

DECEMBER 5 IS 2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION DAY

Story on Page 2



The Calvin Ayre Foundation, the charitable arm of Ambassador Calvin Ayre's business enterprises in Antigua and Barbuda, has made a timely donation to the Department of Youth Affairs to assist with programmes targeting the youth of society. [Story on page 5](#)

December 5 is 2024 Budget Presentation day

Work has begun in earnest on the 2024 National Budget for Antigua and Barbuda.

This time the budget will be presented on December 5, rather than in January as has been the custom of the Gaston Browne Administration.

Reports are that the Cabinet engaged in extensive and fruitful discussions with a team of technical staff from the Ministry of Finance, led by the Financial Secretary, on preparations for the 2024 Budget Presentation.

Foremost in the discussions was an examination of the government's fiscal situation.

At present, the country maintains a tax to GDP ratio of about 16%, but the Caribbean Development Bank recommends that the ratio should be 25%.

According to the reports there is therefore a need to bring the ratio to about 20%.

It is to be emphasized that this will be achieved through a number of approaches, inclusive of greater fiscal discipline through

the reduction of discretionary tax waivers, more robust collection of taxes, and stricter control of government spending. Also, there is a need to ensure social programmes are targeted to those most in need.

One of the largest parts of government expenditure is wages, salaries, and personal emoluments, which is approximately \$38.6 million monthly.

There is therefore a need to ensure wage adjustments are kept in line with the rate of inflation since exceeding this rate can imperil gov-

ernment's ability to meet its monthly obligations, the reported outlined.

Additionally, Cabinet mandated the Ministry of Finance to conduct a study on the Antigua and Barbuda Sales Tax and to make recommendations on ways to improve its effectiveness as a revenue measure.

It is to be emphasized that the government will not be introducing any new taxes, particularly Personal Income Tax (PIT).

All efforts are to be placed into more robust collection of existing taxes.



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Attorney General Hon. Steadroy C. Benjamin to be knighted

The National Honours Committee has accepted a recommendation to bestow a knighthood on Attorney General, Steadroy Benjamin.

At its weekly meeting on Wednesday, members of the Cabinet offered heartiest congratulations to Benjamin on the decision of the National Honours Committee to bestow the honour on him during the upcoming Independence celebrations.

“This knighthood recognizes Benjamin’s immense and outstanding contributions to the nation in the fields of law, politics, sports, and culture. As a lawyer, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General, Benjamin has had a profound impact on the nation’s jurisprudence and has seen the passing and implementation of important pieces of legislation that positively impact the country’s development.

“Moreover, as Minister of Labour, he has been a champion of workers’ rights and for just and fair compensation. To this end, he has presided over increases in the minimum wage, making Antigua and Barbuda among the nations in the Caribbean with the highest minimum wage,” Notes from the Cabinet revealed.

It added that for a number of years, Benjamin has been the sponsor of sports teams in basketball, football, and cricket thus ensuring that the youth can pursue endeavours that contribute to their personal growth and development.

Min. Benjamin has also been an avid supporter of the calypso and steelband movements. The knighthood is therefore justly deserved, and the Cabinet commends his constituents in St. John’s City South for recommending him to the National Honours Commit-

tee for consideration.

Attorney General Benjamin has served in the Parliament for nearly forty years. It is to be noted that only two people, namely the late Father of the Nation, Sir V.C. Bird, and Hon. Sir Robin Yearwood, have served longer terms in the Parliament than Attorney General Benjamin.



Attorney General, Steadroy Benjamin



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Government to retro-fit more schools with air conditioning

The recent announcement that two primary schools have been outfitted with air conditioner units, has prompted a decision by the government to expand

this programme to other educational institutions in the country.

units has been completed in the Urlings and Newfield primary schools. Installation of units is to immediately begin at the Cedar Grove and the Golden Grove primary schools.

There are some schools that require preparatory work before A/C units can be installed and this is to be undertaken as well.

Additionally, departments which provide essential services to the nation will be provided with A/C units in order to improve conditions at work. Work will therefore soon commence on several police stations in this regard.

Notice for Naturalization

Notice is hereby given that **Ruddy Luis Victor** of **Nellie Robinson Street**, Ovals, St. John's Antigua and Barbuda is applying to the Minister of Naturalization and that any person who knows any reason why naturalization should not be granted should send a written and signed statement of facts to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

Notice for Naturalization

Notice is hereby given that **Juan Carlos Mercedes Victor** of **Nellie Robinson Street**, Ovals, St. John's Antigua and Barbuda is applying to the Minister of Naturalization and that any person who knows any reason why naturalization should not be granted should send a written and signed statement of facts to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

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Antigua and Barbuda renews pledge to China's BRI

Antigua and Barbuda has given a ringing endorsement to the Belt and Road Initiative, the key foreign policy platform being promoted by President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China.

The endorsement is contained in remarks made by Health and Environment Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph at the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation now taking place in China.

According to Sir Molwyn, the BRI seeks to usher in a major transformation in the world, as it would place development at the feet of all nations.

He said since it was first launched, it has gone through changes that will benefit all nations equally.

"The BRI has evolved and it has given hope to all nations that prosperity will not be located in only certain geographical areas on our planet; prosperity will become the common experience of all people irrespective of their geography or all nations irrespective of their size," he remarked.

The health and environment minister reaffirmed that Antigua and Barbuda welcomes the bold initiatives as highlighted by President Xi at the opening of the conference.

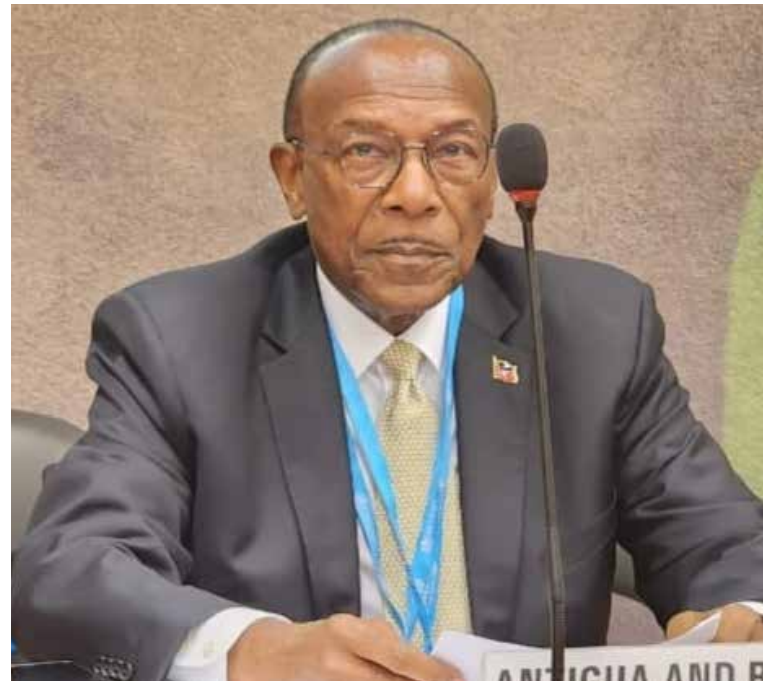
"We welcome these initiatives as they are people

centered, initiatives that will embrace the partnership and solidarity among nations or among the family of nations, the building of platforms that would result in the modernization of all nations, the transfer of technologies, the sharing of experience, and the sharing of wealth. This was the message that was delivered by the president," Sir Molwyn noted.

The senior minister outlined that Caribbean states have been working on models of development that fit their particular circumstances.

He expressed the view that trade among regional states would be strengthened by the plans detailed by President Xi.

Speaking more specifically about Antigua



Health and Environment Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph

and Barbuda, Sir Molwyn explained that one of the major roadblocks to development has been the unavailability of capital for investment.

However, he sees the BRI as a ready source of

capital to jumpstart that development.

"The BRI has brought funding and financial arrangements that allow for greater opportunities for our people.

cont'd on pg 6



Town Hall meeting postponed

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries in partnership with The University of the West Indies (UWI) Five Islands Campus has postponed this evening's town hall meeting planned to update the Five Islands community on the expansion of The UWI Five Islands Campus and the re-

location of the Five Islands Primary School.

Organisers say the reason behind the postponement is the impending weather conditions associated with Tropical Storm Tammy, which formed late yesterday afternoon and is forecasted to impact Antigua and Barbuda on Friday

evening.

"The safety of our community members is our top priority, and we believe it is in everyone's best interest to delay the event," a statement read.

"We apologize for any inconvenience this postponement may cause and appreciate your understand-

ing. We will announce the new date for the town hall meeting as soon as it is confirmed."

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda and The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus have pledged their commitment to working with the community to ensure that the planned expansion work it will undertake, along with the relocation of the primary school are successful.

UWI FIC's expansion will be possible with the allotment of US\$80 million, part of a loan secured by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda through the Saudi Fund for Development.

cont'd from pg 5

"For example, the financial resources that have flowed from China have allowed for the building out of infrastructure to include the new airport terminal and the recent upgrade of the St. John's Harbour," he declared.

He added that the BRI has evolved in another important way; that is the 'greening' of the initiative.

This, he explained is important, as

it seeks to ensure that conditions on the planet that guarantee health and safety of humanity are preserved for generations to come.

Antigua and Barbuda signed the BRI agreement in 2018, becoming the first OECS country, and the second country in the Caribbean (behind Trinidad and Tobago) to join the initiative. More than 155 countries have since signed up to be part of the BRI.



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Calvin Ayre Foundation donates to youth development

The Calvin Ayre Foundation, the charitable arm of Ambassador Calvin Ayre's business enterprises in Antigua and Barbuda, has made a timely donation to the Department of Youth Affairs to assist with programmes targeting the youth of society.

In a media release, CAF said the donation not only covers the purchase of computers, printers, projectors, office stationery and other necessary equipment to execute daily tasks, but also goes towards sponsoring the department's Entrepreneurship Program, slated for January, 2024.

Director of the Department of Youth Affairs, Dr. Jrucella Samuel, says she is filled with gratitude and

appreciation for the generous donation by CAF.

"As you know, an investment in the youth is an investment in our collective future. Thank you once again to the Calvin Ayre Foundation for this generosity.

"Your generosity will empower many young people; help them to pursue their dreams, overcome challenges and make a positive difference in the world."

National Youth Ambassadors, Shaquan O'Neil and Esquire Henry were also in attendance, and expressed similar sentiments.

O'Neil said he believes the donation signifies the start of partnership between the Department of Youth Affairs and the Cal-



vin Ayre Foundation. Henry is particularly happy for the sponsorship towards the launch of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program in January 2024.

"I'm truly looking forward to seeing us get the opportunity to empower entrepreneurs; seeing our youth taking steps to creating new ideas, social programs and implementing businesses."

The DYA's Project and Development Officer, Carolyn Perry, also expressed thanks to the Foundation.

"It is said that hands that give are better than praying lips. We reached out to the Calvin Ayre Foundation and they answered our call and now

we are eternally grateful for their contribution. We can see good things ahead."

Also representing the DYA at the handover ceremony were Senior Program Officer, Sophia Zachariah and Program Assistant, Nekesha Joseph.

Senator Samantha Marshall, who was unable to attend due to another engagement, conveyed her heartfelt thanks.

The Calvin Ayre Foundation (CAF), during a brief handover ceremony on Monday, donated EC\$65,000 to the Department of Youth Affairs (DYA), to assist in their mandate of empowering the nation's youth.

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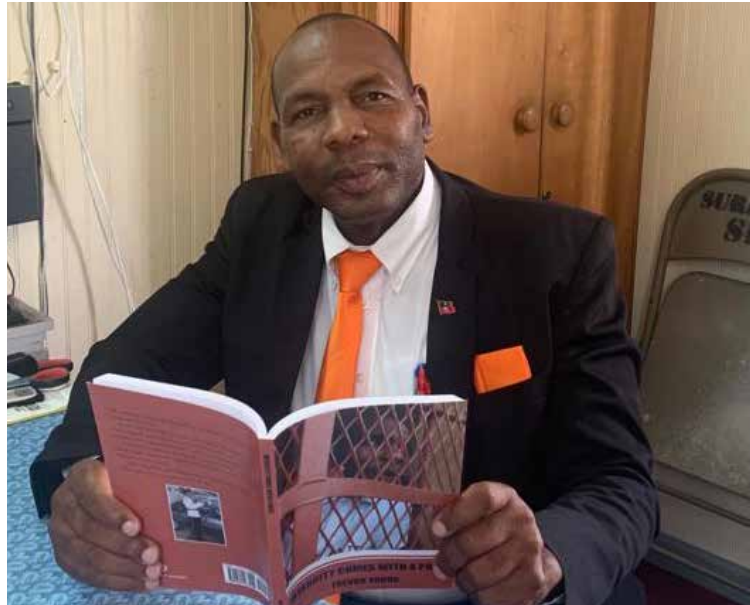
The book “Integrity Comes with a Price” is poised to enter Hollywood

By Trevor Young

I am compelled to begin this article with the lyrics of this old Negro anthem song that I will sing from time to time when the crucibles of life overwhelm me. I began to write this book on the night of the 8th June, 2016, hours after I was bailed after being arrested sometime earlier that day.

On that dreadful day, I went to give support to three UPP parliamentarians in the names of Wilmoth Daniel, Jacqui Quinn and Harold Lovell at the Magistrates’ Court on High Street where they were present for their first hearing after being arrested weeks prior. Hundreds of supporters were present to witness this event also.

I am taken aback to say that these same ungrateful politicians turned their backs on me even before the book was sent off for publishing in the United States of America. The UPP executive made it abundantly clear that I was not worthy to run on their ticket for the 2023 General Election simply because, I am a foreigner and secondly, because I supported Richard Lewis for the party leadership in the 2019-2020 leadership race when he ran against the, “Best Prime Minister that never be,” Harold Lovell. Thank God that what men meant for evil, God turned it around for good. The UPP



Trevor Young

thought that Trevor Young was a finished product.

I was arrested a second time in 2021 and the UPP lawyer who defended me the first time 8/6/2020, refused to show for my bail much less to defend me. It was my political leader, Joanne Massiah who came to my aid and stood by me pro bono until the case was thrown out.

Can you imagine that same UPP lawyer that turned his back on me even refused to sue the government and the police officer who wrongfully arrested me? Every time I called his office to find out why he was not putting in my case, he had some excuse, until one day someone who frequented his office informed me that he saw my file and the case is closed and as a result I went and took my case from that lawyer’s hand. I knew that he did not sue be-

cause he is a Harold Lovell supporter and I then was a Richard Lewis supporter.

To date the book, “Integrity comes with a Price” is poised to enter the halls of Hollywood – obviously as a movie. The book is also a reference book at Harvard University. This University as you know is where seven American Presidents studied to include President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. I am pleased to announce that my book is presently at bookstores everywhere as my publisher, Covenant Books of South Carolina puts it.

I am also delighted to inform the general public that this book that is revered by many is a bestseller at various outlets around the world; for example: Harvard University Barnes and Noble Amazon Midtown Readers

Target

eBay

Hudson Book Sellers

Books on the Square

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Thrift Books and many more

Abe Books

The book can be found in book stores in over 119 countries around the world.

I am very humbled by the description that ABC Books gave of my book and I quote, “this extraordinary book revered as a best-selling title and cherished by readers worldwide, is now being presented in a unique Premium Leather-Bound Edition.”

Last and by no means least, this book attracted the attention of an audio book company in Arizona and as a result, I recently signed on to a fifteen-year contract with Audio Book Network Arizona to convert my written book to an audio book.

I want to thank Covenant Books of South Carolina my publisher for a job well done, my typist Khandi Jones who for long hours, months after months did all the typing. To all the people in Antigua and Barbuda and the diaspora who continue to purchase my book at such a rapid pace thus making it a bestseller, I say thank you and remember, “If you do good in life good will always follow you.” To God be the glory, great things he hath done!



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EMBRACING THE LEGACY, SHAPING THE FUTURE

Technology

Microsoft's new AI assistant can go to meetings for you

By Zoe Kleinman

A ChatGPT-style AI assistant, developed by Microsoft and embedded into its office apps, will become available to all from 1 November, following trials.

Microsoft 365 Copilot can summarise meetings held in Teams for anyone who chooses not to attend.

It can also draft emails, create word documents, spreadsheet graphs, and Powerpoint presentations in moments.

Microsoft says it hopes the tool will eliminate “drudgery” but some worry tech like this will replace workers.

There are also concerns it could leave businesses dangerously reliant on AI-powered assistance.

In its current form, it could also fall foul of new rules governing AI, for failing to make clear when content has not been made by humans.

Both Europe's AI act and China's AI regulations state that people must know if they are interacting with artificial intelligence rather than humans.

Collette Stallbaumer, head of Microsoft 365, said it was up to the individual using Copilot to clarify that.

“It is a tool, and people have responsibility to use it responsibly,” she said.



“I might not be telling you, when I send you that response, that I used an AI assistant to help me generate it. But the human is always in the mix and always in control.”

However, the EU states that it is up to the firms which develop AI tools to ensure they are used responsibly.

I was given an exclusive opportunity to try out Copilot, ahead of its wider launch.

It uses the same tech which underpins ChatGPT, created by OpenAI - a company Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in.

My demo was on the laptop of Derek Snyder, a Microsoft member of staff, because Copilot is embed-

ded into an individual's account, with access to their own - or a company's own - data.

Microsoft says the data is managed securely and will not be used to train the tech.

“You only have access to data that you would otherwise be allowed to see,” said Ms Stallbaumer. “It respects data policies.”

My first impression of Copilot is that it will be a useful tool, but also a formidably competitive colleague for those who do office work - especially within companies looking to make savings.

I watched it confidently summarise in a few seconds, a long chain of emails regarding a fictional product launch.

It then suggested a brief response. We used a simple drop-down menu to make that response longer and more casual, and the Chatbot generated a warm reply, expressing admiration for the ideas proposed and declaring excitement at being involved in the project - although none of us had actually read any of it.

We could then choose to edit the email before sending it, or select the AI-generated copy and send it in its entirety. There was no hint within the email that it contained content from Copilot.

I then saw the tool generate a multiple-slide Powerpoint presentation in around 43 seconds, based

cont'd on pg 11

cont'd from pg 10

on the contents of a Word document. It can use images embedded within the document, if there are any, or it can search its own royalty-free collection. It created a simple but effective presentation - and it also wrote a suggested narrative to read out alongside it.

It did not understand my request to make the presentation more “colourful” and referred me back to manual Powerpoint tools.

Finally, we looked at a Microsoft Teams meeting.

Copilot identified themes and offered summaries of various threads which had run through the discussion. It could also summarise what one particular person had said if required, and in the event of a disagreement, it was able to offer, in a chart format, the pros and cons which had been debated. All of this took a few seconds.

It has been programmed not to answer questions about the performance of individuals in meetings - such as who was the best speaker (or worst).

I asked Mr Snyder whether he thought anyone would actually bother attending meetings, once they realised that Copilot could save them the time and effort.

“A lot of meetings might become webinars,” he joked.

The tech currently can-

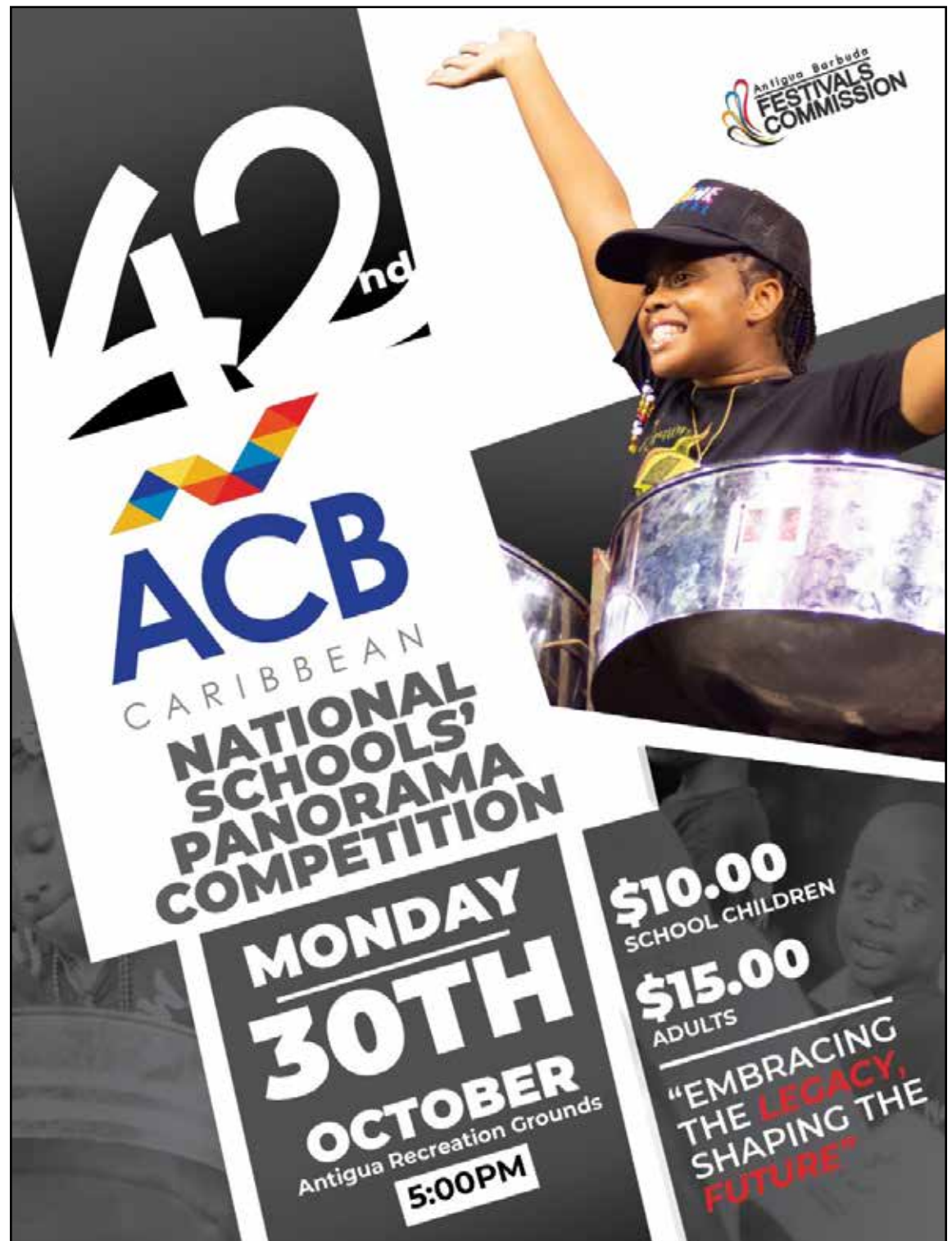
not differentiate between people who are on Teams but sitting together sharing one device, unless they verbally cue each other.

Copilot will cost \$30 per month (which works out at around £25 in the UK). It is internet-connected and does not work offline.

Critics say this kind of tech is likely to lead to a huge disruption in admin-based jobs.

Carissa Veliz, associate professor at Oxford University’s Institute for Ethics in AI, said she was also concerned about people becoming overly dependent on such tools.

“What happens if the tech fails, or it might be hacked? There might be a glitch, or they might institute new policies that you might not agree with. And then, if you’re so hooked on the system that you feel that you can’t do without it anymore, what happens then?” she said.



MI5 head warns of 'epic scale' of Chinese espionage

By Gordon Corera

More than 20,000 people in the UK have now been approached covertly online by Chinese spies, the head of MI5 said.

It comes amid a new warning to tens of thousands of British businesses of the risk of having their innovation stolen.

Ken McCallum was speaking to the BBC at an unprecedented public appearance of the security chiefs of the Five Eyes alliance in California.

The heads of US, UK, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand security agencies appeared together.

They did so for the first time to warn of commercial secrets being obtained by China.

Stanford University in California was chosen as the venue for the first public meeting because it lies in the heart of Silicon Valley. In both public statements and a closed session with entrepreneurs and investors, security chiefs warned that cutting-edge research is being stolen.

"We have seen a sustained campaign on a pretty epic scale," Mr McCallum told the BBC in an interview during the event.

In the past, MI5 focused on protecting government secrets from foreign spies but now the fear



The heads of US, UK, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand security agencies come together.

is that innovation is often stolen from small companies, start-ups and researchers who may not previously have worried about security.

"If you're working today at the cutting edge of technology then geopolitics is interested in you, even if you're not interested in geopolitics," Mr McCallum said.

MI5 is trying to warn tens of thousands of UK companies who are potentially at risk, and doing so requires the security service to go public in a way it has not done before.

Mr McCallum said that MI5 had now seen suspected Chinese agents approach over 20,000 people in the UK over professional networking sites like LinkedIn, in order to try to

cultivate them to provide sensitive information, double the previously reported figure.

In the last year, MI5 has also seen more than 20 instances of Chinese companies considering or actively trying to gain access to sensitive technology developed by UK companies and universities through investments or other means where the full role of China is hidden, often through complicated company structures.

That has included at least two Chinese companies seeking to avoid the scrutiny required under law to access sensitive technology of UK companies undetected.

Another Chinese company is believed to have acquired stolen research data

from a top UK university. And there are thought to be attempts to bypass and undermine the management and regulatory controls at another two top institutions in order to access and influence cutting-edge research.

MI5 and its allies also disrupted the acquisition of a sensitive UK tech company itself linked to UK military supply chains and the supply chains of other major western commercial companies. China has consistently denied accusations of espionage and wrong-doing.

The consequences of research being stolen in cutting-edge fields like Artificial Intelligence are not just for a company's profitability but also for the future of western countries,

cont'd on pg 13

cont'd from pg 12

the head of MI5 warned.

“These technologies are at a historic moment where they are beginning to change our world in some pretty fundamental ways,” Mr McCallum told the BBC.

“And we know that authoritarian states are laser-focused on the opportunities that these technologies may present for them.”

AI, in addition to the data collected by China, could even offer the chance to interfere with politics in a far more effective way, he warned.

Concerns over China were echoed by other members of the Five Eyes alliance.

“China has made economic espionage and stealing others’ work and ideas a central component of its national strategy and that espionage is at the expense of innovators in all five of our countries,” FBI Director Chris Wray told journalists.

“That threat has only gotten more dangerous and more insidious in recent years.”

He said there were more than 2,000 current FBI investigations linked to China and that at one point his organisation was opening a new investigation every 12 hours.

“All nations spy,” Mike Burgess - the head of Australia’s security service - said at the public event featuring the five spy chiefs, “but the behaviour we are

talking about here goes well beyond traditional espionage.” He argued the scale was unprecedented in human history and needed to be called out.

Decoupling western economies from China would be unrealistic and damaging, the security

chiefs argued, and so instead the priority is to identify and protect sensitive areas. Their appearance was timed with the launch of new guidance to reach those who would previously not have had contact with security services.

The meeting took place

in the shadow of events in the Middle East and concerns of increased radicalisation and threats domestically.

“We can focus on more than one thing at one time,” the FBI Director said, describing the threat from China as “existential”.



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- Provides constructive and timely performance evaluations.

Duties/Responsibilities:

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- Evaluates construction plans and materials to be used in construction projects.
- Notifies builders and architects of variances and instances where plans or constructions are out of compliance with codes or regulations; provides general guidance and information on resolution.
- Follows up to ensure that violations are corrected in accordance with codes and regulations.
- Drafts and distributes reports of inspection findings; maintains records of reports and findings.
- Confirms that land usage and construction projects comply with zoning, health, and safety regulations.
- Maintains knowledge of zoning, health, safety, and building codes and regulations.
- Performs other duties as required.

Required Skills/Abilities:

- Extensive knowledge of construction, engineering, and building codes and regulations.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Ability to write clear inspection reports on the condition of properties.
- Proficient with Microsoft Office Suite or related software.

Education and Experience:

- Bachelors degree in Architecture, Construction, or related field
- Five years of related experience required.

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Venezuela takes step towards recognised elections

By **Vanessa Buschschlüter**

Venezuelan government officials and representatives of the opposition have signed an agreement which lays some of the groundwork for presidential elections that will be recognised by both sides to be held.

The government agreed to invite international observers to monitor the election, which has been scheduled for the second half of 2024.

The 2018 election had been widely dismissed as neither free nor fair.

The deal was signed in Barbados.

The agreement constitutes a rare breakthrough after a 11-month hiatus during which talks had stalled.

But analysts point out that it fails to address many of the issues which the opposition had been pushing to have resolved.

There is no mention of a release of political prisoners or the lifting of a ban on a number of opposition candidates vying to run in the 2024 election.

In a joint statement, the US, the EU, Canada and the UK welcomed the agreement, which they described as a “necessary step in the continuation of an inclusive dialogue process and the restoration of democracy in Venezuela”.

But in an indication of the work still ahead, the



The agreement was signed in Barbados by Jorge Rodríguez (left) and Gerardo Blyde.

statement also called for “the unconditional release of all those unjustly detained, the independence of the electoral process and judicial institutions, freedom of expression including for members of the press, and respect for human and political rights”.

The agreement signed on Tuesday contains 12 points, which include promises to give all candidates access to public and private media, and to guarantee their free and safe movement throughout the country.

The two sides have also agreed to update the voter registries, both inside and outside of the country, in order to ensure that the millions of Venezuelans who have emigrated can exercise their right to vote.

But one point, which concerns the eligibility of candidates to stand for the presidency, already appears to have caused disagreement.

The document says that “the registration for the presidential election will be open to all candidates who meet the constitutional requirements”.

The head of the opposition delegation, Gerardo Blyde, said that it could open the door for opposition candidates who have been barred from holding office to “recover their rights”.

But the leader of the government delegation, Jorge Rodríguez, appeared to contradict him, stating that candidates who had been barred from running by the comptroller-general would not be able to stand

in the 2024 election.

The issue is particularly contentious because a number of popular opposition figures have had bans slapped on them by the comptroller-general, who is a close ally of President Maduro.

Among them is María Corina Machado, who is thought to be the favourite to win Sunday’s primary to choose a unified candidate to represent the opposition in the 2024 election.

The 56-year-old former lawmaker has refused to drop out of the race, arguing that if she is chosen as the unity opposition candidate on Sunday, the Maduro government will eventually have to bow to pressure to lift the ban on her.

The government has *cont’d on pg 15*

Belize police believe victims of plane crash were drug smugglers

CMC - Police Commissioner Chester Williams said the identification documents found on the charred remains of two people on-board a plane that crashed soon after it had been stolen showed they were from Argentina and Venezuela.

“We believe that both persons came in illegally because we had checked with immigration and immigration has confirmed that there were no records to indicate that these two individuals came into the country through our legal port of entry,” Williams said, adding that police have received “certain information” after checking with their Venezuelan counterparts.

Williams said he has put together a team of investigators and “we also have members of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) from the (US) embassy assigned to that investigation and they are working with the DEA counterparts in both Argentina and Venezuela to ascertain the type of activities those two individuals may have been involved

in within their respective countries.

“Likewise the Civil Aviation is also a part of that investigation; they are looking to see what may have caused the accident.”

The Cessna Caravan turboprop aircraft was reportedly reportedly stolen by armed thieves in Placencia in southern Belize. But shortly after take-off, the plane clipped a lamp post and crash landed in bushes near mile 21 on Placencia Road.

“Investigation revealed that a security guard who was working at the airstrip was approached by four male persons armed with firearms who tied him up and thereafter he heard the sounds of an aircraft started and then thereafter he heard a loud bang and an explosion,” said Assistant Commissioner of Police, Hilberto Romero, the Regional Commander of the Eastern Division.

Williams says that without a doubt, Belizeans facilitated the theft of the aircraft.



“We still need to ascertain which Belizeans may have been in cahoots with them because certainly they had to have had help locally. And so we are trying to establish which Belizeans may have been in cahoots with them. So the investigation is still ongoing and we are hoping at the conclusion, we will be able to find the answers that we need.”

Williams said that while the security guard had claimed that there were four armed men who accosted him, “surveillance footage from the airstrip (shows), that there may have been as much as eight individuals who went there.

“And yes, they came

in both boats and vehicles. Shortly after the plane took off, the boat and the vehicle was seen speeding off from the area. Like I said, we are still trying to ascertain exactly who those persons are and like I said, we believe that they may be Belizeans who are involved with them.

“It could also be that the boat came directly from Honduras or some neighbouring country and went directly to that area to do what they needed to do in terms of the stealing of that aircraft. So those are things we are still looking at to get to the bottom of this investigation.”

Williams said ‘all indications’ are that the “plane was being stolen to go and do an illicit run, perhaps from South America to Belize.

“They had extra bottles of fuel in the aircraft which suggests that they were going on a long run. So we will see how that turns out at the end of the investigation,” he added.

cont'd from pg 14

not yet officially announced who will be its candidate but Mr Maduro is widely expected to run for another term.

The Maduro government is hoping that Tuesday’s deal will lead to an easing of US sanctions, which were ramped up following his 2018 election win, which the US has described as “illegitimate”.

The US has a vested interest in the cri-

sis in Venezuela easing as the dire state of the economy in the Andean country has driven more than seven million Venezuelans to emigrate, with many heading to the United States.

Venezuela also has the world’s largest proven oil reserves and a scaling back of US sanctions on Venezuela’s oil industry would benefit both countries economically.

Biden backs Israel's account of deadly Gaza hospital explosion

US President Joe Biden has said a deadly blast at a Gaza hospital appears to have been caused by Palestinian militants, backing Israel's account of the incident as he visits the country.

Mr Biden, who landed in Tel Aviv on Wednesday, said he was "deeply saddened and outraged" by the explosion.

Israel's military said it was caused by a failed Palestinian rocket launch.

But Palestinian officials said an Israeli air strike hit the hospital.

During his visit, Mr Biden also announced that Israel has agreed to let humanitarian aid from Egypt into Gaza.

Access to food, water, fuel and power has been blocked by Israel since the conflict began, sparking deep humanitarian concerns.

Israel, the president said, agreed to let the aid in based on the understanding it would go to civilians and not Hamas.

Mr Biden also said \$100m (£82m) in US funding would be allocated to support Palestinian civilians.

Shortly afterwards, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed Israel would not prevent food, water and medicine going from Egypt to the civilian population in southern Gaza.



President Joe Biden was welcomed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, it would not allow any aid to pass through its own territory until hostages being held by Hamas are released. Nearly 200 people have been abducted, Israel says.

Mr Biden's high-stakes visit has been overshadowed by the blast at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital on Tuesday evening, which has further inflamed tensions and sparked protests across the region.

Health officials in Gaza have said almost 500 people were killed in the explosion, which one doctor called "a massacre".

The US president landed in Tel Aviv on Wednesday where he was greeted warmly by Mr Netanyahu, before the pair hosted a joint news conference.

"I was deeply saddened and outraged by the explosion at the hospital in Gaza yesterday," Mr Biden said.

"Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team,

not you," he told Mr Netanyahu. "But there's a lot of people out there not sure so we have to overcome a lot of things."

Mr Biden was later asked by reporters what led him to conclude that Israel was not responsible, and said: "The data I was shown by my defence department."

A senior US official has told CBS, the BBC's US partner, that the US has its own intelligence - in addition to Israel's - that includes communications intercepts and satellite photos which gives it "high confidence" Israel was not behind the strike.

The official said there were "indications" that it was an errant rocket fired by a group in Gaza.

In the news conference, Mr Biden reiterated his support for Israel and condemned the Palestinian militant group Hamas, which launched an unprecedented attack on Israel from Gaza on 7 October that left 1,400

people dead.

But Mr Biden also sounded a warning to Israel not to be "consumed by rage" but to observe the "laws of war".

At least 3,000 people have been killed in retaliatory Israeli strikes on Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials.

Mr Biden had planned to travel from Israel to Jordan to meet King Abdullah, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, but that leg of the trip was cancelled after the hospital blast on Tuesday.

Jordan cancelled the meeting and condemned what it called "a great calamity and a heinous war crime". The White House, meanwhile, said the decision had been "made in a mutual way" and Mr Biden would call Mr Abbas and Mr Sisi on his return flight to the US.

Hamas blamed Israel for the hospital blast, calling it a "war crime". A spokesperson for Mr Abbas, who is based in the occupied West Bank, accused Israel of a "heinous crime".

But the Israeli military said it had proof its forces were not behind the blast and that it was instead caused by rockets misfired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Europe antisemitism: Berlin synagogue targeted as attacks rise

Berlin's Jewish community has been shaken by two petrol bombs thrown at a synagogue amid a spike in antisemitic incidents in some European countries.

Police said two people threw "burning bottles filled with liquid" in what was described as attempted arson.

"We could feel the tensions more and more," said director Anna Segal. She said the community had felt very threatened in recent days.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has expressed outrage at the attack.

Violence broke out elsewhere in Berlin overnight during anti-Israel protests. Emergency services were pelted with bottles, stones and fireworks. Protesters set barricades alight in a number of streets and one demonstration close to the Brandenburg Gate involved 700 people, police said.

The latest attacks came as Lebanon's Iran-backed militant group, Hezbollah, called for a "day of rage" over an explosion at a hospital in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of people are feared dead.

The Central Council of Jews in Germany said "day of rage" was not just a phrase but "psychological terror that leads to concrete attacks". The synagogue also houses a community centre, a kindergarten and high school for 130 children.

Anna Segal told the BBC that the community felt on edge and needed better protection: "We knew it was only a matter of time and it's not the end."

There was little sign of the petrol bombs that burned out in front of the synagogue and Jewish community centre at around 03:45 (02:45 GMT).

Jewish institutions typically have



The Jewish centre in the Mitte area of Berlin has asked for beefed-up security in response to the attack.

ongoing police protection in Germany and reports suggest officers were at the scene when the attack happened.

Hours later, police briefly detained a man who approached the building on a scooter and ran towards the synagogue shouting anti-Israel slogans.

Barriers have been set up around the synagogue and Jewish community centre in the centre of Berlin and officers were positioned along the street.

Last week France and parts of Germany banned pro-Palestinian demonstrations, and Paris police broke up a banned rally in the centre of Paris with tear gas and water cannon. In a ruling on Wednesday France's Council of State, which advises the government on law, rejected an appeal against the ban.

It said local prefects would have to decide on a case-by-case basis, but could not stop a protest purely because of a note from Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin or because a demonstration was pro-Palestinian.

Responding to a spike in antisemitic incidents on Tuesday night, Mr

Darmanin said "nobody will touch a hair of a French Jew without facing a lightning-fast response from the state".

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament on Wednesday that Hamas terror had plunged Israel and the Palestinians into a new spiral of violence.

"We are seeing a rise in antisemitic incidents, including here in Europe. Synagogues have been vandalised. Hate speech and fake news are spreading at worrying speed, and this is something that we simply cannot accept," she said.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak condemned the rise in antisemitic incidents in the UK as "disgusting".

The Community Security Trust, a British charity which has the role of protecting the Jewish community, called on universities to act "swiftly and firmly" against antisemitism and protect Jewish students. The CST said 36 antisemitic incidents had been recorded on campuses between 7 and 16 October.

Sports News



Dredgers win 2023 Taped-Ball League title

The host Dredgers have won the 2023 Taped-Ball League title. Dredgers secured the championship by defeating Pelican Safari VIP by seven wickets in the final at the Dredgers playing field on Tuesday night.

The VIP won the toss and batted first, scoring 93 for eight off their allotted 10 overs. Michael Dover top-scored with 28, which included three fours and two sixes.

Glenton Williams snapped up two wickets for five runs, and Kerry Mentore picked up two wickets for 16 runs.

Dredgers then achieved victory by scoring 95 for three with three overs to spare.

Melvin Charles hammered 33, which included three fours and three sixes. Kerry Mentore chipped

in with 23, which included four fours and a six.

Charles claimed the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the tournament award during a brief presentation ceremony at the end of the final.

Charles also picked up the most runs award. He scored a total of 238 runs.

Demitri Lucas of Pelican Safari VIP won the award for the highest individual score, which was 78 runs.

Kadeem Josiah of Pelican Safari VIP and Glenton Williams shared the award for the most wickets. They each captured a total of 10 wickets.

Egbert Francis of Rackaman Construction Strictly Business took the award for the best bowling figures, which was five wickets for five runs in two overs.



Melvin Charles claimed the MVP award of the tournament. (File photo)

Callan and Richie Shooterz record wins in business league

The Callan Shooters and Richie Shooterz recorded wins in the Cool and Smooth Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Business League on Tuesday night.

Callan Shooters snatched a 60-54 victory over the Sledge O'Ballers in the first game of a double-header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Leroy Percival shot a game-high 23 points, Warren Bogle sank 18 points, and Marlon Davis chipped in

with 14 points for the Callan Shooters.

Coy Quinland produced 15 points, and Kareem Edwards had 12 points for the Sledge O'Ballers.

Richie's Shooterz prevailed 67-52 against the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center in Tuesday's second encounter.

Kwame Brathwaite and Lincoln Weekes each produced 18 points, and Jahmarie Hastings scored 10 points

for Richie's Shooterz.

Delornje Jules sank 17 points, and Nigel Joseph converted 11 points for the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center.

The business basketball league will continue with another double-header at the JSC Sports Complex this evening (Thursday).

The Callan Shooters will face Trimmingham Trucking Enterprises at 6:45 pm, and Sandals will clash with the Police at 7:45 pm.



Team Bahamas goalkeeper Michael Butler holds on to the ball during a match between The Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda in 2023-2024 CONCACAF Nations League at the ABFA Technical Center in Paynters on Wednesday, October 17, 2023.

Antigua and Barbuda draw with Bahamas in Nations League

Antigua and Barbuda's Benna Boys played to a 2-2 draw with the Bahamas in their Group D encounter in League B of the CONCACAF Nations League at the ABFA Technical Center in Paynters on Wednesday.

Nathan Wells scored the first goal of the match in the 5th minute as a Bahamas free kick was poorly defended by the Benna Boys and developed into a second chance opportunity, which was converted by the visitors.

William Bayles nearly extended the lead for the visitors in the 23rd minute on another free kick opportunity for the Bahamas, but Antigua and Barbuda's goalkeeper Zaeiem Scott was able to save the attempt.

Antigua and Barbuda's Javorn Stevens was thwarted in the 39th minute as goalkeeper Michael Butler intercepted the ball to keep the Bahamas from conceding.

But Joshua Parker broke through for

the hosts in the 53rd minute after receiving the ball at the top of the arc and getting the right touch to beat Scott to convert Antigua and Barbuda's equalizer.

Thomas James Bramble then gave Antigua and Barbuda the lead in the 59th minute. Bramble capped off a build-up that started on the left flank by Raheem Deterville.

But Antigua and Barbuda were unable to achieve their second successive win against their opponents, as Nahum Johnson scored an equalizer for the Bahamas in the 82' after getting the finishing touch on a throw-in from Lesly St. Fleur.

Guyana won Group D by securing their fourth win in as many games with a 3-1 win against Puerto Rico at the St. Kitts and Nevis Football Association's (SKNFA) Technical Center in Basse-terre, St. Kitts and Nevis, on Wednesday.

Guyana's Liam Gordon was de-

nied in the 38th minute as Joel Serrano blocked the attempt with his right leg to keep the match scoreless.

But Gerald Díaz struck first as the visitors, Puerto Rico, took the lead in the 41st minute on a long ball from Serrano to surprise the Guyanese defense.

Nathan Moriah-Welsh equalized for Guyana in the 48th minute with an interception on a Puerto Rico clearance straight into goal.

Deon Moore put Guyana in the lead in the 76th minute with a header inside the box. Stephen Duke-McKenna provided the cross for the assist.

Omari Glasgow pounced on a defensive error to score Guyana's third and final goal in the 85th minute, putting the result further out of reach for Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico were reduced to 10 men in the 87th minute as Nicolas Cardona was red-carded and suspended for the next match.

GERM BUSTER

TIPS!

1

WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS

- Before eating or handling food
- After using the bathroom
- After touching pets or animals
- After handling rubbish

2

CATCH YOUR COUGH OR SNEEZE IN A CLEAN TISSUE, AND TOSS IN THE BIN

- Then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer

3

AVOID PUTTING YOUR HANDS IN YOUR EYES, EARS, NOSE OR MOUTH

- Germs spread this way



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AGS get first win in defense of Under-16 Boys league title

Defending champions Antigua Grammar School (AGS) notched up their first win in defense of their title in the Under-16 Boys Division of the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools Football League on Tuesday.

Samuel Brazier scored a hat-trick, while Kevonte Lewis, Jahquanye Joseph, and Jayden Thomas all had conversions as the Antigua Grammar School pulled

off a 6-0 victory against the Jennings Secondary School.

Nashawn Gunthorpes scored five goals to propel All Saints Secondary School to a 7-0 victory against St. Mary's Secondary School.

Jaden Joseph and Kymoni Francis scored the other two goals for All Saints Secondary.

Cody Richards had a double conversion as the Ottos Comprehensive School prevailed 6-1 against the Sir

Novelle Richards Academy.

A Unig Carty's conversion gave Glanvilles Secondary School a 1-0 victory against Clare Hall Secondary School.

The Princess Margaret School also snatched a 4-3 victory against St. Anthony's Secondary School.

The Secondary Schools' Football League will continue with three matches in the East Zone of the Under-20 Boys Division at 3 pm today

(Thursday).

Cup-holders, the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continued Education (AB-ICE), will face Clare Hall Secondary School at the Potters playing field.

Pares Secondary School will take on St. Joseph's Academy at the Pares playing field, and All Saints Secondary School will clash with Irene B. Williams Secondary at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

cont'd from pg 22
ber 5.

She will be managed by former national sprinter Heather Samuel-Daley. Laser boat sailor Jules Mitchell and Antigua and Barbuda's only professional lawn tennis player, Jody Maginley, are the other two athletes selected for the Pan Am Games.

Mitchell will demonstrate his sailing prowess as he competes in the laser boat competition, which is set to run from October 28 to November 5. Maginley will be representing Antigua and Barbuda in the tennis competition, which will take place from October 23-29.

President of ABNOC, E.P. Chet Greene, along with, Secretary General of ABNOC, Cliff Williams, are also attending the prestigious event.

They will participate in various important assemblies such as the Annual Panam Sports General Assembly on October 18-19, and the CAC Games Elective Assembly on October 23.

ABS Television has been selected for participation in the Pan Am Sports Press Support Programme. Terry Andrew and Joel Rayne have been chosen

by ABS Television to represent their media outlets at this esteemed event.

The organizers aim to make these games popular across all countries on the continent by inviting two journalists

from each National Olympic Committee (NOC) so that they can experience this grand sporting event firsthand and share their experiences through their respective media platforms.



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Antigua to showcase talent at 2023 Pan American Games

A team of eight Antigua and Barbuda athletes will participate in the upcoming 2023 Pan American Games, which are set to take place in Santiago, Chile, from October 20 to November 5.

This is the third team of athletes to be chosen by the Antigua and Barbuda National Olympic Committee (ABNOC) to represent the country this year, following successful national teams' participation in the CAC Games held in El Salvador from June 23 to July 8 and the Commonwealth Youth Games held in Trinidad and Tobago from August 4-11.

Leading the delegation as Chef de Mission is Thomas Greenaway, a highly experienced individual with a deep understanding of international sporting events. The eight talented athletes chosen by the ABNOC will compete across various sports disciplines.

Among them is kiteboarding sailor Tiger Tyson, who won gold at the 2022 CAC Beach Games. Tiger will proudly carry his nation's flag as he competes in the kiteboarding competition, which is scheduled for October 28 to November 5.

With his exceptional skills, Tiger stands an excellent chance of winning gold and securing qualification for the prestigious 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France. Tyson's fiercest competition is expected to come from a sailor representing Team USA.

Alston Ryan and Yakita Aska will represent the island in boxing. Ryan will compete in the highly competitive 63.5kg category and aims to surpass



Kiteboarding sailor Tiger Tyson

his previous achievement of winning bronze at the Pan Am Games in 2019.

Aska will compete in the challenging 92kg category, while Rolston Ryan will be the manager of the boxing team.

Swimmers Stefano Mitchell and Noah Mascol-Gomes are also members of the team. These talented swimmers will showcase their skills across various swimming distances during the events scheduled from October 21-25.

Sprinter La Nika Locker, who won bronze in the Commonwealth Youth Games' girls 200-meter event, will be the sole athlete representing Antigua and Barbuda in track and field.

Locker will compete in the women's 200-meter event, which will take place between October 30 and Novem-

cont'd on pg 21



Sprinter La Nika Locker