasters leave many people vulnerable to crime and violence.

She said women and children especially may fall victim to human trafficking.

But the SOUTHCOM Commander said one of the most imminent threats facing many countries are transnational criminal organisations (TCO) that are “poisoning the Caribbean and American people, trafficking in drugs, arms, humans, and other illicit products, and worsening corruption.

She said another emerging threat that can’t be ignored, is cyber-attacks,

noting that “just last year, Microsoft reported that a China-based hacking group called Nickel conducted cyber-attacks against 29 countries, four of them in the Caribbean: Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

She said cyber crimes have only increased in the region since the pandemic, and we must do more together to defend ourselves in the cyber domain.

She said she was looking forward to reviewing the progress made from last year’s CANSEC, when “we focused on the impacts of the pandemic on force readiness, countering TCOs, and identifying coordination gaps within our regional response to humanitarian and natural disasters”.

# Regional News



## Senior government minister says Jamaica will not gain republican status by August 6

CMC - The Jamaica government indicated that the island would not be transitioning from a constitutional monarchy to republican status in time for its 60th anniversary of independence on August 6, this year.

"The constitution sets out its own process for amendment and we cannot deviate from it.

"The commitment of the prime minister to transition Jamaica away from a constitutional monarchy is one that will be kept but I know persons are wondering whether we will have it done in time for the celebration of Jamaica 60," said Legal and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Marlene Malahoo-Forte.

"Unfortunately, the procedure set out in the constitution will not permit that timing to be met," she told the post Cabinet news conference, noting that in order to remove deeply entrenched provisions from the constitution, specific steps must be followed, including notice periods that must be observed and a referendum that must take place.

The former attorney general told reporters that deeply entrenched provisions of the constitution require a two-thirds vote of the members of both houses of Parliament as well as a referendum.

"Additionally, before

a bill seeking to amend an entrenched provision even comes up for debate, there is the requirement of a three-month period between the date when the bill is tabled in the House and the commencement of the debate."

Last month, Prime Minister Andrew Holness told the visiting Duke and Duchess of Cambridge that Jamaica intends to break ties with the British monarchy and fulfill "its true ambitions as an independent, developed and prosperous country" in short order.

"Jamaica is a very free and liberal country.

"The people are very expressive, and I'm certain you would have seen the spectrum of expressions. We are very proud of our history and what we have achieved, and we are moving on."

He said there are issues that remain unresolved but noted that the visit of the Duke and Duchess provides an opportunity "for those issues to be placed in context and put front and centre to be addressed".

Holness' notice that Jamaica will remove the Queen as Head of State and become a republic comes four months after Barbados officially took the step.

But Malahoo-Forte told reporters that "even if the bill were to be tabled, you would have May, June, July before any debate



*Jamaica's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Marlene Malahoo-Forte QC*

could commence because that is what the constitution says.

After the debate is concluded, you also need another three months before the bill can be passed in the House.

"If you take away nothing else, it's to understand that we have to go through a constitutional process to achieve the goal of moving Jamaica from a constitutional monarchy to a republic, and in Jamaica, we have constitutional primacy; whatever we do must be in accordance with the constitution," she said.

However, she is promising to say more when she makes her contribution to the Sectoral Debate in May.

She also said that while people are seeking to compare Jamaica with Barbados, which ditched the Queen as its head of state last November for republican status, the constitutional provisions of the two countries are different.

"Unlike Jamaica, they did not require a vote from the people [referendum] to make that important change in their constitution," she told reporters.

## U.N. suspends Russia from human rights body, Moscow then quits

Reuters - The United Nations General Assembly on Thursday suspended Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council over reports of “gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights” in Ukraine, prompting Moscow to announce it was quitting the body.

The U.S.-led push garnered 93 votes in favour, while 24 countries voted no and 58 countries abstained. A two-thirds majority of voting members in the 193-member General Assembly in New York - abstentions do not count - was needed to suspend Russia from the 47-member Geneva-based Human Rights Council.

Speaking after the vote, Russia's deputy U.N. Ambassador Gennady Kuzmin described the move as an “illegitimate and politically motivated step” and then announced that Russia had decided to quit the Human Rights Council altogether.

“You do not submit your resignation after you are fired,” Ukraine's U.N. Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya told reporters.

Russia was in its second year of a three-year term. Under Thursday's resolution, the General Assembly could have later agreed to end the suspension. But that cannot happen now Russia has quit the council, just as the United States did in 2018 over what it called chronic bias against Israel and a lack of reform.

The United States was last year re-elected to the council. Suspensions are rare. Libya was suspended in 2011 because of violence against protesters by forces loyal to then-leader Muammar Gaddafi.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United Nations “sent a clear message that the suffering of victims



*Sergiy Kyslytsya, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations delivers remarks during an emergency special session of the U.N. General Assembly on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, New York, U.S. April 7, 2022. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly*

and survivors will not be ignored.”

“We ensured a persistent and egregious human rights violator will not be allowed to occupy a position of leadership on human rights at the U.N.,” she said in remarks to be delivered to the General Assembly later on Thursday.

The Human Rights Council cannot make legally binding decisions. Its decisions send important political messages, however, and it can authorise investigations. Last month the council opened an investigation into allegations of rights violations, including possible war crimes, in Ukraine.

The resolution on Thursday was the third adopted by the 193-member General Assembly since Russia invaded neighbouring Ukraine on Feb. 24. The two previous General Assembly resolutions denouncing Russia were adopted with 141 and 140 votes in favour.

After abstaining on the previous two General Assembly votes, Russia's

partner China opposed the resolution on Thursday.

“Such a hasty move at the General Assembly, which forces countries to choose sides, will aggravate the division among member states and intensify the confrontation between the parties concerned - it is like adding fuel to the fire,” China's U.N. Ambassador Zhang Jun said before the vote.

The General Assembly text on Thursday expresses “grave concern at the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine,” particularly at reports of rights abuses by Russia.

Russia says it is carrying out a “special military operation” that aims to destroy Ukraine's military infrastructure and denies attacking civilians. Ukraine and allies say Moscow invaded without provocation.

Russia had warned countries that a yes vote or abstention will be viewed as an “unfriendly gesture” with consequences for bilateral ties.

## Senate confirms Jackson as first Black woman on U.S. Supreme Court

Reuters - Ketanji Brown Jackson was confirmed by the Senate on Thursday as the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court in a milestone for the United States and a victory for President Joe Biden, who made good on a campaign promise as he seeks to infuse the federal judiciary with a broader range of backgrounds.

The vote to confirm the 51-year-old federal appellate judge to a lifetime job on the nation's top judicial body was 53-47, with three Republicans - Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski and Mitt Romney - joining Biden's fellow Democrats.

A simple majority was needed, as Jackson overcame Republican opposition in a Supreme Court confirmation process that remains fiercely partisan.

Jackson will take the 83-year-old Breyer's place on the liberal bloc of a court with an increasingly assertive 6-3 conservative majority. Breyer is due to serve



U.S. President Joe Biden and his Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson watch as the full U.S. Senate votes to confirm Jackson as the first Black woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, from the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington, U.S., April 7, 2022. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

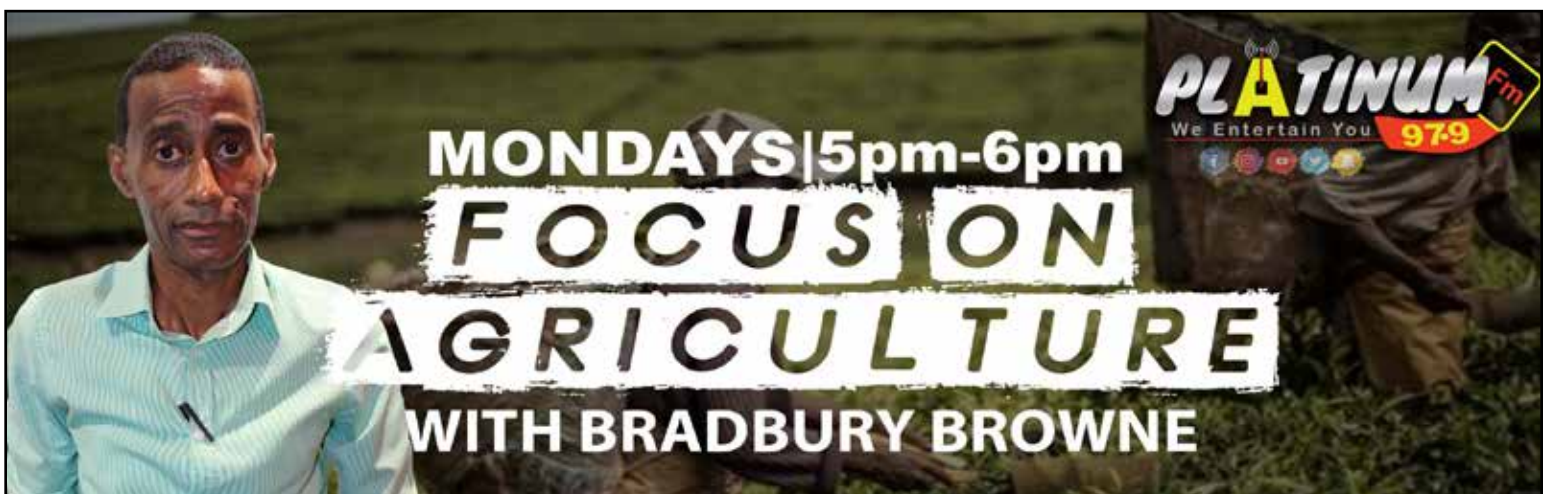
until the court's current term ends - usually in late June - and Jackson would be formally sworn in after that. Jackson served early in her career as a Supreme Court clerk for Breyer.

Democrat Raphael Warnock, one of the Senate's

three Black members, said in debate before the vote: "I'm the father of a young Black girl. I know how much it means for Judge Jackson to have navigated the double jeopardy of racism and sexism to now stand in the glory of this moment.

... Seeing Judge Jackson ascend to the Supreme Court reflects the promise of progress on which our democracy rests. What a great day it is in America."

Of the 115 people who have served on the Supreme Court, *cont'd on pg 23*



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# Pakistan court rules against Imran Khan, bringing his ouster closer

Reuters - Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that Prime Minister Imran Khan's move to dissolve parliament was unconstitutional and ordered lawmakers to return, a decision that could spell the end of his premiership as soon as Friday.

The former cricket star had moved to break up the lower chamber ahead of a no-confidence vote against him that he had looked destined to lose. The court said in its judgement that the vote should now go ahead.

"The advice tendered by the Prime Minister on or about 03.04.2022 to the President to dissolve the Assembly was contrary to the Constitution and of no legal effect," Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial said, as he read out a 13-point order to a packed courtroom.

Dozens of opposition members outside the imposing white stone building shouted in jubilation when the unanimous ruling was announced. Angry Khan supporters chanted anti-American slogans in reply as police in riot gear separated the sides.

The constitutional crisis has threatened economic and social stability in the nuclear-armed nation of 220 million people, with the rupee currency



A shopkeeper tunes a television screen to watch the speech of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, at his shop in Islamabad, Pakistan, March 31, 2022. REUTERS/Akhtar Soomro

hitting all-time lows earlier on Thursday and foreign exchange reserves tumbling.

When opposition parties united against Khan last week to push for the no-confidence motion, the deputy speaker of parliament, a member of Khan's party, threw out the motion, ruling it was part of a foreign conspiracy and unconstitutional.

Khan then dissolved parliament.

Thursday's ruling in the capital Is-

lamabad could spell the premature end of Khan's tenure in a country where no elected leader has finished their full term in office.

The 69-year-old, who steered Pakistan to cricket World Cup victory in 1992, came to power in 2018 after rallying the country behind his vision of a corruption-free, prosperous nation respected on the world stage.

But the firebrand nationalist's fame and charisma may not be enough to keep him in power. He could not deliver on all of his lofty promises and failed to avert an economic decline partly sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Khan called a cabinet meeting for Friday when he also planned to address the nation.

"My message to our nation is I have always & will continue to fight for Pak till the last ball," he tweeted.

**cont'd from pg 22**

Court since its 1789 founding, all but three have been white.

It has had two Black justices, both men: Clarence Thomas, appointed in 1991 and still serving, and Thurgood Marshall, who retired in 1991 and died in 1993. Current Justice Sonia Sotomayor is the only Hispanic ever to serve on it. Jackson is set to be-

come the sixth woman justice ever.

Presidential nominations to the Supreme Court have become a flash-point in American politics. The court wields great influence in shaping American policy on hot-button issues including abortion, guns, voting laws, LGBT rights, religious liberty, the death penalty and race-based practices.

## Man City: Der Spiegel alleges three-year Premier League investigation



*Manchester City were taken over by owners from Abu Dhabi in 2008*

BBC - An investigation into potential rule breaking at Manchester City is focused on illegal payments for underage players, inflated sponsorship deals and hidden salary payments made to a former manager, German newspaper Der Spiegel claims.

The Premier League has been investigating the club for three years, the publication says.

But Der Spiegel has now published details from its own investigation conducted in conjunction with the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) journalism network.

It offers detail on each of the three areas it claims form the focus of the Premier League's enquiries.

The Premier League and Manchester City declined to comment when approached by BBC Sport.

However, it is understood City believe the latest details are a continuation of previous allegations in relation to Financial Fair Play regulations, which they feel are designed to damage the club. It is thought the club also want to respect the ongoing process with the Premier League by not com-

menting.

According to Der Spiegel, the Premier League champions allegedly pressured underage players "to sign contracts with Manchester City through monetary payments, in violation of the rules".

Club sponsors in Abu Dhabi are alleged to have "provided only a portion of their payments to the club themselves", with the remainder reportedly made up by club owner Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi ruling family.

City are also accused of paying a "significant portion" of former manager Roberto Mancini's compensation "by way of a fictitious consultancy contract".

In 2020, City had a two-year ban from European club competitions overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport after Uefa had ruled they had committed "serious breaches" of Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations between 2012 and 2016.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said City had shown a "blatant disregard" to Uefa's investigation into

potential FFP breaches, even though it found "no conclusive evidence that they disguised funding from their owner as sponsorship".

Uefa began its investigation into City after Der Spiegel published leaked documents in November 2018 alleging the club had inflated the value of a sponsorship deal, misleading European football's governing body.

During testimony to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, a legal representative of the Finance Ministry in Abu Dhabi claimed Abu Dhabi United Group Investment & Development (ADUG) - which owned Manchester City until last year - was "completely unconnected" to the government of the United Arab Emirates or the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

In 2021, City lost a ruling by the court of appeal, which confirmed that the Premier League was continuing to investigate the champions for alleged breaches of financial fair play.

City's legal team did not want it reported that it was challenging the jurisdiction of Premier League arbitrators to investigate the case.

## UFC star Conor McGregor charged with six driving offences

AP - UFC fighter Conor McGregor appeared in a court in Dublin on Thursday charged with six driving offences.

The biggest star in mixed martial arts was stopped by police as he was driving his Bentley in west Dublin on March 22.

McGregor was accused of two counts of dangerous driving, as well as driving without insurance and a licence and failing to produce a certificate of insurance or licence.

McGregor did not speak during the court appearance. He was handed a copy of the charge sheet.

McGregor's solicitor, Michael

Staines, told the court that McGregor's licence and insurance were shown to police on Thursday. McGregor was bailed and will appear at the same court on June 23.

McGregor hasn't fought since injuring his left leg in a loss to Dustin Poirier at UFC 264 in July.

Speaking to media outside the court, McGregor said he was looking forward to "going straight back" into training.

Asked if he has an opponent in mind, McGregor said: "We will see what happens. Taking it day by day. The leg is getting better every day and I am happy with that."



Connor McGregor



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## TDO says ABNOC unlikely to release development plan before next month

The public will have to wait several more weeks before a development plan is released by the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC).

Technical Development Officer (TDO) Charles “Chucky” Bellot said he developed and submitted the plan to ABNOC in early January, 2022.

He said preparing the plan formed part of the responsibilities he undertook when he was appointed as TDO by ABNOC on 19th February, 2021.

He said, however, that the plan, which is geared towards improving Antigua and Barbuda’s athletes’ performances in regional and international competitions, is unlikely to be released to the public before next month.

“The plan has, in fact, been submitted and honestly speaking, it was well received. The ABNOC has one or two items on its plate that it has to take care of before, or in advance of delving into the plan,” Bellot said.

“It has to examine the plan and break it down into work groups...the whole train of events such as sensitising the public and an-



*Technical Development Officer of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee Charles ‘Chucky’ Bellot. (Photo: Charles Bellot)*

nouncing the programme formally.

“So, my best guess is that sometime early in the month of May, you will hear or see some more traction as far as that is concerned.”

Bellot said the development plan will implement an approach which will aim to significantly enhance Antigua and Barbuda’s athletes to improve and maximise their competitive potential.

“It’s a different approach. To paraphrase

Albert Einstein, ‘The significant challenges or problems that we face as a nation and as a people, cannot be solved with the same mindset that we had when we created them.’ So, whatever the plan is, once it’s announced, rest assured it will signal a complete shift in the approach towards sports in Antigua and Barbuda, the ABNOC’s role in sports, its attitude towards sports, the development of athletes, not just at the elite level, but...from grass-

roots, from cradle to grave.

“Of course, it will form part of hopefully, what is to be a difference in approach to sports, even from a governmental point of view.”

Bellot said the ABNOC is already sold out on the idea that it must play a more meaningful and supporting role in developing elite athletes in Antigua and Barbuda.

“I can say, I think the time is right and the mood and mindset of many of the members of the ABNOC’s executive is such that we want to improve performances at the elite level, at the world stages, and so I think everybody is sold on the concept that we can’t wait for elite athletes to be presented to us. We have to get involved and try and help in supporting in a more meaningful way whether it is financially, which is always a ticklish part, but there are other ways of supporting.

“But the president (Paul Chet Greene), the general secretary (Cliff Williams) and the executive members are really the ones who should be given the opportunity to reveal and to announce this to Antigua and Barbuda and the world.”

## OCS claim Boys' Division volleyball championship

Ottos Comprehensive were confirmed as winners of the Boys' Division of the Advanced Secondary Schools' Volleyball Championships on Wednesday.

Ottos Comprehensive claimed victory after Sir Novelle Richards Academy lost in straight sets, 20-25, 13-25, to Pares Secondary at the indoor volleyball facility at the YMCA Sports Complex.

The result ensured that Pares and Sir Novelle Richards Academy would end their campaign with 10 points each, the same as Ottos Comprehensive, who still have a rescheduled game to play against Jennings Secondary.

However, Ottos Comprehensive secured the championship victory after winning more sets than any of their opponents.

Ottos Comprehensive can still surpass the overall points tally of both Sir



*Ottos Comprehensive (yellow jersey) were confirmed as winners of the Boys' Division of the Advanced Secondary Schools Volleyball Championships on Wednesday, 6th April, 2022. (File photo)*

Novelle Richards Academy and Pares by winning the final game of the competition against Jennings Secondary.

Coordinator of the Inter-Schools Volleyball Programme, former national player Rosalie Lewis, said the overall number of sets won by Pares and Sir Novelle Richards Academy will be used to determine

the second place finishers.

Clare Hall Secondary also recorded a 25-13, 25-17 victory over All Saints Secondary in their final Boys' Division encounter, while Ottos Comprehensive prevailed 25-20, 25-23 against Sir Novelle Richards Academy in a Girls' Division affair on Wednesday.

The Antigua Girls'

High School won the title in the Girls' Division, which was contested by five teams, edging out Ottos Comprehensive and Clare Hall Secondary.

The top four teams in the Boys' and the top three finishers in the Girls' divisions of the Advanced Secondary Schools, will compete in a one-day volleyball tournament at Fort James Beach on Sunday at 9am.

The male teams are Ottos Comprehensive School, Sir Novelle Richards Academy, Pares Secondary and Princess Margaret Schools.

The female teams are Antigua Girls' High School, Ottos Comprehensive School and Clare Hall Secondary.

They will be joined by Christ the King High School, who won the last beach competition to be hosted by the Inter-schools' Volleyball Unit.

### cont'd from pg 28

anced mixture of persons with sporting and administrative experience, enjoyed a promising initial executive meeting.

"It was a pretty good meeting. When I started the ground work in selecting this executive, it was about finding the right mix and balance of experience administratively and sports in general and ensuring we had some sort of continuity from one executive to the next," Freeland said.

"So, the nucleus of the executive fits well with that structure. All of us, in some way or shape I would say,

are a part of basketball. Who are not coaches, are past players, administrators, that sort of thing.

"It's a basketball executive family basically, so when we got to the table for our first executive meeting, we were already discussing some of the things that we had been working on and it was just a matter of making some decisions moving forward.

Matthew, a former national player, is serving for the first time on the national executive body. He said he is looking forward to the new challenge of contributing to the sport at an administrative level.

"We hit the floor running so we are trying to get it going. We had our first meeting as an executive and I think we hammered out some really good ideas, so I am looking forward to the challenge," Matthew said.

"I really relished the opportunity because I know, with my experience, there is a lot that I can add to the executive.

"Just being a player for all these years, you know sometimes what you are lacking and with that sort of a background, just thinking as a player within the executive will help bolster the sports a lot."

## ABBA executive to forge closer ties with clubs

Newly elected President Michael Freeland has said the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA) will support affiliated clubs in an effort to foster a closer working relationship and to attract fans to the game during their four-year term.

Freeland and his nine-member team were elected at ABBA's Annual General Meeting on 22nd March and held their first meeting four days later to discuss plans for 2022 and beyond.

With the 2020 and 2021 domestic seasons lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Freeland said the ABBA executive's primary objectives are to resume basketball and attract fans back to games, goals that can only be achieved with the help of affiliated clubs.

"It was very important for us to actually wrap our minds as to how we can get basketball fans back and get basketball back on the minds of players," he said.

"As you know, the COVID-19 situation really dampened our season and we were all very saddened that we had to lose the sea-

son and we lost, not only the 2020 season, but two years of basketball.

"So, we wanted to look at how we can bring back the sport and bring it back in a manner that persons would be excited about.

"We want the clubs to know that they have the support of the executive, however we can make it work, and I am not saying we can do it all or we can do the most, but we want to be a part of anything the clubs are doing to benefit the sport.

"We want to be a part of that so that we can strengthen that bond between clubs, executive and basketball fanatics."

Two people who served on the previous executive which was led by the organisation's first female ABBA President, Kebra Nanton, have been reelected. Former Assistant Treasurer/Assistant General Secretary Gilbert Findlay now holds the post of First Vice-President and Jennell Willette has been retained as General Secretary.

Also elected to serve on the new ABBA executive are Second Vice-President



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association Michael Freeland. (Photo: Michael Freeland)

Vere Cornelius and Treasurer Charmaine Weatherill.

The other executive members are Inga Francis, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, Public Relations

Officer, Carlena Knight and Floor Members Brian "Hollywood" Matthew and Jenae Spencer.

Freeland said his team, comprising a good, balanced group of people, is committed to making the sport a success. *cont'd on pg 27*