

HEALTH OFFICIALS ON MONKEYPOX HIGH ALERT

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Antigua and Barbuda joins the world today to celebrate African Liberation Day/Africa Day. To commemorate the event, the Antigua and Barbuda Reparations Support Commission will host a virtual public lecture via Zoom and Facebook tonight from 7:30pm to 9:00pm under the theme, *African Royalty: Traditional and Contemporary Roles*. The lecture features Dr. Samuel Ntewusu, a Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.

MoH increases Monkeypox surveillance

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has stepped up its surveillance for signs of monkeypox in light of detected cases in Australia, Canada, Europe and the United States.

The symptoms of monkeypox, a virus transmitted to humans from animals, are similar to those seen in patients infected with smallpox, although it is generally less severe, according to the World Health Organization.

These include a high fever and signature fluid filled papules or “pox”.

To date, there have been no cases of the virus reported in the Caribbean.

Antigua and Barbuda’s

Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas, told state television that this could change, as with the movement of people, it may only be a matter of time before monkeypox is detected in the region and the country.

As such, the CMO has informed physicians throughout the country to be on high alert.

“They have to be on the lookout for persons presenting with fever and the atypical rash, and they should report this to the Ministry of Health Epidemiology Unit or to me as Chief Medical Officer, so that we can detect any case of Monkey-



Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas

pox in Antigua and Barbuda early, so that we can do contact tracing, isolate that case and stop the transmis-

sion, so that we don’t have more than expected cases in Antigua and Barbuda,” the CMO remarked.

Dr. Sealey-Thomas said one detected case will be considered an outbreak, and the health ministry is seeking to prevent this at all costs.

“I am urging physicians to be vigilant and report, and for persons as well, if you develop a fever and an atypical rash, pustules, vesicles, please seek medical attention as soon as possible, especially if you have a travel history, that can raise a red flag as well.”

According to the WHO, “Monkeypox virus is transmitted from one person to another by close contact with lesions, body fluids, respiratory droplets and contaminated materials such as bedding. The incubation period of monkeypox is usually from 6 to 13 days, but can range from 5 to 21 days.”

BARBUDA EXPRESS
ST. JOHN'S DEPARTURE

SUNDAY

AB 12:00 PM
BA 3:45 PM

MONDAY

AB 6:00 AM
BA 8:00 AM

TUESDAY TO FRIDAY

AB 7:00 AM
BA 3:45 PM

SATURDAY

AB 8:00 AM
BA 3:45 PM

TYPHOON EXPRESS

MONDAY
ST. JOHN'S DEPARTURE

AB 3:45 PM
(OVERNIGHT IN BARBUDA)

TUESDAY

BA 6:00 AM TO ST. JOHN'S

WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY
(CRABBS DEPARTURE)

AB 10:00AM
BA 3:00PM

UPDATED SCHEDULE



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Contaminated JIF peanut butter discovered locally

The JIF peanut butter products that have been recalled in the United States have been found in the country.

The Prices and Consumer Affairs Division said Monday that it had launched an investigation to ascertain whether the products are being sold here and if they have made their way into people's homes.

Acting Director of the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division, Orrin Steele, confirmed the discovery of the salmonella contaminated peanut butter in Antigua and Barbuda.

"We did find it in a few establishments around the island, and some consumers would have called already indicating that they had it in their possession



at home. It is there, and persons are taking action. We are encouraging persons to discontinue the usage of it, and if they have it, to dispose of it immediately," Steel said.

The United States-based Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the recall of JIF peanut butter, which

is manufactured by the J. M. Smucker Company, is due to potential salmonella contamination.

The contaminated products carry lot codes 1274425 – 2140425, which are included alongside the 'best-if-used-by' date. Consuming the contaminated peanut butter can cause illness, and even death in rare cases, and persons are advised to discard them immediately if found in the home.

"If you eat it, you could have some nausea, vomiting, even diarrhea, and even some extreme cases with persons with weakened immune systems, it may be detrimental for them, especially younger children, as well as the elderly folks," Acting Director Steele warned.



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Commonwealth SG: Scotland tours CARICOM seeking support as India announces backing for Johnson-Smith

With less than a month to go before the start of the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, Commonwealth Secretary General (SG), Baroness Patricia Scotland, is touring the region to lobby last minute support for her bid to serve a second term.

The goal of her tour of the region, which ends on 31st May, is to reinforce her connections with her strongest supporters, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

She has also held talks with leaders in St. Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis, that have not openly declared their positions, in the hopes that they will stand with her.

Scotland's nomination for re-election as Commonwealth Secretary General is backed by Dominica, her country of birth. She also has ancestral ties to Antigua and Barbuda.

The SG position is traditionally rotated, so that each region of the world takes a turn in the role for two terms. It is presently the Caribbean's turn for what will be the region's second term.

However, mere days after squashing a challenge from Kenya to advance their own candidate for SG, a new challenge to Scotland's re-election emerged from within CARICOM, after Jamaica announced that it would nominate their own candidate, Kamina Johnson-Smith.

Johnson-Smith's bid for SG, which was described as a "mistake" by Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Gaston Browne, initially lacked real momentum, but in the past week, the tide appears to have turned.

Belize's Prime Minister John Briceno, who now serves as CARICOM



Kamina Johnson-Smith (left), Baroness Patricia Scotland (right)

chairman, announced last week that the members of the 15-member bloc, rather than collectively supporting a candidate for SG as is tradition, will now vote for a "candidate of their choice".

Johnson-Smith, Jamaica's foreign affairs and foreign trade minister, took her campaign further afield in search of support, and it appears to be paying off.

This week, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, declared that his country will support Jamaica's bid to unseat Scotland – a move which Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador Lionel 'Max' Hurst has described as "unfair".

Hurst expressed disappointment that two of the largest members of CARICOM would challenge the nomination of their smaller counterparts who always stand with them in circumstances where a unified regional position is beneficial.

Two weeks ago, Johnson-Smith embarked on a whirlwind tour of European and African nations in search of support. This followed a recent visit to Jamaica by India's President H. E. Shri Ram Nath Kovind.

Yesterday, Jamaica dealt a significant blow to Scotland's campaign with the announcement that the largest member of the Commonwealth, India, has declared its support for Johnson-Smith.

In a letter declaring his country's backing of the Jamaican foreign minister, India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaisankar, said his government is certain that Johnson-Smith's "excellent credentials and impeccable track record can offer the right leadership to the Commonwealth at this important juncture".

Singapore, the Commonwealth's 22nd largest member nation, has also declared support for Johnson-Smith.

High Commissioner Hill visiting nationals working in Jersey

Antigua and Barbuda's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom is presently in Jersey meeting with nationals who have taken up jobs on the largest of the Channel Islands.

The Government of Jersey formed a three-year partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in March this year to fill a number of hospitality related positions.

During her three-day visit, High Commissioner Hill will meet some of the 48 people who are working on the island.

The Jersey Hospitality Association's Chief Execu-



Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill met with 48 Antiguan and Barbudans working in Jersey

tive Officer, Claire Boscq, said the recruitment process was successful and added that the Caribbean employees have adjusted to their new employment and environment well.

"The agreement means

that we will have dedicated professionals to help our businesses recover from two years of disruption caused by the pandemic," she said.

"That relationship has blossomed, and I am so pleased to see how well

those that are here already have settled into their new roles."

The Jersey initiative was offered to citizens of Antigua and Barbuda. As part of the opportunity, people with backgrounds in hospitality management, chefs, front of house and housekeeping specialists and others, were invited to apply and take advantage of the opportunity to enhance their industry related skills, while earning an attractive salary abroad.

The Antiguan and Barbudans began working in Jersey in April and will conclude their tenure in Europe this September.

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Local News



Changes coming to Calypso Monarch Competition

One of the staples of Antigua's Carnival, the Calypso Monarch Competition, will see changes to its format, as organisers and the calypso fraternity join to "re-energise" the show.

President of the Calypsonians' Association, Eugene 'Kaseba' Silcott, said the changes to the format of the show were agreed upon during discussions between the association

and the Ministry of Creative Industries and Innovation (MCII).

"We are looking at ways to bring back the excitement to the competition by staging what we are calling 'Two Competitions – One night format for the show this year,'" he revealed.

Silcott explained that the competition will be divided into distinct segments, Competition One



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- Traditional Calypso (Social/Political) and Competition Two – Up-tempo Calypso (125 or greater bpm).

"A calypsonian may decide to enter one or both competitions. Each competition will require one song, and calypsonians will be required to go through the preliminary rounds of quarterfinals, semi-finals to get to the finals," he explained.

At the quarter-final stage, eighteen calypsonians will be selected for each of the competitions. This will be narrowed down further to ten who will compete in the semi-final.

The criteria for judging from previous years remains intact for both competitions.

The Calypso Monarch Competition has been a flagship event of Carnival since the festival's introduction in the mid-1950's.

In recent years, however, the competition has experienced a decline in attendance. The changes to the format are designed to breathe new life into the event.

Meanwhile, the opening of the first Calypso Tent ahead of Carnival 2022, takes place this weekend at Road House Bar and Restaurant in Newfield. The 'Real Sweet Benna' calypso tent will be operated by musician, Junie Edwards.

The second calypso tent, a joint undertaking of the association and the MCII, opens next weekend at Millers by the Sea bar at Fort James.

The MCII has already announced that further changes are coming to Carnival 2022, which is experiencing a rebirth after a two-year absence, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Bank staff praised for their commitment on Employee Appreciation Day

The colour of the day was red, and the word was definitely “appreciated”!

All across its 15-member regional network of branches and offices staff arrived to work to a red-carpet welcome and other special treats and personalised messages on Thursday May 19, as CIBC FirstCaribbean toasted its nearly 3 000 staff members on Employee Appreciation Day.

Employees at all levels of the regional bank were dressed in red outfits, some complemented with hats and custom-made pieces. They enjoyed a day filled with a range of team building and fun activities as they marked the day under the theme: “One Caribbean: Collaborating for our Success”.

The bank’s Chief Executive Officer Colette Delaney hailed the day as “one of the most exciting days on our corporate calendar” noting that while the bank valued the contributions of all of its employees “all year round...on Employee

Appreciation Day we get to spend the day celebrating and honouring all of you for making our bank the regional success that it is”.

She added: “Our gratitude is multiplied times over when we reflect on the challenging operating environment that we have navigated over the past two years, as a result of your absolute commitment to team CIBC FirstCaribbean.

Your courage, creativity, ingenuity, dogged determination, right attitude, team spirit and at times sense of humour, saw us through those uncertain early months of the covid pandemic.”

The staff in Antigua enjoyed and participated in lots of fun activities including trivia games, cheers to peers, a raffle, food, drinks and ice cream. Tokens of appreciation from the Head Office were also distributed. Country Head, Ladesa James-Williams praised the staff for their commitment and the excellence of



Bank staff: Julia Joseph – Business Banking Manager; Dawn Soleyn – Branch Manager; Khadijah James – Analyst, Business, Operations, Business Analytics; Ladesa James-Williams – Director, Retail Sales, OECS and Country Head, Antigua; Devon Archibald – Officer, Corporate & Investment Banking and Alexei Whyte – Customer Service Representative.

their service to customers.












Meanwhile, Chief Administrative Officer Neil Brennan in his short message to staff said “we may be in 15 territories, but we are solidly one bank – one team. Today, I thank all of you for making our bank so successful and keeping it on top!”

He noted the past “two years have tested and challenged all of us both per-

sonally and professionally. We have had to learn to work, play and socialise in new and not always easy ways, but all across our bank you rose to the new challenges, and you overcame them”.

Using technology to bridge the divide, staff members enjoyed a fun-filled day of engagement and interaction including One Caribbean fun zones and quizzes throughout the day. There was also the very entertaining on-line Pictionary and ‘guess whose workspace’ activities.

Staffers also engaged in lively discussions with executives and other senior personnel during special “let’s Chat” sessions.

Wed 25 Day		Wed 25 Night	
84°		77°	
24%	E 13 mph	23%	E 9 mph
Mostly cloudy. High 84F. Winds E at 10 to 15 mph.		A few clouds from time to time. Low 77F. Winds E at 5 to 10 mph.	
 Humidity 71%	 UV Index 10 of 10	 Humidity 80%	 UV Index 0 of 10
 Sunrise 5:33 am	 Sunset 6:35 pm	 Moonrise 2:22 am	 Moonset 2:41 pm
		 Waning Crescent	

Workplace

The challenges of digital transformation

Today, HRPAB's President will be speaking at the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), Human Resource and ICT Forum 2022, taking place at Middlesex University in London. This Forum will be centred on the theme, Adapt, Innovate, Evolve - The Roles of HR and ICT, and will consider business transformation in the post-Covid-19 era. We take this opportunity to share with you an excerpt from his presentation.

As HR practitioners, we must realise that for us to succeed in a post pandem-

ic, modern workplace we need to improve the technological landscape of our respective organisations. We need to analyse both the drive towards the creation and implementation of new technological systems and the adaptation to the use of these new tools and the corresponding reorganisation of work that will have to happen.

Unfortunately, not many of us see this as priority and there are some challenges that come with this move. Before I outline five of the challenges to digital transformation, let me define



what digital transformation is. Digital transformation (DT) is the process of using innovative technologies to create new, or modify existing business processes, culture, and customer experiences to meet changing business demands and market requirements.

What is important to understand about DT is that just like any other successful change process, the elements must be handled in an integrated way. This means that both the introduction of digital technologies into the actual work process and the changing of the culture of the workplace, need to happen in tandem.

The benefits of DT vary depending on commercial activity but some of the more general ones include increased revenues from the generation of new business, innovation from using technology solutions to make mundane administrative processes more efficient and the enhancement of the client experience. But what of the challenges?

Firstly, there is a lack of clarity on the precise nature of digital transformation. DT is often confused with digitization and digitalization. Digitization is the process of converting information into a digital format. For example, scanning paper documents into a digital document such as PDF. While digitalization is the use of digitised informa-

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Workplace

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tion to make established ways of work more efficient. For example, using cloud technology to store and distribute digital files. DT however is a total revamping of all processes within the business with the deliberate aim of creating a digital business by integrating workflows making things simpler for employees and customers.

Then we are faced with inertia or a lack of urgency. The unfamiliarity with DT brings with it an indifference rooted in the comfort of CEOs, Board Directors and other decision makers with the way things are. This drives a reluctance to change based on the uncertainty with what's new. Some of our older business leaders are guided by the perspective of the generation they came from and are still not comfortable enough to trust technology.

The third challenge pertains to organisational culture. Traditionally, businesses were set up and became

successful based on relationships and a lack of competition. So there are certain practices and principles that a successful company would have grown accustomed to while hitting its targets. Even now, in an age of more choices and easier access to products and services, there is still no appetite in some quarters to change the way things are done.

The next challenge of financial or economic constraints is very real for many organisations. Even with an acceptance that digital transformation could be the way forward, the resources are not available, at the moment, to provide the necessary solutions and to train staff to competently and effectively utilise the new technology.

Finally, the challenge of skills shortage and the lack of relevant expertise that exists in our organisations. Many business analysts are just now graduating universities as qualified professionals but still lack the depth of

experience required to utilise data intelligence to make long lasting positive impacts on business operations.

In our next publication we will explore some possible solutions or recommendations to combat these challenges.

The Human Resource Professionals of Antigua and Barbuda (HRPAB) is a registered non-profit, professional association dedicated to the advancement of the HR profession for national development. We began informally from 2009 and legally registered in 2011. HRPAB's growing membership represents private and public organisations as well as independent consultants specialising in one or more areas of human resource management and development. Membership is offered for three categories: professional, non-professional, and honorary. You may contact us via email at hrpro.ab@gmail.com or on Facebook and Instagram @HRPro268.



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Technology



Facebook, Instagram to reveal more on how ads target users

By Amanda Seitz

Facebook parent Meta said it will start publicly providing more details about how advertisers target people with political ads just months ahead of the U.S. midterm elections.

The announcement follows years of criticism that the social media platforms withhold too much information about how campaigns, special interest groups and politicians use the platform to target small pockets of people with polarizing, divisive or misleading messages.

Meta, which also owns Instagram, said it will start releasing details in July about the demographics and interests of audiences who are targeted with ads that run on its two primary social networks. The company will also share how much advertisers spent in an effort to target



The mobile phone apps for, from left, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are shown on a device in New York. The company that owns Facebook and Instagram said Monday, May 23, 2022, it will begin revealing more details about how advertisers target people with certain political ads, just months before the U.S. Midterm elections. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)

people in certain states.

“By making advertiser targeting criteria available for analysis and reporting on ads run about social issues, elections

and politics, we hope to help people better understand the practices used to reach potential voters on our technol-

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CDB to host regional dialogue on agri-food sector

By Santana Salmon

The Barbados-based Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) says it will examine strategies for transforming the agri-food sector in the Caribbean with an emphasis on improving cross-border trade.

CDB said the June 1 event will follow up on the just concluded regional discussion in Guyana on food security and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) commitment to reduce member states' food import bill by 25 percent in 2025.

"The flow of goods in the Caribbean remains hamstrung by an inadequate logistics ecosystem while countries continue to encounter challenges related to infrastructure and activities along the value chain," said CDB Vice President of Operations, Isaac Solomon, who will address the event.

"The region's private sector, which is comprised primarily of Micro Small



and Medium Enterprises (MSME), is faced with constrained access and limited penetration of markets within and beyond CARICOM", he added.

The CDB said during this dialogue it will seek to influence, shape, and formulate solutions with the input of regional and global expertise.

The webinar on June 1 will be addressed by representatives of the International Trade Centre (ITC), the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), the private and public sectors.

They will seek to identify

opportunities for unlocking regional markets for agri-food MSMEs, the CDB said, adding that discussions will also explore how the region can increase trade in agriculture and its related commodities and support intensified efforts to achieve food security and increase the participation of MSMEs and the private sector.

It said recommendations from the business sector to unravel problems at each point in the logistics ecosystem restricting the movement of goods from the producer to the shipper, to the port and then to the shelves will be

presented.

"Regional infrastructure inclusive of road networks, seaports and airports, existing warehousing, storage and distribution centres, regulatory agencies including border security agencies and other elements of the logistics networks will be examined.

"Building on the region's successes in the sectors and examining the role of regional institutions in supporting the objectives of regional governments, this event will advance the critical issue of regional food security which demands strong emphasis particularly as it relates to addressing the logistical challenges that connectivity places on regional trade."

The CDB said the seminar is the first of several to be held as part of the bank's annual meeting of its highest decision-making body, the Board of Governors. The 52nd annual meeting will be hosted in the Turks and Caicos Islands, June 1-16.

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ogies," Jeff King wrote in a statement posted to Meta's website.

The new details could shed more light on how politicians spread misleading or controversial political messages among certain groups of people.

Advocacy groups and Democrats, for example, have argued for years that misleading political ads are overwhelming the Facebook feeds of Spanish-speaking populations.

The information will be showcased

in the Facebook ad library, a public database that already shows how much companies, politicians or campaigns spend on each ad they run across Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp.

Currently, anyone can see how much a page has spent running an ad and a breakdown of the ages, gender and states or countries an ad is shown in.

The information will be available across 242 countries when a social issue, political or election ad is run, Meta said in a statement.

Meta collected \$86 billion in revenue during 2020, the last major U.S. election year, thanks in part to its granular ad targeting system.

Facebook's ad system is so customizable that advertisers can target a single user out of billions on the platform, if they wanted.

Meta said in its announcement Monday that it will provide researchers with new details that show the interest categories advertisers selected when they tried to target people on the platform.

Regional News



Trinidad PM urges restraint as labour leaders threaten to shut down the country over salary increases

CMC – Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley has urged labour leaders not to “over-react” after they threatened to shut down the country over the government’s latest wage offer to public sector workers.

Public sector trade unions Friday rejected a two percent wage increase offered by the government for their members, expressing disappointment and “down-right disrespect” at the government’s attitude towards workers.

The Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) offered no increase for the period 2014-2017, one percent for 2018, no further increase for the period 2019-2020, and one percent for the 2021 negotiating period.

President of the Police Social and Welfare Association, Gideon Dickson, speaking on a television program said he was astonished by the government’s recommendation.

“I personally was shocked ...and this is disheartening and as a matter of fact this is disrespectful,” he said, recalling that as of December 1, 2021, at least 36 police officers have died as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

President of the Prison Officers Association, Ceron Richards, said the authorities should be treating wage ne-



Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley

gotiations as a serious business.

“We cannot at this juncture look at this negotiation as any game being played by any finance minister. If that is a game, he is in a game by himself, he is virtually on his own with that.

President General of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW), James Lambert, said he found the CPO’s offer “very disrespectful”.

“This is the worst offer in the history of this country to trade unions. This Government is showing that they do not care about the working class, and we had enough of this nonsense. We are ready to shut down the country and hit the streets in our numbers. They take the workers for granted,” Lambert said.

But Rowley, speaking to reporters on Sunday, said his administration is seeking to strike a balance in what it is capable of offering, along with job sustainability and

perseverance.

“What this Government has done since 2015 is to make it quite clear that we are in support of improvement of conditions and of the sustainability of jobs in the public service. Even during our most difficult periods over the last few years, have we tried to solve our difficulties by removing public servants from their jobs, or retrenching them? And this is our seventh year in government. We have never taken that policy once in attempting to balance the budget.

“We said we would preserve the jobs as opposed to giving more to some while others lose their jobs. To that end, we have borrowed money, very early in our existence, and paid about \$6 billion in back pay to those public servants. And, of course, that back pay was kicked in at the same time with a slight increase in pay. We’ve had difficult service since then.

“The statement of the Minister of Finance (Colm Imbert) recently was very clear, there is a little breathing space now. And immediately we looked to add something to public servants with the aim of preserving the jobs but to also see what we can add. Clearly what was offered has offended some people, but don’t try to get derailed from wanting more from less,” Rowley said.

Prime Minister Rowley said the current public service wage bill is TT\$8.7 resulted in an additional cost on recurrent of TT\$175 million in cost-of-living allowance, an estimated one billion dollars in back pay, and then an increase in monthly wages of TT\$411 million.

Rowley urged the labour leaders and the population to “put that against a recent report of a slight increase in revenue from the minister of finance and then the huge debt this country ran up pre-COVID and during COVID and then come to a conclusion if shutting down the country is an appropriate response to these circumstances.

Last Monday, Imbert said the local economy is set to generate an additional TT\$4.5 to five billion dollars this year due to a general recovery in most sectors of the economy and higher oil and gas prices.

Jamaica looks to implement unemployment insurance for workers

CMC – Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness says his government is actively pursuing efforts aimed at introducing unemployment insurance for workers as the country observed Labour Day.

"We are examining the feasibility of implementing unemployment insurance in Jamaica to assist workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in a message marking Labour Day which was observed under the theme "'Reigniting a National for Greatness: Protect our Heritage and Environment'"

He said the initiative will "temporarily provide workers with partial income relief while they search for new employment.

"Additionally, unemployment insurance support would facilitate the acquisition of new skills to increase and improve their employability," Holness said, noting that the most important role of the government for workers "is to ensure that the economy is growing and generating employment

He said Jamaica is recovering from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the local economy is growing with more and more jobs being created.

"Jamaica's unemployment rate of

6.2 percent in January 2022 is the lowest ever recorded in Jamaica's history. Inspired by turbulent times Jamaica is heading in the right direction. This shows the strength of our macro economy and the resilience of our labour force.

He said these external shocks were occurring against the backdrop of the island's long fiscal adjustments "which was secured by the sacrifice of workers which resulted in a rehabilitation of our economy but had real impacts on public sector salaries"

He said in addition there are many instances where the structure of the public sector compensation "is unfair and inequitable.

"This is so in Central Government as well as in public bodies. The inequities in the structure of public sector compensation are not new," Holness said, adding it did not arise "overnight".

"Decades of tinkering with compensation systems without solving fundamental issues are contributing factors. However, this government ... has decided to take on this decades-old problem because we care about our workers, and we recognize that the current structure is untenable".

Holness said his administration working in partnership with public



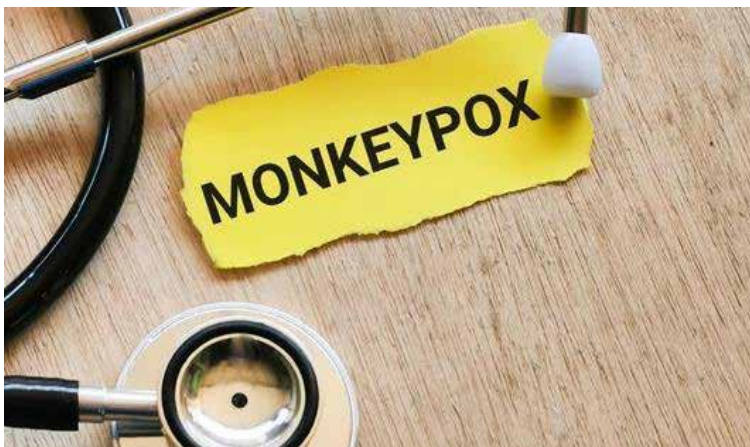
Prime Minister Andrew Holness

sector trade unions made the decision "for us all to engage in the hard work of addressing the structural inequities in public sector compensation through a major public sector restructuring exercise".

He said it is designed to remove inequities, make compensation simpler and more transparent while ensuring that Jamaica's finances remain sustainable.

"We recognize that it will not be an easy process, there is pent-up anger, mistrust from broken promises and contentious issues to grapple with. However, rest assured your government is listening," Holness added.

Guyana on alert for Monkeypox



CMC – Guyana has become the latest Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country to go on an alert for the Monkeypox virus, urging all medical personnel to immediately report severe skin rashes accompanied by other symptoms.

Chief Medical officer, Dr. Narine Singh, in a public health advisory issued to

all Regional Health Officers (RHOs), medical superintendents, senior medical officers, and surveillance units said an acute skin rash may present with lesions or blisters on the skin.

It may also be accompanied by headaches, fevers, myalgia (muscle aches and pains), back pain, asthe-

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Regional News



Bahamas Newspapers claim that deaths of US tourists were due to carbon monoxide poisoning

CMC – The three American tourists who were found dead at the Sandals Resort in Exuma earlier this month, died from carbon monoxide poisoning, according to media reports out of the Bahamas on Monday.

The media quoted Police Commissioner Paul Rolle, as confirming that the results of the samples sent to the United States for examination had been received by the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

He said the results have been sent to the local pathologist and when a cause of death is released to the police, he will first release it to family members and then to the media.

The pathologist is expected to release the findings of the autopsy and toxicology report later this week, but the Tribune and Nassau Guardian newspapers reported Monday that the deaths were



The three American tourists were found dead at the Sandals Resort in Exuma, Bahamas earlier this month (File Photo)

due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Meanwhile – environment health scientists, physicians, and others who are investigating the incident had previously sought to assure citizens that the deaths of the visitors was an isolated incident. The US tourists, husband and wife, Michael 68, and Robbie Phillips, 65, as well as Vincent Paul Chiarel-

la 64, were found dead in two separate villas at Sandals on May 6. Chiarella's 65-year-old wife, Donnis, was the lone survivor. Health Minister Dr. Michael Darville told reporters last week that the victims' families had requested a private pathologist to conduct separate autopsies.

Commissioner Rolle is quoted by the Tribune newspaper as saying that he is

unable to say whether the request had been granted permission saying this was outside of his remit.

Sandals resort has not commented on the latest update, but a statement from Stacy Royal, a spokesperson for Sandals, noted that they are actively working to support both the investigation as well as the guests' families in every way possible.

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nia (weakness) and lymphadenopathy (swollen lymph nodes).

"Nothing is here as yet or anything, so it's just for local physicians to keep aware. If they see any patients present with (symptoms) we might need to investigate it," Dr. Singh said.

Trinidad and Tobago last Friday urged people who have travelled to countries where the Monkeypox virus has been detected and "are symptomatic" to visit their nearest health provider.

Monkeypox is a rare disease that is caused by infection with monkeypox virus that belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus in the family Poxviridae. The Orthopoxvirus genus also includes variola virus (which causes smallpox), vaccinia virus (used in the smallpox vaccine), and cowpox virus. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that there were 92 cases of Monkeypox confirmed in non-endemic countries – that is, areas where the virus is not consistently present.

There are now more than 70 con-

firmed cases in Europe, according to a data tracker compiled by a collective of global health researchers, with additional infections found in the United States, Canada, and Australia. More than 50 suspected monkeypox cases are being examined globally but have not yet been confirmed.

"Vaccination for Monkeypox, where available, is being deployed to manage close contacts, such as health workers. WHO is convening experts to discuss recommendations on vaccination," the world health agency said.

Gunman kills at least 19 children at Texas elementary school

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — An 18-year-old gunman opened fire Tuesday at a Texas elementary school, killing at least 19 children as he went from classroom to classroom, officials said, in the latest gruesome moment for a country scarred by a string of massacres. The attacker was killed by law enforcement.

The death toll also included two adults, authorities said. Gov. Greg Abbott said one of the two was a teacher.

The assault at Robb Elementary School in the heavily Latino town of Uvalde was the deadliest shooting at a U.S. grade school since a gunman killed 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, almost a decade ago.

“My heart is broken today,” said Hal Harrell, the school district superintendent, announcing that all school activities were canceled until further notice. “We’re a small community, and we’re going to need your prayers to get through this.”

The attack also came just 10 days after a deadly, racist rampage at a Buffalo, New York, supermarket that added to a yearslong series of mass killings at churches, schools and stores. And the prospects for any reform of the nation’s gun regulations seemed as dim as in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook deaths.

President Joe Biden appeared ready for a fight, calling for new gun restrictions in an address to the nation hours after the attack.

“As a nation we have to ask, when in God’s name are we going to stand up to the gun lobby? When in God’s name are we going to do what has to be done?” Biden asked. “Why are we willing to live with this carnage?”

Many of the injured were rushed to Uvalde Memorial Hospital, where staff



A law enforcement officer helps people cross the street at Uvalde Memorial Hospital after a shooting was reported earlier in the day at Robb Elementary School, Tuesday, May 24, 2022, in Uvalde, Texas. (Billy Calzada/The San Antonio Express-News via AP)

members in scrubs and devastated victims’ relatives could be seen weeping as they walked out of the complex.

The gunman, who was wearing body armor, crashed his car outside the school before going inside, Sgt. Erick Estrada of the Texas Department of Public Safety told CNN.

He killed his grandmother before heading to the school with two military-style rifles he had purchased on his birthday, according to state Sen. Roland Gutierrez, who said he had been briefed by state police.

“That was the first thing he did on his 18th birthday,” he said.

Officials did not immediately reveal a motive, but the governor identified the assailant as Salvador Ramos and said he was a resident of the community about 85 miles (135 kilometers) west of San Antonio.

Ramos had hinted on social media that an attack could be coming, Gutierrez said, noting that “he suggested the kids should watch out.”

A Border Patrol agent who was working nearby when the shooting

began rushed into the school without waiting for backup and shot and killed the gunman, who was behind a barricade, according to a law enforcement official speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk about it.

The agent was wounded but able to walk out of the school, the law enforcement source said.

The school district’s police chief, Pete Arredondo, said that the attacker acted alone.

It was not immediately clear how many people were wounded, but Arredondo said there were “several injuries.” Earlier, Uvalde Memorial Hospital said 13 children were taken there. Another hospital reported a 66-year-old woman was in critical condition.

Robb Elementary School has an enrollment of just under 600 students, and Arredondo said it serves students in the second, third and fourth grade. He did not provide ages of the children who were shot. This was the school’s last week of classes before summer break.

cont’d on pg 16

WHO chief Tedros reappointed to second five-year term

AP — WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was reappointed to a second five-year term on Tuesday by the U.N. health agency's member countries.

No other candidate challenged Tedros for the post amid the ongoing difficulties of responding to the devastating coronavirus pandemic.

"This is overwhelming," Tedros said, after another World Health Organization official asked everyone in the room to stand and applaud him. Fighting back tears, Tedros described himself as "a child of war" after signing the contract for his extension. He said that after witnessing his younger brother's death at an early age, it was "luck (that) brought me all the way here."

Tedros, a former government minister from Ethiopia, has directed WHO throughout its management of the global response to COVID-19 and withstood occasionally withering criticism over its multiple missteps. He is the first African to lead the agency and the only director-general not qualified as a medical doctor.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), centre, celebrates his reelection, during the 75th World Health Assembly at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, May 24, 2022. (Salvatore Di Nolfi/Keystone via AP)

He is also the first WHO leader not to be supported by their home country; Ethiopia has previously accused Tedros of "misconduct" after his sharp criticism of the war and humanitarian crisis there and raised concerns about his leadership on Tuesday.

Under Tedros, the U.N. health agency failed to call out countries including China for blunders that WHO officials grumbled about privately, advised against mask-wearing for months, and said initially that the coronavirus wasn't likely

to mutate rapidly. Scientists drafted by WHO to investigate the coronavirus' origins in China said the critical probe was "stalled" last year, after issuing a report that even Tedros acknowledged had prematurely ruled out the possibility of a laboratory leak.

"There have been some mishaps, but Tedros has also been a steady voice throughout the pandemic, advocating for an equitable response," said Javier Guzman, director of global health policy at the Center for Global Development in Washington.

He said despite reservations about Tedros' leadership, some countries weren't willing to push for change.

"We are in the middle of the pandemic and there is some pressure for consistent leadership to take us through this difficult moment," Guzman said.

Tedros has frequently railed against rich countries for hoarding the world's limited supply of vaccines and insisted that pharmaceuticals aren't doing enough to make their medicines available to the poor. Amid the near-universal focus on Ukraine after the Russian invasion, Tedros slammed the global community for not doing enough to solve crises elsewhere, including Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan, arguing that it was possibly because those suffering weren't white.

cont'd from pg 15

Heavily armed law enforcement officers swarmed to the school, with officers in tactical vests diverting traffic and FBI agents coming and going from the building.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden was briefed on the

shooting on Air Force One as he returned from a five-day trip to Asia.

Uvalde, home to about 16,000 people, is about 75 miles (120 kilometers) from the border with Mexico. Robb Elementary is in a mostly residential neighborhood of modest homes.

Ex-rebel emerges as favourite in Colombian presidential race

AP – Flanked by bodyguards with bulletproof shields, Gustavo Petro stood on a stage and lashed out at Colombia's political elite in a speech to the residents of Fusagasuga, a rural town where farmers are struggling.

The leftist presidential candidate spoke of the need to protect local farmers from heavily subsidized foreign competitors. In the crowded public square, supporters waving the flags of opposition parties cheered when Petro promised to oust a political class that “prefers to work with criminals.”

“What we offer is a different way to perceive Colombia,” Petro said in an hour-long address. “We want a country where the state provides fundamental rights like education and health, and can finance them because there is a productive economy.”

With an emotional anti-establishment discourse and promises to boost state involvement in the economy, Petro has garnered a comfortable lead in polls as Colombia heads into Sunday's presidential election.

The senator, who began his career in politics as a rebel, is aiming to become the first leftist president in a nation that has long been ruled by politicians with ties to wealthy families and powerful business groups. The current president — who cannot seek reelection — is Ivan Duque, a conservative from Bogota's elite.

Petro's supporters say he will focus on reducing longstanding inequalities that have fuelled decades of political violence and led to the creation of powerful drug cartels.

His critics, however, fear that Petro will upend the country's market-friendly economy.

Politicians on the right regularly cast the senator as a populist leader in



A supporter of Historical Pact coalition presidential candidate Gustavo Petro, holds a flag with the image of Petro before a closing campaign rally in Zipaquirá, Colombia, Sunday, May 22, 2022. Elections are set for May 29. (AP Photo/Fernando Vergara)

the mould of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, and question his commitment to democracy. It's an accusation denied by Petro, who says he wants peaceful changes that will benefit long-neglected groups.

“If he wins, we are in for four turbulent years,” said Laura Gil, a political scientist at Bogota's Javeriana University. “He will have to prove that his leftist movement is willing to operate within the rules of democracy and control the most radical members of his coalition, while facing right-wing groups that will make every effort to block his proposals.”

Petro has been fighting against the odds for decades in his quest to transform Colombian politics.

He began his career as a community organizer for the M-19 guerrilla movement, helping a group of 400 squatter families take over a plot of

land in the town of Zipaquirá.

He won the housing battle, but was captured and spent two years in jail on weapons charges. He resurfaced in Colombia's political scene in the early 90s, when his rebel organization made a peace deal with Colombia's government and participated in drafting a new constitution.

Petro gained national recognition as a congressman in 2006, when he investigated conservative legislators with ties to paramilitary groups and revealed evidence of their crimes on nationally televised debates.

Facing numerous death threats, he's run for Colombia's presidency twice and served as Bogota's mayor from 2011 to 2015, where he led efforts to reduce bus fares and wrestle the city's trash collection system from private contractors that cost the city millions of dollars.

Sports News



Celtics, Heat in tight series, though games are anything but

AP — Huge leads. Lengthy scoring droughts. Blowouts.

The Eastern Conference finals between the Miami Heat and Boston Celtics are as close as can be, heading back to Miami all tied up at two wins apiece. But the individual games have been anything but.

Boston scored 18 of the first 19 points on Monday night on the way to a 102-82 victory in Game 4 of the best-of-seven series. The Celtics led by as many as 32 in the third quarter — a big gap, even for a series that has been full of them.

“Sometimes when you have two really competitive teams, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s going to be a one-point game,” Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. “It means that it can be flammable, either way. Both teams are ignitable.”

And they seem to be taking turns catching fire: The team that has gotten blown out has won the next game each time.

“Whatever they have done to us, we can do to them,” Spoelstra said. “None of us are happy about what happened tonight. This is part of the playoffs. There are these extreme highs and lows, particularly when you have two teams that are pretty closely, evenly matched.”

And both pride them-

selves on their defence. And games dominated by defence don’t always make for entertaining television. The series shifts to Miami for Game 5 on Wednesday, with Boston guaranteed another game at home on Friday. The Heat would host the decisive seventh game on Sunday, if necessary.

“I think human nature plays a part in, when you win a game, you can relax a little bit,” said Celtics star Jayson Tatum, who had 31 points in Game 4 after scoring 10 on 3-for-14 shooting the previous game. “Obviously, when we lose a game, we feel like the next game is do or die, and then we come out and play like we did.

“I think we have to have that mindset going into Game 5 — that it is a must-win game, because tonight was essentially something like that,” he said. “Everybody knew it. We could all feel it. I think that showed in the way we came out.”

It was the fourth straight game that has featured a 20-point lead, with two of them topping 30. There have been four lead changes in the entire series — just one in the second half and none in the fourth quarter.

“It’s wild, right,” said Miami guard Victor Olad-



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) shoots over Miami Heat forward Caleb Martin (16) during the second half of Game 4 of the NBA basketball playoffs Eastern Conference finals, Monday, May 23, 2022, in Boston. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

ipo, who came off the bench to score the Heat’s first basket more than eight minutes into the first quarter after they were already trailing 18-1. “I’m not even sure how to explain it.

In a seesaw series, Game 1 was the most competitive of the bunch.

The Celtics led by 13 points early before Miami outscored them 39-14 in the third quarter to take the lead for good. The Heat nursed a double-digit advantage for most of the fourth.

In Game 2, Boston built a 34-point advantage on its way to a 25-point win. The Heat said they were embarrassed on their home court, and Game 3 was payback; they zoomed out to a 26-point lead, first-half lead.

And after losing big at home on Saturday, the

Celtics led 8-0, 18-1, 26-4 in the first quarter of Game 4.

“Obviously, (it’s) because we lost the last game,” Boston centre Robert Williams III said. “I feel like that’s how our team is. We need to work on being better in that aspect. We shouldn’t have to get punched in the mouth to respond.”

Although the Heat saw their 26-point lead cut to one in Game 3, Boston never led in the entire game. On Monday night, the Celtics led by double digits for more than 43 of the 48 minutes despite shooting under 40%, with their starters going 3 for 20 from 3-point range.

“It’s an inconsistent series from both teams at times,” Boston coach Ime Udoka said. “It’s an odd one, honestly.”

Djokovic backs ATP, laments Wimbledon 'lose-lose situation'

AP — Novak Djokovic intends to defend his title at Wimbledon and supports the decision by the ATP men's tour to withhold ranking points from that tournament as a show of unity among players -- even though the move will negatively affect his hold on the No. 1 spot.

In response to a reporter's question after his first-round victory at the French Open on Monday night, Djokovic called the All England Club's ban of players from Russia and Belarus over the invasion of Ukraine "a mistake" and criticized Wimbledon organizers for their lack of communication.

"They haven't discussed it with anybody from ATP or any individual players — or, for that matter, Russian or Belarusian players — to just communicate and understand whether there is a common ground where both sides could be making a compromise and something could work out," Djokovic said about the All England Club. "So I think it was a wrong decision. I don't support that at all."

He called it a "lose-lose situation for everyone."

Russia, with help from Belarus, began attacking Ukraine in late February. The All England Club said last month it would not allow players from Russia or Belarus to compete when its Grand Slam tournament begins on June 27; the ATP and the WTA women's tour responded by announcing Friday they would not award ranking points to any players for results at Wimbledon.

Djokovic said he heard there might have been other options available to All England Club decision-makers than has been revealed, such as the possibility of exhibition matches to raise money to help Ukrainians in



Serbia's Novak Djokovic plays a shot against Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka during their first round match at the French Open tennis tournament in Roland Garros stadium in Paris, France, Monday, May 23, 2022. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

need.

Djokovic has had his run-ins with ATP management in the past, and even worked to create a separate players' association, but on this matter he said he backs the tour.

"Collectively, I'm glad that players got together with the ATP, the governing body of men's tennis, and showed to the Grand Slam that when there is a mistake happening — and there was, from the Wimbledon side — then we have to show that there's going to be some consequences," Djokovic said.

The ATP says that all players who earned ranking points at Wimbledon in 2021 (Djokovic earned the maximum 2,000 for taking the championship) will have those erased from their record as part of the usual 52-week system that counts someone's best 19 tournaments over that span.

Whatever happens at the tournament in 2022 will have no bearing on

a player's standing.

"For me, or for the guys that did well last year, we are not only not going to have a chance to earn points, but we can't defend them," Djokovic said. "And there are some guys, obviously, who are not going to have a chance to earn points, of course. It's a very unique and weird situation, I must say."

Earlier in the day, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka said she was leaning toward skipping Wimbledon with no points on offer.

But Djokovic's view was different.

"A Grand Slam is still a Grand Slam," said the owner of 20 such titles, one shy of Rafael Nadal's men's record.

"Wimbledon, for me, was always my dream tournament when I was a child. So I don't look at it through the lens of points or of prize money. For me, it's something else."

Sports News



FIFA judges clear women's coach of sexual harassment

AP – Within FIFA, Diego Guacci was the women's soccer expert in South America chosen to help select candidates for its world player of the year award.

To teenage players in Argentina, he was the coach who allegedly exposed himself on a video call, sent sexually explicit messages and berated girls as young as 14 in the locker room with sexually threatening abuse after losing a match.

Five players testified to FIFA ethics committee investigators that their club coach, who later became technical director of Argentina's national teams for under-15 and under-17 girls, violated his duty of care by directing sexual harassment, abusive behaviour and homophobia at them.

Now, more than two years after an investigation led by two women began, the alleged victims discovered that a panel of three male FIFA ethics judges declined to find Guacci guilty. The chief judge, Vassilios Skouris, is a former president of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

The judges concluded "the evidence on file is insufficient to corroborate, to its comfortable satisfaction, the players' account of the events." They did note in a 40-page ruling

published Monday by FIFA that their verdict did not mean the "reported facts" did not occur.

FIFPRO, the world players' union, said it is concerned the case will deter others from speaking out against the perpetrators of harassment and abuse.

"The decision by the FIFA Ethics Committee raises questions about how much evidence is needed for disciplinary action," said the Netherlands-based union, which represented the players and witnesses who gave testimony.

FIFA said in a statement on Tuesday that the ethics investigators and judges "followed the due process indicated in the FIFA Code of Ethics."

Guacci was described in the ruling as "a FIFA Technical Expert and mentor since 1 January 2021" — one year after the formal complaint against him.

He had been appointed in 2011 by FIFA as an instructor in women's soccer. One year later, the alleged incidents began and continued through 2015, when he was working in different spells with two women's teams in Argentina, Atletico River Plate and Deportivo UAI Urquiza.

One player, who was granted anonymity by FIFA, told investigators



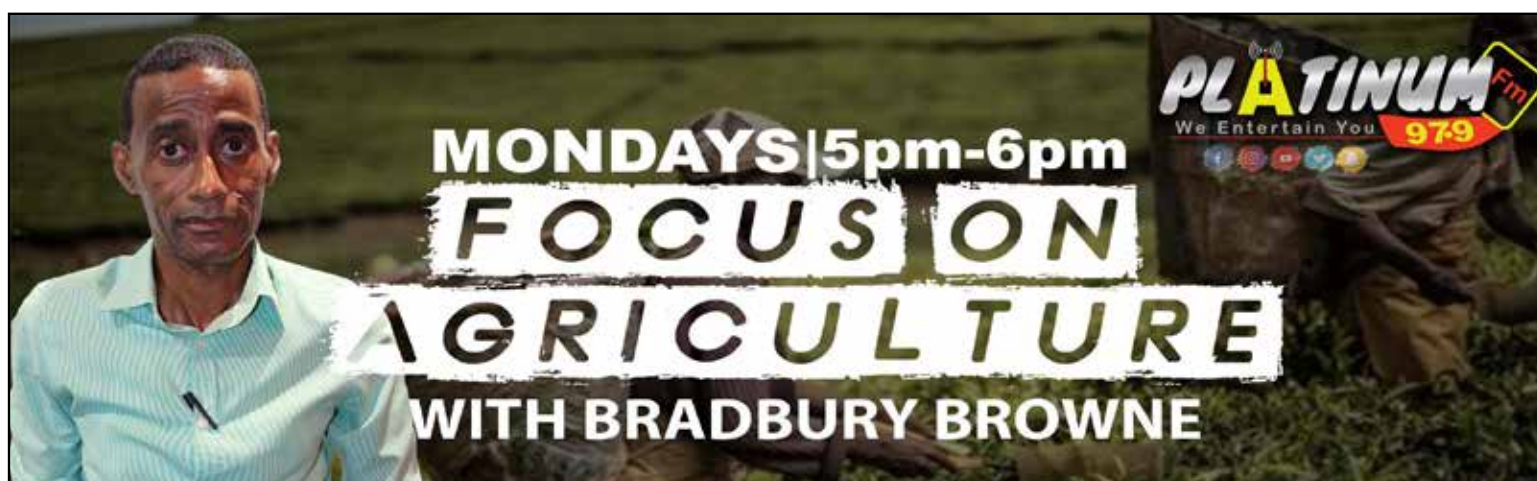
Diego Guacci

she was talking to Guacci about tactics on a video call when he asked her to take off her shirt and expose herself.

"I was completely shocked. I pretended to not understand and I hoped he would just stop," she said in testimony published in the ruling. "When I continued to play dumb he repeated the request. Then he moved his camera and showed me that he was not wearing any trousers. He was only wearing boxers."

"I was completely shocked and horrified," the player said. "I had no idea what to do and felt disgusted, violated and incredibly awkward. I just said, 'I'm sorry, I am in a rela-

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Kurt Zouma pleads guilty to kicking, slapping his pet cat

AP – West Ham defender Kurt Zouma pleaded guilty Tuesday to kicking and slapping his pet cat in abuse caught on video.

The 27-year-old France international appeared at a hearing at Thames Magistrates' Court accused of three offenses under the Animal Welfare Act in relation to footage of the abuse that took place on Feb. 6 and surfaced on social media.

Zouma pleaded guilty to two counts of causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal, while another charge was dismissed. He will be sentenced on June 1.

Zouma arrived at the court in a car and was accompanied by several security guards who held out umbrellas to form a protective shield around him as he was bundled into the court.

Zouma's younger brother, Yoan, filmed the incident involving the cat and posted it on Snapchat.

Kurt Zouma could be seen kicking his Bengal cat across his kitchen, before throwing a pair of shoes at it and slapping its head.

The court was told by prosecutor Hazel Stevens that Kurt Zouma could be heard saying: "I swear I'll kill it. I swear I'll kill it." Stevens said the cats were deemed responsible by Zouma for damaging a chair in his home.

"Since this footage was put in public domain," Stevens said, "there



West Ham United player Kurt Zouma arrives at Thames Magistrates Court for a hearing, in London, Tuesday, May 24, 2022. The West Ham defender is being prosecuted by the RSPCA under the Animal Welfare Act for kicking his cat. (AP Photo/Alberto Pezzali)

has been a spate of people hitting cats and posting it on various social media sites.

"Their behaviour falls short of what is expected of a high-profile image."

Yoan Zouma admitted to one count of aiding, abetting, counseling or procuring his brother to commit an offense. He was suspended in February by fifth-tier team Dagenham.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals took Kurt Zouma's two pet cats into care after the incident.

West Ham fined Zouma two

weeks of salary — the maximum amount possible — when the incident came to light, but manager David Moyes continued to pick the defender to play when healthy. Zouma also lost a sponsorship deal with Adidas.

The RSPCA brought the prosecution against the brothers even though it does not have the power to charge people.

British law allows organizations such as the RSPCA to use specialist lawyers to bring private prosecutions against individuals, with such cases heard in court and sometimes taken over by public prosecutors.

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tionship. I don't do those things.' I also pointed out that he was my coach and I was a player, and I made it clear that I did not want this."

While asking her not to tell anyone about the incident, Guacci allegedly continued to pursue her with calls and explicit texts, including a request to send naked photos.

FIFA investigators said Guacci "unintentionally confirmed that he had harassed" the player after calling another coach to ask if he knew if she was involved in the investigation.

A different player said Guacci aggressively used the language of sexual threats against his team, including players who were 14 and 15, after losing a game.

Sports News



Players express confidence in Da Squad winning volleyball title

Two players are confident Jan-ServeEvents Cool and Smooth Da Squad can go all the way and capture the women's division title in the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Local League.

Da Squad crushed Jets 25-18, 25-16, 25-17 in their final preliminary round encounter at the YMCA on Saturday, to secure the top seed position in this weekend's semi-finals.

Da Squad have won their five matches in the league so far to top the preliminary standings in the six team round robin competition.

Da Squad, based in the Hatton/Grays Green community, will face Jets in the semi-finals.

Following last Saturday's win, captain Yuderka Martinez, one of several athletes from the Dominican Republic and Cuba on the team, said she is confident her team will once again beat Jets and go on to win the title.

"I [have] played in Antigua in Da Squad for about seven years now. This year is a big tournament because it is a long time Da Squad have not won it. Tonight was a hard win for us against Jets because I missed the previous three games," Martinez said.

"Of course, I think Da Squad can win the tournament this year. We are going into the semi-finals against (Jets)...and we will beat them again because we want to go into the final and get the chance to win the title."

Chenoa Evans, a St. Lucian who also represents Da Squad, is equally optimistic about her team's chances of capturing this year's title.

"We didn't underestimate Jets or any of the teams. We trained hard, we worked hard and we were able to reap the result of our work," Evans said.



Da Squad's Chenoa Evans, (centre foreground with towel), during a timeout in her team's encounter against Jets at the indoor volleyball facility at the YMCA Sports Complex on Saturday, 21st May, 2022. (Photo: Elwin Francis)

"I think my team will most definitely take home the championship trophy in this tournament."

Da Squad usually receives large crowd support during their matches and Martinez said she has enjoyed playing in Antigua.

"I feel good playing in Antigua because in my country of the Dominican Republic, we play volleyball hard and a little bit different than in Antigua.

"But I enjoy playing in this tournament in Antigua. It is very good, and me and all the other Spanish speaking players, are really enjoying playing volleyball in the tournament here," Martinez said.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Evans.

"I just came here in Antigua to play volleyball. Back in St. Lucia I play for 758 Ravens.

"One of my coaches reached out to me and said there is a team in Antigua and they have an opening for a player. I wanted a change in environment - I

wanted to experience something new - so I got a chance and I took it," Evans said.

"So far it has been very good. My team has been very hospitable to me. They have been very good to me. The people in Antigua have been very nice.

"Playing in this tournament is exciting. It is also exciting seeing so many people coming out to see the games and to watch different teams with different techniques."

Paragons, who won the women's division title in 2019, the last time the competition was held, will face North Coast Hardware Starz1 in the other semi-final encounter. That game will be played at the YMCA tomorrow.

Defending champions, and unbeaten top seed Stoneville, will face fourth seed Renegades in the second men's semi-finals.

Third seed, High Flyers, will face second seed, Michael Freeland Enforcers, in the first men's semi-finals at the YMCA tomorrow.

Syrian Soca wins feature race at latest horse racing meet

Jockey of the day, Julian Walters, guided Syrian Soca to victory in the feature race of the third horse racing meet of the year at the Cassada Gardens Race Track on Sunday, May 22nd.

Walters capped a fine display in which he rode winners in three of the five races, guiding Syrian Soca to a first-place finish in the final contest, with a time of 1 minute and 15 seconds.

Massacre, ridden by Jahquan Browne, finished in second place.

Walters also guided Playa Zaragoza to its first victory in three outings this year on Sunday.

Playa Zaragoza rebounded from two losses to Lynn's Image to secure victory over six and a half furlongs, in a time of 1



Trainer Neil Cochrane, second left, with jockey of the day, Julian Walters, on Syrian Soca following the feature race at the Cassada Gardens Race Track on 22nd May. (Photo: Antigua Turf Club)

minute, 22.2 seconds.

Leslie Gomes guided Unruly Union to a second-place finish ahead of Silent Action, ridden by Jahquan Brown.

Walters claimed his first

win when he rode Diego to victory in the third race.

He steered Diego across the finish line of the six-furlong course, in a time of 1 minute and 15.04

seconds.

Guilty Pleasure, ridden by Cornell Drew, came second, followed by Jahquan Browne on Tanya in third place.

Earlier, Browne guided Chosen Warrior to victory in the second race of the day when they sped across the finish line after five and a half furlongs, in a time of 1 minute and 12.01 seconds. Zury, ridden by Leslie Gomes, took second place.

Lady Ray, ridden by Tariq Charles, won the first race of the day, a four-furlong race, in a time of 55.2 seconds.

Taliban, with jockey Jahqua Browne in the saddle, came second, ahead of Black Love, ridden by Leroy Campbell.

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times. So, we are yet to recommend any time standards to the athletics association," Williams said.

"In terms of some of the other sports, we are looking at even recommending a fitness test and this will require us to get some equipment such as gym bikes and quite a few things that we need to...really do a proper fitness test with the athletes.

"Cuban, Hector Martinez, was contracted and assigned to work with Bel-lot in putting the minimum

time standards together.

"It was well put together, but in terms of the time standards that were recommended, we at the ABNOC felt it was almost impossible for some of the athletes to meet.

"We felt the times being recommended were too high, and we didn't want to justify adjusting the times without doing the calculation. But we are closer now, and it is something that I think he would be able to complete in short order after further consultations."

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ABNOC yet to implement “Podium Goal”

General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC), Cliff Williams, has said the long-term development plan titled, “Podium Goal”, is yet to be presented to member associations for implementation.

The plan is geared towards providing guidelines to help Antigua and Barbuda’s athletes to attain medals at the 2028 Olympic Games, which will be held in Los Angeles, California. It was prepared by Technical Development Officer (TDO) Charles “Chucky” Bellot, who submitted the document to the ABNOC in early January, 2022.

However, Bellot, who was appointed TDO by the ABNOC on 19th February, 2021, said in April that the plan, which aims to improve national athletes’ performances in international competitions, was unlikely to be released to the public before this month.

Williams has now confirmed that the ABNOC will not be able to present member associations with the plan for implementation before the end of the month.

“I must commend Bellot for taking up the position, and I can say publicly, he has been amazing. He has been a major help to me and the ABNOC. He is more rounded than just the Technical Development Officer, and we have been able to utilise him in getting documentation and that sort of thing,” Williams said.

“He made a proposal to the NOC board in terms of a long-term plan. It started with the idea of wanting to see our athletes on the podium. It is more or less aiming to see our athletes be-

ing able to win a medal at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028.

“It is something he titled Podium Goal, which also entails the Ministry of Education and Sports, because we are starting at grassroots right up to the elite athletes.

“It was presented to the executive board and he got, more or less, somewhat approval. However, we were supposed to have a retreat, in terms of going through the plan. That aspect pertaining to the retreat never took place.

“It is recommending the ABNOC to use four different standards in achieving the Podium Goal. One is qualified, one is consideration and one is just to start to identify in terms of time, but it is something that is well complete and well rounded.

“It is something I personally want to see fast tracked in terms of implementing, but I don’t think that will happen before the end of May.”

Williams also said once the plan is set in motion, discussions will be held with various government agencies concerning other areas of support for national athletes.

“A meeting with the Ministry of Sports is pending because we are still working on the Podium Goal project. It is a strong collaboration between the National Olympic Committee and the government. It starts from grassroots to elite and to the super athlete, which is what we are targeting for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California, in the United States,” Williams said.

Williams also said the plan also



General Secretary of the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee Cliff Williams. (File photo)

involves setting minimum time standards for a number of Olympic disciplines, however, there has been a delay in relaying these time standards to member associations for implementation.

“The other challenge he had, in terms of his workload, was assisting us with the setting of standards for the Caribbean Games and the Commonwealth Games. There has been a delay in terms of finalising the standards, because he went across several CARIFTA Games and Junior Games and the Junior World Championships for athletics, in arriving at what the minimum time standards for athletics will be.

“After he had submitted the time standards, we looked at the times recommended and we decided to ask him to make some adjustments to those

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