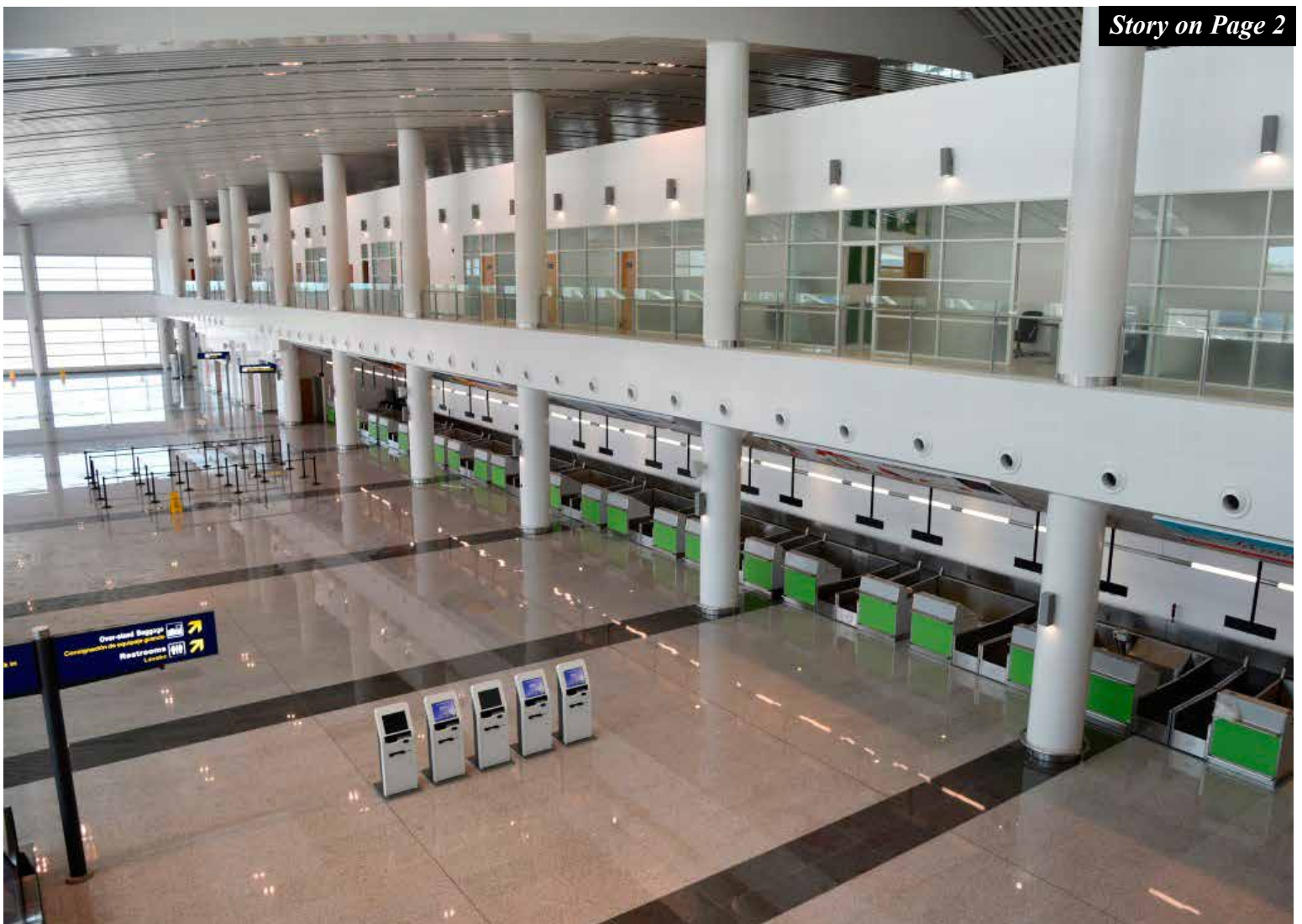


PAPER-LESS ENTRY COMING TO VCBIA



Story on Page 2

Immigration department to phase out 'E.D' forms

The paper-based Embarkation/disembarkation forms which visitors and resident are required to fill out and present to the Immigration Department upon entry into Antigua and Barbuda is to be phased out.

That's the word from Tourism Minister, Charles Max Fernandez. Speaking during a 'Questions and Answers' session at Tuesday meeting of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), Fernandez said the plan in to introduce this system perhaps as early as the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) conference in Antigua and Barbuda at the end of May this year. He was responding to a question on steps the government hopes to take to speed-up the clearance of passengers at the ports of entry, but mainly VC Bird International Airport.

The tourism minister acknowledged that the processing of visitors at the airport has presented quite a challenge especially on Saturdays when the home-porting operations are taking place as well as on Sundays.

In addition to eliminating the need to fill out a paper form prior to entry, he said the department will also add additional stations with more immigration officers to reduce occurrence

of backlog on days when several flights are on the ground at the same time.

Fernandez disclosed that the government is moving to the self-clearance system utilizing kiosks. He said the intention is to work with Canadian Bank Notes, the company that produces the Antigua and Barbuda passports and other sensitive documents for the country.

However, there is an outstanding amount owed to the company which has to be cleared off before work on the new paperless system proceeds. Fernandez is promising that the outstanding amounts will be paid shortly.



CEO of the ABTA Colin C. James (left) and Tourism Minister Charles Max Fernandez (right) field questions from delegates at ASTA meeting at Sandals Antigua Grande Resort



Call for submissions: Naming and Logo Design for Antigua CPL Franchise.

The Worldwide Sports Management Group is thrilled to announce Antigua and Barbuda will be returning to the CPL (Caribbean Premier League), and wants YOU to be a part of its identity.

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Submissions should be sent to antigua.cpl@gmail.com and jcmiller712@gmail.com on or before the deadline of January 15, 2024.

The fan who submits the winning name and logo will be awarded with USD1000.00 and two (2) season tickets to the home matches of the upcoming CPLT20 2024.

COP Rodney to update nation on criminal behaviour

The Police Commissioner, Atlee Rodney will provide the public with a comprehensive overview of the crime situation in Antigua and Barbuda when he joins the Post-Cabinet briefing on Thursday morning.

The Commissioner of Police was invited to the Cabinet on Wednesday along with the Top Brass of the RPFAB.

The Commissioner provided members with a comprehensive update on crimes and arrests in Antigua and Barbuda in the year just ended (2023), compared to previous years.

There has been a negligible change in petty crime in 2023 over 2022; and it was also reported that there has been a minute reduction in road fatalities between both years.

The commissioner reported that trained dogs were assisting in catching those who attempted to import illicit drugs, firearms, and other contrabands. Eight (8) officers are trained to operate the K-9 unit.

The police are preparing for the May 27th – 30th United Nations Small Island Developing States Conference.

Approximately 5,000 delegates are expected to spend almost one week in

several hotels across the island. The Police are also responsible for collecting revenue for various activities and collected more than EC\$1 million.

The Superintendent of the Fire Department addressed the Cabinet on the need for laddered trucks since many of the new building being constructed in Antigua and Barbuda are no longer single storey. As such, more laddered trucks are needed.



Police Commissioner, Atlee Rodney

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Police seek ‘person of interest’

The police say they are making ‘good progress’ that will soon lead to an arrest in the case where a 24-year-old man was shot dead on Sunday night.

Head of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), Clifton Cabral, said the police investigation into the shooting has identified someone they say is ‘a person of interest’ who they suspect may have been the perpetrator of the crime.

ACP Cabral did not name the individual but he said the suspect is ‘well-known’ to law enforcement and teams are currently on the ground in an all-out search for the man.

“We received intelligence that he was staying in an apartment at a particular location, but when we arrived, there he was nowhere to be found. Our search therefore contin-

ues.” he reported.

According to the CID head the shooting may have been motivation by revenge.

“Our information is that this shooting was a reprisal for another incident that happened sometime in the past.

“We also learnt that the person of interest has indicated that he will not turn himself in until he exacts revenge on another individual,” he revealed.

That other individual is currently under close police scrutiny.

24-year-old Keiron ‘Cracker’ Hutson of Yorks was pronounced dead at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre at approximately 8:30 pm on Sunday, roughly one hour after he was shot by an assailant at a social gathering on Christian Street, Grays Farm.



Shooting victim 24-year-old Keiron ‘Cracker’ Hutson

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A local doctor heads a team which wants to purchase the Cancer Centre

A local doctor who is part of a team which wants to purchase the Cancer Centre has made an offer to the government to buy the complex.

The doctor, whose identity has not been disclosed, presented a proposal to the government at Wednesday's Cabinet meeting

"It was anticipated that progress would have been made with the majority owner of the shares in the Cancer Centre who is demanding EC\$40 million dollars for a building that has been valued at EC\$9 million.

The Cabinet then invited into its meeting a local medical practitioner and two investors who have an interest in operating from that building," according to the Cabinet Notes.



The local medical practitioner and team want to purchase the building in order to operate therefrom a new anti-cancer treatment method, utilizing an innovative approach, the Notes explained.

"The investors are interested in treating many whom they would induce to come to Antigua for this special treatment. It is claimed that their treatment method can cure many cancers without

radiation and chemotherapy.

"Their methodology is intended to attack the cancer cells and to leave other cells unaffected; hence, cancer patients who utilize their method are made whole rather than made ill or weakened by radiation and chemotherapy," the Notes indicated.

The investors have agreed to treat nationals and residents of Antigua and Barbuda utilizing their sys-

tem at a fraction of the cost charged to well-off clients coming from developed countries.

Other offers were made to repair the machines that are in the building, so that those who wish to get the traditional treatment for cancer could continue to receive the same. The Cabinet agreed to return to the item next week Wednesday when a firm decision will be made.

Major upgrades in store for school plants

Major repairs and expansions are planned for several of the country's secondary and primary schools for this year.

The Ministry of Education said it wants to ensure that students within the nation's school system are able to learn in an atmosphere that is conducive to the proper delivery of quality education.

Perhaps the most significant development will take place at Five Islands where the current primary school will be demolished as part of the planned expansion of the University of the West Indies campus there.

Another site has been identified

where a new school will be constructed in its place.

"The new primary school at Five Islands will be a state-of-the-art structure with accommodations for an additional 100 students. The building will both be hurricane and earthquake proof with air conditioner throughout as well as a secondary source of water," according to Director of Education, Clare Browne.

Other institutions earmarked for expansion or rehabilitation include the Irene B. Williams Secondary in Swetes, Sir Novelle Richards Academy in Potters, Sir McChesney George Secondary in Barbuda, St. Mary's

School of Excellence in Bolans, the Antigua Girls High School, and the Ottos Comprehensive School.

In addition to improvements in the physical school plants and the professional training of teachers announced this week, the Ministry of Education will be undertaking a training programme for parents of special needs children.

"The training earmarked for these parents will allow them to be able to access and navigate Google Classroom, which is one of the teaching tools that the ministry employs as it moves to adopt the emerging technologies in the classrooms.

Sandals Antigua Grande Resort reports 'record year' in 2023

One of the top hotel brands that currently operates properties in Antigua and Barbuda, Sandals Antigua Grande Resort, is reporting that it experienced a record year in 2023.

Newly appointed General Manager, David Latchimy, who made the disclosure, said the company anticipates that this performance will continue into 2024.

“We had an incredible year in 2023, a record year for the company, and with our future developments we are anticipating greater success in 2024 and beyond. We have been running very healthy occupancy levels throughout last year and you will see this resort has been a favourite of many travelers,” he further reported.

He added that the rate of returning guests is quite high and in addition, the company continues to attract more and more new visitors to the island. “I have seen it where many of our returning guests see this resort as being their ‘home away from home’,” he noted.

Latchimy announced that Sandals Antigua Grande will undergo what he described as ‘re-imagining’ with a substantial investment into upgrading the property. This development is in store for some time this year. He revealed that the company is currently finalizing plans for the upgrade.



New Sandals Antigua Grande Resort General Manager, David Latchimy (Left) and Sandals Regional Director of Public Relations and Communications, Sunil Ramdeen (right) at Tuesday's ASTA meeting.

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Commentary

Work together to meet challenges and achieve common prosperity

By Zhang Yanling, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Antigua and Barbuda

As the world enters a new period of turbulence and transformation, more and more countries are realizing that the destiny of the world should be in the hands of all countries and that the future of the world needs to be created by all nations together.

What kind of world should we build and how should we build this world, The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs that was held in Beijing on December 27-28, 2023, gave an explanation of China's proposal, that is, to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

The bedrock of building a community with a shared future for mankind is consisted of 6 aspects:

- the goal is to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and shared prosperity.

- the pathway is promoting global governance that features extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit.

- the guiding principle is to apply the common values of humanity.

- the basic underpinning lies in building a new type of international relations.

- the strategic guidance comes from the implemen-



tation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

- and the platform for action is high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

On this basis, we hope countries could join together to meet challenges and achieve prosperity for all, and usher in a bright future of peace, security, prosperity and progress for our world.

Given the series of major issues and challenges facing the world today, China calls for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

An equal and orderly multipolar world is one in which all countries, regardless of size, are treated as equals, hegemonism and power politics are reject-

ed, and democracy is truly promoted in international relations. To keep the progress toward greater multipolarity generally stable and constructive, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter must be observed by all, the universally recognized, basic norms governing international relations must be upheld by all, and true multilateralism must be practiced.

A universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization is one that meets the common needs of all countries, especially the developing countries, and properly addresses the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources. It is important to resolutely oppose the attempt to roll back globalization and abuse the concept of security, oppose all forms of unilateralism

and protectionism, firmly promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, overcome the structural problems hindering the healthy development of the world economy, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

China and Antigua and Barbuda have made fruitful achievements under the Belt and Road cooperation, opening up new horizons for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

It is believed that under the strategic leadership of the leaders of both sides, the pragmatic cooperation between the two countries will achieve new and greater development, and the community with a shared future between China and Antigua and Barbuda will grow from strength to strength.

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Adan Canto: X-Men and Designated Survivor star dies of cancer at 42

By Ian Youngs

Actor Adan Canto, who was known for US TV shows like *Designated Survivor* and films including *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, has died at the age of 42.

The Mexican star had suffered from appendiceal cancer, his publicist said.

Canto was the national security adviser in *Designated Survivor* alongside Kiefer Sutherland, who paid tribute to the actor as “such a wonderful spirit”.

In the 2014 *X-Men* film, Canto played mutant Sunspot, and co-star Halle Berry later cast him in her movie *Bruised*.

The actress and director wrote on Instagram: “I don’t have the words just yet... but my dear sweet friend Adan just gained his wings. Forever, forever in my heart.”

Canto’s wife Stephanie Ann posted a photo of the couple, a Bible passage and the words: «Forever my treasure Adan, see you soon.»

In a statement, his publicist Jennifer Allen said: “Adan had a depth of spirit that few truly knew. Those who glimpsed it were changed forever. He will be greatly missed by so many.”

In his message, Sutherland added: “As an actor his desire to do well, to be great, and then do better, was truly impressive and



The actor was Sunspot, who can absorb and manipulate solar energy, in *X-Men: Days of Future Past*.

he will be greatly missed. I am also heartbroken for his wife, Steph and his two young children. Adan, may you rest in peace.”

Canto played Aaron Shore in *Designated Survivor*, which aired on the ABC network in 2016 and 17 before being picked up by Netflix for a third and final season.

Co-star Maggie Q wrote: “Beautiful friend... You are the level of person that Hollywood didn’t even deserve. Kindness and warmth and generosity of spirit - total dedication to your family, and ALWAYS doing the right thing. No one had your moral compass nor did they even come close.

“I don’t understand this. Anyone who knew you was a lucky one. That’s all I do know.”

Italia Ricci, another *Designated Survivor* castmate, wrote that she was «completely lost for words».

“He was the strongest person I know in every sense of the word and I am so angry that this happened. No-one deserved this less than this sweet, brilliant, kind, and gentle man...”

“I’m so sorry for everyone hurting at this devastating loss and am beyond heartbroken for his family. You’ll be in my heart always.”

Canto went on to star as gangster Arman Morales in Fox’s crime drama *The Cleaning Lady* in 2022.

“He’ll always be our Arman,” Fox posted on X. “Adan Canto, your memory will be cherished forever.”

In a joint statement, Fox and Warner Bros Television

described him as “a wonderful actor and dear friend”.

“Most recently, he lit up the screen in *The Cleaning Lady* with a powerful performance that showcased his artistry, range, depth and vulnerability,” the broadcasters said.

“This is an unfathomable loss, and we grieve alongside his wife Stephanie, their children and loved ones. We will miss Adan dearly.”

Canto made his breakthrough in the US in Fox thriller *The Following* with Kevin Bacon in 2013, and appeared in ABC sitcom *Mixology* and drama *Blood & Oil*.

He also appeared as Colombian politician Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in Netflix’s *Narcos*, and his film credits included spy thriller *Agent Game* in 2022.

Amazon slashes jobs at Twitch, MGM and Prime Video

Amazon is to axe hundreds of staff across its subsidiaries Twitch, Prime Video and MGM studios.

More than 500 Twitch employees - a third of the streamer's workforce - will be laid off, according to a note from chief executive Dan Clancy.

Amazon said several hundred employees at Prime Video and film studio MGM will also lose their jobs this week.

The tech giant laid off more than 27,000 staff members in 2023 despite bumper profits.

Twitch was initially set up for gamers to watch and share video gameplay online. It was bought by Amazon in 2014 for \$970m (£585m at the time).

In an email to employees, Mr Clancy said he was taking the "painful step to reduce our headcount" to "build a more sustainable business".

He added that the company paid out \$1bn to streamers in 2023, but had "conservative predictions of how we expect to grow in the future."

Amazon made \$9.9bn profit in July to September, according to its most recent earnings report. That was up from \$2.9bn in the same period in 2022.

In an email sent to staff at Prime Video and Amazon MGM Studios, senior



vice president of the department Mike Hopkins wrote: "We've identified opportunities to reduce or discontinue investments in certain areas while increasing our investments and focus on content and product initiatives that deliver the most impact."

Mr Hopkins added that it was a "difficult decision to make".

The email indicated that job losses affect staff in the US and around the world.

Amazon bought the hundred-year-old MGM Studios for \$8.45bn in 2021.

In December, it announced it would start putting adverts on Prime Video from 5 February 2024.

The reductions at Amazon are the latest in a long series of job cuts in the tech sector, which had expanded rapidly as people increasingly turned to digital services during the pandemic, before

contracting as that enthusiasm waned.

According to US career consultancy Challenger,

Gray & Christmas, the tech sector cut 168,032 jobs in 2023 - up 73% compared to 2022.



Guyana seeks US help to boost military

Guyana's government said it is seeking help from the US to improve its defence capabilities amid fears that neighbouring Venezuela might one day seize a disputed region in western Guyana that is rich in minerals and oil.

The announcement follows two days of talks among top Guyanese officials and Daniel P. Erikson, deputy assistant secretary of defence for the Western Hemisphere who travelled to the South American country to discuss defence and security partnerships.

The talks ended late Tuesday with Erikson saying the US would help Guyana create a more organised and better equipped military in coming months. He did not provide further details. Erikson also said that security forces and specialised training teams that have visited Guyana in the past year will continue to do so in 2024.

Erikson told reporters that Guyana is seeking to modernise its defence capabilities, and that part of the talks focused on scope and capability, as well as cybersecurity.

"One thing of great interest to us is ensuring that as Guyana looks to increase its defence capacities, it does so through a plan that is strategic, nested in its overall defence institutions, and sustainable over time," Erikson said.

He described the talks with Guyanese officials as productive and said the US is aware of what steps are needed to improve defence capabilities.

"We are looking forward to working with them, especially deepening information sharing," he said. "We do recognise that Guyana's at a turning point in terms of its own economic development, in terms of the regional role that it is capable of playing, and so we want to make sure that our defence relationship with Guyana continues to meet the times as the situation in Guyana continues to evolve."

Erikson's trip comes just weeks



Chairman of the Special Commission for the Defence of Guyana Essequibo Hermann Escarra, stands next to Venezuela's new map that includes the Essequibo territory, a swath of land that is administered and controlled by Guyana but claimed by Venezuela, during an unveiling ceremony in Caracas, Venezuela, December 8, 2023. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix, File)

after a century-old dispute over Guyana's Essequibo region deepened, with Venezuela holding a referendum in December to claim sovereignty over an area that represents two-thirds of Guyana.

Tensions continued to worsen late last year until Guyana President Irfaan Ali and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro met in the eastern Caribbean island of St Vincent as part of an emergency mediation meeting organized by regional leaders to prevent further escalation. After the meeting, both sides agreed to refrain from using force, but the territorial dispute continues.

Venezuela has long insisted that Essequibo was part of its territory during the Spanish colonial period and argues a 1966 Geneva agreement among Venezuela, Britain and then-British Guiana, now Guyana, nullified a border drawn in 1899 by international arbitrators.

Venezuela stepped up its aggression toward Guyana after American oil giant ExxonMobil and consortium

partners discovered huge deposits of oil and gas off Guyana's coast in 2015. Daily production is at nearly 600,000 barrels of oil and is expected to increase.

Late last year, the US and Guyana conducted routine joint overflights near the border region with Venezuela during the height of tension leading up to the Venezuelan referendum. Guyana also has hosted joint military exercises with the US and other Caribbean nations as recently as last July.

A British warship also arrived in Guyana in late December, prompting Venezuela to start military exercises near the disputed territory. The UK Defence Ministry said the ship visited Guyana as part of multiple engagements with the region, and that the vessel would undergo training exercises with Guyana's military.

Tensions between Guyana and Venezuela have subsided some this month, with leaders of both countries scheduled to meet later this year in Brazil to continue talks.

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Caesarean deliveries surge in Puerto Rico, reaching a record rate

Cesareans are surging in the US territory of Puerto Rico, which has one of the world's highest rates with more than 50 per cent of babies now delivered via surgery compared with only 32 per cent on the US mainland, according to a federal report released Wednesday.

The rates of cesarean delivery on the island increased from 2018 to 2022 for each age group younger than 40 after remaining stable for nearly a decade, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report did not provide an explanation, but medical experts in Puerto Rico say the reasons behind the surge vary and include the island's crumbling health care system.

"In general, hospitals have limited personnel and few economic resources," said Dr Carlos Díaz Vélez, president of Puerto Rico's Association of Surgical Doctors.

As a result, ob-gyns prefer to schedule a cesarean to ensure they will have all the medical personnel required for a birth, he said.

"They prefer it be organised than improvised," Díaz said. "It guarantees security."

More than a dozen delivery rooms have closed across Puerto Rico in the past decade because of doctors moving to the US mainland and a record drop in births, with only 17,772 births reported last year. That's the lowest since record-keeping began in the late 1880s.

Díaz said a spate of lawsuits against Puerto Rican ob-gyns in the previous decade that he described as "frivolous" also have prompted doctors to schedule cesareans to reduce risks.

Women also prefer cesareans for aesthetic reasons or to avoid pain,



Doctors and nurses work in the neonatal intensive care unit at The Medical Centre in San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 11, 2010. (AP Photo/Ricardo Arduengo, File)

since epidurals in Puerto Rico are routinely not covered by insurance companies, said Dr Annette Pérez-Delboy, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist who specializes in high-risk pregnancies and previously worked in New York.

"In Puerto Rico, women are afraid of vaginal birth," she said.

Pérez-Delboy coincided with Díaz that a lack of medical personnel also has contributed to a rise in cesareans. In addition, she noted that in vitro fertilisations have increased, leading to more twins being conceived, which leads to more cesareans to avoid risky births.

Pérez-Delboy also said that up-and-coming doctors are not well-versed in using forceps or vacuums, and as a result opt for cesareans to avoid legal action.

"For a doctor in Puerto Rico, it is better to do a cesarean section, since it pays more, you have it on time, it has less risk of litigation and the mother leaves happier," she said, adding that doctors and patients are aware that vaginal births are better. "Everyone knows it, and everyone understands

it, but you have to put yourself in the shoes of these doctors."

In recent years, cesarean deliveries in Puerto Rico increased by more than 10 per cent in three of six municipalities that reported at least 1,000 births, according to the CDC report.

The biggest increase occurred in mothers younger than 20, jumping from 37 per cent to more than 42, according to the report.

Puerto Rico's Health Department has said that more than half of all cesareans performed on the island were not medically justified, and that nearly 80 per cent of women who underwent the surgery never presented risk factors.

Heidi Anne Vera, a 47-year-old mother of two, is one of the few women who had a cesarean for medical reasons.

"It was an emergency," she said. "It was not planned."

She had worked with a doula and prepared to give birth at home, but her son was not in the correct position and her blood pressure began to spike.

"That's when we decided to go to a
cont'd on pg 15

Illegal New York synagogue tunnel leads to nine arrests

By Phil McCausland

Nine members of a New York Hasidic Jewish community have been arrested and charged over a secret tunnel that connected to a historic synagogue.

They fought police after city officials and leaders of the Chabad-Lubavitch headquarters came to close the tunnel.

The men are charged with criminal mischief, reckless endangerment and obstructing governmental administration.

A spokesperson for the Chabad called them a “group of extremist students”.

The tunnels were built under a prominent street in Brooklyn, where the Chabad-Lubavitch headquarters are located. The building is one of the most significant Jewish sites in the city.

City inspectors were called to the Chabad on Monday to conduct an emergency structural inspection. There were looming con-



cerns that the illegal tunnel could have caused damage to the famous property.

A brawl broke out after police found a group of young men blocking efforts to inspect and fill the tunnel with cement. Some of the men then broke through the wall of the prayer space. Those acts led to the arrests.

Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, the chairman of the Chabad, thanked police for their efforts and said the community was “pained by the van-

dalism of a group of young agitators”.

“These odious actions will be investigated, and the sanctity of the synagogue will be restored,” he said.

It is unclear who built the tunnel, how they did it and what their motivations were. It appears the tunnel connects to at least one other building on the street in Brooklyn.

One local told the New York Times that the men sought to build the tunnel to

hasten the expansion of the synagogue.

Some members who have attended services and functions at the Chabad have reportedly complained about overcrowding in the building in recent years.

Videos and photos from inside the building on Monday, however, showed a small group of mostly young men trying to block the tunnel from being filled with cement.

cont'd on pg 16

cont'd from pg 14
 doctor,” she said.

The World Health Organization recommends a cesarean rate of between 10% to 15%, noting that the average rate for the Americas is nearly 40 per cent. Once the rate surpasses 10%, there is no evidence that mortality rates improve, according to the agency.

“The sustained, unprecedented rise in caesarean section rates is a ma-

major public health concern,” the organisation said in a 2018 report.

Cesareans are considered a safe procedure, but the WHO noted that any surgery carries risks, and that cesareans could affect future pregnancies or put someone’s life at risk if performed in a place with limited resources.

The organisation said that factors contributing to the rise in cesareans are complex, adding that some of the most common reasons are fear of pain,

the convenience of scheduling a birth and the perception that cesareans are less traumatic for a baby.

For the US as a whole, the cesarean delivery rate is much lower but also has been rising. After generally declining from 2009 to 2019, it inched up for three straight years, accounting for 32.2 per cent of births in 2022, up slightly from 32.1 per cent the year before. Data for 2023 has not yet been released.

US and UK hint at military action after largest Houthi attack in Red Sea

By David Gritten

The US and UK have hinted they could take military action against Yemen's Houthi rebels, after they repelled the largest attack yet on Red Sea shipping.

Carrier-based jets and warships shot down 21 drones and missiles launched by the Iran-backed group on Tuesday night.

The allies warned of "consequences" for such attacks. Asked about potential strikes in Yemen, UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "Watch this space."

The Houthis said they targeted a US ship providing support to Israel.

The have repeatedly claimed - often falsely - that they are attacking merchant vessels linked to Israel in protest at Israeli actions during the war in Gaza.

Tuesday's attack was the 26th on commercial shipping in the Red Sea since 19 November.

The US military said Iranian-designed one-way attack drones, anti-ship cruise missiles and anti-ship ballis-



The UK's Ministry of Defence shared images of the HMS Diamond deploying Sea Viper missiles and guns.

tic missiles were launched from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen at around 21:15 local time (18:15 GMT).

Eighteen drones, two cruise missiles and one ballistic missile were shot down by F/A-18 warplanes from the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D Eisenhower, which is deployed in the Red Sea, and by four destroyers, the USS Gravely, USS Laboon, USS Mason and HMS Diamond.

HMS Diamond shot down seven of the Houthi drones using its guns and Sea

Viper missiles, each costing more than £1m (\$1.3m), a defence source said.

No injuries or damage were reported.

Later, Houthi military spokesman Yahya al-Sarea confirmed its forces had carried out an operation involving "a large number of ballistic and naval missiles and drones".

"It targeted a US ship that was providing support for the Zionist entity [Israel]," he said.

"The operation came

as an initial response to the treacherous assault on our naval forces by the US enemy forces," he added, referring to the sinking of three Houthi speed boats and killing of their crews by US Navy helicopters during an attempted attack on a container ship on 31 December.

He added that the rebels would "not hesitate to adequately deal with all hostile threats as part of the legitimate right to defend our country, people and nation".

cont'd on pg 17

cont'd from pg 15



International

AROUND THE WORLD

cont'd from pg 16

A promotional graphic for the radio show "Touchline". It features two men, Epilus and Kevin, standing side-by-side. Epilus is on the left, wearing a red Arsenal football jersey with "Emirates FLY BETTER" on the front. Kevin is on the right, wearing a dark grey t-shirt. The background is a dark, textured red. In the top right corner, there is a white headphones icon with a soundwave inside, and the text "PLATINUM FM 97.9". Below the men, the word "TOUCHLINE" is written in large, bold, yellow letters. Underneath that, it says "MONDAY TO FRIDAY 7AM-9AM". In the bottom right corner, there is a dark blue box with the text "All the best in sports and more" in white.

Emirates
FLY BETTER

EPILUS

KEVIN

PLATINUM FM
97.9

TOUCHLINE

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and more









WI stumble on first day of warm-up match

The West Indies' batting frailties were again exposed, as they stumbled against an inexperienced Cricket Australia (CA) XI to reach 251 for eight at the end of the opening day of their three-day warm-up match in Adelaide on Wednesday.

Despite getting some positive starts, the West Indies batsmen were unable to push on against a CA XI that does not feature any player with Test experience, which basically underscores the Caribbean side's chances, or lack thereof, heading into the first Test against Australia next week.

After opting to take first strike on a dry Karen Rolton wicket, captain Kraigg Brathwaite, who showed class in their previous Test Down Under last summer, led from the front with his 52 at the top.

Kavem Hodge and Justin Greaves, both showed head coach Andre Coley that they are ready for a Test debut, as they scored 52 and 62 respectively.

But amidst the positives, were also concerns for the Caribbean side. Top-order batters Kirk McKenzie (23)



West Indies players Kavem Hodge, left, and Justin Greaves leave the field during the opening day of the three-day practice match against a Cricket Australia XI at the Karen Rolton Oval in Adelaide, Australia, on Wednesday, January 10, 2024. (CWI Media)

and Alick Athanaze (zero) were both bounced out, in dismissals that will no doubt catch the attention of Australia's seamers.

Brathwaite's dismissal also raised eyebrows. He was caught trying to paddle-sweep Doug Warren in a half-hearted shot that capped a collapse of three wickets for three runs.

Another collapse of four wickets for eight runs, came late in the day around the second new ball, after Hodge and Greaves steadied the in-

nings and took the score to 223 for four.

Liam Haskett led the CA XI's bowling attack with three for 57, while rising New South Wales talent Jack Nisbet finished with two for 50, and Victorian spinner Warren claimed two for 47.

Between them, the three bowlers have played a total of nine first-class matches. That adds impetus to the genuine concerns over the form of the once-proud team from the Caribbean headed into the two-Test series.

The West Indies will field at least three debutants in next Wednesday's first Test in Adelaide, with seven uncapped players in their 15-man squad.

Former captain Jason Holder and all-rounder Kyle Mayers both opted out of the tour to pursue Twenty20 opportunities.

The West Indies were beaten convincingly in two Tests in Australia last summer, with only five players from that tour in the current squad. (Sportsmax)