

BROWNE DECLARES WAR ON FOOD INSECURITY



Prime Minister Gaston Browne, left, joined his colleague CARICOM Heads of Government in Guyana yesterday for the opening of the inaugural Regional Agriculture Investment Forum and Expo. [Photo: Office of the President of Guyana]

PM Browne declares war on food insecurity

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has called for an action plan to address increasing food insecurity within the Caribbean region.

Addressing the opening ceremony yesterday of the inaugural Agri-Investment Forum and Expo taking place in Guyana, the Antigua and Barbudan leader emphasised the importance of food security in staving off what he described as “future catastrophic consequences”.

Heads of government of CARICOM and regional agricultural technocrats are meeting to discuss achieving the 25 percent by 2025 vision of reducing regional food imports by fostering accelerated and targeted investment in agriculture and food production, and its business ecosystem within CARICOM.

Having identified reducing the region’s food import bill as a priority, Prime Minister Browne highlighted other factors that are contributing to food shortages and increased prices, including the cost of fertilisers.

“I draw attention to the worrying observation by the World Bank that the price of fertilisers has increased by as much as 178% between March 2021 and March 2022. The price of urea – one of the most important and widely used fertilisers – has now reached an all-time high.

“Shortages of food products around the world have resulted in the highest rate of inflation for over four de-

cares. The high prices are affecting the poor and the most vulnerable in our societies. In short, the world is facing a crisis in food production and supply that has exponentially increased the cost of food to every nation, including ours in the Caribbean Community, with implications for political stability and national security. This situation exposes our vulnerabilities more profoundly, especially the food insecurity of our region,” he said.

With the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and the disruptions it continues to cause, including to the global supply chain, Prime Minister Browne told his regional counterparts that CARICOM must consider establishing facilities in the region that will supply fertilisers which are vital to ag-

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Prime Minister Gaston Browne



President Irfaan Ali of Guyana engages in conversation with Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Gaston Browne during his three day visit to the South American nation this week.

Pregnant minor now in safe environment

Several agencies are involved in the case in which an 11-year-old-girl was taken to hospital for fear that her pregnancy may endanger her life.

There isn't much information that was made public about the case.

That's because a minor is involved and she is guarded by the Child Protection Act that forbids in part, her identity being

made public and even that of the person who impregnated her. The matter was discussed at Wednesday's meeting of the Cabinet with representatives from key departments of government, and the law was examined to ensure it is adequate in dealing with such issues.

"This is an ongoing discussion and the public will be mindful that we have

a responsibility wherever there is failure in families, and we accept that there are circumstances that will lead to families becoming vulnerable, and in those conditions, children sometimes become victims of the extension of that vulnerability, and the state really would want to make an appropriate intervention," Cabinet spokesman, Melford Nicholas said.

The information minister could not say whether

any arrest has been made, but assured the child is in a protected environment.

"From the information that we have, the young lady is indeed being cared for in a protective environment."

Minister Nicholas stressed the importance of protecting minors, explaining the psychological effects on the child if information is revealed to the public, can prove to be devastating.

cont'd from pg 2

riculture.

"The rapid escalation in the price for fertiliser should be a strong signal to us, as a region, of the importance of our countries, acting together to invest in machinery to produce fertiliser. The present situation may be an opportunity for Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago to explore the possibility of utilising their gas capacity, to strengthen and expand Trinidad's existing facility, so as to produce fertiliser to satisfy the region's needs, and to end our vulnerability to external vagaries.

"I hope this idea might be pursued, including by the two governments, while inviting all CARICOM governments to invest in the enterprise as owners, making it a regional undertaking. Our region ought not to continue to be susceptible to external factors for fertiliser if we have the capacity to cure it," the prime minister asserted.

Browne also appealed for a "regional approach" to address praedial larceny, which greatly affects farmers, and other forms of protection, namely crop insurance, that will allow them to grow their businesses while providing a safety net when difficulties arise. The prime minister cautioned that the region's food import bill can increase exponentially if urgent action is not taken.

"We need to move from rhetoric to firm decisions for the advancement of the region's agricultural sector, in achieving food sovereignty and food security.

"We must also resolve to act urgently in our own interests, including by honouring the terms of the CARICOM Treaty and not permitting breaches of it by any country which imposes non-tariff barriers on goods, particularly agricultural products, from other member states. There is every reason why, together, our countries must view food insecurity as a grave threat to our well-being and declare war on it."



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Dredging of St. John's Harbour encounters setback



Information Minister, Melford Nicholas

The dredging operation at the St. John's Harbour to accommodate the world's largest Oasis Class cruise ships has met with serious challenges after encountering a layer of extremely hard rocks on the ocean floor.

Information Minister, Melford Nicholas, reported that the dredge operators also reported that other 'challenges', including the weather, have slowed their operations.

The disclosure was made during a discussion with the Cabinet and Port Manager, Darwin Telemaque, Permanent Secretary in the Minis-

try of Tourism, Walter Christopher and the Principal of Blue Meridian, Conley Browne.

"The dredging of the approach channel continues to be protracted as issues affected by a number of factors have caused disruptions. These include the weather, as whenever it gets too cold, the company is then unable to operate further out in the channel.

"Additionally, the materials they have uncovered are much harder than the previous surveys would have suggested," Nicholas revealed.

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More details emerge in the suit against the Barbuda Council

The Barbuda Council will have to dig deep into its pockets to meet the costs ordered in a High Court judgement on Wednesday in a matter in which it was found to be in breach of a contract it had entered into with a local businessman.

The court heard that following the ravages brought by Hurricane Irma in 2016, the Council entered into a four-year contract with Yannick Beazer to supply a truck that would be used in the removal and disposal of debris and other materials on the island.

That contract was signed in 2017. However, when control of the Council changed hands in early 2018 from the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party to the Barbuda Peoples' Movement, payments to Beazer for the truck were halted.

In December that year, Beazer sought legal counsel and impressed upon the Council that it should resume payments as significant arrears had accumulated.

It appears that the Council was willing to clear the arrears, but it refused to pay the full value of the contract. Attempts at mediation failed, and the matter was brought to the High Court.

After hearing arguments from attorneys representing the litigants, Master Charon Gardner-Hippolyte returned a ruling in favour of Beazer.

The court ruled that he should be paid the remaining money - \$390,000.00 - which represents the full value of the contract along with accrued interest at a rate of 2.5 percent.

Legal costs were also awarded to Beazer.

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The Cabinet invited the group to report on the progress being made to ready the channel and convert the turning basin into one capable of accommodating the Oasis Class cruise ships.

The turning basin is 99 percent complete, however, along the channel, 125,000 cubic metres of very hard volcanic rock will have to be removed in order to meet the requirements necessary to welcome the large vessels.

"It is anticipated that the work will be completed before the end of June. Additional dredging will also take place to allow for the bigger, cement-laden ships heading for Crabbes to pass through a deeper channel, which Meridian will construct.

"A plan for the disposal of the dredged materials is to be studied and authorised by the Department of the Environment," the Cabinet spokesman stated.



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Local News



Commonwealth SG standoff remains unresolved

With the start of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting set to begin in just over a month, the deadlock within CARICOM on the challenge to incumbent Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Patricia Scotland, by Jamaica's nominee for the post, Kamina Johnson-Smith, remains unresolved.

This week, Chairman of CARICOM, Belize's Prime Minister John Briceño, made it clear that going into the 20th - 25th June meeting in Rwanda, the



nations that comprise the 15-member grouping will each vote independently for "a candidate of their choice".

Traditionally, the position of Commonwealth

Secretary General is rotated among each region of the world. That person elected to the post also generally serves for two terms, each lasting four years.

It is the Caribbean's turn now to hold its second term at the helm of the Commonwealth.

However, in the region, it is unprecedented for such a challenge to arise, as among CARICOM, there has always been agreement on the candidate that will receive the support of the bloc.

Last month, CARICOM issued a statement indicating that the group was divided on whether it would support Dominica-born Scotland or Ja-

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Vanilla

ACB Caribbean hosts “Doing Business in Barbuda” webinar

ACB Caribbean engaged the people of Barbuda last evening with a webinar titled, Doing Business in Barbuda. On the panel were Anika Henry, Manager of Digital Banking; Andrea Dickenson, Supervisor Retail Banking; and Narcisse Moise, Chief Credit and Sales Officer and the head of ACB Caribbean’s Small Business Unit - Simply Smarter Business.

The panel presented all the various features of their ACB Smart App, Digital Banking for Businesses, and establishing and opening business & personal accounts to the Barbudan audience. The panel also provided details on the Bank’s Merchant Services offered to include a standard Credit Card Machine and the MPOS systems and their effectiveness for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Moise described ACB Caribbean’s Small Business Unit - Simply Smarter, Business and how the Bank is partnering with small businesses to help them grow. He also spoke about the loan guarantee programme, spon-



sored by the Eastern Caribbean Partial Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECPC-GC) that assists small-medium-sized enterprises. The guarantee programme is open to business persons operating in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU).

Anika Henry commented after the webinar, “ACB Caribbean is commit-

ted to the growth and development of businesses in Barbuda. We are incredibly pleased to be bringing Digital Banking to Barbuda and assist our customers with banking outside of the lines.”

The webinar is now posted to ACB Caribbean’s YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn social media platforms.

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Jamaica’s Foreign Minister, Johnson-Smith.

The group indicated that a sub-committee would be empanelled to delve into the issue fur-

ther, however, there has still been no indication of whether the committee has reached consensus.

Chairman Briceno’s recent declaration would suggest it has not.

Jamaica is unrelenting in its advancement of its candidate.

This month, Johnson-Smith embarked on a tour of key African nations in a bid to seek their sup-

port for her bid to be elected Commonwealth Secretary General.

To date, only Antigua and Barbuda’s Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Dominica’s Roosevelt Skerit have openly pronounced their support for the re-election of Baroness Patricia Scotland.

Prime Minister Browne has made it pellucid that he considers Jamaica’s decision to advance their own candidate as a monumental “mistake”, which does not serve the region well.

<p>Fri 20 Day</p> <p>85° </p> <p>3% E 14 mph</p> <p>Sunshine and clouds mixed. High near 85F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 69% UV Index Extreme</p> <p>Sunrise 5:34 am Sunset 6:33 pm</p>	<p>Fri 20 Night</p> <p>78° </p> <p>7% ENE 12 mph</p> <p>A few clouds. Low 78F. Winds ENE at 10 to 15 mph.</p> <p>Humidity 77% UV Index 0 of 10</p> <p>Moonrise 11:33 pm Moonset 9:57 am</p> <p> Waning Gibbous</p>
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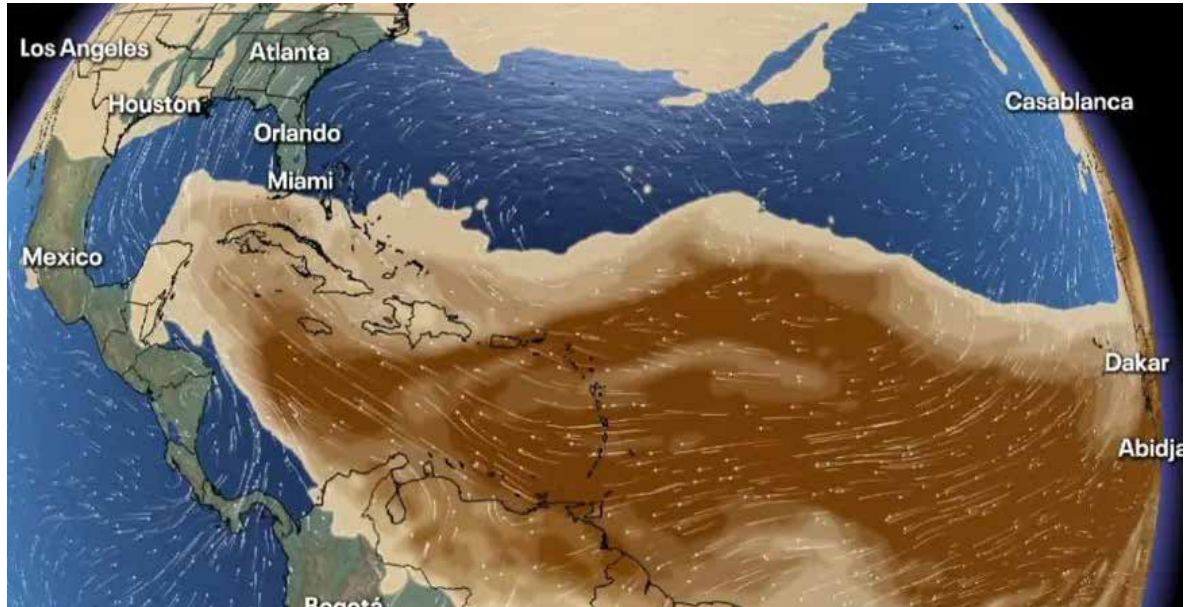
Saharan dust inundates the region

It may still be a good idea to keep your mask close at hand as a massive cloud of dust from the Sahara Desert is now crossing the region.

People who are particularly sensitive to allergens may have noticed an increase in sneezing, burning eyes, coughing and an irritated nose.

Persons with respiratory ailments – asthma for example – may experience some negative health issues associated with the phenomenon.

On Tuesday, the Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Service issued an air quality advisory cautioning that quality is down to moder-



ate, as a result of particulate matter 2.5 to 10 associated with this new wave of Sahara dust.

The Met office continued that general visibility

would continue to be hazy across the islands.

These conditions will improve as the dust cloud moves across the islands and upward to the north.

Neighbouring territories including Montserrat, St. Maarten and the British Virgin Islands have also issued specific air quality advisories.

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Monkey business

By Tony Deyal

(to Tickoya Joseph for sharing Stranger Than Fiction and Gleaner Editor-in-Chief, Kaymar Jordan, for her ongoing help and support)

I take after my father in my sense of humour. He was a truck-driver and once told me about this “loader” who was assigned to work with him. They were supposed to be transporting cement from the factory and, as my father complained, “Boy that handyman wasn’t handy at all.” When my father eventually found him sleeping under a tarpaulin in the back of the truck, the man’s excuse was, “Mr. D (short for “Deyal”), you should know that empty bag can’t stand-up.” My father explained to all of us, “What he mean was that all he was handy with was food and he wanted me to give him something to eat before he lift up any cement bag.” My father continued, “Well I buy him four 'hops bread', a quarter pound of cheese and a Coco-cola and I tell him, 'Eat and then stop loafing and start loading.'”

My father went to get his breakfast and upon returning, not a bag on the truck and the loader seemed to have gone AWOL. “Well ah went looking for him,” my father said with a smile, “and I couldn’t find him anywhere, not even under the tarpaulin.

Then I find him in the loading room behind the pile-up cement bags sleeping. I wake him up. I was upset and say, ‘You tell me that empty bag can’t stand-up and I give you food and you eat it and then you gone straight back to sleep? You come here to work not to sleep!’” My father, took a drink and continued, “The man look at me, he wipe his eyes and then tell me bold-face and full of talk, ‘But Mr. D. You don’t know that full bag can’t bend?’”

While my father had no tolerance for “lazy” people, he had a weakness for alcohol and even as a boy cutting grass in the cane fields, from the age of seven he would “take one” with the older men. He was always brave enough to climb the highest trees around, especially if they had avocados (known to most of us in Trinidad as “zabocca”). Because of the speed with which he climbed, everybody in the village knew my father as “Monkey” and, despite his own many shortcomings (including his height), they called him “Monk” for short. I eventually laughed when I learnt more about the English language.

I found out that a Catholic priest would also be called a “Monk” and whether it was my father or one of that lot, “Monk” was definitely a four-letter word. My father never felt



Tony Deyal

content, happy or even high unless he had over-proof “Puncheon (White) Rum” in a shot glass chased down with some water. One day, accidentally, he drank his shot, thought the bottle next to it was water and took a second shot. The people in the bar still talk about that day when “Monkey” didn’t know what tree to climb.

This is why, when one of the two newspapers that have carried my work for the past thirty years, The Jamaica Gleaner (the other is the Barbados Nation which was the first to use it) started a series called “Stranger Than Fiction” I was immediately interested. In the Caribbean I can understand, “Stranger Than Diction” since Jamaicans say “Hackee” for what most of the rest of us call “Ackee”. They also say

“Abit” for “Habit” and it is not only a bad habit but they do it “H’often”. However, I “H’andastan” the people well enough and since I say “bhagee” or “spinach” for what they call “callaloo”, I should stop behaving “H’ignorant”.

It is even worse when “Stranger Than Friction” runs into Diction. There is an old joke about a man of Chines descent who walked into the currency exchange section of a bank in New York City. He went in with 2100 yuan and walked out with \$300. The following week, he walked in with another 2100 yuan, and was handed \$276. He asked the teller why he got less money that week than the previous week. The teller said, “Fluctuations.” The Chinese man

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Opinion



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stormed out, and just before slamming the door, turned around and shouted, "Fluc you Amelicans, too!"

I became a total fan of the "Friction" column when my father starred in it. In an article entitled "Humans inherited their love of alcohol from monkeys", I thought immediately about my father and wondered if the researchers found him as the missing link. However, their theory is based on modern-day apes who are attracted by over-ripe fermented fruit. The experts claim that millions of years ago, the smell of alcohol led our ancestors to ripe and nutritious fruit. I can see my father and his friends with the monkeys, tails and hands linked in friendship, singing, "Rum till I die/ Rum till I die/ She tell me she don't love me/ And that's the reason why."

What is even more interesting is that an analysis of the urine from black-handed spider monkeys in Pan-

ama proves that the theory still has weight and that is not just proof, it is over-proof! Professor Christina Campbell, from California State University, said: "For the first time, we have been able to show, without a shadow of a doubt, that wild primates, with no human interaction, consume fruit containing ethanol. This is just one study, and more needs to be done, but it looks like there may be some truth to that 'drunken monkey' hypothesis."

Given that my mother and I had to live with a "drunken monkey" for so long, it was always more than a hypothesis for us. What helped a bit was that my father was very quiet when he was sober and was generally a lot of fun when he was drunk. He sang, played the harmonium and made jokes. However, depending on who he was with, he would sometimes end up gambling and inevitably came home with a big smile and no money. This was my mother's jurisdiction and

when she laid into him, if you thought that Stranger Than Fiction, Friction or Diction were bad, you would have learnt that the worst is dereliction. My father got demoted from "Monkey" to "Monk" and got a benediction from my mother that was not just worthy of his malediction, but very scornful of his addiction. However, what was most interesting was the contradiction. He would fall asleep snoring drunk but at four in the morning she would shake him awake, give him his breakfast of coffee and a piece of roti or bread, hand him his packed food in his bag, and he would head out to work, even when he had been fired the night before by his boss for drinking on the job.

**Tony Deyal was last seen remembering when he ran out of the car as soon as they reached the beach and his father called him back and laid down the law, "Eat your food first. When you dead they does bathe you but they don't feed you."*

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Montserrat's cabinet approves Energy Task Force

A report from the Energy Task Force, outlining key recommendations for developing Montserrat's Renewable Energy resource, has been completed and approved by Cabinet.

The Energy Task Force was commissioned by the Ministry of Communications, Works, Labour and Energy (MCWLE) in 2020 to propose how best to exploit the island's vast, indigenous, renewable energy resource.

Comprising stakeholders in the public and private sector, the task force was directed to recommend solutions to overcome potential economic, technical, regulatory, and other barriers to the rapid and expeditious development of local renewable energy resources.

MCWLE Minister Dr Samuel Joseph said: "Montserrat's future is highly dependent on its ability to compete in a globalised market. Our energy security and independence are crucial to us meeting this objective. Once we have set a path to implement clean and sustainable energy, it is believed that the country's economy will improve, and we as a people can enjoy a better standard of living.

Our government has made energy a priority; hence, the Energy Task Force's formulation was a strategy deployed to help meet our strategic objectives."

The Task Force began its work at the end of May 2020 and met eight times, both virtually and in person, up to the beginning of February 2021. The Task Force benefited from presentations and information presented on wind energy, distributed energy, RE evaluation Matrix, Hatch



Kenrick Burke, Director of Energy for the Ministry of Communications, Works, Labour, and Energy

Consulting IRP and an alternative integrated resource plan (IRP).

The Energy Task Force Report offers an in depth look at the opportunities and barriers to developing solar, wind, hydro power, tidal (ocean) power, geothermal resources, and the potential implications of doing nothing.

"Montserrat must choose between two energy futures. Currently, imported fossil fuels provide 99.4 per cent of Montserrat's energy needs.

Choosing a business-as-usual route, which would sustain and potentially even exacerbate our dependence, exposes us to the tremendous risk of oil and gas price fluctuations and shocks, possible supply disruptions, and rising greenhouse gas levels. Alternatively, the country can take a deep plunge into securing its energy future by investing heavily in renewable energy," the report stated.

Chairman of the task force and

Director of Energy for the Government of Montserrat, Kenrick Burke said, "We believe that a more prudent choice for Montserrat is an aggressive and multi-faceted strategy of diversification and development of the most feasible indigenous energy resources.

The report looks at increased investment in energy efficiency and demand management, development of small-scale distributed resources, development of a geothermal plant, and development of large-scale wind and solar resources.

"Of all these alternatives, however, by far the largest and most capable of supporting a low carbon energy future that is largely decoupled from foreign disruption is the development of the local geothermal resource. Geothermal energy holds the potential to supply beyond 100 per cent of Montserrat's energy needs," the report noted.

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Business



cont'd from pg 11

According to the Energy Task Force Report, "Montserrat has the potential to emerge as a net energy exporter through the aggressive development of its geothermal resources."

A significant barrier highlighted in the 129-

page document, is the lack of financing for project implementation. Several strategies on exploring the various financing options available to Montserrat are provided, a time-bound approach on accessing grant funding, debt financing and other alternative fi-

ancing solutions are presented.

Permanent Secretary of MCWLE, Colin Fergus said, "The ministry has reviewed the final report and will include its findings in our ministerial strategic plan."

The Task Force's rec-

ommendations include:

Establishment of a committee to investigate possible models for allowing energy systems (DES) on the national grid without adversely impacting MUL and the lower end ratepayers.

GoM/MUL giving special rate consideration for large consumers as a means of attracting direct foreign investment in Montserrat.

Development of a comprehensive plan to address any inefficiencies that may exist within MUL to facilitate an acceptable electricity rate.

Establishment of an independent and transparent electricity regulatory commission.

GOM must actively explore securing grant funding or a commitment for financing from FCDO towards financing a major renewable energy project.

GOM must secure Britain's approval to pursue the option of debt financing.

The members of the task force are Director of Energy, MCWEL Kenrick Burke, who was selected as the Task Force Chairman; Head of Programme Management (PMO), Martin Parlett; who was chosen as Vice-chair while Laboratory Manager, MCWEL Rolando Kassie, who was selected as Coordinator. Other members include Consultant, Owen Lewis, Managing Director, MUL, Kendall Lee and Director of Fish-N-Fins, Veta Wade.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

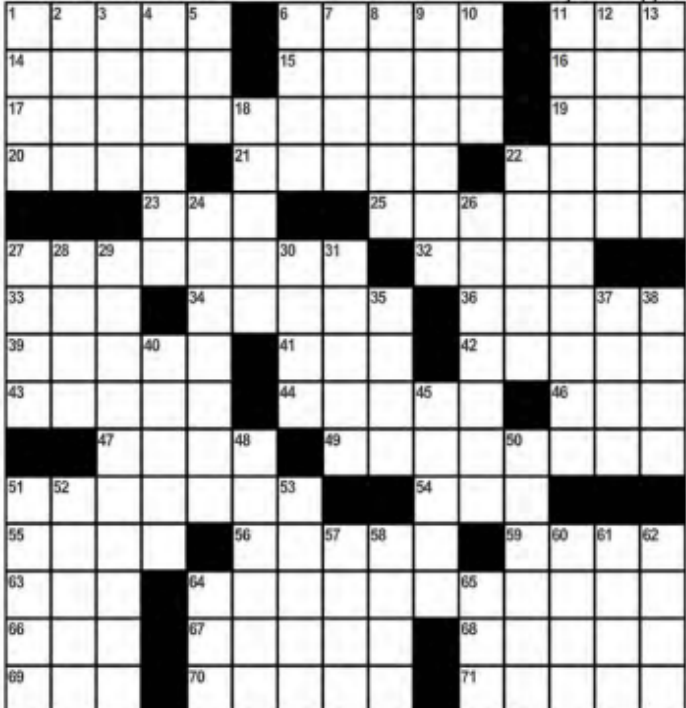
- 1) Possessed, old-style
- 6) Small container for liquids
- 11) Physique, informally
- 14) Draw out
- 15) Populous province of China (Var.)
- 16) Monopoly abbr.
- 17) Removals
- 19) Still in a wrapper
- 20) Eye-opening problem?
- 21) "La Boheme," e.g.
- 22) Currency no more
- 23) Bossy sound
- 25) Grandeur
- 27) Book appendix
- 32) High school subject
- 33) Hilo garland
- 34) English exam finale, often
- 36) Small music ensemble
- 39) Short pants
- 41) Conceitedness
- 42) Prepare to be knighted
- 43) Allow to enter
- 44) Finger or toe
- 46) Miss-named?
- 47) Thing on an agenda
- 49) Herb used in Mexican cuisine
- 51) Old cleaning vessel
- 54) Anger
- 55) Tiny, informally
- 56) Iraqi port
- 59) Supergarb
- 63) Married woman in Mex.
- 64) Shoulder injury
- 66) Wiggly fish
- 67) Some members of the choir
- 68) Became fainter
- 69) "Do" followers on a music scale
- 70) Overly sentimental
- 71) Trucking allowances

DOWN

- 1) Chops with an ax
- 2) Way out of a mine
- 3) Military obligation
- 4) Villain's plan
- 5) Spread, as hay
- 6) Roughen, as lips
- 7) Investment firm T. ___ Price
- 8) Deprive of weaponry
- 9) Peace salutation
- 10) Coast Guard officer (Abbr.)
- 11) Ostracism
- 12) Blatant
- 13) "___ Defeats Truman" (infamous headline)
- 18) Crosses
- 22) Disclose
- 24) Ballroom dance
- 26) Salt, on the briny
- 27) Pond dweller
- 28) Expired
- 29) Heave-hos
- 30) Brought into play
- 31) Illusionist's specialty
- 35) Jellystone Park denizen
- 37) Common alcoholic beverage
- 38) Fake butter
- 40) Short and meaningful, as a saying
- 45) Sacro-___
- 48) Like some homes
- 50) Bee's attraction
- 51) Having better judgment
- 52) "___ Grows in Brooklyn"
- 53) One of the senses
- 57) Pig food
- 58) Optimistic
- 60) Man Friday
- 61) Master of rhymes
- 62) Concludes
- 64) Crow kin, briefly
- 65) Away from the bow

GOING NO PLACE?

By Jill Pepper



Guyana: Cricket Carnival 2022 excitement begins next week

By Gabriella Chapman

Cricket Carnival 2022 in Guyana might just be the most anticipated event of the year on the Caribbean's calendar of events.

The two weeks of activities are slated for September, but the excitement begins next week with five days of six events organised to set the pace for what will come later this year.

The Cricket Carnival is the product of a collaboration between the creators of Guyana Carnival (Hits and Jams Entertainment) and the Government of Guyana, merging the activities of carnival with the semi-finals and finals of the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) set to be held in Guyana late September.

At a media and corporate launch on Wednesday morning, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson said the collaboration was necessary to accentuate the trajectory that Guyana is on.

"What I want everyone to understand is that Guyana is a unique country. As we evolve, as we transition in this period, and the country begins to transform, the pride and the uniqueness of Guyanese people, it must show itself to the world in a very elaborate way.

This collaboration will form a new direction that the Government of Guyana has established as part of an overall vision of where we go, of creating this premier destination in the region for world-class events.

It was an important decision for us to have made, to secure CPL finals and semi-finals and to pair it with Guyana Carnival to create this brand called Cricket Carnival," Ramson remarked.

CEO of Hits & Jams Entertainment, Rawle Ferguson reminisced



Guyana's Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson Jr.

that the vision of having a Carnival in Guyana was a casual conversation between friends that grew into a magnificent global tourism product.

"Today is a very happy day. This actually started in a bottom house between Kerwin and a few friends of ours, and we came up with the concept of Carnival. And our perspective at that time was bringing happiness and bringing people together, bringing cultures together.

And it was until we met His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, we figured out the economic benefits of Carnival and we married Carnival with cricket and wanted to bottle that and share it with all of Guyana and the rest of the world," Ferguson said.

Executive Director of Hits & Jams entertainment, Kerwin Bollers explained that the Genesis x Utopia band launches set for next week from May 25 to 29 are intended to set the pace of Cricket Carnival 2022.

These events include a cooler beach party featuring Patrice Roberts, Stinging Nettles featuring Kes and the band, Baderation dancehall mega-concert featuring Shaneil Muir, Skeng, Yung Bredda, Toga Party, J'ouvert, and Soca and Wine featuring local artistes.

"Guyana is very excited for these activities and we want to start the ex-

citement off with a bang, going all the way into September. We are happy to be back hosting live events again, not running from the bus, or having a limited number of people at an event. We will be able to come out in full fledge in May... and these activities will bring significant financial benefits to Guyana," Bollers said.

Director of Guyana Tourism Authority, Kamrul Baksh echoed similar sentiments, agreeing that this is a significant boost to Guyana's economy through the tourism sector.

"The concept and construct of Cricket Carnival will unify people and industries across the CARICOM region and in other countries. The concept is not only for tourism exclusively, it's much broader, and this is something I feel the government has been leading exceptionally well.

We at the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and the Guyana Tourism Authority have a mandate to ensure that when travellers come here, the travel economy and every aspect of it is well taken care of.

And one major component of that, is the activities that travellers can have and experience here while in Guyana. Next week is one such activity that they can engage in.

They are high quality, high octane, well organised events. That's what we want destination Guyana to be known for. Events are major draw cards to pull people to this destination," Baksh said.

Also present and giving remarks at the launch were representatives from major sponsors such as DDL, Banks DIH, Church's, Ansa McCal, GTT and Fireside Grill, who all expressed sentiments of joy to be supporting the Cricket Carnival 2022.

Elton John doc 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' lands at Disney

By Lindsey Bahr

Sir Elton John is preparing to say goodbye in fabulous splendour, with the help of a documentary crew and the Walt Disney Co.

Disney Original Documentary and Disney+ said Wednesday that the film, entitled "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: The Final Elton John Performances and the Years that Made His Legend," will serve as the definitive and official feature on John's life and career. Including unseen archival footage, new interviews and a present day look at him and his family, it'll culminate with his final North American show at Dodger Stadium

in Los Angeles this November.

Oscar-nominated filmmaker R.J. Cutler, who most recently directed the Billie Eilish documentary "Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry" is directing the film alongside producer and director David Furnish, who is married to John. Furnish also directed the 1997 Elton John documentary "Elton John: Tantrums & Tiaras" and produced the Hollywood biopic "Rocketman."

"What a thrill and an honour it is that David Furnish and I get to create this intimate and unique look at one of the world's most celebrated artists," Cutler *cont'd on pg 15*



Elton John performs during his "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" tour on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, in New Orleans. Disney Original Documentary and Disney+ have landed the rights to the Elton John documentary "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: The Final Elton John Performances and the Years that Made his Legend," the companies said Wednesday, May 18, 2022. (AP Photo/Derick Hingle, File)

Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky welcome their first child – report

Multi-hyphenate pop star Rihanna and rapper A\$AP Rocky have welcomed their first child, according to a TMZ report. The baby boy was reportedly born on 13 May in Los Angeles. No name was given.

The couple, together since early 2020, first announced their pregnancy with a heavily photographed stroll through A\$AP Rocky's home town of New York in January. The fashion mogul and Fenty beauty founder has since made headlines for her trend-setting maternity style of sheer lace, crop tops and belly-baring outfits.

"When I found out I was pregnant, I thought to myself, There's no way I'm going to go shopping in no maternity aisle," the 34-year-old singer told Vogue in April. "I'm



A\$AP Rocky and Rihanna in February. (Photograph: Victor Boyko/Getty Images for Gucci)

sorry – it's too much fun to get dressed up. I'm not going to let that part disappear because my body is changing.

"I'm hoping that we were able to redefine what's considered 'decent' for pregnant women," she elaborated. "My body is doing incredible things right now, and I'm not going to be ashamed of that. This time should feel cele-

bratory. Because why should you be hiding your pregnancy?"

In the same interview, the Grammy-winning performer, who has not released an album since 2016's *Anti*, teased long-anticipated new music, but did not specify when. "I'm looking at my next project completely differently from the way I had wanted to

put it out before. I think this way suits me better, a lot better," she said. "It's authentic, it'll be fun for me, and it takes a lot of the pressure off."

She is also the subject of a long-gestating documentary by the Battleship director Peter Berg. The as-yet-untitled film, which currently has no official release date, was purchased by Amazon for \$25m in 2019.

The birth comes less than a month after A\$AP Rocky, legal name Rakim Mayers, was arrested while returning from holiday in Barbados in connection with a previously unreported November 2021 shooting. Los Angeles police were investigating Mayers' involvement in the shooting, in which he allegedly fired several shots at an acquaintance, grazing his hand.

Beverley Kelso, of Wailers fame, to be honoured

By Anthony Turner

Singer Beverley Kelso, one of the founding members of the original Wailers with Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Junior Braithwaite and Cherry Smith, will be honoured with a United States Congressional Proclamation from Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke. The proclamation will be presented to Kelso at the upcoming Westchester Reggae Festival on May 29, the organisers have announced.

Kelso was thrust in the spotlight in 1963, when, at age 14, Marley asked her mother to let her be a part of The Wailers. The arrangement was that Marley would pick up Kelso at her home, take her to the studio, and back home when the session was done.

Kelso's distinctive voice can also be heard on tracks *It Hurts To Be Alone* and *Lonesome Feeling*. The US-based singer reportedly sang on more than two dozen songs by the group, up until her departure in 1965. She eventually migrated to the US in 1979, where she still lives. The deaths of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Junior Braithwaite, Cherry Smith and Bunny Wailer has left Kelso as the only surviving founding member of the group.

Andrea Bullens, founder and executive producer of the Westchester Reggae Festival, recalled first meeting Kelso.

"I have always been intrigued by her quiet demeanour and her fascinating story," Bullens shared. "After years of



Early publicity photograph (L-R): Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Beverly Kelso and Bunny Wailer.

being silent, in 2009 we were fortunate to have interviewed her on Caribbean Lifestyle TV in New York. She spoke candidly about being a member of The Wailers and her friendship with 'Lesta' (as she affectionately calls Bob Marley) and the group's rise to fame in the early 1960s. Marley and Beverly had a very, very close relationship, but it was not romantic in any way," Bullens explained.

"This is before Rita and the kids became a part of Bob's life. She knows a lot about the formative years of The Wailers, when the group had just start-

ed to gel. She has a fantastic memory of the young 'Lesta' Marley. She has told me some very interesting stories about her life that she has not shared before. I know many people would love to hear her story," she added.

Bullens said she is excited that Kelso will finally be honoured and acknowledged for her contribution to The Wailers. The Westchester Reggae Festival will feature, among others, Studio One veterans Marcia Griffiths, Leroy Sibbles and Johnny Orbourne. All acts will be backed by Derrick Barnett and the Statement Band.

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said in a statement. "As it has for so many others, Elton John's music has had deep meaning for me for decades, and this opportunity is nothing short of a career highlight and privilege."

No release date was revealed for "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road" but the companies teased a festival run and a theatrical release before it streams on Disney+.

"There are no superlatives left to describe Elton

John and his impact on music and culture — he's simply unrivalled," said Bob Chapek, CEO of The Walt Disney Company. "Like a good Disney story, Elton's music has both universal appeal and the ability to connect with au-

diences on a deeply personal level. He has been part of the Disney family since 1994 when he helped make 'The Lion King' an instant classic, and we could not be more excited to collaborate with him on this new documentary."

When Africans asked for COVID shots, they didn't get them. Now they don't want them.

By **Edward Mcallister and Cooper Inveen**

It's noisy inside the Mamprobi clinic in Accra as kids clamber over their mothers while they wait to get their measles vaccines. Outside, an area reserved for COVID-19 shots is empty. A health worker leans back in his chair and scrolls on a tablet.

One woman, waiting to get her daughter inoculated, is fully aware of the dangers of measles: the high fever, the rash, the risk to eyesight. But COVID-19? She has never heard of a single case.

The perception that COVID-19 doesn't pose a significant threat is common in Ghana's capital and elsewhere in Africa, whose youthful populace has suffered a fraction of the casualties that have driven vaccine uptake in places like Europe and America, where the disease tore through elderly populations.

"I mean, Ghana has been spared up until now doing just what we're doing," said Nana Kwaku Addo, a 28-year-old construction worker in Accra. "I've heard people say it's common sense (to get vaccinated), but what about all the other countries that have taken it and still put



Sulayman Jalloh, a health worker vaccinates a driver from the Bundung garage during a mobile vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in Banjul, Gambia May 11, 2022. REUTERS/ Ngouda Dione

people in lockdown."

Only 17% of Africa's 1.3 billion population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 - versus above 70% in some countries - in part because richer nations hoarded supply last year, when global demand was greatest, to the chagrin of African nations desperate for international supplies.

Now though, as doses finally arrive in force in the continent, inoculation rates are falling. The number of shots administered

dropped 35% in March, World Health Organization data shows, erasing a 23% rise seen in February. People are less afraid now. Misinformation about vaccines has festered.

"If we had gotten vaccines earlier, this kind of thing wouldn't happen so often," Christina Odei, the COVID-19 team leader at the Mamprobi clinic, said of the low uptake in Accra. "Initially everyone really wanted it, but we didn't have the vaccines."

That worries public health specialists who say that leaving such a large population unvaccinated increases the risk of new variants emerging on the continent before spreading to regions such as Europe just as governments there abandon mask mandates and travel restrictions.

In a sign of possible perils to come, cases of two Omicron subvariants have shot up in recent weeks in South Africa, the

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continent's worst-hit nation, prompting officials there to warn of a fifth wave of infections.

To boost uptake, countries are focusing on mobile vaccination drives, in which teams visit communities and offer doses onsite.

However, many African countries can't afford the vehicles, fuel, cool boxes and salaries needed for a national campaign, according to more than a dozen health officials, workers and experts across several countries. Meanwhile, donor funding has been slow to arrive, they said.

Rahab Mwaniki, the Africa co-ordinator for the People's Vaccine Alliance advocacy group, said it was a "big ask" for Africans to prioritise getting COVID-19 vaccines to help protect others around the world when infection rates at home were low.

"Many people say, 'you didn't help us'. They feel like the West never really supported them," she added, stressing that Africans should still get vaccinated to protect themselves and others from new variants.

Reaching Out

Many African countries are long familiar with deadly diseases. Millions fall ill each year with tuberculosis. Malaria kills hundreds of thousands annually, mostly children under five. Ebola springs up periodically in Democratic Republic of Congo.

West Africa is facing its worst food crisis on record driven by conflict, drought, and the impact of the war in Ukraine on food prices.

For many people COVID-19, which carries a far greater risk of severe illness and death for the elderly, is not the most pressing concern. The median age in Africa is 20, the lowest of all regions, and about half the 43 in Europe and 39 in North America, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.N. data.

"Let me ask you one question," said Mawule, a businessman in Accra. "Is COVID the biggest problem in Ghana right now? You think it's a bigger problem than inflation, the way people suffer for fuel?"

Now the continent has too many COVID-19 vaccine doses. Vaccination sites lie empty; millions of unused vials are piling up, and one of Africa's first COVID-19 vaccine producers is still waiting for an order.

At the Mamprobi clinic, health workers in bright yellow vests have resorted to proactive measures.

They fan out across the busy market stalls and stores in the area, one with a cool box slung over his shoulder containing COVID-19 vaccine shots, asking wary shoppers if they would like to receive an injection.

After an hour toiling in the baking sun, the team had administered just four doses.

No Money, No Jingles

To boost uptake, countries including Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Kenya are focusing on mobile vaccination campaigns that visit communities. But finances are stretched.

Misinformation is tough to unglue on a continent where big pharmaceutical companies have in the past run dubious clinical trials resulting in deaths. Health workers say they need funds to counter false rumours.

Ghana, one of Africa's most developed economies and one applauded for its early inoculation surge, has a funding gap of \$30 million to carry out another campaign, according to the World Bank. Irregular power supply jeopardises the vaccine cold chain. Doses expire.

"We don't have any problem with the number of vaccines anymore. It's only a problem with uptake and the money to get those vaccines out to people," said Joseph Dwomor Ankrah, who manages the country's COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Niger, where only 6% of the population is fully vaccinated, lacks enough cold storage for vaccines in its vast rural areas, or motorbikes to distribute them, according to the World Bank.

There have been some successes; Ethiopia has vaccinated 15 million people in a nationwide push since mid-February, for example.

Yet uptake is "abysmally low" in the tiny state of Gambia, said Mustapha Bittaye, director of health services.

The African Union wants Gambia to take delivery of more than 200,000 doses, but the country is still working through an old batch and doesn't need more, Bittaye said.

In Zambia, where coverage is 11%, officials are planning outreach campaigns but worry they won't be able to cover the cost of feeding doctors working far from home or pay for their transport.

In Sierra Leone, where 14% of the population is fully vaccinated, radio stations sometimes refuse to broadcast the government's pro-vaccine messages because of unpaid invoices, said Solomon Jamiru, the country's COVID-19 spokesman.

A World Bank fund for vaccine purchases and rollouts has sent \$3.6 billion to sub-Saharan Africa. Of that, only \$520 million has been spent. Amit Dar, the bank's human development director for Eastern and Southern Africa, said outdated health systems had struggled to absorb the funding.

Health experts say more funding was needed at the start of the pandemic for logistics and training.

"The fact that we didn't invest heavily a year or 18 months ago is a big part of what we are seeing now," said Emily Janoch, a senior director at aid group Care USA.

"These are the consequences of earlier failures."

Bahamas: Relatives want own autopsy done on US citizens

CMC - The Bahamas government has confirmed that the relatives of three United States tourists found dead at the Sandals Emerald Bay resort in Exuma earlier this month want US pathologists to perform another autopsy on their bodies.

Health Minister Dr Michael Darville said that the requests are currently being “entertained” by officials.

There were requests by family members of the deceased to bring in pathologists from abroad to do another autopsy because you know to move bodies across water, they have to be embalmed and so that request was made.

“I do not know exactly how far it has gone but we are willing to assist anyone ...and so those requests are being entertained but I’m not sure where they are at this point,” he told the Tribune newspaper.

Deputy Prime Minister Chester Cooper told reporters last week that autopsies had been completed, but



Bahamas Health Minister Dr. Michael Darville

that the findings were not being released as yet into the deaths of married Tennessee couple Michael and Robbie Phillips and Vincent Paul Chiarella of Florida.

Another American, said to be the wife of one of the deceased, was airlifted to New Providence to receive treatment at the Princess Margaret Hospital and has since been flown to the United States for further medical treatment.

Darville said he understands that there is still “some investigations ongoing at the Sandals resort” and that samples from the earlier autopsies have been “sent to a very reliable lab in the United States and a toxicology report was still outstanding”.

Police Commissioner Paul Rolle told reporters last week that investigators were looking into several points of interest to determine the victims’ cause of deaths, including what they ate as well as whether any “contaminants” were present in the separate rooms where they were found on May 6.

Sandals in expressing “deep sadness” at the incident, said it is “actively working to support both the investigation as well as the guests’ families in every way possible during this difficult time”.

It said that it would not be disclosing any further information at this time, out of courtesy to the family.

Cuba brands U.S. rollback of curbs as light on detail, heavy on hostility

Reuters - Cuba’s vice foreign minister denounced the Biden administration’s partial rollback of Trump-era restrictions on remittances and travel to the island, calling U.S. policy toward the island one of continued “hostility” and “economic blockade.”

The U.S. measures, announced on Monday, mark the most significant

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Flags of U.S. and Cuba hang outside a hotel in Havana, Cuba, April 6, 2022. REUTERS/Stringer

Jamaica experiencing fifth wave of COVID-19

CMC – Jamaica’s Minister of Health and Wellness Minister, Dr. Christopher Tufton has confirmed that the island is now experiencing a fifth wave of COVID-19 infections.

He made the revelation during a COVID-19 press conference on May 18.

“Upon reviewing the epidemiology data, we can confirm that Jamaica is currently experiencing the fifth wave of COVID-19. Based on a review of the epidemiological curves for confirmed cases and reproductive rates to identify the inflection point for increased cases.

The inflection point for the fifth wave occurred



Health Minister Dr. Christopher Tufton

around April 20,” the minister explained.

Dr. Tufton noted that the Omicron BA2 variant is likely driving the wave.

In the last 24 hours,

Jamaica saw 147 new COVID-19 cases. Minister Tufton added that the positivity rate is 17.6 per cent.

Despite the declaration of the fifth wave, Dr.

Tufton urged Jamaicans not to panic. He did however urge Jamaicans to get vaccinated against the virus.

“All persons 12 years and older should visit any of the over 100 vaccination centres to be vaccinated if they have not already done so,” he said.

According to COVID.Vax.Live, some 23 percent of Jamaica’s population is fully vaccinated.

Despite the low vaccination rate, the government has reiterated that it will not be going back to strict measures like lockdowns but has urged residents to take personal responsibility.

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changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba since President Joe Biden took office in January 2021. His administration said it would open the door to increased travel to the island, do away with a Trump-era cap on remittances and promises to further boost visa processing.

The measures, however, stop well short of the historic rapprochement under former President Barack Obama.

Cuban Vice Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, in a television program on state-run media on Tuesday, called the announcement “an information sheet sparse in detail, although with a heavy load of hostile language toward Cuba and a

dose of demagoguery.”

He warned against too much optimism until the fine print of the regulations is released, a process he said could take “days or months.”

The United States said on Monday that the rule changes would be implemented “in short order.”

Many Cubans on the island found reason to celebrate this week, as hopes of reuniting with family in the United States and the potential for even a minor uptick in its near-collapsed economy provided some room for optimism. [read more](#)

Cuba, a Caribbean island 90 miles from the United States, is suffering its worse economic crisis in decades, ravaged by Trump-era sanctions, two years of coronavirus

and an ailing tourism industry that is struggling to recover.

Tens of thousands of Cubans have left the island in recent months for the United States, an exodus on par with the 1980 Mariel boatlift.

Cossio expressed scepticism that the announced changes would do much to improve the country’s lot.

“The policy of the United States towards Cuba continues to be a policy of hostility and economic blockade...to isolate Cuba, and to {discredit} it,” he said.

The United States said the policy shift announced Monday “will continue to focus on empowering the Cuban people to help them create a future free from repression and economic suffering.”

NATO chief sure spat over Sweden, Finland will be resolved

AP – Turkey’s leader flatly opposes having Sweden and Finland join NATO but the military alliance’s top official said Thursday he was confident that the standoff would be resolved and that the two Nordic nations would join soon.

Turkey’s approval of Finland and Sweden’s application to join the Western military alliance is crucial because NATO makes decisions by consensus. Each of its 30 member countries has the power to veto a membership bid.

“We have told our relevant friends we would say ‘no’ to Finland and Sweden’s entry into NATO, and we will continue on our path like this,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Turkish youths in a video for Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, a national holiday.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday he was “confident that we will come to a quick decision to welcome both Sweden and Finland to join the NATO family.”

“We are addressing the concerns that Turkey has expressed, because when an important ally (like) Turkey raises security concerns, raises issues, then of course the only way to deal with that is to sit down and find common ground,” Stoltenberg told reporters in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Finland and Sweden officially applied to join the world’s biggest security organization on Wednesday. A first meeting of NATO ambassadors to discuss their applications failed to reach a consensus. For the moment, no new meeting of NATO ambassadors is planned, and one is only likely to be held once higher-level diplomacy with Turkish officials has addressed Erdogan’s concerns.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gestures as he attends a meeting at Kastellet in Copenhagen, Denmark, Thursday May 19, 2022. (Martin Sylvest/Ritzau Scanpix via AP)

Erdogan has said Turkey’s objection stems from its security concerns and grievances with Sweden’s — and to a lesser degree Finland’s — perceived support of the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, and an armed group in Syria that Turkey sees as an extension of the PKK. Turkey’s conflict with the PKK has killed tens of thousands of people since 1984.

A full recording of Erdogan’s conversation for the holiday that marks the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence in 1919 is expected to be released Thursday night. It was not immediately clear when the conversation took place.

In the remarks made available earlier Thursday, Erdogan branded the two prospective NATO members and especially Sweden as “a focus of terror, home to terror.” He accused them of giving financial and weapons support to the armed groups and claimed the countries’ alleged links to terror organizations meant they should not be part of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Erdogan’s ruling party spokesman, Omer Celik, said Thursday they had proof that Swedish weapons were showing up in PKK hands, while also warning the United States and France for “giving to the group that kills my country’s citizens.” If NATO is to expand, Celik argued, then potential members must “cut off their support to terror groups.”

Turkish officials, including the president, also have pointed to arms restrictions on Turkey as a reason for Ankara’s opposition to the two countries becoming part of NATO, saying it is unacceptable for fellow members to impose weapons bans.

Several European countries, including Sweden and Finland, restricted arms exports to Turkey following the country’s cross-border operation into northeast Syria in 2019 with the stated goal of clearing the border area of Kurdish militants.

Turkey says the Syrian Kurdish People’s Defense Units, or YPG, is di-

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Britain offers smallpox shot as monkeypox cases spread in Europe

Reuters - A smattering of monkeypox cases in Britain has prompted authorities to offer a smallpox vaccine to some healthcare workers and others who may have been exposed, as a handful more cases were confirmed in parts of Europe.

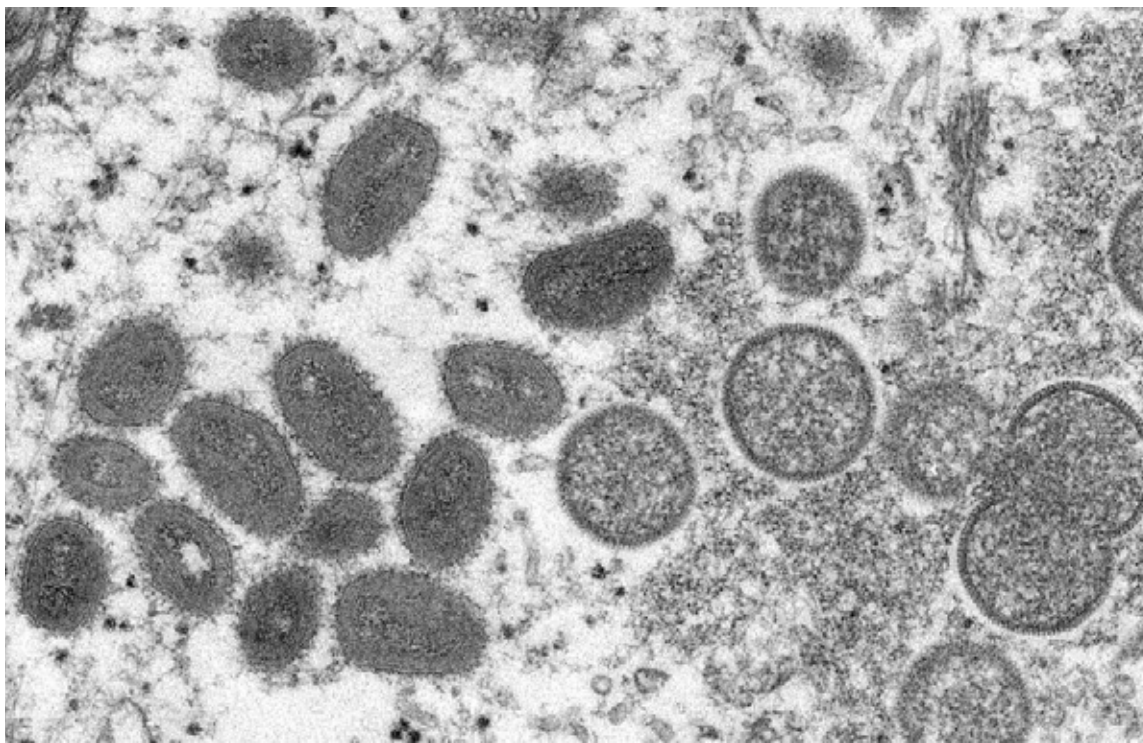
Monkeypox is a usually mild viral illness, characterised by symptoms of fever as well as a distinctive bumpy rash.

There are two main strains: the Congo strain, which is more severe – with up to 10% mortality – and the West African strain, which has a fatality rate of about 1%.

First identified in monkeys, the viral disease typically spreads through close contact and largely occurs in west and central Africa. It has rarely spread elsewhere, so this fresh spate of cases outside the continent has triggered concern.

In the United Kingdom, nine cases of the West African strain have been reported so far.

There isn't a specific vaccine for monkeypox, but a smallpox vaccine does offer some protection, a UK



An electron microscopic (EM) image shows mature, oval-shaped monkeypox virus particles as well as crescents and spherical particles of immature virions, obtained from a clinical human skin sample associated with the 2003 prairie dog outbreak in this undated image obtained by Reuters on May 18, 2022. Cynthia S. Goldsmith, Russell Regnery/CDC/Handout via REUTERS THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY A THIRD PARTY./File Photo

Health Security Agency (UKHSA) spokesperson said.

Data shows that vaccines that were used to eradicate smallpox are up to 85% effective against monkeypox, according to the World Health Organisation.

“Those who have required the vaccine have been offered it,” the UKHSA spokesperson added, without disclosing specifics

on how many people have been vaccinated so far.

Some countries have large stockpiles of the smallpox vaccine as part of pandemic preparedness, including the United States.

Copenhagen-based drugmaker Bavarian Nordic on Thursday said it had secured a contract with an undisclosed European country to supply its smallpox vaccine, Imvanex, in response

to the monkeypox outbreak.

The first European case was confirmed on May 7 in an individual who returned to England from Nigeria, where monkeypox is endemic.

Since then, Portugal has logged 14 cases, and Spain has confirmed seven cases. The United States and Sweden have also reported one case each. Italian authorities have confirmed one case and suspect two more.

Several monkeypox outbreaks in Africa have been contained during the COVID pandemic while the world's attention was elsewhere, Africa's top public health agency said on Thursday.

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rectly linked to the PKK, and Ankara has been infuriated by American support for them in fighting the Islamic State group.

Turkey also accuses Sweden and Finland of harbouring followers of Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based Muslim cleric whom the Turkish government blames for 2016

military coup attempt.

Asked whether Finland could enter before Sweden, Stoltenberg replied that “we handled this as one process and we are working with this as one process.”

The NATO chief was in Copenhagen where he met with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, among others.

Israeli military ID's gun that may have killed journalist

AP – The Israeli military has identified a soldier's rifle that may have killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, but said it cannot be certain unless the Palestinians turn over the bullet for analysis, a military official said Thursday.

The announcement marked a small sign of progress in the investigation into the killing of Abu Akleh, who was fatally shot on May 11 while covering an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank.

Palestinian officials, along with fellow journalists who were with Abu Akleh, have said Israeli troops stationed nearby killed her.

The Israeli army says she was shot during a battle between troops and Palestinian gunmen, and it cannot be determined who fired the fatal bullet without a proper



Shireen Abu Akleh

analysis.

Israel has called for a joint investigation with the Palestinians. But the Palestinians, who have the bullet, have refused, saying they don't trust Israel. They say they are conducting their own investigation and they are ready to cooperate with any country except for Israel.

The military official stressed that while the source of the shot is still unclear, "we have narrowed

down the IDF weapon that might be involved in the fire exchange near Shireen."

He renewed the call for the Palestinians to release the bullet.

If they do so, he said, Israel will "hopefully be able to compare the bullet to that barrel and check if there is a match."

He spoke on condition of anonymity under military briefing guidelines.

The military last week released the results of a pre-

liminary investigation that offered two possible causes of death. It said that in one scenario, she may have been hit by Palestinian gunfire during a fierce shootout with Israeli troops.

In the second scenario, it said she might have been hit by an Israeli soldier who shot through a "designated firing hole" in a military vehicle at a Palestinian gunman who was shooting at the vehicle. It said it could not determine the source of fire without analysing the bullet.

The Palestinians have been conducting their own investigation. Last Friday, the Palestinian public prosecutor said preliminary findings show Abu Akleh was killed by deliberate fire from Israeli troops. The prosecutor said the investigation would continue.

Chilean man finds father's million-dollar bankbook, government fights back

Reuters – Exequiel Hinojosa's father was saving up to buy a house in the 1960s and 70s and managed to save up almost 140,000 pesos, about \$163 now, meticulously detailed in a bankbook of a now defunct credit union.

After his father's death the book remained stored away in a box for decades until Hinojosa found it among his father's belongings.

Similar bankbooks have been found to be worthless, but Hinojosa's has an annotation reading "state guar-

anteed."

With interest and inflation, the 140,000 pesos are now estimated to be worth over 1 billion pesos, or nearly \$1.2 million.

This has caused a substantial headache for the state and Hinojosa, as the case has made it all the way to supreme court.

"That money is our family's. He saved it by working really hard," Hinojosa said, adding that the family didn't even know the bankbook existed until they found it.

"I never thought this process would turn into a kind of lawsuit towards the state," he added.

Multiple courts have ruled in favour of Hinojosa, but the government has appealed every step of the way. Now a final court of appeals will decide the fate of the million-dollar bankbook.

"If the justice system, the supreme court, the court of appeals rule in my favour, all that's left to fix the problem is paying what is due, nothing more, nothing less," Hinojosa said.

Female referees to officiate men's World Cup for first time

AP – Female referees will make World Cup history this year by working games at a major men's tournament for the first time in Qatar.

Three female referees and three female assistant referees were announced Thursday by FIFA among 129 officials selected for World Cup duty, including one man who caused controversy when refereeing a chaotic African Cup of Nations game in January while suffering with heat-stroke.

French referee Stéphanie Frappart already worked men's games in World Cup qualifying and the Champions League, after handling the 2019 Women's World Cup final. She also refereed the final of the men's French Cup this month.



Referee Stephanie Frappart gives directions during the French Cup final soccer match between Nice and Nantes at the Stade de France stadium, in Saint Denis, north of Paris, Saturday, May 7, 2022. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

“As always, the criteria we have used is ‘quality first’ and the selected match officials represent the highest level of refereeing worldwide,” said FIFA Referees Committee chairman

Pierluigi Collina, who worked the 2002 World Cup final. “In this way, we clearly emphasize that it is quality that counts for us and not gender.”

Salima Mukansanga of Rwanda and Yoshimi Yamashita of Japan are also on the list of 36 referees preparing for the 64 games at the tournament, which will be played from Nov. 21-Dec. 18.

The 69 assistant referees include Neuza Back of Brazil, Karen Díaz Medina of Mexico and Kathryn Nesbitt of the United States.

“I would hope that in the future the selection of elite women's match officials for important men's competitions will be perceived as something normal and no longer as sensational,” Collina said.



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Regional rivalries resume with red hot, Red Ball action

The traditional rivalries within regional cricket – which date back over 120 years – resumed on Wednesday with the restart of the West Indies Championship four-day first-class tournament. Fans will be delighted to see their favourite regional and international players on show as the 2022 edition moved into Round 3 in Trinidad. After the first two rounds in February, Barbados Pride headed the points standings, followed by Trinidad & Tobago Red Force. Barbados have 42.0 points, with the home team on 38.6 points and the Leeward Islands Hurricanes rounding out the top three with 24.6 points. Fourth on the table are Guyana Harpy Eagles on 21.4 points, followed by Windward Islands Volcanoes on 10.9 points and Jamaica Scorpions on 8.8 points, respectively.

Several marquee players spoke to CWI Media ahead the upcoming clashes as teams locked horns for the coveted Headley/Weekes Trophy – named in honour of George Headley and Sir Everton Weekes – two pioneers of West Indies cricket and two of the greatest batsmen the game has ever seen.

Guyana Harpy Eagles vs Barbados Pride at Queen's Park Oval

For current defending champions and ongoing season table toppers Barbados Pride, wicket-keeper batsman



FRANCHISES	PTS	M	W	L	T
BARBADOS PRIDE	42.0	2	2	0	0
T&T RED FORCE	38.6	2	2	0	0
LEEWARD HURRICANES	24.6	2	1	1	0
GUYANA HARPY EAGLES	21.4	2	1	1	0
WINDWARDS VOLCANOES	10.8	2	0	2	0
JAMAICA SCORPIONS	8.8	2	0	2	0

Shane Dorwich is part of large contingent with several Test players alongside West Indies captain Kraigg Braithwaite, Shai Hope, Shamarh Brooks, Roston Chase, Jomel Warrican and Raymon Reifer.

“I’m looking forward to the game over the past five, six years, we’ve had some good battles with Guyana. And they always present a challenge for us and we’re always up for it because he’s one of the games that we really enjoy playing. Tomorrow will be no different. It’d be a good battle and we are up for it and ready”, said the 30-year-old Dorwich who has played 35 Tests and 113 first class games. He continued: “It’s crucial that we start well start by Well, obviously we played the first two games at home, so we are playing

overseas now which presents a different challenge and we just need to start well hit the ground running this first game and look to continue in the vein that we were back in the last two games.”

On the opposite end of spectrum Young Guyanese off-spinner has tasted international experience in white ball cricket. He will be part of Harpy eagles team led by veteran captain Leon Johnson, who via the prowess of West Indies incumbent test spinner, the left-arm orthodox Veerasammy Permaul will be hoping to use their spin strength to mount a stern challenge against Barbados on a Queen’s Park Oval venue that historically assists Caribbean spin bowlers.

Sinclair spoke up what he felt Guyana needed to do

in this encounter after the Round 2 defeat in February against Leeward Islands Hurricanes.

“From my point of view, once you play as a team, I believe collectively and learn from our mistakes in the first few rounds, I think we can come out on top and stake a claim for the title since that is what’s on the line. So, we (Guyana) just got to play as a team and work hard”, said Sinclair.

Regarding his own game transitioning in red ball cricket and facing the experience Barbados, Sinclair elaborated further on those two points.

“For me is a bit of a big transition because you know the red ball game is way different from the white ball and you have to get a little bit more variation in the armoury. So that’s been going well for me in practice and in practice matches so I feel like I’m ready and looking forward to doing well in the red ball as well.

He added: “I played my debut game against them (Barbados Pride) and scored a 40 something and I didn’t get any wickets, but I played two games again against them already, so I don’t think it shouldn’t be anything different for me. I just must back myself and back my new skill that I develop in terms of red ball cricket.

Trinidad & Tobago Red
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Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang: Gabon captain retires from international football

BBC – Gabon captain and Barcelona striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has retired from international football, a fortnight before the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying campaign begins.

The 32-year-old made a total of 68 appearances for the Panthers and scored 29 goals, making him the nation's all-time leading scorer.

The Gabon Football Federation (Fegafoot) said it had received a letter from Aubameyang announcing his decision.

"After 13 years of representing my country with pride, I would like to tell you that I am ending my inter-

national career," the former Arsenal star wrote.

"I would like to thank the Gabonese people and all those who have supported me in the good times as well as the bad ones.

"I will always have great memories like the day I made my debut, or the day I came back from Nigeria with the African Player of the Year award. Sharing it with everyone is an unforgettable moment.

"I want to thank my father who made me want to be like him and I hope I made him proud in wearing our colours."

In response, Fegafoot recognised his "immense career" and a player "who



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang captained Gabon at the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations finals on home soil

knew how to promote, thanks to his professionalism, the image of Gabon around the world".

"Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang will always be model for future generations," the Fegafoot statement added.

"The big football family

will be able to count on his expertise for the future."

Aubameyang was born in France and appeared for the French under-21 side but switched to play for Gabon to follow in the footsteps of his father, who captained the side at their first Nations Cup finals appearance in 1994.

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Force vs Leeward Islands Hurricanes at Diego Martin Sports Complex

Hosts Trinidad & Tobago Red Force are on a mission to win their first domestic four-day title since 2005/06 season, when on that occasion they secured the title on the old Guaracara Park in South Trinidad. For the first time this season will play on the twin-island republic newest first-class venue, the Diego Martin Sports Complex versus the Leeward Islands Hurricanes and West Indies Test keeper Joshua Da Silva previewed the clash.

"I'm just happy to be back with the Red Force and just happy with the performances I had in the test series (England) so trying to bring it back here and hope that I could help the Trinidad team and we could go on to win a title which we haven't done in 20 odd years. So, it'd be nice to bring what I've learnt and just

stick to the basics at the end of the day, but we just want to play the best cricket we can", said Da Silva.

Da Silva further spoke of the overall strength and experience of the home side and its very impressive fast bowling trio led by test veteran Shannon Gabriel alongside young duo Jayden Seales and Anderson Phillip, as the Red Force aims to back up their opening two round victories against a Leeward team coming off an impressive victory over Guyana.

"Of course, we have a very strong squad with a lot of experience, with Darren Bravo and Shannon Gabriel coming back. We have an excellent captain and Imran Khan who has been leading us tremendously, we got two wins in the first two rounds", said Da Silva. "So, we're just looking to build on that and use all the experience we have with myself with the test match I have and Jayden (Seales) who is a very big prospect for us. So, he

(Jayden) Anderson and Shannon would be leading the pace attack."

Jamaica Scorpions vs Windward Islands Volcanoes at Brian Lara Cricket Academy

The Jamaicans find themselves at the bottom of the table and will need a fillip, especially from their experienced batters, as they face the upbeat Windwards, led by Kavem Hodge. Skipper John Campbell, has indicated that he will have to shoulder the great responsibility at the top of the order along with Jermaine Blackwood, Nkrumah Bonner and Paul Palmer Jr.

"The previous two rounds were played some time ago and it's almost as though we're starting from zero again, though the points standing won't reflect that. What we must do now in this round is to start well and execute what we have been doing in practice," left-handed Campbell said.

Navjot Singh Sidhu: India's cricketer-turned-politician jailed for road rage death

BBC – India's top court has sentenced cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu to one year in prison in a decades-old road rage case.

The Supreme Court ruled that Sidhu "intentionally caused hurt" to Gurnam Singh, who was 65, resulting in his death in the incident in 1988.

The former MP was acquitted of the more serious charge of manslaughter in 2018 - that still stands.

But the jail sentence is a serious setback for his political career.

Sidhu recently resigned as the Congress party's chief in Punjab after his party was wiped out in state assembly elections.

He has limited legal options left as he can appeal against the ruling only once in the form of a curative petition.

Sidhu was first accused of manslaughter in 1988 when a 65-year-old man died hours after an argument with him in Patiala.

He was India's opening batsman at the time and a rising star in his fledging international cricket career.

The case continued to be heard in a trial court. In 1999, the court acquitted Sidhu.

The state appealed



Navjot Singh Sidhu was one of India's most successful cricketers [Getty Images]

against the acquittal in the high court, which convicted him for manslaughter in 2006. This forced him to resign from his parliamentary seat of Amritsar as Indian laws do not allow convicted individuals to be public representatives.

He appealed against the verdict in the Supreme Court which stayed the conviction, allowing him to retake his seat in a by-election. In 2018, the top court acquitted him in the manslaughter case, but found him guilty of "hurting the victim" and asked him to pay a fine of 1,000 rupees (\$13; £10).

The victim's family appealed against the ruling

and on Thursday, the Supreme Court added a one-year sentence to the fine.

Sidhu is one of India's most successful Test cricketers. Known for his stylish and powerful stroke play, he thrived in particular against fast bowlers, but also held equal command over playing spin skilfully.

He scored 3,202 runs at an average of 42 in 51 Test matches. He also played 136 ODIs and scored 4,413 runs. He retired from all forms of cricket in 1999 and after four years, he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and became an MP. Over the years, he rose to become a prominent party

leader and a star campaigner.

In the next decade, he also managed to launch a successful career as a cricket commentator and also as a TV personality on comedy shows. His witty and sharp style made him popular as a commentator.

But he became disgruntled with the BJP after reportedly not getting any important job in the government despite the party's landslide win in the 2014 general elections.

He quit the BJP in 2016 and joined the Congress, where he rose to become the chief of its state unit in Punjab.

“Porridge” hails 2022 Primary Schools’ Cup a success

The return of competitive primary school football in March 2022 is being hailed a success.

Coordinator Rohan “Porridge” Benjamin, recently reported that all went well with the concluded Primary School Cup, which ended with the Golden Grove Primary retaining their title by defeating Five Islands 3-1 in the final at the Golden Grove playing field on 6th May.

“In terms of the overall tournament, I think that everything went well. We were looking for 16 teams, but we only had twelve teams because some of the schools did not field a team because of their fears that COVID-19 is still around,” Benjamin said.

“Those twelve teams were split into three groups with two of the groups playing at Golden Grove and the other group playing at the T. N. Kirnon School playing field.

“I think the preliminary round matches went pretty well. They were pretty well contested between the teams. Four top teams would have emerged, and we saw in the semi-finals some great games, especially the final.

“The principals of the various schools came out to watch their schools play and so it was really a festive atmosphere, particular-



Coach Rohan ‘Porridge’ Benjamin, foreground, walks past the Five Islands team after the final of the Primary Schools’ Cup at the Golden Grove playing field on 6th May, 2022. (Photo by Elwin Francis)

ly the semi-finals and the final, where the Minister of Sports, Daryll Matthew, was on hand to present the medals and trophies.

“All in all, I must say that it was executed well, and we are just looking forward now to having the next tournament bigger and better in March of 2023.”

Benjamin, a former senior national team head coach, said during the competition, a good standard of play was displayed, especially by the top four teams, including third place Villa

and fourth place finisher Jennings Primary.

“In terms of the standard of play, I think that the players displayed a good quality of play. The cream rises to the top at the end of the day, so teams like Golden Grove and Five Islands that contested the final, Villa - who I was extremely impressed with - and also Bendals, who did not make it to the semi-finals, played good quality football,” Benjamin said.

“The standard was quite good, especially coming out

of not playing football for a pretty long period of time due to COVID-19.

“But it is not so much about quality that we were looking at during this year’s tournament, but the interest that it generates in the league and the rivalry between schools. That was most important along with the children getting a chance to play, not only good football, but to play the game that they love.”

Benjamin said plans are well underway to stage the traditional secondary schools’ competition at the start of the next academic school year this September.

Benjamin said the secondary competition will feature Under-14 and 16 boys, girls and senior or Under-20 boys’ categories.

“Now we have put the primary schools’ competition behind our backs, we will now return to the high school or secondary schools’ competitions, which will start later in the year.

“We are looking forward to start with a knockout on the 15th September, which means teams’ preparations should be well underway within the summer vacation,” Benjamin said.

“So, at this moment, coaches are within the schools planning and organising as to how they will go forward, because whereas

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Starz1 wins final match in preliminary round

North Coast Hardware Starz1 returned to winning ways in the female division of the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Local League on Wednesday night.

Following their 3-1 loss to unbeaten leaders JanServeEvents Cool & Smooth Da Squad last Thursday, Starz1 prevailed 3-1 over their junior colleagues North Coast Hardware Starz2 at the indoor volleyball facility at the YMCA Sports Complex.

Starz1 raced into a 2-0 lead against their less experienced opponents by winning the first two sets 25-07, 25-10, but Starz2 hit back to extend the match by taking the third set 25-19.

However, the veteran Starz1 wrapped up the match, prevailing 25-17 in the fourth set to end their preliminary round campaign with their fourth win in five encounters to confirm their place in the semi-finals.

The fifth loss in as many matches ended Starz2's



North Coast Hardware Starz1 and Starz2 combine for a photo before their final preliminary round match at the indoor volleyball facility at the YMCA Sports Complex on Wednesday, 18th May, 2022. (Photo courtesy ABAVA)

campaign at the bottom of the standings in the six-team round-robin female competition.

Sharks claimed their first win of the competition by snatching a hard-fought 3-2 victory over JanServeEvents Cool & Smooth Storming Lions, in a bottom of the table men's division clash in Wednesday night's second encounter at the YMCA.

Sharks prevailed 25-17 in the opening set before

the Lions stormed back to level the match by snatching the second set 25-23. Sharks regained their lead by winning the third set 25-23, only to surrender the fourth set 12-25 to the Storming Lions, who once again levelled the match 2-2.

There were no more comebacks for the Storming Lions, however, as the Sharks prevailed 15-10 in the deciding fifth set to win the match.

This was the first win in five matches for the Sharks, who finished their campaign just above the Storming Lions in the point standings.

A fifth loss in five outings ensured Storming Lions finished their campaign in the cellar position of the six-team men's round robin contest.

The competition will continue on Saturday with the final preliminary round matches at the YMCA.

Jets and leaders, JanServeEvents Cool & Smooth Da Squad, who are already assured of places in the semi-finals, will clash in their female division affair at 6:30pm.

The female encounter will be followed by a men's division match between unbeaten defending champions, Stoneville, and High Flyerz.

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the school leagues normally open in the first week in October, we will be having a knockout cup that will start pretty early.

"So as schools open in the first week of September, by the middle of the same month we should be ready and raring to go.

"We are looking to stage all five of our age group competitions. We normally put on the Under-14 boys, Under-16 boys, Under-20 boys, Under-16 girls and Under-20

girls. It will be a tremendous effort to get it completed by the end of the year, but that is what we will be aiming for and we have to get it done.

"Not having school football competition for the past two years, the senior boys are really looking forward to the competition this year and we are hoping that some of these clubs and community organisations will be having their youth competitions during this summer and that would really help with the school leagues."

Freetown take on Police in Sir Richie Richardson One Day final

Freetown is hoping for a better outcome when they face host Police in their second final this season in the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League.

Freetown will be seeking revenge in the hopes of handing Police their first defeat of the season when they clash in the final of the Richie Richardson one-day contest at the Police Recreation Grounds (PRG) tomorrow.

Police defeated Freetown by six wickets in the final to win the ACB Caribbean Dave Joseph Limited Overs Competition at the PRG on 9th April.

However, both teams should enter tomorrow's encounter confidently as they both recorded commanding victories in the semi-finals



Police (blue shirts) and Freetown (orange shirts) exchange handshakes at the end of the final of the ACB Caribbean Parish League Dave Joseph competition at the PRG on 9th April, 2022. (Photo: Elwin Francis)

last weekend.

After Police beat Mahico by nine wickets in the first semi-final at PRG last Saturday, Freetown crushed neighbours Newfield by 214 runs in the second encounter at Freetown on Sunday.

Meanwhile, action will resume this weekend in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) First Class programme with

the fourth round of matches in the State Insurance two-day competition.

Defending champions, Pigotts Crushers, will host neighbours New Winthropes Lions at Pigotts in one of five matches, starting tomorrow.

All Saints Pythons will face Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles at Bethesda, while

unbeaten leaders, PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks, will entertain Massy United Combined Schools at Ball Beef in Liberta.

In the other matches, Bolans Blasters will clash with Jennings Tigers in a Round South derby at Bolans, and Rising Sun Spartans will challenge Empire Nation at Rising Sun in St. John's.

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"We are inviting teams from all over the world. We have teams from Mexico, United States, England and we are working on getting a team to come over from Ghana.

"They are all coming to the Caribbean to play against Caribbean teams. I think Wings FC is going to be representing Antigua, and what we are trying to accomplish with that, is that we will be inviting 15 to 20 coaches to scout for talent."

The tournament will be played at the Daren Sammy Cricket Stadium on two football fields.

The Free Kick Foundation Inc. - became a registered corporation and charitable organisation in the US state of Georgia in 2015. It moved on to establish a connection with Antigua and Barbuda in 2017.

The foundation's mission is to inspire, educate and empower youth, from economically depressed communities, through football.

Free Kick Foundation continues support of footballers' education

Chief Executive Officer of the Free Kick Foundation, Aaron King, has commended the work being done by the administrators of the organisation's Antigua and Barbuda chapter.

Directors of the local chapter of the Free Kick Foundation, Barbara Coates and Arlene Josiah, have played a pivotal role in over 20 nationals acquiring partial athletic scholarships to study in United States colleges.

According to King, both Coates and Josiah have performed outstandingly in providing leadership to the Antigua chapter of the organisation.

"Barbara is the head of our Antigua chapter and we got together... based on the sort of work that we were doing in St. Lucia, and she wanted us to come out to Antigua to do a similar college player showcase," said King, during an interview on Pointe FM's Pointe On De Streetz.

"The year before COVID-19, we did that college player showcase and we were really successful. We probably have somewhere between 20 and 30 persons from Antigua out there plying their trade that we got opportunities for, but Arlene and Barbara have been doing a tremendous job for us in Antigua as chapter heads."

As part of the Antigua chapter's success, Zhane Dennie, the first of four students to receive partial scholarships through the Free Kick Foundation, graduated from the Talladega College in Alabama on Saturday 7th May, 2022, with a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science.

Coates travelled to Alabama to



Chief Executive Officer of the Free Kick Foundation, Aaron King.

celebrate with footballers Dennie, sisters Jahira and Nadasta James and Trichet Ann Grant, who were awarded partial scholarships to attend the Talladega College in 2018.

Grant was subsequently recruited to Texas A&M and the James sisters went on to Florida National University.

Coates said 22 students from Antigua and Barbuda have so far received partial scholarships to play football while receiving an education via the Free Kick Foundation.

Some of these students have already graduated from two-year junior colleges.

The Free Kick Foundation is now firmly established in St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Grenada.

To date, approximately 90 young male and female footballers from those countries have benefitted from the initiative.



Zhane Dennie celebrates with the national flag of Antigua and Barbuda after graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Talladega College, Alabama on 7th May, 2022. (Photos courtesy Free Kick Foundation)

Meanwhile, the Free Kick Foundation is planning to stage a major Under-19 soccer tournament in St. Lucia this July that will see involvement from teams around the world. The aim of the camp will be to bring international exposure to players from nations less well known for their prowess at football.

"What we are working on right now is probably our biggest project. We are working on the Free Kick Youth Cup, which is an international Under-19 event that we are having in St. Lucia from 26th July to 1st August," King said.

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