

LONG-SERVING DIPLOMAT SIR RAMEZ HADEED PASSES AWAY

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Official funeral next week for Sir Ramez Hadeed

An official funeral will be held on Wednesday, 13th December, 2023 at the Holy Family Cathedral for Sir Ramez Hadeed.

Antigua and Barbuda's longest-serving diplomat, Sir Ramez Hadeed passed away on Wednesday evening at the age of 80 years.

Reports are he was rushed to hospital on Wednesday and died several hours later.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has led tributes, posting on his social media page "Today, is a sad day, as we mourn the passing of our dear friend and Comrade, Sir Ramez Hadeed", adding he was a close friend of their family. As such, he and his wife, Minister Maria Browne, would spend time with Sir Ramez, discussing politics, diplomacy and business.

"Our last visit to Sir Ramez's home was yesterday [Wednesday] afternoon. It was intended to be a surprise visit, only to be told that he was hospitalized a couple of hours earlier, from what appeared to have been a massive heart attack," the prime minister wrote.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Barbuda Affairs, E.P Chet Greene recalled the close working relationship he shared with the senior diplomat.



"As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had the opportunity to work closely with Sir Ramez and witnessed first-hand his dedication, passion, and commitment to Antigua and Barbuda's interests.

"He was indeed a great diplomat who served our country with distinction for many decades, contributing to many areas of our economic development. Just recently, the diplomatic community celebrated his achievement of '40 Years of Diplomatic Dedication' of which I am pleased that he was able to receive our high esteem whilst present," Minister Greene said.

Former Ambassador to the United States, United Nations and Organization of American States, Lionel 'Max' Hurst, in reflecting on the contributions of Sir Ramez Hadeed said his death

has robbed Antigua and Barbuda of a great talent.

"Not only has he been an ambassador for 42 years, but he has exercised the kind of wisdom and discipline that I think have placed Antigua and Barbuda in a very enviable position."

Sir Ramez Fares Hadeed began his career in the field of diplomacy when he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Antigua and Barbuda to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Iraq and the United Arab Emirates.

He was also appointed an Economic Envoy, promoting Antigua and Barbuda as a democratic country ready to do business and build relations and was successful in obtaining support from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development at a time when very

few Caribbean countries were able to achieve such support.

Sir Ramez is also being remembered for his philanthropy and sound business acumen, employing thousands of Antiguan and Barbudans in construction and finance.

In 2001, he was awarded Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of the Nation (KCN) for his work in diplomacy. His honour was upgraded in 2022, when he received Antigua and Barbuda's second highest honour, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of the Nation (KGCN) and attended an investiture ceremony at Government House on 1st December, 2023, where he received his insignia.

Sir Ramez Hadeed's wife, Lady Afaf Hadeed preceded him in death.

PM reaffirms support for Guyana in border dispute

Prime Minister Gaston Browne says his administration “stands ready” to serve as a mediator in the ongoing territorial dispute between Guyana/Venezuela over the Essequibo region that both countries are claiming to be theirs, in an effort to ease growing tensions.

With the dispute rising, the government in Saint John’s has joined several countries along with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in reaffirming its support for the Government of the Cooperative Republic

of Guyana and its claim to the region [one of three counties that make up Guyana] through an 1899 arbitration settlement involving Venezuela and then British Guiana.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has underscored the importance of both Guyana and Venezuela to the region and said the situation calls for cool heads to prevail.

“We stand in support of their [Guyana] territorial integrity, but at the same time, we want to make sure that we could still have good re-

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Disputed Essequibo region

Venezuela will hold a referendum on Sunday on whether to establish a new state in the disputed Essequibo region, an oil-rich territory long ruled by Guyana.




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Local News



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lations with Venezuela and to dialogue with them to reduce their muscular rhetoric.” He added, “Antigua and Barbuda continues to stand ready as an entity that can be an arbiter in the dispute and to de-escalate the issue”.

During the 2024 Throne Speech delivered by Governor General Sir Rodney Williams on Thursday morning, Antigua and Barbuda’s position was again made clear.

“My government hopes that there will be a peaceful settlement in this long-standing matter. These two States are not just geographic neighbours. Guyana is our kith and kin, having a significant diaspora living in Antigua and Barbuda. Venezuela has



Prime Minister Gaston Browne shown its lasting friendship, coming to our government’s assistance at critical moments when no other states could.

“The CARICOM has issued a Statement following the ruling of the International Court of Justice. Antigua and Barbuda stands with the CARICOM,” Sir Rodney Williams asserted.

The Antiguan and Barbudan leader is concerned about the negative impact to the region, if there is further es-

calation in the disagreement between the two countries.

“The last thing we want is any form of conflict within the hemisphere that could create disruptions. Wherever there are these disruptions, small island states like Antigua and Barbuda suffers disproportionately.

“So, it’s always in our interest to be proactive in our leadership and to try and encourage entities that are violating or are promoting any form of conflict, to cease and desist and to maintain the peace and tranquility in the interest of all,” Mr. Browne added.

A referendum was held in Venezuela last weekend on whether to annex the Essequibo region.

The Government of Nicolas Maduro claimed victory and has since ordered state-owned companies to begin exploiting the region of its oil and other resources, despite a ruling from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for Venezuela not to take any action that will change the status quo, until the substantial matter is heard before the ICJ. However, Venezuela has rejected the court’s jurisdiction.

On Thursday, Guyana’s Vice-President, Bharat Jagdeo, said Guyana stands ready to defend its sovereignty, should Venezuela defy the ruling of the ICJ. He said this will be done with support from international partners, including the United States.

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Throne Speech outlines plans to decrease carbon footprint

An ambitious plan by the government to cut its carbon footprint and promote the use of renewable energy was included in the 2024 Speech from the Throne yesterday, during a joint-sitting of Parliament.

Highlighting the ban on single use plastic bags, straws and Styrofoam containers as measures taken to protect the environment, Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams, said government is prepared to go even further with a plan to convert its fleet of vehicles to electrical cars, buses and trucks.

“Over phased periods, the cars, buses, vans, ambulances and trucks that fill up with gasoline and diesel will instead plug-in; using cheaper and cleaner electricity to re-charge after 200 miles of stored power,” Sir Rodney Williams told the nation.

How the entire operation will un-



Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams

fold is yet to be revealed. However, it is believed that more information will be made public during next Friday’s budget presentation and when the budget debate is held. With oil consumption estimated at \$400 million annually and the figure expected to increase, renewable energy will be the focus of the Gaston Browne administration.

“In 2022, the total value of imported

oil amounted to approximately EC\$400 million; by the end of this year, a similar amount will likely have been expended on oil imports. As the economy grows, even more energy will be required.

“My government intends to reduce the quantum which it expends on the purchase and use of fossil fuels by turning to electric vehicles, by installing solar plants in schools and other Government-owned buildings, by mounting wind-powered plants, and by encouraging conservation in the use of the precious commodity that pollutes,” the Governor General added.

Antigua and Barbuda has been at the forefront of calls for developed countries to do more to save the environment, warning of dire consequences for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), if emissions are not addressed with urgency.



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Environment Minister speaks on renewable energy and climate resiliency

Minister of Health, Wellness, Social Transformation and the Environment, Sir Molwyn Joseph, has shared his position on global transition to renewable energy and the ultimate goal of building climate resiliency.

The discussion was a major event convened by the United Arab Emirates on the sidelines of COP28 now taking place in Dubai. Sir Molwyn was asked to address the discussion as a representative of an island nation that is extremely vulnerable to extreme weather events and is aggressively exploring options to adopt renewable energy to offset the impacts of climate change.

“Embracing solar, wind and other
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Sir Molwyn Joseph

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clean sources not only mitigates the impacts of climate change but also fosters economic growth," Sir Molwyn explained.

"The sun, the wind and the waves that surround our islands can become sources of power, driving local economies and creating jobs in the burgeoning renewable energy sector," Sir Molwyn noted in sharing his vision of a nation that is less reliant on the by-products of fossil fuels.

Minister Joseph shared with the panel of speakers drawn from across several sectors, including business and academia, that energy transition not only creates avenues for climate resiliency, but opens a pathway to economic growth for island nations like Antigua and Barbuda.

"Renewable energy presents an

opportunity for SIDS to chart a new course toward "Resilient Prosperity" and sustainability. Embracing solar, wind and other clean sources not only mitigates the impacts of climate change but also fosters economic growth," Sir Molwyn stated.

"By reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, we can achieve greater energy security and stability, which are crucial foundations for economic growth and supporting renewable energy in SIDS is an investment in our economic resilience. It creates jobs, stimulates local economies, and fosters sustainable development," he further argued.

Sir Molwyn Joseph made use of the opportunity to share Antigua and Barbuda's far-reaching and overarching ambition as laid out in its Nationally Determined Contributions in

helping to reduce emissions and the impact of climate change.

"Our two new ambitious targets are 86% renewable energy generation from local resources in the electricity sector by 2030 and all new vehicle sales will be electric vehicles by 2030," Sir Molwyn revealed.

He further noted that the international SIDS Conference that Antigua and Barbuda will be hosting next May will prove an excellent opportunity to place renewable energy and just transition at the very centre of the narrative for island nations.

"At SIDS4, we want to show the international community what can happen if you invest in the sustainable future of SIDS and all states for that matter, with renewables at the heart of becoming climate resilient," Sir Molwyn stated.

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LIAT resumes service to the region

Antigua-based airline LIAT has announced the resumption of flights after services were grounded last month due to mechanical issues.

In a statement issued on Thursday, LIAT's management informed the general public that the issues it encountered were resolved and it has returned to operating its regular schedule as of Thursday 7th December, 2023, which also includes the booking and purchasing of flights.

Late last month, Development Commissioner, Davén Joseph, revealed that an advanced payment of US\$ 150,000 was made by LIAT 1974 Ltd. to aerospace manufacturer Pratt and Whitney for the acquisition of engines



to facilitate repairs to the aircraft that was grounded in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

LIAT 1974 Ltd. has a total of three ATRs aircraft in its fleet, two of which have been grounded for some time.

Those are also being given attention, but Ambassador Joseph predicts they may return to the skies early next year.

The repaired ATR returned to Saint John's on Saturday.

LIAT has apologised to the people who were inconvenienced as a result of its flight cancellations, noting "The company wishes to reiterate its commitment to the safety and comfort of passengers and crew as it continues to serve its current destinations.

"LIAT wishes to assure all customers that all employees will be working to ensure a smooth winter and Christmas travel season".

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Five vie to become ABLP Rural West caretaker

A primary will be held Antigua Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) caretaker for this afternoon to select an

the constituency of Saint John's Rural West.

Five contenders, Azi-za Lake, Shawn Benjamin, Kevin Morgan, Michael Joseph and Russhell Ellis are vying for the post.

The winning candidate will likely contest the next general election, constitutionally due in 2028, on the ABLP's ticket.

On 3rd November, 2023, the Central Executive of the ABLP met and ratified the nominees for the primary election, which will be held at the Multi-Purpose Cultural and Exhibition Centre, Perry Bay, commencing at 3PM.

Ahead of this after-



noon's primary election, the nominees have been drumming up support and are also making their presence felt in the constituency, getting involved in social outreach programmes and other activities, all in an effort to emerge victorious.



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Facebook and Messenger to automatically encrypt messages

By Chris Vallance

All Facebook and Messenger chats will be encrypted automatically, parent company Meta has announced.

Messages and calls protected by end-to-end-encryption (E2EE) can be read only by the sender and recipient.

It has been possible to opt in to encrypted messages for years, but now it will become the default position.

Critics, including the UK government and police, claim the move to default encryption will make it harder to detect child sexual abuse on Messenger.

The Home Secretary, James Cleverly, said he was “incredibly disappointed” by Meta’s decision after working together to tackle other online harms.

“We’ll continue to work closely with them (Meta) to keep children safe online, but we must be honest that in our view, this is a significant step back”, he said.

James Babbage, director general for threats at the National Crime Agency, was also highly critical.

“It is hugely disappointing that Meta is choosing to roll out end-to-end encryption on Facebook Messenger.

“Today our role in protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation just got harder,” he said.

The switch to encryption meant nobody, including Meta, can see what is sent or said, “unless you choose to report a message to us”, Loredana Crisan, head of Messenger, wrote in a post announcing the change.

The company had worked with outside experts, academics, advocates and governments to identify risks to “ensure that privacy and safety go hand-in-hand”, she wrote.

It is expected that messages in Ins-



tagram, which is also owned by Meta, may get encryption by default sometime in the new year.

Meta says that people will know when their chats are upgraded and become encrypted, because they will be prompted to set up a recovery method to be able to restore their messages if they lose, change or add a device.

Apps including iMessage, Signal and WhatsApp all protect the privacy of messages with E2EE, but the tech has become a political battleground.

The apps and their supporters argue the tech protects privacy and security, including that of children.

But law enforcement, major children’s charities and the government have opposed the expansion of E2EE.

New powers in the recently passed Online Safety Act could enable Ofcom to force tech companies to scan for child abuse material in encrypted messages. Signal and WhatsApp have said they will refuse to comply with such requests.

But despite those powers, there has been continued pressure on Meta to hold the expansion of E2EE.

In September the-then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, alleged that Facebook Messenger and Insta-

gram direct messages were the platforms of choice for online paedophiles, telling the BBC that “we are arresting in this country about 800 perpetrators a month, we are safeguarding about 1,200 children a month from this evil crime”.

But Meta argued that it had spent years developing robust safety measures to prevent, detect and combat abuse while maintaining online security.

“When E2EE is default, we will also use a variety of tools, including artificial intelligence, subject to applicable law, to proactively detect accounts engaged in malicious patterns of behaviour instead of scanning private messages,” the company wrote.

Prof Martin Albrecht, chair of cryptography at King’s College London, welcomed the addition of what he called a standard safety feature.

“It secures not only government and business communication, but also private conversations between parents and their children, parents about their children, or groups of friends of all ages,” he said.

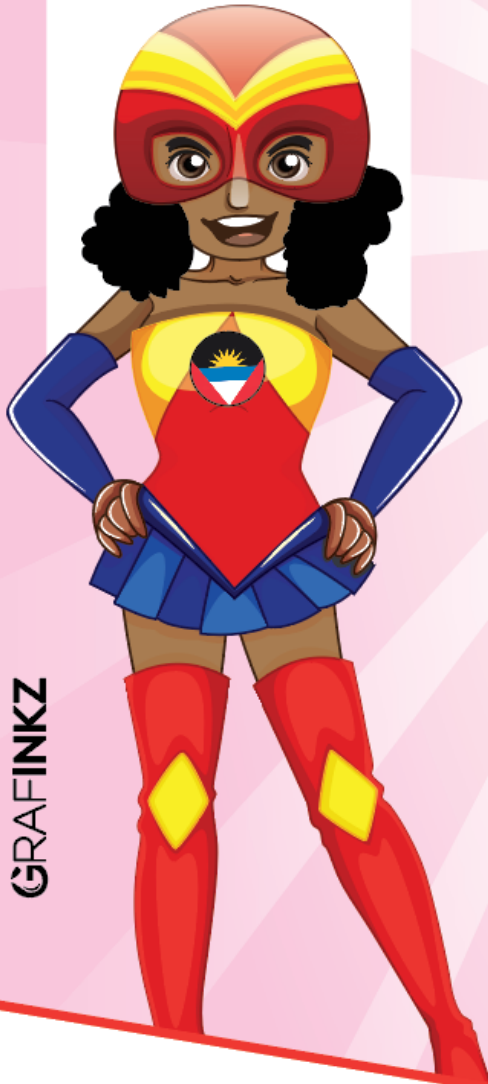
Campaign group Privacy International backed the tech firm’s decision. Encryption, it told the BBC, was “an

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Kendrick Lamar thrills fans with Rwanda concert

By Yves Bucyana

Fans are raving about rapper Kendrick Lamar's "extraordinary performance" in Rwanda's capital, Kigali.

Wowing fans with hit songs such as *She Needs Me*, *Loyalty* and *Humble*, he was the headliner at the inaugural Move Afrika festival co-created by anti-poverty organisation Global Citizen.

Top Rwandan musicians such as Bruce Melodie and Ariel Wayz also performed.

Lamar's pgLang company hopes to grow Move Afrika over the next five years into a cross-continental event.

Appearing on stage on Wednesday evening just before Lamar started, President Paul Kagame thanked the organisers. He said it was "a good way of ending the year, with music, with energy, with optimism".

Rwandan choreographers, along with Rwanda-born Sherrie Silver,



Kendrick Lamar plans to hold more concerts across Africa under the Move Afrika label.

joined Lamar onstage dancing traditional moves.

Julienne Kayitesi, 25, told the BBC the concert "was history for me".

"So many people in the world love Kendrick Lamar, I am now in those who got chance to see him performing live," she said.

Rwanda has invested heavily in organising and welcoming entertainment and sports events in order to boost tourism and attract

investors. It is also an exercise in gaining soft power.

The country has recently hosted international events such as the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the congress of football's world governing body, Fifa, and the Basketball Africa League.

Critics see this as a canny strategy to improve Rwanda's image - the country has been criticised by

human rights groups for its intolerance of free speech and opposition voices.

Last month, the UK Supreme Court ruled that British government plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda was unlawful as it left people sent there open to human rights breaches.

Global Citizen said Move Afrika hopes to "promote equity" as well as create jobs through employing local artists and crews.

cont'd from pg 10

essential defence, shielding journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers, artists, and marginalised groups from potential abuse by data-hungry companies and governments".

But Susie Hargreaves, chief executive of the Internet Watch Foundation, which works to identify and remove child sexual abuse material online, said it was outraged that Meta

had chosen to "prioritise the privacy of paedophiles over the safety of our children".

She accused the platform, which she noted had a strong track record of detecting large amounts of child abuse material before it ended up on its services, of "effectively rolling out the welcome mat for paedophiles".

It was now up to Ofcom "to show its teeth", Ms Hargreaves said.

The firm also announced on Wednesday that it would add a number of new features, including the ability to edit messages for up to 15 minutes after they have been sent.

It will also give users the ability to control if people who send messages receive "read receipts" telling them a message has been read.

The changes will take some months to fully roll out, the company said.

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CARICOM to meet in emergency session to discuss Guyana-Venezuela tension

CMC - The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is scheduled to hold an emergency session on Friday to discuss the latest developments between Venezuela and Guyana in the dispute over the Essequibo region.

This comes as several CARICOM member states, including the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago reinforced its call for respect of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) jurisdiction, for peace to be preserved and for full respect for Guyana's territorial integrity.

Plans for a meeting of the regional body were revealed by Trinidad's Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, Dr Amery Browne, who told the Trinidad Guardian that Caricom was currently in the process of convening an emergency session of Heads of Government via video conference for Friday.

"And will make additional pronouncements at such time," Browne added.

Caricom recently upheld the ICJ's ruling that Venezuela refrain from any action which would modify the current situation where Guyana exercises control over the Essequibo.

Browne said the ministry had received updates and



exchanged information with Guyana and Venezuela after last Sunday's Venezuelan referendum.

The ministry also remained in constant contact with Guyana's Foreign Ministry, its team in Caracas, Venezuela's Ambassador to Port-of-Spain, and with all Caricom counterparts and key external partners.

Browne added: "Caricom speaks with one voice on this border issue—that voice as always fully includes T&T—and we continue to clearly call for respect for international law and the jurisdiction of the ICJ for peace to be maintained and preserved, and for full respect for the ter-

ritorial integrity of Guyana and all member states."

In addition, the main opposition, United National Congress (UNC), has also called on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to prioritise a diplomatic solution to the present imbroglio with Guyana.

Meanwhile, UNC Foreign Affairs spokesman Rodney Charles noted the various developments, including Maduro's latest move on Essequibo.

"We also note the US has sent military advisers and that Guyana has taken the matter to the UN Security Council for appropriate action. We once again call on President Maduro to pri-

oritise a diplomatic solution to the present imbroglio."

Charles added, "One of the positives to emerge from this ongoing dispute is the forged unity among the disparate political and other forces in Guyana with the Guyanese government and opposition standing firmly in defence of their homeland.

"There are many lessons for Trinidad and Tobago in this Essequibo conflict. It's unfortunate that it took an external crisis to forge a measure of Guyanese unity. But now is the time for our Government to put our country first, set aside PNM paramountcy, and work as-

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Cayman Islands court orders father to bring child home from Turkey

CMC – A man who took his eight-year-old daughter, who was born in the Cayman Islands, has been ordered to bring her home.

The ruling was handed down by the Grand Court of the Cayman Islands on Wednesday.

According to court documents, the child was taken to her father's native country without the knowledge or consent of her mother who lives in Cayman.

The ruling in the confidential case that was released with reporting restrictions on identifying the family members, revealed that last month, the father told the mother he was taking the child to the movies but instead took her on a flight to London and then on to Istanbul.

It's reported that hours later, the father called the



mother to say that he was with the child at a local hotel and would bring her home by noon.

Later that day, the mother called the police, who were able to confirm that the child and the father had left on a British Airways flight to London and onward to Turkey.

The mother was told that her husband had purchased

one-way tickets, and she also learned that day that he had asked his business partner to buy out his interest.

The following day, the father admitted that they were in Turkey and sent messages asking the mother to join them there.

In court, the judge said he was satisfied that the court had jurisdiction to make orders in relation to

the child. Having found that the child was wrongfully taken from Cayman and having considered the "welfare checklist" in relation to the Hague Convention, with the child's welfare his paramount consideration, he issued an order requiring the father to return the child to Cayman immediately and blocked him from getting her education records.

cont'd from pg 14

siduously and genuinely towards a united T&T as our country faces many intractable challenges."

This follows measures instituted by Maduro on Tuesday to enforce the decisions of last Sunday's Venezuelan referendum, where voters reportedly heavily backed Venezuela's claim to the Essequibo region.

The measures included a reconfiguration of Venezuela's map to include the Essequibo and other immediate

steps to emphasise Venezuela's foothold there.

In response, the President of Guyana Dr Irfaan Ali said "this is a direct threat to Guyana's territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence, and in violation of fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations and OAS Charters."

"By defying the (ICJ), Venezuela has rejected international law, the rule of law generally, fundamental justice

and morality, and the preservation of international peace and security. They have literally declared themselves an outlaw nation.

"Nothing they do, however, will stop Guyana from proceeding with the case in the ICJ, or stop the ICJ from ultimately issuing its final judgment on the merits of the case.

"We will not allow our territory to be violated nor the development of our country to be stymied by this desperate threat."

Ukraine still hopeful for US aid package after Senate setback

Ukraine says it is hopeful that US lawmakers will approve new military aid for the country, despite Senate Republicans blocking a package on Wednesday.

Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the US, said she thought Congress could vote again by the year's end.

Republicans opposed the bill because it did not also include the US border security measures they wanted.

Another vote will be difficult with Congress slated to go home next week.

Markarova said in a Facebook post that her office continues to work actively with Congress. She said she hoped that lawmakers would approve a package that "will include defense, budget, humanitarian and energy aid for Ukraine" by Christmas.

The Senate is set to break for a holiday recess on 15 December and negotiations between Democrats and Republicans in the Senate are at a standstill. Any bill would also have to be approved by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, which has proved hesitant to continue the US financial commitment to Ukraine.

The \$110bn (£87.3bn) package proposed by President Joe Biden included



Oksana Markarova and other Ukrainian officials met with members of the Senate this week, but Congress remains at an impasse over new funding for Kyiv.

\$61bn for Ukraine, as well as funds for Israel and aid for Gaza.

The bill also included billions of dollars for increased border security.

But as migrant crossings at the US-Mexico border have reached near-record highs, Republican lawmakers have pushed for sweeping US immigration reforms. Their proposal would include more restrictions on those applying for asylum and resumed construction of a border wall.

The Senate vote did not come as a shock to Ukrainian officials, who were aware of Republican concerns.

But the failed aid package "does not eliminate the possibility of re-introducing the bill to the vote in the near future", Ms Markarova

wrote on social media. Despite the outward assurances, there are deepening concerns in Washington and Kyiv that vital military funding has become entangled in the contentious US border debate.

The US only has a few more weeks to continue its pace of support for Ukraine before funding runs dry, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said at a White House press briefing on Wednesday.

"We know that there's strong bipartisan support out there," he added. "It's just that there's a small number of republicans who want to hold that aid hostage for some pretty extreme border policies."

The impasse in Washington comes at a crucial time for Ukraine as its

counter-offensive against Russia has stalled.

The White House and Ukrainian officials have warned that US funds for Kyiv are running out. The officials and outside experts appear to agree that Kyiv could lose the war without them.

An end or significant curtailment of American military support would likely allow Russia to win, a recent analysis by the Institute for the Study of War warned.

Despite the failed vote, Ukraine plans to remain composed and "firm", said Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.

"Regardless of who, where and how they voted

cont'd on pg 17

Armenia and Azerbaijan to work towards peace deal

By Barbara Tasch

Armenia and Azerbaijan say they will move towards normalising relations, and will exchange prisoners captured during the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The two neighbours have been involved in a decades-long conflict over the disputed territory.

In a joint statement released on Thursday night, the two countries said they saw a “historical chance” for “long-awaited peace”.

Both countries said they hoped to sign a peace treaty by the end of the year.

EU Council president Charles Michel welcomed the move, calling it a “major breakthrough in Armenia-Azerbaijan relations”.

The countries say they will work towards signing a full peace treaty based on mutual respect for each others’ territorial integrity.

Baku is releasing 32 Armenian military servicemen and Yerevan is releasing two military servicemen, as a “gesture of goodwill”.

Other moves include Armenia’s support of Azerbaijan’s bid to host the COP29 climate summit by withdrawing its own candidacy. Azerbaijan has



The two neighbours have been involved in a decades-long conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

agreed to support Armenia’s candidacy of a regional group associated with the climate talks.

The two countries also called on the international community to support their efforts.

The agreement was reached during talks between the office of Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the administration of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

Aliyev and Pashinyan have met on several occasions for normalisation talks mediated by the EU, the US and Russia.

Talks had stalled in recent months

after Azerbaijan refused to participate in talks in the US and Spain, claiming bias on the part of Western countries. The two countries resumed talks again at the end of October in Iran.

The Caucasus neighbours have been locked in a decades-long conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which surrendered to Azerbaijan after an offensive in September.

The offensive led to over 100,000 ethnic Armenians fleeing the area.

The territory is recognised internationally as part of Azerbaijan but large areas of it had been controlled by ethnic Armenians for three decades.

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in any country in the world, we will not stop defending our country, we will not give up a single piece of our land and we will not forgive anyone killed or injured,” he wrote on X. “We will focus ... reload our weapons and continue to destroy the [R]ussian monster.”

Ukraine may have to, as the mood on Capitol Hill remained grim.

One of the Republican senators who opposed the package, South Carolina’s Lindsey Graham, said he did not believe a new package would be possible before the upcoming recess.

Mr Graham said President Joe Biden would need

to negotiate more. “It’s going to take his leadership or we are stuck,” he said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Mr Biden said he was “willing to make significant compromises on the border” in order to get the aid bill passed.

“This cannot wait,” he said, adding that “Republicans in Congress are will-

ing to give Putin the greatest gift he could hope for”.

As Senate Democrats expressed frustration with their Republican colleagues over the vote, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer expressed some scepticism over whether a new package could be approved before the break.

“We’ll see,” he said.



Antigua State College (orange jersey) defend against a free kick by Antigua Grammar School (black uniform) during their Under-20 Boys Division match at the PMS Playing Field on Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

OCS beat PMS to claim lead in U-20 Boys' Division

Ottos Comprehensive School (OCS) defeated Princess Margaret School (PMS) in a top-of-the-table clash to become the new leaders of the West Zone in the Under-20 Boys Division in the Ministry of Sports Secondary Schools' Football League on Wednesday.

Joylan Sinclair scored twice to lead Ottos Comprehensive to a 2-1 victory against Princess Margaret at the King George V. Recreation Grounds.

Sinclair scored in the 17th and 41st minutes to give Ottos Comprehensive a 2-0 lead before Jahlanie Barzey scored in the 43rd minute for Princess Margaret School, which has been eliminated from reaching the semi-finals.

Ottos Comprehensive started the game in second place with 19 points, one point adrift of leader Princess Margaret School.

Wednesday's result allows Ottos Comprehensive to overtake Princess Margaret School as the new leaders of the west zone by advancing to 22 points from nine matches.

It was the final group match for Princess Margaret School, which has slipped into third place on goal difference with 20 points from its quota of 10 matches.

Antigua State College, which started the day in third place, beat Antigua Grammar School 2-0 at the Princess Margaret School Playing Field to move into second place on goal dif-

ference by advancing to 20 points from nine matches.

Jevaun Parker had a 38th-minute conversion and James Simon scored in the 49th minute for Antigua State College. The result ensures that Antigua Grammar School remains in fourth place with 12 points from eight matches. The top two teams at the end of the round-robin group play will advance to the semi-finals.

Clare Hall Secondary ended its campaign in the Under-16 Boys' Division with a 2-0 victory against Irene B. Williams Secondary at the Princess Margaret School Playing Field on Wednesday.

Jayden Martin scored in the 8th minute, and Andre Henry had a 37th-min-

ute conversion for Clare Hall Secondary. The result ensures that Clare Hall Secondary will finish in second place behind unbeaten winners Princess Margaret School, which has already secured the Under-16 Boys' Division title by attaining an unassailable 30 points from 10 matches.

Clare Hall finished their quota of 11 matches with a total of 25 points. That tally cannot be surpassed by any of the other teams that are currently trailing Clare Hall in the standings.

It was the final encounter for Irene B. Williams Secondary, which finished its campaign with 13 points from its quota of 11 matches.

English Harbour among winners in Second Division

English Harbour, CPT-SA Wings and Celtics recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League on Wednesday.

English Harbour won for the second time in as many outings by coming from behind to claim a 4-1 victory against Earthquakes at the Fort Road Playing Field.

English Harbour scored four goals in the second half after Arnold "Keegan" James' 21st-minute conversion gave Earthquakes a 1-0 halftime lead.

Joshua Samuel scored the equalizer in the 50th minute and Nigel Graham scored in the 60th minute to give English Harbour the lead, which they never relinquished.

Joel Hernandez extended the lead with an 81st-minute conversion and Wayne Phillip converted a penalty kick in the 88th minute to complete English Harbour's victory.

Wings overcame a two-nil halftime deficit to pull off a 4-3 victory against West Ham at the Princess Margaret School Playing Field to claim their first win of the competition.

Damian Azille scored in the 2nd minute and Vaughn Roberts scored his



The English Harbour football team that beat Earthquake in their ABFA Second Division affair at the Fort Road Playing Field on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. (Photo by Elwin Francis)

first of two goals in the 3rd minute to give West Ham a 2-0 halftime lead.

Wings hit back by scoring four successive goals in the second half to snatch victory. Peter Jacobs reduced the deficit with a 58th-minute conversion.

Reyon Henry scored the equalizer in the 60th minute and Kadeem Campbell scored twice with conversions in the 62nd and 68th minutes to give Wings a 4-2 lead.

Roberts pulled a goal back for West Ham by scoring his second with

a penalty kick in the 74th minute. It was the second loss in two outings for West Ham.

After receiving a 5-1 drubbing against Earthquakes in their opening encounter, Celtics rebounded to claim their first win by snatching a 2-1 victory against Glanvilles at the Glanvilles Playing Field.

Redge Peters scored both goals for Celtics with conversions in the 3rd and 5th minutes. Vaskie Isaac scored in the 53rd minute for Glanvilles, which lost 4-0 against Freemans Vil-

lage in their opening encounter.

FC Master Ballerz and Soccer Academy played to a 1-1 draw in their encounter at the Radio Range Playing Field in Ottos.

Imani Joyce scored in the 5th minute for Soccer Academy and Peter Bellafanti scored in the 7th minute for FC Master Ballerz.

Soccer Academy finished the game with 10 men after Micah Peters received a red card in the 80th minute for using offensive, insulting and abusive language.



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Ramplers take lead in three-hand domino competition

Ramplers have taken over as leaders of the Antigua and Barbuda National Domino Association's (ABNDA) final three-hand competition of the year.

Former leaders Dominatrixx had a bye and Ramplers took advantage in the fifth round of matches to advance to the top of the standings in the accumulated points three-hand competition at the ABNDA's headquarters in Ottos on Tuesday night.

Ramplers won the third match of the fifth round to advance from third to first place with an overall total of 375 points. They scored 80 points to beat the A team of Bolans Revellers with 73 points and the Moise Eagles with 66 points.

The B team of Willikies Super Stars won the second match of the fifth round to jump from fourth to second place with an overall total of 367 points.

Willikies Super Stars B team scored 79 points to prevail against the A team of Full Clip with 74 points and Double Six Diamonds with 72 points.

Triple Dynamite slipped from second to third place after finishing last in the opening fifth-round match on Tuesday.

Willikies Super Stars A team won the opening

fifth-round match with an impressive score of 92 points. Double Six Ice scored 75 points to finish in second place, ahead of Triple Dynamite, who only managed to score 51 points.

The result lifted the Willikies A team from ninth to fifth place with an

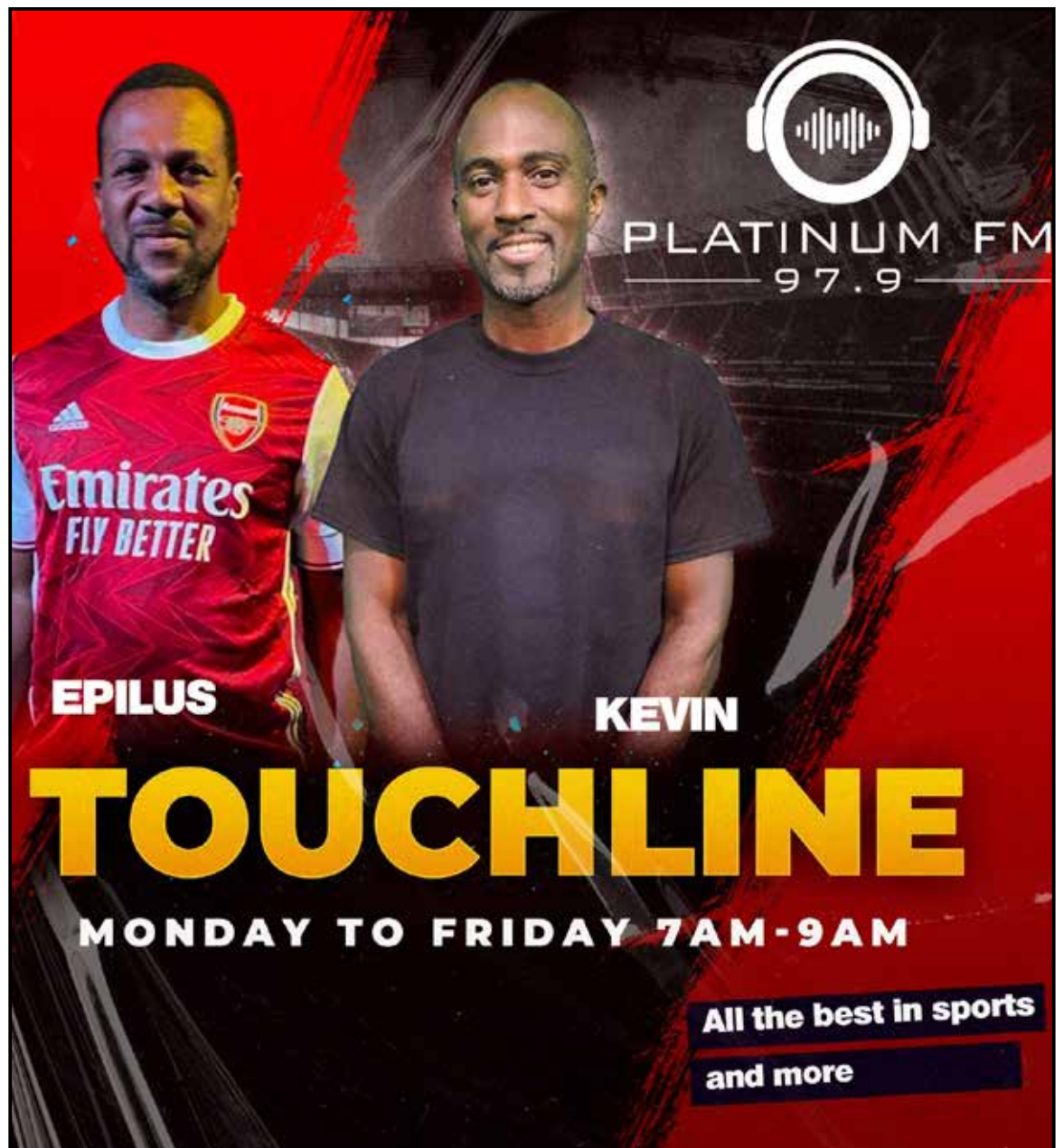
overall total of 330 points.

Unstoppables won the other fifth-round match by scoring 85 points to prevail against the B team of Bolans Revellers with 74 points and the Parham Strikers with 55 points.

Following the results, Unstoppables are now third from bottom of the

14-team competition with an overall total of 276 points. Parham Strikers move from fifth to fourth place with an overall total of 343 points.

There are two more rounds of matches remaining in the final three-hand competition of the 2023 ABNDA domestic season.



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Maximum 4-year ban sought for Paul Pogba in doping case

ROME (AP) - Anti-doping prosecutors in Italy requested a maximum four-year ban for Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba on Thursday after the World Cup winner tested positive for testosterone.

Pogba opted not to make a plea bargain with Italy's anti-doping agency, meaning the case will be tried before the country's anti-doping court. If the four-year ban is confirmed, it could end the 30-year-old Pogba's career.

Four-year bans are standard under the World Anti-Doping Code but can be reduced in cases where an athlete can prove their doping was not intentional, if the positive test was a result of contamination or if they provide "substantial assistance" to help investigators.

Pogba's positive test was announced in September, stemming from an exam that was carried out after Juventus' game at Udinese on Aug. 20.

Pogba did not play in



Juventus' Paul Pogba controls the ball during an Italian Cup soccer match between Internazionale and Juventus, at the Giuseppe Meazza San Siro Stadium, in Milan, Italy, April 26, 2023. Anti-doping prosecutors in Italy requested a four-year ban for Pogba on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. (AP)

the Serie A match but was on Juve's bench. Pogba has made no public comments on the case.

"Humanely, I'm sorry for Paul," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said in October.

The doping case is another negative note for a player who has been bothered by

injuries ever since rejoining Juventus from Manchester United in July of last year.

He was ruled out of France's run to the World Cup final last year due to a knee injury, played in only six Serie A matches for Juventus last season and two this season.

There's also been a po-

lice investigation ongoing in France into allegations that Pogba was targeted by extortionists - including by his older brother Mathias, who has denied any wrongdoing.

Pogba scored for France in the 4-2 win over Croatia in the 2018 World Cup final. He played in 178 matches for Juventus from 2012-16.

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host's top order in a devastating spell, claiming the wickets of Brandon King for 17, Keacy Carty for a duck and Shimron Hetmyer for a duck as well.

Curran's haul was a measure of redemption for his performance in the first ODI, in which he was hit for 98 runs in 9.5 overs without picking up a single wicket, the worst-ever figures for an England bowler.

"It was a tough day the other day,

but you need to keep moving forward and bounce back," Curran said.

"We did so many things right in that first game. The messages from the coaches and captain were just that. We had to come back today and put things right, which we did."

West Indies lost wickets cheaply early on in their innings and were left reeling on 23 for four, but captain Shai Hope (68) and Rutherford (63) put together a partnership of 129 runs to help

them to a respectable total.

Spinner Liam Livingstone took the wickets of both Hope and Rutherford to take the wind out of the West Indies' sails, while Gus Atkinson claimed two for 28 and Rehan Ahmed picked up two for 40.

The third and final ODI will be played at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday, before the two sides face each other in a five-match Twenty20 series.



England's captain Jos Buttler, right, plays an attacking shot during the second CG United One-Day International against the West Indies at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. (Getty Images)

England beat West Indies to level series

Sam Curran took three wickets and Jos Buttler scored a half-century to help England claim a six-wicket victory over the West Indies in the second CG United One-Day International at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Wednesday, leveling the three-match series at 1-1.

Set a target of 203 for victory, England romped home in less than 33 overs to set up a series finale in Barbados on Saturday.

Opener Will Jacks scored an assured 73 off 72 balls before being trapped lbw

by Sherfane Rutherford, while Buttler hit an unbeaten 58 in an unbroken 90-run partnership with Harry Brook (43 not out) to get the tourists over the finish line.

Captain Buttler's knock made him the fifth England batter to cross the 5,000-run mark in ODI cricket. The half-century was his first since September, prior to England's disappointing exit from the World Cup.

"Really pleasing," said Buttler, who scored just three runs in England's four-wicket defeat in the series opener at

the same venue in Antigua last Sunday.

"I've been playing for a while now, so it's great when you get to those milestones after playing for a long period of time. It's been a frustrating time recently."

Left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie was the pick of the West Indies' bowlers, picking up the wickets of Zak Crawley (3) and Ben Duckett (3) in back-to-back overs.

Earlier, Curran's three wickets for 33 runs decimated the *cont'd on pg 23*