

THURSDAY 5TH JANUARY 2023 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3 | [WWW.POINTVILLE.AG](http://WWW.POINTVILLE.AG)

# PM BROWNE SEEKS DAMAGES OVER ASOT'S "DEFAMATORY" SPEECH

*Story on Page 2*



The ABLP candidate for St. John's Rural West rallied the troops on Tuesday night at a campaign rally in St. John's City East ahead of her successful whistlestop and Next Level Rally on Wednesday at Knuckle Block. Photo: [Pointe Xpress/Kavi Roberts]



# Local News

## “He is no scamp!”

### PM Browne rejects allegations made in Asot Michael’s “defamatory” New Year’s Day speech



Attorney-At-Law, Dr. David Dorsette, has penned a strongly worded letter to St. Peter’s MP, Asot Michael, on behalf of his client, Prime Minister Gaston Browne, rejecting the allegations of corruption, theft and other shocking claims made by Michael against the prime minister in his address to his constituents on New Year’s Day.

Dated 4th January, 2023, Dr. Dorsette’s letter said Michael was being dishonest when he claimed that Browne borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars from his deceased mother, Josette Michael, which he never repaid and engaged in corruption when he brokered the sale of television equipment to state owned ABS Television which he collected payment from the Treasury for.

According to the letter, Browne has suffered great “distress and embarrass-

ment” for which he is seeking “significant” compensatory damages as Michael’s widely circulated speech has caused harm to his reputation.

In addition to seeking monetary damages, the prime minister is also demanding an “unequivocal retraction and apology” from Michael with the added requirement that he not repeat the harmful allegations again.

Michael, who was expelled from the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party as a candidate after he was deemed unsuitable to represent the party in the 18th January, 2023 general elections, has until 6th January at 4pm to fulfil Browne’s demands.

According to Dorsette, his chambers, Watt, Dorsette, Hewlett Law, has been instructed to file a claim against the beleaguered politician if he fails to comply with the prime minister’s demands.



**Watt, Dorsette, Hewlett Law**

Attorneys-at-Law

or

Solicitors of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court

Head of Chambers and Founding Partner – Sir Gerald A. Watt, KCN, KC  
Senior Partner – David Dorsette, Ph.D.  
Junior Partner – Jared Hewlett

Kingsgate Chambers  
55A Neugate St.  
P.O. Box 551  
St. John’s, Antigua

4th January 2023

Mr. Asot Michael  
St. John’s, Antigua

Dear Mr. Michael:

#### DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS AGAINST THE HON. GASTON BROWNE

We are instructed by and act on behalf of our client, the Honourable Gaston Browne, of Jolly Harbour, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, who has authorised us to write this letter.

On or about New Year’s Day 2023, you published or caused to be published a speech in which you spoke of our client in defamatory terms. Your speech was carried on various social media platforms.

You made a number of allegations which are untrue. It will not be possible to address all of them at this instant. However, we are compelled to address certain allegations of yours that are comprehensively untrue and defamatory.

The specific words of which we complain of are as follows:

“My late mother gave a loan of 200,000 USD years ago for refrigeration, air conditioning at his South Mall when he was supposed to be making these millions. And to date, this same Gaston Browne has not paid her back a cent.”

“As Prime Minister in 2015 he approached me while on my sickbed at Mayo Clinic in the United States to release television equipment that was owned for my company, Caribbean Times Ltd, to Antigua Barbuda Service, ABS TV. He then used a company called Corvehead Ltd, a company owned by one of his family members or surrogates to fraudulently request and receive a payment of approximately 150,000 USD from the Treasury of this country for equipment that he did not own. Never did. He said there was nothing wrong with that. He told me that because I didn’t need the money. His brand of good governance integrity entitled him to do that.”

The allegations you published mean, and were understood to mean:

1. Our client is a dishonourable man and a man who is not creditworthy who borrows money when he has not the capacity to repay or the intention to repay.
2. Our client secured US\$150,000.00 from the Treasury of Antigua and Barbuda for a company, Corvehead Ltd, when the company was not entitled to be in receipt of the said funds, under the guise that the company had sold to (or secured for) ABS TV certain television equipment.
3. The acquisition of the funds and the circumstances of the same was an instance of corruption in which our client was complicit.
4. Our client is hypocrite in that he advocates for good governance in government but he himself is engaged in conduct that is the antithesis of good governance.
5. Our client is a heartless and uncaring man, intent and dead set on wrongdoing and will approach others, even in circumstances of grave illness and vulnerability, so as to accomplish his despicable ends.

These charges amount to very serious defamation of our client and have caused him considerable distress and embarrassment, more so since our client holds the office of Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Corporate Governance, and regularly represents the government and country of Antigua and Barbuda in international forums. All the allegations made against him are unjustified.

Our client has not been engaged in any action whereby money from the Treasury has been directed to persons and/or entities that were not properly entitled to be paid by the Treasury. Our client is not a person who does not honour his financial obligations. He is no scamp.

Our client is firmly of the view that you are well aware of the fact that your statements are patently false, but you have nevertheless made them in order to seek a political advantage in your attempt to be elected as the parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. Peter’s as an independent candidate and to undermine the electoral prospects of our client and the party which he leads at the upcoming election slated for 18th January 2023.

In all of his years as a Member of Parliament, our client has not been associated with misappropriation of monies being paid by the Treasury or dishonourable conduct in his personal finances. Your allegations are nothing but a big lie and falsity at the extreme.

In the circumstances, or client requires for you as a matter of urgency, a full and unequivocal public retraction and apology in terms to be approved by us, and an undertaking not to repeat these allegations. We have advised him that he is entitled to

substantial compensation for the injury to his reputation and feelings as to which we will invite proposals from you. In respect of damages, our client will point to the following facts and matters:

1. You were once a member of our client’s Cabinet but our client has had cause for you not to continue in his Cabinet.
2. Further, our client has deemed you unfit to run as a candidate on the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party ticket. Our client’s view is also the view of the Party’s Suitability Committee, which rendered you ineligible to be selected as a candidate for the Party.
3. You have failed to produce even a scintilla of evidence to support your allegations against our client. Indeed, there is none to be found.
4. The defamatory statements have been circulated on social media and accordingly has reached (or had potentially reached) a vast international audience.

Our client will require payment by you of all the legal costs he has incurred in this matter. This letter is written in accordance with the pre-action protocol for defamation. We look forward to hearing from you without delay. If we have not secured a satisfactory reply by 4:00pm on Friday 6th January 2023, our instructions are to issue a claim against you. In the meantime, our client researches all his rights.

Yours truly,

*David Dorsette*  
DAVID DORSETTE, PH.D.

Cc: Gaston Browne

## UWI expansion loan agreement to be signed this month

The \$216 million loan agreement for the expansion of the University of the West Indies Five Island Campus will take place later this month.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has announced that the agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the University of the West Indies will be signed in St. John's on 17th January.

In December, the government announced that after several months of negotiations with the Saudi Development Fund (SDF) for US\$80 million to carry out the expansion of the campus, the loan had been



Prime Minister Gaston Browne approved.

Government sources say the Chief Executive Officer of the SDF, along with a delegation, will arrive in Antigua and Barbuda on 16th January for the sign-

ing ceremony the following day.

Minister of Education, Daryll Matthew, will sign on behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda government.

PM Browne said the

UWI FIC represents the "most significant" contribution that any administration has made to the development of the country. He described the institution as "the crown jewel" of the education system and development in Antigua and Barbuda.

"It will be the fulcrum of development of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

"It will increase the human capital of Antiguan and Barbudans making them compatible with people from other parts of the world," he declared, describing the establishment of the UWI FIC as a significant investment in the country's people.

## Robbing the dead: Hospital worker fined for stealing from woman's corpse

A 50-year-old employee of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) found himself on the wrong side of the law after he was accused of doing far more than caring for the patients in his charge.

As the details of the bizarre case became clear, it was revealed to the shock and horror of all that the orderly was accused of robbing a corpse.

In the facts revealed, Delmore Webson allegedly stole three rings, valued at \$2500.00, from a 42-year-old woman's lifeless body on 1st January, 2023.

The woman was pronounced dead at the hospital after she developed difficulty breathing and complained of tightness in her chest while walking in St. John's with her daughter.

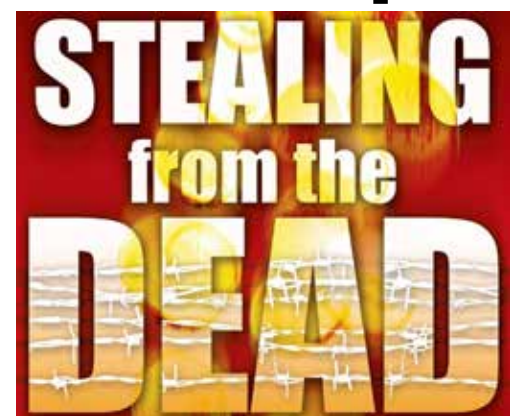
A doctor who pronounced her dead was the first to suspect that something was awry after they observed that her rings were missing.

The doctor contacted the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) who dispatched officers to investigate.

The investigation soon led officers to look in Webson's direction, but he denied taking the rings. He did, however, lead police to where two of the three rings were hidden inside a bathroom in the hospital's emergency wing.

Still maintaining his innocence, Webson then took the police to another location where the third ring was discovered.

It was at this point that he was arrested by the police on suspicion of



larceny.

Webson eventually admitted to committing the crime when he appeared before Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh.

Walsh imposed a fine of \$2500.00 on Webson. Should he fail to make the payment, he will serve a sentence of one year at His Majesty's prison.



# Local News



## Former senior police officer receives Queen's Honour

Former Superintendent of Police, Cosmos Marcelle, was honoured on Wednesday as he received the Queen's Police Medal (QPM) at Government House for his invaluable contribution to national security and public safety.

The Queen's Police Medal (QPM) is awarded to police for gallantry or a specially distinguished record in police specific services of conspicuous merit.

Marcelle is among the last of the honourees to receive the award as part of her late Majesty's Birthday Honours distributed throughout the commonwealth on the occasion of her birthday last June.

The QPM medal was established on 7th July 1909 as the King's Police Medal (KPM) in the UK and was

inspired by the need to recognise the gallantry of police officers.

Renamed the King's Police and Fire Services Medal (KPFMS) in 1940, it was replaced on 19th May 1954 by the Queen's Police Medal (QPM) and awarded for Distinguished Service.

Born in St. Kitts and Nevis, Marcelle quickly made a name for himself within the ranks of Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda after joining in 1969.

During his tenure, he served in many departments including Traffic, the Criminal Investigation Department, Licensing and Transport and at Government House.

He played a vital role while in the Traffic Department as he mapped out the road safety education pro-

gramme which continues today.

As he moved up the ranks, Marcelle completed training programmes in the United Kingdom, France and Barbados. He also was assigned to the local Interpol team.

Upon retirement, he continued to serve as a lecturer at the Sir Wright F. George Police Academy and as a consultant with Elite Island Resorts.

He presently serves as a member of the Police Service Commission.

In his remarks, Governor General Sir Rodney Williams noted that Retired Superintendent of Police Marcelle was the recipient of one of the last of the 2022 Queen's Police Medals and is among the last Antiguan and Barbudans who will receive that honour.

"I would wish, on behalf of a grateful nation, to express our thanks to Retired Superintendent Marcelle for his service thus far to nation building.

"The journey is not over, since he continues to give valuable service to the Police Service Commission. I

therefore encourage you to remain focused on the task of doing your part in supporting the work of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda. You have a great responsibility and with it come great expectations from those you serve.

"Accept our best wishes for continued success in your service to your fellowmen and women," said Sir Rodney.

Along with his family and friends, Marcelle thanked two of his mentors, both former commissioners of police, for instilling discipline which was the foundation of his career.

Both Sir Wright George and Edric Martin were a part of the teaching staff at Langfords Police Academy now the Sir Wright F. George Police Academy when Marcelle was a recruit.

Superintendent Marcelle Ret. was one of three people to be awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, however Public Service Volunteer, Lorraine Perry, OBE and Businesswoman and Philanthropist Gaye Hechme MBE, opted to receive their awards in London.

### AUCTION NOTICE

#### REGISTRATION SECTION

ENGLISH HARBOUR

#### BLOCK

35 2580A

#### PARCEL

447

Instructed by **ACB MORTGAGE AND TRUST COMPANY LIMITED**, I shall sell by **PUBLIC AUCTION** on Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> day of January 2023 at 11:00am the above residential property at Piccadilly.

The property is under the ownership of **TESSA DONAWA-DANIEL**. The land is a 43,500 sq. ft. (1 acre) plot with an approximate 6,969 sq. ft., 2 storey reinforced concrete building with 4 bedrooms and 3 ½ bathrooms.

The property is in a quiet residential area with a commanding view of the surrounding area.

The Auction shall be held on site.

Details of the Auction may be obtained from **Mr. Trevor Santos, Public Auctioneer** at telephone numbers: 464-7653 and 562-7653.

Dated this the 19<sup>th</sup> day of December 2022

Trevor Santos  
Licensed Auctioneer

## Election Countdown:

13  
days left



**GAIL  
CHRISTIAN**

**GASTON  
BROWNE**

# **RURAL WEST TO THE NEXT LEVEL RALLY**

**@ KNUCKLE BLOCK**

**THURSDAY 5TH JANUARY**

**TIME: 7:30PM**



[WWW.VOTEABLP.AG](http://WWW.VOTEABLP.AG)





# Local News



## Jamaican nightclub worker's 2022 death ruled a homicide

One day after police announced Tevin Roacher's death as the 10th homicide of 2022, that figure has now jumped to eleven.

The Jamaican woman who was found dead in her home last October, has been ruled a homicide.

Initially, it was thought that the 23-year-old former employee of Cheeta's Nightclub had died of natural causes.

The Tindale Road resident was discovered on a bed in her home, partially

dressed and foaming at the mouth, by her employer at 9:18pm on 22nd October, 2022.

The visit to check on her was prompted by her failure to show up for work that night.

Police did not immediately suspect foul play as there were no visible marks on her body when it was discovered.

A postmortem conducted last week determined that the woman, who has not been named by police, died of



strangulation.

With the autopsy now completed, plans are reportedly being made to return her body to her family in Jamaica for burial.

## The Antigua and Barbuda Met Office warns of hazardous sea conditions

The Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Service has issued a small craft advisory which will remain in effect until Friday.

It has been issued as a result of a combination of wind waves and wind swells which are expected to create hazardous sea conditions for operators of small vessels and beach goers.

The advisory is also applicable to St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla.

According to the Met Office, the advisory, now classed as moderate, could level up to a small craft warning if conditions deteriorate.

Presently, however, the advisory will remain in effect from Wednesday morning until Sunday for Antigua and Barbuda and Anguilla, Wednesday until Saturday morning for St. Kitts and Nevis and Wednesday night until Saturday morning for



Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands.

Open waters, mainly on the Atlantic sides of the islands, extending out 20 nautical miles will be affected.

Experts at the V. C. Bird International Airport based Met Office have highlighted the importance of heeding their warnings as the threat level to the life, livelihood, property and infrastructure of mariners is expected to rise to moderate to high with the potential for significant to extensive impacts.

The dangers include loss of life at sea, injuries to mariners, capsized, damaged or the loss of vessels and marine equipment, financial losses, disruption of fisheries and scarcity of fish products and disruption to marine transportation.

While these risks apply to all ocean users, the risk is greatest for inexperienced mariners and small vessel operators.

A small craft advisory means that wind speeds of 21 to 33 knots accompanied

by wind, waves, and wind swells of 7 feet or greater are occurring or are imminent.

At the time of the advisory winds over open waters were recorded as coming from the East at 26 to 41 km/h, 14 to 22 knots or 16 to 25 mph, with strong gusts that reached around 50 km/h, 34 knots or 39 mph.

Significant wave heights of 1.8 to 2.7 metres or 6 to 9 feet were also recorded and have occasionally reached near 3.5 metres, over 11 feet.

Wind waves and/or wind swells have registered at 1.5 to 2.5 metres or 5 to 8 feet, occasionally becoming higher.

According to local climatologists, the dominant wind wave period is 6 to 9 seconds.

The highest seas are likely to occur beginning Wednesday night through Friday, especially in Atlantic waters.



**Louis Hardware Depot**



**Located:** Old Parham Road  
**Tel:(268)562-3650**



# Business



## US reopening visa and consular services at embassy in Cuba

By Megan Janetsky

AP — The United States Embassy in Cuba is reopening visa and consular services Wednesday, the first time it has done so since a spate of unexplained health incidents among diplomatic staff in 2017 slashed the American presence in Havana.

The Embassy confirmed this week it will begin processing immigrant visas, with a priority placed on permits to reunite Cubans with family in the U.S., and others like the diversity visa lottery.

The resumption comes amid the greatest migratory flight from Cuba in decades, which has placed pressure on the Biden administration to open more legal pathways to Cubans and start a dialogue with the Cuban government, despite a historically tense relationship.

They are anticipated to give out at least 20,000 visas a year, though it's just a drop in the bucket of the migratory tide, which is fueled by intensifying economic and political crises on the island.

In late December, U.S. authorities reported stopping Cubans 34,675 times along the Mexico border in November, up 21% from 28,848 times in October.

Month-to-month, that number has gradually risen. Cubans are now the second-largest nationality after Mexicans appearing on the border, U.S. Customs and Border Protection data shows.

The growing migration is due to a complex array of factors, including economic, energy and political crises, as well deep discontent among Cubans.

While the vast majority of Cuban migrants head to the U.S. via flights



*A classic American convertible car passes beside the United States embassy as Cuban flags fly at the Anti-Imperialist Tribune, a massive stage on the Malecon seaside promenade in Havana, Cuba, July 26, 2015. The United States Embassy in Cuba is opening visa and consular services on Wednesday, Jan 4, 2023. It was the first time since a spate of unexplained health incidents among diplomatic staff in 2017 slashed American presence in Havana (AP Photo/Desmond Boylan, File)*

to Nicaragua and cross by land at the U.S. border with Mexico, thousands more have also taken a dangerous voyage by sea.

They travel 90 miles to the Florida coast, often arriving in rickety, precariously constructed boats packed with migrants.

The exodus from Cuba is also compounded by rising migration to the U.S. from other countries like Haiti and Venezuela, forcing the U.S. government to grapple with a growingly complex situation on its southern border.

The renewal of visa work at the embassy comes after a series of migration talks and visits by U.S. officials to Havana in recent months, and may also be the sign of a slow thawing between the two governments.

“Engaging in these talks underscores our commitment to pursuing

constructive discussions with the government of Cuba where appropriate to advance U.S. interests,” the U.S. Embassy said in a statement in November following an American delegation’s visit to Cuba.

The small steps are far cry from relations under President Barack Obama, who eased many American Cold War-era sanctions during his time in office and made a historic visit to the island in 2016.

Visa and consular services were closed on the island in 2017 after embassy staff were afflicted in a series of health incidents, alleged sonic attacks that remain largely unexplained.

As a result, many Cubans who wanted to legally migrate to the U.S. have had to fly to places like Guyana to do so before migrating or reuniting with family.

*cont'd on pg 9*



## Securities Commission of The Bahamas denies asking FTX to mint millions in tokens

CMC - The Securities Commission of The Bahamas (SCB) is denying allegations that it had directed the failed crypto-exchange, FTX, to mint US\$300m tokens prior to its collapse.

“The Securities Commission of The Bahamas must once again correct material misstatements made by Mr. John J Ray III, the representative of the US FTX debtors (Chapter 11 Debtors), in both the press and court filings,” the SCB said in a statement as it challenged Ray on his allegations, they had any control over the failed crypto-exchange assets after its filing for liquidation and Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

The SCB said on December 30, last year, the Chapter 11 debtors publicly challenged the commission’s calculations of the digital assets which were transferred to digital wallets controlled by the commission on November 12, 2022, for safekeeping in the exercise of its powers as regulator acting under the authority of an order made by the Supreme Court.

It said such public assertions by the Chapter 11 debtors were based on incomplete information.

“The Chapter 11 debtors chose not to utilise their ability to request information from the joint provisional



liquidators pursuant to a court order of the Supreme Court of The Bahamas that the commission obtained in an effort to allow the Chapter 11 debtors to obtain this information.

“The US debtors’ continued lack of diligence when making public statements concerning the Commission is disappointing and reflects a cavalier attitude towards the truth and towards The Bahamas that has been displayed by the current officers of the Chapter 11 Debtors from the date of their appointment by Sam Bankman-Fried.”

“These statements were made in a court filing on December 12, 2022, without evidence, and then made again under oath, on December 13, before the United States’ House Financial Services Committee.

“Statements suggesting that Bahamian officials directed FTX employees to mint US\$300m in new FTX tokens were widely reported by the

international press. Such unfounded statements have the impact of promoting mistrust of public institutions in The Bahamas.

The SBC said the Chapter 11 debtors have also alleged that the digital assets controlled by the commission in trust for the benefit of customers and creditors of FTXDM were “stolen, without providing any substantiated bases for such claims, particularly, as to their claims to ownership of the assets.

The SBC said Ray had never reached out to confirm any information before making allegations and that it “has still not received a response to its 7 December 2022 letter to Mr. Ray offering cooperation with Chapter 11 debtors.

Last December, the chief executive officer of the collapsed cryptocurrency exchange, Sam Bankman-Fried, was extradited to the United States after he was arrested in The Bahamas.

A grand jury indictment charged Bankman-Fried with wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud against lenders and customers, conspiracy to commit securities fraud, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and violations of campaign finance laws.

*cont’d from pg 8*

While relations have always been tense between Cuba and the U.S., they were heightened following the embassy closure and the Trump administration’s tightening of sanctions on Cuba.

Under President Joe Biden, the U.S. has eased some restrictions on things like remittances and family

travel from Miami to Cuba, but has fallen short of hopes by many in Cuba that a Biden presidency would return the island to its “Obama era.”

Restrictions on tourist travel to Cuba, and imports and exports of many goods, remain in place.

Also kindling tensions has been the Cuban government’s harsh treatment of

participants in the island’s 2021 protests, including hefty prison sentences doled out to minors, a constant point of criticism by the Biden administration.

Cuban officials have repeatedly expressed optimism about talks with the U.S. and steps to reopen visa services. Cuban Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Carlos Cossio said in No-

vember that ensuring migration through safe and legal pathways is a “mutual objective” by both countries.

But Cossio also blamed the flight of tens of thousands from the island on U.S. sanctions, saying that “there’s no doubt that a policy meant to depress the living standards of a population is a direct driver of migration.”

# Lifestyle

## Foreigners now banned from buying homes in Canada

By Nadine Yousif

BBC - A two-year ban on some foreigners buying homes in Canada has come into effect.

The ban aims to help ease one of the most unaffordable housing markets in the world.

As of this summer, the average home price in Canada is C\$777,200 (\$568,000; £473,700) - more than 11 times the median household income after taxes.

Some have been critical of the ban, saying it is unclear what impact it will have on Canada's housing market.

Non-Canadian residents make up less than 6% of homeowners in Ontario and British Columbia, where national statistics indicate home prices are the highest.

As of 1 January, the ban prohibits people who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents from buying residential properties, and imposes a C\$10,000 fine on those

who breach it.

In late December - 11 days before the ban came into effect - the Canadian government announced some exemptions to the regulation, including for international students who have been in the country for at least five years, refugee claimants and people with temporary work permits.

In a statement, federal housing minister Ahmed Hussen said the ban is meant to discourage buyers from looking at homes as commodities instead of a place to live and grow a family.

"Through this legislation, we're taking action to ensure that housing is owned by Canadians, for the benefit of everyone who lives in this country," Mr Hussen said.

While housing prices in Canada dipped slightly in 2022, they remain much higher than a decade ago.

Housing prices were up 48% last year compared to 2013, when the aver-



Canada's largest cities - Toronto and Vancouver - rank among the most unaffordable housing markets in the world.

age price of a home was C\$522,951.

Meanwhile, the average household income for Canadians has struggled to keep pace to rising home prices. The latest data indicates the median after-tax household income grew 9.8% from 2015 to 2020.

These numbers set Canada's housing market up as one of the most unaffordable in the world, ranking the country higher than New Zealand, the US and the UK, according to a Statista analysis of house-





price-to-income ratios.

The average home price in two of Canada's largest cities - Toronto and Vancouver - has topped the C\$1m mark, often putting them at the top of the list of top 10 most unaffordable cities in the world.

New Zealand passed a similar legislation banning foreign homebuyers in 2018 as the country grappled with its own housing affordability crisis.

However, inflation-adjusted home prices have continued to rise since the ban came into effect.

Other countries have enacted different measures to curb foreign homeownership, including by implementing designated restricted zones where non-residents are barred from purchasing homes, or bringing in specific fees on foreign buyers.

Thu 05   Day		Thu 05   Night	
<b>82°</b>		<b>75°</b>	
Partly cloudy skies. High 82F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.	14%  E 18 mph	A few clouds. Low around 75F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.	22%  E 16 mph
Humidity <b>69%</b>	UV Index <b>8 of 10</b>	Humidity <b>75%</b>	UV Index <b>0 of 10</b>
Sunrise <b>6:38 am</b>	Sunset <b>5:47 pm</b>	Moonrise <b>4:44 pm</b>	Moonset <b>5:33 am</b>
		○ Waxing Gibbous	



## US Virgin Islands fires attorney general in Epstein cases

AP - The governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands has fired the attorney general of the U.S. territory who pursued various cases against disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, including a lengthy legal fight that resulted in a \$105 million settlement.

The removal of Denise George comes just days after she filed a lawsuit against JPMorgan Chase in New York and accused the company of helping Epstein finance the illegal exploitation of women and children in the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond.

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. did not provide a reason for relieving George of her duties in a statement Sunday, saying only that she would be replaced by Assistant Attorney General Carol Thomas-Jacobs.

Governor spokesman Richard Motta did not return a message for comment, nor did executive assistant to the attorney general Jennifer Springette.

In the lawsuit filed against JPMorgan Chase on Dec. 27, the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands alleges the company “knowingly facilitated, sustained, and concealed the human trafficking network operated by Jeffrey Epstein from his home and base in the Virgin Islands, and financially benefited from this participation, directly or in-

directly, by failing to comply with federal banking regulations.”

It also alleges that the company concealed wire and cash transactions.

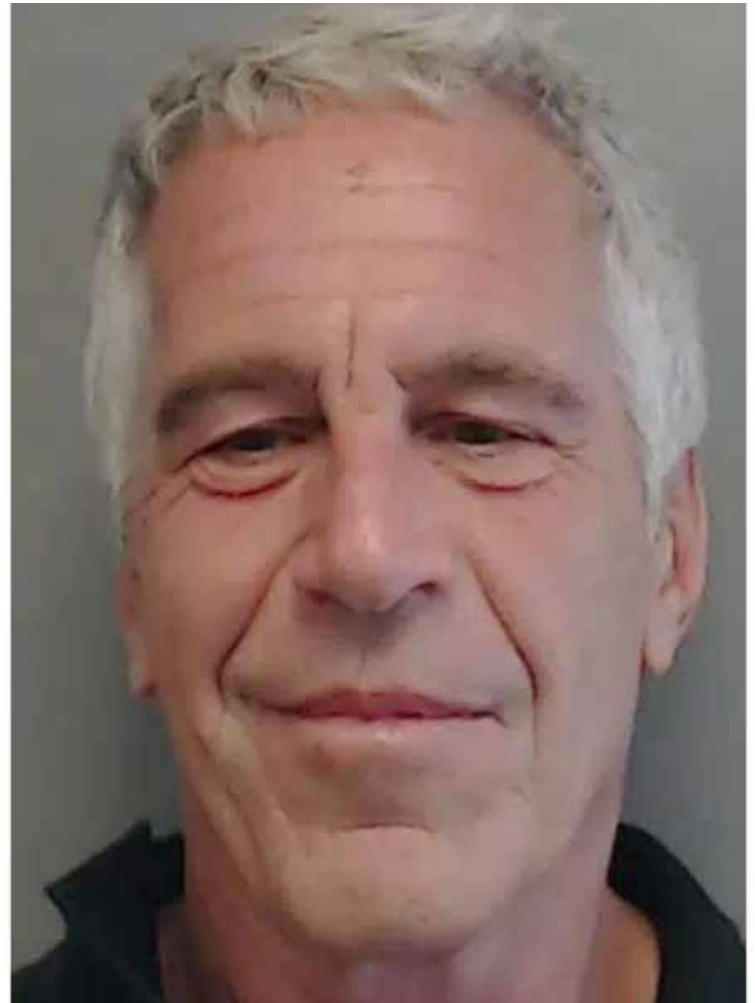
“Human trafficking was the principal business of the accounts Epstein maintained at JP Morgan,” the lawsuit reads. “JP Morgan turned a blind eye to evidence of human trafficking over more than a decade because of Epstein’s own financial footprint, and because of the deals and clients that Epstein brought and promised to bring to the bank.”

A JPMorgan Chase spokeswoman declined comment in a message Tuesday to The Associated Press.

On Dec. 30, JPMorgan Chase asked that a federal judge throw out lawsuits filed by two unidentified women alleging that big banks should have seen evidence of Epstein’s sex trafficking. The bank also said it didn’t commit any negligent acts.

The lawsuit that George filed against JPMorgan Chase comes after Epstein’s estate reached a \$105 million settlement with the U.S. Virgin Islands government in late November.

The Virgin Islands Daily News, a local newspaper, reported that Epstein had made various donations to



*This image provided by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement shows financier Jeffrey Epstein, on July 25, 2013. A statement released on Sunday, Jan 1, 2023, by the governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, relieved of her duties the attorney general who pursued various cases against disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, including a lengthy legal fight that resulted in a \$105 million settlement. Florida Department of Law Enforcement via AP File*

schools and organisations across the U.S. territory, and that the island’s former first lady was the office manager for one of his companies, Southern Trust. It also noted that Bryan, the governor, had granted Epstein’s company various hefty tax exemptions when he served as chairman of the Economic Development Commission.

In the previous lawsuit,

George, the former attorney general, alleged that Southern Trust Company was used as a cover for Epstein’s illegal activities.

Epstein killed himself at a federal jail in New York in August 2019 while awaiting trial. He had pleaded not guilty to charges of sexually abusing dozens of girls, some as young as 14 years old.

# Regional News



## St. Vincent looking to Guyana to help ease housing shortage

CMC - St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves says his country is buying ready-made houses from Guyana, more than two years after the La Soufrière volcano erupted, wreaking havoc across the country.

Gonsalves, who is on a four day-official visit to Guyana, visited the DuraVilla housing project, telling reporters that “Kingstown is buying ready-made houses from Guyana to replace what was lost.”

“We are making arrangements to buy and have delivered to us by the end of March, 15 one, two and three-bedroom houses,” Prime Minister Gonsalves said.

The ready-made, wooden houses will be procured from the privately-owned DuraVilla homes and the authorities said St. Vincent and the Grenadines could



Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves (in blue shirt), as well as other government officials during a tour of the DuraVilla houses in Guyana.

purchase at least 100 houses with Gonsalves saying Guyana produces impressive, low-cost houses.

“These houses, they are quite elegant and they are also reasonably priced. We

will naturally have to do the base and transportation costs...but they are good value for money,” he added.

Gonsalves, who is accompanied by his wife, Eloise, visited the Diamond

Housing Scheme on the East Bank of Demerara (EBD) and the privately-owned DuraVilla homes.

He said housing is one of his focus areas given the

*cont'd on pg 13*

## Plane crash near Turks and Caicos Islands airport

CMC - Rescue teams are searching for a plane with four people that originated from St. Kitts but crashed 17 miles southeast of the Turks and Caicos Islands airport.

In a statement, the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force said officials from the Department of Disaster Management and Emergencies as well as the Fire Department and

Emergency Services “are currently engaged in a search and rescue operation off the coast of Grand Turk.

The authorities said the operation is being supported by air support from the US Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection.

“Preliminary reports received state that at 11.40 a.m. on January 3, a call was placed to the 911 Op-

erations Center stating that a flight originating from St. Kitts with four persons crashed 17 miles southeast of the airport,” the statement said, without providing any further details.

It said, however, “this remains an ongoing operation” and the “release will be updated as more information comes to hand”.



## Dominica PM says domestic violence should be treated as a public problem

CMC - Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit says domestic abuse must be treated as a public problem as Dominica registered two deaths over the past 24 hours as a result of domestic violence.

Police have confirmed that the body of Marshall Jean Jacques was found hanging in the heights of Morne Prosper on Sunday. He was being sought in connection with the murder of his girlfriend, Avonelle Charles, a mother of seven, on December 31.

In the other incident, the body of medical practitioner, Dr. Velma Valmond, was found in a pool of blood at her home in Goodwill, on the outskirts of the capital last Friday. Police said the 32-year-old boyfriend of the 35-year-old doctor "was also found on the floor ....and in a state of distress... and was transported to the Accident and Emergency Department of the Dominica China Friendship Hospital" they said the man is now in a stable condition."

Their deaths brought to 18, the number of people murdered last year.

In a New Year's message, Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit said as his administration embarks upon the task



of "resetting" the agenda for Dominica, following the snap December general election, it will also involve a "re-assessment of our strategies and approaches to governance to deliver growth to our country and strengthen our social systems to promote the well-being of all persons.

"As we reset, we will continue to do our utmost to protect and support

our citizens in times of crisis and distress. More than ever, our children, women, and elderly need us to speak up loudly to shield them from abuse of all forms.

"Domestic abuse must be treated as a public problem which requires us to respond to prevent and punish all acts," he added.

"The reset, therefore, calls on us to be more empathetic to the needs and circumstances of others; and carve out a role for every person in Dominica in the creation of a more peaceful, progressive country."

The leader of the opposition United Workers Party (UWP), Dr. Thomson Fontaine, also condemned the killing of the two women within hours of each other, calling for more protection of those who are victims of domestic violence.

### *cont'd from pg 12*

damage his country has been grappling with in the aftermath of the April 2021 eruptions of La Soufrière.

"We lost a lot of houses during the 2021 volcanic eruptions," Prime Minister Gonsalves noted; with reports indicating that more than 13,000 people were displaced by the eruptions that forced the evacuation of a number of areas nearby.

Prime Minister Gonsalves said with funding secured, the country is keen on rebuilding, and has enlisted Guyana's help.

He praised both the government and private sectors for their efforts at providing low-cost housing solutions to thousands of people, adding that once Guyana's needs are met, there is a large Caribbean market for Guyana-made houses.

# Japan's PM Kishida vows deeper alliance with US on defence

AP — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Wednesday pledged to deepen his country's alliance with the United States under Japan's new defence policy that breaks from its exclusively self-defence-only stance in the face of growing regional tensions.

Kishida, speaking in a news conference after visiting Ise Shrine in central Japan, said he will visit Washington for talks with President Joe Biden to underscore the strength of the Japan-U.S. alliance and highlight closer cooperation between the countries under Japan's new security and defence strategies adopted last month.

The U.S. visit is part of Kishida's upcoming trip to most of the Group of Seven countries beginning Monday. Japan will host this year's G-7 summit in Hiroshima. Kishida said his meeting with Biden will be "very important" and "more significant than showing my face as G-7 president."

"We will show to the rest of the world an even stronger Japan-U.S. alliance, which is a lynchpin of Japanese security and diplomacy," Kishida said. "We will also show our further cooperation toward achieving a 'free and open Indo-Pacific.'"

Japan, under the new security and defence plans, is purchasing hundreds of U.S.-developed Tomahawks and other long-range cruise missiles to preempt possible attacks and also building up defences in southwestern Japan amid growing worries of a Taiwan emergency.

Japanese media said the U.S. and Japan are expected to discuss how they would cooperate in the event of a conflict over Taiwan.

Earlier Wednesday, the White House announced that Biden will host Kishida for economic and security consultations on Jan. 13.



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks during his New Year's press conference in Ise, central Japan Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023. Kyodo News via AP

Biden and Kishida are expected to discuss North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, amid concerns over the potential for another nuclear test by the reclusive nation, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, stability across the Taiwan Strait, climate change and economic issues, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

The two leaders last met in Bali, Indonesia, during November's Group of 20 summit.

Kishida will also visit France, Italy, Britain and Canada to meet their leaders during his Jan. 9-15 trip, according to Japan's Foreign Ministry.

Kishida on Wednesday also vowed to tackle Japan's dire problem of declining births, while pushing his "new capitalism" policy that he said will generate a "virtuous cycle of growth and distribution of wealth" to achieve a steady increase in salaries that have stalled for decades.

The number of babies born in Ja-

pan last year is expected to fall to a new record below 800,000 as part of a steady decline that is seen as eroding national strength.

"We cannot wait any longer," Kishida said. "From an economic perspective, we also need to allay the concerns of those saying they cannot invest in Japan because it's shrinking from declining births."

Kishida said the government will do more to expand support for child-care and reduce gender gaps in salaries and working environments to lower barriers for women.

Japan is the world's third-biggest economy but living costs are high and wage increases have been slow. The conservative government has lagged in making society more inclusive for children, women and minorities.

So far, the government's efforts to encourage people to have more babies has had limited impact despite introducing subsidy payments for pregnancy, childbirth and child care.



## Myanmar army leader touts election plan on Independence Day

AP - Myanmar's ruling military leader pardoned over 7,000 prisoners, including some political detainees, and detailed plans for an election later this year during a ceremony Wednesday marking the 75th anniversary of independence from Britain.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing urged other nations and international organisations, as well as his country's own people, to support "the genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system," a concept the ruling military has defined as its goal since it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

The army's takeover reversed nearly a decade of progress toward democracy after 50 years of military rule.

The plan for a general election is widely seen as an attempt to normalise the military's seizure of power through the ballot box and to deliver a result that ensures the generals retain control. The military will control the entire process and has spent the past two years enfeebling any credible opposition.

There was no sign of the pardoning of 7,012 prisoners, along with a partial commutation of the sentences of other inmates not convicted of serious crimes, including Suu Kyi. She has been held virtually incommunicado by the military since it seized power.



Myanmar's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of the military council, inspects officers during a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of Independence Day in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023. Min Aung Hlaing on Wednesday described plans for an election later this year and called for national unity in a speech as he led a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of independence from Britain. (AP Photo/Aung Shine Oo)

The 77-year-old Suu Kyi is serving 33 years imprisonment after being convicted of a series of politically tinged prosecutions brought by the military. They include illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching the official secrets act, sedition, election fraud and corruption.

Her supporters and independent analysts say the cases against her are an attempt to discredit her and legitimise the military's seizure of power while keeping her from taking part in the election that the military has said would take place by August this year.

At Insein Prison in Yangon - Myanmar's most notorious - relatives thronged the gates and celebrated as loved ones were driven out of the

compound on buses.

Asked how he felt about his release, a former information officer for Suu Kyi's political party, Htin Lin Oo, was restrained in his response. He was arrested on the morning of the army takeover and in February last year sentenced to three years in prison for incitement.

"What really matters is whether it's real freedom or not. I want a real kind of freedom," he said. "I don't just want to be released from jail but I also want freedom for all of my life, all of my hopes, my family and all the new generations."

The first real move toward elections could occur at the end of this month, when the latest six-month extension of a state of emergency declared by the military is completed.

"Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair elections will be held in line with the 2008 constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over state duties to the winning party in accordance with the democratic standards," Min Aung Hlaing said in his speech in the capital, Naypyitaw, where he also presided over a large-scale parade.

The military justified its takeover by claiming massive fraud in the 2020 election, though independent election observers did not find any major irregularities.

Military units and civil servants marched in formation close to the grandiose parliament complex while fighter jets, bombers and helicopters flew overhead.

Although not officially outlawed, Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy has effectively been broken up, its leaders and many members either jailed or in hiding. All forms of dissent are suppressed by security forces, sometimes with lethal force.

The party won a second successive landslide victory in the 2020 general election, a result that triggered its overthrow by the military the following year. The military action led to peaceful nationwide protests that security forces quashed, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. experts characterise as civil war.

## Former Colorado funeral home owner sentenced to 20 years for selling body parts

Reuters - A former Colorado funeral home owner was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison on Tuesday for defrauding relatives of the dead by dissecting 560 corpses and selling body parts without permission.

Megan Hess, 46, pleaded guilty to fraud in July. She operated a funeral home, Sunset Mesa, and a body parts entity, Donor Services, from the same building in Montrose, Colorado. The 20-year term was the maximum allowed under law.

Her 69-year-old mother, Shirley Koch, also pleaded guilty to fraud and was sentenced to 15 years. Koch's central role was chopping up the bodies, court records show.

"Hess and Koch used their funeral home at times to essentially steal bodies and body parts using fraudulent and forged donor forms," prosecutor Tim Neff said in a court filing. "Hess and Koch's conduct caused immense emotional pain for the families and next of kin."

The federal case was triggered by a 2016-2018 Reuters investigative series about the sale of body parts in the United States, a virtually unregulated industry. Former workers told

Reuters that Hess and Koch conducted unauthorised dismemberments of bodies, and a few weeks after a 2018 story was published, the FBI raided the business.

In their filing, prosecutors stressed the "macabre nature" of Hess' scheme and described it as one of the most significant body parts cases in recent U.S. history.

"This is the most emotionally draining case I have ever experienced on the bench," U.S. District Judge Christine M. Arguello said during Tuesday's sentencing hearing in Grand Junction, Colorado.

"It's concerning to the court that defendant Hess refuses to assume any responsibility for her conduct."

The judge ordered that Hess and Koch be sent to prison immediately.

Hess' lawyer said she has been unfairly vilified as a "witch," a "monster" and a "ghoul," when instead she is a "broken human being" whose conduct can be attributed to a traumatic brain injury at age 18. In court on Tuesday, Hess declined to speak to the judge.

Koch told the judge she was sorry and took responsibility for her actions.

Twenty-six victims described their horror at



Megan Hess, owner of Donor Services, is pictured during an interview in Montrose, Colorado, U.S., May 23, 2016 in this still image from video. REUTERS/Mike Wood

discovering what had happened to their loved ones.

"Our sweet mother, they dismembered her," Erin Smith said, selling her shoulders, knees and feet for profit. "We don't even have a name for a crime this heinous."

Tina Shanon, whose mother was dismembered against her will, told the court, "I've worn many masks to cover the pain. I'll never be OK."

It is illegal in the United States to sell organs such as hearts, kidneys and tendons for transplant; they must be donated. But selling body parts such as heads, arms and spines – which is what Hess did – for use in research or education is not regulated by federal law.

Hess committed crimes,

prosecutors said, when she defrauded relatives of the deceased by lying about cremations and by dissecting bodies and selling them without permission. The surgical-training companies and other firms which bought the arms, legs, heads and torsos from Hess did not know they had been fraudulently obtained, prosecutors said.

At her funeral home, Hess charged families up to \$1,000 for cremations that never occurred, prosecutors said, and she offered others free cremations in exchange for a body donation.

Prosecutors said she lied to more than 200 families, who received cremated ashes from bins mixed with the remains of different cadavers.



## Shai Hope among shortlist for ICC ODI Player of the Year

West Indies wicketkeeper-batsman Shai Hope is among an impressive list of four players on the shortlist for the ICC Men's One-Day International Player-of-the-Year 2022 award. The others are Pakistan captain Babar Azam, Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa, and Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza.

Hope made his ODI debut six years ago and since 2017, he has finished every year as the highest run-scorer in ODIs for the West Indies. This year was no different, and the 29-year-old was once again the team's leading batter. He did not get off to the greatest of starts this year, but he started to grind out runs in typical fashion in the later stages of the year, and finished with 709 runs at an average of 35.45 that included three hundreds and two half-centuries.

His first century was 119 not out off 130 balls against the Netherlands which earned him the Player-of-the-Match award in the first ODI of three in a series between May and June. A week later he made 127 against Pakistan in Multan which came off 134 balls and included 15 fours and a six. His most accomplished knock came against India in Trinidad when he made 115 off 135 balls with eight fours and three sixes in his 100th ODI appearance.

Babar, the ODI Player-of-the-Year for 2021 and the No. 1 ranked ODI batsman in the world, is in the running to do a repeat in 2022 after he again showed his prowess in the 50 overs-a-side format. In nine matches he had eight scores of more than 50, three of which he converted into hundreds, and he finished the year with 679 runs at a stunning average of 84.87.

Raza, 36, marked the resurgence



of Zimbabwe on the international scene with 645 runs at an average of 49.61 and strike rate of 87.16, including three hundreds, all of which came while chasing, with two resulting in victories and another almost taking Zimbabwe across the line against India. With the ball in hand, Raza was reliable, scalping eight wickets while giving away a little more than five runs an over.

Zampa continued to show why he has been a vital cog in the Australian white-ball set-up, finishing the year by matching his tally of 30 wickets from his debut year in 2016.

ICC Awards 2022 – shortlists:

Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year; Babar Azam (PAK), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Tim Southee (NZ), Ben Stokes (ENG)

Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year; Amelia Kerr (NZ), Smriti Mandhana (IND), Beth Mooney (AUS), Nat Sciver (ENG)

ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the

Year; Jonny Bairstow (ENG), Usman Khawaja (AUS), Kagiso Rabada (SA), Ben Stokes (ENG)

ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year; Babar Azam (PAK), Shai Hope (WI), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Adam Zampa (AUS)

ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year; Alyssa Healy (AUS), Shabnim Ismail (SA), Amelia Kerr (NZ), Nat Sciver (ENG)

ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year; Sam Curran (ENG), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Mohammad Rizwan (PAK), Suryakumar Yadav (IND)

ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year; Nida Dar (PAK), Sophie Devine (NZ), Smriti Mandhana (IND), Tahlia McGrath (AUS)

ICC Emerging Men's Cricketer of the Year; Finn Allen (NZ), Marco Jansen (SA), Arshdeep Singh (IND), Ibrahim Zadran (AFG)

ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year; Yastika Bhatia (IND), Darcie Brown (AUS), Alice Capsey (ENG), Renuka Singh (IND)

Shortlists for these categories were determined by a specialist panel of cricket writers and broadcasters, identifying the nominees based on statistics and overall achievements in international cricket through the calendar year.

ICC Men's and Women's Associate Cricketers of the Year will also be announced from the action in 2022. These categories will not feature shortlists and will be determined solely by the ICC Voting Academy.

The final categories that comprise the ICC Awards 2022 are the ICC Spirit of Cricket Award, and the ICC Umpire of the Year Award.

The ICC Spirit of Cricket Award

*cont'd on pg 18*

# Sports News



## CWI unveils 2023 West Indies Championship schedule for new Headley Weekes series

Exciting new four-day Series to be held after the West Indies Championship

Cricket West Indies has announced a new innovation for the long format of the game, with the addition of a triangular red-ball tournament to start at the end of the West Indies Championship in April, 2023.

The new Headley Weekes Series will feature three matches and three teams.

Team Headley and Team Weekes will be selected from the best performers in the 2023 West Indies Championship and players outside the starting West Indies Test XI. The new West Indies Academy will provide the third team in the new Series.

Team Headley and Team Weekes are named in honour of West Indies pioneers and legendary batting greats George Headley and Sir Everton Weekes, whose names are also honoured on the Trophy for the winners of the West Indies Championship. The matches will be played from 18 April to

6 May at Coolidge Cricket Ground CCG in Antigua.

Before that, the 2023 edition of West Indies Championship will be played across five rounds of four-day, red ball cricket featuring the six regional Franchise teams – defending champions Barbados Pride, Guyana Harpy Eagles, Jamaica Scorpions, Leeward Islands Hurricanes, Trinidad and Tobago Red Force, and Windward Islands Volcanoes.

The 2023 West Indies Championship commences in February. The first two rounds will be played from 1 February to 11 February in Grenada at the National Stadium and in Antigua at the CCG and the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS).

There will then be a break and the tournament will resume on 15 March and run until 1 April for the final three rounds, after which the champions will be crowned and presented with the Headley Weekes Trophy. These matches will be played in Trinidad at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy BLCA,



Queens Park Oval QPO and the Diego Martin Sports Complex DMSC.

Johnny Grave, CEO of CWI said, “We are delighted to unveil the Headley Weekes Series, which is a new idea that will extend the four-day season, create more opportunities for our players to showcase their skills and will be a huge incentive for them to strive towards selection into our ‘A’ Team, and ultimately our Test Team.

“It will also provide some strong competitive red-ball cricket for our new West Indies Academy Players as we continue to try to ensure that the next generation of players are being prepared along the pathway to international cricket. Whilst the West Indies Championship is once again going to be played on a ‘one’ round, five-match basis, with the plans we have for our ‘A’ Team and Academy to go on overseas tours

after the Headley Weekes Series we expect our best players in the region will still play at least ten four-day games in the first half of next year.”

### TOURNAMENT SCHEDULES

West Indies Championship 2023

for Headley Weekes trophy  
1 to 4 February: 1st round in Grenada and Antigua

8 to 11 February: 2nd round in Grenada and Antigua

15 to 18 March: 3rd round in Trinidad

22 to 25 March: 4th round in Trinidad

29 March to 1 April: 5th round in Trinidad

Full Fixtures to be announced soon

Headley Weekes Tri-Series to be played at CCG

19 to 22 April: Team Headley v West Indies Academy

26 to 29 April: Team Weekes vs West Indies Academy

3 to 6 May: Team Weekes vs Team Headley.

### cont'd from pg 17

acknowledges an action, moment, gesture, or decision on the field of play in international cricket during the year which best reflects the Spirit of Cricket, with the winning entry selected by the ICC.

The ICC Umpire of the Year Award celebrates the outstanding umpire from the calendar year, and is determined by votes collected from the Emirates Elite Panel of Match Referees, as well as playing captains from ICC Full Member nations.



## Can Ronaldo keep the eyes of the world on him in Saudi?

By James Robson

AP — Cristiano Ronaldo's latest coach spoke of his surprise as he looked out at a room filled with reporters on Tuesday.

"Normally after the game there is three or four journalists. Today, I don't know why..." Al Nassr head coach Rudi Garcia said at a news conference to present the Saudi Arabian club's superstar signing.

He was joking and it prompted laughter from the room.

"It's a new era!" said host and newsreader Weam Al Dakheel, who posed all of the questions to Ronaldo, Garcia and Al Nassr president Musalli Almuammar, despite around 100 journalists being present.

Ronaldo's arrival on a two-and-a-half-year contract, reportedly earning him up to \$200 million-a-year, is expected to heap unprecedented attention on Al Nassr and the Saudi Pro League.

However, at his first news conference, no questions were permitted from the floor - and the only prompted interaction from those present was to applaud on cue.

There were also shouts of "I love you Ronaldo" and mimics of his trademark "Siuuu" celebration.

This was a very stage-managed introduc-



*Cristiano Ronaldo smiles during a press conference for his official unveiling as a new member of Al Nassr soccer club in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023. Ronaldo, who has won five Ballon d'Ors awards for the best soccer player in the world and five Champions League titles, will play outside of Europe for the first time in his storied career. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)*

tion with a team of public relations officers ensuring it went off without a glitch.

Not that they could prevent his slip of the tongue when he mistakenly declared: "For me it is not the end of my career to come to South Africa."

It will be fascinating to see if Ronaldo's fame will see interest in Saudi soccer sustain beyond his first weeks in the country.

He has 528 million followers on Instagram, which is more than any other individual in the world.

And that has already had an effect on Al Nassr's account, which has risen from 1.2 million followers to 8.9 million since announcing his signing last week. That number is likely to grow even higher.

Almuammar is con-

vinced the deal will be worthwhile.

"So many people spoke about financing and funding. Once we have this greatest star as Ronaldo in Al Nassr we don't need such finance and such funding," he said. "We have so many sponsors who will work with us closely in the upcoming years and they are sponsors of this great agreement and we will have more revenues and proceeds commercially and economically and this is important for the Saudi league and Saudi football clubs."

Almuammar would not confirm the value of Ronaldo's contract, but, tellingly, added that "it is normal he will be the highest in terms of cost or salary."

One of the most surprising moves in soccer history

has raised questions about Ronaldo's motives as well as those of Saudi Arabia, amid accusations of so-called "sportswashing" to improve its reputation globally.

Saudi's Public Investment Fund led the takeover of Premier League club Newcastle United in 2021 and on Tuesday the club's manager Eddie Howe said there was "no truth" in reports it had an option to sign Ronaldo on loan if it qualified for the Champions League next season.

There is also speculation Saudi Arabia could bid to host the 2030 World Cup.

Now the signing of a player widely considered to be one of the greatest of all time is another significant step to increase the country's influence on soccer.

Ronaldo said he was driven by the challenge of a new league, but also changing the impression of Saudi soccer around the world.

"I know the league is very competitive. People don't know that, but I know because I saw many games," he said.

It is, however, a significant step down for a man who has won five Champions Leagues and five Ballon d'Or awards for the best player in the world.

He will hope to add to his trophy count with Al

*cont'd on pg 20*

# Sports News



## David Gold: West Ham United co-chairman dies following short illness

BBC - West Ham United co-chairman David Gold has died at the age of 86 following a short illness

A lifelong Hammers fan, the club said he passed away "peacefully" on Wednesday morning with his fiancée and daughters by his side.

Gold, previously the chairman and co-owner of Birmingham City, became joint-chairman at West Ham with David Sullivan in 2010.

"I am extremely sad to hear this news," said manager David Moyes.

"On behalf of all of the players and my staff at the training ground, I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to David Gold's family at this very difficult time.

"Mr Gold was a regular visitor to Rush Green and always a source of great support and encouragement to myself and the players. It was clear that he had a gen-

uine and sincere love for the club and was a true supporter at heart.

"He took a great interest in the people working behind the scenes and was always keen to help in any way he could. He will be greatly missed."

Gold grew up directly opposite the Boleyn Ground - West Ham's former stadium - and played for the club's boys' and youth teams.

"Of all our joint ventures, none gave us more pride and happiness than the day we took ownership of West Ham United, our club, in January 2010," said Sullivan.

"David had a long-standing connection with the Hammers, having grown up opposite the Boleyn Ground in Green Street, and represented the club at junior level.

"He always wanted what was best for West Ham



David Gold has been co-chairman at West Ham since 2010

United, and his passing is a great loss for all of us."

Gold was at Birmingham City for 16 years, selling his shares in 2009 before he and Sullivan took over at West Ham in January 2010.

West Ham said their takeover "helped to steady the ship and protect the club's future during a period of great financial uncertainty".

His tenure at the club oversaw its move to the

London Stadium, as well as relegation and subsequent promotion back to the Premier League and playing in the Europa League.

Outside of football, Gold was also the chairman of retail chain Ann Summers and previously co-owned an adult magazine company and corporate air service.

Writing on Twitter, Birmingham City said it was "devastated" to learn of Gold's passing.

*cont'd from pg 19*

Nasser currently top of the league.

Ronaldo's 701 club goals should also be boosted greatly during his time in Saudi, even if he has struggled for form so far this season.

For the thousands that turned up at Al Nassr's Mrsool Park stadium on Tuesday, they just wanted to get a first sight of their hero.

Even on a rainy and chilly night in Riyadh the roads around the stadium were backed up with traffic. Supporters queued at gates, waiting patiently to make their way inside as if this was

a match day.

Ronaldo, meanwhile, was greeted as if turning up for a movie premier, stepping out of a white Range Rover with blacked out windows while cameras flashed all around.

His image was projected on the outside of the stadium, while strobe lights added to the effect.

Wearing a grey three-piece suit and a blue tie, he strode confidently into the news conference to applause before taking his seat.

"I'm so proud to make this big decision in my life. In Europe my work

is done. I won everything and played for the most important clubs in Europe. This is a new challenge," he said.

Later he changed into the yellow and blue kit of his new club and met his teammates before stepping out onto the field to chants of his name, fireworks and smoke machines.

A player who has lived in the spotlight for the majority of his career was centre stage with the eyes of the world on him again.

How long that will last, remains to be seen.



## Pelé buried at cemetery in Brazilian city he made famous

AP — Brazil said a final farewell to Pelé on Tuesday, burying the legend who unified the bitterly divided country.

Newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva paid his respects at Vila Belmiro, the stadium where Pelé played for most of his career.

Pelé died last week at age 82 and was laid to rest in Santos, the city where he became famous after moving there at age 15 to play for Santos FC. The funeral Mass was held at the team's Vila Belmiro stadium before his black casket was driven through the streets of the of Santos in a firetruck.

It was taken into the cemetery as bands played the team's official song and a Roman Catholic hymn. Before the golden-wrapped casket arrived, attendees sang samba songs that Pelé liked.

Some Brazilian soccer legends weren't there.

"Where's Ronaldo Nazario? Where's Kaká, where's Neymar?" asked Claudionor Alves, 67, who works at a bakery next to the stadium. "Do they think they will be remembered like Pelé will? These guys didn't want to stop their vacations, that's the problem."

Geovana Sarmiento, 17, waited in a three-hour line to view Pelé's body as it lay in repose. She came with her father, who was wearing a Brazil shirt with Pelé's name.

"I am not a Santos fan, neither is my father. But this guy invented Brazil's national team. He made Santos stronger, he made it big, how could you not respect him? He is one of the greatest people ever, we needed to honour him," she said.

Caio Zalke, 35, an engineer, wore a Brazil shirt as he waited in the line.



*The remains of late Brazilian soccer great Pele are carried into Necropole Ecumenica Memorial Cemetery at the end of his funeral procession in Santos, Brazil, Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023. (AP Photo/Andre Penner)*

"Pelé is the most important Brazilian of all time. He made the sport important for Brazil and he made Brazil important for the world," Zalke said.

Pelé in the 1960s and 1970s was perhaps the world's most famous athlete. He met presidents and queens, and a civil war in Nigeria was put on hold so people could watch him play. Many Brazilians credit Pelé with putting the country on the world stage for the first time.

Rows of shirts with Pelé's No. 10 were placed behind one of the stadium's goals, waving in the city's summer winds. A section of the stands filled up with bouquets of flowers placed by mourners and sent by clubs and star players — Neymar and Ronaldo among them — from around the world as loudspeakers played the song "Eu sou Pelé" ("I am Pelé") recorded by him.

The crowd was mostly local, although some came from far away, and many mourners were too young ever

to have seen Pelé play. The mood was light, as people filtered out of the stadium to local bars, wearing Santos FC and Brazil shirts.

Claudio Carrança, 32, a salesman, said: "I never saw him play, but loving Pelé is a tradition that goes from father to son in Santos. I learned his history, saw his goals, and I see how Santos FC is important because he is important. I know some Santos fans have children supporting other teams. But that's just because they never saw Pelé in action. If they had, they would feel this gratitude I feel now."

Among those at the stadium was Pelé's best friend Manoel Maria, also a former Santos player.

"If I had all the wealth in the world I would never be able to repay what this man did for me and my family," Maria said. "He was as great a man as he was as a player — the best of all time. His legacy will outlive us all. And that can be seen in this long line

*cont'd on pg 22*

# Sports News



## Sea View Farm and Jennings United remain unbeaten in Second Division

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

Sea View Farm secured five wins in as many matches by pulling off a 4-2 win against Real Blizzard at the ABFA's Technical Center on Tuesday, 3rd January.

This resulted in Real Blizzard's first loss in four matches.

Jennings United also claimed their fifth win in as many matches by prevailing 4-2 over Bethesda at the Bethesda playing field.

This was Bethesda's second loss in four matches.

Tuesday's results ensured that both Sea View Farm and Jennings United remained at the top of the standings with 15 points apiece.

The largest margin of victory, however, was achieved by English Harbour who hammered



*Jennings United beat host Bethesda on 3rd January to maintain their perfect start in the ABFA Second Division league. (File Photo)*

TAMO FC 6-0 at the Golden Grove playing field.

Nigel Graham and Dominic Christopher each scored twice, while the other two goals were scored by Wayne Phillip and Najee Browne.

This was the third loss in as many encounters for TAMO FC.

There was success as well for Attacking Saints who also extended their unbeaten run to four wins

and a draw in five matches.

Attacking Saints defeated Young Warriors 3-1 at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

Corey Jarvis, T'Noy Andrew and Devonta Geron each converted once for Attacking Saints while Reuben Rubel scored for Young Warriors.

Young Warriors have now suffered four losses in six encounters.

Action in the ABFA

First Division will resume today when Police face Green City at the Police Recreation Grounds at 4:20pm. Lion Hill will meet Garden Stars at the Golden Grove playing field at 5pm.

West Ham will tackle Young Lions at the Princess Margaret School playing field at 4:20pm while Bendals will take on Potters Tigers at the Bendals playing field at 4:20pm.

*cont'd from pg 21*

with people of all ages here."

FIFA President Gianni Infantino told journalists that every country should name a stadium after Pelé.

"I am here with a lot of emotion, sadness, but also with a smile because he gave us so many smiles," Infantino said. "As FIFA, we will pay a tribute to the 'King' and we ask the whole world to observe a minute of silence."

Another fan and friend in line was Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes.

"It is a very sad moment, but we are now seeing the real meaning of this legendary player to our country," Mendes told journalists. "My office has shirts signed by Pelé, a picture of him as a goalkeeper, also signed by him. DVDs, photos, a big collection of him."

Pelé had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical centre where he had been hospitalised said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

Pelé led Brazil to World Cup titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970 and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pelé's record during this year's World Cup in Qatar.



## GNFC working to defy unrealistic expectations of the ABFA in national football development

President of the Generation Next Football Club (GNFC) Ricky Santos says it is unrealistic to expect the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA) alone to develop all aspects of the sport in the country.

Santos made this declaration in light of his organisation's plan to resume its annual Gomez/Netherlands Insurance Youth League which was started by GNFC in 2015.

Like many other activities, it was suspended when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.

The league, which accommodates boys and girls from Under-7 to Under-17, is set to resume on Saturday, 28th January.

Although the ABFA is the governing body of the sport in Antigua and Barbuda, Santos said all member clubs, including Generation Next FC, must play their role in the promotion, growth and development of football in the nation.

"To be quite frank, I think it's a

lot to ask the ABFA to do everything. I know the ABFA has its shortcomings and I know many of people like to blast them, including myself from time to time, but at the end of the day, to ask one organisation to do all the work is unrealistic.

"We all have to step in and do our little part, and at Generation Next, we are trying to do our small, little endeavours in part to assist the youngsters in developing."

Over the last 10 years, there has been a proliferation of youth football academies developed by many clubs and individuals who have answered the call to introduce the sport to young people.

While this development is encouraging, enough competitions have not been organised to engage the youngsters and promote their development.

This was a major factor which drove GNFC's decision to start the Gomez/Netherlands Insurance Youth League to fill the need for more youth

football competitions f.

Santos said the football programmes also help to provide youngsters with positive alternatives that reduce the likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

"I want to stress again that I think once we create these programmes, it helps to keep them off the streets. It also helps them to have a purpose and somewhere to go," Santos stated.

"I think it is our responsibility as adults to create these programmes that can assist these youngsters. We were all young at one time and if you don't have a structured programme to be in, you will go astray.

"You are going to do things that you would not normally do if you are not in a controlled environment. If you are under the guidance of your coaches or the authoritative figures, you tend not to do these things.

"So I am hoping that these things will change, across all sports, not just speaking for football."



Young Golden Grove Primary (in blue) and Five Islands Primary (yellow and black) footballers compete in the final of the 2022 Primary Schools' Cup at the Golden Grove playing field on 6th May, 2022. (Photo: Elwin Francis)

## Adams says yachting sector continues to boost the national economy

The Commercial Director of Antigua Sailing Week and past president of the Caribbean Sailing Association, Alison Sly-Adams, said the yachting industry continues to make a significant financial injection into the country's economy.

According to Adams, Antigua Sailing Week alone contributes at least EC\$6 million into the local economy.

This year's Sailing Week is scheduled to be held from 25th April to 5th May.

"The industry is incredible in terms of its impact on the economy. I can't give you a number for the whole industry, but I can tell you for Sailing Week, we calculate it at around EC\$6 million just for the week that comes into the Antiguan economy. But that's one week of the year," Adams stated.

The Antigua Sailing Week is one of the major revenue earning events on the national yachting and sailing calendar of activities.

Among the major events planned this year are the Antigua Yacht Club Round the Island Race on 15th January, the Jolly Harbour Valentine's Regatta from 10th to 12th February, the Antigua 360 on 17th February and the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) 600 from 20th to 24th February.

The Superyacht Challenge Antigua will be held from the 6th to 12th March, the Antigua Yacht Club Annual Laser Open from 26th to 27th March, the Oyster Regatta from 5th to 8th April and the Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta from 19th to 24th April.

The Peters & May Round Antigua



*The 218ft ketch Hetairos won all its races to capture the Privateer Class during the 11th edition of the Superyacht Challenge Antigua which ended at the Nelson's Dockyard in English Harbour on Sunday, 13th March, 2022. (Photo: Claire Matches)*

Race will take place on 29th April, then the Antigua Sailing Week.

Dockyard Day will be held on 6th May, the Antigua to Bermuda Race will be staged on 9th May and the Mike Pigott Jr Memorial Classic Fishing tournament will take place on the 26th May.

The Antigua and Barbuda Sport Fishing Tournament is slated for the 27th and 28th May, Optimist will be held from 2nd to 9th July and the Francis Nunes Jr. Fishing Tournament will take place on 23rd September.

Adams, who is also the General Manager of the National Sailing Academy (NSA), said the economy benefits greatly from the money spent by the yachting community on food, fuel, the maintenance of their vessels and other

services.

"Things like fuel and water, which they need to buy obviously if you are out there at sea for days and days, you have to get those things, the essentials such as food and that kind of thing," she said.

"But also, it's all the service providers who we've got who know how to fix things and do things on boats. It's just like a house. You have a house, over time your electrics go, your plumbing goes and some things break down. It's no different on a boat because everything can go wrong at some time on a boat.

"That's really one of the most important things. We could not have all of the events we have without having the services that we have here."