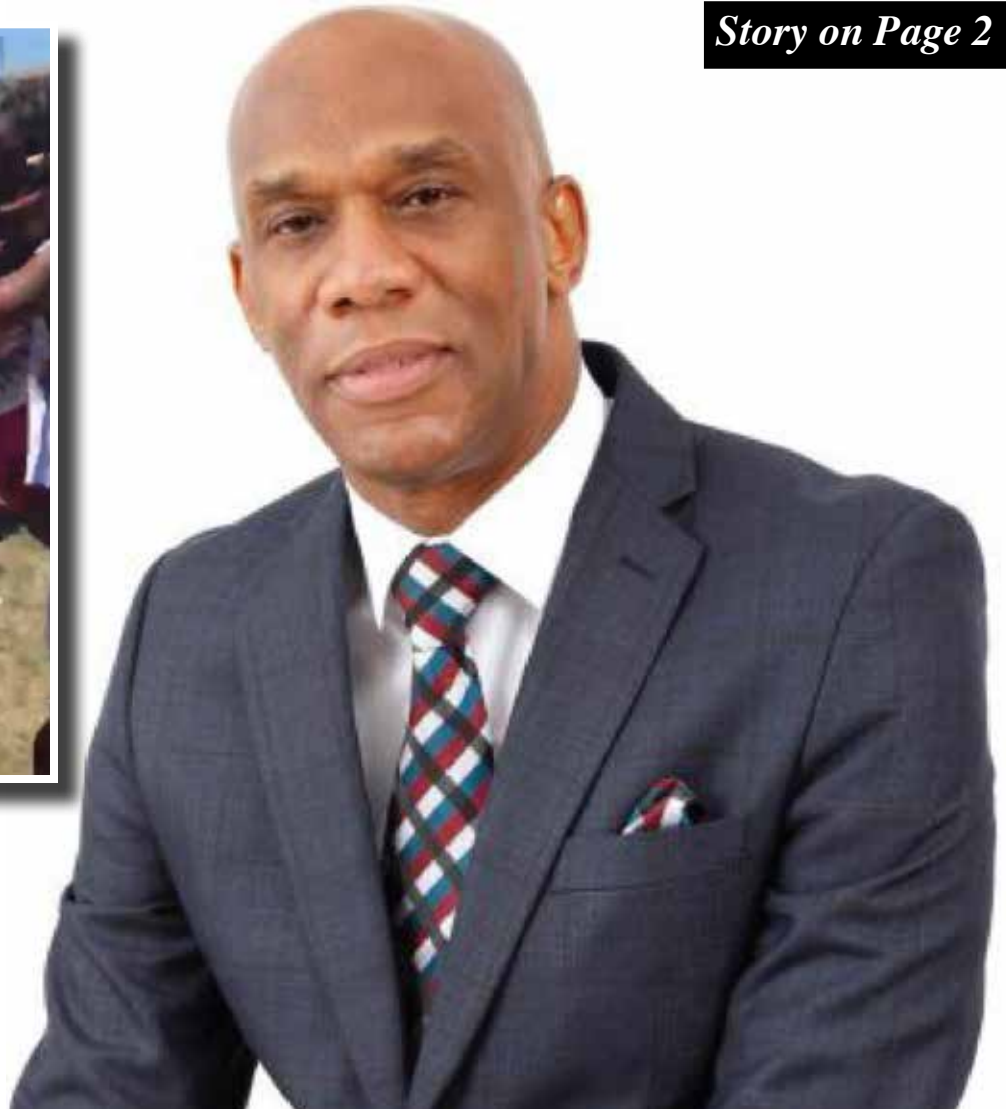


# CLARE BROWNE: SCHOOLS ARE NOT WAR ZONES

*Story on Page 2*



*Director of Education Clare Browne said he was shocked and appalled when he saw the video recording of the fight amongst students at the Clare Hall Secondary School last Friday.*



## Schools are not war zones!

That is the sentiment of Director of Education Clare Browne, in response to the latest fighting incident among students at one of the country's secondary schools.

Browne said he was shocked and appalled when he saw the video recording of the fight amongst students at the Clare Hall Secondary School last Friday, especially after the amount of time and resources that have been put into efforts by the Ministry of Education to bring an end to violence in the nation's schools.

"It is really disheartening that the ministry has spent a lot of money and deployed

much resources to teach our young people a better way; that they have a choice to choose a better path in dealing with conflict resolution.

"Yet, every other week we see examples of our young people engaged in violent behavior. These are our own children, yet this behavior is mind-boggling," he remarked.

The education director said parents must shoulder some of the blame for what is happening among the nation's youth. "We have to look at ourselves and what many of us are doing on social media, where we are threatening people for vari-



ous reasons. Our children are watching and they are acting out what we say on our social media posts," he opined.

The senior education official also wants to see changes to the Child Protection Act, these changes will give the police more scope to act when young people break the law and engage in violent and or anti-social behavior.

"I am not about 'lock-up', but young people must know that we as a society will not put up with this type of behavior," he declared.

Browne said generally the future of the country looks bright, with the vast majority of young people pursuing positive activities, and taking advantage of the opportunities that are available, such as higher education, technology,

and sports, but with a few 'bad elements' wanting to derail these positives with their anti-social behavior.

"This problem of violence amongst our youth is a societal issue and one which has to be solved by the entire society. It is not enough to say young people are a problem; the society must come together and work out solutions," he emphasized.

The director indicated that an investigation will take place in the latest incident and those involved will be dealt with accordingly. "I have never been to a war zone, however, what I saw on this latest video tells me what a war zone is; our schools are not war zones and must not be treated as such," he stated emphatically.

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### AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Instructed by the **ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA DEVELOPMENT BANK** of 27 St. Mary's Street, in the City of Saint John, in the State of Antigua and Barbuda, I will sell by public auction on Friday 14 April 2023 at 1:00 p.m. on site, the under mentioned property owned by Mr. Dale Henry of Lamberts, New Winthropes, St. George's, Antigua.

The property is located at Lamberts, New Winthropes, St. George's, Antigua and consists of a parcel of land of an area of approximately 5,985 sq. ft. or 0.14 acre; with a two (2) storey three (3) bedroom, two (2) bathroom concrete residential dwelling thereon of an area offering approximately 2,900 sq. ft. of living space inclusive of a lower floor basement for possible commercial use.

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- On the East by: Parcel 309;
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## PM warns migrants against smuggling as a means of departure



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

Prime Minister Gaston Browne is appealing to the remaining West Africans who have been living here since late December, not to attempt to leave the country through illegal means such as smuggling.

Speaking on the weekend, the prime minister warned that anyone attempting to be smuggled out of the country could possibly experience the same fate as those individuals who lost their lives last Tuesday, when the

boat in which they were traveling capsized off the coast of St. Kitts.

Sixteen of the estimated 30 or 32 persons who were aboard the vessel have been rescued and are now in custody in St. Kitts. Included among them is the captain and a crew member who are believed to have been at the helm, when the vessel went down in 'very deep' waters, 12 nautical miles northeast of St. Kitts.

*cont'd on pg 4*

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# Local News



*cont'd from pg 3*

Three bodies were pulled from the water and after several days of recovery operations in the area, last Friday afternoon the authorities suspended their operations thereby ending any thoughts of recovering the bodies of the between eleven to thirteen persons who went missing,

and who are believed to have died.

Speaking directly to the migrants who remain in the country, the prime minister noted that there was no need for them to put their lives at risk, and his government made a decision to assimilate them into the local society.

He revealed that when

he first heard of the incident, he was disappointed, as it demonstrated an abuse of the country's benevolence.

"I am hoping that those who remain would not seek to do anything as dangerous as that again and to understand that we have accepted you as residents in this country; you can

live here, you can work here.

"If they want to go back home the offer still stands, we will help them by assisting with the financing of their return to Cameroon; we are not keeping them here against their will," he emphasized.

The prime minister noted that he is aware that some may have been suggesting that the government was keeping them here against their will.

"This is not true and they have to be honest with us; you can't be saying you are being kept against your will while at the same time benefiting from our benevolence," he urged.

He again warned that the consequence of smuggling is real, it's significant and he hopes that none will attempt to do something that dangerous.

PM Browne is also asking nationals who may be thinking of assisting them to leave the country illegally, to 'cease and desist'.

"I am aware, that the police have called in at least one individual for questioning in this matter. My understanding is that the investigation is ongoing and those who aided in the smuggling of these migrants will be brought to justice.

"So we expect that law enforcement will carry out their function and where there is a violation of our laws, they (the perpetrators) will pay the price," he declared.

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## Multi-million dollar offers received for Alfa Nero

The government is currently perusing several bids from a number of individuals who wish to purchase the abandoned vessel, the Alfa Nero.

Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister Lionel Max Hurst revealed that the bids indicate that there is serious interest by many individuals, to purchase the vessel that has been moored in Antigua and Barbuda waters for over a year.

“Several bids have arrived by way of interest, FedEx and through DHL indicating the interest of several persons wishing to acquire the Alfa Nero.

“Although the bid is open to any amount, I have learned that there are two bids that have gained the attention of the government. One is for US\$53 million and the other for US\$72 million.

“The yacht was built for a little more than US\$81 million and although it has fallen into disrepair,



many still regard it as ‘a fine specimen’ of a vessel and continue to show an interest in acquiring it for themselves,” he reported.

As of Monday (yesterday), Hurst further reported that an additional interest has been expressed by others and at least one potential buyer has declared a willingness to outbid the

highest bidder, at the point of sale.

The Chief of Staff however, notes that since the bidding process is secretive the identity of those who are desirous of purchasing the vessel will remain confidential.

He did advise that all the bids are from people living outside of Antigua

and Barbuda.

Hurst indicated that the decision is now for the government to go ahead with the selection of the highest bidder and to consummate the sale of the Alfa Nero. That is likely to happen shortly.

“Any day now we will notify the person with the highest bid that he/she has first option to purchase the vessel.

“He/she then has 10 days and must provide the financing to complete the sale.

“If that does not happen, the second highest bidder will get an opportunity to purchase the vessel,” he explained.

Tue 04   Day		Tue 04   Night	
<b>82°</b>		<b>74°</b>	
24% E 17 mph		23% E 13 mph	
Mostly sunny skies. High 82F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.		A few clouds from time to time. Low 74F. Winds E at 10 to 15 mph.	
Humidity <b>69%</b>	UV Index <b>Extreme</b>	Humidity <b>78%</b>	UV Index <b>0 of 10</b>
Sunrise <b>5:59 am</b>	Sunset <b>6:20 pm</b>	Moonrise <b>5:16 pm</b>	Moonset <b>5:05 am</b>
Waxing Gibbous			

## French authorities open investigation into tragedy at sea

French authorities in Guadeloupe have opened an investigation into the accident at sea that is believed to have resulted in the loss of sixteen lives, when a vessel registered in that island sank just north of St Kitts.

News reports from Guadeloupe state that the Public Prosecutor of Pointe-a-Pitre has opened the investigation into the incident that caused the death of three persons, and the disappearance of thirteen others.

A “boat registered in Guadeloupe” capsized on Tuesday “off the coast of Saint Kitts and Nevis,” islands located north of the Guadeloupe archipelago. The circumstances of the accident are “still poorly

determined,” but the capsizing “caused the death of three people and the disappearance of 13 others,” according to a provisional report, said prosecutor Patrick Desjardins in a press release.

Mr. Desjardins has opened an investigation for “manslaughter by deliberate breach of a security obligation, involuntary injuries by deliberate breach of a security obligation, trafficking in human beings in an organized gang,” he said on Wednesday.

“The identity of the victims, who are not French-speaking, and their nationalities could not at this time be determined with certainty,” the same

source said.

The boat, whose “owner is a French national, residing in Guadeloupe,” carried “32 passengers,” indicates the press release from the prosecution. The investigation was jointly entrusted to the research section of the Guadeloupe gendarmerie and the maritime gendarmerie.

The Martinique branch of CROSS Antilles-Guyane has been actively involved since Tuesday, in search operations jointly with the authorities of Saint-Kitts and Nevis. A French ship is engaged in the area and on Wednesday, a Dutch coast guard plane flew over the area.

*cont'd on pg 8*



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## Nomad Digital Programme applicants to get more time

The Nomad Digital Programme launched by the government in 2020 continues, despite a decline in applicants.

The programme was introduced in an attempt to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic, when millions were working from home in the United States, Europe and Canada. The idea was to offer the country as an alternative to working from home in their native countries, but to do so from Antigua and Barbuda with its tropical climate and other attractions.

Chief Immigration Offi-

cer, Katrina Yearwood in an update recently, stated that the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has agreed to extend the time successful applicants are allowed to stay in the country, from two to possible three years without the need for work permits and so on.

Yearwood said the drop in applications may be related to the fact that the world has opened up, since the pandemic and so many persons are reporting to work at their jobs, rather than working from home.

Successful applicants of the NOMAD Programme

receive a stamp from the Immigration Department, which allows them to work in the country, utilizing the available internet services to connect with their home offices remotely.

Antigua and Barbuda is one of at least eight Caribbean countries that is offering the programme.

However, she said most countries have offered only a one-year stint as opposed to Antigua and Barbuda's two years. The addition of an extra year is expected to give Antigua and Barbuda an edge over the competition.



Chief Immigration Officer, Katrina Yearwood

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# Local News



## National Student Loan Programme seeks new applications

The National Student Loan Programme (NSLP) is currently inviting applications from students who wish to pursue post-second-

ary education or training.

The NSLP has issued a brochure indicating that applications are now being accepted until the deadline of

May 31, 2023. The scheme will accept applications from students wishing to do tertiary level education, or who may wish to under-

take technical or vocational training.

Students wishing to apply, must complete the application form online, following which they will be notified and invited for an interview. Each applicant must have two sureties, both of whom must live and work in Antigua and Barbuda.

Since its inception, the NSLP has approved over nine hundred applications for loans, dispensing a total of \$25 million.

A spokesman said despite this, the scheme remains under-subscribed and there is now a push to increase the number of persons making applications for student loans.

The ceiling for loans is capped at \$75,000.00.

*cont'd from pg 6*

The two cruise ships which were on Tuesday diverted to take part in the rescue of the shipwreck have left the area, said the prefecture of Martinique.

The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, had expressed on social media on Tuesday, "his deep sorrow at the loss of life and the distress suffered by those aboard a vessel, which illegally left Antigua -and- Barbuda on Tuesday, March 28 for an unknown destination, which capsized on the high seas."

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## Vincentian among Caribbean poets to showcase work in Paris

Loop - Dr Jacinth Browne-Howard has been selected to represent St Vincent and the Grenadines at the 40th edition of the Poetry Market also known as Marché de la Poésie which will take place from June 7 to 11 in Paris, France.

How was she selected to attend? In February 2022, the UNESCO programme Transcultura: Integrating Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union through Culture and Creativity, funded by the European Union, extended a call for young poets from the Caribbean. This invitation welcomed the participation of poets from the English, Spanish and French nations of the region.

From the 252 applica-

tions received, 10 poets between the ages of 18 to 35 were selected to showcase their work at the Poetry Market.

The Transcultura programme will facilitate the attendance and participation of the 10 selected poets. This will be the first time that the Caribbean will be represented at this gathering of great literary significance.

While there, Dr Jacinth will receive opportunities to network with established professionals including authors and publishers from all over Europe. Not only will this foster career development, but the programme is also an avenue to distribute Vincentian work in Europe.

Dr Jacinth hopes to



*Dr Jacinth Browne-Howard.*

soon publish her poems in a collection for this purpose. Many of her poems have been inspired by cultural, social and historical occurrences in St Vincent and the Grenadines and the region.

Dr Jacinth is a former national scholar and currently lectures West Indian

Literature at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus.

There will also be representatives from the countries of Barbados, Bahamas, Grenada, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti.



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## Nasa names first woman and black man on Moon mission

BBC - The US space agency Nasa has named the four astronauts who will take humanity back to the Moon, after a 50-year gap.

Christina Koch will become the first woman astronaut ever assigned to a lunar mission, while Victor Glover will be the first black astronaut on one.

They will join Reid Wiseman and Jeremy Hansen to fly a capsule around the Moon late next year or early in 2025.

The astronauts won't land on the Moon, but their mission will pave the way for a touchdown by a subsequent crew.

The three US citizens and one Canadian were presented to the public in a ceremony in Houston, Texas.

They will now begin a period of intense training to get themselves ready.

In selecting a woman and a person of colour, Nasa is keeping its promise to bring greater diversity to its exploration efforts. All the previous crewed missions to the Moon were made by white men.

Reid Wiseman (47): A US Navy pilot who served for a time as the head of Nasa's astronaut office. He's flown one previous space mission, to the International Space station in 2015.

Victor Glover (46): A US Navy test pilot. He joined Nasa in 2013 and made his first spaceflight in 2020. He was the first African American to stay on the space station for an extended period of six months.

Christina Koch (44): An electrical engineer. She holds the record for longest continuous time in space by a woman, of 328 days. With Nasa astronaut Jessica Meir she participated in the first all-female spacewalk in October 2019.

Jeremy Hansen (47): Before



*Koch, Glover (rear), Hansen and Wiseman (seated) were unveiled at the Johnson Space Center.*

joining the Canadian Space Agency, he was a fighter pilot with the Royal Canadian Air Force. He has yet to fly in space.

"The Artemis-2 crew represents thousands of people working tirelessly to bring us to the stars. This is their crew, this is our crew, this is humanity's crew," said Nasa Administrator Bill Nelson.

"Nasa astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Hammock Koch, and CSA astronaut Jeremy Hansen, each has their own story, but, together, they represent our creed: E pluribus unum - out of many, one. Together, we are ushering in a new era of exploration for a new generation of star sailors and dreamers - the Artemis Generation."

Wiseman will be the command-

er; Glover will be his pilot; Koch and Hansen will act as the supporting "mission specialists".

The quartet are essentially repeating the 1968 mission carried out by Apollo 8, which was the first human spaceflight to reach the Moon.

Its crew took the famous "Earthrise" picture that showed our home planet emerging from behind the lunar horizon.

The major difference this time will be the use of the 21st Century technology that Nasa has developed under its Artemis programme. In Greek mythology, Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo.

Last year, the agency tested its next-generation Moon rocket, called the Space Launch System, and its associated crew capsule, known as Ori-

*cont'd on pg 12*

## Five tips to treat dark underarms

By Sharine Joseph

If you have dark underarms, don't sweat it - we all have our shadowy secrets! Don't worry, though, it's not just you - genetics, shaving, tight clothing, and deodorants can all contribute to those pesky dark underarms. It's not harmful, but let's face it, it's not exactly a confidence booster. Lucky for you, we got some tips to brighten up those pits and put a little pep in your step!

**Exfoliate regularly**

Exfoliating your underarms can help remove dead skin cells and unclog pores, which can contribute to darkening. Use a gentle exfoliating scrub or a loofah to gently scrub your underarms once or twice a week. Avoid over-exfoliating, as this can irritate the skin.

**Keep your underarms clean and dry**



Sweat and bacteria can contribute to dark underarms. To keep your underarms clean and dry, shower daily and use a gentle, pH-balanced soap to cleanse the area. Dry your underarms thoroughly after bathing to prevent moisture build-up.

**Avoid tight clothing**

Wearing tight clothing can cause friction and irritation, which can

lead to darkening. Choose loose-fitting clothing made of breathable materials like cotton to prevent irritation.

**Switch to natural deodorants**

Some deodorants and antiperspirants can cause darkening and irritation. Consider switching to a natural deodorant that does not contain aluminium, parabens, or other potentially harmful ingredients.

**Try natural remedies**

Natural remedies like lemon juice, potato slices, and baking soda can help brighten and lighten the skin. Apply lemon juice or potato slices to your underarms for a few minutes before rinsing off. Mix baking soda with water to create a paste and apply it to your underarms. Leave it on for a few minutes before rinsing it off.

*cont'd from pg 11*

on.

This Artemis-1 mission left Earth on a 25-day excursion around the Moon without anyone on board. This allowed engineers to assess the readiness of the hardware.

Now, the newly named astronauts will climb into Orion for Artemis-2 and a journey to and from the Moon that's likely to take about 10 days.

The last human spaceflight mission to the Moon was Apollo 17 in December 1972. The first landing was Apollo 11 in 1969.

Artemis-3, the first landing of the new era, is not expected to occur until

at least 12 months after Artemis-2.

Nasa doesn't yet have a system capable of taking astronauts down to the lunar surface. This is being developed by entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

Called Starship, the vehicle is due to start flight testing in the next few weeks.

"We need to celebrate this moment in human history because Artemis-2 is more than a mission to the Moon and back; it's more than a mission that has to happen before we send people to the surface of the Moon. It is the next step on the journey that gets humanity to Mars," Victor Glover told the Houston

ceremony.

Christina Koch added: "Are you excited? I asked that because the one thing I'm most excited about is that we are going to carry your excitement, your aspirations, your dreams with us, on this mission, Artemis-2 - your mission."

Vanessa Wyche is the director of Nasa's Johnson Space Flight Center, the home of mission control. She said:

"Among the [Artemis-2] crew are the first woman, first person of colour, and first Canadian on a lunar mission, and all four astronauts will represent the best of humanity as they explore for the benefit of all."

## Canada and Barbados Prime Ministers discuss situation in Haiti

CMC - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Barbados counterpart, Mia Mottley have agreed to “continue to work closely together,” on a number of global issues, including the ongoing political, socio-economic situation in Haiti.

A statement issued by the Office of the Prime Minister noted that the two leaders “spoke” over the last weekend expressing “concern over the deteriorating security in Haiti and the need to help address the political, security, and humanitarian crises in the country.

“They emphasized the importance of CARICOM’s (Caribbean Community) role in supporting an inclusive political dialogue and recommitted to working together to help address the urgent needs of the Haitian people,” the statement said.

Late last month, Trudeau and United States President Joe Biden both expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in the French-speaking CARICOM country and in a joint statement, pledged to increase community support to the people of Haiti,



*Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley.*

in particular by offering them security and humanitarian aid and better support for the National Police of Haiti (PNH).

Trudeau said that in order to counter the crisis and support peace and security “Canada is investing an additional CAD\$100 million (One Canadian dollar=US\$0.74 cents) to provide enhanced policing support and equipment to the Haitian National Police, to bolster Haitian-led solutions to the crisis and support peace and security”, rather than lead an international force of several thousand men in Haiti”.

The situation in Haiti has deteriorated significantly since July 2021.

The statement said that during their deliberations, both Trudeau and Mottley also discussed “the importance of improving access to concessional financing for countries vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

“They agreed to work together to address today’s global financing needs of developing countries through innovative and inclusive solutions. They also committed to work jointly to advance efforts to reform the international financing system. This would ensure equitable access to resources needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” it said.

The statement said that the leaders also spoke about their roles as co-chairs of the United Nations Secretary-General’s SDG Advocates group and the next steps to advance priorities and to ensure continued progress.

“Prime Minister Trudeau and Prime Minister Mottley agreed to continue to work closely together,” the statement concluded.

## ICJ to rule on Venezuelan objection in border dispute with Guyana



The International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced it would deliver a ruling on Thursday on Venezuela’s preliminary objection in its border dispute case with Guyana.

President of the Court, Joan Donoghue, will read the ruling at 3 pm during a public sitting of the court which is housed at the Peace Palace in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Venezuela’s preliminary objection in the case centres on their belief that the Court lacks jurisdiction to hear Guyana’s application for it to settle the border dispute since the United Kingdom is a necessary party to the proceedings.

Guyana filed the case in March 2018 asking that the court declare that: “The 1899 Award is valid and

*cont’d on pg 14*

## St. Vincent PM explains situation regarding LIAT and severance

By *Melissa Wong*

Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonsalves, has responded to concerns regarding the issue of severance for former employees of LIAT (1974) limited.

This follows issues raised by the St Vincent LIAT Workers Union in a letter to the editor, where it expressed dismay over the lack of concern, lack of compensation or any official response to the collapse of the airline three years ago.

Speaking over the weekend on WE99.9FM, the prime minister noted that since 2020 he has not been contacted by the Union.

Gonsalves recalled a letter being written to him in 2020, and calling the head of the union to explain that the government was unable to do anything until the administrator indicated in a definitive way, ‘the things which LIAT (1974) limited can and cannot do, and authoritatively for the administrator to sign off on if LIAT were not insolvent, what would be the workers’ entitlement.’

The prime minister said

*cont’d from pg 13*

binding upon Guyana and Venezuela, and the boundary established by that Award and the 1905 Agreement is valid and binding upon Guyana and Venezuela.”

Venezuela had said it was not partici-



he is awaiting a final position from the administrator in relation to all these matters.

He also pointed out that at different times the administrator sent him different numbers, and he needs to know what is the final situation.

Gonsalves noted that he did say the government will give consideration to making whatever reasonable payment it may be able to make ex gratia. He also made it clear that the Union in SVG has not written to him about wanting an audience, as far as he is aware, since 2020.

The prime minister said the commitment he gave still stands and he is prepared to meet with a delegation of the former LIAT

workers any time after Easter. On Thursday he will be heading to St Lucia to discuss regional transportation.

Gonsalves reminded that when the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines had put money inside LIAT and was receiving ‘licks’ from the Opposition, he claimed the nominal leadership of the LIAT union in SVG never supported the government in its attempts to keep LIAT in the air. He said the unions in Barbados and Antigua would make statements supporting what the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines was doing for LIAT.

The prime minister also recalled that in 2020, when he went to Parliament with \$2.7 million in the COVID package supplementary es-

timate to put in LIAT, it was opposed.

“The commitment I gave to LIAT workers still stands and we could have the discussion,” Gonsalves reassured.

The prime minister said right now, governments which did not want anything to do with LIAT are prepared to have a crack at putting money into regional air transportation.

“What I said from the beginning is what is happening. If there is no LIAT you have to invent something called LIAT.”

Gonsalves said from 2001 to 2020 (19 years), St Vincent and the Grenadines was a central cornerstone in LIAT and ‘we carried for many years LIAT.’

He ended by saying, “We soldiered with this thing and in the midst of COVID I was going to put \$2.7 million to help LIAT over a hump, but when the plug was pulled what could I do.”

pating in the matter but it did take part in the case management process.

Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, during her appearance in court last year, said the country’s participation in the case management was “as a courtesy, not as a party in this procedure.”

# Finland to join Nato military alliance today

BBC - Finland will become the 31st member of Nato on Tuesday, the Western military alliance's secretary general has announced.

The application was prompted by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, with which Finland shares a long border.

Turkey had delayed the application, complaining that Finland was supporting "terrorists".

Sweden applied to join Nato at the same time last May, but Turkey is blocking it over similar complaints.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused it of embracing Kurdish militants and allowing them to demonstrate on the streets of Stockholm.

Any Nato expansion needs the support of all its members.

"We will raise the Finnish flag for the first time here at Nato headquarters. It will be a good day for Finland's security, for Nordic security and for Nato as a whole," Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in Brussels.

"Sweden will also be safer as a result," he said.

Finland's membership is one of the most important moments in Nato's recent history.



*Finland's President Sauli Niinisto met with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, last month.*

Finland, a country with a 1,340km (832 mile) border with Russia and one of the most powerful arsenals of artillery pieces in Western Europe, decided to ditch its neutrality and join the alliance in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Sweden also abandoned a longstanding commitment to neutrality in applying to join Nato, but unlike its neighbour it does not share a border with Russia.

One of Nato's founding principles is the that of collective defence - meaning an attack on one member

nation is treated as an attack on them all.

For Russian President Vladimir Putin, Finland's accession is a major strategic setback.

He sent his army into Ukraine last year in the expectation it would check Nato's expansion and weaken Western collectivism. In fact, it has achieved the exact opposite.

In response to Mr Stoltenberg's announcement, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Grushko, said: "In the event that the forces and resources of other Nato members are de-

ployed in Finland, we will take additional steps to reliably ensure Russia's military security." He did not specify.

Finland will become the seventh Nato country on the Baltic Sea, further isolating Russia's coastal access at St Petersburg and on its small exclave of Kaliningrad.

Finnish public opinion has been radically altered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Almost overnight last spring, support for Nato membership leapt from an underwhelming one-third of Finns to almost 80%.

# Kosovo ex-president Hashim Thaci pleads not guilty to war crimes

BBC - Former Kosovo President Hashim Thaci has pleaded not guilty to 10 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He went on trial on Monday with three co-defendants, accused of killing nearly 100 people and other atrocities including enforced disappearances.

The allegations date from Kosovo's independence war against Serbia in 1998-99 in which more than 10,000 died.

Mr Thaci was co-founder of a group fighting for independence and is regarded as a hero in Kosovo.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was set up in the early 1990s as a militant group of ethnic Albanians, in what was then a province of Serbia, and during the war is alleged to have carried out attacks on the region's ethnic Serb minority.

When Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, Mr Thaci became its first prime minister and later president, but resigned in 2020 to face the charges in The Hague.

Victims and human rights groups hope his trial - at a special court known as the Kosovo Special-



*Hashim Thaci and his co-defendants have denied any wrongdoing.*

ist Chambers - will reveal what happened to some of the thousands of people who vanished during the Kosovo conflict.

According to the court's indictment, the crimes took place in more than 100 locations in Kosovo and in northern Albania, where Serb civilians were allegedly detained and mistreated or murdered.

The trial began with opening statements from the prosecution. Judges will also hear from defence lawyers and a representative of Kosovo's war victims' council.

Mr Thaci is being tried alongside the former speaker of Kosovo's parliament

Kadri Veseli, former KLA spokesman Jakup Krasniqi and former KLA commander Rexhep Selimi.

All four co-defendants, who were associates both during and after the war, deny any wrongdoing.

"I understand the indictment and I am fully not guilty," Mr Thaci said at the trial.

The independence movement in Kosovo began after Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's decision in 1989 to strip the province of its self-governing status.

Tensions led to full-scale war in 1998 which only ended after a Nato air campaign against Ser-

bia prompted its forces to leave the province.

Kosovo declared its independence unilaterally in 2008, and was recognised by 99 out of 193 UN member states but not Serbia.

In its first case, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers jailed for 26 years KLA commander Salih Mustafa, who was in charge of a prison where torture took place.

He is appealing against the conviction.

In 2007-12 former Kosovan Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj was tried twice and acquitted at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.





An overhead view of the Chinese balloon on 3 February, shown in a photo provided by the US department of defence.

## Spy balloon sent data to China in real time - report

**By Mike Wendling**

The Chinese balloon that flew over the US earlier this year managed to gather intelligence from military bases for days before it was shot down, US media report.

The balloon was able to transmit data to Beijing in real time, NBC News reported, citing US officials.

The craft picked up electronic signals rather than taking pictures, according to one official quoted by the network.

The White House didn't confirm the report.

But US officials say they managed to limit the balloon's intelligence-gathering abilities as it floated over the country.

On Monday, a defence department spokesperson said that the FBI was still examining the balloon debris.

"We do know that the balloon was able to be manoeuvred and purposely driven along its track," said spokesperson Sabrina Singh, who declined to say which military installations the balloon was able to hover over.

"We're still doing an assessment of what the intel was that China was able to gather but we do know that the steps that we took provided little additive value to what they've been able to collect on from satellites before," she said.

US officials say they tracked the balloon over Alaska and Canada before it re-entered American airspace in early February.

A public acknowledgement that the balloon was flying over the continental US set off days of tracking, sky watching and speculation. The craft - which was about 200ft (60m) tall - was shot down off the coast of

South Carolina on 4 February by a US fighter jet.

American officials later said they had recovered the balloon. Chinese officials say it was a civilian weather balloon and that the US overreacted by shooting it down.

Officials told US media that China was able to control the balloon so it could make multiple passes over military bases, sometimes flying in a figure-eight loop.

The incident triggered a diplomatic row and led US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to cancel a trip to China.

In the weeks after the balloon was shot down, US fighter jets shot down several other balloons they suspected had originated in China. The US defence department says China operates a fleet of balloons around the world.

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## Local teams off to losing starts at Gillian Brazier Basketball Shoot-out

The two local teams participating in the 17th Gillian Brazier Basketball Shoot-out made losing starts to the female competition at the JSC Sports Complex over the weekend.

Local teams CPTSA Wings and Cyclones lost their opening matches to teams of Juel of Ontario of Canada in the five-team round robin female tournament.

Juel 2 (Tessier/Hemion) romped to a 50-19 victory over Cyclones. Maeve McSwiggon shot a game-high 14 points and claimed nine rebounds while Marina Radonjic sank 11 points for the Canadians.

Rayana Regis converted nine points and grabbed 10 rebounds for Cyclones.

Juel 3 (Perkins) cruised to a 56-30 victory against CPTSA Wings. Ella Cavanaugh sank 16 points and snatched seven rebounds, while Veronica Rumeschol converted 14 points and secured five rebounds for Juel 3.

Jenah Andrew and Jodaliah Constant each scored eight points for CPTSA Wings.

Juel 1 (Abella) trounced Cyclones 57-23 in another one-sided

affair.

Alexis Schrybut scored 11 points while Reegan Bell converted eight points and grabbed 10 rebounds for Juel 1.

Mary Jane Grant scored seven points for Cyclones.

In the first battle between the Canadians, Juel 2 (Tessier/Hemion) prevailed 47-32 against Juel 3 (Perkins).

Chelsie Hemon sank 10 points and Zoey Hemon scored nine points for Juel 2 while Jade Diltmer converted 10 points and claimed six rebounds for Juel 3.

The CPTSA Wings, organisers of the Gillian Brazier female tournament, joined forces with their visiting colleagues from Canada in staging a

youth basketball clinic at the same venue yesterday (Monday).

The competition resumed with another double header last night and will continue with two more games this evening at the JSC Sports Complex.

Juels 1 will face Juel 3 at 6 pm while CPTSA Wings will take on Juel 2 at 7:30 pm.



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The Spanish Heat basketball team. (File photo)

## Spanish Heat eliminate Wadadli Elite1 to advance to playoff finals

League champions Galaxia Bar Spanish Heat are on course to complete the double after eliminating Wadadli Elite1 to advance to the finals of the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division Playoffs Championship.

Spanish Heat snatched a 68-63 victory over Wadadli Elite1 in Game Two to wrap-up their best of three semi-final series 2-0 at the JSC Sports complex on Sunday night.

Jesus Emmanuel scored 16 points and claimed eight rebounds; Antonio Cruzdehaa sank 13 points and snatched nine rebounds while Steven Matthew converted 13 points and grabbed seven rebounds.

Wilkin Floyd had 13 assists, nine rebounds and seven points; Rohland Hamilton grabbed 17 rebounds and converted six points and Kelvin Pimen-

tel had 11 rebounds and eight points for Spanish Heat.

Donte Trimmingham shot a game-high 23 points and grabbed nine rebounds, while Jayden Andrew produced 17 points with 11 rebounds, seven assists and six steals.

Tequan Brodie converted 10 points and Lopez Adams snatched 21 rebounds and scored two points for Wadadli Elite1.

Spanish Heat had snatched a 69-64 victory over Wadadli Elite1 in the opening game of the series last Thursday.

Steven Matthew sank 20 points; Kelvin Pimentel scored 12 points and snatched nine rebounds; Wilkin Floyd had 15 rebounds, 11 assists and seven points; Antonio Cruzdehaa claimed 11 rebounds and scored nine points; while Rohland Hamilton grabbed 14 rebounds and converted eight points for

Spanish Heat.

Donte Trimmingham produced 15 points, 11 rebounds and six assists; Tequan Brodie had 15 points and six assists; Najae George sank 14 points and claimed six rebounds; while Jayden Andrew chipped in with nine points, eight assists and seven rebounds for Wadadli Elite1.

In a repeat of the league final, Spanish Heat will once again clash with Ottos Coolers in the best of five finals for the second division play-offs championship.

Ottos Coolers eliminated Caribbean Pharmaceuticals Fearless Crew1 2-0 in their best of three semi-finals series to advance to the playoff finals.

Coolers and Spanish Heat will clash in the opening game of the finals at the JSC Sports Complex tomorrow (Wednesday) at 8:30 pm.

## Sea View Farm advance to face Freetown in final

Dreams 2 Reality Sea View Farm will face defending champions Freetown in the final of the Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) Caribbean Parish League Curtly Ambrose Limited Overs Championship.

Sea View Farm booked their spot in the final by pulling off a seven-wicket victory against Antigua Masters in the second semi-final at Sea View Farm on Saturday.

Batting first, Antigua Masters made 158 for five with Gregg Skepple hitting 44, Ian Gore got 29 and Frederick Floyd chipped in with 27.

In reply, Sea View Farm cruised to victory at 160 for three with Rolston "Triss" Phillip smashing 66, Zavier Freeland struck 34 and Jelani Mussington got 25.

Sea View Farm and Freetown are expected to clash in the final this weekend.



Freetown are on course to retain the Curtly Ambrose Limited Overs Championship after advancing to the final by snatching a six-run win against Police in the first semi-final on Sunday, 26th March.

Chasing 184 runs for victory, Police were restricted to 177 for seven off their allotted 33 overs. Captain Austin Richards Jr had cracked an unbeaten

82 in Freetown's total of 183 for nine off their 33 overs.

Freetown beat Police by 49 runs in the final to win their only title of the four Parish League competitions last year.

It was also the only title to elude the clutches of Police, who won the other three Parish League competitions last year.

### cont'd from pg 22

Leg-spinner Asher Murray Cornelius took four for 43 and fellow spinner and captain Ian Eusebe picked up three for 33. New Winthropes were 17 for one in their second innings when the match ended.

The encounter between Pigotts Crushers and Caribbean Union Bank (CUB) Bethesda Golden Eagles also ended in a draw at the Pigotts playing field.

Kadeem Henry hit 71, Jewel Andrew scored 38 and opener Demari Benta got 30 as Pigotts were dismissed for 202 in 60.2 overs in their first innings. Mekali Tonge claimed five for 46.



*Pigotts Crushers opening batsman Kadeem Henry struck a century against CUB Bethesda Golden Eagles. (File photos)*

In reply, Bethesda Golden Eagles were all out for 180 in 50.5 overs with opener Jamaul Fernandez scoring

43. Captain Elroy Francis Jr bagged five for 44 and Benta picked up three for 46.

Henry, batting as an

opener, struck an unbeaten century as Pigotts Crushers reached 318 for two in 65.2 overs in their second innings when the match ended.

Henry cracked 122 not out off 191 balls with 10 fours and a six while Francis Jr hit an unbeaten 73 off 81 balls. Henry and Francis Jr shared an unbroken third-wicket stand of 122 runs. Henry also added 115 runs for the first wicket with fellow opener Essan Warner, who hammered 62 off 65 balls. Henry was also involved in an 81-run second-wicket partnership with Benta, who scored 47 off 56 balls. Chad Walsh captured two for 84.

## Empire, All Saints claim wins in ABCA Two-Day contest

Empire Nation recorded their second consecutive victory while All Saints Pythons claimed their first win in the third round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) Two-Day Championship over the weekend.

Empire Nation crushed Jennings Tigers by 197 runs at the Jennings playing field. Empire batted first and scored 159 off 27.5 overs with Ziani Da Silva getting 42 off 30 balls and Justin Athanaze smashing 33 off 15 balls. Kenroy Browne captured four for 29.

In reply, Jennings Tigers were dismissed for 96 in 21.5 overs with captain DAhri Francis getting 30 off 35 balls. Jaeo Benjamin snapped up five for 15 and Kershaski Jno Lewis took three for 20.

Boosted by a lead of 63 runs, Empire declared their second innings at 194 for nine off 33.3 overs. Opener Jauri Edwards struck 46, Da Silva made 37 off 25 balls and captain Kenrick Scott hit 33 off 27 balls.

Left-arm spinner Glenton Williams captured five for 62 and Omarie Joseph picked up three for 14.

Set a victory target of 258 runs, Jennings Tigers were bundled out in their second innings for just 60 runs in 18.3 overs. Off-spinner Athanaze grabbed six wickets for 24 runs and leg-spinner Micah McKenzie snapped up four scalps for 19.

All Saints Pythons pulled off a six-wicket win against Combined Schools at the Mack Pond playing

field in All Saints.

Combined School could only muster 80 all out in 30.5 overs in their first innings with only opener Dravid Richardson, who got 26, managed to reach double figures. Off-spinner Demetri Lucas grabbed seven wickets for 11 runs in 13.3 overs.

In response, All Saints Pythons were all out for 178 off 45.5 overs with Edwin Jackson hitting 78 not out. Fast bowler Glen Williams took three for 22 and off-spinner Shamar Pereira claimed three for 32.

Facing a deficit of 98 runs, Combined School were all out for 180 in 57.3 overs in their second innings. Captain George Elvin struck 41, Jedd Joseph made 38 and Pereira chipped in with 37. Justin Robinson bagged four for 43 and Kadeem Josiah picked up three for 22.

Set just 83 to win, All Saints Pythons secured victory at 86 for four in 26.2 overs with Lucas not out on 34.

But defending champions PIC Insurance Liberta Black Hawks are yet to win a match in three outings after they were held to a draw by New Winthorpes Lions at Ball Beef in Liberta.

New Winthorpes Lions made 146 in 52.3 overs with Jermaine Otto getting 53. Jalen Harris claimed four for 44 and captain Kadeem Phillip captured four for 45.

The Black Hawks were all out for 141 in 41.1 overs in their first innings. Miandre James scored 37 and Uri Smith chipped in with 32.

*cont'd on pg 21*



*Empire Nation allrounder Justin Athanaze claimed a six-wicket haul against Jennings Tigers.*