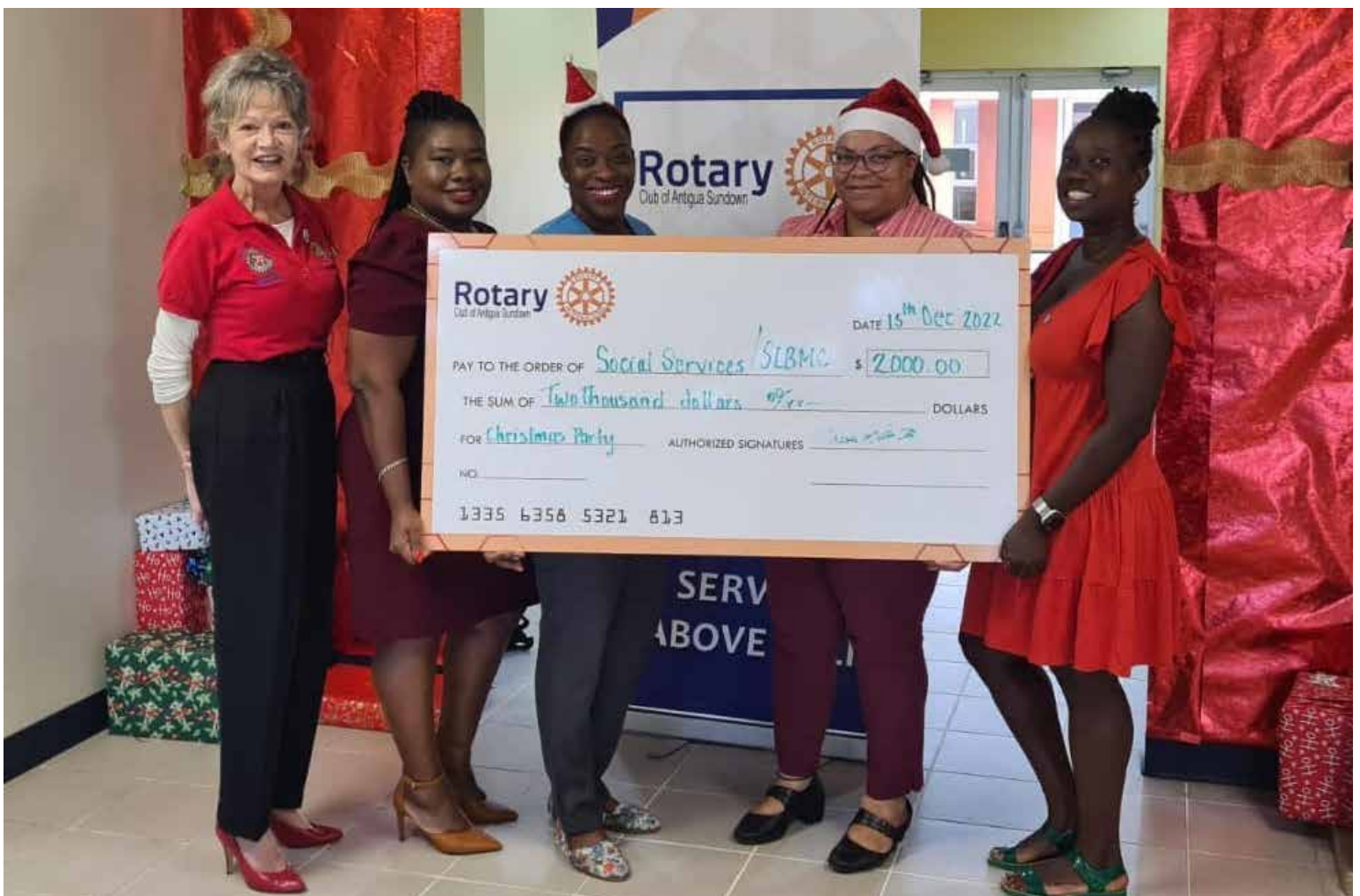


FRIDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2022 | VOLUME 3 ISSUE 242 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

EX-JOLLY BEACH WORKERS COLLECT SEVERANCE FROM ABWU

Story on Page 2



The Rotary Club of Antigua Sundown has donated \$3000 to two child-friendly initiatives in the hope of spreading lots of Christmas cheer this year. Benefiting were the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre Social Services Children's Christmas Party (\$2000), and the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development & The Blue Economy Toys for Joy (\$1000). The club said on Thursday that they hope their actions will help bring cheer into the lives of many children and families.

Local News



Severance payments for former Jolly Beach Resort workers continue

Payment of severance and other emoluments owed to former Jolly Beach Hotel workers will continue today at the Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union.

The resort's past housekeeping staff were the first in line on Thursday morning and they were followed by those who worked in the kitchen and dining room.

Pointe Xpress spoke briefly to one woman who waited patiently for her compensation. Revealing she worked in the dining room for twenty years; the woman said it was a relief that they were finally receiving compensation.

General Secretary of the A&BWU, David Massiah, said it was an arduous process that was long in coming and he is satisfied that finally, the workers



are receiving what is rightfully theirs.

"We just have to say that we are feeling quite happy today where peo-

ple are receiving their severance.

Some people would feel that we were

cont'd on pg 3

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cont'd from pg 2

politicking or trying to take things in that area, [but] it's all about workers' rights. It has nothing to do with politics, it has to do with the workers' satisfaction and representation," Massiah pointed out.

He credited his team at the union for their dedication and for "staying the course", which redounded to the benefit of the former employees of the resort that closed its doors in 2020.

Massiah, however, expressed some disappointment that there was not enough time to reconcile on behalf of some of the men and women who were unable to benefit from the payout.

"There are some people who dropped off of the schedule and this is something that we have to wonder how it is going to go forward. So, the reconciliation process should have been a bit better. There should have been a bit better cooperation between the government, its receiver and the hotel, so that we could have had everything on board, and that is where our disappointment [lies], he contends.

"But, we're happy still that the workers are able to realise the opportunity to receive their severance for the hard years that they worked."

The payment of the workers was made possible through the government's

purchase of Jolly Beach Resort, costing US \$30 million and its insistence that it was going to bring relief to the former employees that were placed on the breadline.

Today, former employees that worked in the security, water sports, grounds

and maintenance departments will receive their payments between 10am and noon.

Front office, entertainment and all other departments will be given their cheques between 12:30pm and 2pm.

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Local News

ABLP to standardise the age of retirement to 65 in new term

The Gaston Browne administration says it is committed to standardising the age of retirement to 65 years should it be returned to office following the general elections.

Following Wednesday's cabinet meeting, the executive body reported that many workers in the private sector are being placed on retirement at age 60. This leaves them without an income for as long as two years, as they are ineligible for Social Security payments until age 62.

"The cabinet, in order to avoid this untenable situation, has agreed that in the New Year when a new Parliament is convened, it intends to establish a National Retirement age to move in lockstep with Social Security eligibility," the Cabinet Notes stated.

Cabinet spokesman, Information Minister Melford Nicholas, recalled when the ABLP came to office in 2014, it met an actuarial report which recommended that the age of retirement should be gradually increased to 65 years to ensure the sustainability of



the scheme.

"The government instituted these measures and it means that the age of retirement has inched its way up to 63 years currently.

"In the private sector, however, the age of retirement continues to be 60 years and persons reaching that age are having to wait an extended period of time before they become eligible for Social Security pension.

"What the government is prepared

to do in the new year and a new legislative cycle, and in consultation with the private sector, is to move all pensions in line with Social Security and to have a single national pension age of 65 years," Nicholas told Thursday's Post-Cabinet briefing.

Based on the recommendation from the actuarial report, the retirement age increase would move up by one year, every other year, until it reaches age 65.

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Antigua and Barbuda wants stronger trade links among ALBA-TCP member states

Antigua and Barbuda is recommending that the countries that comprise the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) - explore ways to generate more trade among its members.

The suggestion came from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Trade, E. P. Chet Greene, during this week's meeting

cont'd on pg 6



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Trade, E. P. Chet Greene, right.



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Local News



cont'd from pg 5

of ALBA heads of state held in Havana, Cuba. He noted that a recent ALBA Economic meeting formulated a number of proposals to foster practical and workable solutions for the group to implement.

"The framework of the

proposals call for us to reemphasise the integration process as the driving force behind ALBA-TCP political action, focused on the consolidation of a post-pandemic, socio-economic development model, based on regional self-sufficiency, in order

to build a sustainable regional economy," he said.

The foreign affairs minister said the future of the Caribbean and Latin America is predicated on the ability to engage in more functional cooperation programmes in the areas of trade, education,

health, and agriculture.

"Food security should be treated as a national security issue; global supply chains are fragile, and are subject to commercial or transportation disruptions, especially within the context of a crisis.

"Many of our countries in the region, such as Antigua and Barbuda, are net importers of food products which exposes us to a high level of risk and vulnerability," Greene said.

He urged ALBA members to continue efforts to bolster their national food supply while strengthening supply chain resilience through greater intraregional trade.

He suggested that regional mechanisms such as ALBA, CELAC and CARICOM could provide a regional governance space for coordination in the fight against the scourge of hunger and end all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

The minister stressed that agricultural development will help to generate broad based growth through job creation, fostering youth empowerment and the reduction of inequality.

Greene added that Antigua and Barbuda stands ready to coordinate with other ALBA members so that the group can attain the vision of a greener, more inclusive and resilient Latin America and the Caribbean.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

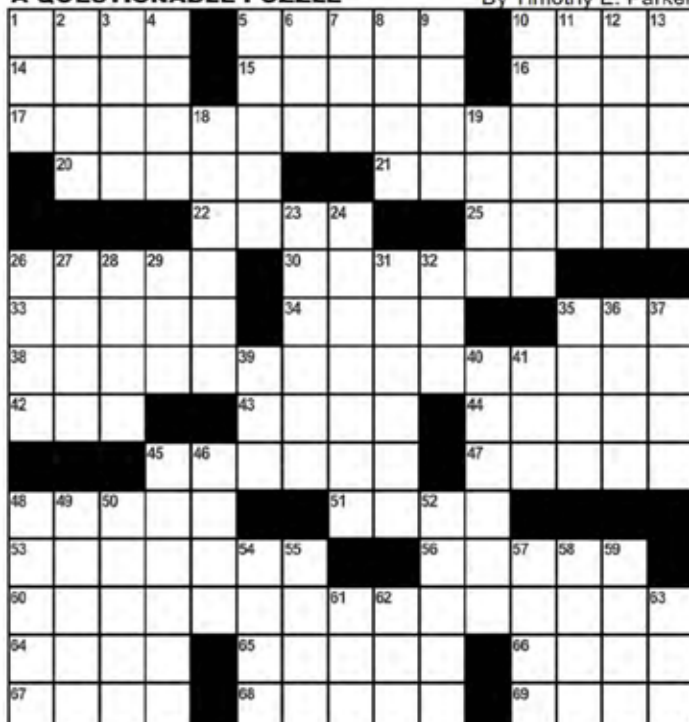
- 1) ___ mater
- 5) Operates a crowbar
- 10) "Song" or "slug" attachment
- 14) TV fixture of old
- 15) Cocoon constructor
- 16) Hourly wage, e.g.
- 17) Procrastinator's response to a question
- 20) Assume for argument's sake
- 21) "Twelve Days of Christmas" boundaries
- 22) Vein glory
- 25) Buying binge, e.g.
- 26) Long-billed shorebird
- 30) Crate eggs, e.g.
- 33) Palomino, e.g.
- 34) Type of lily
- 35) Lion offspring
- 38) Hitting up the boss
- 42) "Indubitably!"
- 43) Lucy Van ___ of "Peanuts"
- 44) Demagnetize
- 45) Fingerprint features
- 47) It falls in the fall
- 48) "Li'l Abner" character
- 51) Lip-___ (fake sing)
- 53) Most suitable for Sprat
- 56) Bewhiskered animal
- 60) Sought consent
- 64) Animal that killed Adonis
- 65) Alternate identity
- 66) Solo at the opera
- 67) Agile
- 68) Thing to ski down
- 69) Put faith in (with "on")

DOWN

- 1) Decay-fighting org.
- 2) It makes a sinner thinner?
- 3) Kind of shark
- 4) Poor-box contents
- 5) Aristotle's instructor
- 6) Car-washer's need
- 7) Nest-egg initials
- 8) Wicked as sin
- 9) Rational
- 10) Frozen, fruity dessert
- 11) "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin ___"
- 12) Cubic meter
- 13) Brief in speech
- 18) Brennan of film
- 19) Girl of Aberdeen
- 23) Less willing to listen
- 24) Signs up, as for the military
- 26) Horse cart
- 27) Scent detector
- 28) Gets one's goat
- 29) Letters on an air pump
- 31) Girl's bow
- 32) Doc bloc, for short
- 35) Overseas greeting or farewell
- 36) Lenin's land, for short
- 37) "How have you ___?"
- 39) Local mail HQ
- 40) Responds to a stimulus
- 41) Line made with a compass
- 45) Place with vats
- 46) Act on, as advice
- 48) Big, thick slices
- 49) Famous writer of fables
- 50) Senegal's capital
- 52) Disturber of the peace
- 54) Aquatic resorts
- 55) Spill the beans
- 57) "Arts" anagram
- 58) Emerald Isle
- 59) Churn up
- 61) Copacabana setting, briefly
- 62) GPS offering
- 63) Voiced turndown

A QUESTIONABLE PUZZLE

By Timothy E. Parker



Partial mask mandate in place at SLBMC

In light of rising cases of respiratory illnesses, and the need to protect its staff and patients from becoming infected, the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) has reinstated the requirement that all visitors to the country's primary healthcare institution wear masks.

Making the announcement on Wednesday, the hospital's head of Infectious Disease and Employee Health, Dr. Acheabea Dyer, said the mandate is a safety precaution that will provide protection for healthcare providers, patients and others seeking medical care at SLBMC.

"We are taking a community-wide approach to keep our patients and visitors safe.

"Masks have been recommended since the start of the pandemic. At this point of higher risk, we have to mandate the mask use once again as part of our precautions this holiday and tourist season to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses and protect young children, older individuals, and those with underlying health conditions", said Dr. Dyer.

A mask will be required to gain access to the hospital's wards, including the emergency room.

While mask wearing will not be compulsory for visitors accessing various services, including those offered in the outpatient

clinic, the hospital's administration is still encouraging wearing a mask.

The SLBMC statement promoted the importance of preventative measures in reducing the likelihood of contracting respiratory illnesses, including accepting available vaccines.

The hospital noted that a "complex challenge" has presented itself, where in addition to COVID-19, a host of respiratory viruses, including Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus



(RSV), have taken hold in many countries throughout the world.

These viruses, while often manageable, can result

in serious outcomes, especially for children. They also create a strain on the healthcare system and hospitals in particular.



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Local News

78 pounds of marijuana seized at LIAT Cargo facility

Another major drug seizure was made at a port of entry on Wednesday.

Forty-three vacuum-sealed packages of the controlled drug cannabis were seized at V. C. Bird International Airport.

Authorities say the cannabis weighed 78 pounds and carried an estimated value of EC\$468,000.

The substance was discovered at LIAT's Cargo storage during a narcotics operation spearheaded by the police and Customs

Division.

The police have not indicated whether there are any suspects and have only disclosed that they are investigating the matter.



Fri 16 | Day

83° 

12%
ENE 13 mph

Mainly sunny. High 83F. Winds ENE at 10 to 20 mph.

Humidity
71%

UV Index
8 of 10

Sunrise
6:29 am

Sunset
5:36 pm

Fri 16 | Night

74° 

21%
ENE 12 mph

Mostly clear. Low 74F. Winds ENE at 10 to 15 mph.

Humidity
82%

UV Index
0 of 10

Moonrise
--

Moonset
12:29 pm

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Gov't, WIOC find temporary solution to LPG shortage

The government and West Indies Oil Company (WIOC) Ltd. have made arrangements to provide temporary relief to some sectors affected by the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), or cooking gas, shortage.

On Thursday, Minister of Information, Melford Nicholas, said LPG has been sourced from Guadeloupe that will serve restaurants, hotels and other service industry businesses.

"Yet again, the government has demonstrated its ability to, when faced with a

crisis or any particular challenge, to find a way of overcoming that. Through the instigation of the Office of the Prime Minister, and of course West Indies Oil Company, we have been able to identify a temporary, short term supply from Guadeloupe with some canisters that's gonna be able to allow us to meet the demands of the hotel and the cuisine sector," Minister Nicholas said.

The sea conditions have also created an issue for the Antigua Public Utilities Authority's Water Department,



now that there has been a transition to reverse osmosis water production. The agitated waters have stirred up sediment in the water which is hard on the equipment used to desalinate and purify sea

water for consumption.

"It has affected the water supply as well. We moved... to improve the resiliency of the APUA Water Division by increasing their ability to produce RO (reverse osmosis) water.

"Having gotten to that point, we now see that there is further disruption caused by this level of climatic conditions."

Nicholas also said the unusual sea conditions that have prevented the ships carrying LPG into ports across the region, is another definite sign of the adverse effects of climate change.

"Climate change is real," said Nicholas. "I can't recall any point in time in my life where the seas would have played such an important part in the Yuletide celebrations.

"It has affected the supply of LPG and...[the oil tanker] was not able to do that due to the turbulence and the waves," said the minister.

Authorities are hoping that sea conditions will stabilise shortly so that next week's attempt to land the LPG shipment will be successful.

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Opinion

Travel within the Caribbean in crisis

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)

The closure of LIAT in 2020, without establishing air transport to fill the vacuum, has led to chaos in regional transportation, gravely affecting the movement of people and goods throughout the Caribbean region.

Anyone, who has tried to travel from one country to another in the Caribbean, can attest to the nightmare it has become. Whereas in the heyday of LIAT, there were at least 2 daily flights from which to choose, allowing for transfers through the airline's main hubs in Antigua and Barbados, flights are now few and far between. Additionally, connectivity from one Caribbean island to another, which physically neighbour each other, often requires travel to Miami or some other country with overnight stays, lengthening journeys and increasing costs.

Gone are the days when businesspersons, consultants, marketing agents and others could get on a plane in the morning, conduct business in another country, and return to their home base

by the evening. Tourists on multi-destination holidays, and even those who would like to make a day-trip to another island that they can see on the horizon, cannot now even contemplate such a prospect. The connectivity simply does not exist.

Caribbean Airlines does not have enough planes or frequency of travel to fill the travel needs; additionally, it only flies to some Caribbean destinations from its base in Trinidad and Tobago. Attempts by two other small airlines to ply some of the routes are also too infrequent and, regrettably, undependable. The owners and management have good intentions, but lack of adequate capital has restricted their ability to invest in aircraft, staff and other costs that would serve the region's needs.

Two vital things have resulted from all this. First, the objective of achieving the social and economic integration of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is being eroded. People to people contact – and therefore familiarity and cohesion – has been set back. Second, the realization of the long-vaunted Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) is being retarded. The marketing of goods and services between CARICOM countries, which is one of the fundamental requirements of a Single Market, has effectively been paused.



Sir Ronald Sanders

Other current objectives, such as establishing the means for food security and making the CARICOM area more self-sufficient and less dependent on goods and services imported from outside the region, are also being adversely impacted.

While no one can discount the anxiety of governments, in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, when costs escalated and revenues declined, causing some owner-governments to want to shed the increasing expenses associated with LIAT, the decision to collapse it with nothing to replace it – at least substantially – has led to the present difficulties.

It is also understandable that, at a time when governments were confronting decreased revenues and increased expenditure to support the poor and vulnerable as well as escalated costs to fight the Coronavirus and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, cuts in expens-

es had to be made. LIAT looked then as an opportunity to be rid of what might have been regarded as an unending hemorrhaging of taxpayers' money that was needed for pressing domestic priorities.

In this regard, LIAT workers, who continuously demanded, increased wages and greater compensation packages, might reflect on whether they could have acted in ways that would have helped to maintain the viability of the airline in everyone's interest, including their own. Had LIAT continued to operate in conditions of cooperation, all might have continued to reap the benefits it delivered.

All parties should learn a lesson from the LIAT experience, including the unemployment of its workers. If no lesson has been learned about how cooperation can help to maintain jobs, then that history will

cont'd on pg 12



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Opinion



cont'd from pg 10
repeat itself.

Partially good news is that the Caribbean Development Bank is alert to the issue and is considering ways to help to address it. The CDB's Board of Directors, responding to a request from the governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines has approved consultancy services. These services will suggest "urgent provisional measures" to re-establish regular air transport services within the sub-region. To be clear the Board's action is

better than nothing, but, by itself, it is not enough. Fortunately, the Board approval allows for consideration of a more permanent solution "in a subsequent intervention".

In short, this decision by the CDB Board, while encouraging, does not solve the immediate problem, nor will it contribute to doing so in the near term.

This is not a criticism of the Bank. For while it is a "development" bank, it is still a bank that has responsibilities to its shareholders who contribute the capital to the bank or are active in helping to raise it

from hemispheric and international institutions. The bank has to balance its role in "development" with its obligation to sustainability.

By any objective analysis, the current crisis of inter-regional travel is a direct result of the decision to collapse LIAT without measures to fill the gap caused by its shuttering.

Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, is making a valiant attempt to keep a rump LIAT in the air, recognizing that it was the main intra-island air carrier in the Eastern Caribbean. But, LIAT presently operates only a

few flights, largely with the singular support of the Antigua and Barbuda government. LIAT's flights are currently less than 90% of its 500 weekly flights prior to its closure. The number of flights is not enough.

To emphasize the point, reduced airlift capacity has stymied the movement of goods, services and people to the detriment of tourism, trade, employment, business activity and social relations in the region. These conditions should not be allowed to continue. The region is harming itself.

More than 9.1 million tourists visited the Caribbean in 2019. The majority of them arrived on aircraft and traversed the region on regional airlines. The COVID-19 pandemic affected those arrivals until most of 2021, but borders have opened, and people are travelling again – and want to continue travelling – in large numbers.

In addition to passenger travel in the region, the volume of freight by air transport in the Caribbean, which had increased by more than 50% before COVID, is severely constrained. That business is still there and can contribute to jobs, earnings, profits, and market cohesion, but not without airlift.

Undoubtedly, the kind of services provided by LIAT provided are sorely missed; and are urgently needed.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com



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Environment



St. Lucia project among ten UN flagship initiatives recognized for restoring the natural world

A flagship project from St. Lucia aimed at scaling up ridge-to-reef restoration of unique ecosystems and tapping blue economic growth to help island communities rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic is among ten ground-breaking efforts from around the globe recognized by the United Nations.

The UN said the project classified as the “Small Is-

land Developing States Restoration Drive,” focused on three small island developing states, St. Lucia, Vanuatu, and Comoros.

It said the goals of the project include a reduction in pressures on coral reefs, which are vulnerable to storm damage, so that fish stocks can recover. Ecosystems under restoration also include seagrass beds, mangroves and forests.

“As well as creating a “toolbox” of solutions for sustainable island development, this flagship aims to amplify the voice of island nations facing rising sea levels and intensifying storms as a result of climate change,” the UN added.

The initiatives were declared World Restoration Flagships and are eligible to receive UN-backed promotion, advice or funding.

They were selected under the banner of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a global movement coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It is designed to prevent and reverse the degradation of natural spaces across the planet.

The UN said that together, the ten flagships aim to restore more than 68 million hectares and create nearly 15 million jobs.

In revealing the World Restoration Flagships, the UN Decade seeks to honour the best examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration, embodying the ten Restoration Principles of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The UN Decade acknowledges the time needed for restoration efforts to deliver results. Until 2030, regular calls for World Restoration Flagships will be launched.

In expectation of increased funding to the UN Decade’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), additional submissions are being considered, including restoration drives from Pakistan, Peru, and an initiative focusing on Somalia and other drought-affected countries.

cont'd on pg 15

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Financial crimes on the uptick in the Caribbean

The US-based Global Financial Integrity (GFI) says the Caribbean has seen an uptick in financial crimes, including fraud schemes, in recent years.

In its latest report titled “Financial Fraud in the Caribbean” released on Wednesday, the Washington-based think tank, said financial fraud “has a widespread footprint across the region, involving hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars in illicit proceeds each year, impacting the economic security of countries and the region as a whole, and generating a certain level of associated violence”

The GFI report examines the prevalence and dynamics of the financial crime, analysing the actors and facilitators involved, the methods of contact used by perpetrators, and the channels utilised to move the associated proceeds.

It also assesses current policy and law enforcement responses. In addition, the report provides five country case studies, examining the country contexts in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

“Fraud, like other crimes, is a continuously evolving phenomenon that reacts to local, regional, and international developments,” said GFI’s president and chief executive officer, Tom Cardamone.

“The public and private sectors, as well as the region’s citizens, must be alert and responsive to the dynamics of long-standing and nascent fraud schemes,” he added.

According to the report, the most common fraud types in the Caribbean include advance fee frauds, specifically lottery/prize scams, online shopping

scams, and romance scams, as well pyramid and Ponzi schemes.

It said pyramid schemes in the region frequently take advantage of citizens’ comfort and familiarity with “sou-sous”, a legitimate, informal community savings practice.

“The method of contact between victim and fraudster is oftentimes dependent on the type of fraud being committed, the sophistication of the schemes and the type of victims involved.

“For example, lottery scams are largely phone-based while romance scams are perpetrated online and through social media.”

According to the GFI, the primary channels used to move the proceeds of fraud are cash smuggling, money service businesses, bank transfers, trade-based money laundering, and online

money transfer platforms, according to interviews with subject matter experts.

“Caribbean countries have laws in place to cover the types of fraud discussed in this report, however many countries face challenges when translating these laws into effective enforcement actions.

“The prevention and investigation of fraud in the region faces cultural barriers.

“Some citizens may incorrectly perceive governments’ efforts to combat fraud as an attempt to prevent them from making money.

“Others may be hesitant to report fraud victimisation due to cultural stigma,” the report said, noting that “in Jamaica alone, experts assessed the annual value of fraud proceeds at up to US\$800 million. (CMC)

cont’d from pg 14

“Transforming our relationship with nature is the key to reversing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste,” said Andersen:

“These ten inaugural World Restoration Flagships show that with political will, science, and collaboration across borders, we can achieve the goals of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and forge a more sustainable future not only for the planet but also for those of us who call it home,” the UNEP official added.

The other winning initiatives come from Abu Dhabi, Africa, India, Central America, Indonesia, and China. (CMC)



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Harry, Meghan vent grievances in final Netflix episodes

By Sylvia Hui and Danica Kirka

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, vent their grievances against the British monarchy in the second half of their Netflix documentary series released Thursday, which includes Harry describing how his older brother shouted at him during a meeting and Meghan talking about wanting to end her life as she struggled to cope with toxic press coverage.

The couple have detailed their experiences

leading to their decision to step away from royal duties and make a new start in the United States in "Harry & Meghan," a six-part series. The first three instalments, released last week, focused on the British media's coverage of the couple and the way it was influenced by racism.

The final three episodes see Harry, 38, directing more of his ire at Prince William, now heir to the throne, and speaking in more detail about how his relationship with the royal household



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Duke and Duchess of Sussex visit the track and field event at the Invictus Games in The Hague, Netherlands, Sunday, April 17, 2022. Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, are expected to vent their grievances against the monarchy when Netflix releases the final episodes of a series about the couple's decision to step away from royal duties and make a new start in America. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong, File)

broke down.

He recounted how William lashed out at him during a royal summit at Sandringham Castle in January 2020 to talk about Harry and Meghan's plan to step down as senior royals and move away.

"It was terrifying to have my brother scream and shout at me and my father say things that just simply weren't true, and my grandmother quietly sit there and sort of take it all in," Harry said.

The royal said he and Meghan's plan to stay "half in, half out" of royal life was swiftly rejected.

Elsewhere in the series, Meghan, 41, says she thought about killing herself before she and Harry decided to move to America. "It was like 'All of this will

stop if I am not here,'" she said.

Harry added that he believed the Mail on Sunday's publication of a letter Meghan wrote her estranged father, Thomas Markle, contributed to her having a miscarriage. Meghan later sued the Mail's publisher and won.

"I believe my wife suffered a miscarriage because of what the Mail did," Harry said. "Bearing in mind the stress that caused, the lack of sleep and the timing of the pregnancy ... that miscarriage was created by what they were trying to do to her."

Harry stressed it was ultimately his decision, not Meghan's, to leave the U.K. "I said that we need to get out of here," he said.

Palace officials have not
cont'd on pg 17



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Puerto Rican salsa singer "Lalo" Rodríguez dies at 64

Puerto Rican salsa singer and musician "Lalo" Rodríguez was found dead on Tuesday at a public housing project in the US territory, according to police. He was 64.

Police said that while there were no visible signs of violence on his body, an autopsy would determine the cause of death.

The singer, who was born Ubaldo Rodríguez Santos, had struggled for years with drugs and alcohol and was previously charged with possession of cocaine.

Rodríguez once formed part of Eddie Palmieri's band and is best known for his 1988 hit, "Ven, devórame otra vez" or "Come, Devour Me Again." (CMC)-30-



cont'd from pg 16

commented on the series.

The production is Harry and Meghan's latest effort to tell their own story after the couple stepped back from royal life in early 2020 and moved to the wealthy Southern California enclave of Montecito. Lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify have helped finance their life on an estate overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The Netflix series has come out at a crucial moment for Britain's monarchy. King Charles III, Harry's father, is trying to show that the institution remains relevant after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, whose personal popularity dampened criticism of the crown during her 70-year reign.

Harry's 2018 marriage to the former Meghan Markle, a biracial American actress, was once seen as a public relations coup for the royal family, boosting the monarchy's effort to move into the 21st century by making it more representative of a multicultural nation.

But the fairytale, punctuated with a horse-drawn carriage ride and lavish wedding at Windsor Castle, soon

unravelling amid relentless media attention, including allegations that Meghan was self-centred and bullied her staff.

A look at some other allegations Harry and Meghan make in the second half of their series:

ON THE ROYAL PRESS MACHINE:

Describing royal press operations as a "dirty game," Harry said there was "leaking" and "planting of stories," and that the palace "comms team" would seek to deflect negative coverage of one royal by issuing a story about another royal.

He talks about being sidelined, citing the example of a joint statement palace officials issued on behalf of him and William to "squash" a story about William bullying the couple out of the family. He said it was issued without his consent.

"I couldn't believe it. No one had asked me permission to put my name to a statement like that," Harry said. "They were happy to lie to protect my brother and yet for three years, they were never willing to tell the truth to protect us."

"I mean, the saddest part of it was this wedge created between me and my brother so that he's now on the institution's side," he added.

Meghan's lawyer, Jenny Afia, claimed in the series that she saw evidence of "negative briefing from the palace" against the couple "to suit other people's agendas." She did not elaborate on the evidence.

ON BEING BLOCKED FROM SEEING THE QUEEN:

The couple said they planned to see Harry's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, during a visit to the U.K. in early 2020, but palace officials blocked it.

Meghan said Harry received an urgent message saying, "You are not allowed to go and see Her Majesty." Harry said he rang the queen, who told him that, "I didn't know that I was busy. I've now been told I'm busy all week."

"This is when a family and a family business are in direct conflict because they're blocking you from seeing the queen, but what they're really doing is blocking a grandson from seeing his grandmother," Meghan told the documentary makers.

'Avatar: The Way of Water' rekindles the wonder in a way that demands to be seen

By Brian Lowry

"Avatar" took a very basic story and adorned it with eye-popping spectacle, in a way that made the film a must-see commodity, and a record-breaking hit in the process. Thirteen years later, braving many different theatrical tides, director James Cameron has done it again with "Avatar: The Way of Water," a state-of-the-art exercise that rekindles that sense of wonder and demands to be seen by anyone with lingering interest in watching movies in theatres.

Although Cameron (who shares script credit with Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver) has already announced plans for multiple "Avatar" sequels, the filmmaker has thrown so much technical wizardry, scope and scale into this 190-minute epic that one gets the impression he approached directing it as if there might never be another, leaving everything on the field – or rather, the waves.

In addition, "The Way of Water" introduces an entirely new Na'vi subculture of reef people, with their own evolutionary adaptations and remarkable fauna with which they bond, wedding the original to Cameron's well-documented love of the ocean and its exploration, an impulse he's been indulging since "Titanic" a quarter-century ago.

As with the 2009 movie, the plot to "The Way of Water" is hardly groundbreaking, but rather a cleverly assembled treatise on the sins of imperialism, an environmental message and, in the main wrinkle, family dynamics, constructed in a way that affords each of the children their own issues but largely avoids the Disney Channel-style missteps that might ensue.

The sequel picks up many years later, with Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) and Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) now the proud parents of four kids, still finding time for "date nights" that consist of euphorically



"Avatar: The Way of Water" introduces a new clan of reef dwellers, 13 years after the original.

soaring above the Pandora landscape.

"Happiness is simple," Jake explains in voiceover, until the "sky people" return to again lay siege to their paradise, this time motivated by a "WALL-E"-type dilemma that involves having polluted Earth beyond habitability, making the commander of this mission (played by Edie Falco) speak of the imperative to "pacify the hostiles."

Out of concern for protecting his family, which Jake repeatedly describes as a father's primary mission, he chooses to seek refuge with the aforementioned water clan, the Metkayina. He finds a more receptive greeting from their king (Cliff Curtis) than their queen (Kate Winslet, in what can be described as a "'Titanic' reunion" in more ways than one).

Fleeing, of course, will only delay the seemingly inevitable showdown, but it offers a chance to introduce a rich new culture as well as expose both parents and their progeny to the adjustment their new surroundings require. The children, in particular, must grapple with the personalities and pettiness associated with becoming the new kids on the reef.

Far from shying away from the mi-

nutia associated with all that, Cameron luxuriates in it and invites the audience to do the same. From the first striking 3D images that practically leap off the screen, "The Way of Water" basks in speed and movement, as if this was all an audition for the inevitable additions to Disney World's theme-park attraction.

The simplicity of the story provides licence to indulge in the dazzling visuals and state-of-the-art performance-capture techniques, which despite fewer human characters this time around prove authentic enough that it almost never feels as if you're watching an animated film.

Similarly, Cameron extends sequences for long stretches but seldom produces a dull moment, with the notable exception coming during the final battle, which keeps piling on threats and escapes that easily could have been truncated or tightened.

That note amounts to a quibble, though, with a film that brings a full-throated roar to celebrating theatrical movie-going as a singular experience, practically daring the viewer to resist its muscularity and power.

As noted, a great deal has changed since Cameron introduced the Na'vi, in-

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Ellen DeGeneres 'heartbroken' over death of Stephen 'tWitch' Boss

By **Sandra Gonzalez**

Ellen DeGeneres has issued a statement regarding the death of her former talk show's longtime DJ and co-executive producer, Stephen "tWitch" Boss, saying on Wednesday that she's "heartbroken" over his passing.

"I'm heartbroken. tWitch was pure love and light," she wrote on Instagram. "He was my family, and I loved him with all my heart. I will miss him. Please send your love and support to Allison and his beautiful children - Weslie, Maddox, and Zaia."

Allison Holker Boss, his wife, confirmed in a statement to CNN on Wednesday that her husband had died at age 40.

He died by suicide, according to the LA County Medical Examiner. The LA County Coroner's Office concluded their examination and published the report on his death on Wednesday.

Boss began his DJ duties on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" in 2014, eventually

going on to become a co-executive producer and occasional guest host.

Amid tribulations during the show's run, stemming from allegations against DeGeneres from some employees about a toxic work environment, Boss publicly stood by his friend DeGeneres.

"We can't speak too much legally about it, but I'll say this, there's been love," Boss told *Us Weekly*. "Obviously there's some things to address, but from my standpoint and from countless others, there's been love. I'll just leave it at that until there's a time where we can address more publicly. There's been love and there will continue to be love."

As the show geared up for its finale earlier this year, Boss looked back at his time there with fondness, telling *Entertainment Tonight* that bidding farewell was a challenge.

"Things do have a beginning and they have an end, so I know that, but I think



ELLEN'S GAME OF GAMES -- "The Sound of Musical Chairs" Episode 201 -- Pictured: (l-r) Ellen DeGeneres, Stephen "tWitch" Boss -- (Photo by: Mike Rozman/NBCU Photo Bank/NBCUniversal via Getty Images via Getty Images)

the closer that it's getting to the end, naturally, as we do, you start to miss it and you start to soak in all of the little moments where you go, 'Well, maybe I'm not quite ready to say goodbye just yet,'" he said. "But then at the same time, this is the natural order of things and also I've said it before, I'm just excited for my friend to start her new chapter of the rest of her journey, you know?"

When the time came for the "Ellen" show to sign off, DeGeneres surprised Boss with a moving tribute on air. At one point, she said, "Well, I don't want to say goodbye."

She went on to recount the first time they met – fittingly, for a dance lesson at her house.

"It was like a crash course in getting to know each other ... and he was so patient with me," she said. "We just bonded over learn-

ing to dance together."

DeGeneres went on to note that when he was absent from the show for whatever reason, a piece was missing.

"I count on him to look over and make silly jokes," she said. "I love you, tWitch, and you know how much. We tell each other that every day when we say goodbye. After the show, we both say 'love you.' He says, 'Love you much,' and I say, 'Love you.' And, so, he's never going to be out of my life."

Boss reacted emotionally to the video piece and DeGeneres' words.

"I love the family we've gained and something I'll always remember is that you gave me a place where I can just be myself," he said. He added, joking: "Whether I was a real DJ or not, I always felt at home."

DeGeneres joked back, "You're a fake DJ but you're real good man."

cont'd from pg 18

cluding the corporate ownership of the property itself, which, originally produced under Fox, is now part of Disney.

Ultimately, though, "The Way of Water" melts away any scepticism that it might be too late or too long in its return to Pandora. For

a franchise that popularised the line "I see you," the director has created a sequel that truly deserves to be seen, not from the comfort of the couch, but on the biggest screen you can find.

"Avatar: The Way of Water" premieres December 16 in US theatres. It's rated PG-13.

Regional News



Cuba proposes CARICOM join climate change projects

CMC - Cuba has invited the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to join several projects that can augment the region's efforts to confront climate change, the Guyana-based CARICOM Secretariat reported Wednesday.

It said Cuba has proposed a project to recover sandy beaches; another on low carbon and resilient tourism cooperation; and a third that focuses on the preservation of coral reefs.

According to the Secretariat, the proposals were made at the just-concluded CARICOM-Cuba Summit in Barbados earlier this month.

The Secretariat also noted that South Korea through the Trinidad-based Association of Caribbean



States (ACS) is funding the project on the recovery of sandy beaches which has been implemented already in Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda.

"With respect to the low carbon and resilient tourism cooperation project, Cuba said it is working on the region-wide project to present to the Green Climate Fund.

Working together, Cuba and CARICOM could develop a project of common interest."

The Secretariat said Cuba is also arranging to obtain funding for a high-level impact project to preserve coral reefs in the Caribbean from the effects of climate change.

"The project seeks to

boost capability to access climate financing.

Cuba said it has created the IRIS United for Climate Foundation to promote co-operation in the region by exploring opportunities that CARICOM could take advantage of."

The Secretariat said in the interest of sustainable development, Cuba has also suggested holding a workshop on disaster risk management and climate change adaptation with emphasis on early warning systems.

"As part of efforts to build capacity in member states, Cuba has volunteered to offer training based on the experience its environmental agency has acquired in the construction of regional projects," the Secretariat added.

Grenada suspends mail delivery to the Caribbean and Canada

CMC - The Grenada Postal Corporation (GPC) says it has suspended mail delivery service to Canada and the Caribbean for the Christmas season blaming a lack of air cargo transportation from Grenada.

GPC said it hopes for a return of normal service by mid-January 2023.

"Right now, we use commercial carriers for the service but because of the increase in passengers travelling with the airline we use, there is no room for carrying out mail, priority with the airline is for passenger's luggage," said Genelle Bowen, the mar-

keting and communications customer relations officer.

Mail delivery service to the Caribbean and Canada was a guaranteed service the cash-strapped regional airline, LIAT offered to the GPC before 2020. Though LIAT has resumed service with limited flights to Grenada it is unable to continue the mail-carrying and delivery service.

The current arrangement is with American Airlines. Bowen explained that mail from Grenada to the affected jurisdictions must first go to the USA before it reaches its final intended des-



tination.

"It therefore means that mails are taking longer to arrive and having received notice that the passenger's luggage is the priority, we cannot guarantee when mails will be delivered, so

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US Navy hospital ship temporarily suspends operations in Haiti

CMC - A United States Navy hospital ship is expected to resume operations later this week after it was forced to temporarily suspend medical services after 19 people with the mission fell overboard amid a heavy swell hitting the Caribbean region.

A statement from the US Navy said, “two U.S. Navy sailors sustained minor injuries during a man overboard incident in the vicinity of Jeremie, Haiti, at approximately 7:17 p.m. local time yesterday while on deployment with USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) in the U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations”.

The statement said, “in total, 19 personnel fell overboard during transfer from a small boat to Comfort” and “all personnel were safely recovered and returned to Comfort with assistance from the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Harold Miller (WPC 1138).

“The two injured sailors were treated aboard Comfort and are expected to make a full recovery. Comfort has paused ship-to-shore opera-



The US Naval hospital ship Comfort.

tions in Haiti for December 13, until a safe alternative for personnel transfer has been identified,” the statement added.

The incident coincided with a demonstration by several hundred people against the presence of the American hospital ship. The demonstrators are demanding the deployment of

an armed force to help fight gangs instead of medical assistance.

“Down with the American people! We don’t want them here,” they shouted, urging Washington to visit certain areas in the capital to free neighbourhoods from the control of powerful gangs.

Haiti has been plunged into chaos with criminal gangs involved in kidnappings for ransom and opposition political parties staging street demonstrations calling for the government of Prime Minister Dr. Ariel Henry to step down. The opposition parties have also been calling for fresh presidential and legislative elec-

tions.

In October, Prime Minister Henry requested the deployment of foreign troops to fight gangs and help end a fuel blockade that has since been lifted. While no international troops have been deployed, the US and Canada have announced a flurry of sanctions on several prominent Haitian politicians accusing them of helping spread unrest in the Caribbean Community country.

Among those sanctioned are former prime minister, Jean Henry Céant, Senate President Joseph Lambert and one of his predecessors, Louri Latortue. They have all denied the allegations.

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that is why the service is suspended,” she said.

It was also explained that mail from the United Kingdom will be affected because of planned industrial action.

Airport staff working for the U.K. Border Force are due to walk out from December 23 to 26, and again from December 28 to New Year’s Eve. It will impact services at the U.K.’s busiest airport, London Heathrow, as well as London Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, and Glasgow.

Biden tells African leaders US is 'all in' on the continent

AP - President Joe Biden told dozens of African leaders gathered in Washington that the United States is “all in on Africa’s future,” laying out billions in promised government funding and private investment Wednesday to help the growing continent in health, infrastructure, business and technology.

“The U.S. is committed to supporting every aspect of Africa’s growth,” Biden told the leaders and others in a big conference hall, presenting his vision at the three-day U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit of how the U.S. can be a critical catalyst.

Biden, who is pitching the U.S. as a reliable partner to promote democratic elections and push critical health and energy growth, told the crowd the \$55 billion in committed investments over the next three years — announced on Monday — was “just the beginning.”

He announced more than \$15 billion in private trade and investment commitments and partnerships.

“There’s so much more we can do together and that we will do together,” Biden said.

The president after his speech spent some time with leaders, including Moroccan Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch, watching Morocco’s World Cup match with France. Morocco lost but made history as the first



President Joe Biden toasts with Senegalese President Macky Sall in the East Room of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, during the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit dinner. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

African team to advance to the tournament’s semifinal round.

The United States has fallen well behind China in investment in sub-Saharan Africa, which has become a key battleground in an increasingly fraught competition between the major powers. The White House insists this week’s gathering is more a listening session with African leaders than an effort to counter Beijing’s influence, but the president’s central foreign policy tenet looms over all: America is in an era-defining battle to prove democracies can out-deliver autocracies.

That message was clear in Wednesday’s events. In his speech, Biden spoke of how the U.S. would help in modernising technology across the continent, providing clean energy, moving women’s equality forward through

business opportunities, bringing clean drinking water to communities and better funding health care. First lady Jill Biden’s office also laid out \$300 million for cancer prevention, screening, treatment and research in Africa.

On Wednesday Biden also held a smaller meeting at the White House with the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Thursday is to be dedicated to high-level discussions among leaders; Biden will open the day with a session on partnering with the African Union’s strategic vision for the continent.

The president and first lady hosted a White House dinner for all the leaders and their spouses Wednesday night, with the food prepared by Mashama Bailey, the executive chef of The Grey, a Southern cooking spot in

Savannah, Georgia. Gladys Knight provided the post-dinner entertainment.

Biden in a toast at the start of the dinner noted the “original sin” of enslaved Africans brought to U.S. shores and paid tribute to the next generation of leaders in both the U.S. and sub-Saharan Africa.

“Because, particularly of our young people, in all our countries together, we can deliver a world that is healthier and safer, more equal, more just, more prosperous and more filled with opportunity for everyone,” Biden said.

Senegalese President Macky Sall, who also heads the African Union bloc, expressed hope in his own toast that the U.S. and African leaders could advance their partnership “to the next level.”

The summit is the largest international gathering in Washington since before the start of the pandemic. Roads all around the city centre were blocked off, and motorcades zoomed by gridlocked traffic elsewhere, ferrying some of the 49 invited heads of state and other leaders.

Many leaders of the continent’s 54 nations often feel they’ve been given short shrift by leading economies. But the continent remains crucial to global powers because of its rapidly growing population, significant natural resources and sizable voting

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Japan military probe finds over 100 sexual harassment cases

AP - Japan's army on Thursday fired five servicemen and punished four others in a sexual assault case brought by a former soldier, prompting a rare investigation across the Defense Ministry that found over 100 other complaints of harassment, officials said.

Rina Gonoï filed a sexual harassment case with the Defense Ministry last year, saying she had suffered multiple assaults by several male colleagues, causing her to give up her military career.

Of the five servicemen who were dismissed from

the army, four had admitted their assaults and apologised to her in October. A fifth was found to be a masochist of the four.

Additionally, the ministry punished four others. The then-commander of the company in Fukushima that Gonoï belonged to was

suspended for six months for not carrying out proper investigation, while another one was reprimanded for verbal sexual harassment and two others were reprimanded for overlooking the problem.

Army chief Yoshihide
cont'd on pg 24

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bloc in the United Nations. Africa also remains of great strategic importance as the U.S. recalibrates its foreign policy with greater focus on China — the nation the Biden administration sees as the United States' most significant economic and military adversary.

But Biden invited several leaders who have questionable records on human rights, and democracy loomed large.

Equatorial Guinea was invited despite the State Department stating "serious doubts" about last month's election in the tiny Central African nation. Election officials reported that President Teodoro Obiang's ruling party won nearly 95% of the vote.

Zimbabwe, which has faced years of U.S. and Western sanctions, also was invited.

Tunisian President Kais Saïed, who has been criticised by the United States for democratic backsliding, used an appearance before reporters with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday to offer a stout defence of actions he has taken, including suspending the parliament and firing judges.

"The country was on the brink of civil war all over the country, so I had no other alternative but to save the Tunisian nation from undertaking any nasty action," Saïed said.

Biden made no mention of China in

his remarks, and White House officials rejected the notion that the summit was in part about countering China's influence.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the administration is "refusing to put a gun" to Africa's head and make it choose between U.S. and China. At the same time, he said "there's nothing inconsistent about calling a fact a fact and shedding light on what is increasingly obvious to our African partners about China's malign influence on the continent."

Still, the summit-related activity got a rise out of China. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said the U.S. should "respect the will of the African people and take concrete actions to help Africa's development, instead of unremittingly smearing and attacking other countries."

Wang said at a briefing Wednesday that it is the "common responsibility of the international community to support Africa's development." But he added: "Africa is not an arena for great power confrontation or a target for arbitrary pressure by certain countries or individuals."

Rwandan President Paul Kagame also bristled at the idea of his country and others on the continent getting caught between the U.S. and China. "I don't think we need to be bullied into making choices between the U.S. and

China," Kagame said during an event on the summit's sideline hosted by the news organisation Semafor.

Biden has promised U.S. support for a permanent Group of 20 seat for the African Union, and the appointment of a special representative to implement summit commitments.

In addition to China, talks also spotlighted what the U.S. sees as malevolent Russian action on the continent.

The administration argued in its sub-Saharan strategy published earlier this year that Russia, the preeminent arms dealer in Africa, views the continent as a permissive environment for Kremlin-connected oligarchs and private military companies to focus on fomenting instability for their own strategic and financial benefit.

During an appearance with Blinken on Wednesday, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo expressed alarm about the presence of mercenaries from Russia's Wagner Group in Burkina Faso directly north of Ghana. This follows a similar deployment of Wagner forces in Burkina Faso's immediate neighbour Mali.

"Today, Russian mercenaries are on our northern border," said Akufo-Addo, adding that he believed Burkinabe authorities had given the Wagner Group control of a mine for payment and that the country's prime minister had recently visited Moscow.

South Africa leader fights for political future over scandal

AP - The president of South Africa is fighting for his political future amid an unfolding scandal that has tainted his reputation as an anti-apartheid icon once widely admired for tackling the problems of Africa's most developed economy.

Cyril Ramaphosa, 70, says he's innocent of charges that he hid at least \$580,000 in a sofa at his game ranch. He's accused of not registering the money with authorities, and when it was stolen not reporting the theft to police, in order to avoid questions about how

he got the U.S. dollars.

South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress, is to vote in a conference starting Friday about whether Ramaphosa should step down as the party's leader. South Africa's past two presidents have had to resign after losing the party leadership at the ANC conference.

Ramaphosa handily survived an impeachment vote in parliament this week, strengthening his hand in the upcoming party conference vote.

Ramaphosa is also be-

ing investigated on possible charges of illegally holding foreign currency.

"From Ramaphoria to Ramafailure," read a headline this week on the News24 website that described how widespread admiration over Ramaphosa's leadership of this nation of 60 million has become dimmed.

Once respected for his anti-apartheid activism and his bond with Nelson Mandela, Ramaphosa came from a trade union background to become a board member and shareholder in sever-

al of South Africa's largest corporations. Ranked as one of South Africa's wealthiest men, he appeared well-equipped to tackle the corruption that has reached into virtually every corner of South African life including dealings with police and accessing government services.

One of Ramaphosa's pet projects is his Phala Phala ranch in Limpopo province, where he raises prize Ankole cattle and African antelopes. The allegations against him stem from a report that undeclared foreign cash was hidden in a couch at his house on the ranch. When that money was stolen in 2020, Ramaphosa did not report the theft to police, apparently to avoid questions about where the money came from and why it had not been declared to officials.

Ramaphosa maintains that his ranch got the money from the sale of some buffalo to a Sudanese businessman and the ranch manager did not know what to do with the cash.

Ramaphosa's supporters argue that the allegations against him — that he broke South African regulations prohibiting citizens from holding foreign cash without declaring it to financial authorities — are minor compared with the billions

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Yoshida repeated his apology to Gono and said, "As head of this organisation, I feel a strong sense of responsibility over (Gono's) sorrow and pain." He said he takes the problem seriously and is determined to "eradicate harassment."

In one incident in August 2021, the senior male colleagues pressed the lower part of their bodies against her in a dorm at a training ground, forcing her to spread her legs, as more than 10 other male colleagues watched and laughed, but none tried to stop them, Gono said.

"I hope the four assailants, regardless of the seriousness of their punishment, sincerely take their responsibility," Gono tweeted in response to the measure taken by the ministry Thursday.

The investigation into her case was dropped in May. After she quit the army and disclosed her allegations on social media, Gono submitted a petition signed by more than 100,000 people to the Defense Ministry in August seeking a reinvestigation of her allegations by a third party.

She also said that she had received information about dozens of other service members who had been harassed while on duty, as well as from parents who were worried about the safety of their daughters in the military.

Preliminary results of a ministry-wide harassment investigation launched in response to Gono's case found 1,414 complaints, the ministry said in a statement Thursday.

About 84% of the complaints were about power harassment, while sexual harassment accounted for 116 cases, or 7.7% the ministry said. By organisation, the army was the most harassment-prone, with 822 cases, or 58%, followed by the navy's 279 cases, or 19.7%, and air force at 203 cases, or 14.4%.

Gono said she went public because she wanted to help others who cannot raise their voices. In a country where gender inequality persists, sexual harassment is often disregarded and the #MeToo movement has been slow to catch on as many still suffer silently.

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of dollars that, critics say, were stolen from the state by associates of former President Jacob Zuma who got fraudulent contracts with state-owned corporations.

"The disappointment in Ramaphosa is profound," said William Gumede, head of the Democracy Works think tank.

"But South Africa's expectations have dropped so low that Ramaphosa is still seen as better than other alternatives. I'm struck by how this is the view from the boardrooms of major corporations to people in rural villages."

Parliament voted 214 to 148 against starting impeachment proceedings on Tuesday, with Ramaphosa getting support from almost all lawmakers in the ruling African National Congress party, which holds a majority of seats.

That ANC support bodes well for Ramaphosa being re-elected the party's leader. He must win the party leadership in order to stand for re-election to a second term as South Africa's president in 2024.

Nelson Mandela is the only post-apartheid South African president to retire voluntarily, after serving one term from 1994 to 1999. Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor, was forced to resign in 2008 after falling out with a faction linked to his then-deputy, Zuma.

Then came the Zuma years. A judge heading an extensive judicial investigation into corruption said those years were characterised by rampant looting of state coffers. Zuma was forced to resign when the corruption allegations against him became overwhelming.

When Ramaphosa took over from Zuma in 2018, he promised to clean up the mess and supported the judicial inquiry. He won respect for capably steering the country through the



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa responds to questions in Parliament Cape Town, South Africa, Sept. 29, 2022, where he denied allegations of money laundering while being questioned over a scandal that threatens his position and the direction of Africa's most developed economy. Ramaphosa is fighting for his political future in a dramatic reversal of fortunes for an anti-apartheid icon once admired for tackling the problems of Africa's most developed economy. (AP Photo/Nardus Engelbrecht, File)

COVID-19 pandemic. But the scandal over the dollars stashed in a sofa at his ranch has forced him to concentrate on just staying in power.

"The majority of the ANC will no doubt close ranks around Ramaphosa and he will continue as the party's leader and as the country's president," Gumede said. "But to survive he has had to get the support of many dodgy characters. They will demand a quid pro quo and he will no longer be able to effectively battle corruption. He will stay in power but he will have less power to do anything. This will make him a lame duck."

Ramaphosa's political struggles come as South Africa is confronted by a daunting array of problems, including unemployment of 35%, inflation of 7.4% and national power outages lasting more than seven hours a day.

"Across South Africa, there is a sense of hopelessness. People don't have political leaders or political parties they trust," Gumede said.

"It's not a good outlook for South

Africa. The only glimmer of hope is that elections in 2024 will bring a better set of leaders."

Ordinary South Africans express a weary cynicism over Ramaphosa.

Lerato Makgatho, 38, who lives in Johannesburg's Kempton Park area, said the revelations about the cash at Phala Phala shocked her.

"He has always been known to be a billionaire, so to hear about dollars of cash in a couch at his farm does not fit with that picture," she said. "This one was quite a shock to me."

Thabiso Kome, 35, a community activist in Tembisa township, east of Johannesburg, said he did not expect Ramaphosa to solve the scourge of corruption because it is so widespread in the ruling party.

"Some of us have seen corruption at a local level, at local clinics and hospitals. That kind of corruption cannot be solved by one person," said Kome. "It is normal to hear about corruption and controversy when it comes to the ANC. Ramaphosa, he is part of it."

Sports News



World Cup history beckons for France, Mbappé, Deschamps

AP - World Cup history is beckoning for France, star player Kylian Mbappé and coach Didier Deschamps.

When France walks on the field Sunday for the tournament final against Argentina and Lionel Messi, soccer lore is waiting to be written for the team.

Les Bleus could be the first winner of back-to-back titles for 60 years since Brazil did it 1958 and 1962.

The 23-year-old Mbappé would become the youngest player with two World Cup wins since Pelé accomplished that feat at age 21.

Deschamps would be the first man to coach two world champion teams since Vittorio Pozzo did it with Italy in 1934 and 1938.

“As for me, I’m not the most important person. It’s the French team,” said Deschamps, who is worthy of his own chapter in World Cup history.

He lifted the trophy in Paris as the team’s captain when France first won the World Cup in 1998. He won it as coach in 2018, and now he is on the brink of getting a third.

“Obviously, I’m proud. I know, everyone knows, we have the chance to win another title,” Deschamps said Thursday after beating Morocco in the semifinals.

France is playing in a fourth final in a span of seven tournaments — including the 2006 final lost to Italy in a penalty shootout after Zinedine Zidane was sent off. It’s a dynastic era not seen since Brazil’s two decades at the top through 1970.

That team typified by Pelé’s brilliance won all three finals it reached starting in 1958, and also played in the decisive last match of the 1950 tournament, which was lost against Uruguay in Rio de Janeiro.

Morocco’s coach was quick to



France's Antoine Griezmann celebrates with team mates after the World Cup semifinal soccer match between France and Morocco at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco)

anoint France and Mbappé after they ended his team’s historic run as the first African team in a semifinal.

“Over the past 20 years you can say France is the top footballing country in the world,” said Walid Regragui, who is French-born and played most of his career there.

“If he won the World Cup again,” Regragui said admiringly of Mbappé, “he would be emulating Pelé.”

Both players made stunning World Cup debuts as teenagers, truly coming to life in the knockout rounds.

All six goals for a 17-year-old Pelé in 1958 in Sweden were scored after the group stage, including a semifinals hat-trick to help eliminate France as he wore the No. 10 jersey that he has made iconic.

Mbappé announced his World Cup arrival at age 19 scoring twice against Argentina and Messi in a 4-3 epic in the round of 16. Anything like a repeat of that game in Russia would be a dream final Sunday.

Mbappé has five goals so far in

Qatar, tied as the leading scorer at the tournament with Messi. The Frenchman scored four times in 2018.

It took Pelé until his fourth World Cup in 1970 to score his ninth career goal, though in fewer games than Mbappé. The French No. 10 has a stage set Sunday to be a key player for a second straight final, which takes place two days before he turns 24.

What makes France and Deschamps even more impressive this time is adapting to a litany of injuries with new talent that never even played in a World Cup qualifying game last year.

Midfielders Paul Pogba and N’Golo Kante, starters in the 2018 final against Croatia, were lost to injuries before the tournament, and left-back Lucas Hernandez lasted just nine minutes in Qatar before suffering a season-ending knee injury.

After the 26-man squad was picked in November, starting centre-back Presnel Kimpembe and forwards Karim Benzema and Christopher Nkunku

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Stephen Curry's shoulder injury latest concern for Warriors

AP - Stephen Curry started Wednesday night unsure whether he would play at Indiana because of a sore right knee.

He finished it in the locker room with an injured left shoulder.

The eight-time All-Star, two-time MVP and NBA career leader in 3-pointers is expected to have an MRI on Thursday after leaving during the third quarter of Golden State's 125-119 loss at Indiana.

Curry was injured with about two minutes left in the third quarter as the Warriors tried to rally from a 20-point halftime deficit. His three-point play with 4:16 to go in the third got Golden State within 83-80.

But when Pacers forward Jalen Smith dribbled toward the baseline, Curry tried to stop him by sticking his left arm out. Smith continued, and Curry's arm bent back awkwardly. Curry grabbed his shoulder while standing hunched over on the court then walked to the locker room during the next



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) shoots over Indiana Pacers centre Myles Turner (33) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022. (AP Photo/Michael Conroy)

timeout.

"The trainers told me midway through the fourth quarter that he wasn't going to return," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "I trust their judgement. I only spoke to him briefly after the game, so I haven't had a chance to talk with him yet."

Curry did not take questions after scoring 38 points, making five 3s and all 11 of his free throws. He isn't expected to speak to reporters again until Friday, when the defending NBA champs vis-

it Philadelphia on the third stop of a six-game trip.

The Warriors already have lost their first two games on their longest Eastern swing of the season. Now they may be without their best player as they try to climb back above .500.

"This is a tough stretch of the season and if Steph's out, it gets tougher for sure," Kerr said. "If we're healthy, I feel like we can beat anybody — I think this team has proven that. We've just got to find a way to get

there."

Curry was his usual, sensational self while he was in the game. He accounted for half of the Warriors' 54 first-half points and finished with seven rebounds, seven assists and two steals.

All-Star guard Klay Thompson missed his second straight game with a right knee injury and Andrew Wiggins sat out with an abdominal injury. Then in the fourth quarter, forward Draymond Green was ejected after picking up two technical fouls in a span of 14 seconds.

Because of Curry, the Warriors still had a chance.

"He basically put us on his shoulders for the minutes he was out there," Kerr said. "He was getting to the line, finding other people and I thought the guys did a great job of battling."

But if Curry misses any substantial time, the Warriors won't be the same.

"Steph's always a guy with a great outlook on life," Kerr said. "So we're hoping for the best."

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were lost to injury.

To replace them, Deschamps promoted a wave of players in their early 20s who have excelled and smoothed the transition to a next generation.

Centre-back Ibrahima Konaté was immense against Morocco and forward Randal Kolo Muani scored with his first touch as a substitute to seal the 2-0 win.

"Sure, they don't have much international experience," Deschamps said of his unlikely midfield pairing, Aurélien Tchouaméni and Youssouf Fofana. "But potentially they have everything."

The youngsters players have veteran teammates to help guide them, including Antoine Griezmann, the goal-scoring winger reinvented as all-around midfielder. The 31-year-old

Griezmann should be a lock for selection to any team of the tournament.

"They need to be surrounded by players with a bit more experience. It's just a matter of playing with freedom," the coach said, making his France project sound so simple.

Deschamps' decade in charge of France looks sure to continue with another contract extension pending, and another trophy waiting Sunday.

EU legal adviser sides with UEFA, FIFA in Super League case

AP - Super League was dealt a blow when an EU legal adviser proposed the European Court of Justice should back rules allowing UEFA and FIFA to block the breakaway competition.

Advocate General Athanasios Rantos proposed on Thursday that the court recognize FIFA-UEFA regulations under which Super League should be subject to prior approval were compatible with European Union competition law.

While organisers were entitled to set up an independent competition outside UEFA and FIFA, they can't also continue to play in events sanctioned by UEFA and FIFA without their blessing, Rantos said.

Advocates generally provide legal guidance to the ECJ. Their opinions aren't binding on the Luxembourg-based court but are followed in most cases.

The case was heard in July at the court after Super League failed to launch in April 2021. But the company formed by 12 rebel clubs — now led by only Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus — started legal action and the Court of Justice was asked to rule on points of EU law by a Madrid tribunal.

The clubs accused UEFA of breaching European law by allegedly abusing its market dominance of soccer competitions.

UEFA's defence was that it protected the special place of sports in European society by running competitions in a pyramid structure open to all, and funded the grassroots of the game.

Rantos acknowledged UEFA and FIFA could restrict competitors' access to the European market of organising soccer competitions. But he insisted "such a fact, if established, does not manifestly mean that those rules have



Chelsea fans protest outside Stamford Bridge stadium in London, against Chelsea's decision to be included amongst the clubs attempting to form a new European Super League, April 20, 2021. Super League was dealt a blow when an EU legal adviser proposed the European Court of Justice should back UEFA and FIFA in blocking the breakaway competition. Advocate General Athanasios Rantos proposed on Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022 that the court recognize FIFA-UEFA rules under which Super League should be subject to prior approval were compatible with European Union competition law. (AP Photo/Matt Dunham, file)

the object of restricting competition."

UEFA "warmly" welcomed the opinion, saying it was "an encouraging step towards preserving the existing dynamic and democratic governance structure of the European football pyramid."

UEFA said Rantos' opinion reinforced the role of federations "in protecting the sport, upholding fundamental principles of sporting merit and open access across our members, as well as uniting football with shared responsibility and solidarity."

FIFA was glad Rantos considered sanctions could be imposed and recognized its exclusive marketing rights.

Football Supporters Europe, a group recognized by UEFA as a stakeholder, said the opinion mirrored the views of fans across the continent.

"Giving even more money and power to a few would be catastrophic,

enriching a handful of clubs at the expense of all other levels of the game," the group said. "It would also destroy important principles such as sporting merit, promotion and relegation, qualification to Europe via domestic success, and financial solidarity."

The European Club Association, which represents Europe's top football clubs, was also satisfied by the opinion, saying it was "a clear rejection of the efforts of a few to undermine the foundations and historical heritage of European football for the many."

Widespread condemnation hit the rebel clubs from England, Spain and Italy last year when they unveiled plans of a largely closed competition as an alternative to the UEFA-run Champions League. UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin called the club leaders "snakes" and "liars" and threatened to ban players from Super League clubs.

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Tennis legend Becker freed from prison, returns to Germany

AP - German tennis legend Boris Becker has returned to Germany after serving eight months in prison in Britain, his lawyer said Thursday.

The 55-year-old German, who has lived in Britain since 2012, was released on Thursday morning and travelled back to Germany shortly thereafter.

Becker “has thus served his sentence and is not subject to any penal restrictions in Germany,” his lawyer, Christian-Oliver Moser, said in a statement. He did not give additional details about Becker’s location in Germany.

The three-time Wimbledon champion had been



Former tennis player Boris Becker arrives at Southwark Crown Court in London, April 29, 2022. British news agency Press Association reports that German tennis legend Boris Becker has been freed from prison after serving eight months of his sentence and now faces deportation from the UK. The 55-year-old German, who has lived in Britain since 2012, was released on Thursday Dec. 16, 2022, ahead of his deportation, PA reported, without citing sources. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein, File)

sentenced to 30 months in prison in April for illicitly transferring large amounts of money and hiding assets

after he was declared bankrupt. He would normally have had to serve half of his sentence before being eligible for release, but was released early under a fast-track deportation program for foreign nationals.

He had been convicted by London’s Southwark Crown Court on four charges under the Insolvency Act, including removal of property, concealing debt and two counts of failing to disclose estate.

Becker rose to stardom in 1985 at the age of 17 when he became the first unseeded player to win the Wimbledon singles title.

The former world number one was declared bankrupt in June 2017.

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The advocate general said the court should also state that EU competition rules do not prohibit FIFA, UEFA, their member federations or their national leagues “from issuing threats of sanctions against clubs affiliated to those federations when those clubs participate in a project to set up a new competition which would risk undermining the objectives legitimately pursued by those federations of which they are members.”

A22 Sports Management, the company sponsoring and assisting the creation of the Super League, took comfort that Rantos acknowledged “the special responsibility” borne by UEFA in ensuring fair access to the market when examining requests for authorization of a new competition.

“We believe the 15 judges of the

grand chamber who are entrusted with the responsibility to examine this case, will go substantially further and provide the opportunity for clubs to manage their own destiny in Europe,” A22 CEO Bernd Reichart said.

A final ruling is expected next year. It is the court’s most anticipated sports decision since the so-called Bosman Ruling in 1995. That case upended soccer’s transfer system, drove up pay for top players, and ultimately accelerated a wealth and competitive divide between rich clubs and the rest.

The court’s opinion was also a win for governing bodies of Olympic sports whose annual income can be less than the individual salary of many soccer players in Europe and are vulnerable to commercial rivals.

When the Super League launched in April 2021, IOC president Thomas

Bach spoke at UEFA’s annual meeting and warned of the threat from “purely profit-oriented goals of commercial sport providers and investors.”

In a separate opinion on a long-running legal antitrust dispute won by two Dutch speed skaters and the European Commission against the International Skating Union, Rantos proposed on Thursday that the case be reviewed again.

The EU general court ruled two years ago that rules imposed by the ISU that sanction athletes for taking part in events not recognized by the governing body were in breach of EU competition law.

Rantos said “the mere fact that the same entity performs the functions of both regulator and organiser of sporting events does not in itself entail an infringement of EU competition law.”



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Ottos Comprehensive win Senior Boys' Knockout title

Ottos Comprehensive have captured the Senior Boys' Division Knockout title in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools' Football Programme.

They captured this year's title by prevailing 2-1 against the Irene B. Secondary School in the final at the King George V. Ground on Wednesday, 14th December.

Demario Roberts put Ottos ahead with a 10th minute strike and Josue Arias scored in the 32nd minute to give the champions a 2-0 halftime lead.

Karique Knight scored a consolation goal for Irene B. Williams in the added-on time (70+2 minutes).



Players of the Ottos Comprehensive School team celebrate with their trophy after winning the Senior Boys' Knockout title in the Secondary Schools' Football Programme at the King George V. Ground on Wednesday, 14th December, 2022. (Photo by Elwin Francis)

Coach Justin "Trini" Pereira, a former national player, expressed his satisfaction in winning a major title in his debut year as a coach in the schools' football programme.

"It's an exciting feeling for me. This is my first year as a coach in the Ministry and so to win a championship in your first year is a great experience," Pereira said.

"But not trying to take away from what the children achieved as well because all the glory goes to them. They put in so many sacrifices that they make

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Dunkley guides England Women to narrow victory in 2nd T20I

England Women pulled off a 16-run victory against West Indies Women in the second T20 international at the Kensington Oval in Barbados.

West Indies Women all-rounder Aaliyah Alleyne told CWI Media that there were some improvements but they're going to keep pushing for that elusive win. Alleyne said,

"We are rebuilding as a team and we are taking it step by step. Our bowling today stood out, restricting England for 140 plus and then cross 120 when we batted. For me personally, I'm looking to score runs for my team at the top of the order and to get that partnership with Hayley going. We still have a few games and I believe we can get it right and get a win."



Sophia Dunkley

Both teams will meet at the same venue on Saturday December 17 at 6:00pm Eastern Caribbean/5:00pm Jamaica time.

For the remaining three T20Is in Barbados, Greenidge & Haynes stand tickets will be US\$10/BD\$20 with 3Ws

stand tickets behind the wicket available for just US\$15/BD\$30.

Fans can purchase tickets in advance from the WindiesTicket online service, presented by Mastercard at tickets.windiestickets.com receiving their tickets securely into their online account to save to mobile devices or print out for presentation at the stadium, avoiding the need to queue at or travel to the stadium ticket offices. Ticket offices at each venue will be open on the day of each match.

Fans can watch all matches live via streamed coverage on the Windies Cricket YouTube channel, as well as on the ESPN Play app. Fans in the UK will be able to view on BT Sport with fans based in the USA able to watch live on ESPN+.



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Combined South captures first ever MMA Cricket League U/12 title



Combined South were crowned Under-12 champions of the inaugural MMA Cricket League, which was held at the Ballbeef playing field in Liberta earlier this month.

Team Combined South, coached by legendary coach Tyrone “Pacer” Williams and captained by Ondre Peters became the first ever MMA 12 and under champions.

Emberry Elite Cricket Academy led by Sienna West was second and Benny Liburd led his team, Time of Victory, to third place.

The tournament is geared towards developing girls and boys 12 years and under.

Organizers, Coach Amahl Nathaniel and siblings Melissa and Michael Lawrie, teamed up with Liberta Blackhawks and Emberry Elite Cricket Academy, which comprised students of Island Academy, to stage the inaugural event.

The tournament was held for a period of three days and saw entry from 5 teams, which included three clubs and two schools.

The teams were Combined South, Emberry Elite



Emberry Elite Cricket Academy captured the runners-up position during the inaugural MMA Cricket League, which was held at the Ballbeef playing field in Liberta earlier this month. (Photos courtesy MMA Cricket League)

Cricket Academy, Foundation Mixed School, Old Road Primary and Time of Victory. Games were held at Ballbeef in Liberta and attracted families, villagers and sponsors.

Teams played 10 overs with at least four games a day and the matches were officiated by qualified umpires from the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Umpires Association.

Some outstanding players included Ondre Peters,

Emmony Segree, Adelaide Wilshaw, Ryan West, Benny Liburd, Mavia Swaby, Cliana Joseph and Clayton Joseph.

Kawanie Atherly copped the most wicket prize and Benny Liburd took home the ward for the most runs.

Many businesses and persons were eager to sponsor the MMA Cricket League. These included PIC Insurance, KJ Singh of CWI, Cool and Smooth, Frank B. Armstrong, Anjo Wholesale, Mr. Lennox “Fox” Julian, Mr. Worrell Richardson, Mr. Hugh Gore, Mrs. Yvette Francis, Mega Distributors and Christos Supermarket.

Organizers have assured that this was the first of many with the hope of getting more teams involved.

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and showed good team spirit throughout the whole campaign.”

Pereira also stated that it has so far been a great experience working in the Ministry of Sports as a coach in its football programme.

“The feeling has been really great. I have been coaching for the past five years, but this is my first year working as a coach

in the Ministry of Sports,” Pereira said.

“I am always excited to take my craft into the schools to see how much I can develop these youngsters to not only make them into winners, but into champions, just like what we did on Wednesday.

“So it’s a joyous feeling for me and I get a lot of support from my other colleagues that are within the ministry as well and I’m just grateful for everything.”

SVF and Jennings extend unbeaten run in second division



The Sea View Farm team that started their second division match against CPTSA Wings at the ABFA's Technical Centre at Paynters on Wednesday, 14th December, 2022. (Photo courtesy CPTSA Wings Sports Club)

Sea View Farm and Jennings United have maintained their perfect start to the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division.

Kevin Warner scored a brace as Sea View Farm claimed their third win in as many matches by hammering CPTSA Wings 4-1 at the ABFA's Technical Centre at Paynters in one of four second division matches on Wednesday, 14th December.

Warner scored his first goal in the 11th minute to put Sea View Farm ahead. Striker Markland Wright extended the lead with a 13th minute conversion.

Jayden Browne scored what turned out to be the only goal of the match for Wings in the 18th minute to reduce the deficit. But Chevon Moore restored

Sea View Farm's two-goal lead with a 26th minute conversion to make it 3-1.

Warner then scored his second goal of the match in the 38th minute to seal Sea View Farm's victory.

Jennings United also made it three wins in a row by snatching a 1-0 victory against English Harbour at the English Harbour playing field.

Daryl Massicotte scored the winner and lone goal of the match with a brilliantly taken free kick.

Bethesda secured their first win in three matches by snatching a 2-0 victory over Belmont FC at the Bethesda playing field.

Blackburn Palace also claimed their first win in three matches by prevailing 5-3 against TAMO FC in an eight-goal thriller at King George V. Ground.

The national domestic football programme will continue with matches in the premier division at the ABFA's Technical Centre this weekend.

Old Road will take on Villa Lions at 7 pm today, Friday, 16th December. It will continue with a triple-header tomorrow, Saturday, 17th December.

Swetes will face Willikies at 4 pm, Jennings Grenades will oppose Villa Lions at 6 pm and Pigotts Bullets will meet Liberta Blackhawks at 8 pm.

In another triple header on Sunday, 18th December, Empire and Parham will clash at 4 pm, Greenbay Hoppers will tackle SAP at 6 pm and Ottos Rangers will take on All Saints United at 8 pm.

Five Islands and Cedar Grove Blue Jays will clash at 7 pm on Monday, 19th December.