

FRIDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2023 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 34 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

REPORT ON CARICOM, DR WORK PERMIT WAIVER COMPLETE

Story on Page 2



The Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) recently announced that it has received a donation of an electrocardiograph (ECG or EKG) machine from the Friends of Mount St. John's Medical Centre (FoMSJMC). The equipment, valued at over EC\$15,000.00 is earmarked for the hospital's outpatient clinic. (L-R): Lawrence Blackman (FoMSJMC Treasurer), Dwayna Derrick (FoMSJMC President), Ann-Marie Browne-Isaac (SLBMC Departmental Nurse Manager), Evon Challenger (FoMSJMC member), Salma Crump (SLBMC Marketing & Comms. Manager). *Story on page 8*

Report on work permits, fate of Africans complete



Information Minister, Melford Nicholas

A report compiled by technicians in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Public Safety and Immigration has been completed and is to be presented to the minister today, Friday 17th February, 2022.

That was the word of Information Minister, Melford Nicholas as he spoke during Thursday's post-Cabinet Press Briefing.

The report examined ways in which the government could implement its election campaign pledge to do away with work permit fees for CARICOM nationals and residents from the Dominican Republic.

While Nicholas did not disclose the details of the

recommendations in the report, he did indicate that it will be presented to the cabinet next Wednesday before being made public.

One of the concerns raised by the Immigration Department, according to Nicholas, concerned the protocols that will be required to accommodate Dominican Republic nationals, as that country is not a full member of CARICOM.

It is expected that this issue will be addressed in the report.

Minister Nicholas also disclosed that the fate of the Cameroonians stranded in Antigua and Barbuda will be covered in the report.

cont'd on pg 3



OUR NATIONAL HERO PRINCE KLAAS KHN.



Prince Klaas, also known as **King Court, Tackey**, or by his African name, **Kwaku**, was an Antiguan slave, who was a posthumous recipient of the Most Exalted Order of the Nation Hero. Klaas is notable for leading a foiled slave revolt plan to overthrow the colonial white government, and create an African-ruled independent Kingdom of Antigua.

The revolution plan took 8 years to prepare and was ready to be carried out in 1736. Along with 132 other people, Klaas was convicted of being involved in the plot, after the report from an anonymous slave.

There is now a Prince Klaas Status in St. John's, as well as an exhibit at the nearby National Museum of Antigua and Barbuda. In 2000, Klaas was posthumously awarded the Most Exalted Order of the Nation Hero.



A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board



African man arrested for masterminding suspected scam

A group of Africans, apparently scammed by one of their own, is desperate to recover their money.

Reports indicate that the man allegedly tricked a group of about twenty people into giving him money under the pretense that he would obtain airline tickets for them on a charter flight back to Africa.

After some time had passed, the man failed to provide the tickets or issue a refund, which roused the suspicion of his countrymen who began to suspect that they may have been duped.

The victims reported the man, whose address has been given as Dickenson Bay, to the Criminal Investigations Department of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda.

After an initial investigation, the fake businessman was arrested, however, he has not yet been charged



by police.

On Thursday afternoon, more than a dozen visibly worried African men and women stood sentry outside St. John’s Police Station.

It is believed that they were awaiting an update from law enforcement officers about whether they would be able to recoup their money.

Meanwhile, a decision on the future of the approximately 800 Africans who have been stranded in Antigua and Barbuda is pending.

With the operations of Antigua Airways suspended

and a civil war raging in Cameroon where some of them originated, Information Minister Melford Nicholas says the way forward in deciding their fate in Antigua and Barbuda will be based on the findings of a report that is to be submitted to Attorney General and Minister of Labour and Immigration, Steadroy Benjamin.

“I would expect that that will be a part of the report that the minister of labour is awaiting that will be on his desk tomorrow [Friday].

“It was a contingent

part of the obligation that we gave to the minister of labour and of immigration, to look at both the matter relating to the CARICOM citizens and their work permit and to help the cabinet to define a legal method of absorbing these persons, given the criteria we had established.

“For those [Africans] who want to leave, we will make arrangements for them to go back to their home country, or for those who choose to stay, we are awaiting the report from the Ministry of Labour and Immigration,” Nicholas said.

The information minister added that the principals of Antigua Airways have confirmed, “that they will be prepared to fund the extraction aircraft”.

When this flight will leave St. John’s for the African continent, however, is unknown.

cont’d from pg 2

“They have different security issues, different security interfaces and other methods of due diligence and that’s why we submitted this matter to them for their consideration,” he stated.

The objective, Nicholas emphasised, is to explore how the Africans who remain in Antigua and Barbuda can do so lawfully as they integrate into society.

Last week, he announced that the govern-

ment was considering several scenarios regarding their continued presence in Antigua and Barbuda.

Those desirous of re-

turning to Nigeria where they boarded their flight to Antigua and Barbuda will have the option to do so free of cost. The others who opt

to remain here may be given the opportunity to integrate into society, obtain work permits and possibly residency.

Fri 17 Day 79° Intervals of clouds and sunshine. High 79F. Winds ENE at 15 to 25 mph.		Fri 17 Night 73° A few clouds. Low 73F. Winds ENE at 10 to 20 mph.	
Humidity 71%	UV Index 10 of 10	Humidity 73%	UV Index 0 of 10
Sunrise 6:32 am	Sunset 6:09 pm	Moonrise 4:10 am	Moonset 3:28 pm ● Waning Crescent

Opposition displeased with limitations on swearing in attendance

On Friday morning, the members of government and the parliamentary opposition will be sworn in and formally commence their five-year term of national service in the Parliament.

Cries of foul surfaced on Thursday, however, when both the United Progressive Party (UPP) and the independent elected representative for St. Peter, Asot Michael, said they were being limited to inviting only ten family members, friends or supporters to the swearing in ceremony.

In his response to the notice from the Clerk to Parliament in which the ten invitations to each opposition member of Parliament were enclosed, Michael said the move to extend invitations to family and supporters was unprecedented in the history of Antigua and Barbuda.

Michael said that he would not honour the Clerk's request, as he expected as many as sixty of his supporters to attend.

He further noted that for the first time in his long service as a Member of Parliament, that invitations had been extended to members of the diplomatic corps to the swearing in ceremony of Members of Parliament.

The gallery at the par-



liament can accommodate 290 people.

With eight elected members of the opposition, this means their well-wishers will only occupy 80 seats in the House.

The United Progressive Party, which won six of the seventeen seats, issued their own statement on Thursday afternoon in which they condemned the move by the Clerk.

"We have extended open invitations to our constituents to attend the ceremony and therefore demand, in the spirit of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people,' that appropriate arrangements be made to accommodate all those who wish to attend this extremely important event in our parliamentary democracy," the UPP defiantly stated.

"In this country, the democratic practice for

the people's participation in the swearing-in ceremonies for Members of Parliament provides for attendance on a first-come first-served basis. It has always been up to the people, in the spirit of their involvement in the election process, to witness their elected representatives take the oath of office.

"Accordingly, we note the convenient departure from settled practice – supposedly to invite Members of the Diplomatic Corps to the ceremony and thereby limit the space available for members of the public," the UPP statement continued.

Ahead of the UPPs statement, Kelvin Simon, the elected representative for St. Mary's South wrote to the Clerk to Parliament to request that the limitation applied to opposition MPs be reconsidered.

At Thursday morning's

post-Cabinet Press Briefing, information minister and MP for St. John's City East Melford Nicholas said he too had been issued with a similar request from the Clerk of the House and could not give a reason for the decision being made.

"I am not in any better position to respond. I am an elected Member of Parliament as well and I received a package of invitations as well.

"I imagine based on the interests that will be in tomorrow's proceedings, that the Parliament officials - the Clerk to Parliament - would ordinarily be concerned about ensuring that there is a measure of order and control.

"So, I do not know. I can't speak to what went into the consideration, but like any other MP, I would have received an allotment of persons to attend," MP Nicholas explained.

More drugs seized at VCB Int'l

Law enforcement officials have seized more drugs that were smuggled past the country's border.

On Wednesday, 8lbs of marijuana were discovered at the V. C. Bird International Airport's cargo shed.

According to police, in collaboration with customs officials, the controlled substance was discovered during an anti-narcotics operation.

The marijuana was concealed in vacuum-sealed packages that were secured inside a box.

Authorities say the cannabis has an estimated value of \$48,000.00.



This is just the latest of several drug seizures at the country's borders since the start of the year, which to date, total more than \$400,000.00.

STUDENT SAFETY POLICY

STATE INSURANCE
COMPANY LIMITED

Live in a better State of mind

www.sicantigua.com
info@sicantigua.com
1 (268) 481-7800\04

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter icons

Wanted Potters man still on the run

Almost two months after police first made an appeal for help finding Potters resident, Darius Williams, he is still on the run.

A wanted bulletin was issued by police on 29th December, 2022 for Williams, who is wanted for breaking and entering and larceny, among other offences.

Despite the plea from police, Williams, who is in his twenties, has managed to evade the law.

Sometime between 30th November and 1st December, 2022, Williams broke into a building on Long Street and stole

a quantity of alcoholic beverages, two electrical transformers, a water pump, an undisclosed sum of money and several other valuable items.

Williams is scheduled to appear at the St. John's Magistrates' Court on 2nd March before Chief Magistrate Joanne Walsh to answer to these crimes, however, it is unlikely he will appear if he is not apprehended before then.

Anyone with information about his whereabouts is asked to contact any police station or call the Criminal Investigations Department on telephone number 462-3913.



Curry House

ANTIGUA

A whole new dining experience awaits you.

Call us at 562-5724 | Whatsapp 736-7165

Counsellor calls for more acceptance of people living with mental illnesses

Counsellor Lisa Harris says the time is long past due for society to accept that individuals affected by mental illnesses are a part of our society.

The creator of Lisa Harris Ministries told Pointe FM's Pointe On De Streetz this week that a healthy state of mind is integral to the wellbeing of each individual.

Sadly, however, over

many years, Antiguans and Barbudans have nurtured a negative, self-defeating culture of stigmatising and labelling people who suffer from mental illnesses.

In her conversation with Vernon Springer, Harris issued a challenge to all members of society to embrace and support those among us who are affected by mental illnesses.

“As you mentioned



mental health, it's time for us to stop thinking, from the moment you hear mental, crazy.

“We need to stop thinking that,” Harris stated during an interview on Pointe On De Streetz on Pointe FM Radio, 99.1 FM.

“If you think about health on a whole, if your mind is not healthy, then nothing else in your life makes sense. If your brain is not functioning in the fullest capacity as the way it should be, then nothing in your life matters.

“You wouldn't know what is going on, you wouldn't be able to function to take care of your skin or to maintain a proper diet, because as you know, the mind controls the body.

“So if the mind is not healthy, then you cannot function as a healthy person. So, we need to think

of mental health as a part of us.”

Harris, who operates the counselling firm Compassionate Couch, added that it is imperative that caregivers receive training which will equip them to provide the best treatment to people suffering from mental illnesses.

“If we are really determined and serious about helping, we need to upgrade ourselves. There are workshops, there are so many programmes online and they are reasonable, I am not saying they are free,” Harris said.

“You can do online courses and it will make you a better person and better equipped because when you sit in a counselling session, you don't want to appear to the individual like you don't know, and you need to know. You need to equip yourself.”



**Government of
Antigua & Barbuda**

**Ministry of Education, Sports & Creative Industries
Government Complex, Queen Elizabeth Highway
St. John's, Antigua**

Tel: 462-0192/462-0193/462-0198/462-0199

Overseas: 268-462-4959/1051

Fax: 268-462-4970

OAS Scholarship Application Announcement

The Organization of American States announces its 2023 call for scholarship applications for undergraduate and graduate academic studies and graduate research.

More information can be obtained through the links listed below.

- Call for applications for Graduate Studies: https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/Academic_Program_OAS_2023.asp
- Call for applications for Undergraduate Studies: https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/specaf_2023.asp
 - Scholarship application form for Undergraduate Studies (last two years of a Bachelor's degree): <https://www.oas.org/fms/Announcement.aspx?id=1137&Type=1&Lang=Eng>
- Scholarship application form for Graduate Studies: <https://www.oas.org/fms/Announcement.aspx?id=1136&Type=1&Lang=Eng>

Deadline for submission of applications and accompanying documents to the Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries is Friday 31st March, 2023.

Local News



Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre receives donation of new ECG machine

The Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) recently announced that it has received a donation of an electrocardiograph (ECG or EKG) machine from the Friends of Mount St. John's Medical Centre (FoMSJMC). The equipment, valued at over EC\$15,000.00 is earmarked for the hospital's outpatient clinic.

An electrocardiogram records the electrical signals in the heart. It is one of the simplest and fastest tests used to evaluate the heart.

"The generosity of FoMSJMC has been a pillar of SLBMC's growth-story over the years," said Salma Crump, Head of Marketing & Communications at SLBMC.

"This dedicated charitable organization has donated funding for just about every area of our hospital—equipment, facilities, training. All of us at SLBMC are so grateful for the continuous support from the Friends of MSJMC—Happy to announce, soon to be Friends of SLBMC. This donation increases the number of ECG machines at our hospital which will help improve the expert care delivered by our team. They are a true friend; the positive impact of this donation will be felt by many

in our communities." "We support the people of Antigua & Barbuda through the work that we do raising funds to help

advance the mission of the hospital," said Dwayna Derrick, President of FoMSJMC. "Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre is the

nation's hospital—We've been supporting them for decades and will continue to do so for many more to come.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

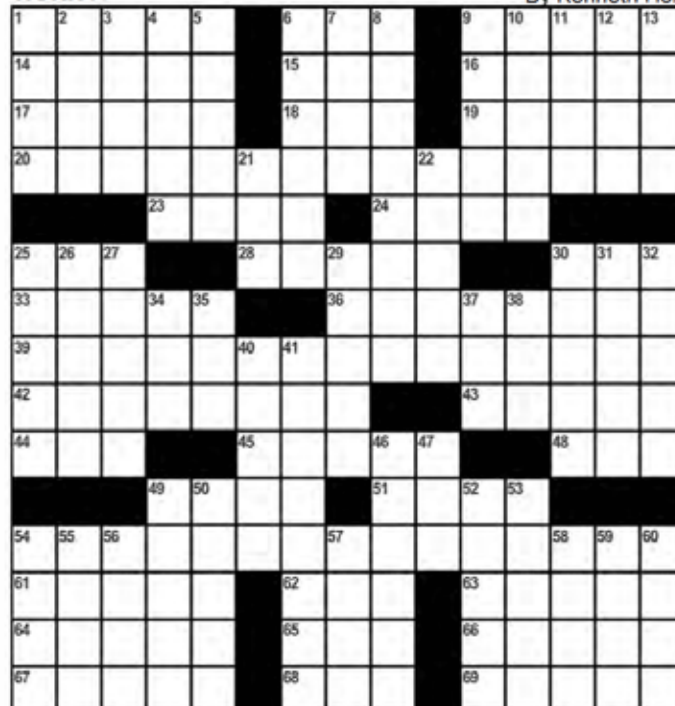
- 1) City in central New York
- 6) No longer is
- 9) Form of sorcery
- 14) Clear plastic wrap
- 15) Gasteyer, formerly of "SNL"
- 16) One kind of wave
- 17) "Give me ___" ("Call me")
- 18) Grassy square
- 19) Fly without an engine
- 20) How speeders like to travel
- 23) Habitual litterbug, e.g.
- 24) Bone in the human arm
- 25) Crucial sleep stage
- 28) "Saturday Night Fever" setting
- 30) Earthbound bird
- 33) Detached
- 36) Classified
- 39) Quaint place to stay
- 42) Certain seedpod bearer
- 43) It's before noon?
- 44) Real attachment
- 45) Adroit
- 48) Stat for a pitcher
- 49) Baglike anatomy structures
- 51) Mobsters speak with one in stereotypes
- 54) McDonald's and Wendy's, for two
- 61) Cool in manner
- 62) Squealer
- 63) Fiber from the East
- 64) Italian resort isle
- 65) 67.5 degrees, in terms of dir.
- 66) Type of angle
- 67) English county
- 68) "Cheers" character Malone
- 69) Change in Chihuahua

DOWN

- 1) Colorado Springs Acad.
- 2) Noted literary plantation
- 3) Blue flag, e.g.
- 4) Pitches to one side
- 5) Heavenly being
- 6) Horseradish condiment
- 7) Bartlett abbr.
- 8) Pharisee's rival
- 9) Keyboard kin
- 10) Very light wood
- 11) Correct a manuscript
- 12) Handy assistant
- 13) A gardener or farmer, sometimes
- 21) "Twilight Zone" writer Serling
- 22) Botanist's concern
- 25) Jewish teacher
- 26) They're crossed in Olympic competition
- 27) "___, I'm Adam" (palindrome)
- 29) Shopping binge
- 30) Related on mom's side
- 31) Microwave frequency device
- 32) Sound leader?
- 34) Did more than walked
- 35) Explosive stuff
- 37) Music from Jamaica
- 38) Not accurate
- 40) "Harry Potter" villain Malfoy
- 41) You get them lying down
- 46) "President" follower
- 47) T-shaped cross
- 49) Accumulate for future use
- 50) Paste on, as a stamp
- 52) Purse attachment
- 53) Park, in Monopoly
- 54) Commonly reflected image
- 55) "Woe is me"
- 56) Soaks (up)
- 57) Another "SNL" alum, ___ Carvey
- 58) Plural of 30-Across
- 59) Michael Jackson's brother
- 60) Meets, as a bet

HURRY!

By Kenneth Holt



End sexual violence against women in the interest of mankind

By Sir Ronald Sanders

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

Rape, and other forms of sexual violence against women in war and conflict, represent one of the great silences and suppressed issues in modern-day history.

Yet, women remain the greatest victims of war and other forms of conflict in many parts of the world. Recently, in Haiti, rape has become a weapon for members of the 200 gangs which now control 60 per cent of the Capital, Port-au-Prince. Women and girls are deliberately targeted for rapes, torture, kidnappings and killings. Tragic stories have emerged of schoolgirls being captured, gang raped and becoming pregnant; their lives stripped of dignity or choice.

In the war in Ukraine, rape is also used as a deliberate weapon of terror, or by soldiers taking advantage of their position to rape women in the absence of any deterrent. U.N. findings suggest that the incidents of rape are underreported in Ukraine. Similarly, the number of rapes, reported in Haiti, are far less than accounts given by victims, who either have no means of making an official report or are too frightened to do so.

Women have been a target of war wherever it has occurred. U.N. statistics show that, in Rwanda, up to 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide, in acts known as 'genocidal rape'; in Sierra Leone 60,000 women were raped during the civil war (1991-2002); in Liberia, 40,000 women were raped and mutilated (1989-2003); in Bosnia in Europe, 60,000 women were

raped (1992-1995); in Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 200,000 women were raped in a decade of conflict. None of this takes account of rapes that certainly occurred during conflicts in Central and South America.

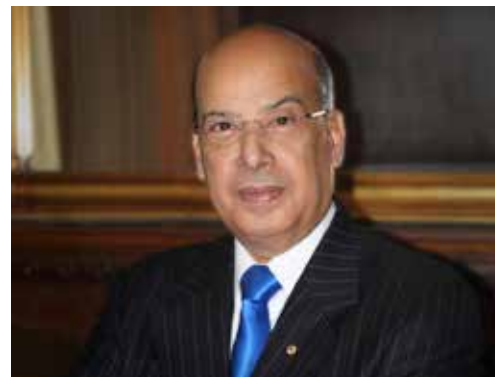
Rape is prohibited, under the Rules of War, particularly the "Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949)", and its 1977 protocol. However, this prohibition is not a deterrent, since the governments, that send their soldiers into war, have not made rape, committed during conflicts, a criminal offence. Indeed, as has happened in the war against Ukraine, Russia has described reports of rape as lies.

Wars and conflicts create refugees who are forced into camps with little protection from predators – in some cases, officials who manage the camps. In such vulnerable situations, women again become victims.

Unacceptable and wrongful as is rape of women in wars and their aftermath, it is in daily life that violence against women, including rape, is most despicable and inexcusable. The situation cries out for action to end it. U.N. figures paint a grim picture.

Globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, or both at least once in their life. More than 640 million women aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence. During the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women increased dramatically.

It is significant that, globally, violence against women disproportionately affects low- and lower-middle-income countries and regions. Thirty-seven per cent of women aged 15 to 49, living in "least developed" countries, have been



Sir Ronald Sanders

subject to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lives. Globally 81,000 women and girls were killed in 2020, around 47,000 of them (58 per cent) died at the hands of an intimate partner or a family member. This latter figure equates to a woman or girl being killed every 11 minutes in their home. In 58 per cent of all killings, perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members, the victim was a woman or girl.

While these figures are deeply disturbing, the silent acceptance of the situation is worse, condemning all societies in which such tolerance prevails.

Against this background, an international coalition of 2,100 women's rights advocates in 128 nations called "Every Woman", is proposing the adoption of a global treaty to eradicate violence against women and girls. It is a treaty whose creation and adoption should be fully supported.

The treaty will not cause violence against women to end overnight, but it will be a potent international instrument that would bind governments to take the necessary legislative, preventative and protective measures to save millions of women from the killings and violence that now exist. The urgency for a global treaty is driven by the fact that, although several conventions have been adopted globally, and legal frameworks have been established nationally, violence

cont'd on pg 10

Guyana slams American Airlines over poor treatment of CARICOM prime ministers

The Guyana government Wednesday criticised American Airlines for continuing to “pay scant regard” to its requests after two Caribbean Community (CARICOM) prime ministers became the latest high level officials to fall victim to the airline’s policy.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the airline had refused to allow Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley and his St. Vincent and the Grenadines colleague, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves to check in through the VIP Lounge at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA).

Noting that it was not taking any blame for the undignified treatment of the visiting Caribbean leaders, the ministry said based on previous similar experience with American Airlines,



Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley (left) and Dr. Ralph Gonsalves during the 2023 International Energy Conference and Expo in Guyana

the carrier had been asked formally to accord the necessary treatment to the two leaders to no avail.

“All government protocols were in place to facilitate their departure. Despite American Airlines having been written to, prior to the arrival of the prime ministers in Guyana, for them to be accorded the courtesies

of check in on departure from the VIP Lounge, the airline refused to acquiesce to the ministry’s request and insisted that the prime ministers leave the lounge to present themselves to the check-in counter,” the Foreign Ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry said the Guyana government intends to formally

communicate its displeasure of this most recent action by the airline that has caused “embarrassment not only nationally, but also to our regional friends”.

The ministry said it “sincerely regrets the inconvenience” caused to the two visiting prime ministers, who were travelling to Miami, en route to The Bahamas for the 44th Caribbean Community (CARICOM) summit in Nassau.

The Foreign Ministry said the Guyana government had previously protested against this position taken by American Airlines against its own high and senior government officials, but without success.

“They have continued to pay scant regard to the Government’s requests for entitlements to the positions held to be respected,” the ministry said.

cont’d from pg 9

against women has persisted. The existing frameworks have failed to deliver the strong measures that are clearly required.

In truth, many of the existing Conventions have serious gaps that have allowed governments to sidestep their responsibilities. And, even where Conventions have not been strong, some governments have not agreed to them. The global treaty seeks to remedy the obvious weaknesses and gaps in existing Conventions.

The government of Costa Rica, which has an outstanding record in advocating for human rights, has already

endorsed the concept of a Global Treaty, recognizing that much more has to be done to protect women from violence. Caribbean governments and civil society should not hesitate to join in the treaty’s promotion.

Even with the best will in the world, a global treaty cannot be negotiated, agreed and ratified with the swiftness it deserves. It could take years, by which time many more millions of women – mothers, daughters, sisters – will die or be seriously injured as victim of violence.

As the advocates of the treaty argue, “It’s time to come together to outpace the violence with a concrete, clear and

actionable solution. Women and girls are waiting. They are asking that we do better”.

Women are restricted to contributing only 37 percent of global production even though they are 50 per cent of the world’s population. Yet, a McKinsey Global Institute report finds that, by advancing women’s equality, US\$12 trillion could be added to global output by 2025. The global circulation of that money would make a huge difference to the economic wellbeing of all countries.

Ending violence against women is in the interest of all mankind.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirroaldsanders.com

‘Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania’ kicks off Marvel’s next phase but comes up short

By **Brian Lowry**

CNN — Ant-Man is a somewhat ironic choice for a very, very big job: Kicking off the next phase of Marvel movies. “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania” works on one key level, establishing Kang the Conqueror as a truly formidable and worthy villain. Yet with its plunge into inner space, “Ant-Man” comes up short in almost every other way that matters.

Actually, the rapid descent into the Quantum Realm, a sprawling universe within our own, makes this feel as much like “Guardians of the Galaxy” as Ant-Man, with a vast assortment of strange characters and outlandish, otherworldly and too often murky production design.

With much of the action unfolding on that plane, the movie bears scant resemblance to the original “Ant-Man,” or even its sequel, which overcame its potentially mockable premise with plenty of comedy and a modestly scaled story.

Director Peyton Reed is back for the third time, and the movie begins with a similar sense of whimsy, but similarities to the franchise’s 2015 introduction pretty much end there.

“Quantumania,” by contrast, has a bad case of gigantism, as Paul Rudd’s Ant-Man/Scott Lang is drawn into the Quantum Realm along with the Wasp (Evangeline Lilly), her parents (Michelle Pfeiffer and Michael Douglas) and Scott’s now-grown daughter Cassie (Kathryn Newton, a nice addition to a family of heroes that keeps growing through shrinking).

What ensues is an especially psychedelic trip, with precious little grounding in anything that resembles



Kathryn Newton as Cassandra “Cassie” Lang and Paul Rudd as Scott Lang/Ant-Man in “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania.”

recognizable reality. The most identifiable aspect involves this hidden universe chafing under the rule of a being so powerful that its occupants exhibit a Voldemort-like reluctance to even speak his name, that being Kang the Conqueror, played by Jonathan Majors.

Although he made an appearance in Marvel’s “Loki” TV series, that didn’t prepare audiences for the Thanos-level threat that Kang represents, and Majors invests him with quiet menace and majesty — a sense of gravitas that’s no small feat given the contours of some of the dialogue. If Kang is destined to become the central antagonist as the next batch of movies again build toward an Avengers-sized showdown, Majors is the one thing to emerge from “Quantumania” on which anyone could hang their hat.

One structural problem, in fact, is that Kang’s power and the scope of his evil plans make the hero-villain pairing feel like a decided mismatch — to couch it in terms suited to Majors’

upcoming role in “Creed III,” asking a lightweight to go toe-to-toe with a heavyweight, one that got his start in the comics sparring with the Fantastic Four. It’s a point overtly made by Kang himself, who sneers at Ant-Man, “You’re out of your league.”

A global pandemic, obviously, significantly altered the theatrical playing field for everyone in Hollywood after Marvel’s smashing success with “Avengers: Endgame,” but the studio hasn’t felt quite as much like a big-league player since that climatic event.

Thanks to its emphasis on Kang, the third “Ant-Man” has taken a necessary step toward something bigger, with the aforementioned “Guardians” and “The Marvels” sequels still to come this year. But it is, at best, a small step, and like much of Marvel’s recent output, only makes “Endgame” loom that much larger in the rearview mirror.

“Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania” premieres February 17 in US theatres. It’s rated PG-13.

Olaplex products cause hair loss, lawsuit claims

By *Tiffany Wertheimer*

BBC — Popular hair care company, Olaplex, is being sued by 28 women who claim its products cause hair loss, blisters and other conditions.

The Olaplex range includes shampoos, conditioners and treatments that claim to safely “repair broken bonds and rejuvenate hair”.

But the lawsuit says Olaplex uses harmful chemicals that left the women’s hair and scalps in a worse condition.

Olaplex has released test results that it says show the products are safe.

“We are prepared to vigorously defend our company, our brand, and our products against these baseless accusations,” it said in a statement on Instagram.

Olaplex has not recalled any of its products in the wake of the lawsuit.

Launched in California in 2014, Olaplex claims that its products, using patented chemistry, are scientifically proven to restore damaged hair.

It is particularly marketed towards people who bleach their hair, and while it is widely available to the public, several products are only sold to trained hair professionals. In many salons around the world it



Olaplex has released test results it claims prove its hair products are safe

is offered - at an additional price - as a treatment for those getting their hair coloured.

The company has enjoyed massive success and has been endorsed by celebrities including Kim Kardashian and Drew Barrymore.

The lawsuit, filed last week in a Californian district court, claims the plaintiffs’ hair was left “dry, brittle, frizzy and dull”.

One woman said her hair became split and broken, making it look as if it had been cut using a “weed whacker”.

Several photos of plaintiffs showing bald spots that they claim were caused by Olaplex have been released by the Law Centre of Amy E. Davis,

one of the legal firms involved in the suit.

The plaintiffs are collectively seeking \$75,000 (£62,200) in damages.

The lawsuit also claims that Olaplex products contain lialil and panthenol, chemical compounds that can lead to hair loss and conditions including “inflamed, blistered, flaking or scaling skin”.

Lialil was once used as a perfume in cosmetics, until the European Union banned it from March 2022 due to its impact on fertility.

Olaplex says it removed the ingredient from its products globally, “out of an abundance of caution”, however the lawsuit claims it is still selling the older products that contain lialil, also known as butyl-

phenyl methylpropional.

The plaintiffs said they carefully considered any other factors that may have caused the women’s hair loss and scalp conditions, but found that “the products alone are to blame”.

Olaplex has strongly denied the allegations, insisting its range does “not cause hair loss or hair breakage”.

“Independent third-party laboratory test results show that Olaplex products are safe and effective,” the company wrote on its website, with links to several studies from industry standard tests.

The company’s CEO JuE Wong said on Twitter that hair loss was a painful and emotional topic “however for our products this is not true”.

Rio's first all-female samba school prepares defiant parade

By *Eléonore Hughes*

AP — As Carnival approaches in Rio de Janeiro, members of a samba school perfect a minutely-tuned performance with dancers twirling in blue, red and white skirts and 40 drummers pounding the rhythm with gusto.

There isn't a single man in sight. This samba school, in Rio's Madureira neighbourhood, is the city's first to be run by and for women.

The community-tied music and dance clubs have always included women, most commonly as seamstresses and dancers. They've played the schools' smaller instruments and Carnival queens lead processions in elaborate, sequined outfits. But rarely do women call the shots on finances, themes or even costumes.

"The big samba schools are coordinated by men, which means women are used to receiving orders," Barbara Rigaud, a 54-year-old cultural producer and hairdresser who is the head of the new Turma da Paz de Madureira samba school, or Group of Peace from Madureira, known by the initials TPM.

During a recent rehearsal, the musicians played under a huge red and orange marquee, offering some protection from the sweltering sun, while older women and a young girl sat in chairs lined against the wall.



Members of the Turma da Paz de Madureira, or TPM, samba school rehearse in preparation for Rio's Carnival parade, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023. TPM is the first all-female samba school in Rio. (AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)

"Here, a woman can express her desires, her ideas, her opinions, which increases self-esteem," said Rigaud, a Black woman who wears beaded earrings and a wide smile. "It is empowering."

TPM started in 2011 as a bloco, the name for musical groups that flood streets with parties during the Carnival season. Rigaud decided she wanted to take the women-only group further and compete in the city's samba leagues. She successfully sought approval from city councillors and the school was inaugurated last September.

The school has 320 members, and rehearses in the lower middle-class neighbourhood of Madureira in Rio's north zone, along with some of the city's most prestigious samba schools, including Portela and Império Serrano.

Among the group's doz-

ens of drummers is Gisele Rosires, 47. She is proud of her big, bulky surdo drum, but the blowback is strong.

"Men look me up and down, they think I'm not capable," she said. A year and a half ago, she was playing in Madureira's park for her first show with the school, when a man took the instrument from her. "He said, 'You're a woman, get out'", said Rosires, who, not wanting to make a fuss, ended up leaving, annoyed.

Challenges start at the very mention of TPM's name; the acronym is the same in Portuguese for premenstrual syndrome, or PMS. While Carnival's street bands often employ clever puns, this was an unintended coincidence that often elicits laughter and mockery from men. Some call them the Turma de Putas de Madureira, or Group of Whores from Madureira.

Patriarchy in Brazil remains persistent. Women are the majority of Brazil's electorate, yet in October congressional elections claimed only 18% of the Lower House seats. There's an even smaller proportion of female senators. In business, women hold leadership positions in 38% of 250 mid-market companies surveyed by consultant Grant Thornton. That percentage has climbed from 15% in 2015, but remains short of parity.

Meanwhile, sexual harassment and assault remain widespread in Carnival's street parties. Over the last decade, however, women have increasingly been standing up for their rights and spreading the message "No means No!" on stickers and pamphlets.

When women are in the spotlight for Carnival, they are often sexualized — particularly Black women. During its coverage of Carnival each year, behemoth TV network Globo airs vignettes with the so-called *Globeleza*, meaning "Globo beauty," played by a Black actress whose role is to promote the spectacle by dancing suggestively while virtually nude.

"Being part of this school is a way of saying we are together. I think women need this, Black women in particular," Margaret Oliveira, a 55-year-old Black housewife who is part of TPM's group of dancers, said at the rehearsal.

cont'd on pg 14

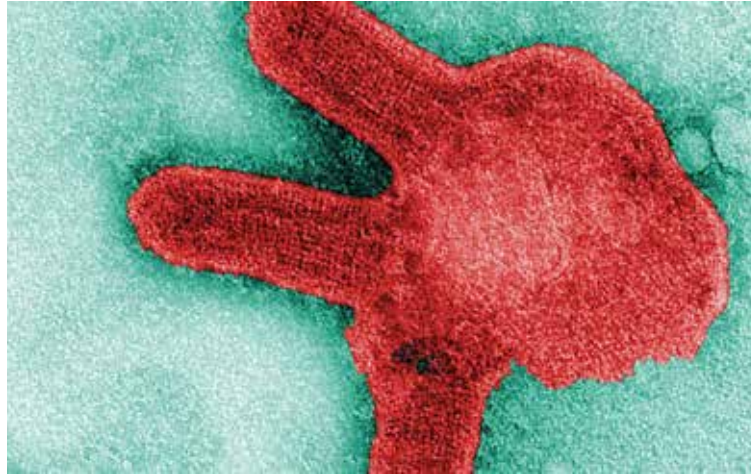
Cameroon finds suspected cases of Marburg virus, an illness similar to Ebola

Cameroonian authorities detected two suspected cases of Marburg disease on Monday in Olamze, a commune on the border with Equatorial Guinea, the public health delegate for the region, Robert Mathurin Bidjang, said on Tuesday.

Equatorial Guinea officially declared its first outbreak of the Marburg virus, an illness similar to Ebola, on Monday.

Neighbouring Cameroon had restricted movement along the border to avoid contagion following reports of an unknown, deadly hemorrhagic fever in Equatorial Guinea last week.

“On the 13th of February, we had two suspected cases. These are two 16-year-old children, a boy and a girl, who have no previous travel history to the affected areas in Equatorial Guinea,” Bidjang said at a



A microscopic image of the Marburg virus.

meeting in Cameroon’s capital Yaounde.

Forty-two people who came into contact with the two children have been identified and contact tracing was ongoing, he added.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said earlier on Tuesday that it was increasing its epidemiological surveillance in Equatorial Guinea.

The small Central African country has so far re-

ported nine deaths as well as 16 suspected cases of Marburg virus disease, with symptoms including fever, fatigue, and blood-stained vomit and diarrhoea, according to the WHO.

“Surveillance in the field has been intensified,” said George Ameh, WHO’s country representative in Equatorial Guinea.

“Contact tracing, as you know, is a cornerstone of the response. We have...rede-

ployed the COVID-19 teams that were there for contact tracing and quickly retrofitted them to really help us out.”

Equatorial Guinea quarantined more than 200 people and restricted movement last week in its Kie-Ntem province, where the hemorrhagic fever was first detected.

Marburg virus is a highly infectious disease that can have a fatality rate of up to 88%, according to the WHO. There are no vaccines or antiviral treatments approved to treat it.

“We’re working on a 30-day response plan where we should be able to quantify what are the exact measures and quantify what are the exact needs,” Ameh said.

He added that the country’s authorities had not reported any new suspected cases in the last 48 hours.

cont’d from pg 13

Making time for oneself in a society that values and expects self-sacrifice from women is an act of resistance, Oliveira added.

With rare exception, women who contributed to samba over time are omitted from its history, said Maira de Deus Brito, who researches samba and the afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé at the University of Brasilia.

For their first parade, on Feb. 19, TPM will honour Iansã, a female deity and warrior of Candomblé. Carnival is just a few days off, but costumes remain incomplete due to a lack of funds. Their vision also will fall somewhat short giv-

en the procession is required by parade protocol to include two men as masters of ceremony.

“It has to be a man for now, until it changes, until this machismo ends,” Rigaud said.

As in any power dispute, the school is going to face problems and opposition, said Paula Dürks Cassol, who wrote a paper about women’s rights and samba in Rio de Janeiro published in the *Journal of International Women’s Studies* last year.

“Every time women try to create new methods of resistance, emancipation and empowerment, there are going to be barriers,” Dürks Cassol said. “But

I am sure that thanks to their union and strength, they will overcome.”

At dusk on the day of TPM’s recent rehearsal, the group spilled out from the courtyard, with the sound of their drums reverberating up and down the narrow street leading off Madureira Park.

This year, the school will make its debut in Rio’s lowest-tier samba league. If the women perform well enough, they can climb the ranks for next year’s parade. Already, Rigaud has her sights on reaching the Sambadrome, where only the top schools compete.

“We’re not here to play around,” Rigaud said. “We’re here to fight, to win.”

CARICOM leaders open annual summit overshadowed by unfolding events in Haiti

CMC — Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders began their 44th regular summit in The Bahamas on Wednesday night, overshadowed by the continued deterioration of the situation in the member country of Haiti.

“The situation in Haiti requires our urgent attention. The turmoil and suffering there continue to worsen. As a near neighbour, The Bahamas is under great strain and many other countries in our region are already heavily impacted,” Bahamas Prime Minister Phillip Davis told the opening ceremony.

Davis, who is the chairman of the 15-member regional integration grouping, said the region will benefit “if Haiti is again fully functioning as a state.

“We should learn from the failures of past efforts to help rather than use these disappointments as an excuse for inaction. I pray that we can agree on a series of concrete steps to help move towards a solution for the Haitian people and the region as a whole,” Davis told the audience that included Haitian Prime Minister Dr. Ariel Henry and Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has pledged his country’s support in finding a solution to the sit-



Caricom Chairman Prime Minister Phillip Davis

uation. “We have learnt that inaction has its own costs and consequences,” Davis added.

Earlier, outgoing CARICOM chairman and Suriname’s President, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, said Haiti “is in need of our concrete, and feasible assistance.

“We must support the Haitian people. Building on our discussions in the past year, I look forward to how and in what way this assistance can be provided. Democracy, free and fair elections, rule of law and certainly the protection of fundamental human rights are indeed at the core of the Caribbean civilization,” Santokhi said, adding “we must foster and protect these also in the sister nation in need”.

CARICOM Secretary General, Dr. Carla Barnett told the ceremony that even as progress is being made

on some fronts, CARICOM and indeed the wider international community continue to struggle to help Haiti resolve its multifaceted crises.

“We will continue our efforts to assist all stakeholders in Haiti to ensure a Haitian-owned resolution to the crises,” she said, adding “we will have to show the resilience and fortitude of the Haitian people, as we strive to overcome challenges and advance the initiatives to improve the lives of all citizens of our Caribbean Community.

“That goal – to create a safe, sustainable, prosperous and viable community for all – has been the guiding principle of our efforts over the last 50 years and will continue to guide us over the next 50 and beyond,” she added.

Haiti has called on the international community, “especially those countries that can help” to support

efforts to deal with the ongoing socio-economic and political situation in his country.

Prime Minister Henry, who succeeded the assassinated President Jovenel Moïse, as head of the government in July 2020, has said to deal with this situation, his administration is urging the international community to participate in a specialised multinational force to help the Haitian security forces to fight against the proliferation of organised crime, the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition, and eradicate the gangs that have held the country hostage.

United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres reiterated his urgent appeal to member states to understand the urgency of acting quickly to support the solutions chosen by Haitian actors.

So far, Jamaica is the only CARICOM country that has publicly said it is willing to participate in a multinational security assistance deployment to Haiti.

The Caribbean leaders will over the two days discuss a wide range of issues, ranging from climate change to food security and the impact of the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Suriname National Party leaves Coalition government



NPS chairman, Gregory Rusland

CMC — The Suriname National Party (NPS) Wednesday left the coalition government of President Chandrikapersad Santokhi after two of its ministers were instructed to submit their resignations.

Education, Science & Culture Minister, Marie Levens and Spatial Planning and the Environment Minister, Silvano Tjong-Ahin have been instructed to leave the government as the NPS also announced it was leaving the coalition that included Santokhi's Progressive Reform Party (VHP) that won the 2020

general election.

“As of today, we are withdrawing from the partnership of the government coalition.

“We leave the coalition and form an autonomous group in the National Assembly. We will act as responsible DNA members,” NPS chairman, Gregory Rusland, told a news conference.

He said the party made the decision to quit the coalition and the government because President Santokhi and Vice President Ronnie Brunswijk have been making policy decisions for some time without involving the NPS.

“After internal deliberations in the party, we have come to the conclusion that we do not expect the situation within the current set-up to change to such an extent within the next two years that the NPS can make a respectable contribution to shaping and implementing government policy,” said Rusland.

“We have never really experienced what we are experiencing now in a coalition that included the NPS,” he added.

With the departure of the NPS, the coalition government now has 30 of the 51 parliamentary seats.

Political commentators said the straw that broke *cont'd on pg 17*

BARBUDA EXPRESS
ST. JOHN'S DEPARTURE

SUNDAY

AB 12:00 PM
BA 3:45 PM

MONDAY

AB 6:00 AM
BA 8:00 AM

TUESDAY TO FRIDAY

AB 7:00 AM
BA 3:45 PM

SATURDAY

AB 8:00 AM
BA 3:45 PM

TYPHOON EXPRESS

MONDAY
ST. JOHN'S DEPARTURE

AB 3:45 PM
(OVERNIGHT IN BARBUDA)

TUESDAY

BA 6:00 AM TO ST. JOHN'S

WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY
(CRABBS DEPARTURE)

AB 10:00AM
BA 3:00PM

UPDATED SCHEDULE



CONTACT US FOR RESERVATIONS
+1 268 764-2291

Jamaica declares states of emergency in Clarendon and St. Ann

CMC — Jamaica has declared states of public emergency (SOEs) in Clarendon and St Ann, as well as the Kingston Western police division, following a surge in criminal activities in these areas.

“The declaration of States of Public Emergency will allow the security forces to carry out targeted operations to disrupt and dismantle criminal gangs and their networks and prevent the occurrence of serious crimes,” Prime Minister Andrew Holness said.

A statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister said Holness on the advice of the Commissioner of Police, the Chief of Defence Staff, and the Governor General, Sir Patrick Allen, had indicated these SOEs will be for an initial period of 14 days, beginning at



Andrew Holness

midnight on February 15.

“Organised gangs are the main source and cause of violence, leading to fear and terror in some communities. The Government must protect innocent citizens from these criminal gangs, and, therefore, must act,” Holness said.

In December, SOEs were reinstated in St Ann,

Clarendon, St. Catherine and specified areas of Kingston and St Andrew to deal with the criminal activities in these areas.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Dr. Horace Chang, stressed that extreme criminality, as recorded in the specified areas, requires equally strong and decisive

enforcement measures to protect law-abiding citizens.

“The government is committed to taking the actions necessary to protect its citizens. In free and democratic societies like Jamaica, focused short-term enforcement measures are justifiable to save lives.

“The use of the States of Public Emergency in these instances is a necessary and effective response to the high level of criminal violence within the identified areas,” he said.

Figures released by the Jamaica Constabulary Force for the period January 1 to February 12, show 20 people have been murdered in Kingstown West, as compared with 15 for the corresponding period last year, St. Ann 11 as against 9 and Clarendon 15 as against five last year.

cont'd from pg 16

the camel's back were recent decisions made by the government to phase out the subsidy on fuel, resulting in prices increasing significantly from Monday.

The government has also indicated that the price of diesel will further increase in March and the subsidy on cooking gas and electricity will also be phased out.

The NPS said that citizens are not able to absorb the new fees and

as a result, more people will go into poverty given that an adequate social safety net has not yet been set up.

The NPS has also accused the former coalition partners of appointing relatives and friends to top positions in government and state-owned companies.

Rusalnd said last week, a younger brother of Brunswijk was appointed as the chief executive officer of the Suriname Energy Companies, while he is under criminal investigation for

suspected corruption at a company where he was the chairman.

“We were not involved in this decision,” said Rusland.

It was only a matter of time that the NPS would withdraw from the government after 12 of the 17 subdivisions of the Paramaribo constituency, the largest division of the NPS, had made the decision during an emergency meeting last Friday that the party should leave the government.

Nicaragua strips citizenship from 94 political opponents

AP — Nicaragua cancelled the citizenship of 94 political opponents Wednesday, including writers Sergio Ramírez and Gioconda Belli.

Appeals Court Justice Ernesto Rodríguez Mejía read a statement that declared the 94 people to be “traitors” and said they had lost their Nicaraguan citizenship.

Mejía said their properties would be confiscated.

He said those on the list — among them rights activist Vilma Núñez, former Sandinista rebel commander Luis Carrión and journalist Carlos Fernando Chamorro — were guilty of “spreading false news” and “conspiracy to undermine national integrity.”

It was not clear what law the declaration was based on. Nicaragua’s congress has not yet fully approved a bill that would allow the government to strip people of their citizenship.

Most of those named have fled Nicaragua since President Daniel Ortega began arresting opponents two years ago, and Mejía said they had been declared “fugitives.” There was no mention of what might happen to those named who are still in Nicaragua.

The move comes days after Ortega packed off



Nicaraguan writer Sergio Ramírez attends a meeting at Cervantes Institute's headquarters in Madrid, Spain, Sept. 13, 2021. The Nicaraguan government on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, declared 94 opponents and critics “traitors to the homeland”, among them Ramírez and fellow author Gioconda Belli, who were stripped of their nationality and confiscation of their properties. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez, File)

222 imprisoned political leaders, priests, students, activists and other dissidents on a flight to the United States.

Shortly after, Ortega’s government voted to strip the expelled former prisoners of Nicaraguan citizenship.

Analysts, legal experts and human rights groups call it a political ploy. They contend it also violates international law and say it is unprecedented — at least in the Western Hemisphere — in terms of scale and impact.

Ramírez announced in 2021 that he would live in Spain, after Ortega’s government tried to arrest him and banned his lat-

est book. The 79-year-old writer served as vice president during Ortega’s first government from 1985 to 1990. But in the mid-1990s he distanced himself from Ortega, along with other intellectuals and former guerrillas.

Thousands have fled into exile since Nicaraguan security forces violently put down mass anti government protests in 2018. Ortega says the protests were actually an attempted coup with foreign backing, aiming for his overthrow and encouraging foreign nations to apply sanctions on members of his family and government.

In the run-up to Ortega’s re-election in No-

vember 2021, Nicaraguan authorities arrested seven potential opposition presidential candidates to clear the field.

The government also has closed hundreds of nongovernmental groups that Ortega accused of taking foreign funding and using it to destabilise his government.

Peter J. Spiro, an international law professor at Temple University, and others say stripping away citizenship in this context violates a treaty adopted in 1961 by countries in the United Nations, including Nicaragua, which sets clear rules meant to prevent statelessness.

The treaty states that governments cannot “deprive any person or group of persons of their nationality on racial, ethnic, religious or political grounds.”

Spiro noted there are some circumstances when governments can terminate citizenship, such as ending nationality for someone who acquires citizenship in another country when the first nation prohibits dual citizenship. But, he said, ending citizenship is not allowed when it is used as a political weapon.

Spain has offered its citizenship to the 222 exiles, while the U.S. granted the Nicaraguans a two-year temporary protection.

China, Iran call on Afghanistan to end restrictions on women

AP — China and Iran have urged mutual neighbour Afghanistan to end restrictions on women's work and education.

The call came in a joint statement Thursday issued at the close of a visit to Beijing by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi during which the two sides affirmed close economic and political ties and their rejection of Western standards of human rights and democracy.

Since taking over Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban has banned women and girls from universities and schools after the sixth grade and forced out those in elected offices and other prominent positions.

“The two sides ... called on the Afghan rulers to form an inclusive government in which all ethnic groups and political groups actually participate, and cancel all discriminatory measures against women, ethnic minorities and other religions,” the statement said, adding that the U.S. and its NATO allies “should be responsible for the current situation in Afghanistan.”

The U.S. had backed Afghanistan's elected government against the Taliban, but withdrew amid the rising costs and dwindling domestic support for a government that was unable to counter a Taliban revival.

The call for women's rights is notable coming from Iran's hardline Shiite Muslim regime, which has been challenged by months of protests sparked by the death of a young woman in police custody for allegedly violating clothing requirements.

The country's theocracy has executed at least four men since the demonstrations began in September over the death of Mahsa Amini. All



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, visiting Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, right, walks with Chinese President Xi Jinping after reviewing an honour guard during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023. China and Iran have urged mutual neighbour Afghanistan to end restrictions on women's work and education. The call came in a joint statement Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023, issued at the close of Raisi's visit to Beijing in which the sides affirmed close economic and political ties and their rejection of Western standards of human rights and democracy. (Yan Yan/Xinhua via AP, File)

have faced internationally criticised, rapid, closed-door trials.

The bulk of the China-Iran joint statement emphasised strong political and economic ties, the quest for peace and justice in the Middle East and denuclearization in spite of Tehran's alleged drive to produce atomic weapons.

In a meeting earlier with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Raisi expressed support for China's crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong and claim to self-ruling democratic Taiwan.

China and Iran portray themselves, alongside Moscow, as counterweights to American power, and have given tacit, and in Iran's case, material support to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

“China supports Iran in safe-

guarding national sovereignty” and “resisting unilateralism and bullying,” Xi said in a statement carried by Chinese state TV on its website.

Xi and Raisi attended the signing of 20 cooperation agreements including on trade and tourism, the Chinese government announced. Those add to a 25-year strategy agreement signed in 2021 to cooperate in developing oil, industry and other fields.

China is one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil and a major source of investment.

Iran has struggled for years under trade and financial sanctions imposed by Washington and other Western governments. The U.S. government cut off Iran's access to the network that connects global banks in 2018.

Belarus claims it won't send troops to Ukraine unless it is attacked, as tensions escalate at border

CNN — Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has claimed there is “no way” his country would send troops into Ukraine unless it is attacked, amid fears Russia’s close ally will help to facilitate a spring offensive by Moscow.

“We are peaceful people. We know what war is and we don’t want war,” the authoritarian leader Lukashenko, who has close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, said at a press conference in Minsk on Thursday.

“There is no way we are going to send our troops to Ukraine unless you are going to commit aggression against Belarus,” Lukashenko said. “But don’t forget Russia is our ally, legally, morally and politically,” he added.

The Kremlin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, meanwhile announced that Putin will meet with Lukashenko in the Moscow region on Friday.

Belarus helped Russia launch its initial invasion of Ukraine last February, allowing the Kremlin’s troops to enter the country through the 1,000-kilometre (621-mile) Ukrainian-Belarusian border to the north of Kyiv.

Minsk has since claimed on numerous occasions that Ukrainian drones and missiles have entered its territory, sometimes without providing evidence.

There have been fears throughout the conflict that Belarus will again be used as a launching ground for another offensive, or that Lukashenko’s own troops will join the conflict, citing such episodes as provocation against its sovereignty. Tensions have been mounting at the border again in recent days as Ukraine braces for a renewed attack.

Lukashenko continued to say



A Belarusian border guard patrols near the Divin border crossing point between Belarus and Ukraine on Wednesday.

Thursday that Russia has “never asked” him to start a joint war in Ukraine.

A CNN team visited Belarus’s southwest border near northwest Ukraine earlier this week, accompanied by state border officials.

The CNN team were 100 metres (328 feet) away from the Ukrainian side, where they saw the Belarusian government’s fortification of the border area with barbed wire in a carefully orchestrated and tightly controlled press tour.

According to the CNN team on the ground, the Ukrainian side of the border is heavily barricaded with several layers of barbed wire and earth mounds to stop anyone from going through.

Belarusian officials told CNN the border crossing from their side in the small town of Dyvin is still functioning but that the Ukrainian side has closed the crossing.

Kyiv has closed all border crossings to Belarus, except to occasionally allow entry to Ukrainian refugees who are looking to return to their home

country, out of concern Belarus could be used for a further invasion by Russia.

The CNN team could see a Ukrainian flag on Ukraine’s side of the border crossing and a red and white flag which is associated with the Belarusian opposition – a move Belarusian authorities called a “provocation.”

Formerly under Soviet control until declaring its sovereignty in 1990, Belarus remains one of Russia’s closest allies and has played a key role in its invasion of Ukraine – despite Lukashenko saying previously his country was “being dragged” into the war.

Russian troops launched the invasion on February 24, crossing into Ukraine from Belarus after months amassing along Ukraine’s border. In the first days of the assault, Russian Tu-22 “Backfire” bombers used Belarusian airspace to launch coordinated cruise missile attacks on targets within Ukraine. More recently, the two nations have engaged in joint military drills near the Belarus-Ukraine crossing.

FA investigating after objects thrown at Man City's Kevin de Bruyne in win at Arsenal

By Mandeep Sanghera

BBC — The Football Association has launched an investigation after Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne had objects thrown at him during their 3-1 win at Arsenal on Wednesday evening.

The midfielder was targeted while he was walking around the pitch after being substituted late on.

Referee Anthony Taylor is believed to have mentioned it in his match report.

Arsenal are studying CCTV footage and say they will impose strict sanctions if those responsible can be identified.

"This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated," added a Gunners spokesperson.

De Bruyne scored and set up a goal as City took over top spot in the



De Bruyne scored the opener for Man City at Arsenal after Takehiro Tomiyasu's poor backpass

Premier League from the Gunners.

'beer anyone?'

The Belgium international posted a picture on social media of himself at Emirates Stadium with the caption

Another picture posted by De Bruyne, with a cup in the air near him, had the caption 'thanks!'.

Dominican Republic to host U20 Women's finals as Concacaf kicks off new youth formats

Concacaf is returning to the Dominican Republic for the finals of its Women's U20 Championship that will qualify three teams for next year's U-20 Women's World Cup.

Last year the championship qualified three teams for the 2022 Women's U20 World Cup in Costa Rica. The US won their seventh title, beating Mexico 2-0 in the final. In the third-place



match, Canada overcame Puerto Rico 2-0.

This year the competition will be the first to take

place under Concacaf's reformatted youth championship structure that will start with 32 teams playing in six qualifying groups (two of six teams and four of five teams) April 14 – 23.

The six group winners and top two ranked nations will then meet May 24 – June 3, 2023, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The finals will start as two groups
cont'd on pg 22

Hayley Matthews, Dottin are only West Indians sold in player auction

CMC — West Indies Women's captain Hayley Matthews and fellow Barbadian all-rounder Deandra Dottin were the only two players from the Caribbean sold at the inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL) player auction on Monday.

Matthews is presently leading the Windies Women at the ICC Women's Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa and was sold to the Mumbai Indians for about US\$49,000.

Dottin, who retired from international cricket last year after playing 143 One-Day Internationals and 127 T20 Internationals for West Indies following her international debut 15 years ago, was sold to Gujarat Giants for about US\$73,000.

A total of 87 players were sold during the player auction and the five franchises — Delhi Capitals, Gujarat Giants, Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore, and UP Warriorz — splurged about

US\$7.2 million to populate their teams.

The first bid turned out to be the most expensive as RCB got India Women's batsman Smriti Mandhana for US\$415,000.

Mumbai Indians defied competition from RCB and Delhi Capitals and bought India Women's captain Harmanpreet Kaur for about US\$220,000.

All-rounder Deepthi Sharma was the second most expensive domestic player, being sold for about US\$317,000, and Jemimah Rodrigues made massive gains after being bought by Warriorz for about US\$268,000.

Australian Ashleigh Gardner, the No. 1 all-rounder in Women's T20Is, and England all-rounder Natalie Sciver topped the charts among the overseas players, attracting a joint top bid of about US\$390,000.

Among the list of players going unsold were former West Indies Women's



West Indies Women's captain Hayley Matthews

captain Stafanie Taylor, of the WPL was contested by pacers Shamikia Connell and Shakera Selman, as well as leg-spinner Afy Fletcher.

The inaugural season in Mumbai.

cont'd from pg 21

of four with the top two in each group going through to knock-out semi-finals.

"We are very pleased to launch this new competition format which will showcase the very best women's U-20 teams from across our region, as they compete to be crowned Concacaf champion and for qualification to the FIFA Women's U-20 World Cup. We know the Dominican Republic will be an excellent host for this important tournament and on behalf of Concacaf,

I would like to thank the Dominican Football Federation for their wholehearted support," said Concacaf General Secretary Philippe Moggio.

The group draw for the qualifying groups will be held in Miami at Concacaf's headquarters February 16 with the following nations going into the pot: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, Canada, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, French Guiana, Grena-

da, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and US Virgin Islands.

The US and Mexico are the two seeded teams that will join the qualifiers for the Dominican Republic finals.

Contact the writer of this story at moc.llabtoofdrowedisni@noslohcin.luap



The Sea View Farm football team. (File photo)

Sea View Farm reclaim runners-up position in second division league

Sea View Farm have regained the second place position in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League.

They did so after taking maximum points from their latest encounter. Goals on either side of halftime gave Sea View Farm a 2-0 victory over ABAYA at the Parham playing field on Wednesday, 15th February.

Markland Wright converted a penalty in the 10th minute to give Sea View Farm a 1-0 halftime advantage. Sea View Farm's 8th win in 10 matches was completed by Bertrand Chastanet's 56th minute conversion.

It was the sixth loss in nine matches for ABAYA who slipped to 13th position in the league as they remain on seven points.

The result lifted Sea View Farm past Attacking Saints and Freemans Village back into second place behind unbeaten leaders Jennings United.

Sea View Farm advance to 25

points, two points ahead of both Attacking Saints and Freemans Village who are now occupying third and fourth places respectively.

Jennings United retained their first-place position after getting a win by default over bottom team Tamo FC who were unable to field a team for the encounter at the Jennings playing field.

The result lifted Jennings United to 26 points from 10 matches, while Tamo FC, who have now lost all their nine encounters, remain rooted in the cellar position of the 15-team competition without a point.

Chunsae Martin scored a brace as Bethesda secured their fourth win in 10 matches by surging to a 3-0 victory over Blackburn Palace at the ABFA's Technical Center at Paynters.

Martin scored his first in the 41st minute which gave Bethesda a 1-0 halftime lead. An O'Shale Simon's 51st minute conversion made it 2-0

and Martin scored his second goal of the match in the 63rd minute to seal his team's victory.

The result lifted Bethesda to 14 points and into 8th place in the standings, while the 8th loss in nine matches has left Blackburn Palace second from bottom of the standings with three points.

Real Blizzard and Young Warriors battled to a 1-1 draw in their encounter at the New Winthorpes playing field. Emmanuel Yanta scored a 60th minute equalizer for Real Blizzard after a Chequane Armstrong's 36th minute conversion had given Young Warriors a 1-0 halftime lead.

Their second draw in 10 matches lifted Real Blizzard to 17 points and up to fifth place in the league contest.

It was also the second draw in 10 matches for Young Warriors which enables them to move on to eight points to advance to 12th place in the standings.

ABNOC-CGA to show appreciation to national outstanding athletes

The Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee and Commonwealth Games Association (ABNOC-CGA) will host an Appreciation Dinner in honour of the nation's outstanding athletes.

The event, which will take place on Saturday, 18th February, at the Sandals Grande Resort, is designed to recognize the hard work and achievements of the country's most talented athletes.

The event will recognize athletes who attended and performed creditably at several major international events, including the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games, the 2022 CARIFTA, (inaugural) Caribbean, Central American and Caribbean Beach Games, and the Commonwealth Games.

Among the athletes being recognized are those who medalled at some of these events, highlighting the outstanding performances of Antigua and Barbuda's elite athletes on the world stage.

In addition to individual athlete recognition, the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association, the Antigua and



Antigua and Barbuda's sprinter Dwayne Fleming celebrates with his country's national flag after surging to victory in the Boys Under-17 100 metres Final at the 49th CARIFTA Games at the National Stadium in Kingston, Jamaica, on Saturday, 16 April, 2022. Fleming is one of the nation's outstanding athletes who will be honoured by the ABNOC-CGA at an appreciation dinner at the Sandals Grande Resort on Saturday, 18 February, 2023. (File Photo)

Barbuda Swimming Federation, and members of their respective winning OECS teams will also be recognized.

The Antigua and Barbuda Netball Association too will be recognized for its commendable (third-place) performance in the 2022 OECS Netball Championships.

The dinner will provide an opportunity to acknowledge all of the teams and their dedication to their re-

spective sports.

The ABNOC-CGA is extending its thanks to all the athletes, coaches, and support staff who have worked tirelessly to achieve these successes and to the family and friends who have supported them every step of the way.

President of the ABNOC-CGA Paul Chet Greene says, "The Appreciation Dinner is part of the ABNOC-CGA's ongoing commitment to support and

develop Antigua and Barbuda's athletic community.

"The organization recognizes the hard work and dedication of the country's athletes and their support teams and is proud to be able to host an event that honours their outstanding achievements."

Greene adds that the organization is looking forward to continue to work with and support Antigua and Barbuda's athletes in their pursuit of excellence.



Coach Kevin McIntosh and his Northern Patriots team during the Gomez/Netherlands Insurance Youth Football League at the ABFA's Technical Center at Paynters on Saturday, 17th February, 2018. (Photo courtesy GNFC)

GNFC's youth league to kick off this weekend

The sixth edition of the Gomez/Netherlands Insurance Youth Football League, which is organized by the Generation Next FC (GNFC), will kick off tomorrow.

President of the Generation Next FC Ricky Santos said unlike previous years, this year's youth league will not take place at the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Technical Center, which is unavailable.

As such, the matches in this year's GNFC's youth league will be held at three different venues.

Matches in the Under-7, Under-9, Under-11, Under-13 and Girls' divisions will be played at the American University of Antigua (AUA) Football Field.

The matches in the Under-15 Division will be hosted at St. Anthony's Secondary School in Langfords and

the games in the Under-17 Division will take place at the Fort Road playing field.

Taking part in this year's youth league are Cutting Edge FC, Earthquakes FC, Five Islands FC, Freemans Village FC, Generation Next FC, Gray's Green FC, Green Bay Hoppers FC, Liberta Blackhawks FC, New Evolution FC, Pigotts Bullets FC, Soccer Academy, Tamo FC, Villa Lions FC, Wadadli United FC, Willikies FC, Wings FC and Young Warriors FC.

Santos said the youth league also provides an avenue to keep the youngsters from getting involve in deviant behavior as well as providing a platform for social interactions and building friendships.

"It's a passion of mine to create pathways and opportunities for our

youngsters. It also does something immeasurable too, in that it keeps them off the streets. As the old saying goes, the devil finds work for idle hands," Santos said.

"I was young once too and if you didn't have anything constructive to do, you would tend to get yourself in somewhat of a trouble, not intending to get into trouble, but trouble tends to find you when you are idle with your hands.

"So I think this youth league is very important and football is also a team sport, not that I am knocking individual sports, but with team sports there is a lot of social aspects that take place.

"There is a lot of interaction together, the players become friends and it crosses all divides, which I also think is very important."

A&B open campaign against Anguilla in LICB's three-day tournament

Defending champions Antigua and Barbuda will open their campaign against Anguilla when action begins in the Leeward Islands Cricket Board's (LICB) Senior Men's Three-Day Tournament in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis on Sunday.

Antigua and Barbuda will engage the Anguillans at Conaree in St. Kitts in one of the three opening round matches that will take place in the six-team tournament from 19th to 21st February.

St. Kitts will take on St. Maarten at Warner Park in St. Kitts, while Nevis will face Montserrat at the Elquemedo T. Willett Park in Nevis in the other two opening round matches.

Meanwhile, three officials from the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Umpires Association (ABCUA) will represent the organization at the LICB's Senior Men's Three-Day Tournament in the federation.

The three officials are umpires Bernard Joseph, Felix Auguiste and Donald Sheckle. Joseph and Auguiste will be umpiring in St. Kitts, while Sheckle will be officiating in Nevis during the tournament.

The LICB's Senior Men's Three-Day Tournament is making a return to the sub-regional cricket calendar after an absence of eight years.

The last LICB Three-day Tournament was held in 2014 when Antigua and Barbuda, under the leadership of captain Sylvester "Bouncing" Joseph and Coach Ridley Rasburg Jacobs, won the title.



Allrounder Rahkeem Cornwall will captain the Antigua and Barbuda team at this year's Leeward Islands Cricket Board's Senior Men's Three-Day Tournament in the Federation of St Kitts and Nevis from 18th February to 5th March, 2023. (File photo)