

WIOC REPORTS PROFIT, GROWTH AND A BRIGHT FUTURE

Story on Page 2



The new Australian High Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda, Sonya Koppe, paid separate courtesy calls on Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P. Chet Greene, on Thursday. *Story on page 5.*

Local News



WIOC reports profit, growth and a bright future

The West Indies Oil Company convened its first Annual General Meeting on Thursday since going public just over two years ago with the Chief Executive Officer, Gregory Georges assuring shareholders that they made a good choice to invest in the company.

Scores of shareholders attended the AGM in person at the John E. St. Luce Business Centre on Factory Road or online by virtual connections. The company went public in March 2021 and more than nine hundred and fifty individuals and institutions took the opportunity to purchase shares.

Reporting on the financial year that ended on December 31, 2022, Georges used graphs to show that the company's profits have been growing since the



government's take-over in 2015. He noted that growth has remained constant except for the COVID-19 pandemic years. Between 2021 and 2022, profits increased by over one million dollars.

He revealed that the company made a strategic decision to diversify its operations several years ago and to turn to storage as a source of revenue. He added that this decision proved to

be a sound one as during the pandemic when revenues in other sectors fell, it was the revenues from the storage that helped keep the company afloat.

"We did not have to lay off a single worker. We did not have to cut anyone's salary. That was because of the decision to diversify. We have a high retention rate as practically all of our workers we had during the

pandemic remained with us, even today," he disclosed.

Looking ahead, Georges said the company will continue to invest in additional storage capacity and that it plans to manage the transition from fossil fuel to renewables. Contrary to what some may think, the CEO assured the shareholders that renewables are no threat to the existence of WIOC.

"In fact, we are looking to set up a solar farm to produce electricity for APUA and we are working along with the Environment Division on a number of initiatives that will secure growth into the future. I assure you, the transition to renewables is no existential threat to WIOC, if anything, it opens up a world of possibilities," he declared.

He said the company will continue to invest in its staff and invest in safety as these are critical areas to the success of the organization.

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Barbudans advised not to engage in unlawful acts

A stern warning has come from the Minister of National Security and Attorney General, Steadroy Benjamin, asking the people of Barbuda not to allow themselves to be drawn in to commit illegal acts.

The Security Minister was responding to reports from Codrington which alleged that members of the Barbuda Council had been telling the people on the sister island to occupy any lands they desire and to fence these lands as their own. Under the circumstances, the Council is reported to have indicated that it will issue certificates to these individuals.

However, the Attorney General stated that such acts would be illegal and that the members of the Council



Minister of National Security and Attorney General, Steadroy Benjamin

who may have been encouraging the people of Barbuda to commit such acts are encouraging Barbudans to break the law.

“The members of the council are

fully aware that the Privy Council gave a ruling that all lands in Barbuda belong to the crown and that the council has no right to be asking people to occupy lands. This is wrong, it is malicious and misleading and we as a government will not shirk from our responsibilities to uphold the law,” he warned.

He reported that an investigation is currently underway to determine what was said by the council member in question and based on the findings of the investigation, the government will take appropriate action.

According to the Attorney General, there will be no countenance of any acts to incite lawlessness or any disturbance of the public peace.



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Australia offers support for the MVI being promoted by SIDS

The new Australian High Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda, Sonya Koppe, paid separate courtesy calls on Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Foreign Affairs Minister, E.P. Chet Greene, on Thursday.

During a brief discussion on the new Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index, the new method to gauge a country's economic vulnerability regardless of what its Gross National Income may indicate, the High

Commissioner said her country has concerns about what is happening in many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly those in the Pacific.

"One of the things we are concerned about, is the lack of good paying jobs in the SIDS particularly in the Pacific and we are wondering if that is the same here in the Caribbean?" she queried.

High Commissioner Koppe said Australia would like to see the MVI adopted by the end of the year with mechanisms for it to change, as conditions change. "We see it as an instrument that can be fluid and can be changed over time. We don't want it set in concrete because if it is set in

cont'd on pg 6



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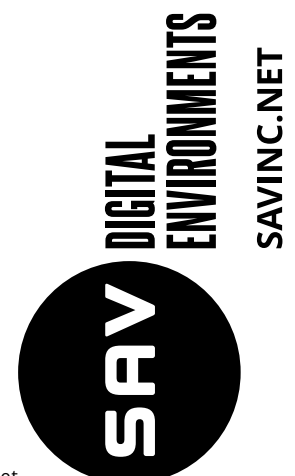
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Local News



cont'd from pg 5

concrete it will not do what it is supposed to do. We see it as a dynamic instrument.”

PM Browne agreed with the High Commissioner’s comments noting that the MVI, when adopted, will address her concerns.

The PM welcomed and hoped that



she would utilize her office to deepen and strengthen the existing relations between our two countries. “It’s a living document and future iterations will address those situations. One of the outcomes we planned for the SIDS conference in Antigua and Barbuda next year, is the development of a Centre of Excellence that will focus on the collection of data, reliable data. We are thinking of establishing data hubs and these will help build capacity and deal with the issue of high-paying jobs for our people,” he declared.


PM Browne noted that several areas of cooperation can be further explored bilaterally, particularly in investment and trade, and further noted that Australia has also been an integral partner with CARICOM, exhibiting their commitment to collaborate on various issues, such as those related to climate change.

During her courtesy call on Foreign Affairs Minister Greene, both engaged in a brief discussion on cricket



during which Minister Greene noted that “sports is a pivotal area that cements people-to-people exchanges between our countries.”

He also thanked the Australian government for its role in the ongoing MVI initiative.



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Press Release
For Immediate Release
September 28, 2023

Relocation of N.S.W.M.A Headquarters

The National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) wishes to advise the General Public that the Headquarters located on Sir George Walter Highway will be relocating. Our last business day at the Headquarters will be Friday September 29th, 2023.

The new Headquarters will be in the Sealy Building on Sir George Walter Highway.

To facilitate this move, our Headquarters will be closed for business from Monday October 2nd- Thursday October 5th, 2023 and will reopen to the public on Friday October 6th, 2023 from 8:00am-3:00pm

For further information please feel free to contact the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) hotline at (268) 562-1347.

For updates please follow our social media pages:
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For any further information I can be contacted at 723-7054

Juan V. Dominguez
 Juan Valentin Dominguez De Los Santos

Antigua and Barbuda represented at the Global Experts meeting

The 10th Session Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development, was convened on 27–28 September 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting was held under the auspices of the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Antigua and Barbuda's Director for International Trade, Joy-Marie King, who was among the participants at the meeting.

King reported that the gathering of experts critically assessed the recent developments, challenges, and opportunities in sustainable economic diversification. Specifically, the areas addressed were:

Developing countries diversifying their economies towards sectors with lower carbon emissions; and

The policies, instruments, and institutional reforms needed at the national



Antigua and Barbuda's Director for International Trade, Joy-Marie King

and international levels to promote more sustainable diversification and innovation.

King who also oversees the country's move to implement the SDGs and also serves as the UNCTAD Focal Point within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided further insights into the discussion held over the past two days. According to King, "a major takeaway is

the fact that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will provide small states like ours with the opportunities of achieving sustainable economic diversification and innovation."

For Example, she noted, "SDG 9-Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure purports building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and supporting innovation. It is a proven fact that industrialization positively correlates with SDG progress, and the industry has the tremendous potential of bridging the digital divide plaguing small states because of its high innovation content."

King is of the view that the time has come for the designing of a national industrial policy that is SDG-oriented; supports public-private coordination; is future-ready/propelled by digitalization; context-based and addresses regional priorities, challenges, and opportunities.

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Several schools to participate in African Culture and Heritage Expo

The Antigua Barbuda Reparations Support Commission (ABRSC) will host the African Culture and Heritage Exposition on Friday in various schools across Antigua. This second annual exposition is a vital component of the Commission's Africa-CARICOM Day celebration activities, which commenced on September 7th.

According to Ambassador Dorbrene O'Marde, Chairman of the ABRSC, "This initiative encourages

our schools to develop activities focused on African culture and heritage, providing our children and young people with meaningful knowledge about the African continent. The program, initially piloted in Jamaica, is part of a regional effort to dispel misconceptions and misinformation that many of our people hold about Africa."

During the exposition, participating schools will stage ceremonies dedicated to celebrating selected countries such as Ghana, Kenya,



South Africa, or Ethiopia. The emphasis will be on aspects such as location, capi-

tal, population, national and official language(s), political leadership, cuisine, music, cultural expressions, national flag, motto, and anthem.

The exposition follows a series of activities held throughout September to celebrate the regional day of recognition. On September 7th, the Commission hosted a compelling panel discussion titled "YOUTH AND REPARATIONS," featuring renowned poet and reparations advocate Cyndi Celeste from Barbados, alongside Kamalie Mannix, President of the National Youth Parliament Association and History Teacher, CARICOM Youth Ambassador Esquire Henry, and moderated by Regis Burton.

Following the panel discussion, the ABRSC hosted an engaging evening of Creative Activism, where a collective of poets, artists, and musicians illuminated the power of creative arts as a tool for positive change.

cont'd on pg 9



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Mothers discuss breastfeeding at seminar

Several mothers along with their infants and partners were part of a one-day seminar hosted by the Ministry of Health with support from UNICEF.

“The session saw close to thirty mothers, their infants, and supportive fathers coming together to

share their experiences and challenges, related to their breastfeeding experience.

“The discussion focused on whether the experience of breastfeeding was successful and what can be done to improve it,” a statement from the Minister of Health revealed.

It said another part of the discussion focused on whether mothers exclusively breastfed their infants and the reasoning behind their decision.

The ministry release said it also addressed the introduction of other feeds such as formula and the benefits

derived from breastfeeding their infants and by extension, the family.

“The session also focused on myths the parents have heard about breastfeeding e.g. that it pulls down your breast: is less attractive to their partner etc. and from whom?”

“Another important focus area for the group was if the workplace and daycare centers supported breastfeeding,” it noted.

The session concluded with views on how the Ministry can increase the level of support offered to breastfeeding mothers.

cont'd from pg 8

As part of the annual Africa-CARICOM Day celebrations, the ABRSC also presented the debut of “Creative Voices,” an evening dedicated to poetry, spoken word, songs, and jazz music, featuring celebrated artists performing for a captivated audience.

The inaugural Africa/CARICOM Summit held on September 7th, 2021, resulted in a historic decision to institutionalize collaboration between Africa, CARICOM, and the diaspora. This was accomplished through the establishment of Africa-CARICOM Day on September 7th each year, the creation of a dedicated Secretariat/Structure, and the organization of annual Africa-CARICOM Summits.

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Opinion



Guyana-Venezuela: the path to peaceful resolution

By Sir Ronald Sanders

Recent intimidatory and aggressive statements issued from Venezuela in the name of President Nicolas Maduro, the Government of Venezuela and the National Assembly concerning Guyana, have raised alarms in the regional, hemispheric and international community.

The Commonwealth, the Organization of American States, and CARICOM have objected to Venezuela's behaviour toward Guyana, particularly as the Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro alleges, without any substantiation, that the Guyana Government is allowing the United States of America (US) to construct a military base on its territory "against Bolívar's Venezuela".

In a UN statement, the Guyana Government rejected Venezuela's allegation, stating that "this all derives from Venezuela's grotesque claim to two-thirds of Guyana".

Historical Context

The background to these events is that in 1899, Venezuela agreed to an international arbitration that established the boundaries between Guyana and Venezuela as a 'full, final, and perfect' settlement. However, in 1962, just as Guyana was on the brink of gaining independence, Venezuela reversed its longstanding acceptance of the 1899 settlement. Without providing any evidence, the government claimed that the settlement was nothing more than a covert political agreement that infringed on its rights.

Based on this unfounded allegation, Venezuela has staked a claim to two-thirds of Guyana, specifically the Essequibo region. This claim, together with intermittent acts of belligerence by Venezuela including its naval

forces, have cast a shadow over Guyana's economic development for all 57 years of its independence, deterring investors and causing instability in the country.

In February 1966, three months before Guyana's independence from Britain, representatives from Venezuela, Britain, and Guyana convened in Geneva. There, they signed an agreement endorsed by the governments and parliaments of all three nations, aiming to resolve 'the controversy'. This agreement outlined several steps towards resolution, including a provision for the UN Secretary-General to select a means of resolution as specified in Article 33 of the UN Charter. This process is articulated in Article IV of the 1966 Geneva Agreement which Venezuela fully endorsed.

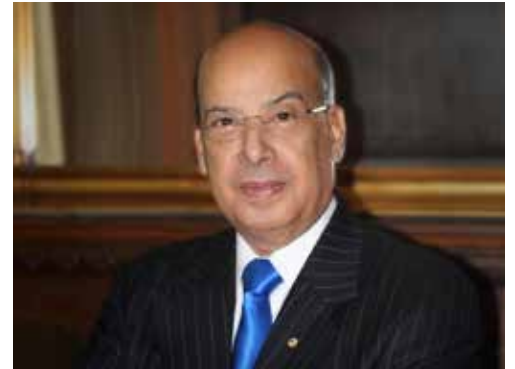
Therefore, after the failure of initial resolution steps, UN Secretary-General António Guterres decided on 30 January 2018 that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) would be the avenue for resolution.

The path of peaceful resolution

Accordingly, in March 2018, Guyana applied to the ICJ for judicial adjudication.

In response, Venezuela refused to recognize the ICJ's jurisdiction, abide by its decisions, or participate in its proceedings. This response was a direct infringement of Article 93 of the UN Charter, which clearly states: "All Members of the United Nations are ipso facto parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice".

However, the ICJ adjudged that it had jurisdiction to hear the case. Venezuela appeared twice before the Court to object. On both occasions, the Court rejected the Venezuelan objections. Therefore, the case has contin-



Sir Ronald Sanders

ued much to the disquiet of Venezuela which has clearly always been fearful of the Court's decision.

The hostile path

In 2020, Guyana started producing and selling oil and gas offshore, boosting its economy. The IMF declared Guyana to be the fastest growing economy in the world with GDP growth of 62.3% in 2022 and 59% in the first half of 2023.

In the wake of these spectacular riches, an immediate response was sparked from the Venezuela government when, on 13 September 2023, the Guyana President, Irfaan Ali, updated the public on bids for 14 new offshore oil blocks, which had been opened for exploration and development. Ali said that immediate bids on 8 of them had been received from oil giants such as ExxonMobil, Hess Corporation, China National Offshore Oil Corporation and Total.

On 19 September 2023, the Venezuela government described the bidding process as "illegal" and issued a "warning" to all the participating companies that it would "apply all necessary measures to prevent the illegitimate exploitation of the natural resources that belong to our nation".

This was followed by the unsubstantiated allegation on 23 September

cont'd on pg 11

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2023 at the UN General Assembly that the US is seeking “to establish a military base in the contested territory, with the aim of creating a spearhead in its aggression against Venezuela and consolidating the plunder of our energy resources”.

Attempt to divide CARICOM

In an open message, posted on his X page, Maduro proposed that Guyana should abandon the process at the ICJ for “a meeting promoted by CARICOM to retake the Geneva Agreement of 1966”. It is a misleading proposition because it is clear, from even a cursory reading of the Geneva Agreement, that Guyana has followed its terms to the letter.

President Maduro had previously sought, unsuccessfully, to divert CARICOM from supporting the ICJ process. He has not succeeded in this further attempt. Although many CARICOM governments are friendly with the Maduro Government and have urged the US to drop sanctions against

it, on 22 September 2023, CARICOM publicly supported Guyana’s sovereignty and right to develop its resources.

Promoting Nationalist Venezuela sentiment

On 21 September 2023, Venezuela’s National Assembly, decided to arouse nationalist sentiment at the urging of the government. It decided to hold a referendum on the claim to Essequibo “so that the people strengthen the defence” and “the inalienable rights of Venezuela”. It is a referendum hardly worth holding since, in furtherance of their unsubstantiated claim, for 61 years successive Venezuelan governments have indoctrinated their people from primary school in the belief that Essequibo belongs to Venezuela.

When the Venezuelan political parties met in Mexico in August 2021 in one of the failed attempts to find a way out of the many political, economic and humanitarian challenges that the country faces, the only thing on which they could agree was the claim for the

Essequibo.

International Involvement and Response

In the wake of all this, the international community has made its position clear: it favours ICJ adjudication as the appropriate and peaceful means to settle the controversy, adhering to the Charter of the UN and international law.

This resolution path not only serves justice but also underpins the stability and development prospects of both Guyana and Venezuela, fostering an environment where mutual respect and cooperation can flourish.

(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda’s Ambassador to the United States and the Organization of American States. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are entirely his own. Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronald-sanders.com)



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Actor who played Prof. Dumbledore in 6 'Harry Potter' movies, dies

Veteran actor Michael Gambon, who was known to many for his portrayal of Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore in six of the eight "Harry Potter" films, has died, his publicist said Thursday. He was 82.

A statement by his family, issued by his publicist, said he died following "a bout of pneumonia."

"We are devastated to announce the loss of Sir Michael Gambon. Beloved husband and father, Michael died peacefully in hospital with his wife Anne and son Fergus at his bedside," his family said.

No matter what role he took on in a career that lasted more than five decades, Gambon was always instantly recognisable by the deep and drawling tones of his voice. He was cast as the much-loved Dumbledore after the death of his predecessor, Richard Harris, in 2002.

He once acknowledged not having read any of J. K. Rowling's best-selling books, arguing that it was safer to follow the script rather than be too influenced by the books.

That didn't prevent him from embodying the spirit of Professor Dumbledore, the powerful wizard who fought against evil to protect his students.

Although the Potter role raised Gambon's international profile and introduced



British actor Michael Gambon arrives in Trafalgar Square, in central London, for the world premiere of "Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows: Part 2," the last film in the series, on July 7, 2011. Gambon, who was known to many for his portrayal of Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore in six of eight "Harry Potter" films, died. He was 82. A statement by his family, issued by his publicist on Thursday, September 28, 2023, said he died following "a bout of pneumonia." (AP Photo/Joel Ryan, File)

him to a new generation of fans, he had long been recognised as one of Britain's leading actors. His work spanned TV, theatre and radio, and he starred in dozens of films from "Gosford Park" to "The King's Speech" and the animated family movie "Paddington." Gambon was knighted for services to drama in 1998.

Born in Ireland on October 19, 1940, Gambon was raised in London and originally trained as an engineer, following in the footsteps of his father. He made his theatre debut in a production of "Othello" in Dublin.

In 1963 he got his first big break with a minor role

in "Hamlet," the National Theatre Company's opening production, under the directorship of the legendary Laurence Olivier.

Gambon soon became a distinguished stage actor and received critical acclaim for his leading performance in "Life of Galileo" directed by John Dexter. He was frequently nominated for awards and won the Laurence Olivier award 3 times and the Critics' Circle Theatre Awards twice.

A multi-talented actor, Gambon was also the recipient of four coveted British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards for his television work.

He became a household

name in Britain after his lead role in the 1986 BBC series "The Singing Detective," written by Dennis Potter and considered a classic of British television drama. Gambon won the BAFTA for Best Actor for the role.

Gambon was versatile as an actor but once told the BBC of his preference for playing "villainous characters." He played gangster Eddie Temple in the British crime thriller "Layer Cake" — a review of the film by the New York Times referred to Gambon as "reliably excellent" — and a Satanic crime boss in Peter Greenaway's "The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover."

He also had a part as King George V in the 2010 drama film "The King's Speech." In 2015 he returned to the works of J.K. Rowling, taking a leading role in the TV adaptation of her book "The Casual Vacancy."

Gambon retired from the stage in 2015 after struggling to remember his lines in front of an audience due to his advancing age. He once told the Sunday Times Magazine: "It's a horrible thing to admit, but I can't do it. It breaks my heart."

The actor was always protective when it came to his private life. He married Anne Miller and they had one son, Fergus. He later had two sons with set designer Philippa Hart.



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Dominica government announces gun and ammunition amnesty

CMC - The Dominica government Thursday announced a month long gun and the illegal possession of ammunition amnesty ahead of going to parliament and significantly amending the legislation allowing for stiffer penalties for gun related crimes.

National Security Minister Rayburn Blackmoore told a news conference that the amnesty would begin next month and the proposed legislative changes would also allow for persons to be denied bail while awaiting trial on gun charges.

“A gun and ammunition amnesty will commence on the first of October, 2023 and end on the 31st of October, 2023,” he said, recalling that such an amnesty had been offered in 2007.

He said based on the current situation he felt the need to propose that another gun and ammunition amnesty “be offered to the nation for a short period.

“Let me just say that a gun and amnesty programme is a period for non-prosecution that allows people to surrender their illegal firearms or unregistered firearms without fear of legal jeopardy or being charged or prosecuted.

“This amnesty there-



fore is directed to distinct set of people. Firstly, those who know that they are in possession of illegal firearms or ammunition and secondly, those who are perhaps innocent custodian of a weapon, component or ammunition and possibly even unsure as to its legal status but are too frightened to do anything about it.

The National Security Minister, flanked by Police Commissioner, Daniel Carbon, said the illegal firearms and ammunition could be surrendered at any police station.

He said following the amnesty period, the Roosevelt Skerrit administration would go to Parliament to amend the existing legislation.

“Once this (amnesty) period has expired the government will go to Par-

liament and it will significantly strengthen out gun and bail act.

“Close every loophole (and) thereafter if you are found with an illegal firearm or ammunition you will go to jail for a minimum of five years.

“If you use an illegal firearm thereafter to hurt somebody...or God forbid kill somebody, you will wait in jail until the trial date of the case,” Blackmoore said.

He said when the government had repealed the Firearms Act in 2011 the intention of the Parliament was clear.

“Penalties must significantly increase,” he said.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Skerrit urged Illegal firearm holders to turn in their firearms to the police after the is-

land recorded 12 murders so far this year..

“The police are taking a zero tolerance to these things and I want to urge people who have illegal firearms to make a way in getting it to the police. The police can facilitate you in getting it to them.”

Skerrit said the police have been working with some groups to get the illegal firearms off the streets.

“I have said to many people that when you have a firearm you always run the risk of using it and when you sell it you will be selling it to someone who will come back and kill you, or kill your mother, or kill your brother,” Skerrit said, adding “and so, the possession and the trading of firearms is not for a country like Dominica. It is too small for this.”

Suriname is hoping to reach settlement with China over debt

CMC - Suriname is hoping to reach a settlement with China over its outstanding debt to the Asian country even as the Dutch-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM) state looks to Beijing for financing of projects in the future.

“Based on our strategic cooperative partnership and long-standing bond of friendship, our government is confident that our countries will soon reach a mutually agreed debt restructuring agreement,” President Chandrikapersad Santokhi told a ceremony on Wednesday night, marking 74th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

Last week, Santokhi said in New York that Foreign Affairs Minister Albert Ramdin would travel to China in November to seek to find a solution to the debt situation.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Paramaribo a year ago made an offer to re-negotiate the US\$545 million it owes China.

Santokhi, speaking at the Chinese Embassy, said that Suriname aims to establish cooperation in other areas as quickly as possible with Chinese financing based on the national development plan 2022 – 2026.

Chargé d’Affaires at the



Chinese Embassy, Jia Jinyi said that China is willing to continue to strongly support Suriname, “and we look forward to taking our cooperation to the next level”.

He said that the Chinese support is in the context of several international large-scale projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in more than 150 countries and international organisations.

The Chinese diplomat said that China is convinced that Suriname’s economic future will improve given the recent “good news” within the oil sector.

Santokhi said that his administration will continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship with China based on trust and mutual respect, both at bilateral and

multilateral levels.

Jia said that political exchanges between China and Suriname have become closer this year and that “the leaders of both countries have exchanged letters, further deepening strategic mutual trust and political guidance.”

Jia said economic and trade exchanges have also become more frequent, referring to the Suriname-China Investment Coordination Committee to facilitate Chinese investments in Suriname.

The pilot project of direct shipping between the two countries has already been deemed a success and the sixth cargo ship will soon leave the Chinese port of Tianjin for Paramaribo.

“As the world’s second-largest economy, the largest manufacturing country, the largest commodity

trader and the holder of the largest foreign exchange reserves, China’s economy remains resilient, with great potential and vitality,” Jia said, adding that the fundamentals of China’s positive long-term economic outlook remain unchanged.

The diplomat referred to the World Economic Outlook Report which indicates that China’s contribution to global economic growth is expected to reach a third this year.

“China is determined to deepen reform and opening-up and provide new opportunities for the development of the world with its new achievements on China’s path to modernization.”

In the field of education, Jai said 10 scholarships were provided in the past year and more than 200 Surinamese officials participated in training in China.

Gaza-Israel tensions spiral amid closures and clashes

In the dark after midnight, it was like rush hour in the northern Gaza Strip.

Thousands of Palestinian workers had heard that Israel was to open its side of the Erez crossing at dawn after 12 days of closure in response to renewed violent protests by the separation fence with Israel in the east of the impoverished territory.

It was the news that Amjad Hassan, a builder who is the sole breadwinner for 13 relatives had been praying for. "We work on a daily wage, if we don't work, we don't feed our families," he explained.

A father-of-five, Nabil said the crossing closure had been "the greatest disaster" for him, as he accrued a large debt to the middleman who had arranged his Israeli permit while he was unable to work to pay it off. He had feared losing his coveted permit altogether.

Some 18,000 Gazans are currently authorised to work in Israel, giving them respite from the dire economic situation at home. Dramatic photographs showed many waiting at the crossing point overnight. Some slept in corridors, on the floor, even on a baggage scanner in a reception hall belonging to Hamas, the Islamist militant group which governs Gaza.

After a period of relative calm in Gaza, demonstrations restarted along its boundary



A Palestinian worker waiting to cross into Israel sleeps inside a scanning machine at the Erez crossing.

fence earlier this month, with hundreds of young Palestinians turning out most days to confront Israeli soldiers. The rallies have been approved, even encouraged, by Hamas.

Protesters have burnt tyres, thrown stones and explosive devices, and released incendiary balloons and kites into southern Israel, which have set fire to farmland and scared Israeli communities living nearby. Some have shot at soldiers, the Israeli military says. It has responded with tear gas and live fire.

One Palestinian at the fence was shot dead by Israeli forces and on another occasion, six were killed, apparently by a malfunctioning Palestinian explosive device.

At one point earlier this week, the Israeli military responded to what it called the "violent riots" using a drone, helicopter, and tank to hit several targets in Gaza, including Hamas militant posts. There were no reports of any casualties.

Hamas says that young

Palestinians have organised events in response to the tough living conditions in Gaza, which has been under a tight Israeli-Egyptian blockade for the past 16 years, since the group took over the territory. It suggests they have also been motivated by Israeli actions in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem told the BBC that it was "a unified picture of a national struggle in all arenas".

For Omar Shaban, a political economist in Gaza, it is no surprise to see young people turning out by the perimeter fence.

"The situation in Gaza is boiling," he says. "People who go to the border are frustrated by the lack of opportunity. Two thirds of Gazans are aged under 30, who don't have jobs and they can't travel and so they express their anger."

However, for many Palestinians the demonstrations bring back painful memories

of the Hamas orchestrated weekly mass protests between 2018 and 2019, known as the "Great March of Return".

Back then, Israeli snipers killed more than 300 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry. Thousands more were injured - with hundreds losing their limbs after being shot. Israel's military said it opened fire at people trying to infiltrate its territory.

On TikTok, powerful videos have been put up by Gazans who were maimed in the earlier rallies and are now urging young people not to go to the new ones.

One amputee claims he was deceived by the organisers five years ago. "Whenever they feel that people are against them, they rush to send them to the border to vent their anger away from them," he says. "We have nothing in this country. They are the ones making money and we are losing our limbs."

With the renewal of the protests, albeit on a small-scale, there is a perception that Hamas has been trying to distract attention from its own economic woes but also to gain leverage in indirect talks with Israel, being led by Egypt, Qatar, and the UN.

A senior official, familiar with the negotiations, told the BBC that ahead of the Erez crossing (also known as Beit Hanoun) opening for Palestinian workers, an agreement

cont'd on pg 17

Gunman kills three in twin Rotterdam shootings - Dutch police

Dutch police have arrested a gunman who killed at least three people in twin shootings in the city of Rotterdam.

They say the male attacker, 32, opened fire in a home before setting it alight, then stormed the city's Erasmus Medical Center on Thursday.

He was a student at Erasmus University, which is affiliated with the hospital.

A woman, 39, and her 14-year old daughter were killed in the first shooting. A male lecturer, 43, was shot dead at the hospital.

Footage has emerged showing a man in camouflaged clothing being taken from the hospital building in handcuffs. The motives for the attack were not immediately known.

A security guard who says he was first on the scene told the BBC it was a "shocking" day.

"It was terrible, terrible," he said, visibly shaken and not wanting to give his name.

He said that the gunman had not entered the medical centre through the main en-



Employees were seen running out of the Erasmus Medical Center.

trance. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte wrote in a post on social media: "My thoughts go out to the victims of the violence, their loved ones and to all the people who have been in great fear."

At a news briefing after Thursday's shooting, Rotterdam police officers said the gunman was known to them. He was convicted of animal cruelty two years ago.

The suspect has been named Fouad L., Dutch media are reporting.

The police said there were no indications of a sec-

ond gunman.

As the shooting started at the medical centre, employees were seen running out of the building with patients, some of them on stretchers.

Signs were seen taped to two hospital windows reading: "Room 32. We can't get out!"

Barak, a 27-year-old student from Israel, told the BBC he was in a job interview when the shooting began. When he came out, it was scary with so many sirens and messages.

"We can't believe it was a student like us," he added.

Another student told RTL Nieuws website: "First there was a shooting on the fourth floor. Four or five shots were fired. Then a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the education centre."

Elite police units - including snipers - stormed the hospital, and helicopters were seen hovering over the hospital building.

Before his arrest, the police said the dark-haired tall suspect in combat gear may have been on a motorcycle, and was carrying a backpack, headphones and a handgun.

cont'd from pg 16

was reached to stop the demonstrations for two weeks.

However, there are difficult outstanding issues to resolve as Hamas struggles to balance its practical responsibilities as a governing power in Gaza, in the midst of a deep financial crisis, while sticking to its militant ideology.

Just before the unrest by the fence

restarted, Hamas announced that it was slashing the wages of its civil servants by half. Recently, Qatar, which helps pay the salaries under the terms of previous ceasefire understandings with Israel, has sent less money, for which Hamas blames Israel.

As part of the indirect talks with Hamas, Israel is understood to be offering more economic privileges if the

group freezes its military activities - including carrying out attacks on Israelis in the West Bank.

This follows two shootings last month which killed three Israelis in Hawara and Hebron. On both occasions, Hamas went beyond expressing general support - its usual response - to claim that members of its armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, were responsible.

Sports News

Labuschagne and Head make Australia's World Cup squad

AUSTRALIA (Reuters) - Marnus Labuschagne broke into Australia's 15-member squad for the 50-over World Cup in India at the last possible moment on Thursday on the back of his strong recent form while injured opener Travis Head was also included.

Labuschagne had been left out of the provisional squad, but strong displays in South Africa and the one-day series in India forced his recall.

Head is set to miss Australia's early matches after breaking his hand in South Africa, but was included in place of left-arm spinner Ashton Agar, who was in the preliminary squad of 15 players but failed to recover from a calf injury in time.

Glenn Maxwell is likely to be Australia's second spin option, alongside Adam Zampa, after the off-spinner's career-best four for 40 against India in the third One-Day International on Wednesday.



Australian batsman Marnus Labuschagne. (Getty Images)

Five-time champions Australia begin their World Cup campaign against hosts India in Chennai on October 8.

Australia squad: Pat Cummins (captain), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey,

Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, David Warner, and Adam Zampa.



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The West Indies Women are all smiles after taking a wicket during their practice match against a New South Wales Women's team at Wilson Park in Banora Point, New South Wales, Australia, on Thursday, September 28, 2023. (CWI Media)

West Indies Women start Australian tour with win in practice match

SYDNEY, Australia- The West Indies Women got their tour of Australia off to a winning start with a four-wicket victory over a New South Wales (NSW) Women's team at Wilson Park on Thursday.

Batting first, Karishma Ramharack had the NSW ladies spun tightly in her off-spin web along with skipper Hayley Matthews.

The NSW Women posted 105 for nine off their 20 overs. Skipper Sammy-Jo Johnson was their top-scorer with 28, and Hannah Darlington chipped in with 24.

Ramharack finished with three wickets for 12 runs, and Matthews captured two wickets for seven runs.

Shemaine Campbelle led the West Indies Women's run-chase with the bat, as she posted 33 from 34 deliveries, which included five boundaries.

Skipper Matthews was next best

with 24 off 27 balls. Aaliyah Alleyne with 19 not out and Zaida James with 15 not out, took the visitors home to victory in 17.5 overs.

Head Coach Shane Deitz was pleased with the team's first outing since arriving in Australia four days ago.

He said, "It's good to get the first win on tour. I think we've got a lot of areas we need to improve on... especially getting used to batting on these wickets with some extra pace and bounce.

"Overall, I think we played generally good all-round and it's going to put us in a good position to play on Sunday.

The West Indies will face Australia in the first of three T20 International at the North Sydney Oval in Sydney on Sunday. They will also take on the Aussies Women a three-match One-

Day International Series.

The ODI series against Australia is West Indies' fourth fixture in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-2025 after playing New Zealand, England and Ireland.

Each match provides the West Indies with the opportunity to win valuable points to climb the championship table where they currently lie ninth out of 10 teams.

Following the Australia series, the West Indies Women will have four further three-match ODI series to play over the next two years.

At the end of the cycle, the top five teams in the ICC Women's Championship will book a berth for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in 2025, as well as hosts India.

The remaining teams will have to go through the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier.

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BOE get first win in business basketball league

The Board of Education (BOE) team claimed their first win in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League Competition on Wednesday night.

They notched up their first win in four outings by pulling off a 49-36 victory against reigning league champions Eye Mobile Vision Care in the second game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Jesus Emmanuel scored a game-high 27 points for the Board of Education, while Kevin Pimental converted nine points for Eye Mobile Vision Care.

Health First Pharmacy Fearless Crew recorded their second win in four encounters by snatching a 67-64 victory against H. Wright Promotions in the opening game on Wednesday evening.

Errol Quallis had 19 points, Daysher Samuel scored 13 points, and Ricky Willock sank 10 points for Fearless Crew.



Humroy Wright shot a game-high 24 points, Devorn Benjamin converted 19 points, and Anthony Greer produced 11 points for H. Wright Promotions.

The Business Basketball League will continue

with another double-header at the JSC Sports Complex tomorrow (Saturday).

The Police will take on Health First Pharmacy Fearless Crew in the first encounter at 6:30 pm, and Trimmingham Trucking Enterprises will clash with Richie's Shooterz at 7:30 pm.



*ECCB International
Netball Series*


Sep 30 - Oct 7, 2023

YMCA Sports Complex
Antigua

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Francis Nunes Jr. Memorial Sports Fishing tournament takes place this weekend

Anglers will once again be engaged in friendly competition during the Francis Nunes Jr. Memorial Sports Fishing Tournament and Seafood Festival this weekend.

The annual event will take place at the Falmouth Harbour Marina in Falmouth Harbour on Saturday, September 30th.

A number of boats, including entrants from other Caribbean islands, are expected to participate in the competition, which is organized by the Antigua and Barbuda Sports Fishing Association (ABSFA).

All boats registered in the competition are allowed to leave their home port with a maximum of six anglers on board.

The anglers will start fishing at 7 am and lines are required to stop fishing at 3 pm.

The weigh-in will be conducted from 3 pm to 4:30 pm and the prize-giving will take place at 7 pm.

Cash prizes will also be presented to the anglers with the largest dolphin, tuna, wa-



An angler displays his catch during a previous Francis Nunes Jr. Memorial Sports Fishing Tournament. (Photo courtesy Antigua and Barbuda Sports Fishing Association)

hoo, and kingfish.

The best male, female, youth, and youngest anglers will also be rewarded. There will also be prizes for the champion boat and the champion boat 25 feet and under.

The boat with the highest total weight of all the fish that are caught on it will be declared the champion.

According to the organizers website, "This tour-

namment has a difference; it really is about celebrating family, friends, and great seafood, so bring everyone to enjoy a great time with fantastic food on offer.

"We will have everything from lobster, crab, sushi and whole hog on a spit to fried fish, fungi, and seafood rice. One thing we know is that you won't leave hungry, and don't forget to take some

away.

"The grills are fired up by 2.30 pm with your favourites, so come down and enjoy the food and atmosphere early."

This weekend's event has an added attraction, which will be the GRACE Cook-off Competition at 6 pm. Eight teams of four have 30 minutes to light a fire on a coal pot, prepare and cook their fish, and present the dishes for judging.

To enter a team, you must have four people on your team and notify a tournament organizer by 5:45 pm.

A number of sponsors are partnering with the ABSFA to stage the event. They include Anjo Insurances, agents for Massy United; Falmouth Harbour Marina; Premier Beverages, agents for Cavalier Rum and Oasis Water; and Outdoor World, agents for Yamaha.

Other sponsors are the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Consolidated Marine Services, and Anjo Wholesale, agents for Heineken & Grace Foods.

cont'd from pg 24

scheduled for today, Friday, September 29.

The tournament is a round-robin format, and the 36 matches shall be officiated by four (Umpires Appointment Panel) UAPs and 10 umpires ap-

pointed by World Netball.

Three matches will be contested on the opening day tomorrow (Saturday).

The first match of the tournament will feature the defending champions, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, against the Cayman Islands on Court

1, and St. Lucia will challenge Montserrat on Court 2.

Host Antigua and Barbuda is scheduled to play against Dominica in the last scheduled match on the opening day. Dominica hosted last year's ECCB International Netball Series.

ECCB International Netball Series to shoot off in Antigua this weekend

The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) International Netball Series is scheduled to commence at the refurbished YMCA Sports Complex in St. John's, Antigua, this weekend.

Seven teams from the OECS countries and two guest teams started to arrive in Antigua and Barbuda yesterday to participate in the nine-team competition during the period September 29 to October 8 (travel dates included).

Teams from the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the host country - Antigua and Barbuda - shall compete for the "Gloria Ballantyne Trophy."

Caribbean counterparts Barbados and Cayman Islands will benefit from the opportunity to engage in World Netball (WN)-approved international matches as the two guest teams in the tournament.

The participation by nine countries is indeed a fitting tribute to the ECCB, which has been in existence for 40 years.

According to a press release from the Caribbean



Champions St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which won the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank International Netball Series in Dominica last year. (File photo)

Netball Association (CNA), "On January 19, 2023, the ECCB launched its 40th anniversary year of celebration and implementation, and the Caribbean Netball Association (CNA) is indeed delighted at the best-ever participation by countries coinciding with 'ECCB@40 : A Year of Celebration and Implementation.'"

This year, the ECCB took into consideration the high cost of air travel within the region, and all OECS member countries were generously supported in covering the cost of travel to Antigua.

The level of funding being provided by the ECCB to facilitate the participation of OECS countries in the ECCB International Netball Series is testimony to the ECCB's unwavering commitment to the growth and development of netball in the region.

Since 1991, the ECCB has been supporting netball in the OECS. In appreciation of more than three decades of netball financing, the ECCB will be highly featured throughout the series.

The opening ceremony will begin with the parade

of the participating country teams from the ECCB Office in St. John's to the YMCA Sports Complex tomorrow (Saturday). The ECCB will deliver the keynote address at the opening ceremony.

The customary ECCB Personal Development Session for participating players and officials took place at the Jolly Beach Resort on Wednesday.

The Welcome Reception and Candle Lighting Ceremony, under the auspices of the Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, is *cont'd on pg 23*