



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

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FREEMANS VILLAGE MAN DROWNS OFF BIRD ISLAND

Story on Page 2



Participants and coordinators in the latest training course offered by St. Paul Synergies and the UWI FIC. *Story on page 6.*

Freemans Village fisherman drowns off Bird Island

Frederick Dick of Freemans Village has been identified as the person who lost his life in an apparent drowning off Bird Island on Monday.

Dick, 55, was out spearfishing with a friend when the incident occurred.

Spearfishing requires great skill, as these fishermen often free dive to hunt their catch.

The experienced fisherman is believed to have encountered difficulty in the water as he reportedly disappeared from sight for some time.

This caused alarm and a search began to locate him.

Sometime into the search, his unresponsive body was found floating



near where he disappeared.

According to police, Dick was finally brought ashore at about 2:40pm and was shortly after pronounced

dead by a medical doctor.

A police investigation is now underway into the circumstances surrounding Dick's untimely demise.

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A&BUT agrees to March deadline for school security upgrades

Classes in public schools across the country are expected to return to normal today following an emergency meeting on Monday between the teachers' union and government to discuss the issues which led public school educators to take industrial action yesterday.

Yesterday's meeting, held at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, included Labour Minister, Steadroy Benjamin, officials from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries and the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers (A&BUT).

The agenda centred on issues raised by the union on behalf of its members, which included improved security, a promised honorarium for department heads and teacher upgrades.

While the finer details of the meeting are unknown, a source revealed that the government's side, led by Minister Benjamin gave the undertaking that the concerns related to security in public schools to prevent vandalism and secure the safety for teachers and students will be addressed, in full, by the end of March, 2023.

As it relates to the honorarium for educators who have been appointed to head departments, updates on the progress of this commitment are to be provided by the Ministry of Education to the A&BUT.

Upgrading teachers who have completed higher education is an ongoing process that will continue.

The A&BUT agreed to give their employers and their representatives 21 days in which to resolve the issues raised by having them rectified before the end of the deadline or by proposing a plan and timeline in which they will be settled.



Should the government fail to fulfil its side of the bargain, the union has indicated that its industrial action will resume.

It is believed, however, that the A&BUT has accepted the timeline proposed by the government to address the concerns raised.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education, Sports and Creative Industries, Daryll Matthew, insists that the government has been fulfilling its promises to improve security at public school plants across the island.

In an appearance on the Browne and Browne show on Pointe FM on Saturday, Minister Matthew said every effort is being made to ensure the safety of stakeholders in education.

"We committed to putting adequate lighting on our school plants and we committed to improving the presence of the physical security guards. To date, I'm happy to say that following the procurement of the lights and cameras, we have installed cameras in about three of our schools, Irene B. Williams is one,

Clare Hall [Secondary] is one, I believe they have now got to Princess Margaret or if not, it's going to be happening soon.

"So, we have been living up to the commitment that we gave to the Antigua and Barbuda Union of Teachers," Matthew said.

The minister of education rejected claims that the recent invasion of Clare Hall Secondary School could have been prevented if there were more security guards on duty.

During the incident at the end of January, two people, armed with a machete and golf club, gained access to the campus by scaling the school's rear wall in search of a student whom they intended to attack.

Matthew said the unfortunate incident did not amount to a breach of the agreement between the government and A&BUT.

He pledged, however, that the administration will continue the work it has started to make public school plants safer for their faculty, students, and support staff.

A&B urges OAS to take urgent action to remedy Haiti's rapidly deteriorating situation

Antigua and Barbuda has called upon the Organization of American States (OAS) to take swift and decisive action concerning the steadily deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Haiti.

Addressing the OAS Permanent Council last Friday, senior Antiguan and Barbudan diplomat, Sir Ronald Sanders impressed upon his colleagues the dire circumstances in which the people of Haiti now find themselves.

“The situation in Haiti is grave,” Sir Ronald said. “The activities of more than 200 gangs and their control of large parts of Haiti, including more than 60 per cent of the Capital, their utter contempt for the rule of law, and what amounts to their reign of terror cannot be tolerated by any of our member states.

“Action must be taken urgently to address the situation.”

While Haiti has a long and sad history of hardship as a result of crises triggered by natural disasters, outbreaks of disease and political upheavals, the relative stability the country embraced in recent years was shattered with the brutal assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on 7th July, 2021.

Since then, the country has battled not just with political upheaval as new



Sir Ronald Sanders

elections have not yet been held, but also an outbreak of cholera which has further weakened the country's already fractured systems and depleted its scant resources.

Five million people in Haiti currently experience food insecurity; reported kidnappings soared to more than 1,200 last year, more than double the number in 2021; and there were 2,200 homicides in 2022.

Despite the intervention of friendly nations, both within the Caribbean region and globally, Sir Ronald said Haiti and the Haitian people themselves must take a stand to rescue their nation from further disaster.

“We are also concerned that the authorities in Haiti – and other parties – have not been able to achieve the unity of purpose and common cause that Haiti urgently needs,” said Sir Ronald in his address.

He continued, “While my delegation welcomes the Accord, which was

signed on December 21st, 2022, by representatives of the Haitian governments and some representatives of the private sector, political parties and civil society, for an “Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections”, we are troubled that the process is not inclusionary enough.”

This political unrest and a dysfunctional judiciary has given strength to the country's criminal underground and the rise of gang activity, but Ambassador Sanders raised alarming concerns which, if true, could spell more trouble for Haiti and its people.

“We are troubled by reports of collaboration between some politicians and members of the private sector with some of the criminal gangs.

If, indeed, these reports are true, they do not bode well for a swift end to the rule of crime and terror that now overwhelms the country, especially its law enforcement agencies,” Sir

Ronald said.

Ambassador Sanders recommitted Antigua and Barbuda's support of Haiti through this crisis, but added that for progress to be made and order restored, the Haitian people must take action.

“Friendly governments can help, but Haitians must do the necessary and constructive work,” he said.

To this end, a recently passed Resolution tabled during the Permanent Council's meeting outlined several measures that OAS member nations will take in support of Haiti.

“We will establish a Working Group which, with the assistance of the General Secretariat, will convene a Security, Humanitarian, Electoral, and Democracy Assistance Dialogue with the participation of the Government of Haiti and the High-Level Transition Council that was recently established in Haiti.

“The purpose will be to gather information, on the priority assistance that is required, so that each of our member states and permanent observer countries, could determine how best each can help to enable, and ensure, inclusive participation of Haitian stakeholders in arrangements for free, fair and credible elections and democratic transition in Haiti,” Ambassador Sanders outlined.

New Agriculture Minister to hold regular interaction with farmers

Minister of Agriculture, E. P. Chet Greene, has promised to hold regular, informal meetings with farmers in which the goal is to hear their concerns and challenges with a view to finding solutions.

The minister gave the commitment following visits to two farming communities last Friday in which he engaged with local farmers.

Minister Greene, accompanied by Chief Extension Officer, Owolabi Elabanjo, travelled to Burkes Estate, which is located east of All Saints Village, and Table Hill Garden in Liberta.

According to Elabanjo, the farmers raised several issues which have grave implications for their industry.

These included assistance with land preparation, the provision of machinery, marketing their crops, the ability to acquire a line of credit with Central Marketing Corporation (CMC) and the price of agricultural inputs.

With respect to marketing, Elabanjo explained that talks centred around CMC's role in providing this service and whether a separate entity should be established to concentrate on this key area.

In the case of the cost of agricultural inputs, while

farmers complained about the spiralling cost of these items, it was explained that they are already imported to the country free of duty. It was acknowledged, however, that significant increases in the cost of shipping have had a negative impact on their cost.

On the issue of water, Minister Greene gave the commitment that he will discuss the matter with Utilities Minister, Melford Nicholas, to whom he would propose a 25 percent discount on the rate of water supplied to farmers.

The farmers also re-

cont'd on pg 6



Agriculture Minister, E. P. Chet Greene (right) listening to farmers during an informal visit to agricultural areas

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Armed bandit remanded on robbery charges

Delarno Davis, who appeared in Saint John's Magistrates' Court on Monday morning facing two charges of robbery, has been remanded to His Majesty's Prison.

The Golden Grove New Extension teenager was caught on surveillance camera last Tuesday carrying out the armed, daytime robbery of a variety store on Corn Alley.

Davis made off with an undisclosed sum of cash, jewellery and electronic items valued at EC\$30,973.00.

Police also linked the 18-year-old to the armed robbery of a supermarket on Fort Road on 4th February, 2023.

Davis allegedly entered the establishment wearing a ski mask and hooded shirt and reportedly pointed a gun at the cashier and demanded money.

He then reportedly threatened to shoot her if she did not comply.

The employee handed over the money that was available in the cash register to the bandit, after which he made his escape.



Appearing in the courtroom of Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh, Davis was not required to enter a plea, as the offences he is

charged with are indictable and, consequently, must be handled by the High Court.

He was remanded to His Majesty's Prison until 27th April, 2023, when committal proceedings are due to commence in the case of the Fort Road robbery.

Committal proceedings for last week's incident have been scheduled for 3rd May, 2023.

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requested that identification cards be issued to registered farmers which will distinguish them as bonafide when conducting business.

Minister Greene said this request could be implemented within a matter of

months.

The meeting concluded with Minister Greene instructing the Chief Extension Officer to work diligently with farmers to address their concerns.

It is expected that these meetings will continue each Friday.

Guys and Dolls
Simply Classy

268-782-6020

NYPAAB condemns youth violence, calls for urgent intervention

The National Youth Parliament Association of Antigua and Barbuda (NYPAAB) has issued a statement condemning the alarming increase in incidents of violent behaviour and criminal activity among youth.

Describing the trend as “an alarming concern” the NYPAAB expressed worry that “The significant increase in gangs, travelling with weapons and other such horrendous acts have resulted in severe injuries and as of recent, young people being remanded to prison.”

The organisation called on “...relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to swiftly implement a combative and rehabilitative solution for the dreadful situation”.

Recognising young people as the future of the nation and the deleterious im-



National Youth Parliament Association of Antigua & Barbuda

pact deviant behaviour will have on the prosperity of the country, the NYPAAB said it is critical that youths understand their role as the “backbone” of society and as “one of the main agents for progressive change”.

In light of the important societal role young people play, NYPAAB continued, “These acts of violence and crime

pose a serious threat to the security of our country, creating an atmosphere of instability which threatens our peace and safety.”

The organisation also called for more structured after-school activities to be implemented, which will help young people channel their energy constructively in their free time.

Students participate in St. Paul’s HR training programme

Seventeen students are taking part in the second Strategic Human Resource Management course launched by St. Paul’s Synergies and Member of Parliament for St. Paul, E. P. Chet Greene, through the University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus

(UWI FIC). Coordinator of the programme, Arlene Weste, explained that the course will run for thirteen weeks.

Last year, twenty-one participants completed a Quality Service Management in Hospitality and Tourism course that was

also offered in collaboration with the UWI FIC.

St. Paul’s Synergies, which is a non-profit entity associated with the St. Paul Empowerment Centre in Liberta, also plans to start another training module in March. The module, this time offered in partnership

with the UWI Open Campus, will focus on Computer Literacy.

Other courses that have been completed include mask making, floral arrangements, small engine repair, soap making, information technology and QuickBooks.

While St. Paul’s residents in particular are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities being offered, people who reside outside of the constituency are also welcomed to take advantage of the training programmes and the chance they give to improve one’s education and skills set.

Tue 14 Day		Tue 14 Night	
80°		73°	
7% ESE 10 mph		21% ENE 8 mph	
Sunshine. High around 80F. Winds ESE at 5 to 10 mph.		A few clouds from time to time. Low 73F. Winds ENE at 5 to 10 mph.	
Humidity 70%	UV Index 10 of 10	Humidity 79%	UV Index 0 of 10
Sunrise 6:34 am	Sunset 6:08 pm	Moonrise 12:59 am	Moonsset 12:21 pm
		Waning Crescent	

The adults celebrating child-free lives

By Maddy Savage

From consciously child-free influencers, to online communities for people who've decided against having kids, the no-kids movement is booming – but so is the backlash.

In one of Marcela Munoz's most recent videos, the 27-year-old dances in a sunny park, wearing denim shorts and high tops. This carefree, untethered social-media post is the embodiment of her mission to celebrate her child-free lifestyle. As the owner of Childfree Millennial TikTok, Instagram and YouTube accounts, Munoz is one of a growing number of influencers producing content designed to validate why they never want to have kids.

"The number-one thing that I always say when people ask me why I'm child-free – it's because I don't have a desire to have children," says Munoz, a small-business owner from Kansas, US. She also believes kids would interfere with her passions for spontaneous travel, football training and regular lie-ins. In one of her other recent posts, she jokes, "if you have baby fever take a nap, if you enjoyed that nap don't have kids". "I can't tell you how many times my [parent] friends are like 'Oh my gosh, I only got two hours of sleep last night, my kids were throwing up and I had to take care of that,'" says Munoz.



says Munoz. "That doesn't sound appealing to me at all!"

While deciding against having children is nothing new, a trend for owning the 'child-free' label and discussing that choice more openly is picking up pace. Alongside the rise of individual influencers like Munoz, online communities and support groups for child-free adults have mushroomed in the past couple of years. But while the child-free movement is growing, researchers argue that societal acceptance and understanding of the choice to live without kids is shifting at a much slower pace.

Choosing a life without kids

Most child-free online communities define their members as people who have consciously decided never to have children. This contrasts with other adults who don't currently have kids, but want them in the

future, or adults who had hoped to have children, but were unable to (usually labelled 'childless'). Childless people may have faced fertility challenges or other medical issues, or been affected by social circumstances, such as not meeting a suitable or willing partner at the right time, for instance.

The term 'child-free' has existed since the early 1900s, although it wasn't until the 1970s that feminists began using it more widely, as a way of denoting women who were voluntarily childless as a distinct group. The suffix 'free' was chosen to capture the sense of freedom and lack of obligation felt by many of those who had voluntarily decided not to have kids.

However, most academic research has typically "lumped all people who don't have children into the same group," explains Elizabeth Hintz, an assistant

professor in communication at the University of Connecticut, US, who's studied perceptions of child-free identities. This doesn't reflect the very different experiences and feelings of child-free and childless people, she says, and means there's a lack of long-term comparative data looking specifically at either group.

Nevertheless, in our hashtag-heavy social media age, the 'child-free' label is gaining fresh momentum, says Hintz, as more people who've opted not to have children have reclaimed the word. This trend sits alongside some research that suggests growing numbers of adults in the West may be actively choosing not to have kids. In the US, a 2021 Pew Research Center study showed some 44% of non-parents aged 18 to 49 don't think they will have children, up from 37% in 2018. More than half listed

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their main reason as “don’t want to have children” rather than more circumstantial factors such as medical issues or not wanting to raise a child without having a partner. In England and Wales, a 2020 YouGov study suggested that more than half of British 35-to-44-year-olds who haven’t had kids never plan on doing so.

The reasons people don’t want children

The reasons millennials and Gen Zers are choosing to be child-free are wide-ranging, says Hintz, although there are several common trajectories.

“There are people who know early in life that they don’t want children and they never waver. There are people who come to the decision later in life and then proclaim it as a part of their identity. And then there are people who are sort of on the fence about whether to have children that might flip-flop back and forth.”

Ciara O’Neill, a London-based 31-year-old social media manager, puts herself firmly in the first category. “I’ve never really wanted to have a child, or I’ve never really seen myself as like a future parent,” she says. “I don’t feel like I have this maternal yearning to procreate, really.” Her boyfriend of three years feels the same way, she says, and the couple also believes having kids would make it more challenging for them to travel or work abroad in the future.

For Cristina Garcia Trapero, an English teacher working in Spain, deciding she wanted to identify as child-free was more of a gradual process. “When I was a teen or in my early 20s, I thought about kids, but it was because I believed that was what everyone had to do,” she says. Now 32 and currently single, she started embracing a child-free identity a couple of years ago, after concluding she couldn’t see herself as a mum. “I am a person who enjoys silence and alone time, and

I wouldn’t be able to have that with kids,” she says.

Garcia Trapero also lists “climate change and the state of the world” as external factors that influenced her reasoning, reflecting a small but growing trend identified by child-free researchers such as Hintz. In the 2021 Pew Research study, 9% of non-parents said that “the state of the world” was the reason they probably won’t have kids, with 5% citing a concern for the environment.

I’ve never really wanted to have a child, or I’ve never really seen myself as like a future parent. I don’t feel like I have this maternal yearning to procreate, really – Ciara O’Neill

Margaret O’Connor, a counselor and psychotherapist in Limerick, Ireland, works primarily with clients in Hertz’s so-called “flip-flop” group, and hosts the Are Kids for Me? podcast. She says practical and financial issues like living in insecure rental accommodation, working in the gig economy and limited access to health-care are also increasingly pertinent for many millennials, as they weigh up whether to have children.

“These things can maybe be mitigated or navigated to a degree if the desire is strong enough to have a baby – you can move or get a different job,” she explains. However, she says growing numbers of young people who are uncertain about becoming parents are stopping to question what exactly those kinds of “sacrifices” might look like, in contrast to previous generations, who may have been more likely to follow societal norms and start a family, anyway.

Increased awareness of the potential physical and mental toll of starting a family is also having an influence, says O’Connor. “The women that I work with are really taking account of the impact of pregnancy and childbirth, and also their ability to be as engaged as they want physically and

mentally,” says O’Connor. “Whether people live near their family of origin or friends network is also definitely a factor.”

The rise of child-free advocates

For a generation that grew up sharing everything on social media, Munoz argues that child-free millennials initially dragged their heels when it came to vocalising and celebrating their decisions online, but says there’s been “a big shift” in recent years. She argues that there’s been a snowball effect, with more people starting to feel comfortable talking about their experiences, after seeing “how open and vocal” other intentional non-parents have become.

“When I started my Instagram account, there were maybe three or four other child-free Instagram accounts ... But now, two years later, fast forward – there are hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of child-free accounts,” she says. “You can tell that there’s some sort of a movement going on right now.”

On Instagram, the hashtag #child-free has garnered more than 311,000 posts to date. And on TikTok, where Munoz is also active, the hashtags #child-free and #childfree by choice have rocketed in popularity during the past couple years, with 570 million views and 391 million views of each tag, respectively. Munoz’s TikTok strikes a light and comedic tone, but she says the subject still spawns plenty of deeper discussions about some of the pressures experienced by people who are child-free. For instance, some of her followers know they don’t want children, but feel they could risk losing friendships or disappointing their own parents if they decide to be childfree.

“I’m not one to get into debates or be argumentative about things I am passionate about, so I find humour to be my outlet in expressing my child-free choice,” says Munoz. “I’ll just

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Lifestyle



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add that at the end of all my YouTube videos, I always say, 'this is your life, these are your decisions, live your best life'...Don't live the way your mom wants to live. Don't do what your best friend wants you to do. Don't do what your neighbour wants."

She says child-free content creators are providing the kind of community she felt was missing when she started to embrace her own child-free identity in her mid-20s, but didn't know anyone else in the same boat. "I really thought I was the only person in the world who didn't want to have kids," she says. "The community has just kind of solidified my decision, and has helped me also open other people's eyes to the fact that, yes, [being child-free] is a choice."

Another burgeoning online community is We Are Childfree, run by British-born Zoë Noble and her partner James Glazebrook, who are both in their early 40s, and live in Berlin. The group uses photojournalism, podcasts and meet-ups to celebrate the different ways in which child-free people live fulfilling lives. As of now, it has built up 66,000 followers across its social media platforms, since launching during the pandemic.

Reddit's global child-free subreddit is swelling, too. It recently reached 1.5 million subscribers, up from fewer than a half-million a decade ago, when University of Connecticut's Hintz began studying its threads. Here, people post anecdotes about some of the unsolicited comments or microaggressions they get from family members and strangers (such as "you'll change your mind", "you're just too focussed on your career aren't you" or "don't you want a little you?"). Others use it as a space to debate wide ranging topics related to being child-free, such as access to sterilisation, expressing a child-free identity within the LGBTQ community or how to approach being

child-free when dating.

From boom to backlash

Experts say the boom in influencers and online communities celebrating being child-free is, on one hand, an indication that societal norms are shifting. The sheer number of people going online and finding others who share their perspectives is notable, says Hintz. "My sense is that [some] people are loud and proud about it because it's been something that's increasingly less taboo."

Exactly why taboos have shifted is likely down to a confluence of different factors, says Hintz. Crucially, non-parents are becoming increasingly aware of others who don't have children – whether via their own social circles or via online communities – simply since it's become more common. "Knowing someone personally who belongs to a stigmatised group can be one of the most powerful catalysts for changing one's own prejudicial views," she says. Meanwhile, "as the child-free path becomes increasingly well-trodden, online communities become places of respite for intentional non-parents".

I really thought I was the only person in the world who didn't want to have kids. The community has just kind of solidified my decision, and has helped me also open other people's eyes to the fact that, yes, [being child-free] is a choice – Marcela Munoz

The pandemic may also have played a role, Hintz suggests, as public discussions about the challenges faced by many parents came to the fore. As parents began talking openly about their struggles with home-schooling, nursery closures or simply managing basic living expenses due to the economic impact of Covid-19, this provided a safer backdrop for talking about the advantages of being child-free.

Yet Hintz also points out that child-free content also generates "a lot of strong opinions" from outside the

community, which indicates there is still a lack of respect or understanding for child-free adults from some quarters.

Munoz's content has frequently attracted harsh online comments from those who've disparaged her choices as being "anti-child" or "selfish", or from followers who simply don't believe she could find her lifestyle fulfilling. "A lot of parents just don't understand that it was a choice. And so, they see it as an attack on their choice of having children," she says. "They immediately go on the defence mode and tell you, 'oh, but you're going to regret it' and 'you're going to die alone', and 'who's going to take care of you when you're older?' and 'you'll never know true love'."

Munoz, a Christian, says she has also been criticised by some in her religious community, both online and within her own congregation, who believe she's rejecting the Bible's focus on procreation. Others have accused her of turning her back on her Hispanic background.

"People will be like 'your culture, your heritage, you have to pass it down to generation after generation – what are you doing?!'"

Hintz points out that much of the criticism hurled at child-free advocates tends to be steeply gendered. "Reproductive decision making has always been a burden placed on women more so than their partners," she says. "And motherhood and femininity are so closely intertwined as well, so that is also, I think, a part of it." As a result, this means there's still often more pressure on women than men to follow a traditional "life script" and start a family, says Hintz, even in Western countries that have made great strides towards equality.

A new 'life script'?

Helping Gen Z and millennials get a better handle on what their alterna-

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tive “life scripts” could look and feel like is a core goal for many child-free activists. “It’s still not what the majority of people do. So, if it’s different, it’s scary,” says O’Connor.

“There is a bit of pressure that if you’re not having children, you have to be off living this wonderful, glamorous or philanthropic life, or that you have to go off and do something significant.”

Instead, she hopes her podcasts, social media channels and counselling sessions can help raise awareness that a child-free life might also just “be your regular day-to-day life, just not having children”. “It could be volunteering. It can be being involved in your own family’s or friends’ lives as a support. But really it is whatever is important to you, or whatever you want it to be.”

One couple hoping to be older pinups for a happy, regular life without kids are fiancés Veronica Prager, 46, and Rick Grimes, 51. Based out of Austin, Texas, they run the Child-free Connection online community, through which they share what they’ve learned about being child-free in their 30s, 40s and beyond. “There’s a lot on TikTok or whatever of like, ‘I’d rather be at the club than having to take care of a kid’. Which is interesting and which is fine, and makes sense for them at the time. But there does come a time where you’re not going to be at the club,” says Payer.

The couple currently spends their time kayaking, looking after their dogs and working flexibly from different locations. Despite never wanting their own kids, they also love hanging out with their nephews and nieces, and their content offers advice on how to navigate and maintain relationships with close friends and family who are parents.

“There are a lot of accounts out there that do a lot of ‘kid bashing’

and, like, ‘oh, we have it better’ and that type of thing. And that’s not what we’re about,” explains Grimes. “It’s more about just what this life feels, looks like, what you can expect.”

Practical and financial issues are also covered, including how to plan for retirement as a non-parent. “There’s a lot of fear of getting older and ‘who’s going to take care of me’ and ‘what is my future going to look like’? So, we’re right now doing it ourselves so that we can share it with our community,” says Prager.

The couple even offer advice for members with lingering doubts about being child-free. “There are days where you’re going to feel very confident about your choice, and then all of a sudden the next day, you’re going to have fear of missing out,” says Grimes. “That inner struggle going back and forth is important to keep a handle on, and [many need] to have a place to go, to get that support.”

Shifting societal stigma

How much the child-free movement could have an impact on future generations’ decisions to have children, or wider perceptions of non-parents, is still up for debate.

O’Connor says it’s important to point out that most child-free advocates “are very pro-choice for everyone”, and don’t have the goal of “convincing people to be child-free” or “trying to recruit for the community”. But she hopes that as online groups grow and gain more prominence, they’ll help more people who are unsure about having kids to better understand their options, and give those who are already child-free more tools to “facilitate” their lifestyle choice.

There are days where you’re going to feel very confident about your choice, and then all of a sudden the next day, you’re going to have fear of missing out. That inner struggle going back and forth is important to keep a handle on – Rick Grimes

Hintz is confident being child-free will become even “more normalised” in the coming years, simply because of the increasing proportion of people who aren’t having children now. She hopes this will help to combat some of the stigma that “child-free people are selfish and miserable”, since those who have or want kids will naturally start to come across more child-free singles or couples who can help to buck that myth.

However, whether this results in bigger shifts in public opinion will, she argues, likely also be influenced by the wider political, media and religious climate in any given location. For instance, those living in a predominantly right-wing, Christian, pro-life suburb might be less likely to change their attitudes towards intentional non-parents than those based in bigger, more liberal cities, even as more consciously child-free people emerge in their own communities.

O’Connor strongly agrees that the media has an important role to play moving forward. “There’s a lack of positive representation of what being child-free or childless looks like in society,” she says. “We don’t have in the wider media, in TV shows and in film, older people living just happy content, child-free lives.”

In the meantime, social media influencers like Munoz argue there’s already a lot to celebrate in terms of how much more visible the child-free movement has become throughout the past couple years.

“More and more articles are coming out about people not having kids ... and seeing more accounts pop up, more channels being created on YouTube, it’s so refreshing,” she says. “I’m not discriminatory to people who have kids. I have a lot of friends in my life who are parents. But I just love that people are now thinking a little bit deeper about parenthood, rather than just assuming it’s the thing to do.”

Rihanna reveals she's pregnant at Super Bowl half-time show

By Steven McIntosh

Rihanna delivered an electrifying and hit-heavy half-time show at Sunday's Super Bowl, but social media went into meltdown when the singer revealed an unexpected special guest.

In an interview last week, the Bajan singer was asked if there would be any surprises during her performance at Arizona's State Farm Stadium.

"I'm thinking about bringing someone," she replied. "I'm not sure, we'll see."

Naturally, fans assumed she was talking about one of the many artists she's collaborated with during her illustrious career. A guest spot from Jay-Z, Drake or Eminem seemed both likely and in keeping with the half-time show tradition of surprise duets.

But Rihanna wasn't referring to any of them. Although nobody twigged at the time, she was in fact hinting that she was pregnant with her second child.

The singer may have failed to debut any new music during her performance at Sunday's Super Bowl, but the baby bump she debuted instead almost broke the internet.

Wearing an all-red custom jumpsuit by Loewe, Rihanna appeared on one of several floating platforms which soared high above the



Rihanna revealed she is expecting her second child, nine months after welcoming a son with partner A\$AP Rocky

crowd, as a swarm of energetic dancers, all dressed in white, gathered below.

The audience went wild as the singer launched straight into Better Have My Money - a somewhat ironic opener considering she is not being paid for her Super Bowl performance.

As the 34-year-old dazzled the crowd from on high, her dancers performed beneath her at breakneck speed, in a display of razor-sharp choreography which they would maintain throughout the whole performance.

The singer rattled through several recognisable hits, front-loading her set with some of her most danceable and up-tempo numbers including Only Girl (In The World) and the excellent Where Have You

Been.

It was a half-time show not short on spectacle, even once she had been lowered to the ground. Fireworks were let off above the stadium as she launched into the euphoric We Found Love.

While rumours that the star might take the opportunity to perform new music failed to materialise, the decision to rely on her extensive back catalogue, one of the strongest in pop, was a sensible one.

The singer packed a huge number of hits into a tight 14-minute set, only performing the first verse or chorus of certain songs. But monster hits such as Rude Boy were balanced with the somewhat harder-edged and lesser-known Pour It Up.

Somewhat disappointingly, the set list took ad-

vantage of some of her best-known collaborations - without any of her collaborators actually joining her on stage.

As she performed Run This Town, All of the Lights and Wild Thoughts, there were no appearances from Jay-Z, Ye (formerly Kanye West) or DJ Khaled, who normally feature on those tracks.

But their absence didn't matter. By this point, everyone's attention was firmly on an entirely different, and very visible, special guest.

1. Better Have My Money
2. Where Have You Been
3. Only Girl (In The World)
4. We Found Love
5. Rude Boy

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6. Work
7. Wild Thoughts
8. Birthday Cake (instrumental) / Pour It Up
9. All of the Lights
10. Run This Town
11. Umbrella
12. Diamonds

Confusion initially permeated social media as fans rushed to share their theories about Rihanna's apparent baby bump. Many pointed out the singer is known for her body positivity and could well have just been showing off her curvier figure following her previous pregnancy.

Although the star's bump was on display throughout, Rihanna did not draw attention to it quite as explicitly as Beyoncé did at the MTV VMAs in 2011, where she memorably dropped her microphone, unbuttoned her jacket and rubbed her belly.

But as Rihanna's set progressed on Sunday, viewers became increasingly confident she was pregnant again, nine months after she and her partner A\$AP Rocky welcomed their son.

Within an hour of Rihanna's performance drawing to a close, as her fans debated exactly which trimester she might be in, her representatives officially confirmed the singer's good news.

While some fans admitted to a tinge of disappointment that this will likely mean yet another delay to Rihanna's much-anticipated ninth studio album, the reaction on social media was overwhelmingly joyful.

Elsewhere, there were no costume changes during Rihanna's set - quite understandably - and her band looked positively tiny compared with the number of dancers.

Unlike last year's half-time show, which saw Eminem take the knee on stage, Rihanna's set was distinctly light on political statements - something which may surprise those who

remember why she previously turned down the Super Bowl.

The singer confirmed to *Vogue* in 2019 she had declined the invitation in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick, the quarterback who controversially knelt during the national anthem in protest against racism and police brutality. "I just couldn't be a sellout. I couldn't be an enabler," she said at the time.

Four years later, "taking the knee" is much more commonplace, particularly in light of the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, and Rihanna's headlining of the Super Bowl is perhaps a sign of her approval of the NFL's progress in recent years.

Fans broadly agreed her performance was worth the wait, featuring a set list which she had joked earlier in the week had been through 39 drafts before it was finalised.

Rihanna even found time to subtly plug her cosmetics brand, by fixing her make-up mid-performance - something which quickly became another of the night's viral moments.

Meanwhile, the annual jokes about the culture clash between pop music fans and sports fans were in full swing on social media, with Rihanna even embracing them herself.

Ahead of the show, her clothing label manufactured T-shirts with the slogan: "Rihanna concert interrupted by a football game. Weird but whatever." Model Cara Delevingne was among the attendees sporting one on Sunday.

Rihanna's fans admit she doesn't necessarily have the best voice in music. It's more distinctive than it is powerful, the kind of voice you would recognise instantly as hers on the radio, even if it was an unfamiliar song.

Ahead of her Super Bowl debut, Stereogum's Tom Breihan noted: "Rihanna never needed to over-sing anything; she always sounded too cool to emote."

But what has set Rihanna apart

from some of her peers is the sheer number of hits she has to her name. In the late noughties and early 2010s, she churned out chart-toppers faster than the industry's top songwriters could compose them.

She released seven albums in as many years, scoring a new worldwide hit every few weeks. As a result, perhaps one inevitable disappointment with her Super Bowl set was the number of songs she simply couldn't squeeze in.

Some of her earlier smashes, such as *Pon de Replay* and *SOS*, would have gone down a treat, as would the pounding *Don't Stop The Music* and the catchy *What's My Name* (although we did get a tiny snippet of the latter right at the beginning, before she appeared on stage).

Other fan favourites, such as the rather graphic *S&M*, were probably wise to avoid, given the Super Bowl's history with pop stars offending family audiences during the half-time show.

However, the song wasn't missing entirely - its vocal hook was layered on top of *We Found Love*, while a few seconds of another risqué but popular track, *Birthday Cake*, were teased just before *Pour It Up*.

And surely everybody can be grateful that her set wasn't dragged down by her most recent release - *Lift Me Up*, from the soundtrack to Marvel's *Wakanda Forever*. A perfectly nice song which deserves its Oscar nomination, but one which would not have worked at the Super Bowl.

Instead, Rihanna deployed some of her biggest hits as she hurtled towards the end of her set, climaxing with her ode to British weather, *Umbrella*, and the rousing, anthemic *Diamonds*.

It may not have grabbed the headlines for the reasons fans were expecting, but Rihanna delivered a half-time show they will never forget.

Dubai again plans for flying taxi takeoff, this time by 2026

By Jon Gambrell

Dubai again is planning for the takeoff of flying taxis in this futuristic city-state on the Arabian Peninsula, offering its firmest details yet Monday for a pledged launch by 2026.

Since 2017, the commercial capital of the United Arab Emirates has offered promises to launch flying taxis in the city already home to the world's tallest building and other architectural wonders. A series of different types and companies have cycled through those promises as well, most timed to be included at Dubai's annual World Government Summit, which saw this year's edition begin Monday.

Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, announced the relaunched flying taxi programme on Twitter Sunday. This time, Dubai highlighted the six-rotor electric flying taxi made by Joby Aviation of Santa Cruz, California, in the promotional video.

The inclusion of Joby Aviation, rather than the Chinese-made EHang 184 and XPeng X2 or the German-made electric Volocopter all previously displayed in Dubai, wasn't explained by Emirati officials. Joby aircraft featured at a stand at the World Government Summit on Monday.

"We're excited about the opportunity and actively exploring the possibility," said Oliver Walker-Jones, a spokesman for Joby Aviation.

Ahmed Bahrozyan, an official in the emirate's Roads and Transport Authority, similarly told the state-owned Dubai Eye radio station on Monday that "it's early days" for the plan.

"We haven't yet signed with any partners yet," he said.

Another difference in this year's promise on flying taxis is the release



A man experiences a driving simulator of a flying taxi at the Dubai Roads and Transportation Authority's stand during the World Government SummitWLD in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Feb 13, 2023. Dubai again is planning for the takeoff of flying taxis in this futuristic city-state on the Arabian Peninsula, offering its firmest details yet Monday for a pledged launch by 2026. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

of specifics about the programme. The city plans four "vertiports" by Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, downtown Dubai, the man made Palm Jumeirah archipelago and Dubai Marina. Those points will include two launching pads and four charging points for the flying taxis.

"We believe those are attractive areas with business hubs and tourist hubs that could generate considerable demand," Bahrozyan said.

The pricing for the flying taxis "will be in the range of a limousine service in Dubai, maybe slightly higher," Bahrozyan said. The RTA describes limo service rates as "at least 30% higher than taxi fares" in the city. Taxis have a minimum fare of around \$3.25 and charge \$0.50 a kilometre.

Another departure from earlier plans include the RTA planning to have piloted flying taxis at first, rather than

autonomous ones as previously discussed. Dubai officials described the taxi as having a pilot with four seats for passengers on board, which match Joby's electric flying taxi. However, Bahrozyan said tests would continue with autonomous flying taxis as well.

The Joby prototype can fly over 240 kilometres (150 miles) before needing a charge - something which would put Abu Dhabi and other areas of the country within range. It takes off and lands vertically, while its rotors tilt forward in flight. It has a maximum speed of 320 kph (200 mph).

Joby Aviation Inc., which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, was at \$4.20 a share before trading Monday. Its major shareholders include Intel Corp., while Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines also has invested.

The video posted by Sheikh Mohammed's Twitter account also included

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Caribbean leaders to tackle Haiti's woes amid migration

AP - Top Caribbean leaders are expected to debate Haiti's spiralling chaos and its impact on the region during a biannual meeting this week, with some complaining bitterly about a constant stream of migrants arriving on their shores as they flee poverty and worsening violence.

The three-day meeting of the Caribbean trade block known as Caricom starts Wednesday in the Bahamas.

Some of the group's 15 members are pushing to get key Haitian stakeholders to a neutral nation in the region to reach a consensus agreement on holding elections in the impoverished country that has been stripped of all democratically elected institutions.

However, the international community and local officials have noted that elections cannot be held

in Haiti until violence is quelled.

Haiti's foreign minister, Jean Victor Génés, warned during an Organization of American States meeting Friday that insecurity has risen and will spill over into neighbouring countries.

"We must absolutely tackle this problem in Haiti because no one else in the Caribbean will be spared," he said.

The Caricom meeting will be hosted by Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Davis, who has persistently complained about the cost of repatriating thousands of Haitians as well as hundreds of Cubans in the past year. He says Caricom needs to help find a solution to Haiti's security, political and economic crisis.

Violence has soared in Haiti as poverty and hunger deepens, with gangs



Residents move about as police patrol in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday, Feb. 10, 2023. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

growing more powerful since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. The number of reported kidnappings rose to more than 1,200 last year, more than double what was reported the previous year. Meanwhile, 1,200 killings were reported last year, an increase of 35% compared with the previous year, according to the U.N.

The violence, coupled

with double-digit inflation, has prompted thousands to flee Haiti to neighbouring Caribbean islands, with many seeking to eventually reach the U.S. Dozens have died in such attempts as they cram into rickety boats captained by human smugglers.

The International Organization for Migration announced last month that it documented at least 321 migrant deaths and disappearances in the Caribbean last year, the highest number recorded since 2014 and a spike compared with the 180 deaths registered in 2021.

Last year, the Bahamas repatriated nearly 5,000 migrants, the majority of them Haitians. In January, the government sent home 570 migrants, of whom 368 were Haitians. The government of the Turks & Caicos Islands intercepted more than 3,000 such migrants last year.

In late January, the Bahamian government an-

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ed the logo of London-based Sky Sports Infrastructure, which also refers to its support projects as "vertiports." The company is already testing its "vertiport" model outside of Paris and is working with Joby. Skyports did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Opening the skies to flying taxis would add to the "Blade Runner" skyline of Dubai, while also easing the real-world grind of daily traffic that's only worsening as its population booms to over 3.5 million people.

Rush hour on Sheikh Zayed Road, a dozen-lane artery running down the length

of the Dubai, alternates between dense gridlock and sports-car slalom. Over 1.8 million Dubai-registered vehicles ply its roads, not counting those crowding in from the United Arab Emirates' six other sheikhdoms.

There's also the desire to move away from carbon-belching gasoline and diesel vehicles as the UAE will host the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate talks later this year. That's even as the Emirates hopes to expand its production of crude oil ahead of a promised "carbon-neutral" future by 2050. Meanwhile, Dubai hopes to have a quarter of all cars on its roads be driverless by 2030.

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Trinidad's Agriculture Ministry moves to combat illegal trade of wildlife

CMC – Sixty-eight honorary game wardens were handed letters of appointment on Saturday as Trinidad's Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (M.A.L.F) took steps to combat the illegal wildlife trade in the twin island republic.

Last month, 396 honorary game wardens were officially appointed via Gazette as outlined in the Conservation of Wildlife Act, the training and delivery of appointment letters will continue during this month.

Honorary game wardens are volunteers who are conferred with the same powers as game wardens; empowered under the Conservation of Wildlife Act and related legislation.

While speaking at the appointment ceremony at Caroni Bird Sanctuary Agriculture Minister Kazim Hosein, commended the volunteers hailing their decision to serve as a patriotic act saying, "service to man is service to God."

He reminded the volunteers that the preservation of the ecosystem is paramount for future generations

"Your role as guardians of our na-



tion's conservation efforts is crucial to the agriculture sector and the modern hunting culture as it provides an added level of enforcement against poachers and persons who commit wildlife offences and infractions."

Last week, the minister reminded the nation that the illegal trade of wildlife will not be tolerated following the seizure of exotic animals by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Force.

He reiterated to the audience that the animals may bring diseases and viral infections into the shores, which could have disastrous effects on the environment and also the prices at the

market.

"The importation of illegal animals into this country is linked to a larger criminal enterprise. These boats are not transporting animals alone but other illegal items which fuel and fund the criminal enterprise of this country. Your service is vital in combating these crimes."

He said there are currently 46 game wardens employed with the ministry and the most recent appointments would strengthen the unit's capabilities.

The last batch of honorary game wardens was appointed in 2016.

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nounced that no new work permit applications for Haitians would be processed until authorities could better authenticate documents issued by Haiti's government. Also that month, the Turks & Caicos government approved a six-month moratorium on visitor visas for Haitians.

Both governments have complained about an increase in migrant shantytowns and on spending related to patrolling waters

surrounding both archipelagos.

"There is no question as to whether Haiti will be discussed" at this week's meeting, Caricom spokesman Leonard Robertson said. "Haiti has been at the front and centre of the community's interest and agenda."

Critics say Caricom has failed to produce a more managed approach to Haiti's situation.

"We are either all brothers on one ship or not," said Mark Kirton, an author and

former professor at the University of the West Indies. "We need a strong, sustained intervention from Caricom as Haiti is a member. ... This has been severely lacking."

Earlier this month, Jamaica's prime minister said he was willing to send soldiers and police officers to Haiti as part of a proposed multinational security assistance deployment. Last year, the Bahamas said it would send troops or police if asked to do so.

Since October, Haitian

Prime Minister Ariel Henry and top officials have requested the immediate deployment of foreign troops. However, the U.N. Security Council has not addressed the request, opting instead to implement sanctions.

On Friday, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti released a report recommending that Caricom accelerate efforts to control the illegal proliferation of firearms and ammunition in the Caribbean.

Canadian Prime Minister to travel to The Bahamas to meet with CARICOM leaders

CMC - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be heading to Nassau, The Bahamas, this week, to participate as a special guest at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Intersessional Meeting of Heads of Government.

Trudeau said he will drive progress on shared priorities, including continued support for the Haitian people.

“The visit will provide an opportunity for the leaders to consider further regional political security, and humanitarian assistance in support of the Haitian people and Haitian-led solutions to the ongoing situation in Haiti, which is having a devastating impact on the Haitian people,” the Canadian prime minister said.

“As a steadfast partner,

Canada has taken action in response to the egregious situation, including by providing support to the Haitian National Police, deploying a long-range patrol aircraft to disrupt the activities of gangs, coordinating the delivery of vital security equipment purchased by the Haitian government, providing humanitarian support, and implementing robust sanctions on those responsible,” he added. “We will continue to stand with the Haitian people as they strive for a brighter future.”

As CARICOM celebrates its 50th anniversary, Trudeau said he will participate in group discussions and bilateral meetings with CARICOM leaders.

He said he will work to strengthen Canada’s partnership with countries in the Caribbean region, including



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

by advancing democracy, human rights, “economic growth that benefits everyone”, and developing clean energy.

The Canadian prime minister said he will also work with CARICOM leaders to increase trade and investment between Canada and the Caribbean to create jobs and growth, and advocate for climate action and

resilience for the region, “which is particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters”.

As a steadfast partner, Trudeau said Canada continues to work with CARICOM to build “a more secure, stable and prosperous world”.

CARICOM comprises 15 full members and five associate members. The full members are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitt Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The British Overseas Territories of Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and Turks & Caicos Islands are associate members.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Office Closure

The Development Control Authority wishes to advise the public that its offices remain closed on Monday 13th February 2023 and Tuesday 14th February 2023 to facilitate building maintenance.

DCA offices will reopen to continue serving the public during regular working hours on Wednesday 15th February 2023 .

We do apologize for any inconvenience caused.

Turkey earthquake survivors face despair, as rescues wane

AP - Thousands left homeless by a massive earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria a week ago packed into crowded tents or lined up in the streets for hot meals Monday, while the desperate search for anyone still alive likely entered its last hours.

A crew wrested a 4-year-old girl from rubble in hard-hit Adiyaman, 177 hours after the 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck. The rescuers were among thousands of local and overseas teams, including Turkish coal miners and experts aided by sniffer dogs and thermal cameras, who scoured pulverised apartment blocks for signs of life.

While stories of near-miraculous rescues have flooded the airwaves in recent days - many broadcast live on Turkish television and beamed around the world - tens of thousands of dead have been found during the same period. Experts say given the freezing temperatures - and the total collapse of so many buildings - the window for such rescues is nearly shut.

The quake and hundreds of aftershocks, some nearly as powerful as the first, struck southeastern Turkey and northern Syria on Feb. 6, killing more than 35,000 and reducing whole swaths of towns and cities inhabited by millions to fragments



Workers unload empty coffins for victims of the earthquake at Sehir cemetery in Malatya, Turkey, Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco)

of concrete and twisted metal.

Some 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the epicentre, almost no houses were left standing in the village of Polat, where residents salvaged refrigerators, washing machines and other goods from wrecked homes.

Not enough tents have arrived for the homeless, said survivor Zehra Kurukafa, forcing families to share the tents that are available.

"We sleep in the mud, all together with two, three, even four families," said Kurukafa.

In the city of Adiyaman, 25-year-old Musa Bozkurt waited for a vehicle to bring him and others to the city of Afyon, in western Turkey.

"We're going away, but we have no idea what will happen when we get there," Bozkurt said. "We have no goal. Even if there was (a

plan) what good will it be after this hour? I no longer have my father or my uncle. What do I have left?"

Fuat Ekinici, a 55-year-old farmer, was reluctant to leave his home for Afyon despite the destruction, saying he didn't have the means to live elsewhere and had fields that needed to be tended.

"Those who have the means are leaving, but we're poor," he said. "The government says, go and live there for a month or two. How do I leave my home? My fields are here, this is my home, how do I leave it behind?"

Volunteers from across Turkey have mobilised to help millions of survivors, including a group of volunteer chefs and restaurant owners who served traditional food such as beans and rice and lentil soup for survivors who lined up in the streets of downtown

Adiyaman.

Other volunteers continued with the rescue efforts. After rescuers pulled out the 4-year-old, a relative told HaberTurk television that more loved ones were inside the building.

As the scale of the disaster comes into view, sorrow and disbelief have turned to rage over the sense there has been an ineffective response to the historic disaster. That anger could be a political problem for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who faces a tough reelection battle in May.

Meanwhile, on Monday, rescuer workers, including coal miners, found a woman alive in the wreckage of a five-story building in Gaziantep province.

But Eduardo Reinoso Angulo, a professor at the Institute of Engineering at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, said the likelihood of finding people alive was "very, very small now."

David Alexander, a professor of emergency planning and management at University College London, agreed. But he added that the odds were not very good to begin with.

Many of the buildings were so poorly constructed that they collapsed into very small pieces, leaving very few spaces large enough for

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Thousands march in Israel as Netanyahu allies push overhaul

AP - Tens of thousands of Israelis - hoisting flags, blowing on horns and chanting "democracy" and "no to dictatorship"- protested outside the parliament building Monday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government formally launched a contentious plan to overhaul the country's legal system.

It was the largest protest outside the Knesset in years and reflected the deep divisions over the plan. The proposed changes have triggered weeks of mass demonstrations, drawn cries of protests from influential business leaders and for-

mer military men and even prompted a statement of concern from President Joe Biden.

Despite a plea from the nation's figurehead president to put the legislation on hold, Netanyahu's allies approved a series of legislative changes during a stormy committee meeting Tuesday. The vote now sends the legislation to the full parliament for a series of votes - an opening salvo in a battle expected to stretch on for weeks.

"They hear our cry. They hear the strong voice of truth," opposition leader Yair Lapid said from the

stage outside parliament. "They hear it and they're afraid."

Netanyahu and his supporters say the proposed changes are needed to rein in a judiciary that wields too much power. But his critics say the judicial overhaul is tantamount to a coup and will destroy Israeli democracy. They also say that Netanyahu, who is on trial for a series of corruption charges, has a conflict of interest.

The protesters came from across the country. Organisers said that upwards of 100,000 people were in attendance, with female LGBTQ activists and lead-

ers of the opposition parties addressing the crowd.

Thousands of people arrived in Jerusalem on packed trains, streaming up escalators in the city's main train station chanting, "democracy," cheering and whistling, and waving the national flag. Hundreds of others gathered in protest at Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray, before marching toward the Knesset.

In parliament, opposition lawmakers vocally protested the proposed reform to judge appointments ahead of a committee vote

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people to survive in, Alexander said.

"If a frame building of some kind goes over, generally speaking we do find open spaces in a heap of rubble where we can tunnel in," Alexander said. "Looking at some of these photographs from Turkey and from Syria, there just aren't the spaces."

Wintery conditions further reduce the window for survival. Temperatures in the region have fallen to minus 6 degrees Celsius (21 degrees Fahrenheit) overnight. In such a cold, the body shivers to keep warm - but that burns a lot of calories, meaning that people also deprived of food will die more quickly, said Dr. Stephanie Lareau, a professor of emergency medicine at Virginia Tech.

Many in Turkey blame faulty construction for the vast devastation, and authorities have begun targeting contractors allegedly linked with buildings that collapsed. Turkey has intro-

duced construction codes that meet earthquake-engineering standards, but experts say the codes are rarely enforced.

At least 131 people were under investigation for their alleged responsibility in the construction of buildings that failed to withstand the quakes, officials said. On Monday, authorities in the quake-hit province of Malatya issued warrants for the detention of 31 more people while a construction supervisor and a technician were arrested in Kahramanmaraş, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

Turkey's death toll from the quake has passed 31,000. Deaths in Syria, split between rebel-held areas and government-held areas, have risen beyond 3,500, although those reported by the government haven't been updated in days.

Visiting the Turkish-Syrian border Sunday, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin

Griffiths said that the international community has failed to provide aid.

Griffiths said Syrians "rightly feel abandoned." He added: "My duty and our obligation is to correct this failure as fast as we can."

In the Syrian capital of Damascus on Monday, the U.N. special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, told reporters that the "troubles" regarding the flow of aid to Syria's rebel-held northwest are "now being corrected."

The Kurdish-led administration in northeast Syria, meanwhile, said that 53 trucks carrying aid had crossed from Kurdish territory into earthquake-damaged areas controlled by rival Turkish-backed rebels in northwest Syria who had previously prevented convoys from crossing. Turkish authorities consider the Syrian Democratic Forces to be a terrorist group, along with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a Turkey-based Kurdish separatist group.

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that would send the bill to the full parliament for a vote. During an unruly session, members of the opposition stood on the conference table and shouted as a key Netanyahu ally tried to hold the vote. The motions passed in a 9-7 committee vote.

Throng of people marched to the Knesset, the Israeli legislature, a day after the country's figurehead president urged Netanyahu's government to delay its proposed changes to the judiciary - moves that critics say will weaken the country's Supreme Court and erode democratic checks and balances.

Many protesters carried the blue and white Israeli flag and posters decrying what they saw as an attack on the country's democratic institutions. "Shame! Shame!" and "Israel will not be a dictatorship!" they chanted.

"The people won't have it," said Boaz Zarki, a demonstrator in Jerusalem. "The separation of authority is critical to the existence of democracy, and we need to do everything in our power to prevent" the changes from passing.

Other large demonstrations were held in cities around the country.

At a joint press conference at the Knesset, former Defense Minister Benny Gantz said that opposition party leaders were united "against the targeted assassination of democracy."



Israelis wave national flags during protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government to overhaul the judicial system, outside the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in Jerusalem, Monday, Feb. 13, 2023. Thousands of Israelis protested outside the country's parliament on Monday ahead of a preliminary vote on a bill that would give politicians greater power over appointing judges, part of a judicial overhaul proposed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government. (AP Photo/Ohad Zwigenberg)

Netanyahu and his allies took office in December after the country's fifth election in less than four years. That election, like its predecessors, focused on Netanyahu's fitness for office at a time when he is facing serious criminal charges.

Netanyahu has lashed out at the country's police, prosecutors and judges, saying he is the victim of a deep-state style conspiracy to oust him. His critics say he is motivated by a personal grudge and his campaign will destroy Israel's democratic system of checks and balances.

The legislation approved in committee Monday would give Netanya-

hu's parliamentary majority the authority for appointing all of the country's judges - a step that critics say could pave the way for his trial to be dismissed.

A second change would take away the Supreme Court's authority to review the legality of major pieces of legislation, known as Basic Laws.

His coalition also plans on passing another law that would give parliament the power to overturn Supreme Court decisions it dislikes.

Taken together, critics say this will destroy the country's system of checks and balances and unleash a process similar to those in authoritarian countries like

Poland and Hungary.

Eliad Shraga, chairman of the Movement for Quality Government, a civil-society group that organised Monday's demonstration, said the gathering was meant to send a message of support to the Supreme Court and a warning to the Knesset.

"We will fight to the end," he told The Associated Press. "They want to change Israel from a liberal democracy to a dictatorship, a fascist dictatorship."

Late on Sunday, President Isaac Herzog appealed to Netanyahu to put the legislation on hold and open a dialogue with the opposition. Netanyahu has not responded to the appeal.

Mystery surrounds objects shot down by US military

BBC - The US military is unsure what three flying objects it shot out of the skies over North America were - and how they were able to stay aloft.

President Joe Biden ordered another object - the fourth in total this month - to be downed on Sunday.

As it was travelling at 20,000ft (6,100m), it could have interfered with commercial air traffic, the US said.

A military commander said it could be a "gaseous type of balloon" or "some type of a propulsion system".

He added he could not rule out that the objects were extraterrestrials.

The latest object - shot down over Lake Huron in Michigan near the Canadian border - has been described by defence officials as an unmanned "octagonal structure" with strings attached to it.

It was downed by a missile fired from an F-16 fighter jet at 14:42 local time (19:42 GMT).

The incident raises further questions about the spate of high-altitude objects that have been shot down over North America this month.

US Northern Command Commander General Glen VanHerck said that there was no indication of any threat.

"I'm not going to categorise them as balloons. We're calling them objects for a reason," he said.

"What we are seeing is very, very small objects that produce a very, very low radar cross-section," he added.

Speculation as to what the objects may be has intensified in recent days.

"I will let the intel community and the counterintelligence community figure that out," Gen VanHerck said when asked if it was possible the



A US fighter jet shot down the object over the shores of Lake Huron in Michigan on Sunday (file image)

objects are aliens or extraterrestrials.

"I haven't ruled out anything at this point."

A suspected Chinese spy balloon was downed off the coast of South Carolina on 4 February after hovering for days over the US. Officials said it originated in China and had been used to monitor sensitive sites.

China denied the object was used for spying and said it was a weather monitoring device that had blown astray. The incident - and the angry exchanges in its aftermath - ratcheted up tensions between Washington and Beijing.

But on Sunday, a defence official said the US had communicated with Beijing about the first object, after receiving no response for several days. It was not immediately clear what was discussed.

Since that first incident, American fighter jets have shot down three further high-altitude objects in as many days.

President Biden ordered an object to be shot down over northern Alaska

on Friday, and on Saturday a similar object was shot down over the Yukon in north-western Canada.

Both the US and Canada are still working to recover the remnants, but the search in Alaska has been hampered by Arctic conditions.

"These objects did not closely resemble, and were much smaller than, the [4 February] balloon and we will not definitively characterise them until we can recover the debris," a White House National Security spokesperson said.

China's foreign ministry said on Monday the US has flown balloons into its airspace more than 10 times in the past year.

"It's not uncommon as well for the US to illegally enter the airspace of other countries," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin at a press briefing.

Detection of the most recent objects could be a result of widening the search from radars and sensors, a US official told the Washington Post on *cont'd on pg 22*

International

AROUND THE WORLD



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Saturday.

The official, who requested anonymity, likened it to a car buyer unticking boxes on a website to broaden the parameters of what can be searched.

But he said it was unclear whether this was producing more hits - or if the new incursions are part of a more deliberate action.

Unidentified flying objects - timeline

4 February: US military shoots down suspected surveillance balloon off the coast of South Carolina. It had drifted for days over the US, and officials said it came from China and had been monitoring sensitive sites

10 February: US downs another object off northern Alaska which officials said lacked any system of propulsion or control

11 February: An American fighter jet shoots down a "high-altitude airborne object" over Canada's Yukon territory, about 100 miles (160 km) from the US border. It was described as cylindrical and smaller than the first balloon

12 February: US jets shoot down a fourth high-altitude object near Lake Huron "out of an abundance of caution"

One senior official told ABC News that the three most recent objects to be shot down were likely weather devices and not

surveillance balloons.

But this was seemingly contradicted by the top Democrat in Congress, who earlier told the broadcaster that intelligence officials believed the objects were in fact surveillance balloons.

"They believe they were [balloons], yes," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said, adding that they were "much smaller" than the first one shot down off the South Carolina coast.

Democratic Senator Jon Tester, who represents Montana, told the BBC's US partner CBS: "What's gone on the last two weeks or so... has been nothing short of craziness."

Republicans have re-

peatedly criticised the Biden administration for its handling of the first suspected spy balloon, saying it should have been shot down far sooner.

Other countries are watching the response in the US closely, in case an object is discovered in their airspace.

In the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said his government would do "whatever it takes" to keep the country safe.

"We have something called the quick reaction alert force which involves Typhoon planes, which are kept on 24/7 readiness to police our airspace, which is incredibly important," he added.

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Motie in seven-heaven as he spins out Zimbabwe on opening day

West Indies left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie took seven wickets to help dismiss Zimbabwe for 115 before the visitors finished the first day on 133-4 – 18-run lead. The hosts first innings lasted only 40.5 overs on Sunday after choosing to bat first. Opener Innocent Kaia top scored with 38.

Motie, in his third Test, took full advantage of the conditions in the back-to-back Test. He bowled with immaculate control, got the ball to turn and demonstrated great variations and change of pace for his career-best bowling figures of 7-37 in 14.5 overs.

“It’s a great feeling, it means a lot to me. I really enjoyed bowling in these spin-friendly conditions. Hopefully we can get a good total tomorrow,” Mo-



tie told the media after the day’s play.

Motie got to his first five-wicket haul in Test cricket when he picked up the wicket of Brandon Mavuta. He achieved the best ever figures for the West Indies against Zimbabwe, beating Shane Shillingford 6-49 in 2013.

The West Indian opening pair, Kraigg Brathwaite

and Tagenarine Chanderpaul, who created history by being at the crease at some point of each day in the first test, came out with their usual confidence. However, captain Brathwaite (7 from 27) fell to the left arm spin of Masakadza in the eighth over. Raymon Reifer (53 from 86 balls) then came to the crease, and himself and Chanderpaul built the big-

gest partnership of the day, 73 runs off 116 balls, before Chanderpaul, who made an unbeaten double-century in the first Test, fell for 36 (77 balls).

The West Indies found themselves four wickets down before the end of the day, with Reifer being runout and Blackwood caught by Nyauchi, pulling a short ball from Mavuta – who continues to stand out for his team with the ball, finishing the day with figures of 2-24.

The West Indies will be eager to get a sizable lead on Monday. With the first Test ending in a draw, after losing a full day to rain, both teams will be eager to win this virtual final. Play restarts on Monday at 10am (4am Eastern Caribbean/3am Jamaica).

Super Bowl 57: Chiefs fight back to beat Eagles 38-35 in thriller

BBC - The Kansas City Chiefs became NFL champions for the second time in four years after fighting back to claim a thrilling 38-35 win over the Philadelphia Eagles.

Seen as slight underdogs for Super Bowl 57, the Chiefs trailed for much of the game in Phoenix and were 27-21 down heading into the final quarter.

But despite limping after aggravating an ankle injury, quarterback Patrick Mahomes and veteran coach Andy Reid orchestrated a rout back in front of 67,827 fans in the State Farm Stadium.

Mahomes, who was named the season’s Most Valuable Player for a second time last week, made touchdown passes to Kadarius Toney and Skyy Moore to put Kansas City in front for the first time.

The Eagles levelled after a record-breaking third rushing touchdown by Jalen Hurts, followed by a two-point conversion by the third-year quarterback.

But a heroic 26-yard run by Mahomes made the ground for Harrison Butker to kick a game-winning field goal from 27 yards with eight seconds

remaining.

Mahomes’ performance saw the 27-year-old become the first player since 1999 to win the season MVP, the Super Bowl and the Super Bowl MVP in the same season.

He has led the Chiefs to at least the AFC Championship game in all five seasons as a starter and many argued that, for the Reid-Mahomes era to be considered a dynasty, they had to win another Super Bowl.

“I am not going to say a dynasty yet, we are not done,” said Mahomes.

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Wu Yibing tops Isner, is first from China with ATP Tour title

AP - Wu Yibing became the first Chinese player to win an ATP Tour title, rallying in a three-set, all-tie-breaker thriller to beat John Isner in the Dallas Open on Sunday.

Wu overcame 44 aces from the big-serving Isner - one shy of tying a three-set record - and four match points in the 6-7 (4), 7-6 (3), 7-6 (12) victory. The 23-year-old was the first Chinese player in an ATP final.

Wu also came back from a set down to beat top-seeded American Taylor Fritz in the semifinals. There were no service breaks in Wu's victory over the fifth-seeded Isner, who was playing in his hometown tournament.

"It's not only about winning the title, I think it's more about me personally making history and also for the country," said Wu, who was the first Chinese man to reach the third round of the U.S. Open when he did it as a qualifier last year.

"That's huge for the next



Yibing Wu, of China, returns a shot to Daniil Medvedev, of Russia, during the third round of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Friday, Sept. 2, 2022, in New York. Yibing Wu became the first Chinese player to reach an ATP Tour final, rallying for a three-set victory over top-seeded American Taylor Fritz in the Dallas Open on Saturday night, Feb. 11, 2023. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File)

generation," Wu said. "For me, I need to keep going, keep my body healthy. I'm sure there's more to come."

Leading 8-7 in the third-set tiebreaker, Isner came to the net for an easy volley that hit the top of the net and stayed on Isner's side. The 6-foot-10 American sensed the opportunity lost, sitting for a few moments and fiddling with the strings on his racket.

Wu saved another match point at 10-9 and had four match points of his own in the final tiebreaker before finally converting on Isner's serve when Isner sent a forehand long off Wu's return.

Wu fell on his back in disbelief, staying down long enough for Isner to come across the net to congratulate him.

It was the first tiebreaker in a decisive set in Wu's

career, who climbed into the top 60 of the rankings for the first time.

Battling injuries that kept him out for most of 2019-20 before the pandemic sidelined him even longer, Wu was No. 1,121 a year ago.

"I've been through a lot of things," Wu said. "I think the reason now I'm relaxed on tennis courts is I trust myself. If you want to beat me, you have to work hard."

Since his return, Wu has a 50-10 match record and had won three ATP Challenger titles before his Dallas breakthrough.

Isner was trying for his 17th career title in his 31st final. He made the semifinals in the inaugural Dallas Open last year before losing to eventual champion Reilly Opelka in the semifinals.

cont'd from pg 23

"I told you nothing was going to keep me off the field. I want to thank my teammates - we challenged each other and it took everybody."

On Reid, who coached Philly for 14 years before taking over at Kansas City in 2013, Mahomes added: "He's one of the greatest coaches of all time. I think everybody knew that, but these last two Super Bowls kind of cemented that.

"To have someone that is such a great person who gets the best out of the players, you wanted to win those Super Bowls for him. It's great that we did that."

Reid, 64, said of Mahomes: "He wants to be the greatest player ever and that's the way he goes about his business. And he does it humbly, there's no bragging.

"The great quarterbacks make everybody around him better, including the head coach. So he's done a heck of a job."

Champions League back with Messi, Mbappé doubt, legal drama

By Graham Dunbar

AP - The Champions League returns on Tuesday to a very different European soccer scene than it was before a three-month midseason break.

In the interim, Lionel Messi won his first World Cup title. Kylian Mbappé almost won his second, then got injured. Early-season favourites for the European title fell into slumps at home.

Meanwhile, one stand-out team before the World Cup, Napoli, has marched on and aims for its first quarterfinal place in the competition's 68-year history.

Off the field, the Super League project that tried to effectively kill the Champions League met a serious legal setback, and English title holder Manchester City faces Premier League charges of financial wrongdoing that could one day stop the club entering future Champions Leagues.

It adds up to plenty of drama even before soccer's most prized club competition resumes with a stellar game between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich.

A rematch of the 2020 final won by Bayern pairs two powers that helped stop the Super League in 2021 by refusing to join it. What it was not expected to have at Parc des Princes were the goalscorer and goalkeeper



PSG's Lionel Messi stands next to injured PSG's Kylian Mbappé during the French League One soccer match between Montpellier and Paris Saint-Germain at the State La Mosson stadium in Montpellier, France, Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

with the best records from the group stage.

Mbappé, who scored seven goals across five different Champions League games in the fall, was set to miss most of February with a thigh injury. He made a surprise return to training on Sunday.

Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer's season is over because he broke a leg skiing on a vacation taken after Germany's quick exit from the World Cup.

The other game Tuesday pairs AC Milan and Tottenham, two of the seven round-of-16 teams that

are currently outside the Champions League qualifying places in their domestic leagues. Chelsea is another and visits Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday, when Club Brugge hosts Benfica.

Four more first-leg games are scheduled Feb. 21-22.

At age 35, Messi finally has a World Cup title for Argentina. Now back to the business of winning a fifth Champions League.

When Messi won his fourth title with Barcelona in 2015 Barack Obama was president, Britain was in the European Union and Jose

Mourinho won a league title, at Chelsea.

Messi has not been to the final since and his first try with PSG ended in the round of 16 against Madrid. When he last faced Bayern it was an 8-2 rout over Barcelona in the single-leg quarterfinals of the pandemic-hit 2020 edition.

Both PSG and Bayern have misfired since the World Cup. PSG was unbeaten entering 2023 then lost three in the league and is out of the French Cup. Bayern still leads the Bundesliga after restarting with three straight draws.

Williams re-elected as president of cycling federation

St Clair Williams has been re-elected to serve as President of the Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation (ABCF) for another four-year term.

Williams was re-elected unopposed in the election of officers during the national cycling federation's Annual General Meeting at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Thursday, 9th February.

Five members, who served on the previous or outgoing executive, were retained, while two newcomers have been added to the seven-member administrative slate.

Former Second Vice-President Derrick Sutherland will now serve as first vice-president.

Cleofoster Harris, who held the post of Treasurer in the former admin-



The new executive of the Antigua and Barbuda Cycling Federation. From left to right: Cleofoster Harris, Cassandra Murray, Cliff Williams, St Clair Williams, Derrick Sutherland, Cassandra Ryan and Jamaul Francis. (Photo courtesy ABCF)

istration, will now carry out duties as the second vice-president.

Cliff Williams, a former president, and Cassandra Murray have both been retained their posts as Secretary and

Assistant Secretary respectively.

The two new comers on the ABCF's executive are Treasurer Cassandra Ryan and Assistant Treasurer Jamaul Francis.

Cool & Smooth T20 Explosion to bowl off in April

The Cool and Smooth T20 Explosion, which will be celebrating its tenth year in 2023, will begin on 13th April with matches to be played at the Sir Vivian

Richards Stadium in North Sound.

According to a media release from the organizers, this year's tournament will consist of 32 matches, with

the grand finale taking place on 29th April.

To commemorate the tenth year, the tournament will be represented by a newly-designed logo and

eight teams will be vying for the coveted title of Cool & Smooth T20 Champions and the grand prize of \$23,000.

The participating team are the Bethesda Golden Eagles, New Winthropes Lions, Empire Nation, Bolans Blasters, Pigotts Crushers, Jennings Tigers, All Saints Pythons, and the defending champions, the Liberta Black Hawks.

The Liberta Black Hawks have been the most successful team in this competition, winning the tournament five times, including three straight titles from 2015 to 2017.



The PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks won the 2022 Cool and Smooth T20 Explosion. (File photo)

State College among winners in schools' basketball

The Antigua State College was among the winners in the Cool & Smooth Inter-Schools Basketball Competition at the JSC Sports Complex on Friday, 10th February.

Antigua State College claimed a 34-24 victory over the Antigua Grammar School in their Senior Boys' Division affair.

Tzvi Hunte had seven points while Adrian Browne and Shammoi Liddie each scored six points for State College. Nameen Joseph shot a game high 13 points for Antigua Grammar School.

Clare Hall Secondary School romped to an emphatic 49-7 victory over the Jennings Secondary School in the Junior Boys Division.



Players of the Antigua State College (orange uniform) compete against their counterparts from the Antigua Grammar School (green uniform) during their Senior Boys' Division game at the JSC Sports Complex on Friday, 10th February, 2023. (Photo courtesy Schools Basketball League)

School in the Junior Boys Division.

Kevin Pimental sank 15 points and Aiden Tonge converted 13 points for Clare Hall Secondary, while Labron Alphonso scored all seven points for Jennings Secondary.

Success as well for Combine, who crushed Christ the King High School 51-2 in their Senior Girls' Division encounter.

Alyssa Jardine shot a game high 17 points, Jodaliah Constant and Kinaya Lewis each scored 12 points and Jenah Andrew chipped in with eight points for Combine.

Rukiya Thomas scored the two points for Christ the King High School.

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Villa Lions beat Tryum to stay third in premier league

Villa Lions claimed their eighth win in 11 matches to consolidate their third place position in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier League on Sunday night, 12th February.

Forward Eroy Gonsalves scored a hat-trick as Villa Lions trounced Tryum 4-1 in the second game of a triple header at the ABFA's Technical Center.

Gonsalves scored his first two goals in the 9th and 32nd minute to give Villa Lions a 2-0 halftime lead. Following the interval, Gonsalves scored in the 64th minute to complete his hat-trick as Villa Lions extended their lead.

One minute later, Villa Lions were, however, reduced to 10-men when referee Brian "Strikes" Willett issued a red card to their goalkeeper Shanoi Dorsette for serious foul play on a Tryum player just outside the 18-yards box.

Romari Dennie capitalized on the resulting free-kick from Dorsette's infringement by placing the ball past Villa Lions' substitute goalkeeper Nalian Gonsalves into the back of



Villa Lions forward Eroy Gonsalves, left foreground, is being congratulated by teammates Jayden Bowen, second left foreground, and Jahiem Ferron, third left foreground, after scoring his hat-trick during their premier league match against Tryum at the ABFA's Technical Center on Sunday, 12th February, 2023. (Photo courtesy ABFA)

the net to score Tryum's only goal of the match in the 69th minute.

Striker Yasnay Torres sealed Villa Lions' victory by scoring his team's final goal in the 73rd minute.

The result lifted Villa Lions to 25 points, two adrift of Jennings Grenades, who currently occupy second place behind leaders All Saints United.

A sixth defeat in 11 matches left Tryum on 13 points and 11th in the standings.

Leaders All Saints

United dropped points for only the second time in 11 encounters when they were held to a nil-all draw by Greenbay Hoppers in the opening encounter on Sunday.

Despite the result, All Saints United still remain at the top of the standings, advancing to 28 points, one more than Jennings Grenades.

Their second draw in 10 matches lifted Greenbay Hoppers to eighth place with 14 points.

Zidane Smith scored

one minute (89th) before the end of regulation as Parham snatched a 1-1 draw with Old Road in Sunday's feature match. Striker Raheem Deterville had scored in the 18th minute to give Old Road a 1-0 halftime lead.

Old Road's sixth draw in 11 encounters ensured they remain in fourth place on goal difference by advancing to 18 points.

The result also left Parham fourth from bottom of the standings with nine points after 11 outings.