

“SIN TAX” PROPOSED BY FINANCE OFFICIALS

Story on Page 2

Congratulations Katalyna!

Katalyna Fagan, 10-years-old, received the 2023 Guiding Light Award during a brief presentation ceremony with Their Excellencies, Sir Rodney and Lady Sandra Williams at Government House on Monday.

The Grade 4 student of Grace Christian Academy was selected for the honour by the Girl Guides Association, on account of her commitment to community service and her willingness to assist.

In addition to excelling in academic and humanitarian endeavours, Katalyna is also a dancer, a musician and a stilt walker. She is described as having a “polite, humble and caring spirit” with a “loving and giving personality”.



Excise tax recommended for alcohol and cigarettes

Included in the recommendations submitted by the Ministry of Finance to the government to boost its revenue intake is the imposition of a 10 per cent “Sin Tax”.

If adopted by the government, the tax will be levied against alcohol, tobacco and cannabis products.

Sin Tax applies to products and services that are considered harmful to the health and well-being

of people.

Financial Secretary, Rasona Davis-Crump, stated that it is the hope of her ministry that the excise tax is taken on board.

This, she explained, can yield revenue, which will be used to fund the public health system.

“It certainly has an impact on health and ultimately will affect the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, when you talk about the impact on health and

non-communicable diseases,” the FS posited.

Stressing that the country’s health system is heavily subsidised, Mrs. Crump advanced that the Sin Tax could serve to discourage drinking and smoking among the population, if consumers are made to pay more in order to obtain the products.

If it does not break the habits, she said at least there will be funding available to treat the diseases



Financial Secretary, Rasona Davis-Crump

that will likely arise.

The financial secretary said on state television on Monday that the ministry conducted their research before proposing the excise tax.

“When we look at our tax structure and we look at some of the other ECCU countries who, interestingly enough, have the Personal Income Tax (PIT) and they also have an excise tax, generally, I think we are looking at a rate of somewhere in the region of 10 per cent, but again, this requires a little bit more assessment, but 10 percent is what we are leaning towards on these items.”

All recommendations advanced by the Ministry of Finance will first be reviewed by the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda before a decision is made to accept or reject the proposals.



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Booby Alley soil testing data to be used to finalise building design

The data from soil testing that was carried out at Booby Alley will be used to finalise the building design once analysis is complete.

A team of Chinese technicians spent last month drilling into the ground at the site for the proposed housing project, collecting soil and rock samples. This is important Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim said to ensure international best standards and practices during construction.

Ambassador Pilgrim, who is chairman of the Booby Alley Urban Development

cont'd on pg 4 *Booby Alley*



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cont'd from pg 3

opment and Renewal Committee during an update, told Pointe Xpress, once the laboratory testing ends and modifications are made to the building plans, construction is likely to commence.

While he did not commit to a date by when the building phase of the project will get underway, Ambassador Pilgrim said they are hoping it will be sooner rather than later, though acknowledging that careful planning is required.

“The reality is there is a process with which the Chinese government adheres to, so, we are playing it stage by stage. Hopefully, in the first quarter of next year, we should have some information from China with respect to how we proceed,” he added.

150 two-bedroom units are to be constructed at Booby Alley in a turn-key arrangement between the Governments of Antigua and Barbuda and the People’s Republic of China.

The agreement was signed between both governments on 18th August, 2022.

The project was slow in getting off the ground, as a result of the drawn-out process in relocating residents.

Member of Parliament for Saint John’s City West, Prime Minister Gaston Browne, will hold a town hall meeting with Booby Alley residents at a date to be announced.

The chairman of the Booby Alley Urban Development and Renewal Com-

mittee is of the opinion that the social housing project will prove beneficial for the people who will occupy the units.

“This urban renewal and development project aims to uplift the standard of living in that particular area. I believe it is a project that should be replicated in other similar areas.

“The economic benefits will be tremendous, as well as the social benefits. I believe that the residents who bought into the project will significantly benefit, more now, than ever before,” Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim declared.



Ambassador Clarence Pilgrim

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Roof repairs approved for GPO

The roof of the General Post Office will undergo major repairs as government moves to resolve the ongoing issues there that have caused employees to stage industrial action.

Cabinet members at their weekly meeting on Wednesday agreed for repairs to be carried out on the roof of the GPO over a six-month period.

During that time, part of the post office's operation will be moved to the Sir Cuthwyn Lake Medical Centre on Lady Nugent Avenue.

The decision was taken that no retrofitting was required at the facility before sections of the GPO are transferred.



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Battery case against Asot Michael postponed to January

Saint Peter Member of Parliament, Asot Michael, is to appear in the All Saints Magistrate’s Court on 23rd January, 2023, to answer to a charge of battery on a female law enforcement officer.

When the matter was called before Magistrate Ngaio Emanuel on Wednesday, Michael was a no-show. This, after he was summoned to make an appearance before the District B. Magistrate.

However, the court was notified via correspondence from his attorney, Hugh Marshall Jr. that Asot Michael was abroad on a med-



Asot Michael

ical appointment and would return until next week Tuesday.

The case will be called again in January, 2024.

The lawyer has also asked the court for disclosure of the case file, which Magistrate Emanuel said will be provided within 21

days.

The female police officer accuses Asot Michael of assaulting her at the popular fete RISE, held at Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium on 5th August, 2023.

Allegations are the female officer rejected the MP’s efforts to pull her cheeks. In a drunken stupor, she alleges he then grabbed her uniform and while pushing him away, several of her buttons became loose, partially exposing her.

The matter was reported to her superiors, but dissatisfied with their response, the woman pressed charges against Asot Michael.

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ABHTA commits to highlighting industry professionals

A new initiative undertaken by the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA), profiling hospitality workers and their contributions to the sector will continue into the future.

The “Unveiling Hospitality Professional Series” has garnered positive reviews at home and abroad, winning the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) Award in the People Development and Support Category last week in Miami, Florida, which was hosted by the Caribbean Hotels and Tourism Association (CHTA).

Antigua and Barbuda won the award in the Human Resources Category and Executive Director of the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association, Patrice Simon said the series serves as an inspiration for many involved in the tourism industry not only at home, but throughout the region.



AHTA Executive Director Patrice Christian-Simon

“Certainly, our colleagues across the Caribbean have been watching as well and are really pleased for us to have been recognised in this way,” Simon said.

Several people that are part of the

local hospitality industry have been profiled to date, with a few receiving promotions in their line of work since their journeys were aired and published.

The ABHTA executive director noted that there are numerous stories of Antiguan and Barbudans, whose contributions to the hospitality sector must be highlighted.

“We want the next generation of hospitality professionals to see Antiguan and Barbudans within this space and the work they’ve been doing to make sure that our industry is where it is today, a shining example of what it should be in the Caribbean.”

The hospitality workers that were featured in the “Unveiling Hospitality Professional Series” will be special guests at the Tourism Awards Gala on Saturday, part of the schedule of activities planned for Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Week, 2023.

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BVI Yacht Sales returns as Antigua Sailing Week sponsor

Antigua Sailing Week organisers have announced the return of BVI Yacht Sales as sponsor of the regatta's 55th edition from April 27 – May 3, 2024.

The leading Caribbean brokerage firm in the region, specialising exclusively in pre-owned yacht sales and brokerage, BVI Yacht Sales has continuously supported and promoted sailing events that celebrate the spirit of Caribbean lifestyle, adventure and competition.

This is the second year of partnership with the event Antigua Sailing Week, reinforcing the company's dedication to fostering the growth and success of sailing and exploration of the Caribbean by sail.

"We are thrilled to welcome BVI Yacht Sales back onboard as the official yacht brokerage of Antigua Sailing

Week" said Alison Sly-Adams. "We are happy to provide international exposure in exchange for support of regional brands in the industry. It's a win-win situation for everyone involved".

"We are excited to renew our partnership of the event for 2024," said Brian Duff of BVI Yacht Sales.

"This sponsorship represents our ongoing commitment to supporting sailing events that bring together passionate sailors, enthusiasts, and industry professionals. Antigua Sailing Week embodies the essence of the sport, and we are proud to be a part of such a key regional event."

Antigua Sailing Week stands as one of the longest running regattas in the region, attracting professional crews, Corinthian sailors and spectators originating in over 30 countries across the

world.

BVI Yacht Sales recognises the significance of this event in connecting and fostering international relations within the sailing community.

The 2024 Antigua Sailing Week promises an exhilarating line-up of competitive racing, social events, and networking opportunities set against the stunning backdrop of Antigua's crystal-clear waters and picturesque coastline.

BVI Yacht Sales and its brokers look forward to engaging with participants, attendees, and fellow sponsors throughout the week-long celebration of sailing excellence.

Antigua Sailing Week consists of 6 days of racing including a circumnavigation of the island in the Peters & May Round Antigua Race.



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We wish Azarie continued success in his culinary journey.



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Meta is child abuse ‘breeding ground’, lawsuit claims

Facebook and Instagram have become a “breeding ground” for child predators, the New Mexico attorney general has claimed in a lawsuit.

Raul Torrez said his office had set up fake accounts that were sent phallic pictures and “solicitations”.

He asked the court to order the firm to make changes to protect its youngest users, alleging it has “refused” to do so voluntarily.

In response, Meta said it worked hard to root out predators.

But New Mexico said searches by its investigators revealed that some kinds of exploitative child material was “ten times” more prevalent on Facebook and Instagram than on sites such as Pornhub and OnlyFans.

State investigators reported groups and accounts sharing child porn content to the company without effect, according to the filing.

“Our investigation into Meta’s social media platforms demonstrates that they are not safe spaces for children but rather prime locations for predators to trade child pornography and solicit minors for sex,” said Attorney General Torrez.

US law shields companies from liability for content posted on their platforms.

But the New Mexico lawsuit said the recommendations made by Meta’s software meant it was not simply acting as a publisher.

Facebook and Instagram are not “simply presenting content created by others,” the lawsuit said.

“Instead, Meta’s algorithms operate to ‘search and disseminate’ sexually exploitative and explicit materials and to create its own social network of users looking to buy and sell the images and the children who are its casual-



ties and its currency”.

The lawsuit, filed in state court, said Meta had duped young users and their families about the safety of the platform, breaking laws that bar firms from deceptive practices, and created a product that is a hazard to public health and safety.

“In short, Meta has allowed Facebook and Instagram to become a marketplace for predators in search of children upon whom to prey,” the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit personally names Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, saying he “called the shots” and had denied requests to make design tweaks or investments that would have improved child safety, while making misleading public statements about the issue.

“He promised publicly that he directed that Meta safeguard children, but privately demanded and delivered the opposite,” the lawsuit said.

In a statement responding to the New Mexico allegations, the company said: “Child exploitation is a horrific crime and online predators are determined criminals.”

“We use sophisticated technology,

hire child safety experts, report content to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and share information and tools with other companies and law enforcement, including state attorneys general, to help root out predators.”

Meta is facing a mounting drumbeat of legal fights in the US over its treatment of its youngest users.

Those include a lawsuit filed by dozens of US states in October, which alleged that the company had contributed to a youth mental health crisis and misled the public about the risks of using social media.

Hundreds of families have also taken legal action, saying the platforms are harmful by design.

In the European Union, regulators this month also asked for more detail on the measures the firm had taken to protect children from abuse.

In June, in response to concerns about child exploitation on its platforms, Meta established a task force on the issue.

Since then, it said it had expanded the number of terms it polices and developed new technology to identify predators, among other steps.

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Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs accused of sexual assault by fourth woman

By Steven McIntosh

A fourth woman has accused Sean “Diddy” Combs of sexual assault, alleging he and two others gang raped her when she was 17.

Jane Doe, as she is referred to in the legal action, claims the rapper flew her to his New York studio in 2003.

She alleges she was given “copious amounts of drugs and alcohol” before Diddy and two other men took turns raping her.

Mr Combs, 54, said he “did not do any of the awful things being alleged”.

The woman claims she drifted in and out of consciousness during the alleged ordeal, and says she was left in so much pain that she could barely stand or remember how she got home.

In a statement to BBC News, lawyers for the woman said: “As alleged in the complaint, Defendants preyed on a vulnerable high school teenager as part of a sex trafficking scheme that involved plying her with drugs and alcohol and transporting her by private jet to New York City where she was gang raped by the three individual defendants at Mr. Combs’ studio.

“The depravity of these abhorrent acts has, not surprisingly, scarred our cli-



Sean “Diddy” Combs

ent for life.”

The woman’s legal team confirmed a federal lawsuit had been filed against Mr Combs and two other men, as well as two responsible corporate entities.

BBC News has approached Diddy’s company, Bad Boy Entertainment, for comment.

Lawyers allege one of the other two men named in the lawsuit “approached Ms Doe at a lounge in Michigan, near to where she was living at the time, told her that he was ‘best friends’ with Mr Combs, and proceeded to call Mr Combs, who was in New York City.

The two allegedly

“convinced” Ms Doe to take a private jet to Mr Combs’ recording studio in New York City.

“Once there, the defendants plied Ms Doe with drugs and alcohol and viciously gang raped her, one after the other.”

It is also claimed one of the men forced her to give him oral sex, which allegedly left Ms Doe “choking and struggling to breathe”.

Responding to the latest allegations, Diddy said in a statement to BBC News: “Enough is enough.

“For the last couple of weeks, I have sat silently and watched people try to assassinate my character, destroy my reputation and

my legacy.

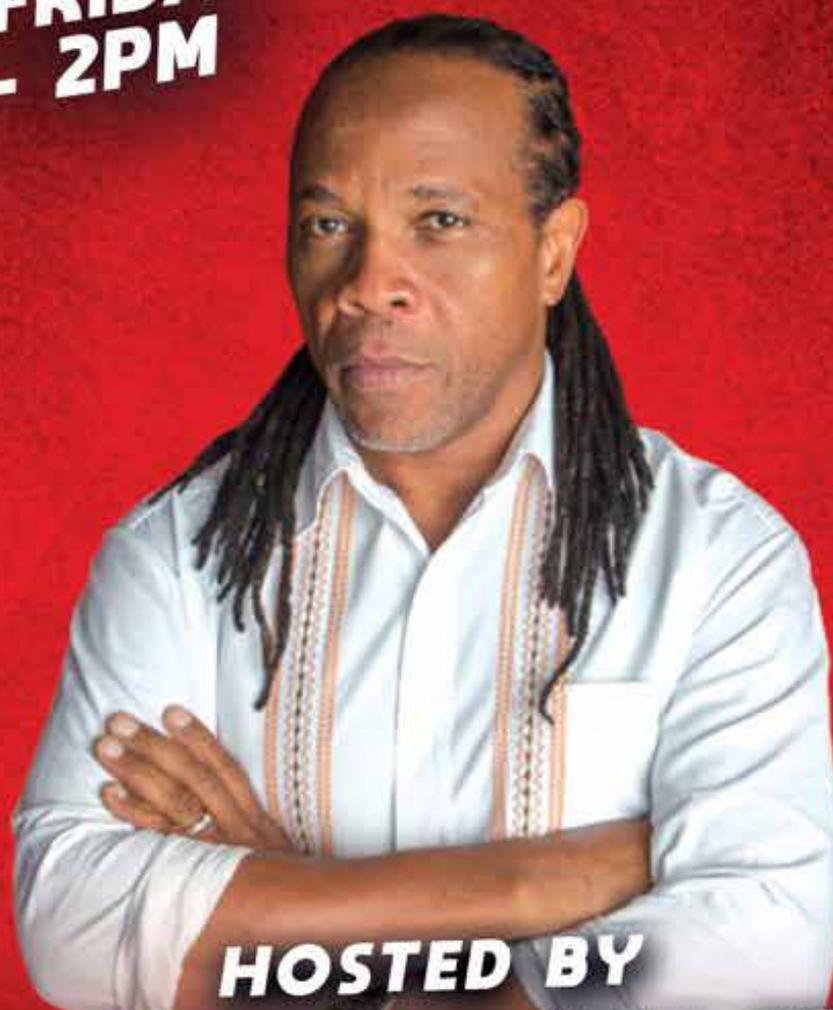
“Sickening allegations have been made against me by individuals looking for a quick payday.

“Let me be absolutely clear: I did not do any of the awful things being alleged. I will fight for my name, my family and for the truth.”

Last month, Diddy was accused in a lawsuit by R&B singer Casandra Ventura, known as Cassie, of rape and sex trafficking. The pair settled out of court the day after it was filed.

Two further women subsequently came forward accusing the rapper of rape. Diddy has denied the claims.

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

President Ali says Guyana is preparing to defend itself from Venezuela

Guyana's President Irfaan Ali told The Associated Press on Wednesday that his country is taking every necessary step to protect itself from Venezuela, which has ordered its state-owned companies to explore and exploit oil and minerals in Guyana's vast Essequibo region that it considers its own.

When asked if he has requested military assistance, Ali said his government is reaching out to allies and regional partners, some of which Guyana has defence agreements with, to protect the Essequibo region, which makes up two-thirds of the country.

"We take this threat very seriously, and we have initiated a number of precautionary measures to ensure the peace and stability of this region," Ali said in a brief phone interview.

He noted that Guyana's Defense Force also is speaking with counterparts in other countries but didn't say which ones.

"Should Venezuela proceed to act in this reckless and adventurous manner, the region will have to respond," he said. "And that is what we're building. We're building a regional response."

Ali spoke a day after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro said he would immediately grant operating licenses for ex-



Guyana President Irfaan Ali speaks during a plenary session at the COP28 UN Climate Summit, Friday, December 1, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

ploration and exploitation in Essequibo and ordered the creation of local subsidiaries of Venezuelan public companies, including oil giant PDVSA and mining conglomerate Corporación Venezolana de Guayana.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, but years of mismanagement and economic sanctions imposed by the US against Maduro's government have hurt PDVSA and subsidiaries.

Maduro also announced the creation of a Comprehensive Defense Operational Zone for the territory in dispute. It would be similar to special military commands that operate in certain regions of Venezuela.

"The announcements by Venezuela are in full defiance of international law," Ali said. "And any country

that so openly defies important international bodies should be of concern not only for Guyana but for all of the world." He said Venezuela's actions can severely disrupt the region's stability and peaceful coexistence.

Guyana expects to bring up the issue at Wednesday's UN Security Council meeting.

The president said in a statement late Tuesday that his administration has reached out to the US, neighbouring Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, the UN secretary general and the US Southern Command, which oversees military operations in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Ali also accused Venezuela of defying a ruling that the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands

issued last week. It ordered Venezuela not to take any action until the court rules on the countries' competing claims, a process expected to take years.

Venezuela's government condemned Ali's statement, accusing Guyana of acting irresponsibly and allegedly giving the US Southern Command a green light to enter the Essequibo region.

Venezuela called on Guyana to resume dialogue and leave aside its "erratic, threatening and risky conduct."

On Wednesday, the United Nations issued a statement highlighting the recent ruling by the International Court of Justice barring parties from any action that "might aggravate or extend the dispute or make it more difficult to resolve."

cont'd on pg 15

Dominica: American nationals charged with hoteliers murder

CMC - Two American nationals are due to appear in a magistrate's court on Wednesday in connection with the murders of Canadian born hoteliers, Daniel Langlois and Dominique Marchard, whose charred remains were found in a burnt-out vehicle last Friday.

Police said that Jonathan Lehrer, the owner of Bois Cutlette estate, one of the oldest estates in Dominica, and Robert Snider of Pittsburg, Florida, will make their first court appearance before a Rousseau Magistrate where the charge of "murder" will be read to them.

Lehrer, 57 years, along with his wife and Snider and one Dominican national were assisting the police in their investigations into the murders that shocked the south west community of Soufriere, where Langlois and Marchand, owned and operated the Coulibri Ridge Resort.

Police said that the two



hoteliers were "ambushed" by a hit man who killed them and then set their car on fire.

Media reports said that Langlois and Lehrer had been involved in a dispute over the usage of the Morne Rouge Public Road, which passes through the Bois Cutlette estate. In 2019, the OECS Supreme Court ruled that the road was public and could be freely used by Langlois' guests.

Residents of the twin

communities of Soufriere and Gallion have expressed "shock and anger" at what they described as the "brutal and heartless" killing of "two community icons."

Chief executive officer of state owned Discover Dominica Authority, Colin Piper, said the death of the two hoteliers "leaves an irreplaceable void not only in our lives but also in the heart of Dominica and the global sustainable tourism community."

"Daniel and Dominique

were more than just pioneers; they were visionaries who dared to dream of a balance between luxury and sustainability. Their passion and commitment to this cause transformed Coulibri Ridge into a beacon of green tourism, earning them global recognition and a host of accolades. Their legacy has set a benchmark for others to aspire to," he said.

Piper said that the government takes every incident involving its citizens, residents, and visitors to the island very seriously.

"It appears that this was an isolated incident, the local authorities are actively investigating, and suspected individuals have been apprehended and are currently in custody. Despite this occurrence, Dominica remains a safe place to live, work, and visit," he added.

cont'd from pg 14

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly supports the use of solely peaceful means to settle international disputes," the UN said.

The diplomatic fight over the Essequibo region has flared over the years but intensified in 2015 after ExxonMobil announced it had found vast amounts of oil off its coast. Venezuela insists the region belongs to it because Essequibo was with-

in its boundaries during the Spanish colonial period. Venezuela rejects the border that international arbitrators drew in 1899, when Guyana was still under British rule.

The dispute escalated after Maduro held a referendum on Sunday in which Venezuelans approved his claim of sovereignty over Essequibo.

Ali called the referendum a "failure" and said Guyana is preparing for any eventuality.

Army veteran accused of killing parents and four others in Texas shooting spree

Police in Texas say a man shot his parents dead at the start of a shooting spree that killed a total of six and injured three others.

Shane James Jr is suspected of carrying out the rampage that began in San Antonio and ended in Austin.

Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar said that two bodies were found in the San Antonio house where Mr James lived.

They have tentatively been identified as James's parents, Phyllis James and Shane James Sr, the sheriff said.

Mr James Jr is charged with murder for four killings in Austin, authorities said. The murder charges for the San Antonio slayings are expected to be filed in the coming days, and he is expected to face other charges as well.

The suspect had a violent history and suffered from mental health issues, police said at a press conference Wednesday.

Mr Salazar said the police had been called to the family home in August 2023, that Shane James Jr had been arrested on domestic violence charges the previous year, and that he had been discharged from the US Army because of a domestic violence incident.

Mr and Mrs James were shot dead at the house they shared with their son sometime between Monday night and Tuesday morning, he



The violence that began in the morning stretched into the evening.

said.

After allegedly killing his parents, Mr James Jr then travelled to Austin, about an hour and a half away, where he carried out a string of attacks.

Robin Henderson, interim chief of the Austin Police Department, said at an earlier press conference that her department received a call at 10:43 EST (15:43 GMT) that a school district police officer had been shot at Northeast Early College High School.

The school, in north Austin, locked down after the gunfire was heard.

Another shooting later Tuesday morning killed a man and woman further south in Austin, Ms Henderson said.

A male cyclist then was shot on Tuesday afternoon. He survived the attack.

Police were then called to an Austin home for a reported burglary on Tuesday

evening. There they found Mr James Jr in the home's backyard.

He "immediately opened fire", Ms Henderson said.

The officer who found the suspect was shot multiple times and two people were later found dead in the house.

Mr James Jr then led police on a car chase and was caught after he crashed his vehicle.

The officer allegedly shot by Mr James Jr is in stable condition, as are the school police officer and the cyclist. All are expected to survive their injuries.

The sheriff said Mr James Jr was charged with misdemeanour domestic violence against his parents and a sibling in January 2022. He was eventually released on bail.

In August 2023, police were called to the house again on reports that Mr James Jr was suffering from a men-

tal health episode. Deputies attempted to bring him into custody on the previous domestic violence charges, but could not coax him out of a bedroom at the house.

Police could not legally break down the door because the charges were misdemeanours, Mr Salazar said. The officers told Mr James Sr to call them when his son emerged, but the suspect's father never asked them to return.

It was the last interaction that police had with the suspect before the fatal shootings, according to the sheriff. As the crimes were misdemeanours, Mr Salazar said, police did not actively seek to arrest Mr James Jr over his outstanding warrants.

Following reports of the shooting spree, Texas Gov Greg Abbott praised law enforcement and said the state grieves "for the loved ones of the six Texans who were murdered".



Thailand has one of the highest rate of road deaths in the world.

Thailand: Bus crash kills 14 and splits vehicle in half

Fourteen people have died in Thailand after a double-decker bus veered off the road and smashed into a tree.

Photos online show the bus leaning on its side and its front split in half, with parts of the tree wedged in it.

Thirty-two others were injured following the crash in Prachuap Khiri Khan, a coastal province in the country's south.

Thailand has one of the world's highest road accident rates, leading to thousands of deaths every year.

Many attribute this to poor safety standards on the country's busy roads.

In 2022 alone, 15,000 people lost their lives on Thailand's roads, according to the country's Road Accidents Data Centre. In the UK, which has a slightly lower population, that number stands at 1,700.

In 2021, traffic-related incidents made up almost a third of total deaths in the country, the World Health Organization said.

The cause of Monday night's crash has not been confirmed, but police suspect the driver may not have had enough sleep, AFP reported.

He was badly injured but survived. Authorities are also checking his blood alcohol levels, the news agency said.

Police are still verifying the identities of those who died from the crash.

Prachuap Khiri Khan is popular among tourists for its beaches, caves and hiking trails.

Rescuers spent "several hours" pulling the dead and the wounded out of the bus, said the Sawang Prachuap Dhammasathan Foundation, which supported the operation.

Pictures posted on the foundation's Facebook account showed more than a dozen rescuers attempting to remove the tree which was pressing on the bus. Some smashed the vehicle's windows open with a hammer.

The number of fatalities has fallen in the past three years, but Thailand is still

ranked in the top 10 worst countries for road safety.

Despite this, there is little public demand for improved safety, and the issue rarely arises during election campaigns.

Some have attributed this to the fact that most of the victims - more than 70% of fatalities - are motorbike riders, typically among the poorest sectors of society, and most occur on rural roads.

Helmet-wearing is almost universally unenforced in Thailand, unlike in neighbouring Vietnam and Indonesia, and alcohol is often a cause of the accidents.

Governments in Thailand are more often swayed by campaigns backed by wealthier urban residents.

Roads in Thailand are good enough to drive fast on, but often poorly lit and marked, making accidents more likely.

Speeding is only very occasionally penalised, the fines are low, and often not collected at all. It is also rare for Thai drivers to be disqualified from driving.

Argentina's Messi named Time's Athlete of the Year for 2023

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Argentina captain Lionel Messi has been named Time magazine's Athlete of the Year for 2023 after winning the Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time and elevating the profile of the sport in the US with his move to Inter Miami.

Messi played a key role in guiding Argentina to their first World Cup title in 36 years when they beat defending champions France in the final in December last year.

The 36-year-old had no shortage of offers when he left Paris St Germain earlier this year, choosing to sign for Major League Soccer's Inter Miami despite being linked with his former team Barcelona and a big-money move to Saudi side Al-Hilal.

"The truth is that fortunately, I had several options on the table that were interesting, and I had to analyze them and think, even weigh them up with my family, before making the final decision to come to Miami," Messi told Time.



Argentina footballer Lionel Messi. (Getty Images)

Messi made an instant impact at Miami, scoring 10 goals in seven Leagues Cup appearances as he spurred them to victory in the tournament which features MLS teams as well as sides from Mexico.

The Argentine's arrival in the US also made waves off the pitch, causing a massive spike in searches for

match dates and tickets to see him in action, with fans also buying up his official pink Inter Miami shirt.

The price of tickets to Inter Miami games skyrocketed, while Apple TV, which has a 10-year partnership with the MLS, saw a significant increase in subscriptions, according to research firm Antenna.

"Messi managed to do what once seemed impossible: turning the US into a soccer country," Time wrote.

Gymnast Simone Biles, basketballer LeBron James, and the United States women's soccer team have won the award in recent years, with baseball player Aaron Judge of the New York Yankees winning in 2022.

Bangladesh in charge against NZ despite bizarre Mushfiqur dismissal

DHAKA (Reuters) - Mushfiqur Rahim's brain-fade moment led to his obstructing-the-field dismissal, but Bangladesh took charge of the second Test against New Zealand after 15 wickets tumbled on a frenzied opening day of the contest on Wednesday.

Chasing a series-levelling victory,

New Zealand appeared to nose ahead in the contest after bundling out Bangladesh for 172 at Mirpur's Shere Bangla Stadium.

The tourists had to contend with a top-order meltdown of their own when they came out to bat and they were reeling at 55 for five when bad

light stopped play with only 79 overs bowled in the day.

Daryl Mitchell (12) and Glenn Phillips (five) will resume New Zealand's battle to stay in the contest when play resumes on Thursday.

Earlier opting to bat, Bangladesh *cont'd on pg 19*

Maxwell to play in IPL until he 'can't walk anymore'

MELBOURNE (Reuters) - Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell says the Indian Premier League (IPL) has been so good to him that he will play in the lucrative T20 competition until he "can't walk anymore."

The IPL has been the perfect platform to showcase Maxwell's explosive batting and the 35-year-old is one of four foreign recruits Royal Challengers Bangalore have retained for next season.

After making his debut in the competition with Delhi Daredevils in 2012, Maxwell commanded the top price at the players auction the following year with Mumbai Indians shelling out US\$1 million for his services.

After a three-year stint in Punjab, he returned to Delhi for one more season before making the switch to Bangalore, where his destructive batting has made him a fan favourite.

Playing in India obviously suits Maxwell - he smashed his only Test hundred there in 2017 and helped Australia win the 50-overs World Cup title last month.

"The IPL will probably be the last tournament I ever play, as I will play the IPL until I can't walk anymore," Maxwell told reporters on

Wednesday.

"I was talking about how good the IPL has been to me throughout my career -- the people I've met, the coaches I have played under, and the international players that you get to rub shoulders with ...

"You're rubbing shoulders with AB (de Villiers) and Virat (Kohli) for two months, talking to them while watching other games," he said referring to the stalwarts he shared the Bangalore dressing room with.

"It's just the greatest learning experience that any player could ask for."

Australia will hope for a telling contribution from Maxwell in the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the US next year, and the Victorian said playing in the IPL before the showpiece event could prove invaluable.

"Hopefully, a lot of our Australian players can get over to the IPL and get to work in slightly similar conditions to the West Indies, where it is a little bit drier; it will spin," Maxwell said.

Maxwell will lead the Melbourne Stars in Thursday's Big Bash League opener against Brisbane at the Gabba.



Australian allrounder Glenn Maxwell. (Getty Images)

cont'd from pg 18

slumped to 47 for four in 15 overs with New Zealand's spin duo of Mitchell Santner (3-65) and Ajaj Patel (2-54) wrecking their top order.

Mushfiqur (35) and Shahadat Hossain (31) combined in a 57-run stand to steady the ship until the 41st over when New Zea-

land prized out a wicket in the unlikeliest of fashions.

Mushfiqur defended a Kyle Jamieson delivery and then instinctively extended his right hand to push the ball away even though there was no chance of it hitting the stumps.

The TV umpire upheld New Zealand's appeal for what was previously

known as handling-the-ball but was brought under obstructing-the-field dismissal in 2017.

Mushfiqur is the first Bangladesh batter to be given out obstructing the field, seven batsmen had previously been given out 'handling the ball' in Test cricket.

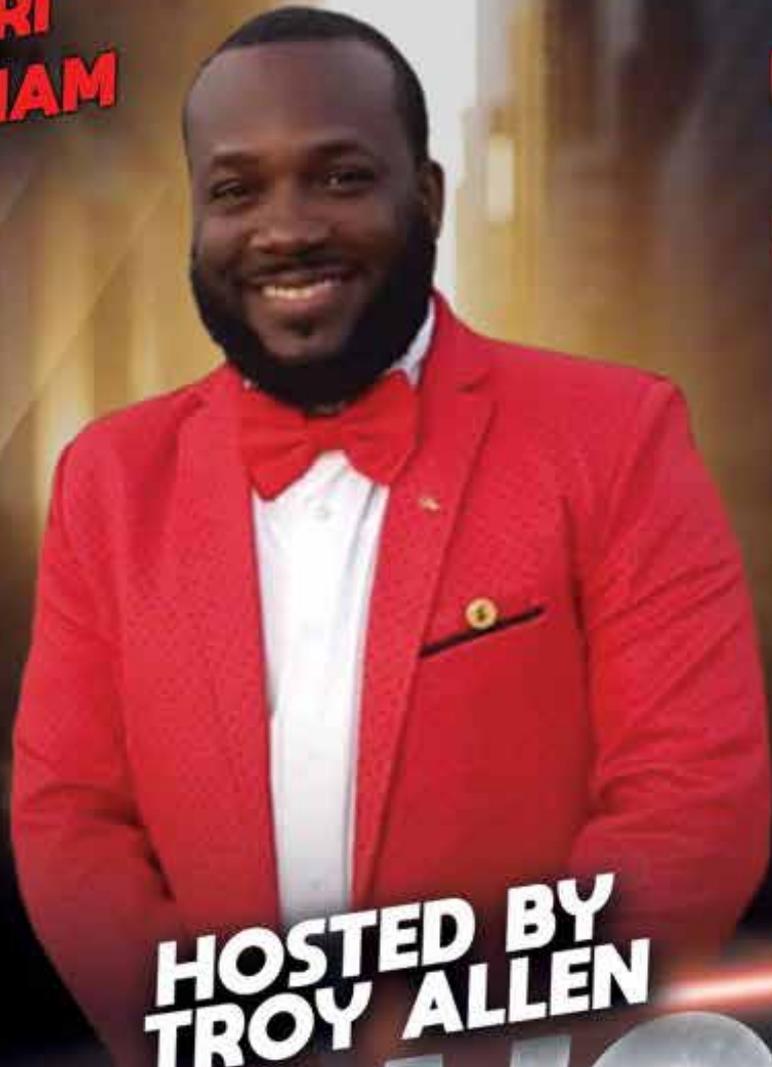
Phillips wrecked Ban-

gladesh's lower order with figures of three for 31. New Zealand's top order could not master the spin-friendly conditions and looked ill at ease against Mehidy Hasan Miraz (3-17) and Taijul Islam (2-29).

Bangladesh won the opening Test in Sylhet by 150 runs, their first on home soil against New Zealand.



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ABICE beat All Saints in east zone of U-20 Boys' Division

Defending champion Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) beat leaders All Saints Secondary in the East Zone of the Under-20 Boys' Division in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools' Football League on Tuesday.

Karique Knight scored twice as ABICE came from behind to prevail 3-1 against All Saints Secondary at the Potters Playing Field.

Knight had conversions in the 23rd and 35th minutes and Tigahnie Isaac scored in the 59th minute for ABICE to claim their fifth win of the competition.

Leon Ogarro scored the opening goal of the match in the 14th minute to give All Saints Secondary a 1-0 lead.

It was only the second loss in nine matches for All Saints Secondary, which remains the leader of the east zone with 19 points.

ABICE advances to second place on goal difference with 16 points from nine outings.

Joshua James and Dejuan Francis each scored twice as St. Joseph's Academy came from behind to hammer Clare Hall Secondary 5-1 at the Clare Hall Playing Field.

James had conversions in the 22nd and 37th minutes, Francis scored in the

30th and 38th minutes and Joseph Saiegh scored in the 41st minute for St. Joseph's Academy.

Jayden Martin scored in the 17th minute to give Clare Hall a 1-0 lead. The result meant that Clare Hall Secondary dropped from second to fourth place after suffering their third loss in nine matches to remain on

14 points.

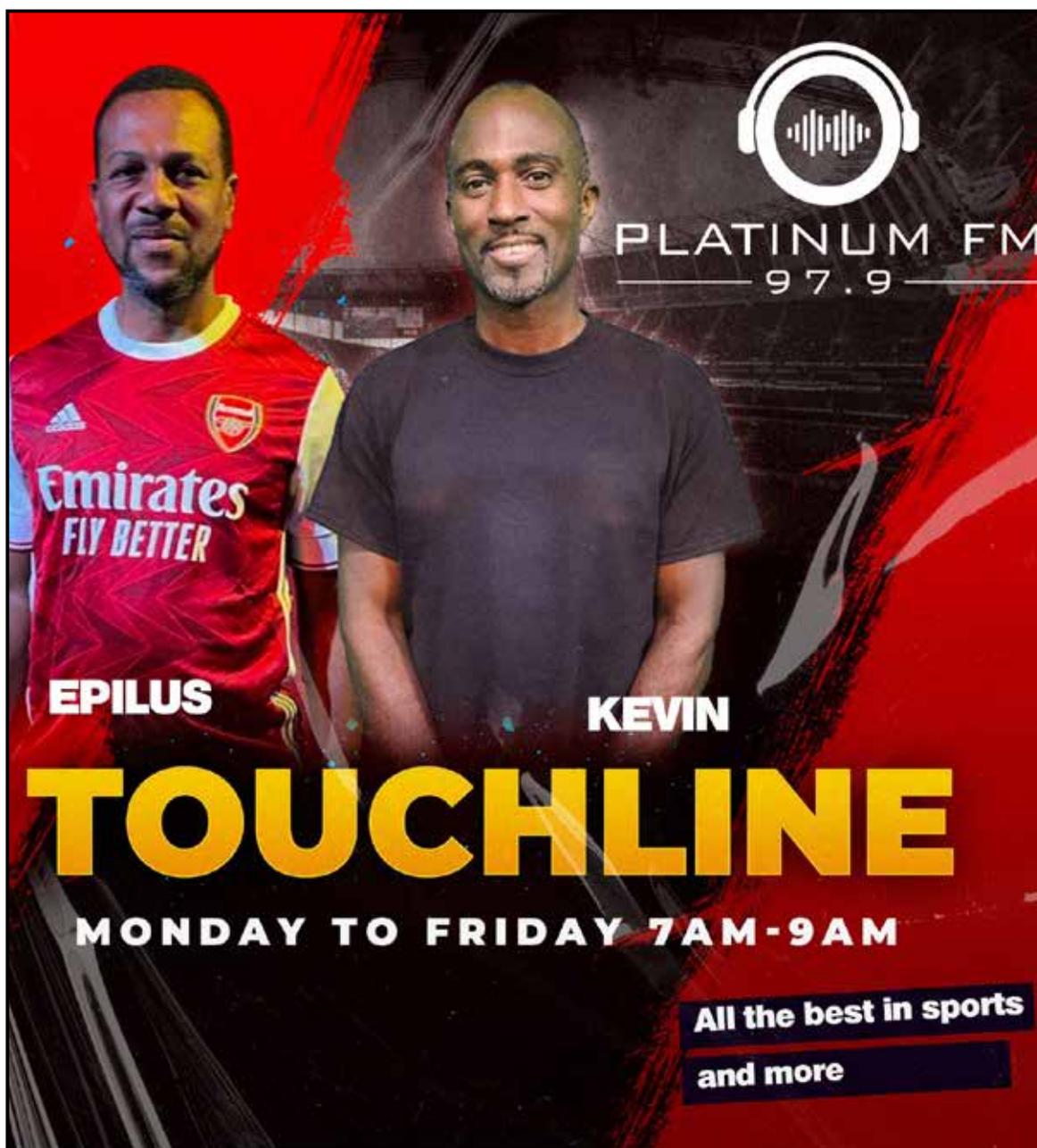
It was the third win in eight matches for St. Joseph's Academy, which remained second from the bottom of the six-team zone despite advancing to 10 points.

Irene B. Williams Secondary won by default after the bottom team, Pares Secondary, failed to show

up for their encounter at the Swetes Playing Field.

The result ensures that Irene B. Williams moves to third place on goal difference after joining ABICE on 16 points.

Pares Secondary School remains in the cellar without a point after failing to win any of its eight matches.



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ABIIT and the Media claim wins to end campaigns in business volleyball league

Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology (ABIIT) and the Media have won the last two games of the preliminary round-robin phase of the Antigua and Barbuda Amateur Volleyball Association's (ABAVA) Business League Competition.

ABIIT recorded a 2-0 win against Royalton, while the Media clinched a 2-1 victory against MEDSO/UWI Fusion during a double header at the indoor volleyball facility at the YMCA Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology secured their 25-21, 25-8 victory to finish their campaign in eighth place in the 11-team competition with a record of three wins and seven losses.

Royalton, which is the only newcomer in this year's competition, finished second from the bottom of the standings with a record of one win and nine losses.

The Media prevailed 25-17, 18-25, and 15-13 against MEDSO/UWI Fusion to finish in seventh place with a record of five wins and five losses.

It was the 10th loss in as many games for MEDSO/UWI Fusion, which finished



The Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology volleyball squad. (Photo courtesy ABAVA)

in the cellar of the competition.

Runners-up in last year's competition, the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB) finished at the top of the preliminary standings with a perfect record of 10 wins in as many games.

Defending champions, APUA Inet, finished second ahead of ICONS by virtue of winning more sets overall in the competition after both teams finished tied with identical records of eight wins and two losses.

Nate's Photography clinched fourth place ahead of Treasury and Sandals by virtue of winning more sets overall in the competition

after all three teams finished tied with identical records of six wins and four losses.

Treasury was relegated to fifth place and Sandals, which claimed fourth place last year, finished in sixth place in this year's competition.

77 Bus, the other team that is participating in the competition, finished in ninth place with a record of two wins and eight losses.

The top four teams at the end of the preliminary phase have advanced to the semi-finals, which will commence at the same venue today (Thursday).

The second-seeded and defending champions,

APUA Inet, will face the third-seeded ICONS in the first semi-final at 6:30 pm.

The unbeaten top seed, the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank (ECAB), will clash with the fourth-seeded Nate's Photography in the other semi-final at 7:30 pm.

The winners of the semi-finals will clash in the final at the same venue on Saturday. The final will be preceded by a playoff for third place between the two losers of the semi-finals.

The business volleyball league will conclude with a presentation and award ceremony following both matches on Saturday.

Four teams get first win in first division

Attacking Saints, Potters Tigers, Liberta Blackhawks and Jennings United all recorded their first wins during the second round of matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division on Tuesday.

Joshua Samuel scored a brace as the Attacking Saints pulled off a 4-2 victory against Fort Road at the Fort Road Playing Field.

Samuel converted his goals in the 3rd and 82nd minutes, Kenijah Challenger scored in the 15th minute and Carlos Tittle produced a 48th-minute conversion for the Attacking Saints, who played to a goalless draw with Five Islands in their opening encounter.

Ordell Samuel hit a hat-trick to lead the Potters Tigers to a 7-0 drubbing of the Young Lions in the first game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

After Kelvin Carr opened the scoring with a 2nd-minute conversion, Samuel scored in the 3rd, 24th, and 39th minutes to give the Potters Tigers a 4-0 halftime lead.

Shava McDougal in-



The Attacking Saints team that started their second division encounter against Fort Road at the Fort Road Playing Field on Tuesday, November 5, 2023. (Photo by Elwin Francis)

creased Potters Tigers' advantage with a 67th-minute conversion.

Watende Grayman scored in the 71st minute and Juwan Esdaile converted a penalty in the 85th minute to wrap up victory for the Tigers, who battled to a 2-2 draw with Jennings United in their opening game.

Following a goalless first half, Shemoy Rhodes scored in the 85th minute to give the Liberta Blackhawks a 1-0 victory against Bendals in the second game

of the double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Jennings United scored three goals in the second half to record a 3-0 victory against Lion Hill at the Jennings Playing Field.

Rhezal Gomes opened the scoring with a 60th-minute conversion, J'Vontea Benjamin added a second in the 76th minute and Mervin Etienne scored United's final goal in the 78th minute.

The ABFA domestic season will continue with four matches in the sec-

ond division today. Golden Grove will face Real Blizzard at Golden Grove and Urlings Golden Stars will host Freemans Village at Urlings.

Belmont FC will tackle Young Warriors in the first game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center and TAMO FC will clash with JSC Progressors in the second encounter. All games will begin at 4:30pm, except for the latter game, which will commence at 6:30 pm.