

ANTIGUA/BARBUDA WELCOMES QUEEN'S BATON



Queen's Baton is here!

The Queen's Baton is currently on a tour of the 72 Commonwealth countries ahead of the Commonwealth Games from July 28 to August 8, 2022

The Baton arrived in St John's on Thursday and was greeted by an official party at the V. C. Bird International Airport.

The welcome party included Governor General Sir Rodney Williams, the resident British High Commissioner, Lindsay Thompson, President of the National Olympic Committee, E. P.



Chet Greene, Sports Minister, Daryll Matthew, Chair of the welcome committee, Neil Cochrane and Chef De Mission of the Common-

wealth Games for Antigua and Barbuda, Joel Rayne.

The Baton arrived from neighbouring Anguilla on a special flight and was pre-

sented to Governor General Williams who in turn handed it over the NOC's President Greene.

Cochrane said the Baton will spend the night "in a place of safety" and it will travel to Barbuda on Friday before returning to Antigua on Saturday.

On Saturday, it will spend the day at the Interpretation Centre in the Nelson's Dockyard National Park before being taken to Government House where a reception will take place in its honour.



Cabinet meets PMS student athletes

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda welcomed two student athletes from the Princess Margaret Secondary School (PMS), along with their principal, Colin Greene this week.

PMS enjoyed phenomenal success in the just concluded Inter-schools' Championships, where their athletes dominated in both

the male and female track and field events.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne expressed his wishes for even greater success in the future and encouraged the athletes to continue to perform outstandingly in their academics as well.

The Prime Minister, as an alum-

nus of PMS, was presented with a t-shirt emblazoned with the tagline, "Home of the Champions."

One of the two student athletes was also a medallist at the CARIFTA games held earlier last month.

Minister of Education and Sports, Daryll Matthew, was also presented with the schools' championship shirt.

Alrick Daniel sworn in as ABEC Commissioner

Alrick Daniel is the Antigua Barbuda Electoral Commission's (ABEC) newest commissioner, filling the position left behind by the retirement of former chairman, Nathaniel "Paddy" James.

The top ABEC position was filled by former commissioner, John Jarvis, in April creating a space on the commission.

Daniel was sworn in and received his instruments of appointment from H. E. Governor General Sir Rodney Williams on Thursday in a ceremony at Government House.

"Your responsibility is to ensure that the confidence of

the people in the democratic system is solid. We do hope that you would use your experience well, that you would use your knowledge well and follow the laws of the electoral process clearly, and wherever those laws may appear vague, that you will use your discretion and seek clarity and counsel where it may be obtained", said Sir Rodney.

In response to this charge, Commissioner Daniel said, "I am very honoured to be selected to serve on a body that represents the advancement of democracy in Antigua and Barbuda. The Commission has a major role to play in maintaining a transparent

electoral process in the country and I am pleased that I will be a part of that process."

Daniel is returning to ABEC as a commissioner having served briefly from August 2014 to July 2015.

He brings a wealth of experience to his new role having worked in labour relations and human resource management with various global agencies including the International Domestic Workers Federation based in Hong Kong, as the Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean.

He has also spent time contributing to other international projects including



Newly appointed ABEC Commissioner Alrick Daniel

the Programme for Management Labour Cooperation (PROMALCO), Trafficking-in-Person and HIV/AIDS Workplace policy.

Here at home, he has brought his expertise to several roles including appointments with the National Labour Board, National Minimum Wage Committee, Social Security and Country Coordinating Mechanism.



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Antigua and Barbuda hosts Green Climate Fund Board Meeting this month

The 32nd meeting of the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) will be held from Monday, 16th to 19th May in Antigua and Barbuda at the historic Nelson's Dockyard National Park.

Pre-meetings commence a day earlier on 15th May.

The GCF is a global multilateral Fund which was established to support the efforts of developing



countries in responding to the challenges of climate change.

The Fund provides financial instruments such as grant, loans equity, and guarantees resources for low-emission and climate-resilient development.

The funds provided by the GCF comes from developed country governments, which contribute funding as part of their obligations under the international UN Climate Change Convention.

The GCF provides funding through entities that undertake a rigorous accreditation process. These Accredited Entities include the World Bank, UNDP and other UN agencies and direct access entities (DAEs).

Antigua and Barbuda is one of only three CARICOM countries with a DAE.

The Small Island Developing State (SIDS) seat on the GCF Board is held by Antigua and Barbuda's Nadia Spencer-Henry, Debt Manager in the Ministry of Finance. She is supported by, advisor, Michai Roberston and other key members

of the DoE and the Ministry of Finance.

While in Antigua and Barbuda, the GCF will also stage a technical meeting from the 19-21st May at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

During this time, more than 200 participants are expected to attend both in person and virtually.

Support for the large-scale GCF meeting will be provided by the Department of the Environment (DoE) in tandem with the National Parks Authority (NPA).

The Board of the Green Climate Fund generally holds three meetings per year, which, pre-COVID, were typically attended by more than 300 participants, including observers from civil society and private sector organisations, National Designated Authorities (NDAs), which are the national conduits to the Fund, and Accredited Entities and other partners who assist in delivering climate finance to developing countries.



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Rare “Blood Moon” visible from Antigua/Barbuda this Sunday

Antiguans and Barbudans will have the opportunity to enjoy a rare, total lunar eclipse this Sunday.

The celestial event, which will begin on Sunday at about 9:32pm, will reach its peak around 12:11 am on 16th May and end at about 2:50am.

A total eclipse happens as the full moon moves into the deep umbral shadow of the Earth.

This weekend’s eclipse will be visible in total phase from portions of the Americas, Antarctica, Europe, Africa and the east Pacific.

Other regions of the world will experience it as a penumbral eclipse which arises when the moon is in the lighter penumbral shadow



A Blood Moon total lunar eclipse will occur on May 15-16, 2022 and will look similar to this view of one from July 2018. (Image: ESA/CESAR-M. Castillo)

of Earth. This view will be visible in New Zealand, eastern Europe and the Middle East.

The first eclipse of 2022 is also unique in that it is also a supermoon which means that the full moon will be at its closest

to Earth this month making it a Super Blood Moon eclipse.

The second, and only other lunar eclipse of 2022, takes place on 8th November and is expected to be visible, at least partially, from Asia, Australia, North

America, parts of northern and eastern Europe, the Arctic and most of South America.

2023 will also see two lunar eclipses. The first will be another penumbral eclipse from 5th to 6th May, visible at least partially from southern and eastern Europe, Antarctica, most of Asia, Australia, Africa as well as the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans.

The second will be a partial eclipse between 28th and 29th October, visible at least partially from Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, North America, northern and eastern South America, the Arctic, Antarctica and the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.

Antigua/Barbuda joins Airbnb ‘Live and Work Anywhere’ campaign to promote digital nomads

Antigua and Barbuda has joined the Airbnb “Live and Work Anywhere” campaign to promote the destination to the growing number of digital nomads worldwide.

Colin C. James, chief executive officer of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority said, “Remote working is part of our new norm, and we are delighted that this Airbnb Campaign will allow those consumers seeking to capitalise on the freedom to work from anywhere in the world, to easily source information on the range of accommodation throughout Antigua and Barbuda to meet their needs.”

As flexibility becomes a permanent part of so many company cul-

tures, Airbnb wants to make it easier for workers to take advantage of their newly enshrined flexibility. With more than 6 million listings worldwide, the platform launched last Thursday its “Live and Work Anywhere” program, an ongoing initiative to continue working with governments and DMOs to create a one-stop-shop for remote workers, and encourage them to try new locations to work, while helping to revive tourism and provide economic support to communities after years of travel restrictions.

For the Caribbean region, Airbnb found that:

- The share of nights booked for long term stays in Q1 2022 almost



doubled compared to the same period in 2019.

- In Q1 2019, almost 6 percent of all bookings were for long term stays, while in Q1 2022 this percentage reached almost 10 percent.

- The number of nights booked for long term stays tripled in Q1’22 compared to Q1’19.

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Care Project to benefit from CIBC FirstCaribbean donation

Surprise and joy were emotions expressed by officials at the Care Project as the institution received a substantial donation from CIBC FirstCaribbean on Wednesday May 11, 2022.

“We are not surprised that CIBC FirstCaribbean responded to our request for assistance as they have done so in the past. But this large amount of \$10,000 was not expected,” said Acting Matron, Ashline Francis-Samuel.

“Now we will be able to purchase all the much-needed equipment and supplies which are urgently required. We are so happy and grateful,” she added.

Dawn Soleyn, the bank’s branch manager, who made the presentation said that while Covid has changed and affected many things, one thing that has not changed is the bank’s corporate commitment to its social responsibility.

“Once we understand and see the need, you can be assured that as long as we are in the position to do so, we will respond positively. We recognise the important role being played by the Care Project in the care of our different-



Acting Matron Ashline Francis-Samuel, Care Project’s Operations Manager Sandy Daniel, Dawn Soleyn, CIBC FirstCaribbean’s Branch Manager and the bank’s Corporate Manager Priscilla Leonce.

ly abled children and adults and we are so privileged to be able to assist”

Also speaking during the short presentation ceremony was Ms. Sandy Daniel, the Care Project’s Operations Manager, who also thanked the bank for the timely donation.

“This is amazing. We approached CIBC FirstCaribbean in March and never expected a donation of this size. We are so happy and on behalf of all

our patients, we express our thanks.”

The bank previously assisted the Care Project in 2009, 2011 and 2012.

The CARE Project, which was established in 2015 is housed in the building that was previously the Children’s Ward at the Holberton Hospital and is a 24-hour facility which provides residential care, medical and personal assistance to 11 differently abled and autistic children and adults.

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Continuing the effort to partner with governments and tourism agencies to promote responsible travel and local economic growth,

Airbnb in partnership with the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) will promote CTO member countries with digital nomad programs across Airbnb’s

vast global community.

This campaign will promote Antigua and Barbuda through a landing page that provides details about the digital nomad program,

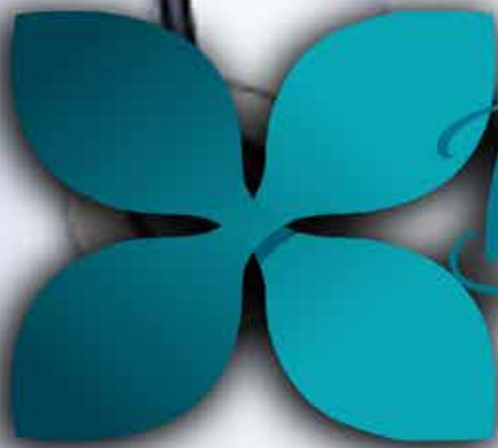
and also highlights the best Airbnb options to stay in and work from in Antigua and Barbuda.

Airbnb policy manager for Central America and the Caribbean Carlos Muñoz, said, “Airbnb is proud to partner again with the CTO in order to keep promoting different destinations in the Caribbean so people can work and travel within. This campaign is a new joint effort that will continue to help with the promotion of the wonderful region.”

Fri 13 Day 84° Partly cloudy skies. High 84F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.		Fri 13 Night 77° Partly cloudy skies. Low 77F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.	
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The Summit of the Americas – wise heads should prevail

By **Sir Ronald Sanders**

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

The Summit of the Americas, scheduled to be held in Los Angeles from June 8 to 10, should be regarded by all the Heads of Government, as a golden opportunity to address the many challenges now confronting the hemisphere.

Indeed, the impact of the present global environment on the economies, health and people of the area, is crying out for collective attention at the highest levels.

Of critical importance are: the threat to world peace and stability, posed by Russia's military aggression in Ukraine; the economic impact of the war in Ukraine and the consequent sanctions on Russia that have disrupted the global supply of food and oil, creating high costs and increasing inflation; economic recovery from the disastrous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and planning for future pandemics; the urgency for action to halt Climate Change that remains as a dagger at the heart of every hemispheric nation, particularly

small island states; and the preservation of democracy, including human, civil and political rights.

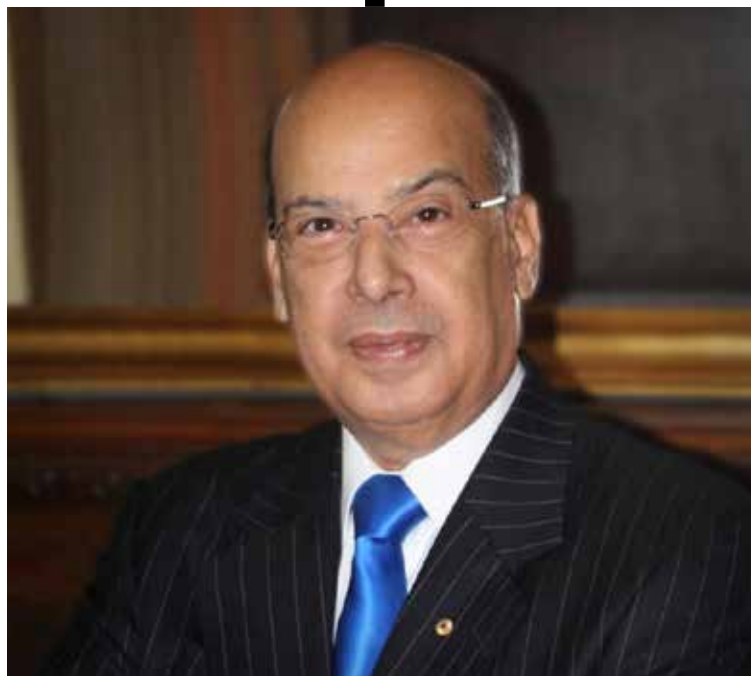
But the golden opportunity is being lost. The Summit is in danger of poor attendance.

Governments of several Latin American and Caribbean states regard an official US government statement, made on April 27 by Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols, that Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela would not be invited, as exclusionary. They have indicated a reluctance to attend if the three governments are snubbed.

Since Nichols' statement and the response by these governments, President Biden's Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, said on May 10, that "We haven't made a decision about who will be invited, and no invitations have been issued yet".

This may be an indication that some re-thinking is being done in the White House, and there could be modification of the plans that were previously being pursued and to which Nichols provided insight. We must hope that is the case.

But President Biden is under severe domestic political pressure to exclude Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela while he is also being urged to invite Juan Guaidó as the "Interim President"



Sir Ronald Sanders

of Venezuela. The latter is a farce, started under the presidency of Donald Trump, that the Biden administration has continued even though Guaidó has no control over anything in Venezuela – a fact tacitly acknowledged by US authorities when, on March 7, they dispatched a high-level team to Caracas to explore the possibility of the Nicolás Maduro government pumping more oil to help offset the effects of sanctions on Russian oil sales.

While Biden may be able to drop any plans for inviting Guaidó to the Summit, thus satisfying some governments that have steadfastly not recognized him as President of Venezuela, it would be difficult in the present US political climate for him to invite Cuba,

Nicaragua and the Maduro Government even if he wanted to.

The pressure on President Biden is coming from a number of sources, including US commentators and more particularly Congresspersons, such as Marco Rubio and Bob Menendez who have adopted a hard line on the governments in Cuba and Venezuela.

There are as many Congressional representatives from the Democratic Party as they are from the Republican party who feel the same way. One commentator has suggested that Biden should tell those who suggest that they will not attend the Summit, "If you want to side with these dictatorships instead of with their victims, you are welcome to

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 stay at home.”

All this places President Biden in a difficult situation. Both he and his advisors are aware that the Summit is a “Summit of the Americas”; it is not a US Summit.

The US is Chairing the Summit because it requested to host it. But does hosting the meeting give the Chair the right to disqualify attendance by other Heads of Government?

Also, clearly the US government – and many other governments – are concerned about the violations of democratic principles and practices and of human rights in some hemispheric states.

Therefore, does the Summit not present an opportunity for a frank discussion by all, including the Governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, of these issues?

It could not have escaped those who want a fully inclusionary Summit to recognize that such a discussion

would have to happen.

The risk would be that it would dominate the Summit which could become rancorous, and which would fail to deal with crucial issues that should be discussed.

In other words, the Summit could be in danger of imploding, accomplishing nothing but the creation of a very divided hemisphere.

All countries would have to think carefully about the immediate and long-term effect of such a development because there should be no doubt that the majority of countries in South and Central America, would side with the US.

They will, after all, be very concerned about their own national interests, including trade, transportation links, investment, and development assistance.

At one point, consideration was being given by governments, including some in the Caribbean, to attend the Summit, and to argue for the posi-

tions of Cuba and Maduro from within the meeting.

There is still every reason to maintain this position, thereby preserving the benefits of the Summit while putting forward arguments for an improvement in the relationship with the Cuban and Venezuelan governments.

Advancing vigorous arguments within the Summit on behalf of Cuba and Venezuela has to be better than being absent from the table and achieving nothing for anyone.

There is need for understanding by other governments of the difficulties faced by President Biden should he invite the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, and a willingness, at the very least, by the President not to seek to impose Juan Guaidó on elected leaders.

The Summit is an opportunity. Wise heads should guide the actions of all.

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Workplace



The toxic 'cut-throat' culture that drives out workers

By Alex Christian

Many employees thrive in high-pressure work environments. But ruthless cultures can poison the well, eroding wellbeing and ultimately driving out workers.

When Anthony was called into a meeting room at work, he expected the worst. Following a market downturn, lay-offs at his Hong Kong firm were imminent; the investment banker was aware his job was at risk. "Cuts were coming, but no one was sure if their job was on the line – it was a secret management kept from us."

In the company's cut-throat environment, this kind of secrecy was par for the course. In Anthony's line of work, firms vied with one another for the highest-paying clients. Rivalry spilled over among internal teams. Employees were made to fight for their futures; every year, the bottom 10% of performers would automatically face the sack.

Finally, Anthony's boss delivered the news. "We were told everyone in our meeting room would be staying – everyone else on the floor would be fired. Desks were cleared, people were marched out and then placed on gardening leave. I never saw them again."

For Anthony, this kind of workplace culture meant he had to become ruthless if he wanted to keep his job.



"Competition permeated the whole firm," he adds. "You survive long term if you're political, prepared to put in insane hours and not make enemies of certain people. It's a dog-eat-dog world. It breeds chest-beating, Spartan-like behaviour: 'I work longer hours than you'. You either fight and work harder than the next man, or you're quickly out the door. It can be absolutely brutal."

While a degree of healthy competition in a company can be beneficial, a ruthless, cut-throat environment seems to poison workplaces. In fact, an analysis of 1.4 million reviews written by US employees on company-reviews website Glassdoor shows toxic workplace culture was the leading cause of resignations last year. One of the biggest factors in this toxicity was cut-throat culture: hyper-competitive work

environments featuring continuous undermining from management and colleagues.

Competition seems to be in the DNA of certain sectors, companies and even employees. Yet it's clear companies need to do more to draw the line between rivalry that can be motivating, albeit high-pressured, versus toxic – or risk an exodus of unhappy staff.

Defining cut-throat culture

Cut-throat culture has been a fixture of workplaces for decades, particularly in professional services where only certain employees will ever climb to the top of the corporate ladder.

Johnny C Taylor Jr, president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), based in Washington, DC, says these kinds of workplace cultures breed internal competition

between workers from day one. "In law firms, there are a large number of recruits with only a few ever making that coveted partner status. So, by definition, you have to do better than your colleagues if you want to make it."

These internal tensions are often further stoked by competition with rival businesses for the highest-paying clients. Taylor says this competitive corporate culture begins at the executive level, and cascades via middle management down to junior-level employees. "Cut-throat is where an organisation over-values competition to the point that their main focus is to beat another company. If you're in the 100 top law firms, you're naturally going to fight to remain there when you're up against tens of thousands competing against you."

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Cut-throat culture is often synonymous with toxic workplaces. The recent analysis of Glassdoor reviews by human capital insights firm CultureX, seen by BBC Worklife, shows mentions of “cut-throat” are often listed alongside problems like being unable to raise issues, speak freely or promote racial equity at work; abusive leadership, favouritism and negative feedback are also frequently cited. Phrases like “Darwinian”, “back-stabbing” and “two-faced” are used to describe cut-throat environments.

According to the research, although mentions of “cut-throat” appeared in just 1% of 1.4 million reviews across 40 industries, use of the term had one of the biggest impacts on a company’s rating. “The most frequent criticism of an organisation will be compensation – but it has a mild effect on an employee’s overall review,” explains Charlie Sull, co-founder of CultureX, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, US. “Toxic culture, however, significantly tanks a Glassdoor rating. And ‘cut-throat’ is one of its biggest factors: it’s on the same level as unethical and exclusionary behaviour. It’s a very powerful driver of employee dissatisfaction.”

Glassdoor data shows cut-throat culture appears across a wide variety of sectors, from Big Tech to aerospace and construction. There is also a higher prevalence in media and entertainment, as well industries that have more frontline employees, such as in retail and health. “Cut-throat culture can even exist in non-profits,” says Taylor. “It’s ultimately people-led: if management believes in winning by all means, then it becomes the corporate culture.”

Age, gender and seniority play their part in determining cut-throat work environments. Taylor says firms with this kind of culture often have leadership that skews towards older white men, those who “understand the rules of the game”. Cut-throat firms can also have a

lack of diversity at employee-level. Anthony describes his industry dominated by alpha males. “The attitude is to put everyone in the snake pit and see who climbs out,” he adds. “It’s a very aggressive, macho, male-dominated work environment.”

For some, this competitive workplace culture can be an immediate turn-off. Angela says she quit her job at a major consulting firm in New York City after realising climbing the corporate ladder meant playing – and winning – at internal politics. “Everyone was gunning for promotion: it wasn’t the work you were doing, but who you knew that could vouch for you,” she explains. “I didn’t necessarily have those mentors and people vouching for me. As a recent graduate, I’d had a notion of meritocracy in the workplace – it was a big shock to me.”

Can competitive companies change?

While cut-throat culture seems to be a huge indicator of employee dissatisfaction, references to it seem to be declining, according to Glassdoor figures. Sull

believes this is due to the rise of remote working; fewer face-to-face interactions have somewhat muted toxicity issues.

“It’s one thing if your boss is mean to you on a virtual call, another if it’s done to your face,” he adds. “Our hypothesis is that cut-throat culture has been hibernating during Covid and hybrid work – it’s become less immediate.”

Yet it seems unlikely it’s going away. In a recent survey of more than 16,000 business leaders, across 650 global organisations, seen by BBC Worklife, CultureX found political connections influenced promotions more than collaboration. Respondents were also nearly as likely to say there were factions among their top teams as there was cohesion. It implies that cut-throat culture remains widespread.

“Culture and toxicity are very obdurate forces,” says Sull. “They don’t change much unless they’re pushed very hard, or there’s a sudden shock like a major CEO-led culture change initiative. Even if the company wants to

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Puffed with pride: Cuba's legendary hand-rolled cigars post record sales in 2021

By Dave Sherwood

Cuba's state cigar monopoly, Habanos S.A., said on Wednesday it logged record sales of its famous hand-rolled smokes in 2021, rebounding strongly after two years of pandemic-induced sluggishness. Curbs on travel in 2020 due to the coronavirus had dealt a serious blow to demand from countries reliant on tourism as well as sales at key duty-free shops in airports around the world, denting revenue.

But Habanos reported revenue jumped 15% over the previous year, according to a statement on its website, as vaccination programs began to take effect and some global travel resumed.

Cuba's hand-rolled cigars, which include brands such as Cohiba, Montecristo and Partagas, are considered by many the best in the world.

The good news on cigar sales, one of the communist-run country's top exports, is a rare bright spot for the Cuban economy, which has been hammered by the pandemic and tightened U.S. sanctions. Habanos said in its statement it would also make uniform prices across markets for its coveted high-end cigars, using Hong Kong as a benchmark for setting the price of both its exclusive



Cigars from Cuban luxury tobacco brand Cohiba are on display at a tobacco shop in Hanau, Germany, May 12, 2017. REUTERS/Kai Pfaffenbach

Cohiba and Trinidad brand cigars.

Cigar Aficionado, a top cigar industry publication, predicted the larger Cohibas will soon exceed a price tag of \$100 per cigar on the announcement, noting that the Hong Kong market is among the priciest globally.

"Bigger Cohibas will sell for \$100 each ... and boxes will no longer be priced in the hundreds of dollars, but in the thousands," the publication said in a story on its website on Tuesday.

Habanos usually holds a festival early in the year for tobacco aficionados

and retailers featuring tours of Cuba's historic plantations and factories as well as evening social events that provide opportunities to puff on Cuban smokes. This year, however, the party was once again called off.

The Cuban cigar maker said Spain, China, Germany, France and Switzerland are the top markets for Cuban cigars. The Caribbean island cannot sell its signature export to the biggest market worldwide for cigars, the United States, due to the decades-old U.S. trade embargo.

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change, and knows how to, it's a generally slow process that can take years in large organisations."

Across traditionally high-pressure and competitive industries, such as finance and law, however, there may be little appetite to overhaul the cut-throat environments that turn over huge profits, despite trends in other sectors towards building kinder workplaces. Many of

the biggest firms are multinational institutions with decades-old working practices that have become baked in over time. Change, therefore, may be hard to come by.

In these industries, Taylor suggests firms should implement "guardrails" to keep cut-throat culture in check, creating healthier competition.

"There should be an agreement that no individual can win at the cost to

their colleagues or organisation," he says. "Management should establish what constitutes ethical or unethical behaviour – guiding principles that articulate a good work culture."

Without such measures in place, a win-at-all-costs mentality creates the kind of toxic environment that, ultimately, forces employees to quit. Although Anthony still works in finance, he says his cut-throat days are, thankfully, behind

him.

"It was always, 'We're the best bank because we do the best work, have the best price performance and raise the most money,'" he explains.

"I became so wrapped up in the money and lifestyle of it all until I eventually hit a wall. I was a mess, snatching a bit of sleep at my desk at night, pulling all-nighters. I knew I couldn't do it anymore: I quit."

Mario Batali acquittal underscores perils of #MeToo cases

By Philip Marcelo

Bill Cosby was released from prison when his conviction that he drugged and assaulted a woman was overturned. Quarterback Deshaun Watson landed a record-setting \$230 million contract, despite an investigation into allegations he assaulted 22 women. Celebrity chef Mario Batali was acquitted this week on just the second day of his sexual assault trial in Boston.

Nearly five years into the #MeToo era, former prosecutors, legal experts and victims' advocates say prosecuting sexual misconduct cases has proven to be no easier than before the reckoning that ignited a firestorm of accusations against powerful, seemingly untouchable men.

Cases such as Batali's, if nothing else, reinforce how the criminal justice system remains "an extremely imperfect tool" for addressing the needs of survivors, said Emily Martin, a vice president at the National Women's Law Center, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

"Failure to get a criminal conviction doesn't mean that abuse didn't happen or that it was okay," she said. "It will often be extremely hard to prove sexual misconduct beyond a reasonable doubt, especially given the gender stereotypes that lead many people to be especially distrusting when women share their experiences of sexual assault."

Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Ian Polumbaum, who helped prosecute Batali, declined to comment specifically about the case Wednesday but said sexual assault cases are among the most challenging to prosecute.

"Sexual assault survivors are still trusted less than any other kind of crime victim," he said. "That's the perception we're always fighting. Part of it is public attitudes, part of it is the private nature of



This combination of 2017-2020 photos shows, from left, Dr. Larry Nassar, Mario Batali, and Harvey Weinstein. Legal experts and victims' advocates say celebrity chef Batali's acquittal on sexual assault charges underscores the inherent difficulties of prosecuting such cases nearly five years into the #MeToo era. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya, John Minchillo; David L. Ryan/The Boston Globe via AP)

the crime in most cases."

Accusing a person of wealth or stature only adds to the challenge because of the heightened public attention and the increased scrutiny of the victim's alleged motives, Polumbaum said.

"We're not afraid to bring the tough cases if they're supported by evidence," he added. "And we hope that survivors are not deterred from coming forward, either."

Batali's case also reinforces how crucial the credibility of the accuser is in a misconduct case, especially when there's scant additional evidence or witnesses to support the claims, says Laurie Levenson, a former federal prosecutor in California who is now a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

The former Food Network personality Batali, 61, was accused of aggressively kissing and groping a woman while taking a selfie at a bar in 2017. Boston prosecutors largely relied on photos taken at the bar that night and the testimony of the now 32-year-old software company worker who accused him of the misconduct.

But Batali's lawyers honed in on

the woman's pending civil suit against Batali, which seeks more than \$50,000 in damages, as well as her recent admission that she'd tried to get out of jury duty in another criminal case by claiming to be clairvoyant and, in a separate incident, faked lease documents just to get out of paying a \$200 gym fee.

"These cases are never going to be easy," Levenson said. "But even in the #MeToo era, you need credible victims."

Levenson hopes the Batali verdict serves as a cautionary reminder to abuse survivors that they will always be held to a higher standard, especially in high profile cases.

"There's more temptation in these cases to go off course, and by doing so, you undercut the credibility of your own case," Levenson said. "The whole celebrity nature of it leads victims to do things like offer to sell their story, make demands for money or somehow sensationalize what occurred."

But Stewart Ryan, a former assistant district attorney in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, who helped prosecute Cosby, argued a sexual abuse survivor

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Dancehall artiste Shaggy to receive honorary degree from Brown University

He's "boombastic" and he's fantastic, and Brown University, a private Ivy League research institution located in Providence, Rhode Island, recognises that fact and is honouring Shaggy in a huge way at the end of the month.

The Grammy award winning reggae and dancehall artiste has been selected to receive an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the university.

Shaggy, whose real name is Orville Burrell, is among nine candidates who will be bestowed with honorary degrees during the university's Commencement and Reunion Weekend from May 27 to 29.

According to a Brown University release, honorary degree highlights will include a Commencement oration delivered by Speaker of the US House of Representatives



Nancy Pelosi; a Baccalaureate address by public health leader Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and an honorary degree oration for the Class of 2020 by Shaggy, a former US Marine.

"A Brown tradition since 1769, the annual presentation of honorary degrees offers our community the chance to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of leaders from a wide variety of backgrounds," Brown President Christina H. Paxson is quoted as saying. "Having made tremendous impacts in govern-

ment, public health, the arts, global affairs, science and technology, and more, this year's distinguished recipients offer a superb example to our newest graduates."

Born Orville Richard Burrell and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, two-time Grammy Award winner Shaggy got his start as an emcee in New York City's dancehall scene after moving to Brooklyn in his teens.

Not long after serving four years in the US Marines, including two tours of duty in the Middle East as part of

Operation Desert Storm, he earned his first record deal and scored a global crossover hit with Oh Carolina.

As the only diamond-selling dancehall artiste in music history, Shaggy has sold more than 40 million album units to date in addition to landing eight singles on the Billboard Hot 100 and seven albums on the Billboard 200, including four in the top 40. He is among the top three streamed reggae artistes of all time on Spotify.

Not only a pioneering songwriter, Shaggy has used his platform to strengthen his community and homeland. In 2009, he established the Shaggy Make a Difference Foundation and organised the first of many Shaggy & Friends benefit concerts, which, to date, have raised millions for the Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston. (Jamaica Gleaner)

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also seeking damages in a civil lawsuit should be viewed no differently than someone who was hit by a drunk driver suing the defendant while they face criminal charges. He also stressed the rate of false reports of sexual assault are "minute" compared to the "far greater percentage of survivors" who never report an attack at all.

"One reason, unfortunately, is the sort of tactics employed here, questioning the motives of a survivor with questions wholly unrelated to whether or not a sexual assault in fact occurred," Ryan said of the Batali defence strategy.

The Batali acquittal parallels another

high-profile #MeToo case in Massachusetts that fell apart over issues involving the accuser.

In 2019, prosecutors were forced to drop indecent assault and battery charges against actor Kevin Spacey after his teen accuser refused to testify to being groped by the "House of Cards" star while working as a busboy at a Nantucket bar.

Meanwhile, actor Cuba Gooding Jr. is poised to avoid jail time after pleading guilty last month to forcibly kissing a worker at a New York City nightclub in 2018.

Even disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein's watershed #MeToo

conviction in 2020 could be in doubt, with a New York court expected to rule soon on his appeal.

"Sometimes people think since the Weinstein trial and conviction that we are in a different time," said Michelle Simpson Tuegel, a Dallas-based attorney who has represented gymnasts abused by former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar and other victims.

"People are definitely more aware and survivors are more supported," she said. "But by no means are we seeing the level of accountability, especially for people who are super wealthy, very powerful, and who are known to the public."

FIFA takes on EA Sports video game in soccer's new rivalry

By Rob Harris

The name “FIFA” can bring to mind images of the World Cup and soccer’s greatest players, like Pele, Zinedine Zidane or Lionel Messi. The acronym for the sport’s governing body may also remind some of shameless bribery and corruption.

For many, though, it’s the video game that is synonymous with FIFA.

For three decades, the Switzerland-based soccer body has enjoyed a flourishing, mutually beneficial relationship with EA Sports. The annual edition of the video game, alongside related products, has raked in billions of dollars and has proven to be so lucrative that FIFA thinks it can be making even more on its own.

FIFA severed the licensing deal partnership with Electronic Arts Inc. on Tuesday, making FIFA23 the last new EA game with the involvement of both sides. They are now becoming opponents.

EA will continue to make soccer games with best players and biggest teams, they will just be stripped of the FIFA brand and instead called EA Sports FC.

Confusingly, perhaps, FIFA24 should also be on the shelves next year because the soccer body is determined to go ahead with its own launch.

EA has already begun to highlight its advantages over the FIFA game, given it has the rights to show 19,000 players from more than 700 teams in more than 30 leagues playing in 100 stadiums. Manchester United, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain will still be there, along with their best players.

“That is the only place that you can have an authentic, famous and fully representative football experience,” David Jackson, vice president of brand



In this Aug. 20, 2019 file photo, gamers play latest video games from Electronic Arts at the Gamescom in Cologne, Germany. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner, File)

for EA SPORTS FIFA, told The Associated Press. “I do think that there is an element of potential confusion in the marketplace.”

The hyperbole from FIFA is already trying to undercut EA’s marketing by claiming it is in talks with multiple rival gaming companies and has plans to enter the metaverse.

“I can assure you,” FIFA President Gianni Infantino said, “that the only authentic, real game that has the FIFA name will be the best one available for gamers and football fans.”

How that will be achieved is far from clear, although FIFA does hold the rights to the biggest soccer show on earth. The World Cup will disappear from the EA game.

“The FIFA name is the only global, original title,” Infantino said. “FIFA 23, FIFA 24, FIFA 25 and FIFA 26, and so on — the constant is the FIFA name and it will remain forever and remain the best.”

That kind of bombastic talk puts pressure on FIFA to deliver on Infanti-

no’s vision for a game that usurps the EA franchise despite not having the rights to feature leagues such as the Premier League — and the teams that play in them.

“New entrants would face a steep licensing curve to compete with EA,” said Andrew Marok, an analyst covering the digital media sector at investment bank Raymond James.

Soccer gaming is big business for EA. The annual report issued this week showed revenue of \$6.19 billion.

“We’ve just had our biggest year — ever — for EA SPORTS FIFA games,” EA Sports CEO Andrew Wilson told investors on Wednesday, a day after it was announced the FIFA deal would cease at the end of the year.

A huge part of the revenue comes from the Ultimate Team mode, where customers buy extra content in EA sports games. That generated \$1.623 billion in 2021.

“We have historically derived a significant portion of our net revenue

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Entertainment



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from sales related to our largest and most popular game, FIFA, annualized versions of which are consistently one of the best-selling games in the marketplace,” EA told investors.

Brand loyalty will be key starting next year. Will gamers stay with EA’s rebranded product or jump to the rival being launched by FIFA?

It’s already a competitive market with eFootball, the former Pro Evolution Soccer game produced by Japanese firm Konami. That game has a partnership with Manchester United, though the record 20-time English

champions will still feature in EA’s game through a Premier League agreement.

EA has already warned its investors of the risks to its soccer gaming business from rivals.

“Any events or circumstances that negatively impact our FIFA franchise, such as product or service quality, other products that take a portion of consumer spending and time, the delay or cancellation of a product or service launch, increased competition for key licenses, or real or perceived security risks, could negatively impact our financial results to a disproportionate

extent,” EA said in its annual report.

EA should get an edge over FIFA by retaining its 300 license partners, 30 leagues and federations, 700 teams and 19,000 athletes, JPMorgan analyst David Karnovsky said in a client note.

“While it’s difficult to think there won’t be at least some impact from the brand shift to sales, the \$150 million available from the absence of a license fee to FIFA provides ample room for marketing to drive awareness around EA Sports FC,” Karnovsky wrote.

Untangling itself from the world of soccer politics has its benefits for EA. Tensions between regional confederations have led to European body UEFA and South American counterpart CONMEBOL circumventing FIFA to launch their own meeting of champions.

The debut of the Finalissima will see Italy and Argentina meet at Wembley Stadium in London on June 1. It would seem incongruous for EA to promote its FIFA game at the match.

“What name would we put on a perimeter board in a UEFA-CONMEBOL event? It’s really tough for us to put FIFA on there,” said Jackson, EA’s vice president of brand. “What has previously been a springboard for our brand, and an accelerant to it many years ago, has just become less valuable to us over time.”

EA might just have saved the FIFA brand as well. The fond association with the video game by so many fans has balanced against the toxicity of Sepp Blatter-era organization after the opening of sprawling criminal investigations into soccer corruption in 2015.

“If you ask a young football fan what FIFA is, they’re more likely to say a video game than they are the global governing body, but that value lives with us, I believe,” Jackson said. “We are the predominant voice in the world of football from an interactive entertainment perspective, and we don’t see a world where that changes.”

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

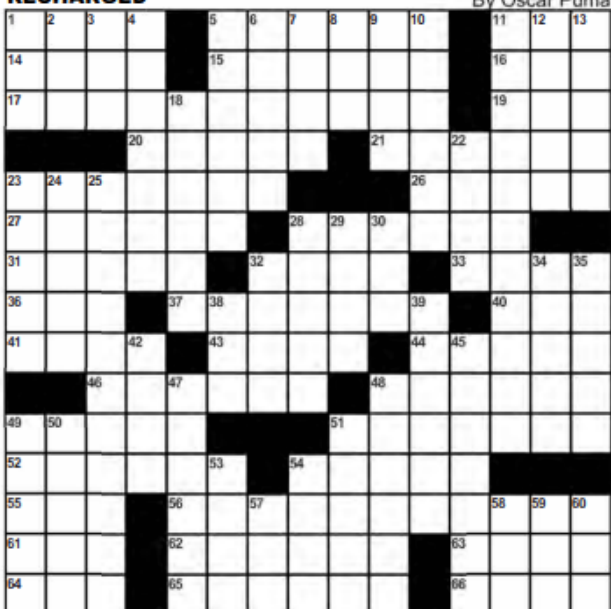
- 1) Transit charge
- 5) Bind, as grass stalks
- 11) Grammy category
- 14) Newspaper essay page
- 15) Give thought to
- 16) Wing not for flying
- 17) Restores strength to
- 19) Sweet murmur
- 20) In the cards
- 21) Well-seasoned stew
- 23) Endangered
- 26) Inclines
- 27) Makes shiny and smooth
- 28) Stoked
- 31) Tsunami kin
- 32) Without moisture
- 33) Potluck choice
- 36) One for the off-road
- 37) New versions of old films
- 40) Early afternoon
- 41) Nick’s cousin?
- 43) Basks at the beach
- 44) Alaskan craft
- 46) Goes off volcanically
- 48) Larry or Shemp
- 49) Deep-six
- 51) Nonsense
- 52) Exerts no effort
- 54) Delaware city
- 55) Make a decision
- 56) Liven up
- 61) Function
- 62) “... falls ___ on the plain”
- 63) Apple variety
- 64) Cabernet, e.g.
- 65) Breastplates (Var.)
- 66) TV prize

DOWN

- 1) In favor of
- 2) Arm-over-arm swinger
- 3) Make a motor roar
- 4) Teacher or preacher, e.g.
- 5) Sudden outpourings
- 6) ___ out (made a successful putt)
- 7) “National Velvet” author Bagnold
- 8) Wood-dressing tool (Var.)
- 9) Change course suddenly
- 10) Artificial
- 11) Restore to a particular state
- 12) For all to hear
- 13) Draws, as a line on a graph
- 18) Chatterbox
- 22) Turned a horse right
- 23) Pretentious sort
- 24) Carry away, in a way
- 25) Returned to life
- 28) Casual pair
- 29) Big boats
- 30) Scrabble 10-pointer
- 32) Salacious stuff
- 34) Tool for bending cold metal
- 35) Cornball
- 38) Clairvoyant’s claim, for short
- 39) Supplier to an army
- 42) Caroler’s syllables
- 45) Marina charge
- 47) Computer-is-working period
- 48) Crinkly leaved cabbages
- 49) Use elbow grease on
- 50) Small woods
- 51) Goblin or bugbear
- 53) Pantyhose woe
- 54) Rackets
- 57) Seven, on a grandfather clock
- 58) It’s on some Scottish locks
- 59) “A Nightmare on ___ Street”
- 60) State

RECHARGED

By Oscar Puma



Jamaica gets support from USAID to address electricity theft

CMC – Jamaica’s Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology is receiving technical assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to address the issue of electricity theft.

Minister Daryl Vaz, said USAID and its lead consultant, Deloitte, are providing support under the Strengthening Utilities and Promoting Energy Reform (SUPER) Program.

Making his contribution to the 2022/23 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, Minister Vaz informed that in 2021, the USAID and Deloitte established a working group comprising the Ministry, Jamaica Public Service (JPS), Jamaica Social Investment Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

“The group has come to a consensus on a set of strategic policy concepts to address the issues of non-technical losses,” he said.

Currently, non-technical

losses, which include electricity theft, account for approximately 18 to 20 percent of electricity generation.

The Minister noted that the set of policy concepts are grouped into four categories – energy efficiency programs, to reduce the demand from illegal users; communication and reporting, to build trust between relevant entities and encourage cooperation on loss-reduction activities and objectives; empowerment, to provide consumers with the tools to acquire legal electricity; and enforcement, which aims to discourage electricity theft through prosecution capabilities.

Vaz said the first activity to be implemented is a house-wiring initiative, which was conceptualized under the empowerment category.

In addition, the IDB is funding a National Electricity Loss Reduction Plan (NELRP) Consultancy for Jamaica, which is being conducted by Estudios Energéti-



Minister of Science, Energy and Technology Daryl Vaz, speaking in the House of Representatives on Tuesday. In the background is his wife, Member of Parliament for Portland Eastern Ann-Marie Vaz. (Photo: JIS)

cos Consultores (EEC).

“The IDB’s non-technical losses audit consultancy with the EEC is allowing the Government to collaborate in conducting an energy loss independent audit report (ELIR) and preparing a national electricity loss reduction plan (NELRP),” he indicated.

The Minister told the House that the ELIR will focus on the factors that impact the level of technical and non-technical losses at the national, parish, and feeder levels, while the NELRP will define the roles, actions,

time periods, benefit-costs, targets, and other elements needed to reduce losses.

Meanwhile, Minister Vaz told the House that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to drive a rise in consumer demand for electricity.

He informed that electricity generation has increased by two percent over the period, with the renewable energy share remaining at 13 percent.

The alternative energy share, based on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), also remained at 59 percent.

Grenada’s vaccination rate for children plummets

The Grenada government has expressed concern that the percentage of children receiving childhood vaccines has fallen significantly and is urging parents to help rectify the situation.

“I have learned from the Ministry of Health that the childhood vaccination rate has decreased at an appalling rate,” former health minister, Clarice Modeste, told the Parliament, adding that the usual



vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella are no longer a priority for parents.

“All of those things that we used to do before and that we were always in the 90s and highly commended by PAHO and other World Health Organizations, we have forgotten what these diseases look like.

“We have forgotten seeing our children suffering from these things, but the reality is, if we do not pick up and pick

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Regional News



Fahie files motion to dismiss US Attorney's appeal against bail

BVI News - The attorney representing former Premier Andrew Fahie has filed a motion to dismiss the US Prosecution's appeal of the bail bond previously offered by the Miami District Court.

Judge Alicia Otazo-Reyes had granted Fahie a \$500,000 corporate surety bond with several strict conditions as he faces drug and money laundering charges.

But the US Attorney's Office appealed the ruling causing the disgraced former Premier to remain in federal custody until the appeal process is concluded.

Fahie's lawyer Theresa Van Vliet noted that US Attorney's Office had filed its Notice of Appeal (NOA) on May 5 — one day after Fahie was offered bail — and said they were in the process of obtaining the transcript from that court hearing.

Van Vliet further said the prosecutors indicated that they would prepare a more thorough motion for revocation of the bail bond upon receipt.

However, Fahie's attorney indicated that the US prosecutor's at-

tempts to secure the transcript have been slow. Van Vliet said the court clerk's failure to provide the document to the government counsel had impeded the process of her client's appeal and as a result, he is still in custody.

"While the delay is not believed to be of the government's doing, the plain fact is that Mr Fahie's bond status has fallen victim to a lack of compliance with the mandatory rules of this Court and more broadly to the statutory and constitutional right to a prompt bond process," Fahie's attorney said in the motion to dismiss.

"Mr Fahie was entitled to have this appeal well along its way by now.

"Through no fault of his own, that is not the case, and he continues to sit in detention despite a finding by a Magistrate Judge that there are conditions of release that will ensure his appearance," the document said.

"Given that the 48-hour window closed almost four days past, Mr Fahie respectfully requests that the Government's NOA be dismissed or, alternatively, that the stay of bond



Disgraced former BVI premier Andrew Fahie in a recent court appearance.

be lifted or denied to the extent is sought to be renewed and that he be permitted to post the bond set by Magistrate Judge Otazo-Reyes on May 4, 2022," the motion continued.

The United States prosecution has since filed a response to the motion to dismiss the appeal stating that Fahie's request is without basis inside the law and should be denied in front of the court.

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up soon, these things instead of COVID-19 could become the order of the day...all of these things that we had completely eradicated," she said.

The former health minister said she has not heard of any outbreak in a "very encouragingly long time" and it is important that as the island deals with the coronavirus (COVID-19) "we work together and take responsibility...for the childhood vaccines that have been tried,

have been tested, that have been proven effective and that have saved the lives of our children and save them from suffering".

Health Minister Nicholas Steele confirmed that the rate of child vaccination has fallen by more than 30 percent, telling legislators that in the 1990's the childhood vaccination rate was as high as 98 percent.

He said recent figures show "we are in the 60s. We had some challenges during

the first year of COVID-19 but now we are stocked" with vaccines.

Steele said the reduction did not start with COVID-19 but sometime before due to misinformation spread on social media.

Grenada's Public Health (School Children Immunization) Act requires the immunisation of all school children under 13 years of age against communicable diseases. The law provides for the minister of health to include or remove

diseases.

The law also states that "notwithstanding any law to the contrary, but subject to the provisions of this Act, no child shall be admitted as a pupil to a pre-primary school, primary school, private school or all-age school unless he or she produces to the principal thereof a certificate of immunisation with respect to every communicable disease." The exceptions are medical grounds and religious grounds.

Finland seeks NATO membership ‘without delay’

Reuters – Finland said on Thursday it would apply to join NATO “without delay”, with Sweden expected to follow suit, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine brings about the very expansion of the Western military alliance that Vladimir Putin aimed to prevent.

The decision by the two Nordic countries to abandon the neutrality they maintained throughout the Cold War would be one of the biggest shifts in European security in decades.



Flags wave outside the Alliance headquarters ahead of a NATO Defence Ministers meeting, in Brussels, Belgium, October 21, 2021. REUTERS/Pascal Rossignol/File Photo

They are the two biggest EU countries that had stayed out of NATO, and Finland’s 1,300-km (800-mile) border will more than double

the frontier between the U.S.-led alliance and Russia, putting NATO guards a few hours’ drive from the northern outskirts of St Pe-

tersburg.

“Finland must apply for NATO membership without delay,” President Sauli Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin said in a joint statement in Helsinki.

“We hope that the national steps still needed to make this decision will be taken rapidly within the next few days.”

Five diplomats and officials told Reuters that NATO allies expect both countries to be granted membership

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UK police recommend more than 100 fines for Downing Street lockdown breaches

Reuters – British police said on Thursday they had now made more than 100 referrals for fines as part of their investigation into lockdown rule-breaking at gatherings held in Downing Street during the COVID-19 pandemic.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised for receiving a fine in April for breaking lockdown rules by attending a gathering in his office to celebrate his birthday, but has refused to resign over it.

He could receive further fines for other gatherings, but on Thursday Johnson’s spokesman said the prime minister had not received another fine.

“As of Thursday 12 May, Operation Hillman, the investigation into breaches of COVID-19 regulations in Whitehall and Downing Street, has made more than 100 referrals for fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to the ACRO Criminal Records Office,” a police statement said.



Police officers walk towards Downing Street, in London, Britain February 12, 2022. REUTERS/May James

Police said the investigation remained live, so the running total of fines could rise further.

It was the first update from the police on the number of fines issued in a month after they delayed them until after local elections, which were held last week.

In the last update on April 12, po-

lice said they had made more than 50 referrals for fines.

Police are investigating 12 gatherings held at Downing Street and the Cabinet Office after an internal inquiry found Johnson’s staff had enjoyed alcohol-fuelled parties, with the British leader attending a few of the events himself.

Bolivia's Arce warns may not attend Summit of the Americas

Bolivia's President Luis Arce says he may not go to the Summit of the Americas if some countries from the region are not invited, joining Mexico's leader in objecting to suggestions that Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua might be excluded from the June meeting in Los Angeles.

Arce made the statement in a tweet late Tuesday following a similar warning earlier in the day from Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Two Caribbean leaders have also protested against calls to exclude the three leftist governments that are under U.S. sanctions.

"A Summit of the Americas that excludes American countries will not be a full Summit of the Americas and, if the exclusion of sister countries persists, I will not partici-

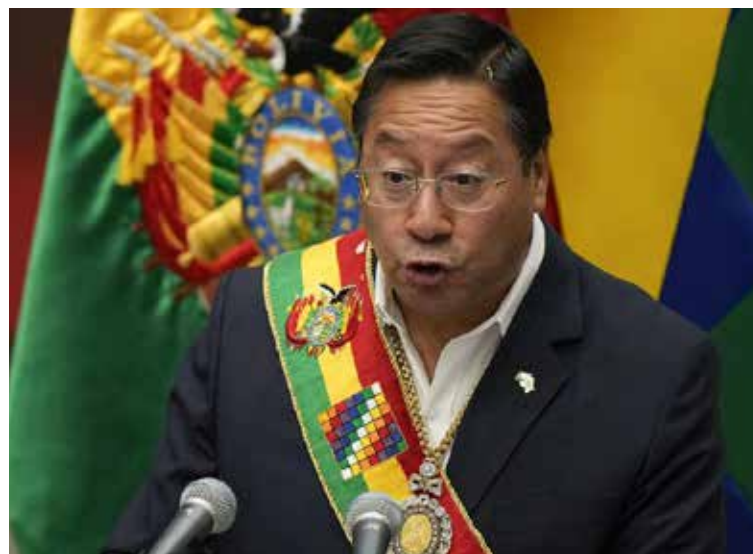
pate," Arce wrote.

López Obrador had warned that "if there's exclusion, if not everyone is invited, there will be representatives from the Mexican government, but I would not attend."

Arce's statement followed a meeting last week between the Bolivian and Venezuelan foreign ministers.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols recently said the U.S. was unlikely to invite the governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua because they do not respect democracy. The U.S. has imposed sanctions on all three countries and does not even recognize Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro as the country's legal leader.

However, the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, said Tuesday that "a final decision has not been



Bolivia's President Luis Arce said in a tweet late May 10, 2022 that he may not go to the Summit of the Americas if Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua are excluded from the June meeting in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Juan Karita, File)

made yet" on who will be invited.

Cuba was excluded from the first six hemispheric summits, but then-President Raul Castro attended the 2015 meeting in Panama, where he met U.S. President Barack Obama at a moment of improving ties between the two countries.

On Wednesday, while in Germany, Argentine President Alberto Fernández said he planned to go to the Summit of the Americas. "But I ask of the organizers what López Obrador has asked: that they invite all the countries of Latin America," Fernández told Germany's Deutsche Welle.

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quickly, paving the way for increased troop presence in the Nordic region to defend them during a one-year ratification period.

The announcement came even as Russia's war in Ukraine was hitting another turning point, with Ukrainian forces driving Russian troops out of the region around the second largest city Kharkiv, their fastest advance since forcing Russia to withdraw from the capital and northeast more than a month ago.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited NATO's potential expansion

as one of the main reasons for Moscow's "special military operation" in Ukraine launched in February.

Ukraine had also expressed a desire to eventually join the U.S.-led Western alliance, although it has since offered to accept a form of neutral status as part of peace talks.

Moscow has repeatedly warned Finland and Sweden against joining NATO, threatening "serious military and political consequences".

Asked on Wednesday if Finland would provoke Russia by joining NATO, Niinisto said: "My response would be that (Putin) caused this. Look

at the mirror."

NATO describes itself as a fundamentally defensive alliance, built around the principle that an attack on one member is an attack on all, effectively granting U.S. allies the protection of American superpower might, including its nuclear arsenal.

Moscow sees that as a threat to its influence in neighbouring countries. But Putin's decision to invade Ukraine has caused a shift in public opinion in the Nordic region, with political parties that had backed neutrality for generations now coming to embrace the view that Russia is a menace.

Palestinians mourn slain Al Jazeera journalist, blame Israel

AP – Thousands gathered to mourn a slain Al Jazeera journalist in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday, as the head of the Palestinian Authority blamed Israel for her death and rejected Israeli calls for a joint investigation.

Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American reporter who covered the Mideast conflict for more than 25 years, was shot dead Wednesday during an Israeli military raid in the West Bank town of Jenin. Journalists who were with her, including one who was shot and wounded, said Israeli forces fired upon them even though they were clearly identifiable as reporters.

Israel says it is investigating the incident. It initially suggested she might have been shot by Palestinian militants, without providing evidence, but has since backtracked. Israel is calling for a joint investigation with the Palestinian Author-



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas lays a wreath of flowers on the body of slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead Wednesday during an Israeli military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin, during an official ceremony at the Palestinian Authority headquarters in Ramallah, Thursday, May 12, 2022. (AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

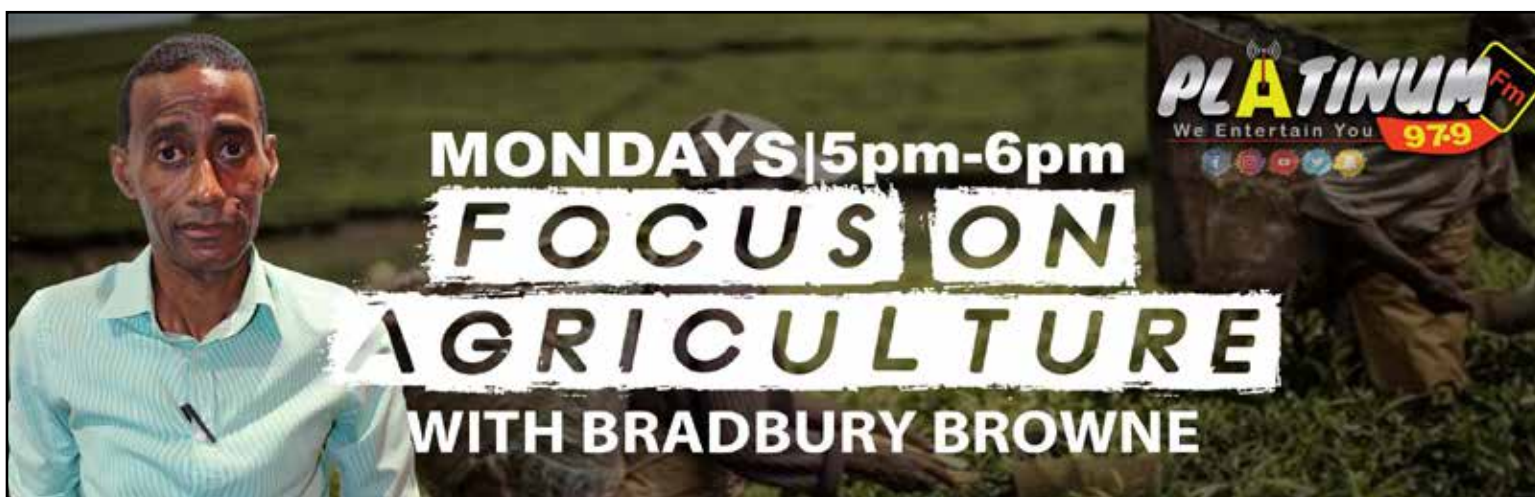
ity, which administers parts of the West Bank and cooperates with it on security.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas angrily rejected that proposal, saying

“we hold the Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for killing her.”

“They cannot hide the truth with this crime,” Abbas said in an address as

her body lay in state with a Palestinian flag draped over it in the West Bank city of Ramallah, where the Palestinian Authority is headquartered.



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Jimmy Adams: Players not meeting fitness standards 'a let down, not just for the individual but for the region'

ESPN – Cricket West Indies lead selector Desmond Haynes and director of cricket Jimmy Adams have criticised West Indies' players for failing to meet "even minimum fitness standards". Adams warned that there were contractual consequences for players who fell below the mark, while Haynes said he was "pretty disappointed" at players who hadn't met the criteria.

"When you look at the amount of cricket being played around the world, there's a certain level of fitness that is required," Haynes said.

"I think that is a standard that you should set as a professional cricketer. I do get concerned when you are selecting a side not sure if these guys are going to be fit enough to finish the tour. As a professional cricketer, there's a level of fitness that is required, and all players should try to reach that."

The comments came after West Indies announced their ODI squads for the upcoming tours of the Netherlands and Pakistan. While Jason Holder and Shimron Hetmyer were also absent from the squad, it was Evin Lewis' non-selection that raised eyebrows, with CWI saying he was not considered because he failed to meet fitness criteria.

Hetmyer, who has also had fitness issues in the past, was given a break and allowed to go home for the birth of his first child.

"For contracted players who are unavailable for fitness, there are consequences that are outlined in the contracts," Adams said.

"We have players who, in our eyes are good enough to be considered for selection who are unavailable because of not even coming in on minimum fitness standards. That is very disap-

pointing. For players who are contracted, that is doubly disappointing.

"It means we would have made an investment in them going back a year, and we have nothing to show for that investment.

"It is something that is concerning to us, and something we have to think very seriously about when we go into the next cycle of contract discussions. I can't say enough how much we consider this a let down, not just for the individual, but for the region."

Fitness issues have plagued West Indies regularly over the past, with former captain Kieron Pollard criticising his side's commitment to maintaining fitness standards earlier this year. He called on players to "pride themselves" on being fit, saying players at times "take it for granted".

Adams echoed a similar message, saying that while support was available, the responsibility ultimately fell on the shoulders of the individual.

"It begins with the player," he said. "There's always support that a player needs.

"All of that support can be given, but in a lot of fitness cases we've seen in the recent past, the players - if they were being honest - would say they'd let themselves down.

"We want to compete with the best in the world, and we want our players to go out on any cricket field anywhere in the world and know that they're equals.

"This is one area we've worked very hard on over the last few years and we'll continue to keep moving the bar upwards.

"We believe this is something that doesn't require as much resource as other areas that players need to im-



'For contracted players who are unavailable for fitness, there are consequences that are outlined in the contracts' - Jimmy Adams [Getty Images]

prove upon to become world-class."

Haynes lauded Pollard's contribution, expressing confidence that West Indies had the quality to cope without him, and threw his weight behind the new white-ball captain Nicholas Pooran.

"When you look at Pollard's contribution both on and off the field, it isn't something you can say we are going to take lightly.

"I think he'll be missed, but you've got a lot of guys who are playing in the middle there, and a lot of allrounders. Yes, he'll be missed, but I think we've got enough there that can do the job for us.

"To play cricket for West Indies is the ultimate. This is a good opportunity for the youngsters to show their worth. I hope they take advantage of it.

"Nicholas Pooran, you've seen how he's handled himself in the games that he has captained West Indies, and the way he's carried himself in the IPL. I'm sure he'll do a good job leading these young men."

Brendon McCullum named England's New Test Coach

ESPN - Brendon McCullum, the former New Zealand captain, has been confirmed by the ECB as England Men's new Test head coach, on a four-year deal.

McCullum, who will step down from his role as Kolkata Knight Riders' head coach at the end of the ongoing IPL, played 101 Tests for New Zealand between 2004 and 2016, scoring 6453 runs at 38.64 with a highest score of 302 against India in 2014, which remains the only triple-century made by a New Zealander.

Although he has never before taken charge of a red-ball team in his coaching career, McCullum was New Zealand captain for 31 Tests from 2013 until his retire-



Brendon McCullum has never previously coached a red-ball team but earned plaudits for his captaincy of New Zealand's Test team (Photo courtesy Getty Images)

ment, earning plaudits for a positive approach which was also instrumental in the white-ball team's run to the World Cup final in 2015. In 2020, he also coached Trinbago Knight Riders to the Caribbean Premier League title.

His exact arrival date in the UK is dependent on

KKR's qualification for the IPL play-offs.

However, with two group-stage games remaining - the last of which comes against Lucknow Super Giants on May 18, they are an outside bet to reach the competition's final four.

Work permits permitting, he is expected to link

up with the squad - which will be led by England's newly-appointed captain Ben Stokes - ahead of the first Test against New Zealand at Lord's, starting June 2, and will now have an input in next week's selection meeting too.

Rob Key, England's director of men's cricket, acknowledged that McCullum's appointment was a calculated gamble, adding that it was "time for us all to buckle up and get ready for the ride", but praised his proven ability to change team cultures for the better - an attribute sorely needed after a grim 12 months for England's Test team, in which they have won one of their last 17 Tests and sunk to their lowest ICC ranking since 1995.

Chris Gayle hopes for title success after vowing IPL return next season

CMC - Forty-two-year-old Jamaican batsman Chris Gayle is hoping to win a title with one of the three franchises he has played within the Indian Premier League (IPL) on a vow to return to the tournament next year.

Gayle, who has played for Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and Punjab Kings since starting his IPL innings in 2009, opted out of the tournament this year because of what he said was a lack of respect.

"Next year I'm coming back," he

cont'd on pg 24



Chris Gayle [Photo: Kamran Jebreili/AP]

Sports News



Nikola Jokic captures second straight NBA MVP award

AP – Nikola Jokic plays for Denver. And for Serbia.

Both places can once again make the same claim: For the second consecutive season, they're home to the NBA's Most Valuable Player.

The league announced Wednesday night that Jokic won back-to-back MVP awards. The Nuggets' big man is the second consecutive international player to win two in a row, after Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo — from Greece — was honoured in 2019 and 2020.

This marks the first time international players have won the award in four consecutive seasons. Canada's Steve Nash went back-to-back for Phoenix in 2005 and 2006, followed by Germany's Dirk Nowitzki for Dallas in 2007.

International players finished 1-2-3. Jokic got 65 first-place votes and 875 points from the panel of writers and broadcasters. Philadelphia's Joel Embiid was second with 26 first-place votes and 706

points; Antetokounmpo was third, with nine first-place votes and 595 points. Devin Booker of Phoenix wound up fourth.

"I don't know what else you can say about Nikola at this point," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said in a statement. "He's consistently improved his game, he's consistently proven people wrong when they doubt him and he's consistently the best player on the floor night in and night out."

The 27-year-old Jokic averaged 27.1 points, 13.8 rebounds and 7.9 assists on a team that was missing two max players in Jamal Murray (ACL) and Michael Porter Jr. (back) and won 48 games. The do-it-all centre nicknamed "Joker" created a new category, too, in becoming the first NBA player to eclipse 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 500 assists in a season.

He's now a member of another rare club — the 13th player to win back-to-back



Denver Nuggets centre Nikola has won his second consecutive Most Valuable Player award after a season in which he finished with numbers never before seen in NBA history. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

NBA MVP awards. He joined the likes of Antetokounmpo, Stephen Curry, LeBron James (twice), Nash, Tim Duncan, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Moses Malone and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (twice). Larry Bird, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell each won the award in three straight seasons.

Jokic was caught by surprise, too, as he rode in behind his horse on a two-wheeled cart at his stable in Serbia. Malone was waiting to hug him. Same with president of basketball operations

Tim Connelly.

"It was a real emotional moment for me," Jokic said in an interview on the TNT broadcast. "Amazing."

Jokic was taken by the Nuggets with the 41st pick in the 2014 draft. His selection that day flashed across the bottom of the television screen during a Taco Bell commercial.

He's come a long way. He's eligible for a supermax extension that could guarantee him nearly \$254 million over five seasons starting with 2023-24.

cont'd from pg 23

said in an interview with the UK Mirror.

"I've represented three teams in the IPL, Kolkata, RCB and Punjab. Between RCB and Punjab, I would love to get a title with one of those two teams. I had a great stint with RCB where I was more successful with in the IPL, and Punjab, they've been good. I love to explore and I love challenges so let's see what happens."

This is the first time Gayle has skipped the event since beginning his IPL career 13 years ago.

"For the last couple of years, the way the IPL went about, I felt like I wasn't treated properly," he told the Mirror in explaining his absence from the 2022 IPL.

"So I thought 'okay, you didn't get the respect you deserved after you did so much for the sport and IPL'. So I said 'okay, that's it, I'm not going to

bother to enter the draft', so I left it as it is."

The left-handed batsman has played a total of 142 matches in the IPL, amassing 4,965 runs that included six centuries and 31 half-centuries, and taking 18 wickets with his right-arm bowling.

Gayle has struck the most sixes in IPL history (357) and he recorded the franchise tournament's highest score of 175 in 2013.

Hurricanes practice match ends in draw at Liberta

The three-day practice matches between the Leeward Islands Hurricanes A and B teams ended in a draw at the Liberta Sports Grounds at Ball Beef on Wednesday.

Set 225 to win, Hurricanes B Team, captained by Rahkeem “Jimbo” Corwall, struggled on 80 for 5 off 28 overs in their second innings when the match ended.

Elroy Francis Jr. made 35 and Cameron Pennyfeather got 22. Daniel Doram captured 2 for 30 in 10 overs.

Hurricanes A Team, skippered by Amir Jango, made 261 all out off 83.4 overs in their first innings after winning the toss and electing to bat.

Keacy Carty top scored with 59 off 136 balls, Hayden Walsh Jr. struck an unbeaten 53 off 72 deliveries, Jango contributed 42 and Terrance Warde chipped in with 35.

Damion Williams bagged 3 for 70 in 17 overs, Avier Christian picked up 2 for 15 in 12.4 overs and Shimon Berridge claimed 2 for 25 in 16 overs.

In reply, the Hurricanes B Team could only muster 186 all out in 61.4 overs in their first innings.

Christian top scored with 67 off 109 balls and Jewell Andrew made 43 off 75 balls.



Keacy Carty scored a half century in the Leeward Islands Hurricanes practice match at Liberta. (Cricket West Indies)

Jeremiah Louis snapped up 4 for 19 in 8.4 overs and Walsh bagged 2 for 32 in 7 overs of leg-spin bowling.

With a first innings lead of 75 runs, Hurricanes A Team made 149 for 4 off 47.4 overs in their second innings before Jango declared to set the 200-plus target for Cornwall's team to chase for victory.

Jango hit a top score of 57 off 90 deliveries while Christian picked up 2 for 11 in 9 overs.

The Leeward Islands Hurricane will participate in a match simulation exercise at the same venue today. The match simulation of 90 overs will take place from 10am to 5:30pm.

The matches are part of the Leeward Islands Hurricane training camp here in Antigua from 5th to 14th May.

The Leeward Islands squad will then travel to

Trinidad for the remaining three matches in the West Indies regional Four-Day Championships.

The Hurricanes will face Trinidad and Tobago Red Force at the Diego Martin Sporting Complex in one of the three third round matches that will commence on Wednesday, 18th May.

In the other matches, Guyana Harpy Eagles will face defending champions Barbados Pride at the Queen's Park Oval and the Jamaica Scorpions will clash with the Windward Islands Volcanoes at the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba.



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Lack of available facilities delays start of ABFA leagues

President of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) Everton “Batow” Gonsalves has said the lack of adequate available facilities could continue to delay the resumption of the national domestic league.

Since suspending its competitions on 12 March, 2020, the ABFA is yet to restart or issue an official statement regarding the resumption of any of its three national league competitions.

Gonsalves, who was re-elected on 25th April to serve as president for a fourth consecutive four-year term, said a lack of venues will delay the restart of the domestic league.

At the centre of the issue, is the current dilapidated state of the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG), which has been used the home of the ABFA’s flagship Premier Division League for the past 15 seasons.

Although football matches had been played periodically at the ARG in previous years, since 2007, when the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium was commissioned, the venue in St John’s has been used as the permanent home for premier division matches up until 2020 when the pandemic interrupted competitions.

In 2020, when the ABFA was forced to curtail all competitions due to the pandemic, the ARG, which was already in need of repairs, further deteriorated.

“We would have to earmark a number of grounds across the country that would be able to facilitate the hosting of matches in the premier division and that is a situation that we would not be able to address overnight,” Gonsalves stated.

“That has been a difficult situation for the administration, the Antigua Recreation Grounds. It has been the

facility that has housed the premier-ship, but the first and second division matches are played across the length and breadth of this country.

“So we will have to carry out some studies to indicate what is the position with the fields around the length and breadth of the country.

“Coming out of that, we may have to identify which of these fields can have a duplicate amount of matches.”

Gonsalves said that serious consideration is also being given to using its Technical and Training Centre to host matches. He said there are already plans to add another field to the facility which is located at Paynters.

“We will also have to look at the Paynters facility, which is well lit and has the seating capacity to accommodate matches of a high standard, but I don’t think Paynters will be able to accommodate the number of patrons that regularly come to a Premier Division match if football returns and Premier League matches are played there.

“So there are some significant challenges that the administration will face in terms of readying itself for the 2022 season.”

On October 9th 2020, the ABFA announced that based on its constitution, the 2019/20 domestic season would be cancelled. As a result, it did not declare a champion or relegate any team in any of its three divisions.

Jennings Grenades were leading the 10-team round-robin Premier League competition with 31 points after 16 matches. This means that PIC Liberta Black Hawks, who won the 2019-20 Premier League title, will remain the defending champions.

As part of restructuring efforts, the ABFA also decided that six teams would be promoted from the First to



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association Everton ‘Batow’ Gonsalves. (File photo)

the Premier Division, while six teams would be promoted from the Second to the First Division.

The promotions were based on the point standings as of 12th March, 2020, when the season ended.

The six teams promoted from the first division were Empire FC, Sap FC, FC Aston Villa, Tryum FC, Blue Jays FC and Willikies FC.

The teams promoted to the First Division were Garden Stars FC, Bendals FC, Lion Hill FC, JSC Progressors, Young Lions FC and Green City FC.

The ABFA executive committee’s decision was later ratified by the general membership during its ordinary congress on 21st December, 2020.

Therefore, the next Premier Division League will feature 16 teams.

Teams to battle in one-day semi-finals

Police are among four teams that will attempt to claim a place in the final of the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League Sir Richie Richardson Limited Overs Championship this weekend.

Police, who are yet to lose a game all season, will try to remain on course for their second title of 2022, when they contest one of two semi-finals in the one-day competition on Saturday.

The winners of this year's Dave Joseph Parish League one-day contest will entertain Mahico at the Police Rec-



The Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda Cricket team. (Photo: ACB Caribbean Parish League)

reation Grounds with Paget Samuel and Llewellyn Simon officiating.

Losing finalist in this year's Dave Joseph competition, Freetown, will hope to

reach their second final this season when they host neighbours Newfield in the other semi-final at Freetown. Nigel Browne and Garfield Jacobs will be the umpires.

Meanwhile, action resumes this weekend in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) first class programme with the third round of matches in State Insurance Two-Day competition.

Defending champions, Pigotts Crushers, will host Empire Nation at Pigotts in one of five matches, starting tomorrow. Also tomorrow, All Saints Pythons will host Rising Sun Spartans at Mack Pond playing field in All Saints, and Jennings Tigers will entertain PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks.

In the other two matches, New Winthropes Lions will welcome Bolans Blasters at Perth in New Winthropes and Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles will face Combined Schools at Bethesda.

MATCH DAY 3

MAY 15TH 2022

3:00

GAME 1

WESTHAM FC
VS
TUN & BANG

4:20

GAME 2

LEGACY FC
VS
GOLDEN GROVE MASTERS

5:40

GAME 3

EXTRAORDINARY MEN
VS
UP & OVER FC

7:00

GAME 4

DUN BAR CREW
VS
TURF MASTERS

VENUE: ABFA TECHNICAL CENTER

Athletes from three sports to represent Antigua at Caribbean Games

Antigua and Barbuda is likely to field a delegation in the inaugural Caribbean Games in Guadeloupe from 23rd June to 3rd July.

The athletes to attend will participate in swimming and cycling.

General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC), Cliff Williams, has said his organisation has engaged in dialogue with various national associations to decide on the final team who will represent the country at the event.

The Caribbean Games will also feature competitions among Under-23 athletes in Futsal, Judo, netball and 3x3 basketball.

Antigua and Barbuda did not qualify for netball and basketball, the other disciplines in which the country could have participated.

“Antigua and Barbuda will only be participating in three of the disciplines in terms of the sports that will be hosted at the games. The disciplines are athletics, swimming and cycling,” Williams said.

“The other sports where we could have participated, but did not qualify, are 3x3 basketball and netball so we are communicating with the national federations in terms of getting the long lists of athletes that they have within that range.

“Swimming certainly has that; athletics gave us a good amount of names, but we are not sure who will represent athletics as yet because we are looking at three males and two females.

“Cycling for some reason, we only have one athlete, but we are allowed three athletes within that discipline.”

Williams said the national associations should capitalise on the opportunity to showcase their Under-23 athletes at the Caribbean Games.

“We are preparing, it’s just to get that whole vibe from our national federations in terms of taking it serious. The games focus on the age of athletes that are transitioning from juniors to the elite or pros and I think it’s an opportune time and I think the national federations need to take advantage of this event,” Williams said.

“It’s focus is that bridge from...juniors to elite or pros. They normally leave the sport when they hit that age, so now we are trying to protect them, keep them in, and have some activities for them.”

The Caribbean Games falls under the umbrella of the Caribbean Associations of National Olympic Committees (CANOC).

CANOC Executive Committee members, represented by President Brian Lewis and Secretary-General Keith Joseph, completed a successful visit to Guadeloupe from 1st to 5th May.

There, they attended a series of critical meetings with the Local Organising Committee, local government officials, and commercial enterprises.

During these meetings, the numerous challenges that continue to confront



General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee Cliff Williams.

the organising committee and CANOC were shared.

Lewis said despite this, the people of Guadeloupe are excited about the Games and CANOC will continue on the path of realising the Games, against all odds, with the event already having been postponed last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CANOC has scheduled a special meeting of its membership via Zoom to discuss the challenges still confronting the Games’ preparation.

Around 800 athletes and 200 officials from 29 countries and territories are expected to compete at the maiden Caribbean Games.

The Games were first scheduled to take place in 2009 before a late cancellation by Trinidad and Tobago’s government due to fears about swine flu.

Guadeloupe was awarded hosting rights in January 2020.