

BRITTANY JNO-BAPTISTE CHARGED WITH JANE FINCH'S MURDER

Story on Page 2



A construction worker is hard at work restoring the flooring at the historic Copper and Lumber Inn in Nelson's Dockyard. *Story on page 6*

Local News



Brittany Jno-Baptiste charged with Jane Finch's murder

Ten months after Brittany Jno-Baptiste was discovered standing over the lifeless body of Jane Finch in the woman's Picadilly home, she has officially been charged with her murder.

Finch took to social media on the evening of 4th October, 2021, to make a desperate plea for help, posting that someone was forcing their way into her home.

She said the attacker was trying to enter the house through a window they had broken.

Officers from the Dockyard Police Station responded to calls for help by persons who saw Finch's anguished post, but on arrival, they discovered her lifeless body with what appeared to be multiple stab wounds.

Jno-Baptiste was in the house.

Initially, the murder accused woman was charged with burglary and was declared unfit to stand trial following a psychiatric evaluation conducted by Dr. James King.

Dr. King told the court at the time that the young woman had a psychiatric disorder and proposed that she undergo six months of treatment, after which she would be reevaluated.

The submission of the second report was delayed until July, and while the contents are unknown, the latest development suggests that Jno-Baptiste is now competent to stand trial.

Jno-Baptiste, who has been confined to Her Majesty's Prison since last October, is expected to appear in the District B Magistrate's Court today, or at latest, by early next week.



Jane Finch

At the time of her death Canadian born Jane Finch, who had made Antigua and Barbuda her home for four decades, worked as tour representative.



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Carnival 2022 free of major incidents

The organisers of Carnival 2022 say they are overwhelmed with the success of the event; the first since the coronavirus pandemic forced its cancellation in 2020 and 2021.

Both the organisers and the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda were unanimous in expressing pleasure that the return of the national festival occurred without any major incidents marring the event.

Police spokesman, Inspector Frankie Thomas, reported that there were minor skirmishes during the festival, including two stabbings.



Inspector Frankie Thomas

In both cases, the individuals, who have not yet been identified, were rushed to the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre and treated for non-life-threatening wounds.

ening wounds.

They have all been released by the hospital.

A check with the traffic and fire departments revealed no reports of major incidents.

Head of the Traffic Department, Assistant Superintendent of Police Rodney Ellis, said that apart from the usual “fender benders”, there were no accidents that resulted in hospitalisations or death over the Carnival weekend.

There was a heavy security presence during the carnival with the police receiving the support of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force.



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Historic Wadadli Action Platform set to advance action for SIDS' resilience

Leaders of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) from the Pacific, Caribbean, and African, Indian Ocean and South China Sea states will converge at the Wadadli Action Platform to address the most critical issues that hinder Sustainable Development in SIDS.

The two-day meeting, organised by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), in partnership with the Governments of Denmark and the United Kingdom, will take place on August 8th and 9th, 2022, in St. John's.

The event is billed as a solutions-oriented springboard for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in SIDS.

Presenters and participants will include Hon. Abdulla Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly, Dr. Hyginus Leon, President of the Caribbean Development Bank, Dr. Natalia Kanem, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, and other United Nations representatives and SIDS global partners who will address the environmental, social, and economic factors which waylay SIDS' advancement.

"Wadadli, meaning "our own", signifies the leadership of SIDS in pioneering tailored and sustainable solutions, including through local and traditional knowledge," said Sir Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health, Wellness



Sir Molwyn Joseph will chair next week's Alliance of Small Island States meeting here in St. John's

and the Environment for Antigua and Barbuda, who will lead the event in his role as Chair of AOSIS.

"Reeling from the aftershocks of the global pandemic and lockdowns which decimated the tourism sector on which many of our economies are based, SIDS require accelerated and concrete action and tailored solutions for recovery.

"Our countries also contend with debilitating loss and damage from climate change impacts, with GDP losses from tropical cyclones alone, averaging at 3.7% per year. In response, the least amount of Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding compared to other regions was made available for SIDS last year – just 4% of total funding. Many SIDS are struggling to stay afloat, weighed down by onerous debt burdens which may now be exacerbated by the international market disturbance due to the armed conflict in Europe.

"At the Wadadli Action Platform we aim to transform rhetoric and commitments for enhancing resilience in SIDS, into urgent and tangible actions to ensure our right to thrive," he said.

With the stakes at an all-time high for these developing and least-developed countries, the Wadadli Action Platform is set to put SIDS challenges in an international spotlight and enhance partnerships to strengthen long-term resilience.

The Platform aims to secure new, actionable commitments to address the issues in access to development finance that continue to plague SIDS, such as the long overdue implementation of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) by the International Finance Institutions, to guide their concessional lending and debt restructuring policies. It will also serve as a critical marker on the road to the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in 2024,

to take stock and identify key priorities and elements for the development of the new framework for SIDS.

The Wadadli Action Platform agenda will focus on:

- Environmental Resilience in SIDS: Protecting the planet

- o Addressing the adverse impacts of climate change.

- o Addressing Marine Plastic Pollution for sustaining Ocean-based Economies in SIDS.

- Economic Resilience in SIDS: Access to Development Finance

- o Adoption and use of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index; dissecting the interim report of the Expert Panel.

- o Solutions for debt sustainability in SIDS.

- Social Resilience in SIDS: Inclusive and enabling environments

- o Promoting formal and informal education, including through digital technologies.

- o Gender, youth, economic empowerment and the inclusion of persons with disability.

- The Fourth SIDS Conference: Setting the future for sustainable development

- o Monitoring implementation and strengthening national and regional statistical systems.

- o Priorities for the post-SAMOA Pathway development – The Next SIDS Blueprint.

PM, 'Boogsie' Sharpe pay homage to Victor 'Bubu' Samuel

Legendary pan maestro, Dr. Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe of Trinidad and Tobago, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Gaston Browne this week that inspired thoughtful and emotional exchanges as they discussed Victor 'Babu' Samuel in the pantheon of Caribbean culture and civilization.

Dr. Sharpe is in Antigua and Barbuda for the official funeral on Monday of local and Caribbean pan icon, Victor 'Babu' Samuel.

PM Browne shared his thoughts on how pan has helped to shape the Caribbean's cultural identity and Samuel's role and contribution to that continuing effort.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Dr. Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe and Lauckland 'Punchin' Joseph

Prime Minister Browne reflected on Samuel's legacy and contribution to the development of pan music in Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Caribbean.

He described being around the Halcyon Steel Orchestra's pan yard as a youth and experiencing Bubu's mastery of the instrument. It was during this period that he developed a love for pan music. It also inspired his love for Halcyon Steel Orchestra which endures to this day.

Dr. Sharpe became very emotional as he highlighted the work and passion of his late friend, colleague, and bandmate.

He recalled Bubu's visits to Trinidad and Tobago at his invitation and their many collaborations over the years. He described Samuel as a "gifted composer and arranger" whose has left a void in the pan movement.

PM Browne confessed to engaging in spirited debates with leading local pan enthusiasts in which he would always conclude

that, when compared with his peers, "Babu is the best!"

Boogsie responded, "I back you with that!" as he noted that Babu stood out as he always "played from the heart".

Executive member of Halcyon Steel Orchestra, Lauckland 'Punchin' Joseph, who accompanied Dr. Sharpe on the courtesy call, thanked the prime minister and the Cabinet for honouring Samuel with an official funeral which will celebrate his life and achievements.

In June, the Cabinet offered an Official Funeral to Victor "Babu" Samuel who died on June 28th, 2022 at age 64.

The celebration of his life will take place at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG) on Monday 8th August 2022 at 2pm. His body will be interred at the Public Cemetery.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne with Dr. Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe

Local News



Nelson's Dockyard National Park stresses importance of entrance fee

The National Parks Authority (NPA) has expressed its pleasure with the return of so many nationals this summer.

In a statement on Thursday, the NPA also expressed delight that the public remains supportive and understanding of the importance of contributing to the Parks' restoration and preservation programmes.

The Park's access fee of EC\$10.00 has remained unchanged for nationals and residents for years, making it affordable and accessible to anyone desirous of visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"We are encouraged that this rate is about the same or below for some of the most popular national parks and world heritage sites across the region," the NPA said.

It was further disclosed that the extended special offer of EC\$50 for a one year pass for individuals and the



Preservation work at Copper and Lumber

Family Pass, which costs EC\$200, is still available to nationals and residents.

A season pass, which expires at the end of the yachting season, is available at a cost of US\$100 while a daily pass for visitors is US\$15.

The revenues generated from these fees help to pay the employees who manage the diverse operations of the unique facilities, which include the maintenance of yachting facilities that make Antigua a major hub for the sector in the Caribbean.

The NPA, a self-financing institution, ensures that its revenue goes directly to the renovation and restoration of the park and its facilities.

The organisation also engages in several programmes that benefit the residents of English Harbour.

The Park also plays a major role in the protection and management of Antigua and Barbuda's marine space and terrestrial park areas, waste management and keeping the areas around the major tourist attractions of English Harbour and Shirley Heights in pristine shape.

Fri 05 Day		Fri 05 Night	
86°	☀️	79°	☁️
22% E 16 mph		24% ENE 14 mph	
Mostly cloudy skies early will become partly cloudy later in the day. High 86F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy skies. Low 79F. Winds ENE at 10 to 20 mph.	
Humidity 69%	UV Index Extreme	Humidity 79%	UV Index 0 of 10
Sunrise 5:48 am	Sunset 6:38 pm	Moonrise 12:26 pm	Moonset --
		🌑 First Quarter	

Watchnight gathering: A moving observance

On Sunday, scores of people observed the 14th annual Watch Night gathering at the Botanical Gardens in commemoration of the 188 anniversary of the emancipation of enslaved peoples throughout the British West Indies.

Some who attended described the event as “invigorating”, “thought-provoking” and “entertaining”, but most of all an honourable and fitting tribute to the millions who lost their lives during slavery and their descendants who continue to suffer because of it.

“This annual commemoration of Watch Night activities is our way of paying homage to our forefathers who fought, bled, and sacrificed so we can enjoy the freedom we have today,” one member of the organising committee told Pointe Xpress.

Participating in the celebrations were Prime Minister Gaston Browne, Minister of Creative Industries, Dr. Michael Browne and Minister of Education and Sports, Daryll Matthew.

Organised by the Antigua and Barbuda Reparations Support Commission (ABRSC), the celebrations included performances by calypsonians Sammie C and Richie Francis, reggae artist Zambai, the Ras Free-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne (centre) flanked by chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Reparations Support Commission, Dorbrene O'Marde and Ugandan ambassador, H. E. Ireneo Namboka

man Nyhabingi drummers, the Royal Police Force Iron Band and poet Fayola Jardine.

A special presentations were made by the Global Vice President of Aido Network International, Ambassador Ireneo Namboka of Uganda, and Heritage Resources Officer of the National Parks Authority, Desley Gardner.

There was also a special tribute to the late Ambassador Franklyn ‘King Frank-I’ Francis, who was an integral member of the Reparations Movement in Antigua and Barbuda and the region.

The Emancipation day was ushered in at 12:50am with renditions of the Negro Anthem and a performance by the police iron band.

A&B national called to the bar in the UK



Egberta Joseph, the daughter of Orden and Khin Joseph, was called to the bar in the United Kingdom on 27th July, 2022 at the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple. Congratulations!

Local News



Annual St. Paul's senior citizens summer excursion a success

This year's St. Paul's senior citizens summer excursion is being hailed a success.

The event, which is sponsored by St. Paul's MP E. P. Chet Greene, is designed to showcase developmental projects around the island to the seniors of the St. Paul's who, due to their age and mobility, may not have the opportunity to visit these locations.

Thursday's excursion was welcomed by more than 200 seniors as they toured the new UWI Five Islands Campus under the watch of Hiram Forde, a senior staff member at the university.

A journey through St. John's allowed them to see

the new developments at Heritage Quay and the St. John's Harbour. Following this stop, they journeyed to the Chinese Embassy in Marble Hill. MP Greene praised the hospitality of the Chinese ambassador and her team who treated the visiting St. Paul's seniors like royalty.

The seniors were also provided with an account of the operations at the West Indies Oil Company (WIOC), including the progressive ownership platform promoted by Prime Minister Gaston Browne and the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party government.

The tour ended with a surprise visit to Caribbean



Cinemas on Friars Hill Road. Several seniors admitted that it was their first time visiting the movies, while others remarked that it brought on welcomed nostalgia.

According to MP Greene, he is looking forward to next year's activity with the senior members of his constituency as a trip to Barbuda is being planned.

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Joella Charles continues to excel



“Without commitment, you will never start, but most importantly, without consistency, you will never finish!” - Denzel Washington

Prime Minister Gaston Browne and the government of Antigua and Barbuda have congratulated Charles on her latest milestone.

This is one of the many quotes that Joella Charles lives by. Charles is the epitome of resilience, focus, commitment, determination, and an example of making dreams a reality.

Charles matriculated into the prestigious Columbia University, a world renowned Ivy League institution, in New York City, in October, 2020, and in only one year, she graduated with Master's degree in Negotiation, Mediation, and Conflict Resolution, with her lowest grade being an A-.

She was also selected as a finalist to receive the Dean's Excellence Award earlier this year.

The young Antiguan and Barbudan prides herself in her ability to overcome the obstacles that appear along her journey and she urges anyone who has a dream to follow them, no matter the difficulties along the path.

Charles, who gives God the credit for her accomplishments, extended thanks to her parents, brothers, and her son Jordan for their un-failing support.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

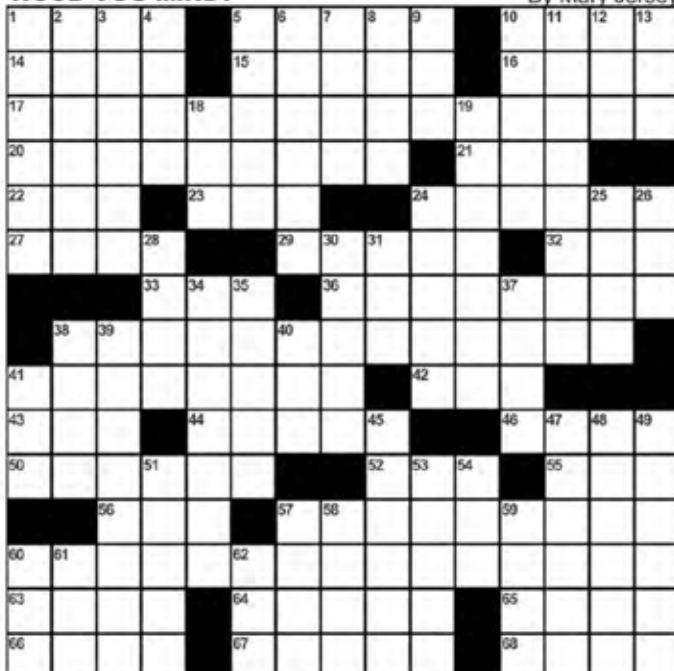
- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) ___ A Sketch (classic toy) | 41) Pad with springs |
| 5) Long-faced one | 42) CBS symbol |
| 10) Jungle creatures | 43) At ___ cost |
| 14) Old woman's nursery rhyme home | 44) Even if, briefly |
| 15) Pro sports venue | 46) Pre-college exams, for short |
| 16) ___ Major (constellation) | 50) Fix potholes |
| 17) Arizona attraction | 52) Plumber's pipe material (Abbr.) |
| 20) Pitching lineups | 55) Memorable time for historians |
| 21) Cup part | 56) Suffix with "cyan" or "ox" |
| 22) Fury | 57) Young vegetable shoot |
| 23) Erie Canal mule | 60) Some Australian growths |
| 24) Civil rights target | 63) Fraction of a kilo |
| 27) Hardly an old pro | 64) Utility bill information |
| 29) Actor M. ___ Walsh | 65) Life-of-Riley state |
| 32) "___ sells seashells ..." | 66) De-squeaks |
| 33) Greyhound vehicle | 67) "Growing Pains" star Joanna |
| 36) Like possums and squirrels | 68) Fire, red and black insects |
| 38) It puts on coats | |

DOWN

- 1) Cleverness of wit
- 2) The Big Bang, e.g.
- 3) Fastening pin
- 4) Mother of Ares
- 5) Puzo subject
- 6) Brooks Robinson, for years
- 7) Rounded hammer part
- 8) Draws to a close
- 9) Battle of Britain fighter (Abbr.)
- 10) Goldfinger's first name
- 11) Building and its grounds
- 12) Count finish?
- 13) Parked oneself
- 18) Not his or hers
- 19) Art of public speaking
- 24) Jewish teacher (Var.)
- 25) Ayatollah predecessor
- 26) "Braveheart" star Gibson
- 28) A few words in passing?
- 30) Wet, spongy ground
- 31) Half a married couple
- 34) Come apart
- 35) Ancient upright stone
- 37) Regrets
- 38) Window part
- 39) Not ordinary
- 40) World record finish?
- 41) Vandalize
- 45) Question the validity of
- 47) Sea bordering Greece
- 48) Straightest, as an arrow
- 49) Mouths off to
- 51) One of two presidents
- 53) Arrangement containers
- 54) Old-style computer screen
- 57) Church nook
- 58) Celestial twinkler
- 59) Carpet layer's calculation
- 60) Bigheadedness
- 61) Swiss canton
- 62) "That's gross!"

WOOD YOU MIND?

By Mary Jersey



Opinion

Has CARICOM reached its limits of regional integration? Part 2

By Sir Ronald Sanders

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

In the first part of this commentary, the conclusion was reached that the great ideals, set out in the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas (the CARICOM Treaty) and its revision in 2001, remain unfulfilled. But does this reality mean that, as the CARICOM project reaches its 50th anniversary next July, it has reached the limits of regional integration?

The previous commentary showed that CARICOM expanded by adding new members (Suriname and Haiti), but it failed to deepen its integration arrangements, such that while it has been aspiring to become a Single Market and Economy (SME) since 2001, it still has not established a Customs Union let alone a Common Market.

The prevailing characteristic of CARICOM, apart from the agonizingly slow pace of institutionalizing the machinery for integration, has been the jealous retention of "sovereignty" by governments of the region. In other words, as the late, former Prime Minister of Barbados, Owen Arthur, put it disapprovingly: "[CARICOM] conceives of (itself) mainly as a community of sovereign states in which sovereignty is pooled but never ceded; with the nation-state being the locus of decision-making in respect of the implementation of regional commitments".

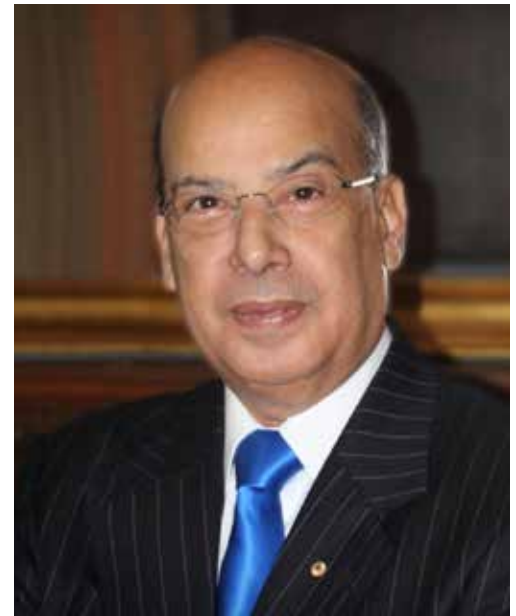
However, it should not be believed

that political leaders are the only persons who cling to sovereignty (in other words, keeping all decision making at the national level). Over the years, keen to maintain control over what they consider to be their own turf, bureaucrats have also caused decisions to be delayed, deferred or made impossible to implement. The pull of local control remains greater than the push toward regional authority.

The worst example of failure to operationalize fully a regional institution that CARICOM governments, themselves, established is the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ). Upon its establishment, the CCJ was to become the final appellate Court for all civil and criminal matters, replacing the British (and colonial) Privy Council. Epitomizing the inexplicable dissonance that surrounds the attitude to the CCJ is that its headquarters is located in Trinidad and Tobago, a country that has been independent since 1962, and that has long severed the Queen as its Head of State in favour of becoming a Republic with a native President. Yet Trinidad and Tobago's final appellate Court remains the British Privy Council because of internal politics.

Only four CARICOM countries – Barbados, Belize, Dominica and Guyana – recognize the CCJ as their final Court of Appeal. Despite the celebration of independence and sovereignty, Caribbean politicians (on all sides) by their failure to explain the merits of the CCJ to their people – or by their deliberate misleading of them – sustain a contradiction.

In part, this situation continues because the "nation state" in CARICOM has not collapsed, supported, as it is, by official development assistance



Sir Ronald Sanders

from members of the international community; by international lenders who profit from loans to needy governments; and by investors whose business models are based on over generous tax concessions by the state, motivated by competition between CARICOM states, especially in the tourism industry.

Additionally, no CARICOM country has had to bear the full burden of national security that would come from the establishment of the military apparatus necessary to protect its borders and its sovereignty. There has been little or no need for an air force, battle ships, armies or considerable armaments. Up until Russia invaded Ukraine, the borders, territorial integrity and sovereignty of individual CARICOM countries, was protected by an international order and a UN Security Council that seemed to insure protection against military aggression. Despite Russia's action, CARICOM countries have not discussed their collective defence. Instead, they have repeated their desire for the Ca-

cont'd on pg 12



EXTERNAL VACANCY

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The Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority (ABAA) is accepting applications for the position of **HR Officer (Health & Safety)**. ABAA is responsible for the management of V. C. Bird International Airport (VCBIA) and the Codrington Airport.

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E-mail: hr@abairportauthority.com
Website: www.vcbia.com

The **deadline** for receipt of applications is **Tuesday 9, August 2022**. Only suitable applicants will be acknowledged.

Opinion

cont'd from pg 10

ribbean to be a “zone of peace”, expecting external actors to respect it, knowing fully well that the cost of defending themselves militarily is far beyond each of their means.

Even at times of natural disasters, causing massive damage and economic reversals, individual CARICOM countries have looked to the international donor community for help; borrowed money, thus increasing their national debt burden; and entered into financial adjustment programmes with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the latter

case, they have been forced to cede aspects of the “sovereignty” to which they cling within the CARICOM grouping.

However, apart from the worthwhile, but under resourced, work of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, CARICOM is not able to respond in the way in which, for instance, the single federal governments of the US or Canada are able to tackle disasters in states or provinces.

To be sure, in the 60 years since Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago became independent states,

leading to a procession of Caribbean countries doing the same, independence has allowed national governments to accelerate infrastructural development and economic progress in many countries.

Within the CARICOM group, Haiti, with its history of foreign occupation, exploitation, and succession of dictatorial and repressive governments, is the main exception.

So, sovereignty has not been without its benefits. But the question remains: how much further along the road to economic and social progress would

CARICOM countries have been, had they not only pooled their sovereignty but also ceded aspects of it to a regional centre as occurred with the European Union?

According to the latest IMF research, further liberalizing trade and labour mobility in the region can generate significant economic benefits—potentially over 7 percent of the region’s GDP in 2018.

The February 2020 research finds that “a 25-percent reduction in non-tariff barriers and trade costs within CARICOM and vis-à-vis non-CARICOM trade partners can boost trade and improve welfare gain for all members—at about \$6 billion, or 7.6 percent of the region’s GDP in 2018. It can also help restructure economies from contracting to expanding sectors, resulting in a net employment gain across the region”.

The IMF report entitled, “Is the Whole Greater than the Sum of its Parts? Strengthening Caribbean Regional Integration”, lays out solid research to establish that while the small size and supply constraints of these countries may potentially limit benefits from economic integration, acting as a group can enhance the scale, bringing widespread benefits and helping the region further tap into global value chains.

Part 3 next week will conclude this discussion.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com



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Record amount of seaweed is choking shores in the Caribbean

By **Dánica Coto**

Near-record amounts of seaweed are smothering Caribbean coasts from Puerto Rico to Barbados, killing fish and other wildlife, choking tourism and releasing stinky, noxious gases.

More than 24 million tons of sargassum blanketed the Atlantic in June, shattering the all-time record, set in 2018, by 20%, according to the University of South Florida's Optical Oceanography Lab. And unusually large amounts of the brown algae have drifted into the Caribbean Sea.

A raggedy carpet of vegetation recently surrounded an uninhabited island near the French Caribbean territory of St. Martin that is popular with tourists, forcing officials to suspend ferry service and cancel kayaking, paddle boarding and snorkelling tours. The normally translucent turquoise waters around Pinel Island turned into a prickly yellowish-brown slush.

Oswen Corbel, owner of Caribbean Paddling, said he had to close his St. Martin business on July 22 and doesn't expect to reopen until late October. He estimated he has lost at least \$10,000.

"Maybe I should give up. ... Sometimes I think I should go into the mountains and herd sheep, but



Lakes Beach is covered in sargassum in St. Andrew along the east coast of Barbados, Wednesday, July 27, 2022. More than 24 million tons of sargassum blanketed the Atlantic in June, up from 18.8 million tons in May, according to a monthly report published by the University of South Florida's Optical Oceanography Lab that noted "a new historical record." (AP Photo/Kofi Jones)

this is what I know to do," he said. "What's next? We had Hurricane Irma, we had COVID, we had the sargassum, and now I'm pretty scared of global warming."

Scientists say more research is needed to determine why sargassum levels in the region are so high, but the United Nations' Caribbean Environment Program said possible factors include a rise in water temperatures as a result of climate change, and nitrogen-laden fertiliser and sewage that nourish the algae.

"This year has been the worst year on record," said Lisa Krinsky, a university researcher with Florida Sea Grant, a programme aimed at protecting the coast. "It is absolutely devastating for

the region."

She said large masses of seaweed have a severe environmental impact, with the decaying algae altering water temperatures and the pH balance and leading to declines in seagrass, coral and sponges.

"They're essentially being smothered out," Krinsky said.

The "golden tide" also has hit humans hard.

The concentration of algae is so heavy in parts of the eastern Caribbean that the French island of Guadeloupe issued a health alert in late July. It warned some communities about high levels of hydrogen sulphide gas emanating from the huge rotting clumps of seaweed. The gas, which

smells like rotten eggs, can affect people with breathing problems such as asthma.

The Biden administration declared a federal emergency after the U.S. Virgin Islands warned last month of unusually high amounts of sargassum clogging machinery at a desalination plant near St. Croix that is struggling to produce water and meet demand amid a drought.

In addition, the U.S. Virgin Islands' electricity generating station relies on ultra-pure water from the desalination plant to reduce emissions. The loss of such water would force the government to use a type of diesel fuel that is more expensive and in limited sup-

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Environment



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ply, officials said.

Chuanmin Hu, an oceanography professor at the University of South Florida who helps produce the seaweed reports, said sargassum levels for the eastern Caribbean were at a near-record high this year, second only to those reported in July 2018. Levels in the northern Caribbean are at their third-highest level, he said.

Experts first noted large amounts of sargassum in the Caribbean Sea in 2011, and the problem has occurred practically every year since then.

"We don't know if this is a new normal," Krinsky lamented.

Sargassum in moderation helps purify water and absorb carbon dioxide and is a key part of the habitat for fish, turtles, shrimp, crabs and other creatures. It is also used in fertiliser, food, biofuel, construction materials and medicinal products.

But it is bad for tourism and the environment when too much accumulates just offshore or on beaches.

"This is the worst we've ever seen it for sure," said Melody Rouveure, general manager for a tour compa-

ny in the Dutch Caribbean territory of St. Maarten, which shares an island with St. Martin. "It did ruin my personal beach plans."

On Union Island, which is part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the seaweed invasion has forced some resorts in recent years to close for up to five months.

Masses of sargassum also have strangled the Caribbean's fishing industry. It damages boat engines and fishing gear, prevents fishermen from reaching their vessels and fishing grounds and leads to a drop in the number of fish caught. Barbados, where

the beaches are piled with reddish-brown seaweed, has been hit especially hard.

An overabundance of sargassum was blamed for the recent deaths of thousands of fish in the French Caribbean island of Martinique. It also has activists concerned about the plight of endangered turtles. Some are dying at sea, entangled in the seaweed or unable to lay their eggs because of the mat of algae over the sand.

In the Cayman Islands, officials launched a trial programme in which crews pumped more than 2,880 square feet (268 square metres) of seaweed out of the water. But on Tuesday, the government announced it suspended the project, saying the seaweed had decomposed so much that it had rendered the pumping useless.

Some island nations use heavy machinery to remove seaweed from the beach, but scientists warn that causes erosion and can destroy the nests of endangered turtles.

Many Caribbean islands are struggling financially and do not have the means to clear the vast amounts of seaweed.

Gov. Albert Bryan of the U.S. Virgin Islands said he asked President Joe Biden to declare a federal emergency for the entire three-island territory, not just St. Croix, but that didn't happen. Bryan said he is now trying to find local funds to clean beaches, "but a lot of things need money right now."

New global alliance launched to end AIDS in children by 2030

Three United Nations agencies have formed a global alliance to prevent new HIV infections and ensure that by 2030 all HIV-positive children can get access to lifesaving treatment.

The UN said while more than three-quarters of all adults living with HIV are receiving some kind of treatment, the number of children doing so, stands at only 52 percent.

In response to this “startling disparity,” the UN said the new Global Alliance for Ending AIDS in Children by 2030, comprising UN agencies, civil society groups, governments, and international partners, was announced at the landmark International AIDS Conference, which ended in Canada, on Tuesday.

Regarding the Caribbean, there were an estimated 330,000 people living with HIV last year and the UN said from 2010 to 2021, AIDS-related deaths in the region declined by 50 percent.

There were 5700 deaths last year and new HIV infections decreased by 28 percent since 2010. An estimated 14,000 people contracted HIV during 2021, translating into 270 new HIV infections every week in the Caribbean.

“While the Caribbean has not had the increase in



new infections experienced in other regions, the rate of decline is far too slow,” explained Luisa Cabal, UNAIDS Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Support Team.

The UN said the Caribbean is second to sub-Saharan Africa for the prevalence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Addressing the conference, Limpho Nteko from Lesotho shared her journey from a surprise HIV diagnosis to pioneering the women-led mothers2mothers programme to combat gestational transmission of HIV.

Pregnant when diagnosed, Nteko highlighted the importance of community leadership in combating HIV.

“To succeed, we need

a healthy, informed generation of young people who feel free to talk about HIV, and to get the services and support they need to protect themselves and their children from HIV”, she told delegates.

The UN said Netko’s emphasis on community leadership will now be backed by the resources of an international coalition.

The UN said stakeholders in the alliance have identified four pillars of collective action, close the treatment gap among breast-feeding adolescent girls and women living with HIV and optimise the continuity of treatment; prevent and detect new HIV infections among pregnant and breast-feeding adolescent girls and women; promote accessible testing, optimised treatment,

Warner Bros. axes 'Batgirl,' won't release \$90M HBO Max film

By Jake Coyle

In a highly unusual move that rattled Hollywood, Warner Bros. axed the "Batgirl" film planned for HBO Max, opting to shelve the \$90 million film as the reorganised studio revamps its approach to streaming and DC Comics films.

The studio ultimately decided the nearly completed "Batgirl" didn't merit either a streaming debut or a theatrical release. Warner Bros. instead is choosing to entirely write off the film starring "In the Heights" star Leslie Grace

as Batgirl and co-starring Michael Keaton (returning as Batman), J.K. Simmons and Brendan Fraser. It was directed by Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah. Production wrapped in April.

Warner Bros.' decision, one without any obvious parallel in recent Hollywood history, sent shockwaves through the industry. When a movie doesn't meet a studio's expectations, it's typically sold off or dumped quietly with little fanfare. "Batgirl," greenlit before WarnerMedia's merger with Discovery Inc., will instead sim-



Leslie Grace arrives at a screening of "In the Heights" during the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival on June 4, 2021. Warner Bros. has axed the \$90 million "Batgirl" film planned for HBO Max, according to a person connected with the film who was not authorised to speak publicly about it. (Photo by Richard Shotwell/Invision/AP, File)

ply not see the light of day.

"The decision to not release Batgirl reflects our leadership's strategic shift as it relates to the DC universe and HBO Max," a Warner Bros. spokesperson said in a statement, adding that Grace is "an incredibly talented actor and this decision is not a reflection of her performance."

The filmmakers learned of the studio's decision shortly before the story broke late Tuesday. An early cut of "Batgirl" had recently undergone one test screening. And while its scores weren't good, poor test results haven't been infrequent for Warner Bros.' DC releases nor has post-production drama. Zack Snyder's "Justice League" was recut and re-shot by Joss Whedon before a fan campaign led to the

eventual HBO Max release of an edit by Snyder. The badly received 2016 "Suicide Squad" was followed by James Gunn's similarly titled 2021 relaunch "The Suicide Squad."

"We are saddened and shocked by the news. We still can't believe it," El Arbi and Fallah said in a statement Wednesday. "As directors, it is critical that our work be shown to audiences, and while the film was far from finished, we wish that fans all over the world would have had the opportunity to see and embrace the final film themselves. Maybe one day they will insha'Allah (if God wills)."

The directors signed their statement, posted on Instagram, "Batgirl For Life."

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Keanu Reeves takes rare TV role in historical thriller

By Lynn Elber

Keanu Reeves will star in a TV adaptation of “The Devil in the White City,” the bestselling nonfiction thriller about ambition, a killer and the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago.

Reeves will portray Daniel H. Burnham, an architect “trying to make his mark on history” with his designs for the fair, Hulu said in announcing the limited series Thursday.

The other central role, that of convicted murderer Dr. H.H. Holmes, has yet to be cast, the streaming service said.

Erik Larson’s novelistic-style account of the fair — formally called the World’s Columbian Expo-



Keanu Reeves

sition — was published in 2003. The fair’s nickname was White City, stemming from the colour of many of its building exteriors.

Various Hollywood players circled the book,

and Leonardo DiCaprio acquired the rights in 2010, with the aim of starring in a big-screen version as Holmes. Martin Scorsese reportedly was set to direct.

Scorsese, DiCaprio and

Reeves are among the series’ producers. There was no immediate word of an on-screen role for DiCaprio in the Hulu project, and its release date was not announced.

Reeves has worked almost exclusively in films, including the “Matrix” and “John Wick” franchises. He took an excursion into TV with “Swedish Dicks,” a 2016-18 comedy series about Swedish private eyes in which Reeves made brief appearances.

Holmes, born Herman Webster Mudgett, was linked to and confessed to a number of murders. He was convicted and sentenced to death for only one and was executed in 1896.

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Late Wednesday, Grace posted on Instagram that she was proud of the work that went into “Batgirl.”

“I feel blessed to have worked among absolute greats and forged relationships for a lifetime in the process!” wrote Grace.

“To every Batgirl fan — THANK YOU for the love and belief, allowing me to take on the cape and become, as Babs said best, ‘my own damn hero!’”

Under new Warner Bros. Discovery chief executive David Zaslav, Warner Bros. is shifting its strategy on film releases and trimming costs. Under previous chief executive Jason Kilar and partly as a pandemic response, the studio implemented day-and-date releases in 2021, open-

ing films simultaneously in theatres and on HBO Max. Other films, like “Batgirl,” were produced solely for HBO Max.

This year, Warner Bros. has returned to exclusive theatrical windows for at least 45 days before sending movies to HBO Max. While “Batgirl” isn’t as pricey as many superhero films, which typically cost \$150-200 million to make, it’s a bigger budget movie for an HBO Max title.

Zaslav has maintained larger budgeted movies are best served by a theatrical rollout.

But marketing a movie like “Batgirl” for that kind of release would require tens of millions more. Warner Bros. Discovery is set to report second-quarter earnings Thursday.

Warner Bros. also shelved “Scoob!: Holiday Haunt,” an almost-completed sequel to 2020’s “Scoob!” Producer and writer Tony Cervone confirmed in an Instagram post that “the movie is practically finished and turned out beautifully. I am beyond heartbroken.”

The “Batgirl” cancellation comes as Warner Bros. is trying to revamp its DC Films operations.

While “The Batman” earlier this year performed well with \$770.8 million in ticket sales, Warners’ DC releases have been erratic and plagued by controversy. “The Flash,” scheduled for release next June, stars Ezra Miller who has been arrested twice this year in Hawaii, in a disorderly conduct case and on suspicion of assault.

Rapper Mystikal, accused of rape, denied bond by judge

A Louisiana judge has refused to set any bond for rapper Mystikal, who is accused of raping and choking a woman at his home outside Baton Rouge.

State District Judge Steven Tureau ruled on Tuesday that evidence against 51-year-old Michael Tyler, his past history and the victim's fears met the standard for holding him without bail, *The Advocate* reported.

Tyler served six years in prison after pleading guilty in 2003 to sexual battery. In December 2020, prosecutors in Caddo Parish, in northwest Louisiana, dropped rape and kidnapping charges that had kept him jailed for 18 months.

He was not convicted of other charges, including marijuana possession and misdemeanor domestic violence, that had been brought against him since the mid-1990s, the newspaper reported.

Defense attorney Roy Maughan Jr., who had asked for \$250,000 bond, maintained that Tyler is innocent of the most recent charges, including rape and domestic abuse battery by strangulation. But he told the newspaper after the hearing that Tyler probably won't appeal the bond ruling.

Maughan tried unsuccessfully to get the court record to reflect that Tyler made all of his court dates



Rapper Mystikal poses for a portrait in Baton Rouge, La., Jan. 22, 2021. Mystikal was jailed in Louisiana on Monday, Aug. 1, 2022, accused of rape more than a year after prosecutors dropped charges that had kept him jailed for 18 months in another part of the state. (AP Photo/Rusty Costanza, File)

in those cases and, as a celebrity, would have a hard time evading capture if he fled. He had been released on \$3 million bond in February 2019, nearly two years before the Caddo Parish charges were dropped.

Mystikal, who grew up in New Orleans and now lives in Prairieville, is accused of attacking the woman, taking her keys and holding her against her will, according to an arrest warrant.

Sheriff's Detective Garrett Keith testified Tuesday that the woman went to Tyler's home about 8 p.m. Saturday to talk about alleged

financial commitments he had made to her.

He said the woman reported that Tyler's behaviour changed abruptly after he went into the bathroom and returned: He accused her of stealing cash, choked her and pulled out her hair, Keith testified.

Tyler later apologized, prayed with her and threw rubbing alcohol on her to cleanse her "bad spirits" before raping her, Keith testified.

Maughan's cross-examination tried to show that the prayer and apology indicated that things were calmer and the woman wasn't

afraid, the newspaper reported.

Keith later told prosecutors that the woman was "praying for her safety" and didn't know what Tyler said.

The woman was cut and bruised, and deputies found some of her braids, an earring and a broken nail in the house, the detective said. Some wounds were consistent with rape, he said.

Maughan also cross-examined Keith about whether and how the woman had objected to sex. Keith quoted her as saying Tyler's threats had made her afraid to object at first, but she later clearly told him "no."

Driver gets one year in jail in death of Nicki Minaj's father

AP - The driver in a hit-and-run crash that killed the father of rapper Nicki Minaj last year was sentenced Wednesday to a year in jail, in keeping with a promise the judge made when the man pleaded guilty in May.

Charles Polevich, who pleaded guilty to leaving the scene and tampering with evidence in the crash on New York's Long Island that killed Robert Maraj, was also ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and had his driver's licence suspended for six months.

Polevich's lawyer, Marc Gann, suggested his client may have had a medical issue at the time of the crash and that he wasn't fully aware of what had happened when he fled.

Polevich, 72, said in court that he's "been heartsick since realising the extent of the tragedy" and that there was "no excuse" for his behaviour.

Maraj's widow, Carol Maraj, said in court that Polevich had left her husband "like a dog on the street" and that sparing him a longer jail sentence was a "slap in the face for the family," *Newsday* reported.

Polevich struck Maraj, 64, while Maraj was walking along Roslyn Road in Mineola in February 2021. Polevich stopped briefly to ask Maraj if he was OK, but didn't call for help, prosecutors said.

Instead, Polevich went home, parked the car — a white, 1992 Volvo station wagon — in his garage and covered it with a tarp, prosecutors said. Maraj was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead the next day.

Prosecutors sought a sentence of one to three years behind bars, but Nassau County Judge Howard Sturim said in May, when Polevich pleaded guilty, that he would get "no more than one year in jail."



Charles Polevich at the Nassau County Courthouse for sentencing on Wednesday, Aug. 3, 2022, in Mineola, N.Y. Polevich, the driver in a hit-and-run crash that killed the father of rapper Nicki Minaj last year has been sentenced to a year in jail. Polevich, who pleaded guilty to leaving the scene and tampering with evidence in the crash on New York's Long Island, was also ordered Wednesday to pay a \$5,000 fine and had his driver's licence suspended for six months. (Howard Schnapp/Newsday via AP)

Brendan Brosh, a spokesperson for the Nassau County district attorney's office, said that "given the severity of the defendant's conduct," prosecutors felt a stiffer sentence was warranted.

"We continue to express our condolences to the family of Robert Maraj," Brosh said.

Gann asked for a 90-day jail sentence, arguing that other factors outside of Polevich's control were partially to blame for the crash, including road construction, street lights that weren't working and Maraj's physical condition.

Maraj's widow, Carol Maraj, is suing Polevich over the crash.

Polevich, who had been splitting time between Long Island and Guam, where he runs a drilling and water purification business, surrendered to police a few days after the crash.

Detectives said they used pieces of surveillance video to track the Volvo involved in the crash to Polevich's Mineola home.

Nicki Minaj, the platinum-selling, Grammy-nominated rapper of "Anaconda," "Super Bass" and other hits, was born Onika Tanya Maraj in Trinidad and was raised in Queens.

In a post on her website, Minaj, 39, called her father's death "the most devastating loss of my life."



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Bahamas Police investigating discovery of child's body in a pond

CMC - Police in The Bahamas are seeking to identify a child, whose body, clad only in underwear, was found in a pond near the Oakes Field Sports Centre Golf Academy on Tuesday.

Police said they believe the child had been there for at least 24 hours. He is one of three persons who reportedly drowned on Tuesday.

Police press liaison officer, Chief Superintendent, Chrislyn Skippings, told reporters they had received a report late on Tuesday regarding the discovery of the body.

She said officers responded and discovered the "body of a male partially submerged in the pond here," and that "the body appears to be that of a child within the ages of 10 to 12."

The police said they are trying to determine the identity of the child and that prior to the discovery had not received any reports pertaining to a missing child.

"I wish to send a firm message to parents that you need to know where your children are. You need to ensure that your children are always with a responsible adult," Skippings said, adding the police have a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to child neglect.

"If our investigation reveals that (in) this particular incident that there was some form of child neglect you will see the parent or par-

ents being charged in connection with this matter. We have a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to our darlings, the children. Children are our future, and we are supposed to look out for these children," she added.

Meanwhile, police have also confirmed that two people, including a woman, drowned on Tuesday.

In the first incident, police said a woman on Andros died after attempting to rescue a child who was

cont'd on pg 22



Police retrieve the body of the unidentified boy from the pond





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Regional News



Belize gov't hints at banking concerns for temporarily shelving marijuana bill

CMC - The Belize government has confirmed that concerns raised by the banking community have led to the Cannabis and Industrial Hemp Control and Licensing Bill 2022 being temporarily shelved despite going through all the states in Parliament.

Home Affairs and New Growth Industries Minister, Kareem Musa, was asked by reporters to comment on his reluctance to admit that banking sector concerns would present a roadblock to the bill.

"Cannabis legalisation is taking place all across the Caribbean. Like the rest of the Caribbean, Belize always has correspondent banking concerns.

"As you recall with the offshore sector, we had to make certain regulations and adjustments to comply with the European Union so that we were not blacklisted.

"So, correspondent banking is a live issue at all times for Belize and the Caribbean, but what I can

tell you is that countries like Jamaica, and Antigua are moving towards it, Trinidad is about to pass their legislation, and St. Vincent, those countries are moving towards the legalisation of cannabis."

Musa acknowledged that the cannabis industry is a cash industry, "so when you ask me about banking, banking does not come into the picture unless you are banking your cannabis dollars.

"So, even in the Caribbean, and the great United States where it is a US\$92 billion-dollar industry, it is a cash industry.

"So, individuals who are engaged in the cannabis sector do not go and deposit their funds in the bank. That does not happen even in America.

Musa also indicated that the government's primary reason for putting a pause on the cannabis legislation is the five million dollars (One Belize dollar=US\$0.49 cents) price tag attached to



Home Affairs and New Growth Industries Minister, Kareem Musa (File Photo)

the execution of a cannabis referendum.

Last month, the Belize Coalition of Churches (BCC) said it would soon be putting forward its campaign after meeting the threshold for triggering a referendum on the issue of cannabis legalisation that could take place in September this year.

Under the Referendum Act, a referendum may be triggered when a petition receives the signatures of ten percent of the voting population.

Chief Elections Officer Josephine Tamai said the threshold to trigger the referendum had been met.

The House of Representatives has debated the introduction of a supplementary allocation to cover the cost of the upcoming cannabis referendum with Prime Minister John Briceño saying his administration has to find the five million dollars that it didn't budget for in its recent national budget.

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drowning. A man was able to rescue the child, but the woman was found in an unresponsive state a short time later. She was taken to the local clinic, where she was pronounced dead.

In the second incident, the body of a boy, who police on Grand Bahama had

been searching for since Monday, was pulled from waters in Deadman's Reef.

"On Tuesday ... shortly after 5 p.m., a team of officers along with other individuals assisted with the search of the water near Paradise Cove, Deadman's Reef, where the lifeless body of a juvenile male was pulled from the waters," police said.

Ex Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez charged with bribery

AP - Former Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez was arrested Thursday on bribery charges related to the financing of her 2020 campaign, the latest hit to an island with a long history of corruption that brought fresh political upheaval to the U.S. territory.

Vázquez is accused of engaging in a bribery scheme from December 2019 through June 2020 — while she was governor — with several people, including a Venezuelan-Italian bank owner, a former FBI agent, a bank president and a political consultant.

“I am innocent. I have not committed any crime,” she told reporters. “I assure you that they have committed a great injustice against me.”

The arrest embarrassed and angered many in Puerto Rico who believe the island’s already shaky image has been further tarnished, leaving a growing number of people who have lost faith in their local officials to wonder whether federal authorities are their only hope to root out entrenched government corruption. Concern over previous corruption cases led to a delay in federal aid for Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria as the U.S. government implemented more safeguards.

Thursday’s arrest also



Governor Wanda Vazquez gives a press conference to announce the extension of the COVID-19 curfew, while detailing the new sectors of the country that may resume operations, as part of a new executive order in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Thursday, May 21, 2020. According to an official who was not authorised to talk about the federal case, Vazquez was arrested on Aug. 3, 2022 in the U.S. territory on federal corruption charges. (AP Photo/Carlos Giusti, file)

was a blow to Vázquez’s pro-statehood New Progressive Party, which is pushing to hold a referendum next year in a bid to become the 51st U.S. state.

Vázquez was the second woman to serve as Puerto Rico’s governor and the first former governor to face federal charges.

Former Gov. Aníbal Acevedo Vilá of the opposing Popular Democratic Party was charged with campaign finance violations while in office and was found not guilty in 2009. He had been the first Puerto Rico governor to be charged with a crime in recent history.

“For the second time in our history, political power and public office are used to finance an electoral campaign,” said José Luis Dalmau, president of Acevedo’s party. “Using the power of the government to advance political agendas is unacceptable and an affront to democracy in Puerto Rico.”

Vázquez’s consultant, identified as John Blake-man, and the bank president, identified as Frances Díaz, have pleaded guilty to participating in the bribery scheme, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

In early 2019, the inter-

national bank owned by Julio Martín Herrera Velutini was being scrutinised by Puerto Rico’s Office of the Commissioner of Financial Institutions because of transactions authorities believed were suspicious and had not been reported by the bank.

Authorities said Herrera and Mark Rossini, the former FBI agent who provided consulting services to Herrera, allegedly promised to financially support Vázquez’s 2020 campaign for governor in exchange for Vázquez dismissing the commissioner and appointing a new one

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Regional News



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of Herrera's choosing.

Authorities said Vázquez accepted the bribery offer and in February 2020 demanded the commissioner's resignation.

She then was accused of appointing a former consultant for Herrera's bank as the new commissioner in May 2020. After the move, officials said Herrera and Rossini paid more than \$300,000 to political consultants to support Vázquez's campaign.

A flurry of messages exchanged during that time between people involved in the case included a heart emoji attached to the commissioner's resignation letter and three sealed lips emojis when someone provided Rossi's name to Vázquez, who requested the name of "the guy from the FBI."

In addition, Herrera texted Ros-

sini about the need for a campaign manager and said he didn't want "a monkey from Puerto Rico."

After Vázquez lost the primary to current Gov. Pedro Pierluisi, authorities said Herrera then allegedly sought to bribe Pierluisi to end an audit into his bank with favourable terms.

Herrera is accused of using intermediaries from April 2021 to August 2021 to offer a bribe to Pierluisi's representative, who was actually acting under FBI orders, according to the indictment.

Officials said Herrera then ordered a \$25,000 payment to a political action committee in hopes of trying to bribe Pierluisi.

Stephen Muldrow, U.S. Attorney for Puerto Rico, said Pierluisi is not involved in the case.

Vázquez, Herrera and Rossini are each charged with conspiracy,

federal programs bribery and honest services wire fraud. If they are found guilty on all counts, they could face up to 20 years in prison, officials said.

Vázquez was sworn in as governor in August 2019 after former Gov. Ricardo Rosselló stepped down following massive protests. She served until 2021, after losing the primaries of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party to Pierluisi.

Vázquez previously served as the island's justice secretary and a district attorney for more than 30 years.

She became governor after Puerto Rico's Supreme Court ruled that the swearing in of Pierluisi — who was secretary of state in 2019 — as governor was unconstitutional. Vázquez at the time said she was not interested in running for office and would only finish the nearly two years left in Rosselló's term.

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In S. Korea, Pelosi avoids public comments on Taiwan, China

AP - After infuriating China over her trip to Taiwan, U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi met South Korean political leaders in Seoul on Thursday but avoided making direct public comments on relations with Beijing and Taipei that could further increase regional tensions.

Pelosi, the first House speaker to visit Taiwan in 25 years, said Wednesday in Taipei that the American commitment to democracy in the self-governing island and elsewhere “remains ironclad.” In response, China on Thursday began military exercises, including missile strike training, in six zones surrounding Taiwan, in what could be the biggest of their kind since the mid-1990s.

After visiting Taiwan, Pelosi and other members of her congressional delegation flew to South Korea — a key U.S. ally where about 28,500 American troops are deployed — on Wednesday evening, as part of an Asian tour that included earlier stops in Singapore and Malaysia.

She met South Korean National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin Pyo and other senior members of Parliament on Thursday.

After that hour-long meeting, Pelosi spoke about the bilateral alliance, forged in blood during the 1950-53 Korean War, and



U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, centre left, and South Korean National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin Pyo, centre right, inspect an honour guard upon her arrival at the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. (Lee Jung-hoon/Yonhap via AP)

legislative efforts to boost ties, but didn't directly mention her Taiwan visit or the Chinese protests.

“We also come to say to you that a friendship, (the) relationship that began from urgency and security, many years ago, has become the warmest of friendships,” Pelosi said in a joint news conference with Kim. “We want to advance security, economy and governance in an inter-parliamentary way.”

Neither Pelosi nor Kim took questions from journalists.

Kim said he and Pelosi shared concerns about North Korea's increasing nuclear threat. He said the two agreed to support their governments' push for denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula based on both strong deterrence against North Korea and diplomacy.

Pelosi and her delegation later spoke by phone with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on the alliance, foreign policy and other issues.

Yoon is on vacation this week, but critics accuse him of intentionally shunning a face-to-face meeting with Pelosi in consideration of ties with China, South Korea's biggest trading partner.

Yoon's office said it had reviewed national interests and that Yoon's vacation plan had already been set up when, about two weeks ago, Pelosi's side contacted his office about a possible meeting.

During the phone conversation, Pelosi and other members of her congressional delegation didn't bring up the Taiwan issue, and Yoon also didn't raise the matter, Yoon's office said.

In recent years, South Korea has been struggling to strike a balance between the United States and China as their rivalry has deepened. Yoon, a conservative, took office in May with a vow to boost South Korea's military alliance with the United States and take a tougher line on North Korean provocations.

Later Thursday, Pelosi was to visit a border area with North Korea that is jointly controlled by the American-led United Nations Command and North Korea, South Korean officials said.

If that visit occurs, Pelosi would be the highest-level American to go to the Joint Security Area since then-President Donald Trump visited in 2019 for a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Anger, clashes in South Africa following gang rape arrests

AP - Protesters in the South African city of Krugersdorp beat suspected illegal miners with sticks and set fire to their camps Thursday following the arrests of more than 80 men, some thought to be miners, in connection with the gang rapes of eight women last week.

Residents of Krugersdorp's Kagi-so township also barricaded roads with rocks and burning tires during a protest against the presence of the miners.

They said they were frustrated with high levels of crime that they blame on the illegal miners and the alleged failure of police to deal with them.

Some suspected illegal miners were stripped of their clothes and whipped by residents, who also chased others out of their camps and beat and kicked them before handing them over to police.

Police responded by firing rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the protesters, who also clashed with police officers. In some cases, officers rescued the people being attacked.

"We want support from the police because the illegal miners are terrorizing us. We cannot simply walk around the neighborhood at night because they rape us," said Nhlanhla Felatsi, who was part of the protest.

We recently had an incident where two female security officers were raped by the same people. The police are not protecting us."

Police said eight women were raped on July 28 when a television crew filming a music video at a mine dump in the nearby township of West Village was attacked by heavily-armed men, some suspected of being illegal miners. Police said they were investigating 32 counts of rape.

The attack was a shocking inci-



Community members look on after apprehending illegal gold miners, beating them and stripping them naked before police arrested them near Krugersdorp, South Africa, Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. Community members beat suspected illegal miners with sticks and set fire to their camps following the alleged gang rapes of eight women by miners last week. (AP Photo/Denis Farrell)

dent, even for a country used to high levels of violent crime like South Africa. More than 80 men accused of being involved in the gang rapes appeared in court on Monday.

Illegal mining is rife in South Africa, with miners known as zama-zamas searching for gold at the many disused and abandoned mines in and around the Johannesburg region. Krugersdorp is a mining city on the western edges of Johannesburg.

Illegal mining gangs are considered dangerous by the police, are usually armed and are known to fight violent turf battles with rival groups.

The trade is believed to be dominated by immigrants who enter illegally from neighboring countries Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique and police said that some of the men suspected of raping the eight women were foreign nationals.

That has aggravated the situation

and comes at a time when South Africa is seeing an upsurge in xenophobic attacks sparked by locals blaming foreigners for crime in their areas.

"What upsets me is that we live as though we are not South Africans. How can someone from nowhere come and control us in our community?" said Kagiso resident Thoko Setlhabi.

"The people from Lesotho and Zimbabwe are coming into our houses and rape us. You must make sure you and your family are indoors by 6 p.m. When will our children be allowed to be free?"

Police say they are still analyzing DNA evidence in order to link some of the suspects to the rapes.

But residents have criticised the local police force for doing nothing despite warnings from locals that illegal miners were operating in the area as part of larger crime syndicates.

Efforts intensify to reach 10 trapped coal miners in Mexico

AP - Efforts to rescue 10 miners trapped in a collapsed and flooded coal mine in northern Mexico intensified Thursday with hundreds of people involved in the operation, authorities said.

The collapse occurred after the miners breached a neighbouring area filled with water on Wednesday, officials said. Authorities had not reported any contact with the trapped miners since the collapse.

The miners are trapped between two 200-foot deep mine shafts more than half flooded with water, Undersecretary of Defence Agustín Rádia-la Suástegui said Thursday. Rescuers were working to pump water out of the flooded mine.

A National Guard plane was expected to arrive Thursday with six special forces scuba divers who could enter the mine when conditions allow.

Civil Defence Coordinator Laura Velázquez said that five miners had managed to escape the collapse. Three of them remained hospitalised. Authorities had initially reported nine trapped miners Wednesday, but revised that number to 10 on Thursday.

The mine is in Sabinas, about 70 miles southwest of Eagle Pass, Texas. The mine began operations this year, and the local government said it had not received any complaints or reports of previous incidents.

More than 24 hours after the collapse, relatives of the trapped miners waited in the shade of a tree outside the mine. Police and soldiers with rifles restricted access to the mine.

Alfredo Torres, cousin of one of the trapped miners, said he had been volunteering in the rescue effort since Wednesday. Wearing a plastic helmet and clothes and boots coated in mud,



National Guards stand along the road that leads to where miners are trapped in a collapsed and flooded coal mine in Sabinas in Mexico's Coahuila state, Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. The collapse occurred on 10 miners after they breached a neighbouring area filled with water on Wednesday, officials said. (AP Photo/Elizabeth Monroy)

he said they had been using small pumps since the day before to remove water from the flooded shafts, but the water remained high.

"No one can go in," Torres said. "We have to first try to pump out all of the water, get it out, so the miners can go in to rescue their co-workers. He said that so far there had been no contact with the trapped miners.

He said he still hoped to find them alive, but recognized that "many hours have passed and the water is still very high."

A small chapel was set up outside the mine where family members could pray for the miners' rescue.

Bishop Alonso Garza from the Piedras Negras diocese complained that conditions for miners continued to be bad and called on the government and companies to improve safety. "Each time that a tragedy like this happens they say yes and unfortunately now no."

In June and July of 2021, cave-ins at two Coahuila mines claimed the

lives of nine miners.

Mexico's worst mining accident also occurred in Coahuila on Feb. 19, 2006, when an explosion ripped through the Pasta de Conchos mine while 73 miners were inside. Eight were rescued with injuries including serious burns. The rest died and only two of their bodies were recovered.

López Obrador's administration promised two years ago to recover the remaining 63 bodies, a highly technical endeavour that has still not begun.

The Pasta de Conchos Family Organization made up of relatives of those lost in that tragedy said in a statement late Wednesday that the new mining accident shows that the structural dangers that led to the Pasta de Conchos collapse have not been addressed. There is a lack of inspections, complicity with mining companies and little protection for workers.

They called on the government to do everything possible to rescue the miners and review mining conditions in the area.



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Commonwealth Games: Jamaica earn netball victory over top seeds Australia

AP - Tenacious Jamaica took a stunning 57-55 victory over netball top seeds Australia to finish top of Pool A at the Commonwealth Games.

The Sunshine Girls overturned a five-goal deficit in the final period to earn the triumph in Birmingham.

The victory is, on paper, a shock, but based on Jamaica's performances so far it is no less than they deserve.

If England beat New



Zealand later on Thursday (21:00 BST), they will face Australia in Saturday's semi-final.

That would be a repeat

of the thrilling 2018 final, which England won 52-51.

Jhaniele Fowler scored 47 of her 50 attempts under the post and a dogged

Jamaica defence, roared on by the crowd at the NEC, piled the pressure on Australia's shooters to take the final quarter 17-9.

Jamaica, who are ranked fourth in the world, have featured on the podium at the past two Commonwealth Games, both times in the bronze-medal position.

Meanwhile, Wales earned their second win of the tournament, beating Barbados 60-44.

EPL sets high bar in European soccer, finances and glamour

AP - The world's richest soccer league starts a new season in England on Friday as the rest of Europe looks for ways to catch up.

Off the field, the English Premier League is a commercial juggernaut with broadcasting deals worldwide fueling player transfers and wages most others cannot match. It helps explain why some clubs created the Super League project.

League riches helped English champion Manchester City make the marquee summer signing. Erling Haaland's arrival from Borussia Dortmund cost City more than 100 million pounds (\$122 million) in transfer and agent fees.

While Haaland was a boyhood City fan whose father played there, he was

also lured to a competitive league that avoids the one-club dominance recently seen in Germany, Italy and France.

On the field, five different teams have won the Premier League in the past 10 seasons, including Leicester's stunning 2016 title. Though City has four of the past five titles, two were epic duels with Liverpool.

The Champions League is also feeling Premier League power with four different teams in the past four finals, including two all-English games. Liverpool was in three of the past five finals while winning just one Premier League title.

Those same four teams — City, Liverpool, Chelsea and Tottenham — are England's entry in the Cham-



Manchester City's Erling Haaland, right, is challenged by Liverpool's Andrew Robertson during the FA Community Shield soccer match between Liverpool and Manchester City at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, England, on July 30, 2022. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein, File)

pions League this season.

Manchester United and Arsenal qualified only

for the second-tier Europa League and are by far the wealthiest clubs in it.

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Judge shortens road to decide NFL racial discrimination suit

AP - A judge on Thursday made it likely she'll rule in weeks rather than months whether NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell gets to decide the merits of racial discrimination claims made by Black coaches against the league and its teams, saying an effort to gather more evidence seems like "an impermissible fishing expedition."

U.S. District Judge Valerie Caproni said in a written ruling that lawyers for coaches Brian Flores, Steve Wilks and Ray Horton cannot gather additional evidence from defendants to

support their arguments that the lawsuit in Manhattan federal court should remain in court rather than be sent to arbitration.

Her ruling makes it likely that a decision on whether to move the case to arbitration or let it remain in Manhattan federal court will be decided in weeks rather than months.

"Because Plaintiffs should know whether they entered into any other contracts or agreements that would affect their agreement to arbitrate, the Court can only assume that they are attempting to embark



NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell speaks to the media after the close of the NFL owners' meeting on March 29, 2022, at The Breakers resort in Palm Beach, Fla. A judge on Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022, quickened the time it will take to rule whether Goodell gets to decide the merits of racial discrimination claims made by Black coaches against the league and its teams, saying that it appears an effort to gather more evidence is a try at "an impermissible fishing expedition." (AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell, File)

on an impermissible fishing expedition," Caproni wrote.

Still, the judge said lawyers for the coaches may well be able to argue that the proposed arbitrator is so biased against them that the motion to compel arbitration should not be granted, but they do not need discovery to do so. In legal cases, "discovery" references evidence such as emails and text messages that lawyers try to get from their opponents to strengthen their arguments.

Flores, who was fired in January as head coach of the Miami Dolphins and is now an assistant coach with the Pittsburgh Steel-

ers, filed the lawsuit in February, saying the league was "rife with racism" even as it publicly condemns it. The other coaches later joined the lawsuit, which sought unspecified damages and class-action status.

In Thursday's ruling, Caproni instructed lawyers for the coaches to submit written arguments against arbitration by Aug. 19 and told the NFL and its teams to respond by Aug. 26.

Her decision came just days after the NFL released the results of its investigation into allegations by Flores that Dolphins owner Stephen Ross offered \$100,000 a game to purposely lose games.



Sports News



WNBA's Griner convicted at drug trial, sentenced to 9 years

AP - U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner was convicted Thursday in Russia of drug possession and smuggling and was sentenced to nine years behind bars in a politically charged case that could lead to a high-stakes prisoner exchange between Washington and Moscow.

The 31-year-old Griner, a two-time U.S. Olympic champion and an eight-time all-star with the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury, listened with a blank expression as an interpreter translated the verdict by Judge Anna Sotnikova, but her lawyers said later she was "very upset." Griner also was fined 1 million rubles (about \$16,700).

U.S. President Joe Biden denounced as "unacceptable" the verdict and sentence, which came amid soaring tensions between the U.S. and Russia over Ukraine.

"I call on Russia to release her immediately so she can be with her wife, loved ones, friends, and teammates," Biden said, adding that he would continue to work to bring home Griner and Paul Whelan, an American imprisoned in Russia on an espionage conviction.

Outside court, the U.S. Embassy's charge d'affaires Elizabeth Rood called the outcome "a mis-

carriage of justice."

Griner, recognized as one of the greatest players in WNBA history, has been detained since Feb. 17 after police said they found vape cartridges containing cannabis oil in her luggage upon landing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. She was returning to Russia, where she has competed since 2014.

As she was led out of court, Griner said: "I love my family."

The nine-year sentence was close to the maximum of 10 years that Griner had faced under the charges. Most Russians possessing small quantities of drugs get at most five years in prison, lawyers said.

Defence attorney Maria Blagovolina told reporters later that Griner was "very upset, very stressed. She can hardly talk. It's a difficult time for her."

Before the unusually swift verdict was reached, an emotional Griner apologised to her family, teammates and the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, where she plays in the WNBA offseason, "for my mistake that I made and the embarrassment that I brought on them."

With her voice cracking, she added: "I hope in your ruling it does not end my life."

Griner has 10 days to



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner is escorted from a courtroom after a hearing, in Khimki just outside Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 4, 2022. A judge in Russia has convicted American basketball star Brittney Griner of drug possession and smuggling and sentenced her to nine years in prison. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

appeal, and her lawyers say they expect a hearing in Moscow regional court next week.

Asked if Griner could ask for pardon from President Vladimir Putin, Blagovolina said they would consider every possibility, but the lawyers said they were not part of any discussions about a prisoner swap.

Griner's agent Lindsay Kagawa Colas said the sentence "was severe by Russian legal standards and goes to prove what we have known all along, that Brittney is being used as a political pawn."

She added that she supported Biden's efforts "to get a deal done."

A conviction is usually needed before arranging a prisoner exchange and also allows Griner to apply for a pardon. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said last month the "necessary judicial procedures" must be completed before other steps can be taken.

The disclosure in July that the U.S. government was seeking a prisoner swap involving Griner reflected the growing pressure on the Biden administration to do more to bring her home.

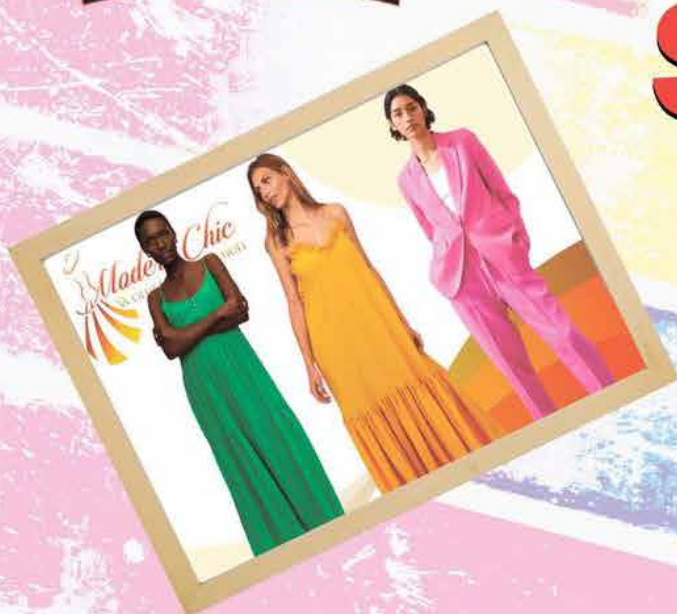
The U.S. State Department had earlier declared Griner to be "wrongfully detained" — a charge that Russia has sharply rejected.



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Tough outing for Wings FC at Free Kick Youth Cup



Assistant coach Rolston 'Lexi' Phoenix (standing in black outfit) addresses the Wings FC players during halftime in one of their group stage matches at the inaugural Free Kick Youth Cup tournament in St. Lucia on 31 July, 2022. (Photo: Free Kick Youth Cup)

The young footballers of the Concerned Parents Teachers Sports Associations (CPTSA) Wings Football Club (FC) have returned home from a poor showing at the inaugural Free Kick Youth Cup tournament in St. Lucia.

Wings FC lost all their matches in the 26th July to 1st August Under-19 boys tournament, which was won by Vincy Ballers of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Wings FC were unsuccessful in each of their four matches in the preliminary stage of the 10-team competition, which was contested across two zones featuring five teams.

Competing in Group A of the preliminary competition, one of their most embarrassing losses came in an 8-0 loss to View Fort South in their

opening encounter.

They were also beaten 2-0 by Bim United of Barbados, with goals from Mikalai Oziashad and Sacain Griffith.

With the top two teams advancing to the semi-finals, Wings FC finished at the bottom of Group A pointless and were forced to concede a tournament high 23 goals at the group stage.

Midfielder Darryl Massicot was the only player from Wings FC who was selected for one of one of two Free Kick Youth Cup All Star teams. These teams were selected from the two groups who made it to the preliminary phase of the competition.

Vincy Ballers secured victory with a 3-1 victory against St. Lucia Select XI in the final on Monday, 1st August.

The Vincentians advanced to the final after defeating Trincity Nationals

of Trinidad and Tobago 2-1 in one of two the semi-final matches.

Denzel Bascombe hit home in the 3rd minute and Bishom Richards scored in the 33rd minute to give Vincy Ballers a 2-0 halftime lead.

Malachi Celestine pulled a goal back for Trincity National with a 56th minute conversion.

St. Lucia Select XI defeated View Fort South 5-2 in the other semi-final, which was contested by two teams from the host nation.

Trincity Nationals beat View Fort South 2-1 in the playoff for third place on Monday.

Also contesting the tournament were XCEL Academy of England, Little Haiti FC of the United States, Harlem United of Dominica and Real Betis of Trinidad & Tobago.

Warner and Joseph victorious at mach play golf tournament

Akevia Warner and Siyolo Joseph captured the girls' and boys' titles in the Lockstone London 18 and under mach play golf championship at the Cedar Valley Golf Course over the Carnival weekend.

Warner, the number two ranked player, defeated the top seed Lenijah Thomas 2-1 to capture her first ever title in the 27-hole final.

On her way to the grand finale, Warner, a student of the Christ the King High School, overcame Anya Tavernier and Lexi Hunte while Thomas eased passed Jenae Andrews and Andreina Dela Cruz.

Siyolo, the son of for-

mer West Indies batsman Sylvester "Bouncing" Joseph, had a relatively easy time in the final, overcoming Taj Barnes 3-2.

In his march to the title, Joseph, a student of the St. Joseph's Academy, breezed past Jahir Matthew and Kieohn James.

Meanwhile, Barnes beat Imman Henry and Marquise George, however, George was smiling in the end as he defeated James 1-up in the boys' third place match.

In the girls' consolation battle, Lexi Hunte went the distance against Dela Cruz, prevailing 1-up.

Sixteen golfers took part in the event.



Ministry of Sports golf coach, Skey Anthony (centre) is flanked by boy's champion Siyolo Joseph (left) and girls' champion Akevia Warner (right) in the Cedar Valley Club House at the end of the Lockstone London 18 and under mach play golf championship last weekend. (Photo: Marlon George)

cont'd from pg 36

men's light welterweight (60 kilograms to 63.5 kilograms) division at the Commonwealth Games.

Ryan advanced to the quarter finals after defeating John Browne of Sierra Leone in the round of 16. He won on a points decision on all five judges' scorecards.

Ryan, who won a bronze medal for Antigua and Barbuda at the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru, also won on a points decision on all five judges' scorecard, defeating Alex Michael Isendi of Tanzania in his opening bout.

Female boxer Kagra Ryan, was unable to compete after she and two

other Antiguan and Barbudan athletes tested positive for COVID-19 on 27th July, one day before the opening of the 28th July to 8th August event.

Although Ryan returned negative tests the following day, 28th July, she missed registration and weigh-in ahead of the first round of boxing which was slated to start the next day, 29th July.

In swimming, Antigua and Barbuda's Stefano Mitchell won his heat, but missed out on a semi-final spot in the men's 100 freestyle.

Mitchell clocked a season best of 51.42 seconds, but finished 18th overall and missed out on the semi-finals with only the top 14 finishers advancing.

Also in the pool, Jadon Wuillez missed out on a place in the final of the Men's 50 metre breaststroke. Wuillez grabbed the last semi-final spot with a time of 28.44 seconds to advance from his first round heat.

Meanwhile, although young sprinter Ajani Daley ran a personal best, he missed out on a place in the 100 metre semi-finals at the World Athletics Under-20 Championships in Cali, Colombia.

Daley clocked 10.48 seconds in his qualifying heat, but his time was not good enough to earn him entry to the semi-finals of the World Junior Championships, which is being held from 1st to 6th August in Colombia.

Skerritt advances to men's 200m semis at Commonwealth Games

National sprinter, Darion Skerritt, advanced to the semi-finals of the men's 200-meter competition at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England on Thursday.

Although Skerritt did not attain automatic qualification as he finished fourth in his first round heat, his time of 21.24 seconds was good enough for him to advance to today's semi-final as one of the next eight fastest competitors.

The first round heat was won by Emmanuel Esemé of Cameroon in 20.44 seconds with Dwight St Hillaire of Trinidad and Tobago finishing second in 20.85 seconds and Ifoanyi Emmanuel Ojeli of Nigeria claiming third place in 21.12 seconds.

National female sprinter, Joella Lloyd, did not participate in yesterday's opening round heats of the women's 200-meter competition.

Lloyd and top national sprinter, Cejhae Greene, however, reached the semi-finals of the women's and men's 100 meter events respectively, but did not advance to the finals.

Lloyd missed out on the women's 100-meter final after finishing fifth in her semi-final with a time of 11.49 seconds.

Lloyd booked her spot in the women's 100 metre semi-finals by clocking 11.42 seconds to finish third in her qualifying heat, which was won by Daryll Neita of England in a time of 11:02 seconds ahead of Bree Masters of Australia in 11.41 seconds.

Greene missed out on the men's 100-meter final after finishing 8th in



Antigua and Barbuda's Alston Ryan, left, and John Browne of Sierra Leone in the men's Middleweight round 16 bout of the boxing on day three of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games at NEC Arena in Birmingham, England, on 31 July, 2022. (Getty Images)

his semi-final in a time of 10.45 seconds.

He did, however, advance to the men's 100 metre semi-final with his time of 10.16 seconds and third place finish in his first round qualifying heat, which was won by Rohan Browning of Australia in 10.10 seconds ahead of Samwol Bitonyake Imeta of Kenya in 10.12 seconds.

Antigua and Barbudan cyclist, Conor Delanbanque, did not contest yesterday's men's Individual Time Trial Final, which was won by Rohan Dennis of Australia in 46 minutes and 21.24 seconds with Fred Wright of England finishing second and Geraint Thomas of Wales claiming third place.

Delanbanque and teammate Jyme Bridges are expected to contest the men's road race this Sunday.

Bridges failed to finish in the Men's 40 kilometer Points Race Final on the track, finishing in 10th place, where he was joined by thirteen other competitors, who were all defeated by Aaron Gate of Australia.

Gate's Australian team mate Campbell Stewart finished second, while Oliver Wood of England captured third place from a field of 23 cyclists.

Bridges also failed to finish the qualifying round of the Men's 15 Kilometer Scratch Race on the track. He finished last in his qualifying heat from a field of 13 cyclists.

Antigua and Barbuda's United Kingdom based boxer Alston Ryan was beaten 4-1 by Abdul Wahib Omar of Ghana in the quarter-final of the

cont'd on pg 35