

FRIDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2023 | VOLUME 4 ISSUE 24 | WWW.POINTVILLE.AG

CCTV CAMERAS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY NEXT MONTH

Story on Page 3



*T. N. Kirnon students pose for a picture with the captain of the AIDAdiva', Thomas Mey, and some of his crew. **Story on page 9.***
[Photo: Antigua Cruise Port]

Gov't explores options to tackle teen deviance

With the uptick in violence among young people again at the forefront, the government has recommitted to ensuring that there are structures in place to intervene to catch at risk youth before disruptive, antisocial behaviours take root.

To this end, Minister of Information, Melford Nicholas gave the assurance at Thursday's post-cabinet press briefing that several options to reach troubled youngsters are being considered as the government is disinclined to rush to incarceration as a first option.

These options being examined include the redevelopment of the Boys Training School to provide holistic services to young boys in need of sup-



Minister of Information, Melford Nicholas port and the establishment of a similar facility to serve girls who find themselves in trouble.

Where a lack of parental supervision in the home is at the root of the problem, Nicholas said the government may have to consider stepping in to make neglected children wards of the state.

He added that the government is also open to considering a cadet programme where young people can be introduced to the military in cooperation with the Antigua Barbuda Defence Force. This, he said, would help to instil discipline and structure in the lives of young people.

"In addition...or a part of the whole sum development, some type of structured environment associated with the army where they could be incorporated in the Cadet Corps as part of the whole restructured environment for improving the overall social integration.

"That will be one of the issues on the table for consideration in the wider societal discussion on this particular matter," said Minister Nicholas.



ANTIGUA

A whole new dining experience awaits you.

Call us at 562-5724 | Whatsapp 736-7165



Work to install CCTV cameras in schools in progress

Work to install closed circuit television surveillance cameras (CCTV) in schools across the island is progressing smoothly.

This is according to Information Minister, Melford Nicholas, who provided an update on the issue considering recent security breaches at several public schools.

The installation of CCTV cameras was one of several measures the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda announced last year to address break-ins and vandalism of public school plants.

At that time, the government said that the work would have begun during the second term of the school year, which began in January, 2023.

"The work has already begun. The Ministry of Education did indicate that they had come up with a quick and easy solution, and the vendor has presented a quotation which was accepted by the government

through the Ministry of Education and the funding has already been approved and so...the rest of it - the whole question of implementation, procurement and installation and commissioning - ...the Ministry of Education would have given themselves some time for the implementation and of course, it will be by a school by school basis, so... it will be a phased implementation basis," Nicholas added.

The minister said he expects that most public schools will have cameras installed and operational by March this year.

Building strong rooms or large safes on school compounds was also proposed as a solution to secure high value items after school hours.

Additional lighting is also to be placed on public school campuses to improve security.

All schools will also be fenced so that access to campuses can be monitored.



Antigua Cruise Port

JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Accounts Officer

The Accounts Officer will report to the Financial Controller in supporting the company's Finance programs.

CORE DUTIES

1. Reconcile bank accounts daily and prepare cash reports.
2. Post vendor invoices to accounting software daily, initiate and post payments.
3. Send out invoices to cruise lines daily and tenants monthly.
4. Follow up on receivables for Cruise Lines and tenants and compile monthly reports.
5. Manage purchasing (placing orders, clearing overseas shipments, liaising with Broker/Driver).
6. Receiving purchases, tracking inventory (cleaning and office supplies), compile monthly inventory reports.
7. Update the fixed asset register weekly (new purchases and disposals).
8. Assist in the preparation for and during Audits.
9. Assist in the preparation of management and financial reports.
10. Fill in for Admin as Financial Assistant when position is vacant.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Associate Degree or equivalent in Accounting or a Finance related field. In the absence of the respective qualifications, a minimum of 3-years relevant work experience.
- Good organizational skills.
- Excellent communication and coordination skills.
- Excellent understanding of dealing with people.
- Leadership skills.
- Use of written and spoken English and report writing skills.
- Confident and self-motivated.
- Ability to work flexible hours.

Antigua Cruise Port (ACP) is seeking to recruit a highly motivated and experienced Accounts Officer.

Learn more at
www.antiguacruiseport.com/careers

All applications are to be submitted
 by February 10, 2023
 to veryssam@antiguacruiseport.com

Local News



Director of Education commits to improved security in schools

The country's director of education has said an urgent review of security at public schools across the country is underway.

This follows the daytime invasion of Clare Hall Secondary School (CHSS) by armed masked men on Tuesday.

Pandemonium broke out at the school after the men entered the compound to hunt down and attack a student.

This brought an abrupt end to the school day, leaving students and teachers traumatised.

Director of Education, Clare Browne condemned the attack and added that the perpetrators' actions were "reprehensible," especially in a school setting.

"When parents send their children to school, they expect that their children are going to be safe. When teachers come to work at

schools, their workplace, then they expect to be safe. When cleaners and all the other persons who operate within a school compound come to operate there, they expect to go back home at the end of the workday and they do not expect to be terrorised as they were terrorised [Tuesday], Mr. Browne stated.

The issue of school security is again at the fore as there has been a resurgence of break-ins and vandalism, but the failed attempt by the two men to harm their teen-aged target has driven home the urgency with which education officials must act to safeguard the safety of pupils and teachers.

"We recognise that we need to look again, to rethink the quality of security that is provided for schools," Director Browne said.

"We need to make sure that persons when they come



Director of Education, Clare Browne

to work, or they come to learn, that they are able to go back at the end of the day.

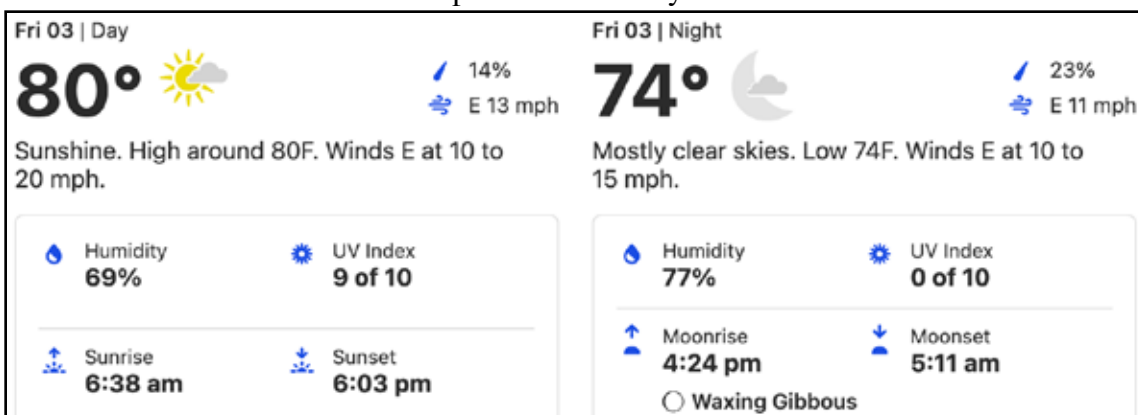
"We need to make sure that parents who are out trying to make a living for themselves have the peace of mind that their children are receiving an education in a safe and healthy learning environment."

Minister of Education,

Sports and Creative Industries Daryll Matthew, Director Browne and a team from the ministry, which included counsellors, visited CHSS on Wednesday to offer support to those who were impacted on Tuesday.

The ministry has also committed to making schools safe havens for everyone involved.

"We would have promised the school that the Ministry of Education will do everything within its powers to ensure that we improve the security situation at the Clare Hall Secondary School, and at every other school, primary, secondary in this country," Director Browne assured.



MoW to announce community road repair schedule

The Ministry of Works will soon roll out a schedule that will detail plans for road repairs in the country.

Minister of Works, Maria Browne, has wasted no time in focusing the attention and the resources of the ministry on addressing the poor condition of some community roads.

This was a major concern of electors in the lead up to the January elections.

According to the minister, teams from the Ministry of Works will soon begin carrying out road repairs in communities across the nation.

It is anticipated that these teams will spend an average of three weeks in each community before moving on.

Over the first year, it is expected that most commu-



Minister of Works, Maria Browne

nities on Antigua will enjoy improved road infrastructure.

Within a week of her appointment, Minister Browne deployed a crew to complete Loblolly Road in Greenbay Hill. Its state of disrepair had been the source of much frustration for residents.

The work being done on this road includes the completion of the sub-base.

Before the intervention, the road was completely unusable. Over the past week, however, Public Works Department trucks have delivered the aggregates, machinery and manpower required to make the

road usable.

Meanwhile, although the work to resurface Anchorage Road has been halted temporarily, Minister Browne said this has been done to enable APUA to install new water pipes which will replace the existing six-decade old cast iron pipes.

The work is expected to resume in about two weeks.

This swift move to action by the Ministry of Works has been applauded by the cabinet who have also applauded both the Minister of Works, Maria Browne, and Minister of Utilities, Melford Nicholas, for collaborating to resolve some of the issues that have existed between the two ministries with respect to the maintenance of infrastructure in the country.



Guys and Dolls
Simply Classy

268-782-6020

OAS calls for dialogue, condemns violence as Peru political unrest continues

On 30th January, Antigua and Barbuda cosponsored a declaration presented to the Permanent Council of the Organisation of American States (OAS) seeking an end to the reported human rights violations and violence stemming from the political upheaval in Peru.

Joining Antigua and Barbuda in support of the declaration were Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, and Uruguay.

In part, the declaration expressed “...dismay at the acts of violence which have resulted in fifty-eight deaths to date, according to the Office of the Ombudsperson in Peru, and property damage” as well as “reports of both excessive use of force and the violation of academic spaces.

The Antigua and Barbuda delegation led by Ambassador Sir Ronald Sanders called on “all sectors of the Peruvian society to respect the right to assembly and for protest to be exercised in a peaceful manner; and to resume dialogue and build consensus to overcome the



Sir Ron Sanders
current situation.”

The declaration further called on the Peruvian state to pursue a course of action to resolve the unrest that “...adheres to the Inter-American standards of necessity, legality, proportionality, reasonableness, or other widely accepted standards, as well as the adoption of effective accountability measures related to the acts of violence and destruction that have occurred in Peru”.

The Permanent Council also recognised the “...decision of the government of Peru to provide the necessary facilities to the Public Ministry to investigate and identify, and prosecute and punish, where appropriate, those responsible for the violations of human rights, particularly of life and safety, and for damage to public and private property.”

At the heart of the declaration was the OAS’ aim

of assuring the safety of all Peruvians, “...especially affected people, and their right to due process consistent with the rule of law”.

The organisation is also insisting that Peru take steps to ensure good governance and democratic institutional “...through the prompt holding of free, fair and transparent general elections, with international electoral observation”.

The underlying civil unrest in Peru came to a head at the end of 2022 when thousands of protesters converged in the country’s capital Lima to show support for former president, Pedro Castillo, who was ousted on 7th December, and to demand the resignation of current President Dina Boluarte.

Protesters are also calling for the dissolution of parliament and fresh elections.

Castillo, 53, had been accused in multiple corruption investigations and narrowly avoided two impeachment attempts by Peru’s opposition-led legislature.

Before the third impeachment effort on December 7, Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree. The constitutional court called Castillo’s announcement a “coup d’etat”.

The legislature immediately voted to replace him in the latest blow in a years-long clash between Peru’s executive and legislature. Boluarte then ascended to the job as Peru’s sixth president in five years.

Castillo is being held in pre-trial detention while he is investigated on charges of rebellion.

Many of the protesters are Castillo supporters with a similar background to the former president. They are Indigenous and from rural Peru’s mountainous regions and have argued that Boluarte doesn’t represent them.

The worst political violence Peru has experienced in more than two decades has shined a spotlight on the deep divisions in the country, much of which is fuelled by the claims of Indigenous people that they have been excluded from the benefits of economic progress in their country including access to healthcare, education and housing.

February starts with two drug seizures

Police seized more than half of a million dollars worth of controlled drugs in two separate incidents on Wednesday.

In the first incident, several packages of Hashish washed ashore on a beach in Barbuda and were handed over to police on the island.

The substance amounted to 77 pounds in weight, with an estimated value of \$523,899.

Following that seizure, the police and customs conducted a joint drug operation at the Airport Cargo Shed where they found five packages containing 5 pounds of cannabis.

The controlled substance, which was concealed inside a cardboard box, carried an estimated value of EC\$30,000.

The police are investigating both incidents.



Last week, the Customs Task Force and Police K-9 Unit conducted a joint operation which resulted in the discovery of four vacuum-sealed packages that were concealed in a cardboard box at the General Post Office.

The drugs found in this seizure arrived from the United States and had an estimated value of EC\$20,000.00.

On 9th January, EC\$24,000.00

worth of marijuana was discovered at the FedEx office located at the V. C. Bird International Airport cargo bay in an operation conducted by the Police Narcotics Unit and Customs Enforcement Department.

Days earlier on 6th January, fifty-two vacuum-sealed packages of cannabis, weighing 52 pounds, were discovered at the Deep Water Harbour.



STATE INSURANCE
COMPANY LIMITED
Live in a better State of mind

SATELLITE BRANCH EBENEZER

**DO BUSINESS IN A
BETTER STATE OF MIND**


**FULL
SERVICE**


**EASY
PARKING**


**HASSLE-FREE
PAYMENTS**


**GREAT CUSTOMER
SERVICE**

(268) 481-7800/04 | info@sicantigua.com | www.sicantigua.com |

Local News



Restaurant Week to be added to tourism calendar

Officials from the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority will be placing emphasis on new events that will be added to the tourism calendar, the first of which will be introduced in March.

Besides increased air-lift, themed events to include Romance Month in June and regattas that have become staples on the tourism calendar, Chief Executive Officer of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin James, said Restaurant Week

will be added to the schedule of events with the aim of attracting foodies from across the globe.

“That’s something that’s going to be new, working with all our restaurateurs, working with our hotel partners, working with our street food vendors to have a week of activities highlighting the culinary aspects of Antigua and Barbuda,” James said earlier this week.

“We’re going to be making sure that we can showcase

that to the world, using the international media, whether it’s the food channel to get our imagery and to get that part of our product, which maybe has not been given so much attention in recent past, but is something that’s really important,” he added.

Restaurant Week is expected to be launched in the second quarter of 2023 and the ABTA’s CEO is confident that its introduction will bode well for Antigua and Barbuda, as efforts are made to further enhance the tourism product.

“We can look forward to Restaurant Week coming in May, extending the tourist season, making sure that there are more activities to do for bringing people here but also, the visitors who are here at that time spending more, going out patronizing the restaurants, street food vendors and really making sure that more of that tourist dollar stays in Antigua and Barbuda.”

Meantime, while 2022 tourist arrivals did not live up to expectations, CEO of the Tourism Authority Colin James says there is still reason to be satisfied with the performance of the destination. He revealed tourism officials were aiming to make last year the second best for Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism industry with a target of 301,000 visitor arrivals. Instead, the final count was



Colin James

just over 265,000. However, growth was experienced in major source markets.

“The US market beat their 2019 figures. The US came in with 129,000 visitors, which is up five percent on their very best year. The UK again 79,900 visitors, up on their best year in 2019.”

The performance of the Canadian market could not match those of the US and UK because of flight restrictions that were imposed by the government of Canada to help contain the spread of COVID-19. Now that the Canadian travel industry has returned to normal, officials in St. John’s are upbeat following signs that point to rapid growth.

“The good thing now is Canada is back and is on fire,” Colin James told state television. “We have a flight every day of the week from Canada. Whether it’s Sunwing, Westjet or Air Canada, you can travel to Antigua and Barbuda any day of the week. You can also fly from Montreal now with Air Canada and so, the Canadian numbers are really rocketing up right now”.

STATE INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

GET GYM FIT WITH STATE INSURANCE

Life | Medical

OUR POLICY HOLDERS RECEIVE PREFERRED GYM RATES

Buff up Gym
Stay Fit Gym
National Fitness Centre
Iron Basics Gym
Keep Fit Gym
Twist Fitness Gym



Antigua Cruise Port partners with AIDAdiva to host T. N. Kirnon students

On Monday this week, Antigua Cruise Port facilitated seventeen students and one teacher from the T. N. Kirnon School aboard AIDAdiva for a fun and educational tour aboard the vessel.

The Grades 4 and 5 students got to dip their hands into one of the ship's hot tubs, played basketball, enjoyed panoramic views of the city, and met Captain Thomas Mey.

The tour ended with a sumptuous lunch.



AIDA reached out to Antigua Cruise Port about having students tour one of their vessels to forge a closer relationship with the local



community.

Captain Mey said, "We don't want to only come and go but we want to go deeper with your country so that we have a good relationship."

Antigua Cruise Port general manager, Dona Regis-Prosper, who was also present for the tour said, "It was an honour for us to arrange to have the children come onboard. This field trip has opened their eyes to see more of what happens in the tourism sector. We also believe it's important for our presence to be positively felt by neighbouring

communities, so it was fitting to have students from a school less than 10 minutes away benefit from this opportunity."

Meanwhile, the children's chaperone, teacher Olivia Lynch said, "It (the tour) broadened their knowledge to know there's more out there in the world because most would not have [otherwise] gotten to experience something like this."

The children gave the trip glowing reviews with many saying excitedly that, "It was the best day ever!"



Opinion

Democracy in 'The Americas' in decline: Haiti and Peru biggest worry

By Sir Ronald Sanders

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

All the countries of 'the Americas,' i.e., those in North, Central and South America and the Caribbean are experiencing political, social and economic trials to some extent.

In large part, these trials, in most countries, are the result of several factors, including persistent historical societal inequalities, the lingering economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the prices of food, oil and gas, and the worldwide chain of supply of goods and services.

However, in some countries of 'the Americas', the tribulations are caused by undemocratic practices by governments or other power holders.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), usually reliable for the thoroughness of its investigation and analysis, recently published its Democracy Index for 2022. The Index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism,

functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.

The EIU ranks only 4 countries of 'the Americas' among the top 22 fully democratic nations of the world. These are: Uruguay (11), Canada (12) Costa Rica (17) and Chile (19). The United States of America (US) is ranked at number 30 of the 167 countries that were examined.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) experiences its seventh consecutive year of decline in 2022 in the EIU table. The area's average score fell to 5.79, down from 5.83 in 2021. However, I point out that The Bahamas, Barbados and the 6 independent countries in the Eastern Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts-Nevis, St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines, were not examined. This omission is probably due to the smallness of the populations of these countries, although it is an omission in the EIU analysis which should be corrected.

According to the EIU, the countries driving the 2022 decline in the LAC are Haiti (-0.68), El Salvador (-0.66) and Mexico (-0.32). Countries recording more modest declines include Peru (-0.17) and Brazil (-0.08). Peru's declining score ranks it lower



Sir Ronald Sanders

than a "flawed democracy".

"Weak state capacity" is cited by the EIU as a major cause of the region's low scores related to the functioning of government and political culture.

The analysis concludes that "the most extreme case of weakening state capacity in the region is Haiti, which experiences the area's steepest fall in score in 2022". Stating that the interim prime minister, Ariel Henry, has "failed to re-establish the state's control over parts of the country, ceding ground to heavily armed gangs, many linked to drug-trafficking networks", the EIU blames Mr Henry for "failing to call elections, which led to significant score downgrades". The EIU also regards Henry's call for foreign intervention to help re-establish order, as "an abdication of leadership and a damaging admission that the country is no longer capable of self-rule".

Regarding Peru, this

country has declined rapidly into political chaos. As I pointed out in a recent commentary, the cause of the current crisis, while it is a struggle for power between rival political parties, is rooted in economic discrimination and marginalization of indigenous people. Even in the midst of social and political upheaval, which should have demanded inclusionary dialogue to find a solution, the response has been a disproportional use of force by the military against protestors, resulting in the deaths of 58 persons so far.

These events in Peru led to the introduction of a Declaration at the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) by Antigua and Barbuda and Colombia. The Declaration, which was adopted by the OAS on January 30, called for "respect the right to assembly and for protest to be exercised in a peaceful manner" and for the resumption

cont'd on pg 11

Opinion

cont'd from pg 10

of dialogue to “build consensus to overcome the current situation”, and also for “the prompt holding of free, fair and transparent general elections, with international electoral observation.” The latter is unlikely to happen anytime soon. The Peruvian Congress has refused to bring forward the date of elections, even though the current President of Peru, Dina Boluarte, has called for it in the wake of angry demonstrations.

Both Peru and Haiti will occupy the attention of the member states of the OAS in the coming weeks. Haiti will be a greater priority for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Haiti is now run, for all practical internal purposes, by more than 200 armed gangs, according to United Nations and Haitian National Police figures. The situation has worsened since 9 October 2022, when Prime Minister Henry wrote to the OAS Secretary-General, Luis Almagro, asking countries “that are friends of Haiti” to deploy “without delay a specialized international armed force” to address “the breakdown in security.” There was no formal response from the OAS, although diplomatic representatives have informally expressed concerns about the provision of an “international armed force”, who would contribute to it, how would it be financed, under what terms, including immunity, would it operate, and for how long.

Pierre Espeirance, the Executive Director of the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) in Haiti, claimed in a publication on February 2, that “the root of the problem lies in the corruption of successive governments and their increasing use of gangs to suppress public protests, provide personal protection, and ultimately to retain their hold on power.” Espeirance rejects an international armed force entering Haiti, saying: “... such a force cannot possibly be effective

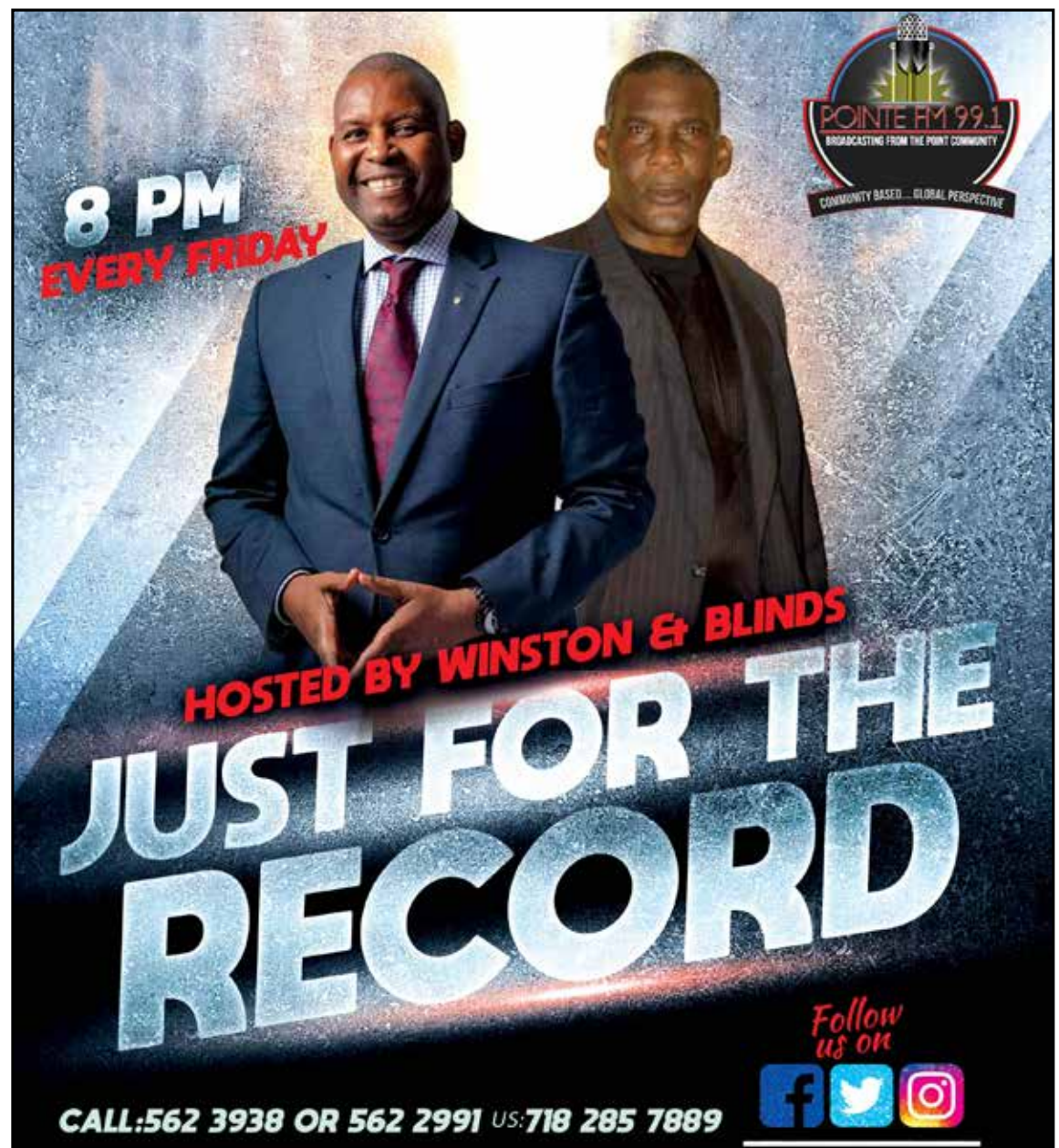
in the current political chaos. Henry effectively rules on his own, with no Parliament, as just last month, the mandate of the 10 remaining members of the Haitian Senate expired for lack of elections in recent years. And yet, elections make no sense in the current tumult.”

The internal situation in Haiti, as in Peru, poses enormous difficulties for the world’s governments to help. In both countries, there has first to be internal political agreement that external governments can

support. Everyone wants to help, but all the parties within Haiti and Peru must first agree on the nature of the help they want and the terms on which it could be provided.

The issues to be settled internally are precisely the categories in the EUI index of Democracy: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com



8 PM EVERY FRIDAY

POINTE FM 99.1
BROADCASTING FROM THE POINT COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY BASED... GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

HOSTED BY WINSTON & BLINDS

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Follow us on

CALL: 562 3938 OR 562 2991 US: 718 285 7889

Lifestyle



Why are people turning to psychedelics like ayahuasca?

By Michael Casey

Ayahuasca is a psychedelic tea whose roots go back hundreds of years to ceremonial use by Indigenous groups in the Amazon region.

It's widely used in South America where it is legal in several countries, including Peru and Brazil.

But in the United States, it remains illegal because the brew contains the psychedelic N, N-Dimethyltryptamine or DMT.

Despite its illegal status, ayahuasca has become increasingly popular in the U.S., and interest has intensified as celebrities like NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers and Hollywood star Will Smith talked about attending ceremonies.

Supporters have formed churches to hold their ceremonies, which are largely held underground in homes, at rented facilities or in remote locations like deserts.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DRINK THE TEA?

Those who drink ayahuasca report seeing shapes and colours and going on dream-like journeys that can last several hours. Some say they can encounter dead relatives as well as friends and an assortment of spirits who talk to them.

Surveys of tea drinkers have reported that most experience a range of physical and mental effects after drinking ayahuasca. The most common physical reaction, according to a study in PLOS Global Health, was vomiting or nausea while other lesser side effects include abdominal pain and headaches.

A majority of participants also reported seeing and hearing things, feeling alone or having nightmares - though almost all those reporting



A pitcher of ayahuasca, right, sits on an altar covered by a bundle of leaves called a "wayra" used in a spiritual ceremony hosted by Hummingbird Church in Hildale, Utah, on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022. Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brew containing an Amazon shrub that is known to cause visions lasting several hours. A rising demand for the plant medicine has spurred the formation of hundreds of groups like Hummingbird across the U.S. (AP Photo/Jessie Wardarski)

mental effects felt they were beneficial to their growth. According to the study, 2.3% of those surveyed reported needing medical attention after taking ayahuasca.

WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE AYAHUASCA?

A growing number of people in the United States are turning to ayahuasca to address a range of mental ailments they say conventional medicine has failed to remedy.

Many turn to the ceremonies to help with eating disorders, depression, substance use disorders and post-traumatic stress. One study, using data from the Global Ayahuasca Project, reported that most people with depression felt it had "very much improved" or "completely resolved," while most of those with anxiety reported that their symptoms were "very much improved" or "completely resolved."

But medical experts caution that not enough research has been done in the United States to confirm these findings - though smaller studies have been done in Brazil and other countries.

"There aren't really the same kinds of studies that have been done above ground in the United States that allow us to know how well does it really work, who does it really work the best for, what are the real side effects of it," said Anthony Back, a professor of medicine at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle.

He is leading a study using psilocybin, a hallucinogen found in some mushrooms, to help doctors and nurses with symptoms of depression and burnout linked to their work during the pandemic.

"Our knowledge (of ayahuasca) is
cont'd on pg 13

NBC is closing down 'The Blacklist' after decade on the air

NBC said Wednesday that the James Spader drama will end after its upcoming season, its 10th on the air. It will return for its final run of episodes on Feb. 26.

Spader has played the character Raymond Reddington, an FBI informant on old criminal colleagues. This last season, Reddington confronts "unparalleled danger" as some of those he's identified seek re-

venge, NBC said.

The show's 200th episode, a milestone in the often fleeting world of television, will air on March 19.

Diego Klattenhoff, Hisham Tawfiq, Anya Benerjee and Harry Lennix are other regulars on "The Blacklist."

The final episode will air sometime this year. An NBC spokesperson said it's not immediately clear when that will be.



This image released by NBC shows: James Spader as Raymond "Red" Reddington in a scene from "The Blacklist." (Will Hart/NBC via AP)

cont'd from pg 12

kind of limited," he said. "There is not as much information about safety as the regular other medical treatments that you might get if you went to a regular doctor in the United States. It's kind of in the early stages I would say - interesting, intriguing, promising."

WHERE IS THE MOVEMENT HEADED?

Some supporters worry the popularity of ayahuasca could prompt a federal government crackdown. Some advocates have reported ayahuasca shipments from South America being seized and churches closing for fear of legal trouble. Others worry reports of sexual assaults at ceremonies, sickened participants or organisers ripping off people could prompt the federal government to act.

Some groups have formed churches in the hopes of being protected from prosecution by a 2006 U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

Citing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a New Mexico church won the right to use ayahuasca as a sacrament. A subsequent lower court decision ruled Oregon branches of a different ayahuasca church could use

it.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, which declined to comment for this story, set up a system in 2009 for churches to be recognized as having an exception to the Controlled Substances Act.

But Sean McAllister, who represents an Arizona church in a lawsuit against the federal government after its ayahuasca from Peru was seized at the Port of Los Angeles, said no churches have been approved. Most people in the movement, he said, view that option as "a complete waste of time."

"The government wants to keep a lid on this thing. They want to keep it as small as they can," said McAllister, adding that the DEA would be sceptical of people claiming ayahuasca connects them to God.

COULD DECRIMINALIZATION HELP?

Some supporters hope moves to decriminalise ayahuasca and other psychedelics in several states will reduce the risk of prosecution. Decriminalisation efforts have succeeded in Colorado and Oregon and a bill is pending in California.

More than a dozen cities - most-

ly in California, Massachusetts and Washington - have passed resolutions that deemphasize the prosecution of various drugs including ayahuasca.

"Part of what we are trying to do is get the word out and change the laws in the United States so this is 100% legal and you never have to worry about it," Brian Cantalupi, a lead facilitator with the California-based Hummingbird Church, told participants at a recent ayahuasca ceremony. The church, which once largely operated underground, now holds ceremonies in the open.

But it's unclear if the new laws sanction ayahuasca ceremonies. Even if they did, participants could still face federal prosecution.

"From the perspective of Colorado, it does seem under the new law that people can get together and share ayahuasca but the question is how much are they allowed to have. That is not clear," said Mason Marks, the senior fellow of a psychedelics project at the Petrie-Flom Center at Harvard Law School.

"It doesn't mean that it's a free for all and people can do what they want. There are still a lot of restrictions."

Grammy predictions: AP writers debate who'll win on Sunday



This combination of photos shows top nominees for the Grammy Awards, from left, Adele, Beyoncé and Harry Styles. (AP Photo)

By Jonathan Landrum Jr. and Kristin M. Hall

The Beyhive is all abuzz over the possibility that Beyoncé will have a chance to make Grammy history this year, which should make for an exciting awards show as she's up against heavy hitters Adele, Kendrick Lamar and Harry Styles.

She'll need just four more trophies to ascend to the top decorated artist in the Recording Academy. Odds are in her favour in most of the categories she's nominated in, including album of the year and record of the year.

Associated Press Entertainment Writers Jonathan Landrum Jr. and Kristin M. Hall break down the extremely close races for Grammy glory. The 65th annual Grammy Awards will air on Sunday on CBS and Paramount.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR: "Voyage," ABBA; "30," Adele; "Un Verano Sin Ti," Bad Bunny; "Renaissance," Beyoncé; "Good Morning Gorgeous" (Deluxe), Mary J. Blige; "In These Si-

lent Days," Brandi Carlile; "Music of the Spheres," Coldplay; "Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers," Kendrick Lamar; "Special," Lizzo; "Harry's House," Harry Styles.

LANDRUM: Beyoncé is going after her Grammy throne, again. With the superstar singer being on the cusp of becoming the most decorated artist in Grammy history, it's no coincidence Queen Bey returned to the live show stage for the first time in four years with a spectacular, star-studded performance at Dubai's newest luxury hotel last month. She even held a two-night "Club Renaissance" event in Los Angeles last month with Amazon Music to celebrate her seventh album "Renaissance," an album of the year candidate. Beyoncé's lead up game is strong, and both of her remarkable displays feel like a grand tour toward her multiple Grammy crowning. No disrespect to the other more-than-worthy nominees in the category, but Beyoncé is an easy choice here. It just makes sense.

HALL: The last time Adele and Beyoncé were both nominated in this category, the British singer-songwriter used her acceptance speech to heap praise on Beyoncé, calling her the "artist of my life." It's one of the toughest years in this category with so many deserving albums from the biggest names. It would be amazing to see Bad Bunny take home the award for his incredibly popular "Un Verano Sin Ti," but I agree, Jonathan, all signs are pointing to a record-breaking year for Beyoncé.

RECORD OF THE YEAR: "Don't Shut Me Down," ABBA; "Easy on Me," Adele; "Break My Soul," Beyoncé; "Good Morning Gorgeous," Mary J. Blige; "You and Me on the Rock," Brandi Carlile featuring Lucius; "Woman," Doja Cat; "Bad Habit," Steve Lacy; "The Heart Part 5," Kendrick Lamar; "About Damn Time," Lizzo; "As It Was," Harry Styles.

HALL: So many danceable bops this year to choose from! Lizzo is a
cont'd on pg 15

cont'd from pg 14

powerhouse at delivering good-time positive bangers with catchy lyrics and Harry Styles' pop rock jam "As It Was" is an undeniable hit and fan favourite. While Adele absolutely kills her performance of "Easy on Me," I don't think it has the dominance of her other record of the year hit "Hello." For me, the best two in the category are "Break My Soul" and "Bad Habit." The '90s house music-inspired "Break My Soul" captures an entire mood and an exciting pivot for Beyoncé, so she'll likely add this award to her wall of Grammys.

LANDRUM: I totally rode the Beyoncé album-of-the-year bandwagon, but I'm riding with Harry Styles' "As It Was" in this category. Kudos to the other nominees from Kendrick Lamar, Steve Lacy and Adele - who are also deserving of this award. But "As It Was" was just too massive in a category where the biggest commercial hits usually reign supreme. For me, it seems like I've heard his infectious jam whenever I go out. Even my 2-year-old daughter perks up when she hears the song, sings along and requests to listen to it again, again, and again.

SONG OF THE YEAR (songwriter's award): "abcdefu," Sara Davis, GAYLE and Dave Pittenger; "About Damn Time," Melissa "Lizzo" Jefferson, Eric Frederic, Blake Slatkin and Theron Makiel Thomas; "All Too Well (10 Minute Version - The Short Film)," Liz Rose and Taylor Swift; "As It Was," Tyler Johnson, Kid Harpoon and Harry Styles; "Bad Habit," Matthew Castellanos, Brittany Foushee, Diana Gordon, John Carroll Kirby and Steve Lacy; "Break My Soul," Beyoncé, S. Carter, Terius "The Dream" Gesteelde-Diamant and Christopher A. Stewart; "Easy on Me," Adele Adkins and Greg Kurstin; "God Did," Tarik Azouz, E. Blackmon, Khaled Khaled, F. LeBlanc, Shawn Carter, John Stephens, Dwayne Carter, William Roberts and Nicholas Warwar; "The Heart Part 5,"

Jake Kosich, Johnny Kosich, Kendrick Lamar and Matt Schaeffer; "Just Like That," Bonnie Raitt.

LANDRUM: I might've chosen Harry Styles to pull away victorious with record of the year, but Beyoncé's powerful words in "Break My Soul" spoke to my spirit - especially in a category for songwriters who wrote the lyrics or melodies to one song. Her tune became a dance floor anthem after the pandemic thanks to the attractive upbeat melody and the well-written lyrics by the formidable writing team comprised of Beyoncé, her husband Jay-Z, The-Dream and Tricky Stewart - who's behind penning big singles including Rihanna's "Umbrella" and Mary J. Blige's "Just Fine." In this collaboration, the writing foursome created a collection of inspiring words suited for Beyoncé who took the proverbial baton and sang with beautiful authority. In the end, "Break My Soul" should cross the finish line first as song of the year.

HALL: If you've only heard the TikTok snippet from Steve Lacy's dreamy confessional song, do yourself a favour and listen to the whole thing, and then his whole album, too. The song, like Lacy, is experimental and complicated and the song twists and distorts into something brand new while his voice is charmingly disarming. I think he's a dark horse in this category, though, going up against so many crazy talented songwriters.

BEST NEW ARTIST: Anitta; Omar Apollo; DOMi & JD Beck; Muni Long; Samara Joy; Latto; Månekskin; Tobe Nwigwe; Molly Tuttle; Wet Leg.

HALL: Normally I feel like there are one or two heavy hitters in this category that are riding the wave of a big debut hit, but this category is wide open this year. Bluegrass musician Molly Tuttle and R&B singer-songwriter Muni Long are well-established in their respective music fields and it would be great for them to get the widespread attention they deserve with a win in this

category. But I think Anitta has a big advantage with her multi-platinum global hit "Envolver," even if she may not be as familiar to American audiences.

LANDRUM: Anitta certainly feels like the leading choice in this loaded category. The Brazilian artist has been nothing short of phenomenal with her trilingual album "Versions of Me," which was led by her single "Envolver." Månekskin, Muni Long and Latto can make their claim here too. But I'm going with a category dark horse: Tobe Nwigwe. He broke through with "I Need You To," a 44-seconds long song that called attention to the police killing of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky. It was reposted by big names like LeBron James, Madonna and Diddy. Along with that, the Nigerian singer-rapper has posted an original song and video every week across social media for the past several years. He performs alongside his wife, Fat Nwigwe, and their ballad "Fye Fye" is a legit smooth hit.

BEST POP SOLO PERFORMANCE: "Easy on Me," Adele; "Moscow Mule," Bad Bunny; "Woman," Doja Cat; "Bad Habit," Steve Lacy; "About Damn Time," Lizzo; "As It Was," Harry Styles.

LANDRUM: This is a tough one. Each song is a certified hit. My gut tells me Adele or Steve Lacy could prevail in a category filled with strong contenders. But my mind, heart and soul is screaming "HARRY STYLES." I'm going with my latter feelings. "As it Was" for me, please.

HALL: Adele is likely to pick up a win here, if voters are more inclined to choose Beyoncé in the top categories.

BEST RAP PERFORMANCE: "GOD DID," DJ Khaled featuring Rick Ross, Lil Wayne, Jay-Z, John Legend & Friday; "Vegas," Doja Cat; "pushing P," Gunna & Future featuring Young Thug; "F.N.F. (Let's Go)," Hitkidd & GloRilla; "The Heart Part 5," Kendrick Lamar

cont'd on pg 16

Entertainment



cont'd from pg 15

HALL: I gotta give all the love to Memphis-native GloRilla for her first Grammy nomination for her breakout hit "F.N.F. (Let's Go)." Her toughness and bravado show up well on the track that celebrates being free of no-count scrubs and proves she can go as hard as any male rapper.

LANDRUM: Kendrick

Lamar's "The Heart Part 5" will win, but DJ Khaled's "GOD DID" should be victorious. Why? Because with Khaled bringing together Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, Mr. EGOT John Legend and Rick Ross on one track, God certainly did that!

BEST R&B PERFORMANCE: "VIRGO'S GROOVE," Beyoncé; "Here With Me," Mary J. Blige fea-

turing Anderson .Paak; "Hrs & Hrs," Muni Long; "Over," Lucky Daye; "Hurt Me So Good," Jazmine Sullivan

LANDRUM: Jazmine Sullivan could pull a repeat with "Hurt Me So Good" after she won in this same category last year for "Pick Up Your Feelings." The sheer appeal of Beyoncé's "VIRGO'S GROOVE" gives her a strong shot to win as well.

There are other viable contenders including Mary J. Blige and Lucky Date, who had big hits in their own right. But if I was a betting man, my money would be on Muni Long's "Hrs & Hrs," a breakthrough hit for the best new artist contender. After maintaining strong momentum throughout the year, I believe Muni (pronounced as Money) will be ready to cash in as this category's victor.

HALL: When Muni Long starts the song by whispering "Can I sing to you?" in that breathy voice of hers, it's clear she is masterfully in control. I hope she gets this win.

BEST COUNTRY SOLO PERFORMANCE: "Heartfirst," Kelsea Ballerini; "Something In The Orange," Zach Bryan; "In His Arms," Miranda Lambert; "Circles Around This Town," Maren Morris; "Live Forever," Willie Nelson

HALL: I think the Recording Academy voters are trying to send a message by nominating "Live Forever" from Willie Nelson, who is (remarkably) turning 90 this year and is showing no signs of slowing down. But I think new artist Zach Bryan has momentum this year and lots of buzz, so the slow-burning "Something In The Orange" should win.

LANDRUM: I think Zach Bryan is Willie Nelson's biggest threat here. But with Nelson still performing at a high level at 90, his song "Live Forever" is a fitting title for his musical legacy.

Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

ACROSS

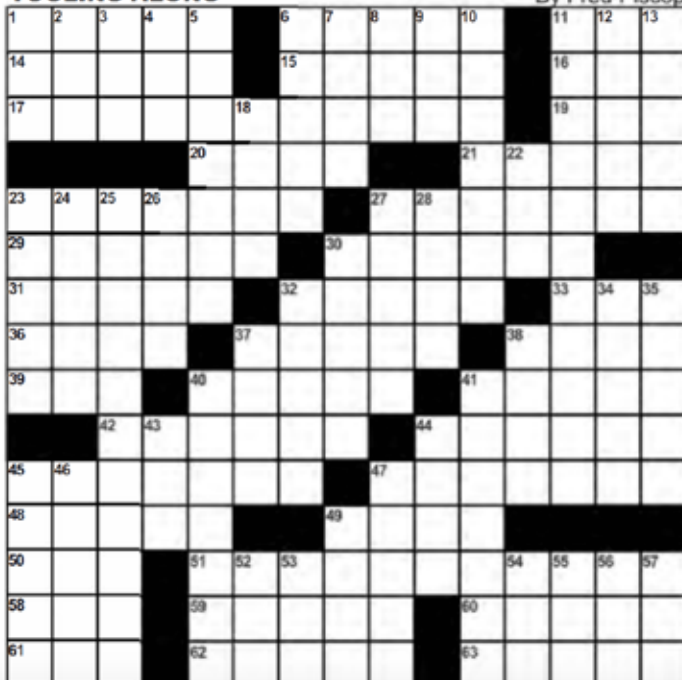
- 1) Fancy fundraisers
- 6) Synagogue reading
- 11) With it, slangily
- 14) Including everything
- 15) Essential ___ acids
- 16) India Pale ___
- 17) Medical extract-yielding tree
- 19) Cozy footwear, informally
- 20) Personal manner
- 21) Home of the Rays
- 23) Dragged through the mud
- 27) 12-year-old, e.g.
- 29) Restaurant in an 18-minute song
- 30) Less well off
- 31) Millrose Games runner
- 32) Gloomy atmospheres
- 33) Grid scores (Abbr.)
- 36) Salt Lake City collegians
- 37) Gondolier's workplace
- 38) "Comin' ___ the Rye"
- 39) Chest muscle, briefly
- 40) More desirable, to a collector
- 41) Front-porch song
- 42) Some mass text messages
- 44) Seven-veil dancer
- 45) Hanging sculptures
- 47) Fastened, in a way
- 48) Reason to take Mylanta
- 49) Title opportunity
- 50) Hookah part
- 51) Vacationer's buy, maybe
- 58) Bobby who sang "Devil or Angel"
- 59) Cobb or Greek
- 60) Some urban pollution
- 61) Repair shop fig.
- 62) Online reads, for short
- 63) Freak out

DOWN

- 1) Platoon members, briefly
- 2) "SNL" alum Gasteyer
- 3) Robert Kardashian's field
- 4) Monte Rosa, for one
- 5) Hoosegow
- 6) No longer feral
- 7) Gathering clouds, to some
- 8) Gradually slower, in music (Abbr.)
- 9) Hobby farm critter
- 10) Restaurant chain with an owl logo
- 11) Olympics field event
- 12) Slip away secretly
- 13) Praline nut
- 18) Loads of bull
- 22) Packed away
- 23) Stop the flow of
- 24) Powerful group
- 25) Four-drawer unit, maybe
- 26) Air Force hotshots
- 27) Like some opposites
- 28) Monopoly turn
- 30) French door sections
- 32) Junkyard buys
- 34) Suffix with "hippo"
- 35) Did some cobbling
- 37) Show concern
- 38) Fish story
- 40) Fall off the wagon
- 41) Sanitation department service
- 43) English course, for short
- 44) "Nae" sayer
- 45) Light purple shade
- 46) Fairy-tale fiends
- 47) Loses, in a way
- 49) Negotiations glitch
- 52) Gangster's getaway
- 53) ___ broche (skewered)
- 54) Cote call
- 55) Sportage automaker
- 56) Mentalist's skill, briefly
- 57) Kickoff gadget

TOOLING ALONG

By Fred Piscop



Missy, Willie and George Michael among Rock & Roll Hall of Fame nominees

By Mark Kennedy

Missy Elliott, Willie Nelson, Kate Bush, Iron Maiden, Cyndi Lauper, Soundgarden, Sheryl Crow and the late George Michael are the 2023 nominees for induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, reflecting a mix of country, soul, hip-hop, metal, pop, rap-rock and grunge.

The Cleveland-based institution announced Wednesday the 14 artists and groups being considered for Rock Hall induction, also including Rage Against the Machine, The Spinners, A Tribe Called Quest, The White Stripes, Warren Zevon and Joy Division/New Order.

If Elliott makes it, she would become the first female hip-hop artist in the hall.

"This is an incredible honour. I'm so humbled and grateful to be counted amongst all the incredible honorees. I've spent my career making the kind of music I love and it means so much to know that I have touched others as well," she said in a statement.

Artists must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years before they're eligible for



This combination of photos shows Missy Elliott, George Michael and Willie Nelson, who are among this year's nominees for 2023 induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. (AP Photo)

"This remarkable list of nominees reflects the diverse artists and music that the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame honours and celebrates," said John Sykes, chair of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Foundation in a statement. "These artists have created their own sounds that have impacted generations and influenced countless others that have followed in their footsteps."

Eight out of 14 nominees are on the ballot for the first time, including Crow, Elliott, Joy Division/New Order, Lauper, Michael, Nelson, The White Stripes and Zevon. This is the first year of eligibility for Elliott and The White Stripes. While the late Zevon has been el-

igible since 1994, Billy Joel led a push for his entry, writing to the nominating committee urging them to consider Zevon.

"Seeing my name on this year's ballot with so many talents that I admire means so much to me. It has been a lifetime privilege to reach so many different kinds of fans with a message of following your own path (and having fun along the way, too)," Lauper wrote in a statement.

A Tribe Called Quest and Bush were nominees last year and didn't make the cut but now find themselves back in the running this year. Bush's latest nod may be due to a new wave in popularity after the show "Stranger Things" featured her song "Running Up That

Hill (A Deal with God)."

Inductees will be announced in May and the ceremony will take place this fall. Nominees will be voted on by more than 1,000 artists, historians and music industry professionals. Fans can vote online or in person at the museum, with the top five artists picked by the public making up a "fans' ballot" that will be tallied with the other professional ballots.

Last year, the nomination process was complicated by Dolly Parton, who gave the honour an enthusiastic embrace after temporarily turning it down. She initially said she did not want to take votes away from the remaining nominees and had not "earned that right."

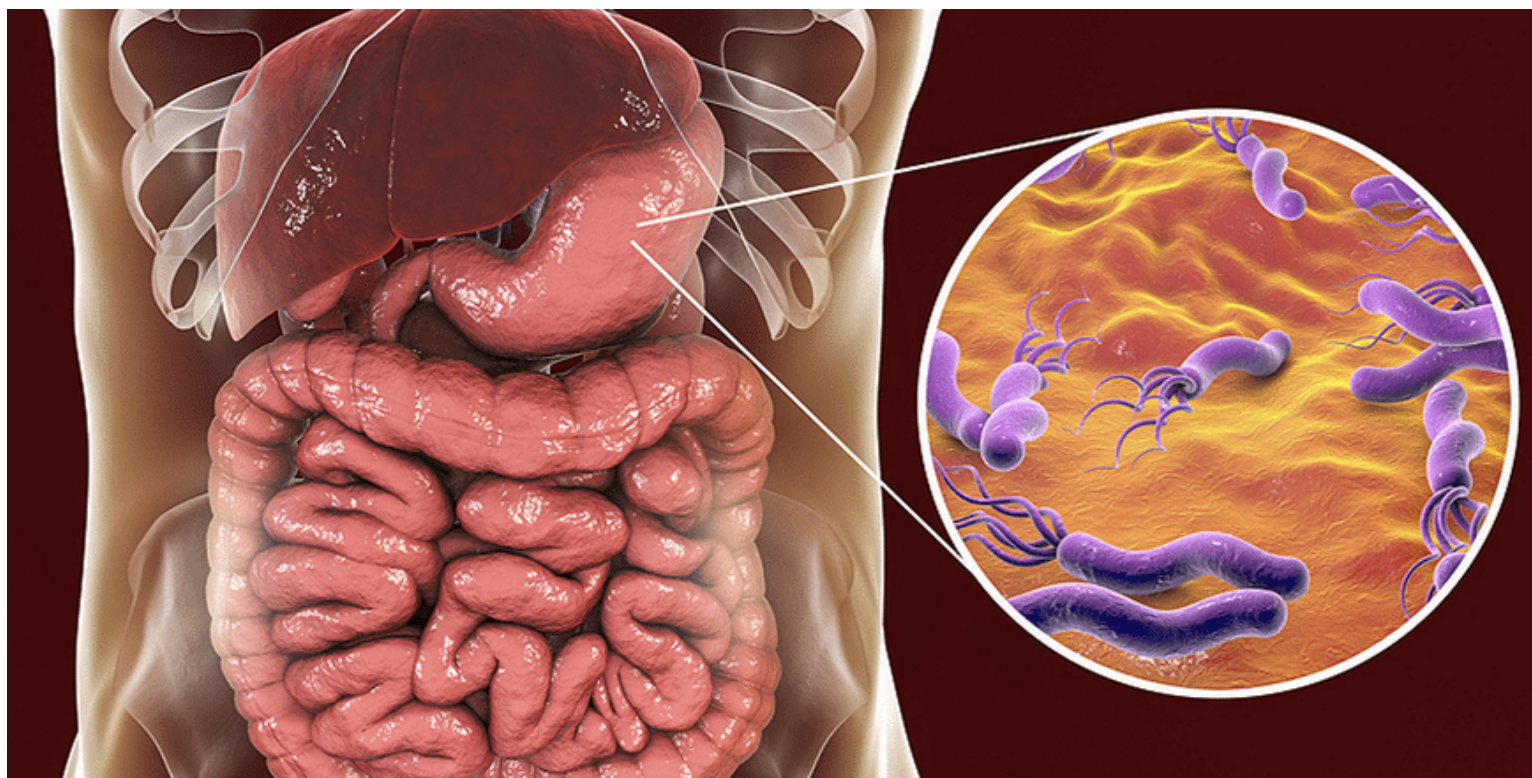


Figure 1 Imaging courtesy of badgut.org

H Pylori: The cancer-causing gut bacteria

By Saeed S Graham MD

Do you know anyone in Antigua who has lived on an unpaved street? How about someone who has drunk tap water or shared a room with a parent or sibling?

These are risk factors for being infected by H pylori: a small rod-shaped bacteria that can cause stomach pain, increased tiredness and can even lead to cancer.

One in every two persons has H pylori living in their stomach and studies show that the infection rate is even higher in the Caribbean and other developing countries. With more awareness, we can better respond to this quiet pandemic.

H pylori is a small rod-shaped bacteria that lives in the stomach. Normally the stomach's acid can kill most bacteria we ingest.

H pylori on the other hand makes an enzyme that can neutralize our stomach acid. This is something like mixing vinegar and baking soda. This allows the bacteria to multiply in the

harsh environment of the stomach where it causes inflammation.

Inflammation of the gut over time is what leads to the symptoms of H pylori. You might experience feeling full after eating a small amount of food, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, dark or black colored stools. CagA is the protein made by H pylori that kick-starts this inflammation. Over time, this can transform perfectly normal cells into cancer cells.

The human stomach is the only known host of H pylori. Infection is believed to be spread by human-to-human contact. This could be from ingesting food or water contaminated with stool or saliva from an infected person. Mouth-to-mouth contact is also a mode of transmission.

Risk factors for H pylori infection are mostly related to socio-economic factors. These include living in a crowded home, having a high number of siblings, a lower level of education, not having indoor plumbing and living in an undeveloped country.

Your doctor has a few options for testing you for H pylori. The most certain way is by navigating a flexible tube with a camera attached to the end down the food pipe, into the stomach and taking small samples which can be examined under a microscope.

This is a costly and uncomfortable procedure for most patients. The stool can also be tested for antigens made by the bacteria. Breath testing is a quick and convenient method that only requires the patient to drink a small solution and exhale into a bag however this is currently not available in Antigua.

If tests are positive the bacteria can usually be completely eradicated with a course of antibiotics.

H pylori is a global issue. Studies show that the risk of stomach cancer can be cut in half by treating H pylori infection.

If you or someone you know has symptoms or strong risk factors, speak to your doctor. A small investigation now can spare a big workup later.

Four charged in connection with plot to kill Haitian president

CMC - Four men detained in Haiti in connection with the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, appeared in a United States court on Wednesday after they were transferred to face criminal charges related to their alleged involvement in the July 7, killing of the Haitian leader.

US authorities said a criminal complaint charges dual Haitian-American citizens James Solages, 37, Joseph Vincent, 57, and Colombian German Alejandro Rivera Garcia, 44, with conspiring to commit murder or kidnapping outside the United States and providing material support and resources resulting in death, and conspiring to do so, knowing or intending that such support and resources would be used to prepare for or carry out the conspiracy to kill or kidnap.

In addition, a separate criminal complaint charges dual Haitian-American citizen Christian Sanon, 54, with conspiring to smuggle goods from the United States and cause export information not to be filed, as well as with smuggling goods from the United States and providing unlawful export information.

Solages, Vincent, Rivera and Sanon made their initial federal court appearances in the Southern District of Florida on Wednesday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Alicia Otazo-Reyes.

US law enforcement authorities have now charged seven individuals, including the four new defendants for their roles in the assassination plot. The other men charged are Mario Antonio Palacios Palacios, 43, Rodolphe Jaar, 49, and Joseph Joel John, 51, who were arrested last year.

As alleged in the complaints, Solages, Vincent, Rivera, Sanon and others participated in crimes that cul-



Former Colombian soldiers arrested in connection with the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. (File Photo)

minated in the assassination of the Haitian president at his private residence overlooking the Haitian capital, Port au Prince. His wife, Martine Moïse, survived the assassination and had to be flown to the United States for medical treatment..

The US alleges that in April 2021, Solages, Sanon and others met in South Florida to discuss regime change in Haiti and support for Sanon, an aspiring Haitian political candidate. After that meeting, a list of equipment and weapons needed for the regime change operation was shared with Solages, who then shared it with Sanon.

According to the complaint, items on that list included rifles, machine guns, tear gas, grenades, ammunition, bulletproof vests, and other weapons and equipment.

In May 2021, Sanon contracted for equipment needed to support his "private military" forces in Haiti. His pri-

vate forces included about 20 Colombians with military training who were recruited to assist in the operation and provide security to Sanon. Rivera led the Colombian group, according to the allegations.

It is also alleged that Sanon conspired with others to ship 20 ballistic vests for use by his private military forces from South Florida to Haiti on June 10, 2021. The vests were shipped without the required export licence from the U.S. Department of Commerce and without the required export information filings.

In mid-June 2021, support for President Moïse's replacement shifted to a former Haitian Supreme Court Judge. That judge signed a document requesting assistance to further the arrest and imprisonment of President Moïse. In addition, a document purportedly signed by that judge claimed

cont'd on pg 20

Regional News



Caribbean countries urged to develop strategies to deal with trans-national crime

CMC - The third annual United Kingdom-Caribbean Heads of Defence Staff Conference has heard a call for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop effective strategies to deal with trans-national crime and criminal organisations.

The conference is being hosted jointly by the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) and the United Kingdom (UK) Armed Forces.

The organisers said the conference will also allow for an analysis of the issues impacting regional security, including humanitarian assistance, disaster response cooperation, and understanding the United Kingdom perspective on providing assistance in the aforementioned areas.

Barbados Home Affairs and Information Minister, Wilfred Abrahams, said while globalisation had strengthened the interconnectivity of the Caribbean,



Home Affairs and Information Minister Wilfred Abrahams in front row with security officials from the Caribbean

it had also created avenues for criminal networks in the region to thrive.

“What has created several opportunities for economic diversification and advancement has also had a negative, unintended consequence of increasing the complex and multifaceted nature of current and emerging threats,” Abrahams told the two-day conference.

“This phenomenon has created avenues for criminal networks to collaborate and, consequently, become more difficult to counter,

unfettered by borders or national bureaucracy. Criminal networks and alliances are able to exploit the inconsistencies in our regional security mechanisms and capabilities.”

Abrahams said these threats had worsened due to a number of factors such as the climate change crisis and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

“Regrettably, the trials of the pandemic engaged and diverted the attention of world governments and law enforcement agencies,

thus providing the perfect opportunity for transnational criminal organisations, cybercriminals, violent extremist organisations and other threat actors to gain a stronger foothold in the region.

He said the Caribbean’s normally peaceable existence has been marred by the proliferation of trafficking in illegal firearms, illegal drugs and human trafficking, which all enable violent crime.

Abrahams said with the scarcity of maritime assets, coastal surveillance systems and trained personnel, it has become problematic to adequately patrol the region’s sea passages.

In his address, the home affairs minister urged delegates to conceptualise systems and regional mechanisms that will improve resilience to natural hazards and enhance the efficacy and speed of the response thereafter.

cont’d from pg 19

to provide immunity in Haiti to those who participated in the operation.

On June 19, 2021, Solages, Vincent, Rivera and others communicated about their plans to arrest President Moïse, detain him and take him away in an airplane to an unknown location. The plan did not go forward when the conspirators failed to obtain the plane and weapons for the operation.

According to the charging documents, on June 28, 2021, Solages travelled from Haiti to South Florida to

share with others the documents purportedly signed by the Haitian judge requesting assistance and immunity. Solages flew back to Haiti on July 1, 2021, to participate in the operation against the president.

The US also alleges that on July 6, 2021, Solages, Vincent, Rivera and others met at a house near President Moïse’s residence, where firearms and equipment were distributed and Solages announced that the mission was to kill President Moïse.

According to the allegations

on July 7, 2021, several individuals arrived outside President Jovenel Moïse’s residence, some of whom were wearing ballistic vests. They entered the president’s home and killed him, according to the allegations.

Haitian authorities arrested Solages, Vincent, Rivera and Sanon. They were detained in Haiti until their transfer on Tuesday to the United States.

Solages, Vincent and Rivera face up to life imprisonment if convicted. Sanon faces up to 20 years if convicted.

Suriname: Bouterse not afraid of another long jail term

LOOP - "Life is the highest good of every human being. In an extremely cold-blooded and calculating manner, the suspect deprived these 15 victims of the right to life. The victims were riddled with a hail of bullets that were fired at them at close range. Relatives have not even had the opportunity to say goodbye to their loved ones in a dignified manner," acting Attorney General, Carmen Rasam said as she sought 20 years of unconditional prison for the former head of state.

But in a statement issued by Bouterse's National Democratic Party (NDP), he said given the course of the criminal process since it was started, the sentence did not come as a surprise to him.

In the statement, Bouterse calls on his fellow party members to keep calm.

Bouterse has lodged an appeal because he disagrees with the judgement and also denies premeditation. He argues that matters have consistently been omitted from the procedural documents in his favour.

The NDP says the criminal process must run its course.

In August 2021, the Court Martial of Suriname upheld the 2019 military court ruling of a 20-year-jail term on Bouterse following a trial that had been going on for several years.

In 2017, Bouterse along with 23 co-defendants had appeared in the Military Court after the Court of Justice had earlier rejected a motion to stop the trial. The former military officers and civilians had been charged with the December 8, 1982 murders of the 15 men that included journalists, military officers, union leaders, lawyers, businessmen and university lecturers.

The prosecution had alleged that the men were arrested on the nights of De-



Desi Bouterse

cember 7 and 8 and transferred to Fort Zeelandia, the then headquarters of the Surinamese National Army. They said the men were tortured and summarily executed.

Earlier this month, attorney Irvin Kanhai, who is also representing Iwan Dijksteel, Stephanus Dendoe, Benny Brondenstein and Ernst Geffery challenged the objectivity of the military judge, Colonel Dennis Kamperveen, claiming that one of the victims, André Kamperveen and the judge, have a common grandfather. The men are challenging their 10-year jail term.

But the Public Prosecution Service argued that it had no need to hear witnesses during the appeal process, reiterating its call for Bouterse, 77, who led Suriname during the 1980s as head of a military government and de facto leader, to be arrested and given his unconditional prison sentence.

Bouterse took office as president in 2010, following a democratic election and was elected for another term in 2015.

Rasam told the court on Tuesday,

"we are dealing with a suspect who has been president of the Republic of Suriname, while this criminal case was on trial. The suspect has been the highest responsible person in the country during the period of the criminal offence.

"The rulers at the time were not prepared to return the power of government to the people and saw any resistance from society as an acute threat to their rule. Since going back to a democratic regime would mean that they would have to hand over military power, which they were in no way prepared to do. In response, any action taken by third parties to push back or undermine military authority was eliminated," Rasam argued.

She told the court the crucial question that looms throughout the process is: "Does the alleged regime change as presented by the accused justify these summary executions of the named persons, who were inhumanly and cruelly deprived of their lives without any form of legal process?"

"The victims, who, because of the location where they were then housed and the heavy guards in the Fort, could never have been a threat to this military regime. There was therefore no need to kill these defenceless victims in such a gruesome manner," Rasam argued.

She said Bouterse can rightly be held responsible for the criminal offence, namely murder, on the basis of the evidence presented.

She said Bouterse's statement that an invasion was imminent and that a plane flew overhead and that shots were fired in a panic situation, or that Paul Bhagwandas gave the order without his consent to shoot at the 15 victims, has no bearing whatsoever.

The acting Attorney General ar-
cont'd on pg 22

Regional News



IACHR calls for progress in the recognition and protection of reproductive rights in the region

CMC - The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) says while it welcomed the progress achieved in the region last year in the exercise of reproductive rights of women, girls, adolescents, and all pregnant persons, it nonetheless calls on states to refrain from going backward in recognizing and protecting these rights.

The IACHR is urging countries to guarantee the exercise of these rights free of all forms of violence and gender discrimination in accordance with their international obligations.

It said reproductive rights, which encompass certain human rights, have historically been limited, restricted, or otherwise denied based on harmful gender norms prioritising the reproductive function of women, girls, adolescents, and pregnant persons over their human rights.



“This historical and structural discrimination is reflected in the violence fostered by laws that absolutely criminalise the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, limiting the legal, safe, and opportune options to do so.”

The inter-American system has recognized that the decision to have biological children constitutes an area of private life related to other rights, such as the right to form a family, physical and mental integrity, and specifically reproductive rights.

“Such rights entail a series of obligations on the part of the state, such as due regulation and supervision

of health services, access to information and technologies, the obligation for medical personnel to obtain informed consent for any treatment to be practised, and the prohibition of disproportionate restrictions to exercise reproductive decisions.”

The IACHR said as has already been specified by the Inter-American Court, it recalls that the protection of life from conception is not absolute but gradual and incremental, according to its development, in such a way that it allows an adequate balance with other rights that may conflict.

“In this way, the IACHR has reiterated that the absolute criminalization of abortion exposes women to dangerous and even deadly practices that put their health and lives at risk, especially those in poverty and greater vulnerability, who have a disproportionate impact on their rights.

“Furthermore, this negative impact is exacerbated in girls and adolescents, who, due to their gender and age condition, are more exposed to sexual violence, and for whom pregnancy represents a high health risk, as identified by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).”

The IACHR said in addition, forcing them to carry the pregnancy to term causes them physical and mental suffering, which constitutes gender-based violence and potentially amounts to torture or cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment.

cont'd from pg 21

gued that it can be concluded from all evidence and witness statements that the murders were orchestrated and that Bouterse, Gefferie, Dendoe, Dijksteel and Brondenstein played an important role and task in the killings.

Rasam referring to statements from witnesses and Bouterse himself that he was present in the fort while some of the men were shot, but he did not suspect that the shots were used to kill the detainees, said she found it striking

that Bouterse, as absolute ruler and commander, did not take any sanctions against the then battalion commander Bhagwandas when he had officially reported to him that 15 of the 16 detainees had been shot during an escape attempt.

She also found it strange that while Bouterse indicated that he did not believe Bhagwandas's story for a moment, he nevertheless went to the government with the statement and later presented that statement during a radio and television broadcast.

According to Rasam, Bouterse took no action against the battalion commander to whom he had handed over command of Fort Zeelandia because the murders were committed with his approval or knowledge.

During the criminal proceedings, several witnesses stated that it was impossible to flee from the place where the detainees were held.

Bouterse has always maintained during the trial that he was not present in the fort when the men were shot.

Iran blames Israel for drone attack, threatens retaliation

AP - Iran on Thursday blamed Israel for a drone attack that targeted a military workshop in its central city of Isfahan over the weekend, warning that it “reserves its legitimate and inherent right” to retaliate.

Iran’s mission to the United Nations, in a letter it published on its website, attributed the attack, which happened late Saturday, to Israel.

“Early investigations suggest that the Israeli regime was responsible for this attempted act of aggression,” the letter signed by Iranian Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani said. The letter did not elaborate on what evidence supported Iran’s suspicion.

Israeli officials declined to comment. However, Israel has carried out a series of attacks targeting Iran’s nuclear program and other sites since the collapse of Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers as part of a yearslong shadow war between the Mideast rivals.

Details on the Isfahan attack, which happened around 11:30 p.m. Saturday, still remain scarce, days after the assault. A Defense Ministry statement said three drones were launched at the facility, with two of them successfully shot down. A third apparently made it through to strike the building, causing “mi-



This is a locator map for Iran with its capital, Tehran. (AP Photo)

nor damage” to its roof and wounding no one, the ministry said.

Iran’s state-run IRNA news agency later described the drones as “quadcopters equipped with bomblets.” Quadcopters, which get their name from having four rotors, typically operate from short ranges by remote control. Iranian state television later aired footage of debris from the drones, which resembled commercially available quadcopters.

It remains unclear what the workshop produced. Iravani referred to it only as “a workshop complex of the Iranian Defense Ministry” in his letter.

Israel had been initially suspected as possibly being behind the attack. Iran’s Intelligence Ministry in July claimed to have broken up a plot to target sensitive sites around Isfahan.

A segment aired on Iranian state television in October included purported confessions by alleged members of Komala, a Kurdish opposition party that is exiled from Iran and now is based in Iraq, that they planned to target a military aerospace facility in Isfahan after being trained by Israel’s Mossad intelligence service. However, activists say Iran has aired hundreds of coerced confessions on state TV over the last decade.

Iravani’s letter to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council warned that Tehran could respond to the attack.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right ... to defend its national security and respond resolutely to any threats or wrongful actions by the Israeli regime, wherever and whenever

deemed necessary,” the letter read.

Israeli officials rarely acknowledge operations carried out by the country’s secret military units or its Mossad intelligence agency. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who recently re-entered the premiership, has long considered Iran to be the biggest threat to his nation.

Iravani’s letter separately complained about Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who tweeted after the drone attack: “Explosive night in Iran ... Ukraine has warned you.”

Iran has supplied Russia with bomb-carrying drones that Moscow has used to target power plants and civilian sites in Ukraine in its war on the country.

Meanwhile Thursday, the head of Iran’s civilian nuclear program disputed comments by the International Atomic Energy Agency over Iranian enrichment operations at Fordo.

The facility sits under a mountain near the holy Shiite city of Qom, some 90 kilometres (55 miles) southwest of Tehran, and has long been a worry for the West - it was initially built in secret and with the likely ability to withstand airstrikes.

International

AROUND THE WORLD



Sunak marks 100 days as UK prime minister as problems mount

AP - U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has angry unions to the left of him, anxious Conservative Party lawmakers to the right and, in the middle, millions of voters he must win over to avert electoral defeat.

It's a daunting situation for Sunak, who on Thursday marks 100 days in office, more than twice the number of his ill-fated predecessor, Liz Truss. Installed as Conservative leader after Truss' plan for huge tax cuts sparked panic, the 42-year-old Sunak calmed financial markets and averted economic meltdown after he assumed the post of prime minister on Oct. 25.

Next, Britain's youngest leader for two centuries - and its first prime minister of South Asian heritage - has promised to tame soaring inflation, get the sluggish economy growing, ease pressure on the overburdened health care system and "restore the integrity back into politics" after years of scandals under former Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Easier said than done.

"The things that happened before I was prime minister, I can't do anything about," Sunak told a group of health workers this week. "What I think you can hold me to account for is how I deal with the things that arise on my watch."

Jill Rutter, a senior



New British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak waves after arriving at Downing Street in London, Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022, after returning from Buckingham Palace where he was formally appointed to the post by Britain's King Charles III. (AP Photo/Frank Augstein, File)

fellow at the Institute for Government think tank, said Sunak had succeeded in overcoming the impression that the U.K. "had a completely lunatic government."

"You would chalk that up as the first thing that he had on his to-do list," she said. "Otherwise, it's slightly hard to see concrete achievements."

Sunak is a former U.K. Treasury chief, and his top priority has been the country's economic malaise. Gross domestic product remains smaller than it was before the coronavirus pandemic, and the International Monetary Fund forecast this week that the U.K. will be the only major economy to contract this year, shrinking by 0.6%.

Sunak blames global forces - disruption from the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Critics

say the elephant in the room is Brexit, which has led to a sharp reduction in trade between the U.K. and the European Union.

Sunak, a longtime advocate of Britain's departure from the bloc, insisted Wednesday that the cost-of-living crisis had "nothing to do with Brexit."

Whatever the causes, Sunak has little economic room to manoeuvre. Annual inflation hit a four-decade high of 11.1% in October and remained at a painful 10.5% in December. The U.K. is in the midst of its biggest wave of strikes in decades as nurses, paramedics, teachers, border agents and other workers seek pay increases to offset the soaring cost of living and the stresses of holding a job in an increasingly threadbare public sector.

Meanwhile, a faction inside the Conservative Party

is pushing for immediate tax cuts to encourage growth, despite the damage done by "Trussonomics" just months ago.

"We need growth or our debts will get bigger," lawmaker Iain Duncan Smith, a former Conservative leader, said this week. "Targeted tax reductions will help achieve that."

Sunak is resisting both labour unions and tax-cutting Tories. He argues that double-digit public sector pay raises would drive inflation even higher and that "the best tax cut right now is a cut in inflation."

Economists say U.K. inflation will likely fall during 2023, allowing Sunak to meet one of his key pledges. Other goals are likely to be harder to achieve.

He is seeking to improve relations with the 27-member EU, and both sides have made progress toward resolving a dispute over Northern Ireland trade rules that has burdened businesses and shuttered the regional government in Belfast.

But any agreement will anger Conservative eurosceptics, who are likely to see rapprochement with Brussels as a betrayal of Brexit. A compromise also faces opposition from Northern Ireland's British unionists, who say post-Brexit customs checks undermine Northern Ireland's place in the United

cont'd on pg 25

African countries lack 'immediate access' to cholera vaccine

AP - Africa's public health agency says countries with deadly cholera outbreaks on the continent have no "immediate access" to vaccines amid a global supply shortage.

The acting director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ahmed Ogwell, told journalists on Thursday that the agency is working with the World Health Organization and the vaccine alliance GAVI on ways to obtain more doses.

The Africa CDC is also working with two local manufacturers to explore if their facilities can be repurposed to manufacture cholera vaccines, Ogwell said. He didn't say which ones.

WHO and its partners recommended in October that countries temporarily



A woman carries her son, who has cholera, at Bwaila Hospital in Lilongwe central Malawi, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2023. Malawi's health minister says the country's worst cholera outbreak in two decades has killed 750 people so far. The southern African country of 20 million people first reported the outbreak in March last year. (AP Photo/Thoko Chikondi)

ly switch to using a single dose of the cholera vaccine instead of two because of the supply shortage as outbreaks of the water-borne disease surge globally. They said one dose of vaccine has proven effective in stopping

outbreaks "even though evidence on the exact duration of protection is limited" and appears to be lower in children.

WHO noted that Haiti and Syria also are trying to contain large outbreaks.

WHO and partner agencies manage a stockpile of cholera vaccines that are dispensed free to countries that need them.

Malawi in southern Africa especially is struggling with a cholera outbreak. The country has recorded 3,577 new cases including 111 deaths in the past week, Ogwell said. They make up the bulk of the new cholera cases on the continent.

Since the beginning of 2023, there have been 27,300 new cases of cholera including 687 deaths in five African countries, Ogwell said.

The WHO has said climate change could make cholera epidemics more common, as the bacteria that causes the disease can reproduce more quickly in warmer water.

cont'd from pg 24
Kingdom.

Sunak also has struggled to rid the Conservative Party of its reputation for scandal and sleaze. A member of his Cabinet, Gavin Williamson, quit in November over bullying claims. On Sunday, Sunak fired party chair Nadhim Zahawi for failing to come clean about a multimillion-dollar tax dispute. Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab is being investigated over allegations he bullied civil servants, which he denies.

The leader of the opposition Labour Party, Keir Starmer, alleged Wednesday that Sunak was "too weak" to tackle bad behaviour.

U.K. voters haven't yet had their

say on Sunak, who was chosen as party leader by the 357 Conservative members of Parliament. The government doesn't have to call a national election until late 2024, so Sunak may have time on his side.

Or, he may not. The Conservatives are trailing 20 or more points behind Labour in opinion polls, and poor results in May's local elections could spur calls for another change of leader.

Some Conservatives hanker for the return of Johnson, whose final words to Parliament as prime minister - "Hasta la vista, baby" - hinted at a comeback.

Some analysts say it may be too late for any Conservative leader to avoid defeat. An Ipsos poll released

this week, considered accurate to within 4 percentage points, found 66% of respondents wanted a change of governing party. Only 10% thought the Conservatives had done a good job.

Steven Fielding, emeritus professor of politics at the University of Nottingham, likened the mood to the final years of Prime Minister John Major's government, wiped away by Tony Blair's Labour election landslide in 1997 that ended 18 years of Conservative rule.

"People are just waiting for them to go," Fielding said. "And the longer they are there, the more irritated (voters) are with them."

He said Sunak "is trying his best. But people aren't listening."

Wimbledon and LTA face decision over whether to lift ban on Russians and Belarusians

By Russell Fuller

BBC - The Australian Open women's singles trophy bears the name of Aryna Sabalenka, but not of Belarus - her country of birth.

The new champion was playing as a neutral athlete in Melbourne last month, just as all Russians and Belarusians have been since the invasion of Ukraine.

With one notable exception. The grass courts of the UK were off limits last summer as the All England Club and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) decided with "deep regret" to decline all entries from those two countries.

The announcement was generally very well received in the UK. But within the sport of tennis it caused enormous ill-feeling, led to the removal of ranking points at Wimbledon and resulted in large fines being issued to the LTA governing body for breaching its contracts with the ATP and WTA Tours.

Over the next few weeks, the All England Club and the LTA will finalise how they are going to proceed this year.

The early indications are that Sabalenka will be seen alongside Victoria Azarenka and Daniil Medvedev on the grass this summer - although the stringency of



Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka won the Australian Open women's singles title in January

the conditions attached and how that will be presented to a domestic audience are still being fiercely debated.

Most players, but notably not all Ukrainians as Marta Kostyuk indicated at the Australian Open, think individual Russians and Belarusians should be free to play where they like.

The two countries are banned from tennis' team competitions, in keeping with most other sports, but in choosing to ban individuals the All England Club and the LTA adopted a stance seen in athletics and skiing, but rarely elsewhere.

It may prove helpful to the two organisations that the International Olympic Committee executive board recently declared that "no athlete should be prevent-

ed from competing just because of their passport".

If the decision is to be reversed, despite no sign of a Russian withdrawal from Ukraine, the All England Club and the LTA will have to perform some deft linguistic gymnastics to make the case that circumstances have changed.

Last year the All England Club argued it must play its part in limiting Russia's global influence and ensure the regime does not "derive any benefits from the involvement of Russian or Belarusian players".

Another Sabalenka Grand Slam success at Wimbledon would create a gilt-edged opportunity to do just that.

Public opinion played a part last year, and will do so

again. There was little disquiet in Australia, France or the US when it was announced Russians and Belarusians would be free to enter those Grand Slams, but a YouGov poll last April found 69% of the British public supported Wimbledon's decision.

But it will not have been lost on those making the decision that if they ban these players again this year, they will probably have to continue to do so until the war is over.

Another major factor last year was the UK government. While the All England Club may have over-emphasised the pressure it was under to exclude Russian and Belarusian players, government rhet-

cont'd on pg 27

Mason Greenwood attempted rape charges dropped

BBC - Charges of attempted rape and assault have been dropped against Manchester United footballer Mason Greenwood.

The 21-year-old was arrested in January last year amid allegations surrounding images and videos that emerged online.

He was later charged with attempted rape, controlling and coercive behaviour and assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

The Crown Prosecution Service said the charges were discontinued after key witnesses withdrew their involvement.

A spokesman said: "We have a duty to keep cases under continuous review."

"In this case a combi-



Mason Greenwood was arrested in January 2022 after the allegations emerged

nation of the withdrawal of key witnesses and new material that came to light meant there was no longer a realistic prospect of conviction. In these circumstances, we are under a duty to stop the case.

"We have explained our decision to all parties."

"We would always en-

courage any potential victims to come forward and report to police and we will prosecute wherever our legal test is met."

Within hours of the allegations surfacing online at the beginning of 2022, the forward, who has made one appearance for England, was suspended from

playing or training with the Old Trafford club.

The club has been asked by the BBC to comment.

Greater Manchester Police said it was "only fair" to announce Greenwood would no longer face criminal proceedings.

Ch Supt Michaela Kerr said the decision had "not been taken lightly".

She added: "I would, however, like to use this opportunity to reiterate the force's commitment to investigating allegations of violence against women and girls and supporting those affected, regardless of their circumstances, throughout what can be a hard and upsetting time for them."

cont'd from pg 26

oric and guidelines still significantly shaped their final decision.

Those guidelines - to all sporting organisations - have not changed. And they do not trigger a blanket ban on these athletes. Broadly speaking, if the players compete under a neutral flag, do not publicly support the war or take money from the state, then they are free to play. The then sports minister Nigel Huddleston suggested in March last year that a written declaration could be made to that effect, although in practice that might not need to be shared publicly.

The All England Club will want to rebuild some bruised relationships, ensure the strongest field possible, and avoid another year without ranking points.

The stakes are even higher for the

LTA. It was fined \$750,000 (£608,355) by the Women's Tennis Association and \$1m (£811,140) by the Association of Tennis Professionals for excluding the players from the tour events they operate at venues like The Queen's Club and Eastbourne.

That is a significant sum of money, even for a governing body which received £42.43m from Wimbledon last year. But of even greater concern, aside from the prospect of further fines, is the very explicit threat to the viability of the pre-Wimbledon tournaments.

Both tours have said they will cancel the LTA's membership if it exercises further "discrimination based on nationality".

That would mean no grass-court tour events in the UK in the run-up to Wimbledon. Queen's and Eastbourne

could, in theory, continue as exhibitions but few would want to play, and the tournaments would almost certainly not take place.

The consequences on the profile of the sport, and the numbers who play or take it up, could be felt for many years.

This is, self-evidently, an issue of great sensitivity.

The All England Club and the LTA hope they can steer a path which maintains the integrity of the tournaments, preserves tennis for the long term in the UK and falls broadly in line with the rest of the sport.

They will hope to be able to do so without incurring the wrath of the government or the displeasure of too many in the country at large.

And, most importantly, try to avoid worsening in any way the continuing suffering of the people of Ukraine.

Sports News



Women's World Cup hosts urge FIFA not to sign Saudi sponsor

By Graham Dunbar

AP - Women's World Cup co-hosts Australia and New Zealand urged FIFA on Wednesday not to sign a sponsor deal with the tourism authority of Saudi Arabia where "rights of women remain severely restricted."

Leaders of the two national soccer federations warned in a letter to FIFA, including president Gianni Infantino, that unilaterally sealing the "Visit Saudi" sponsorship could "severely tarnish the reputation" of the 32-nation tournament that starts in July.

That is despite the tourism brand being endorsed by men's World Cup-winning captain Lionel Messi, who was announced last year as a paid pitchman.

Such a confrontation between a World Cup host and FIFA is unprecedented in recent history, and is likely to shine more attention on so-called "sportswashing" investments by Saudi Arabia.

"We write to express our serious disappointment and concern at the news of the apparent appointment of Visit Saudi as a sponsor," Chris Nikou of Australia and New Zealand's Joanna Wood wrote Wednesday in the letter to FIFA seen by The Associated Press.

"We cannot express strongly enough the potential repercussions and fallout that could result from this decision.

"Australia and New Zealand, both as sovereign nations and as football associations, have for decades placed the utmost importance on gender equality, and have sought to promote these ideals around the world," the letter said, reminding FIFA their governments have invested hundreds of millions in the soccer event.



Australia's Sam Kerr (20) scores against Sweden's Nathalie Bjorn (14) during their women's friendly soccer match in Melbourne, Australia, Nov. 12, 2022. Australia's opening Women's World Cup match against Ireland has been moved to Stadium Australia in Sydney because of ticket demand, FIFA announced. The tournament, co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, starts on July 20, 2023. (Asanka Brendon Ratnayake, File

Tournament organisers and government officials in both countries were said not to have been consulted, they claimed, nor offered the chance to make a counter proposal for a domestic tourism campaign.

Wood is among the few women to lead one of FIFA's 211 member federations and also an elected member of FIFA's ruling council which Infantino chairs.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Saudi Arabia has made progress in women's soccer in the past three years creating a national team and a domestic league, plus preparing a bid to host the 2026 Women's Asian Cup.

In Saudi society, however, women's freedoms are limited by strict male guardianship laws.

"While we acknowledge some important and positive gender equali-

ty reforms have commenced in Saudi Arabia, it remains undeniable under any reasonable standard that the rights of women remain severely restricted," the Women's World Cup hosts wrote to FIFA.

Tony Gustavsson, head coach of Australia's women's national team, didn't directly comment on the issue of the sponsorship Thursday while unveiling a squad for the Feb. 16-22 Cup of Nations tournament, but said "I know what these women stand for and what the team stands for."

"I've had the privilege to meet the Matildas alumni and everyone knows the core values of this team," he said. Football Australia "is seeking more information and the team knows what they stand for."

The "Visit Saudi" campaign was among more than 30 sponsors at the men's World Cup in Qatar last year.

cont'd on pg 29

Tokyo Olympic bribery scandal rolls on; company apologises

By Yuri Kageyama and Stephen Wade

AP - A Japanese company embroiled in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic corruption scandal said Thursday it would strengthen oversight to prevent further wrongdoing.

Kadokawa “seriously betrayed public trust,” company president Takeshi Natsuno said. He bowed deeply with two other executives to show remorse in a news conference.

Tsuguhiko Kadokawa, the son of the founder, was arrested in September on suspicion of bribing Haruyuki Takahashi, a member of the Tokyo Olympic organising committee, with 69 million yen (\$480,000).

Kadokawa Group was chosen as an Olympic sponsor and published the Games program and guidebooks.

Takahashi is a former executive at the Japanese advertising company Dentsu, which played a key role in 2013 in landing the Olympics for Tokyo, and then became the Tokyo Games marketing arm.

Takahashi was arrested



Workers prepare to remove giant Olympic rings from the waterfront area at Odaiba Marine Park after the 2020 Summer Olympics came to an end on Aug. 8 in Tokyo, Japan, Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. A Japanese company embroiled in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic corruption scandal said Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, it would strengthen oversight to prevent further wrongdoing. (Kim Kyung-hoon/Pool Photo via AP, File)

and released from jail after being held for about four months. Japanese media say he is denying the corruption charges.

He also faces bribery allegations in connection with several companies tied to the Tokyo Olympics: Aoki Holdings, a clothing company that dressed Japan's Olympic team; Daiko Advertising Inc., ADK Marketing Solutions, and Sun Arrow, which produced the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic mascots named Miraitowa and Someity.

Any trials are likely to be slow moving as the Japanese court process tends to be drawn out, and more than a dozen people are involved.

Prosecutors say Takahashi acted in ways to favour the companies with sponsorships and other benefits related to the Olympics in return for the bribes.

Prosecutors say, besides the bribery scandal, a separate probe is ongoing into bid-rigging and the choice of venues for Olympic test events.

The sprawling corrup-

tion allegations surrounding Tokyo have caused the bid by the northern Japanese city of Sapporo for the 2030 Winter Games to be placed “on hold.”

Sapporo was considered the favourite for 2030, partially because of Japan's reliability and heavy spending to hold the delayed Tokyo Games.

The Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee is reported to have Salt Lake City as the lone candidate to hold the 2030 Games.

Salt Lake organisers have said they would prefer 2034, not wanting to directly follow Los Angeles, which will hold the 2028 Summer Olympics.

The official price tag for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics was \$13 billion, although a government audit suggested real costs might be twice that much. About 60% of Tokyo Olympic spending was public money.

The Games were postponed for a year and held in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

cont'd from pg 28

FIFA did not formally announce that deal which became apparent through pitchside advertisements when the games started in November.

The Women's World Cup is to be played July 20-Aug. 20. The United States is defending its title in the first

edition of the marquee tournament expanded to 32 teams.

It will also be the first test of FIFA's policy to separate broadcasting and sponsor deals for the Women's World Cup from the men's event. That was intended to give independence to women's soccer and prove it had its

own commercial value.

Infantino previously defended the women's tournament when he used the platform of the finals tournament draw in Auckland in October to criticise broadcasters for making offers for rights that FIFA deemed unacceptably low.

ABCA seeking to forge closer ties with Indian sports company

President Leon “Kuma” Rodney said the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association is seeking to forge closer working partnership with India’s Fantasy Sports Company, Dream11.

Dream11, a subsidiary of parent company Dream Sports, is an Indian fantasy sports platform that allows users to play fantasy cricket, hockey, football, handball, basketball, volleyball, rugby, futsal, American football and baseball.

It was founded in 2008 and is now owned by Sporta Technologies Pvt Limited with its headquarters in Mumbai, India.

Dream11 partnered with the ABCA during last month’s hosting of its first domestic competition of the year, the ABCA 10 Splash, which was won by Empire Nation and featured 12 local teams.

Dream11 was able to live stream the ABCA’s 10 Splash matches via the Dream Sports Fan Code App to an online audience during the competition, which was held from Thursday, 5th January to Friday, 20th January.

Speaking on Platinum’s Radio Touchline Sports Show, Rodney said the ABCA is already engaging Dream11 in further discussions to provide even more meaningful sponsorship to the national cricket association during the course of this year’s domestic programme.

Rodney said the ultimate objective of its ongoing partnership with Dream11 is to offer some financial benefits to the teams which participate in the ABCA’s domestic programme.

“It was a good tournament. The tournament was powered by the ABCA and Dream11 out of India so all the streaming was going back to India and could have been seen on Fan Code



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association Leon ‘Kuma’ Rodney. (Photo courtesy ABCA)

via Dream11. Different entities would have taken it from Dream11,” Rodney said.

“We are trying to develop a reasonable partnership with Dream11 and I am pretty sure that within the next coming months you may see the Dream11 six-team 10-over aside tournament.

“That is in discussion along with other things that we want to get done. It makes sense and once we continue to develop that partnership, I am sure that clubs will reasonably be happy because there is some sort of a financial gains that they will get from it.”

In April 2019, Dream11 became the first Indian fantasy sport company to become a unicorn. In business, a unicorn is a privately held startup company valued at over US\$1 billion.

In November 2021, Dream11 was valued at US\$8 billion. In December 2022, Dream11 had 150 million active users in India.

Rodney said the ABCA is grateful to Cricket West Indies Media Officer Dario Barthley for resurrecting discussions with Dream11, which paved the way for the Indian company to provide the national association with its initial support during the recent 10 Splash domestic competition.

“If you follow 10 overs a side cricket in the Caribbean you would have seen a Dream11 tournament in Dominica, St Vincent and so forth. They are the ones that put that on. We were in discussion with them just before the Pandemic, and unfortunately, the pandemic lock down everything.

“With this, our 10 overs aside, it’s not their tournament, but thanks to Dario Barthley, who resurrected some discussions with them, they came on board and accept our tournament,” Rodney stated.

“They really don’t like to do these kind of tournaments with so many teams. They prefer a six-team tournament, but they felt it was necessary and important to get involve in Antigua, and they did so and we appreciate it.

“The ABCA will still have to find some money to put in, but I think that they had cushioned the blow a little bit. But all in all, I think the tournament was good. I just want to thank everybody. Once you know that you would have played your part, thank you very much.”

TD Gomes: All course participants get chance to attain diploma

National Technical Director Sowerby Gomes said all coaches are given the opportunity to attain a diploma in the coaching education programme being administered by the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association (ABFA).

Thirty-seven coaches, comprising 15 females and 22 males, are currently enrolled in an ABFA B and C-License certification course, which commenced with the first phase at its Technical Center from 26th to 29th January, 2023.

The 37 participants will be given the opportunity to attain their coaching diplomas during the final phase of the ongoing training course, which will take place from 12th to 18th February for the males and the last week in February for the females.

However, Gomes said the participants who are unsuccessful in attaining their coaching diploma at the end of the current course, will be given further opportunities to achieve their licence certification.

"As it relates to either a pass or fail, there is no pass or fail grade when it comes to licensing of coaching.

"What you will find, after the end of the assessment period where each coach would have completed a number of hours and an evaluation is being done, if we are not seeing where they are supposed to be, there is further development for that particular



Some of the participating coaches at the ABFA's C License Coaching Course at the Technical Center at Paynters on Saturday, 28th January, 2023. (Photos courtesy ABFA)

course," Gomes said.

"It is not that they have failed, but it's just that they would like, let's say, another two or three weeks for development. But after those additional weeks of development, we will do further assessment and give them that passing grade."

The coaching course is a joint initiative between the national association and sub-regional governing body CONCACAF, the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association of Football.

Gomes said the joint initiative between the national association and CONCACAF is geared towards the continued development of the football coaches in Antigua and Barbuda via the ABFA coaches' education programme.

Gomes said the coaches' education programme will help the coaches to have a greater impact on the players, which will produce better results on the field of play.

"The ABFA in collaboration with CONCACAF is very much on the drive of coaches' education and it's our educational pathway to see a greater development of our coaches in Antigua because we recognize the more we can impact and empower our coaches, the greater impact we will see on our players on the pitch and get better results," Gomes said.

"More than just the game itself, we are looking about building the individuals, whereas the coaches are also looking to build and shape their own lives, they are now able to build the young students lives as well."

cont'd from pg 32

match with 10 men when Jamal Joseph was given a red card after committing his second bookable offence in the 82nd minute.

The win lifted ABA-YA into ninth place on

goal difference with seven points, the same tally as 10th placed Bethesda and CPTSA Wings.

The sixth loss in seven matches has left Blackburn Palace second from bottom of the standings with three

points.

Joshua Blenman scored a hat-trick to lead Belmont to their fifth win in nine matches with a 3-0 victory over Real Blizzard in the opening match of the double header.

Blenman scored in the 25th, 41st and 47th minute for Belmont to advance to fifth place with 16 points.

Their third loss in eight matches ensured that Real Blizzard remained in sixth place with 13 points.

Jennings United drop first points but regain lead in Second Division

Jennings United have dropped their first points but regained the lead in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Wednesday, 1st February.

Jennings United failed to win for the first time in the league and their seven-match winning streak was ended by Lingies CPT-SA Wings as both teams fought to a 1-1 draw at the St Johnston's playing field.

Wings also squandered a good chance to win the encounter by squandering a penalty that was taken twice, in the latter stages of the game.

Wings scored the spot kick on the first attempt, but was ordered by the referee to retake it after one of their players was deemed to have encroached into the 18-yards box at the time the penalty was taken.

Wing failed to score the penalty on the second attempt after the spot kick was saved by Jennings United goalkeeper.

Striker Daryl Massicot,



A Jennings United player (red uniform) shields the ball while fending off a player of CPTSA Wings in their Second Division match at the St Johnston's Playing Field on Wednesday, 1st February, 2023. (Photo courtesy Wings Sports Club)

a former Wings player, had scored in the 36th minute to give Jennings United a 1-0 halftime lead. Jaheem Robinson scored an equaliser for Wings with a 48th minute conversion.

The result lifted Jennings United back to the top of the second division on goal difference ahead of nearest rivals Attacking Saints with both teams on 22 points.

But Jennings United

have played eight matches, one less than Attacking Saints who are in second place.

Their first draw in eight matches lifted Wings to 11th place with seven points.

ABAYA recorded their second win in seven outings by pulling off a 2-1 victory over Blackburn Palace in the second game of a double header at the ABFA's Technical Center

at Paynters.

Shamar Carr scored the winner for ABAYA by converting a penalty in the 78th minute.

Tarique Gomes had scored an equaliser for Blackburn Palace by also converting a penalty in the 54th minute after Anesto Joseph's 20th minute conversion had given ABAYA a 1-0 halftime lead.

ABAYA ended the

cont'd on pg 31