

OFFICIAL FUNERAL HELD FOR SIR RAMEZ HADEED



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Officers of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda bear the flag-draped casket of Sir Ramez Hadeed, Antigua and Barbuda's longest-serving diplomat, following an official funeral yesterday at the Holy Family Cathedral.

Sir Ramez Hadeed's generosity and philanthropy remembered at official funeral



Veteran diplomat Sir Ramez Hadeed was remembered yesterday as one of the pillars of his family and as a mentor and philanthropist, who dedicated his energies to the development of Antigua and Barbuda through diplomacy that spanned four decades.

Sir Ramez's body was interred at Saint John's Public Cemetery following an official funeral held at the Holy Family Cathedral at

Michael's Mount.

In tribute, Aziz Hadeed spoke of the close bond he shared with his brother from childhood, which continued when they arrived in Antigua and Barbuda in the early 1960s and endured until his older brother's passing. He thanked successive governments and the people of Antigua and Barbuda for embracing their family over the decades.

Nephew, Francis Hadeed said his uncle used his wisdom to serve as a guiding light for the family, adding his entire life was dedicated to service, while being modest and generous.

"He instilled in us the importance of sharing and giving back to the community. This was an essential part of his philosophy from the very beginning and it is a commitment that we intend to follow. Uncle Ramez was a tall figure in modern Antigua and Barbuda in business manufacturing, diplomacy and philanthropy. He loved this country with a passion and served it to the end. It was a service of love, a service that brought him much pride and satisfaction."

Prime Minister Gaston Browne offered words of comfort to the bereaved family, saying, "We know it is a very difficult time for the Hadeed family, but we wish to reassure you that we stand in solidarity with each

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DEWS

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Antigua and Barbuda & Cuba pledge closer cooperation

Antigua and Barbuda and the Republic of Cuba have pledged closer cooperation as Cuba's new resident Ambassador H.E. Sergio Manuel Matinez Gonzalez begins his tour of duty in Antigua and Barbuda.

Ambassador Gonzalez met with Prime Minister the Hon. Gaston Browne on Tuesday, during which he commended the head of government for his leadership on the regional and international stage in the climate change and justice campaign on behalf of Small Island Developing States.

Ambassador Gonzalez also pledged to not only maintain existing relations, but to do his best to improve the near 30-year relationship between the two nations. Antigua and Barbuda and the Republic of Cuba established diplomatic relations on April 6, 1994. The agreement was signed in New York by the then Ambassador to the United Nations and current Chief of Staff in the Office of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Lionel Hurst.

The Cuban diplomat also pledged to expand on trade and economic development to further the bilateral agenda and also to explore cultural exchanges.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne, whose government is credited with expanding the diplomatic relations with Cuba said that his government stands in solidarity with Cuba, particularly in the removal of the financial blockade placed on that country by the United States. He also highlighted that Cuba has been an instrumental partner of Antigua and Barbuda in helping to build human capacity through education and the provision of healthcare personnel. The prime minister also outlined that he will continue to cooperate with

Cuba on international issues such as climate change.

Over the years, both sides have pursued common interests as members of the United Nations, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

Over the past twenty years, Antigua and Barbuda has benefited from the assistance of hundreds of Cuban health professionals, includ-

ing doctors, nurses and lab technicians, who form the Cuban Medical Brigade.

Additionally, the Republic of Cuba has provided hundreds of scholarships to young Antiguan and Barbudans, building capacity at the local level and contributing to skills development and economic growth. Currently, the Prime Minister's Scholarship programme in conjunction with the Government of the Republic of Cuba is offering scholarships for students to pursue medical studies in Cuba commencing in February of 2024. Nine medical scholarships, one dentistry, seven nursing and five specialization scholarships for Cuban trained doctors are available.

The deadline for applications is 19th December, 2023.

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member of the Hadeed family and we hope that the passage of time and certainly the fond memories and as you reflect on the contributions that he made towards nation building, that those will assuage the pain

you feel".

Sir Ramez Hadeed passed away last Wednesday at the age of 80 years. He served four prime ministers and was a leading businessman and chairman of the Hadeed Group of Companies.

Local News



Suspect held in service station robberies

A man who went on a robbery spree yesterday is in police custody and the car he used to commit the crimes has been seized.

The man, who is likely to be charged, stole a mobile phone from a vehicle in Potters, believed to be owned by the supervisor of a supermarket.

The man, who is believed to have acted alone, then targeted Ace Enterprises (Sprugoos Service Station), where he robbed a pump attendant of \$300.

He then made his way to Dee's Service Station at the junction of Old Parham Road and Sir George Walter



Highway, where he again robbed a pump attendant of cash.

Video footage shows the man drove into the service station and turned the car around and brought it to a stop before exiting the driver's seat, pouncing on an

unsuspecting female pump attendant, who it appeared, was walking into the building that houses a mini-mart.

The suspected robber is seen snatching what appears to be the cash bag from the female employee before making good his escape.

Unconfirmed reports are the woman was relieved of approximately \$900.

It was shortly before 1PM when the brazen crime was committed at Dee's Service Station, bringing back memories of the February, 2012, robbery at the same location that claimed the life of a female pump attendant, Dorothy Prince, who was shot multiple times.

Police sources say after exiting the service station, the man abandoned the car in an effort to distract law enforcement officers. However, he was later taken into custody.

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Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems Initiative launched

An Early Warnings for All (EW4ALL) initiative was launched recently during a two-day workshop at St. James’s Club.

A collaboration between the National Office of Disaster Services (NODS), the Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Service and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the EW4ALL is dedicated to disaster risk reduction.

Director of NODS, Sherrod James, expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, emphasizing its timeliness in light of the anticipated surge in severe weather events attributed to climate change. Recognizing the need for a more robust system to disseminate timely information to vulnerable populations, James stressed the importance of “building back better” in the face of evolving threats.

Dr. Jair Torres, Programme Manager at UNDRR responsible for implementing the initiative across several CARICOM countries, while endorsing the workshop, highlighted the diverse participation of local ministries and agencies, expressing excitement about the forthcoming collaborative efforts over the next few months.

The workshop saw the active involvement of representatives from various agencies, including the DCA, the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture’s Veterinary Division and the Immigration Department, among others.

National Technical Consultant behind the initiative, Mali Barnes, said the inaugural workshop marks the beginning of a comprehensive series of activities aimed at fortifying Antigua and Barbuda’s Multi-Hazard Early

Warning Systems.

The initiative aims to enhance the nation’s resilience in the face of a spectrum of hazards, laying the ground-

work for a more proactive and effective response to potential threats.

The initiative is driven by the United Nations.


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NOTICE FROM THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT
DECEMBER 5, 2023

SUBJECT: INTERRUPTION OF SOME SERVICES (WORK PERMIT SUBMISSIONS AND PAYMENT OF FEES)


The General Public is asked to take note of the following:

1. The final date for submission of work permit applications for the year 2023 is **December 15, 2023**. The acceptance of applications will resume on **January 2, 2024**.
2. The final date to make payments for Work Permit Applications, Work Permit Fees, CARICOM Skills Certificate application and CARICOM Skills Certificate verification fees for the year 2023 is **December 28, 2023**. The cashier will resume operation on **January 2, 2024**.
3. All other services will continue as normal.

Your kind attention to the foregoing is anticipated.



 Labour Commissioner



A&B to mark International Migrants Day with activities

A schedule of activities has been planned in observance of International Migrants Day on 18th December, 2023.

The activities will commence on Friday with a panel discussion involving three people who have migrated to Antigua and Barbuda from various countries, at various time periods and have been contributing in diverse ways to their new home. Friday's episode of Conversations on Migration in the Caribbean will be the first in a series that will include migrants and will examine "The Ambition and Ability of Migrants to Contribute to Sustainable Development in Antigua and Barbuda".

Other activities will include a family fun day dubbed "Nations and Celebrations", at the Rising Sun Grounds

from 11 am on Sunday 17th December.

On 18th December, 2023, International Migrants Day, officials will make media appearances.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is collaborating with the International Organization for Migration (IOM-UN Migration) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Antigua to host the activities.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Barbuda Affairs E.P Chet Greene said the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is pleased to be associated with the planned events.

"The Government of Antigua and Barbuda takes great pleasure today in collaborating with the IOM in celebration of International Migrants Day

2023. The fact that we've been chosen as the host for several activities to mark this occasion of and by itself speaks to the extent to which our nation has been significantly influenced, and in a positive way I might add, by the migration experience.

"Just like our native sons and daughters of Antigua Barbuda have had the opportunity to migrate to other lands, so, the Antigua and Barbuda fabric has been tremendously enriched and strengthened by the addition of migrants," Minister Green stated.

International Migrants Day commemorates the creation of the "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and

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Members of Their Families”. The aim of the Government and the United Nations is to make sure that all migrants and their families are properly looked after. The observance is led by IOM as the lead agency on migration in the UN system. IOM’s Co-ordinator for the Caribbean, Patrice Quesada, is excited to be hosting these activities in Antigua.

“Recent research published by the World Bank shows that Antigua and Barbuda have 30 percent of the population defined as migrants. This is an incredible statistic and the country demonstrates what we at IOM believe that well-managed migration can be a solution and actually a pillar for sustainable development in States,” she said.



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Technology



Elon Musk's Tesla recalls two million cars in US over Autopilot defect

Tesla is recalling more than two million cars after the US regulator found its driver assistance system, Autopilot, was partly defective.

It follows a two-year investigation into crashes which occurred when the tech was in use.

The recall applies to almost every Tesla sold in the US since the Autopilot feature was launched in 2015.

Tesla, owned by billionaire Elon Musk, said it would send a software update "over the air" to fix the issue.

The update happens automatically and does not require a visit to a dealership or garage, but is still referred to by the US regulator as a recall.

The UK Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency said it was not aware of any safety issues involving Teslas in the UK, noting that cars sold in the UK are not equipped with all of the same features as cars in the US.

"Teslas sold in the UK market are not self-driving and are not approved to do so," a spokesperson said, adding that the agency would continue to monitor the situation.

Autopilot is meant to help with steering, acceleration and braking - but, despite the name, the car still requires driver input.

Tesla's software is supposed to make sure that drivers are paying attention and that the feature is only in use in appropriate conditions, such as driving on highways.

But the US National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said a two-year investigation of 956 Tesla crashes found that "the prominence and scope of the feature's controls may not be sufficient to prevent driver misuse".

"Automated technology holds great promise for improving safety but only when it is deployed responsibly", the NHTSA wrote, adding it would continue to monitor the software once it was updated.

Tesla did not respond to a request for comment.

According to the recall notice, the company did not concur with the agency's analysis but agreed to add new features to resolve the concerns, including additional checks on turning on the self-driving features.

The recall comes a week after a former Tesla employee told the BBC he believed the technology was not safe.

Lukasz Krupski, speaking after winning the Blueprint Prize which recognises whistleblowers, told the BBC: "I don't think the hardware is ready and the software is ready".

"It affects all of us because we are essentially experiments in public roads", he claimed.

Reacting to the news of the recall Mr Krupski told the BBC it was "a step in the right direction" but pointed out it was not just a problem in the US.

"The hardware is the same in all the Teslas in the



US, China etc.", he said

On Tuesday, Tesla defended the safety of Autopilot in a post on X (formerly Twitter) in response to a Washington Post article.

"Safety metrics are emphatically stronger when Autopilot is engaged than when not engaged" it wrote, pointing to statistics that suggested there were fewer crashes when the system was used.

Jack Stilgoe, associate professor at University College London, who researches autonomous vehicles, said Tesla should have spent more time developing the system in the first place.

"The conventional way of ensuring safety is to check that a car is safe when it leaves the factory", he told the BBC.

But despite this being the second recall this year affecting Tesla vehicles, Susannah Streeter of investment company Hargreaves Lansdown, said her assessment was that it should not check the carmaker's momentum too greatly:

"This recall of 2 million cars on its own is not likely to seriously quash enthusiasm.

The share price has dropped back slightly, but it doesn't look like it'll be hit by a bout of skidding.

"After all, recalls in the car industry are far from unusual and the group also has the financial ability to invest in fixes", she added.

Tesla has heavily promoted the technology in its cars and says remaining at the cutting edge of self-driving is key to its future growth.

Goldman Sachs analysts estimated this month that Tesla's most advanced Autopilot offering, full self driving, could end up generating more than \$50bn a year in revenue by 2030, up from \$1bn-\$3bn presently.

In the US, the full-self driving package costs \$12,000, or a \$199 monthly subscription fee.

"Autonomy is really where it's at," Mr Musk told investors this summer.

Critics have said Tesla has misled customers about its software's capabilities, contributing to risks.

The carmaker is facing other government investigations, as well as a number of

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Federal Reserve signals interest rate cuts next year

The US central bank has signalled it could start cutting interest rates next year if inflation continues to fall.

Forecasts released by the Federal Reserve on Wednesday showed a majority of policymakers expect to lower its key interest rate in 2024, after raising it to a 22-year high.

The Federal Reserve kept the target for that rate unchanged at 5.25% - 5.5%.

Markets surged on signs borrowing costs could be reduced next year, with the Dow Jones closing at a new record high.

The three major indexes in the US ended the day up 1.4%.

“This gives real credence to the view that [the Fed] thinks inflation is under control and believes that policy is producing the right outcome for the economy,” said Neil Birrell, chief investment officer at Premier Miton Investors, a London-based asset management firm.

The announcement comes ahead of a number of central bank meetings in Eu-



rope. The Bank of England, which meets on Thursday, is also expected to hold interest rates again.

In a press conference after the announcement, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said he welcomed signs that inflation, the rate at which prices rise, had slowed.

The forecasts released by the Fed showed that none of the rate-setting committee members see a need to raise rates further and a majority expect to cut the Fed's key rate below 5% next year, with the median rate of 4.6%.

That is a big shift from just a few months ago.

But Mr Powell said the bank remained alert to the

risks of rising prices, noting that inflation remained above the 2% rate that the bank wants to see.

While Fed policymakers do not expect any further hikes, Mr Powell said they did not want to take the option off the table.

“It is far too early to declare victory,” he said. “There is a lot of uncertainty and we’ve seen the economy move in surprising directions, so we’re just going to need to see further progress.”

The Fed has raised interest rates sharply since the start of 2022 in a bid to cool the economy and slow inflation.

The hikes came as prices were soaring at the fastest

rate in decades, in part driven by the jump in energy prices after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But inflation in the US has come down significantly since its 9.1% peak in June 2022.

Prices were up 3.1% last month, compared with a year earlier, according to Labor Department figures released this week.

Fed members expect inflation to fall further next year, but do not expect it to return to its 2% target rate until 2026.

By making borrowing more expensive, higher interest rates encourage saving and reduce borrowing for home purchases and business investments, cooling the economy and easing the pressures pushing up prices.

Officials expect the US economy to grow by 1.4% next year, which is significantly slower than this year's pace.

The Fed also expects an uptick in the unemployment rate, which currently stands at 3.7%.

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lawsuits in the US in relation to crashes involving the software.

But a jury in one of the first cases to go to trial found that Tesla's autopilot technology was not to blame.

The new controls that Tesla has agreed to do should help limit drivers from using Autopilot unsafely, said Professor Missy Cummings, director of the Autonomy and Robotics Center at George Mason University.

But she added that there was “an

opportunity missed” for regulators to require Tesla to make Autopilot features unavailable in places where it is not supposed to be used.

The recall centres on a part of Autopilot called Autosteer.

Autosteer helps keep a car in the correct lane in conjunction with “traffic-aware cruise control” which matches the speed of the car to that of the surrounding traffic.

The driver is expected to have their hands on wheel and be ready to take over

from the assistive system when required.

When Autosteer is on, systems in the car monitor that the driver is paying attention. If it detects the driver isn't there are warning alerts. There are also alerts if the driver tries to use Autosteer in inappropriate circumstances.

According to the NHTSA recall report, the over the air update will include additional alerts and monitoring to encourage the driver to adhere to their continuous driving responsibility whenever Autosteer is engaged.

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Regional News



ExxonMobil says it will stay in Guyana for the long term

Oil giant ExxonMobil says it will keep ramping up production in offshore Guyana despite the escalation of a territorial dispute with neighbouring Venezuela, which claims that oil-rich region as its own.

In a brief statement posted Monday on Facebook, ExxonMobil Guyana said it was reaffirming its “long-term commitment to Guyana” as tensions grow between the two South American countries that share a border.

“We are not going anywhere – our focus remains on developing the resources efficiently and responsibly, per our agreement with the Guyanese government,” the company wrote.

Earlier this month, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro proposed that companies operating in the vast Essequibo region in Guyana,



Venezuela’s new map that includes the Essequibo territory as its own is displayed at the Foreign Ministry in Caracas, Venezuela, Monday, December 11, 2023. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix)

that is rich with minerals and located near massive oil deposits, should withdraw their operations within three months.

His government also is seeking to ban companies operating in Guyana from doing so in his country.

Venezuelan lawmakers are currently debating a bill that contains the proposed ban.

Maduro has argued he has the authority to issue such orders following a December 3 referendum aimed at annexing the Essequibo area.

ExxonMobil is producing about 600,000 barrels of oil a day after successfully drilling more than 40 wells off Guyana’s Essequibo region. The Exxon-Mobil consortium also submitted a bid

and received approval to develop three more areas in the region believed to contain additional oil deposits.

Many of Guyana’s largest gold, diamond, manganese and other mines also are located in Essequibo. Most are Canadian-owned, but no companies have reacted yet to Maduro’s statement. Several Chinese companies also have timber operations in the area.

ExxonMobil issued the statement a day after Guyana’s president, Irfaan Ali, told reporters Sunday that investors have nothing to fear.

“We want to encourage our investors to invest as much as they want,” he said.

Ali and Maduro will meet Thursday in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to discuss the territorial dispute, with regional leaders urging talks to avoid further conflict.

Bermuda: Police say murder victim was not the target

Bermuda Police have identified Monday’s murder victim as Steve Parkes. Parkes, 53, was shot at 7:48 pm on Mary Victoria Road as he was getting onto his motorcycle.

Detective Inspector Jason Smith told reporters today at a media conference that Parkes was a father of six and he would have celebrated his 54th birthday on Christmas Day.

Smith said Parkes, who goes by the nickname Carpenter, spent most of

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At least 16 vehicles caught fire, the state governor said.

Venezuela highway in flames as lorry ploughs into crash site

By **Vanessa Buschschlüter**

At least eight people have been killed in an accident on the outskirts of the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, officials say.

A lorry ploughed into several cars which were stopped on the highway after being involved in an earlier accident.

One of the vehicles appears to have been transporting a highly flammable liquid.

Videos from the scene show the highway, which links the cities of Guarenas and Caracas, engulfed in flames.

Firefighters and emergency services have been deployed from Caracas to extinguish the fire and tend to the injured.

The governor of Miranda state, where the crash site is located, said 16 vehicles had caught fire in the incident, which hap-

pened after 07:00 local time (11:00GMT).

Footage shared on social media shows a burnt-out passenger bus lying on its roof on the highway.

The deputy minister of risk management, Carlos Pérez Ampueda, described how the tragedy had unfolded.

“There was a minor crash involving a lorry and three cars on Caracas-Guarenas carriageway,

where old asphalt was being replaced,” he told local radio station Unión Radio.

He said that a lorry then ploughed into this crash site.

“The first accident happened at 07:00 and the second at 07:15,” he explained.

He added that the driver of the lorry might have not have been able to see the site of the first accident because of “poor meteorological conditions”.

But locals took to social media to complain that road maintenance had been neglected in many parts of the country during Venezuela’s economic crisis.

Some also pointed out that poorly serviced heavy goods vehicles had been involved in a number of recent accidents.

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Monday installing cabinets at a residence.

In appealing for information to catch Parkes’ killer(s), Smith said their investigation has so far revealed that he was not specifically targeted in the attack and may have been “in the wrong place at the wrong time”.

This was Bermuda’s 4th murder for 2023.

Police are appealing for information in

finding the driver of a white taxi that passed in front of Parkes’ home around the time he was killed.

Smith said the taxi is not linked with the shooting but the driver may have information “critical” to their investigation.

Additionally, police are looking to chat with residents, who may have seen a white car passing through the neighbourhood up to a week prior to the attack.

Israel to continue Gaza war with or without international support, FM says

Israel's foreign minister has said it will continue the war in Gaza "with or without international support".

A ceasefire at this stage of the conflict would be "a gift" to Hamas and allow it to return, Eli Cohen warned.

Israel is facing mounting pressure over the number of Palestinian civilians killed by its military in Gaza and the worsening humanitarian crisis there.

On Tuesday, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

And in his strongest comments yet, US President Joe Biden said Israel was losing support worldwide because of its "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza.

Intense fighting continued in both the north and south of Gaza on Wednesday, while heavy rains worsened conditions for the hundreds of thousands of displaced people who are living in makeshift tents or out in the open.

A senior UN aid official also warned that the Palestinian territory faced a "public health disaster" because of the collapse of its medical system and the spread of infectious diseases in overcrowded shelters.

The war was triggered by an unprecedented attack by Hamas gunmen on southern Israel on 7 October, in which at least 1,200 people - including many women and children - were killed and about 240 taken hostage.

Since then, more than 18,600 people have been killed in Gaza, about 70% of them women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

At Tuesday's emergency session of the UN General Assembly, 153 member states voted in favour of a non-binding resolution demanding an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in Gaza, and "the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access".

Eight states joined Israel and the US in voting against the resolution, in-



cluding Austria and the Czech Republic, while the UK and Germany were among the 23 states which abstained.

It was put forward by Arab and Muslim states after the US vetoed a binding resolution at the UN Security Council last Friday, saying an immediate ceasefire would allow Hamas to regroup.

The day after the General Assembly vote and President Biden's warning, Eli Cohen told a visiting diplomat: "Israel will continue the war against Hamas, with or without international support."

"A ceasefire at the current stage is a gift to the terrorist organisation Hamas, and will allow it to return and threaten the residents of Israel," he added, according to a statement from his office.

So far, the US has supported Israel's opposition to a pause in hostilities.

But senior American officials are increasingly demonstrating discontent with the way Israel is conducting its offensive.

On 2 December, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin warned that Israel risked replacing a "tactical victory with a strategic defeat" if it did not sufficiently protect civilians in Gaza.

Disagreements are also emerging about what a post-war Gaza will look like.

On Thursday, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan will ar-

rive in Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli media report that their discussions will include a timetable for the end of the war - and some suggest that Mr Netanyahu, by openly disagreeing with the Biden administration, is trying to appeal to his right-wing base.

Speaking with Israeli military commanders serving in Gaza on Tuesday afternoon, Mr Netanyahu said the war would "continue until the end, until the victory, until the elimination of Hamas".

And, reflecting "international pressures", he added that "nothing will stop us".

However, as previous Israeli wars show, calls for a ceasefire will soon become too loud to be ignored.

Israel is continuing to pound Gaza in the meantime, but Hamas and its allies are fighting back.

Tuesday was the deadliest day for the Israeli military since its ground offensive began on 27 October.

The military said 10 soldiers were killed, almost all of them in a co-ordinated ambush in the Shejaiya district of Gaza City, where there has been a focus of the ground operation in recent days.

Hamas fighters "threw explosives at the soldiers and shot at them from inside a residential building in which un-

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Florida school board pushes member to resign amid sexual assault scandal

By Nadine Yousif

A Florida school board is demanding the resignation of one of its members, whose husband, the Republican Party state chairman, is being investigated for sexual assault.

The Sarasota County School Board voted 4-1 for a resolution requesting that Bridget Ziegler step down.

Her husband, Christian Ziegler, is facing accusations of rape.

No charges have been filed against him, and through his lawyer Mr Ziegler has denied the allegations.

The vote on Tuesday to remove Ms Zeigler was brought by Chair Karen Rose, who said in an email that she was “deeply shocked and saddened” by the accusations and believed media scrutiny of the couple “would cause irreparably harmful distractions”.

Ms Ziegler, co-founder of the conservative Moms for Liberty group, was the sole vote against the resolution. She also did not indicate that she would resign from the board, where she has served for nearly a decade.



Bridget Ziegler has been a member of the Sarasota County School Board since 2014.

In Florida, the governor is the only person who can fire school board members.

The alleged assault occurred on 2 October at a home in Sarasota, in southwest Florida, according to a heavily redacted document from police that included several mentions of rape and sexual battery.

An investigation is ongoing.

The influential Republican couple had been involved in a years-long sex-

ual relationship with the woman who filed the police complaint, according to the Florida Trident, which first reported on the accusations.

Citing “sources close to the investigation,” the news site, which is run by the non-profit Florida Center for Government Accountability, also reported the alleged attack occurred at the woman’s home, when she and Mr Ziegler were alone.

Mr Ziegler’s lawyer, Derek Byrd, told the BBC

that “we are confident that once the police investigation is concluded that no charges will be filed and Mr Ziegler will be completely exonerated”.

Mr Ziegler is resisting pressure from Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and other conservatives to resign from his post as chairman of the state’s Republican party, which he has held since February.

“We have a country to save and I am not going to let false allegations of a crime put that mission on the bench,” he said.

Along with the accusations of violence, the revelation that Ms Ziegler had a relationship with a woman is deeply troubling to some in the state. Ms Ziegler has backed Mr DeSantis’ controversial “Don’t Say Gay” law.

Democrat critics say the allegations are at odds with the emphasis the couple placed politically on “family values”.

“The level of hypocrisy in this situation is stunning,” said Florida Democratic Party Chair Nikki Fried in a statement.

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derground terror infrastructure was also located”, according to a statement.

Hamas said the announcement confirmed the “failure” of Israel’s leaders and military in the face of “strong resistance” from the group’s armed wing.

The UN’s local humanitarian co-ordinator, Lynn Hastings, told reporters: “What is happening on the ground is not going to bring peace and security to either the Palestinians or Israelis for

many, many years, if not generations to come. So a ceasefire is in the interest of everybody at the moment.”

She warned that the number of Palestinians being killed and injured was going up significantly every day and that almost half of Gaza’s 2.3 million population had fled to the southern Rafah area, on the border with Egypt, in an attempt to avoid the Israeli bombardment.

The collapse of the healthcare sys-

tem, with only one-third of hospitals partially functioning, combined with the unsanitary conditions at overcrowded shelters, also meant there was “a textbook formula for epidemics and a public health disaster”, she added.

The UN estimates there have so far been 360,000 cases of infectious diseases, including meningitis, respiratory infections and diarrhoea, which is a leading cause of death among children under the age of five worldwide.

‘Not political’, Khawaja to fight Gaza message ban

PERTH (Reuters) - Australia batsman Usman Khawaja believes the statements he wrote on his shoes in support of the people of Gaza were not political and said he would fight the International Cricket Council’s (ICC) ruling that he cannot display them while playing.

Khawaja had the messages “Freedom is a human right” and “All lives are equal” written on his boots in the colours of the Palestinian flag in Tuesday’s training for the first Test against Pakistan.

Australia’s captain Pat Cummins said on Wednesday that the Pakistan-born opener had agreed not to display the messages during the match when it started on Thursday, but Khawaja later posted an emotional video on the social media site X.

“The ICC have told me I can’t wear my shoes on the field because they believe it’s a political statement under their guidelines,” he said.

“I don’t believe in this though. It’s a humanitarian appeal. I will respect their view and decision, but I will fight it and seek to get an approval. Freedom is a human right.”

Israel’s ongoing assault on Gaza in response to the deadly Oct. 7 cross-border attacks by Hamas has killed at least 18,205 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry.

The ICC Code of Conduct forbids players wear-



Australia batsman Usman Khawaja. (Getty Images)

ing, displaying or conveying messages through arm bands or other items on clothing or equipment without prior approval.

Messages related to political, religious or racial activities or causes are not allowed.

When asked for comment on Wednesday, the ICC directed reporters to the relevant regulations, which make clear that the global governing body is the final arbiter of what is allowed and what constitutes a “political, religious or racial cause.”

England’s batsman Moeen Ali, who like Khawaja is a Muslim with Pakistani heritage, was banned by the

ICC in 2014 from wearing wristbands featuring the slogans “Save Gaza” and “Free Palestine.”

The ICC did, however, allow players to “take the knee” before international matches in support of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement in 2020 and 2021.

“What I’ve written on my shoes isn’t political. I’m not taking sides. Human life to me is equal,” Khawaja added.

“One Jewish life is equal to one Muslim life is equal to one Hindu life, and so on. I’m just speaking up for those who don’t have a voice.”

Cricket Australia said in a statement that Khawaja had

a right to express his opinion, but they expected him to conform to the ICC rules banning displays on his playing equipment.

Australia’s Sports Minister Anika Wells gave Khawaja her full backing.

“Usman Khawaja is a great athlete and a great Australian. He should have every right to speak up on matters that are important to him,” she said.

“He has done so in a peaceful and respectful way. He has done so as an individual and expressed an individual opinion that does not compromise the Australian cricket team’s obligations to the ICC.”



The Potters Tigers football team. (File photo)

Four teams record wins in first division football league

Potters Tigers, Police, Lion Hill, and Bendals all recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League on Tuesday.

The Tigers secured their second win in three matches by snatching a 3-2 victory against the Libertas Blackhawks in the first game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Brian Davis scored in the 12th minute, Ordell Samuel had a 64th-minute conversion, and Jay-Zeba Foster scored in the 82nd minute for the Potters Tigers.

Tijahni Isaac had a 28th-minute conversion, and Potters Tigers' player Dikembe Williams scored an own goal in the 56th minute for the Libertas Blackhawks.

Jahquan Davis scored twice as the Police won for the first time in three outings by prevailing 3-1 against Fort Road in the second encounter at the ABFA Technical Center.

Davis had conversions in the 11th and 37th minutes, and Stephen Hughes scored in the 18th minute for the Police, who finished the game with 10 men after Nijah Hope received a

red card in the 42nd minute for committing serious foul play.

Ezekiel Thomas converted a penalty kick for Fort Road in the 47th minute.

Juan Melenciano Jr. scored a hat-trick, and Gerome Geller and Renford Harris each had double conversions to propel Lion Hill to an 8-0 drubbing of the Young Lions at the Golden Grove playing field.

Melenciano Jr. had conversions in the 8th, the 59th minute with a penalty kick, and the 76th minute to lead Lion Hill to their first win

in three matches.

Geller scored in the 22nd and 47th minutes, and Harris scored in the 68th and 81st minutes. Tequaine Teague scored the other goal for Lion Hill in the 32nd minute.

Alva Guishard Jr. scored twice as Bendals claimed their first win in three matches with a 3-1 victory against Bolans at the Bendals playing field.

Guishard Jr. struck in the 61st and 79th minutes, and Daren Stevens scored in the 56th minute for Bendals. Taiem Tonge scored a consolation goal for Bolans in the 78th minute.



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Willikies Super Stars B team take over top spot in domino contest

The B team of Willikies Super Stars has taken pole position after the penultimate round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda National Domino Association's (ABNDA) final three-hand competition of the year.

The Willikies Super Stars B team will go into this weekend's seventh and final round of matches at the ABNDA's headquarters in Ottos as leaders of the 14-team accumulated points competition with an overall total of 445 points.

The B team of Willik-

ies Super Stars moved from second to first by finishing second in the second match of the penultimate round of the three-hand contest.

The Super Stars scored 78 points to finish behind the match winner, the B team of Full Clip, which chalked up 82 points, and Double Six Diamond came in third with 61 points.

Parham Strikers won the opening match of the penultimate round to advance from fourth to second place with an overall total of 422 points.

Parham Strikers scored

79 points to prevail against Double Six Ice with 74 points and the A team of Willikies Super Stars with 73 points.

The result was sufficient to enable the Willikies Super Stars A team to move from fifth to third place with an overall total of 403 points.

Former leaders Dominatrixx won the fourth and final match of the penultimate round to jump from eighth to joint fourth place with the Full Clip A team, as both teams have an overall total of 393 points.

Dominatrixx recorded 86 points to overcome Moise Eagles with 77 points and the B team of Bolans Revellers with 68 points.

The Full Clip A team won the third match of the penultimate round to move from sixth place to join Dominatrixx in fourth place.

The A team of Full Clip scored 77 points to prevail against Unstoppables with 73 points and the A team of Bolans Revellers with 60 points.

The Ramplers, who held the lead after the fifth round with an overall total of 375 points, had a bye and did not play in the penultimate round.

The Ramplers have slipped from first to seventh place going into the final round of matches.

Willikies Super Stars are leading the 125 Four-Hand competition, which will also conclude with its final round of matches this weekend.

The Super Stars are leading the four-team contest with eight wins after romping to a 125-112 victory against A.S. Bryden and the Stingray City Bolans Revellers.

Everyday Service Station Double Six won by default against the Ramplers. Double Six and Bolans Revellers are jointly tied for second place with six wins apiece, while the Ramplers are in the cellar without a point.



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Harrigan retains post as treasurer of ECVA

President of the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association (ABA-VA), Wilbur Harrigan, has retained his position on the executive committee of the sub-regional governing body for the sport.

Harrigan retained his post as treasurer of the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association (ECVA) during the regional organization's 2023 Congress at the St. Kitts Marriott Hotel last Sunday.

In the final session, the election of officers took place, reflecting a harmonious continuation of leadership.

President Glenn Quinlan of St. Kitts & Nevis, Vice President Sabinah Clement of the British Virgin Islands, Secretary General Shayne Felicien of St. Lucia, and Harrigan were returned unopposed.

Additionally, member Elvin Henriquez of St. Eustatius secured victory over challenger Leonardo Romeo of St. Maarten by an 8-5 vote, demonstrating the democratic process within the ECVA.

In attendance was Cristobal Marte Hoffiz, who is the current President of

NORCECA, which is the international governing body for the sport of volleyball in Northern America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Marte Hoffiz administered the oath of office to the newly elected executive, emphasizing their commitment to working in the best interest of the zone without fear or favour. This moment symbolizes a new chapter in the leadership of ECVA, dedicated to advancing volleyball in the Eastern Caribbean.

The 2023 Congress of the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association was able to reach a successful conclusion. This was achieved after the delegates convened for insightful discussions, key decisions, and the election of officers, marking a momentous occasion for volleyball in the Eastern Caribbean.

One of the significant outcomes of the Congress was the unanimous approval of the addition of Under-19 men and women indoor editions scheduled for December 2024 in St. Maarten.

This expansion signals a commitment to nurturing young talent in the region. The ECVA affirmed its sup-



President of the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association Wilbur Harrigan retained his post as treasurer of the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association during the regional organization's 2023 Congress at the St. Kitts Marriott Hotel on Sunday, December 10, 2023.

port for the participating national federations, emphasizing collaboration and shared growth.

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ting to secure the win with 11 balls to spare. And, fittingly, it was Russell who dispatched the winning runs with a glorious cut for four to cap a triumphant return to the West Indies side.

"Life is so funny," said Russell afterwards. "When I got selected for the West Indies team, I kept dreaming that in my first game I would be man of the match. I didn't know how it would happen, but I kept believing.

"Since the CPL (Caribbean Premier League) season, we've played here. The wicket has been up and down, two-paced. Cutters seem to work very well here. I tried to make sure we bowled as many cutters and took pace off.

"When I look at most of the boundaries in the England innings, it was pace on deliveries, but we pulled it back and well bowled to everyone tonight."

Reflecting on England's display, Buttler said, "It was always going to

get hard, the way the pitch played. But from the position we were in, we were looking for a score of around 200.

"We want to keep pushing the boundaries and be as positive as we can, but it is finding ways to keep scoring in that way."

Both teams will clash in the second T20I at the Grenada National Stadium today at 1:30 pm. The third match will also be played at the same venue and time on Saturday.

West Indies win first T20I against England

Jamaican all-rounder Andre Russell returned from the international wilderness to inspire the West Indies to a four-wicket victory against England in the opening game of the five-match CG United T20 series in Barbados on Tuesday night.

The 35-year-old Russell excelled with ball and then bat as the West Indies chased down England's 171 all out with 11 balls to spare, making the highest successful men's T20 International run-chase at the Kensington Oval look comfortable in the end.

England started with a bang after being asked to bat first, with Phil Salt (40) and Jos Buttler (39) smashing 77 runs in the opening powerplay to set the foundation.

However, Buttler's side failed to build on the opening pair's fast start as the West Indies adjusted their bowling plans brilliantly through the middle overs, bringing the scoring rate right back under control with a series of cutters and slower balls.

Russell, making his first appearance for the West Indies in more than two years, produced a brilliant bowling performance by grabbing a format-best three for 19 in



West Indies' batsmen Andre Russell, right, and Rovman Powell celebrate during their partnership against England in the first T20 International cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. (AP)

his four overs.

Antiguan fast bowler Alzarri Joseph recovered from an expensive start to finish with three for 54, and all-rounder Romario Shepherd took two for 22.

England added just 94 runs from the 13.3 overs after the opening powerplay, being bowled out for 171 with three balls of the innings remaining.

The West Indies' reply

also got off to a blistering start, thanks to Brandon King (22) and Kyle Mayers (35), with nine sixes coming in the first half of the innings.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid, who had two for 25, bowled beautifully on the night of his 100th T20I appearance for England, becoming the first Englishman to take 100 wickets in the format along the way to help keep En-

gland in the hunt.

Fellow leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed captured three for 39 to help restrict the West Indies through the middle overs, before a spell of rain delayed the conclusion of the match.

But Russell, who struck 29 from 14 balls, and captain Rovman Powell, who hit 31 from 15 balls, produced a stunning display of late hit-

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