

HEALTH MINISTER WANTS MORE EFFORTS TO FIGHT CERVICAL CANCER

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ANTIGUA
AND BARBUDA
Romance

The health minister wants more efforts to fight cervical cancer

The Health Minister wants a more concerted effort to fight cervical cancer which he reported is on the rise in Antigua and Barbuda.

Health Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph, reported to his Cabinet colleagues that cervical cancer cases have doubled in the last two years.

He explained that the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is solely responsible for this increase in a cancer that affects women in the society. It was noted that HPV is spread through sexual contact and that the disease strikes at women, causes cancer, and can be prevented by administering a vaccine before girls begin engaging in sexual relations.

The Minister pointed out that vaccination, treatment and screening are the three steps that can be taken



Health Minister, Sir Molwyn Joseph

to reduce the disease significantly, and it can be eliminated from the Antigua and Barbuda population in four years.

A Ministry of Health position paper noted it is concerned about the high incidence of cervical cancer and the high number of cervical cancer-related deaths globally and locally. Data

show that in Antigua and Barbuda, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer in women and the third leading cause of death from cancer in women.

“We are aware that cervical cancer is preventable and curable if detected early and adequately treated. Therefore, the implementation of WHO’s global strat-

egy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem gives hope that by 2030, cervical cancer and its direct and indirect impact on women, their families and countries will be a thing of the past,” the document stated.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Health launched the National HPV Vaccination Program in 2018 and in September 2022, the National Cervical HPV Testing Program, piloted in 5 clinics. Over the past 6 months, 1,571 women 30-49 years were screened, superseding the 1,500 target and representing an approximate 100% increase in the number of women normally screened yearly in primary healthcare.

The programme will be scaled up next month with

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Works Ministry to introduce new road construction and repairs technique

Minister of Works, Maria Browne, has informed the Cabinet that her ministry is looking closely at a new road construction and repairs method which she plans to put into practice shortly.



The Minister of Works said the new method, described as roller-compact-concrete-pavement, will become the new approach for road building. In her explanation, she said under this method, the pavement absorbs far less moisture than asphalt roads to which the country has grown accustomed, and that it will not develop potholes.

She announced that work on community roads will commence shortly utilizing this new technology.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet was updated on the ongoing work at the Magistrate's

Minister of Works, Maria Browne Court on High Street. Reports are that the rehabilitation is almost complete and may likely be ready by the end of January 2024 if no disruptions take place.

Additionally, the Cabinet agreed to complete the seating stand at the Bolans Playing Field which was stalled because of the lack of building resources and other challenges.

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the official launch of a national set of guidelines to combat the incidence of the HPV among women in the society.

The Minister is also voicing concerns over what he has reported as a crisis in kidney failures in the country. This he noted, is based on the number of adults whose kidneys have begun to fail them due to hypertension and diabetes.

He again reiterated the need for a balanced diet, a reduction in salty foods and sugary drinks, and the need for exercise.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the major cause of death and amputations among the Antigua and Barbuda adult population. Changing diet and an active lifestyle are two methods by which these dreaded diseases can be avoided.



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- Only suitable applications will be considered and acknowledged.

Antigua and Barbuda ranked among top honeymoon destinations

Antigua and Barbuda has been ranked among the world’s top honeymoon destinations by TripAdvisor’s 2024 Travelers’ Choice Awards Best of the Best.

In its latest rankings, Antigua and Barbuda secured the 25th spot in the world from among hundreds of other destinations.

“These awards represent the pinnacle of recognition by TripAdvisor, with winners forming the top 1% of TripAdvisor’s 8 million listings globally. Antigua and Barbuda now join the elite ranks of top destinations in the world to include the Maldives, Tulum, Bora

and Mauritius,” according to a release from the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority (ABTA).

It describes TripAdvisor as the world’s largest travel guidance platform, and it is recognised for its traveler-driven insights. This ac-

colade rooted in “a high volume of above-and-beyond reviews and opinions” from travelers, over a 12-month period, stands as a credible marker of the islands’ appeal to couples and signifies the “highest level of excellence in travel.”

Minister of Tourism Charles ‘Max’ Fernandez remarked, “Receiving this recognition from travelers themselves is a great honour as it is one of the most coveted and recognized awards in the travel space, we acknowledge how valuable this is to elevate and further position us as a top destination for couples. There is no doubt that our partnership with TripAdvisor has been instrumental in growing our romance business and increasing our brand awareness among discerning travelers.”

Chief Growth Officer *cont’d on pg 5*



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Three in custody for firearm and ammunition

Three people are in police custody charged with the possession of firearm and ammunition; however, this case is separate from the attempt to smuggle a 9 mm firearm and ammunition into the country uncovered on Monday.

The police communications unit reported that this case involves three individuals who were caught in a police stop-and-search operation and

who had the firearm in their vehicle.

“On Tuesday this week, the police intercepted a vehicle during a stop-and-search exercise on Friars Hill Road and found an illegal firearm among the occupants.

“Further investigations also led the police to search another vehicle belonging to one of the suspects and several rounds of ammunition were

found inside that vehicle. All three suspects were arrested and taken into custody,” a police media release disclosed.

On Monday, one 9mm pistol and 18 rounds of ammunition were discovered at the Deep-Water Harbour inside a package labeled as the holy bible. Investigations are still ongoing into that matter.

Barbudan stroke victim benefits from CalvinAir medivac services

A 65-year-old Barbudan male is the first person in the new year to benefit from the medivac services provided by CalvinAir Helicopters.

The continuation of the medivac services by CalvinAir Helicopters is based on a commitment to provide medical emergency evacuation service as mandated by its Chairman, Am-

bassador Calvin Ayre. Ayre, a businessman and philanthropist, is also the Founder of the Calvin Ayre Foundation, which funds the cost for the emergency flights.

A CAF media release said on Tuesday afternoon at approximately 4:30pm, the helicopter company was presented with a distress call from Hanna Thomas Hospital in Codrington,

informing them that the 65-year-old male was experiencing symptoms of a stroke and needed to be rushed to mainland for emergency treatment.

Within a short time, an Airbus EC130 helicopter was dispatched to Barbuda. The patient landed at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, just around 5:35pm.

Hanna Thomas’ Ma-

tron, Caryl Jones Michael, extended heartfelt thanks to both CalvinAir Helicopters (CAH) and the Calvin Ayre Foundation (CAF), for what she considered to be a speedy response to this emergency case.

In response, CEO of CAH, Mark Fleming, who is also an emergency pilot, said, “We’re always standing by ready to assist because we know how critical, and time sensitive medical evacuations are.”

Media Relations Specialist for CAF, Jamilla Kirwan, said “the Calvin Ayre Foundation will continue to do its best to serve the nation of Antigua and Barbuda in the areas of emergency response, sports and education and social development.”

Kirwan wishes the patient a speedy recovery on behalf of the Ayre Group of Companies and Ambassador Calvin Ayre.

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at TripAdvisor, John Boris, congratulated Antigua and Barbuda, saying, “This recognition in the Travelers’ Choice Awards Best of the Best for 2024 is a testament to the memorable romantic experiences Antigua and Barbuda has to offer.

“That so many couples took the time to share glowing reviews shows the impact Antigua and Barbuda has had on its guests. We anticipate that this accolade will continue to attract more couples to the islands in the upcoming year and beyond.”

The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority has breathed new life into its romance product over the last two years, launching awareness campaigns across all

its markets. The destination’s current campaign beckons couples to come write their love story on the Caribbean’s most romantic islands by highlighting all the elements that appeal to couples.

From boutique accommodations, to culinary experiences, breathtaking views, pink and white sand beaches and a relaxing and exclusive atmosphere, Antigua and Barbuda is the perfect backdrop to any romantic occasion.

Explore the captivating reviews of Antigua and Barbuda on TripAdvisor and see why so many can’t help but fall in love with its charm. Best Honeymoon Destinations in the World - Tripadvisor Travelers’ Choice Awards

ABEC pays tribute to Chairman John M. Jarvis

The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) is saddened by the sudden passing of its Chairman, John M. Jarvis.

Jarvis passed away at the Sir Lester Bird Mount St. John's Medical Centre on Monday 15th January 2024 after a brief period of illness.

He was appointed as a member of the Commission on December 21st 2015 and became the Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission on April 6th 2022 after the tenure of the then Chairman, Nathaniel "Paddy" James.

Jarvis is being remembered as a professional, jovial, meticulous, fair and motivating individual, who kept the interest and advancement of team members at ABEC along with the integrity and transparency of the work of

the Commission, at the forefront of his daily operations.

His strength and leadership as an electoral management professional provided a catalyst for learning for the human resources in the organization who often relied on his vast experience and expertise.

Deputy Chairman of ABEC, Eugene Francis, expressed that Jarvis was more than just a colleague "he was also a friend and a mentor".

"He will be greatly missed. We always had great conversations and he was always willing to share information about the history and work of ABEC and always had ideas on how to improve the working conditions of our staff at ABEC".

Supervisor of Elections, Ian. S. Hughes, indicated that the nation of

Antigua and Barbuda has lost a stalwart, who is revered internationally for his sterling contributions to the electoral management process.

The Commission expresses its condolences to his wife, Faustina Jarvis, his children and his wider circle of family and friends for their loss. He will be deeply missed.

Meanwhile, The Cabinet expresses its condolences to the wife and family of the late John Jarvis, Chairman of the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission at the time of his death. He was an outstanding servant of the people of Antigua and Barbuda having served as Chairman of the Carnival Development Committee, and a member of a plethora civic organizations that significantly impacted the nation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Halo Foundation singles out Gaye Hechme for special recognition

The Halo Foundation has awarded Gaye Hechme, MBE, as its Best Corporate Citizen 2022 at a ceremony held on Friday at Government House.

Hechme is a member of several professional boards, and currently spearheads three successful companies: Chestertons Antigua and Barbuda, Moon Gate Development Ltd. and Island Living Investment Services.

She serves as Board Director to the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO).



Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams with Gaye Hechme

As a Managing Partner of Henley and Partners up until 2020, she was instrumental in the development of the Henley & Partners Hero Scholarship managed

by the Halo Foundation. This scholarship trained young people for 4 years to the first-degree level, at Saint Mary's University in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Hechme was congratulated on her sterling charitable contribution by Their Excellencies Sir Rodney and Lady Williams, Patron and President respectively of the Halo Foundation.

A spokesman for the Halo Foundation explained that the award for 2022 is being announced and presented at this time due to extenuating circumstances.



Memorial Service for
SIR RAMEZ HADEED KGCN

The Hadeed family and Finance & Development Company Ltd. invite you to join us for a memorial service for the late Sir Ramez Hadeed Founder and Chairman of FDC.

THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2024 | 5 PM
HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL
MICHAEL'S MOUNT, ST JOHN'S



There was no indication the King or Princess of Wales were suffering from ill-health when they appeared together at Sandringham over Christmas.

Kate in hospital after surgery as King to get prostate treatment

The Princess of Wales is recovering in hospital after undergoing surgery, and King Charles III is set to undergo a medical procedure next week.

Catherine will step back from royal duties for months after surgery for an unspecified but non-cancer related abdominal condition.

The King's benign prostate condition will be treated next week.

The unexpected health announcements were made within two hours of each other on Wednesday afternoon.

Details about the health of senior royals are usually a closely-guarded secret and only announced to the public in limited circumstances, so the decision to release two significant updates in one day was striking.

At about 14:00 GMT, Kensington Palace disclosed the princess was admitted to private hospital in central London on Tuesday for a procedure and is recovering there.

It is understood the princess is doing well, but is expected to spend up to two weeks in hospital and be out of the public eye until after Easter as she continues a months-long recovery.

It is clear from the length of time she needs to recuperate and the tone of the statement from the palace that her condition is serious, though it was stressed the procedure had been planned and successful.

The palace called for the princess' medical privacy to be respected, adding: "She hopes that the public will understand her desire to maintain as

much normality for her children as possible."

The Prince of Wales will also step back from royal duties in the coming weeks to be with his wife and Prince George, 10, Princess Charlotte, eight, and Prince Louis, five.

Less than 90 minutes later, a separate statement was published by Buckingham Palace revealing the King requires a "corrective procedure" next week for an enlarged prostate.

The condition is common in older men and is not cancerous. The King turned 75 in November.

It is not known what procedure the King requires, but the palace said his "engagements will be postponed

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for a short period of recuperation”.

His treatment is not a sufficient disruption to trigger any of the constitutional mechanisms for when the head of state is seriously ill.

In such circumstances, “counsellors of state”

can act as stand-ins for the monarch and carry out duties such as signing official documents - but Buckingham Palace has said that will not be necessary.

The King is staying at his private home near Balmoral with the Queen, and royal sources said he was in “good form” and in

“good spirits”.

The timing of the announcement about the King so soon after the news about the princess is thought to have been unavoidable due to the monarch’s scheduled engagements on Thursday and Friday.

He had been due to meet with foreign dignitar-

ies and Cabinet members in Scotland, so the news had to be made public as those meetings were cancelled on doctor’s advice.

Medical issues for the royals have been kept very private in the past - and the announcements about the King and the Princess of Wales might seem to show a greater degree of openness.

It is understood the King wants his own experience of getting prostate treatment to help raise awareness and to encourage others to have checks.

For the princess, although there are no explicit details about the surgery, there is much more information from the palace than in previous years, with a reassurance her illness is not cancer-related, that it was not an emergency operation and a clear sense of how long the recuperation will take. But much of this frankness might also have been necessary to get ahead of the news narrative, as questions would inevitably have arisen if the King and the princess began to cancel planned events.

There had been talk of overseas trips for Kate and William in the spring and there would have been pressure to confirm this.

Now the health issues have been revealed, the royals will hope for some more understanding about why the King and the Prince and Princess of Wales are temporarily not carrying out public duties.



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Exciting new cancer drug kinder than chemotherapy

By Michelle Roberts

Some children with cancer are receiving a new type of drug treatment far less toxic than chemotherapy.

Arthur, 11, is one of the first to try it, at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital, for his blood cancer.

His family call the therapy "a little bit of sunshine", since it worked without making Arthur feel much sicker.

And because it could be given on the go, rather than just in hospital, he spent more time at home with his family, enjoying more of what he loves.

He carried it with him in a rucksack - his "blina backpack".

For Arthur, blinatumomab or blina was his only real option after his chemo had failed to clear all of his cancer and had left him very weak.

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Arthur is back at school and pursuing hobbies again.

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For Arthur, blinatumomab or blina was his only real option after his chemo had failed to clear all of his cancer and had left him very weak.

Blina is already licensed to treat adults with cancer - and experts hope to show it can safely help children too.

Some 20 centres around the UK are using it off-label for children with B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (B-ALL).

The drug is an immunotherapy that seeks out cancer cells so the body's own immune system can recognise and destroy them.

And this death hunt is precisely targeted - healthy cells are untouched, unlike with chemo.

Blina comes in a bag of liquid administered through a thin plastic tube that remains running into a vein in the patient's arm for many months.

A battery-operated pump controls how quickly the drug trickles into the bloodstream - a bag can last days.

All of the kit can be carried in a backpack smaller than an A4 textbook, making it fully portable.

For Arthur, that meant he could do other things - like play on the swings in his local park - while the treatment was happening.

And unlike his intensive chemotherapy, which had stopped working anyway, it did not make him

too weak to enjoy his days.

Like other patients on blina, Arthur was given medication to cut the chance of serious reactions or side effects before his infusion started.

At first, he had some bouts of fever and needed to stay in hospital for checks.

But shortly after, he was able to go home.

The backpack stayed with Arthur continuously, including in bed - and even though the pump makes a noise, he was able to have a decent night's sleep.

Chemo had been rough for Arthur and moving on to blina was a relief, his mother, Sandrine, said.

"It was completely out of his control - we were living in a constant challenge as his body was getting hit

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Escaped Brazilian prisoner found dead in Suriname's hinterland

Suriname Police have confirmed that a man, who was stabbed to death last week, is a Brazilian national who escaped from prison last year.

Police said the deceased, who goes by the alias Kajoe, was found by employees of the Regional Assistance Team East in Dagu Ede, Stoelmansland near the Lawa River on January 12 after they received reports that a body was located in the area on January 11.

Kajoe was stabbed multiple times and he had head injuries.

Police said their preliminary investigation revealed that Kajoe was hiding out at a camp in Dagu Ede, which is just across



Escaped prisoner Kajoe.

the river from French Guiana.

On the day of his murder, police said a witness

from a neighbouring camp heard the sound of boat engines coming from Kajoe's hiding place. He was later seen bleeding heavily from a neck wound.

Kajoe was taken by boat to Gran Santie for medical assistance, but he died en route.

Kajoe along with two other Brazilians and two Surinamese escaped from the Nieuwe Haven police station on September 24, 2023, via a toilet.

He was held in connection with several murders in Suriname's gold mining district.

Police believe Kajoe went back to his old ways after escaping from custody and was killed after committing a crime.

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by the drugs," she said.

"We were curing him by making him feel worse - it's a very difficult thing to process."

Arthur had to return to hospital every four days so doctors could top up the blina kit but was able to manage the treatment at home the rest of the time.

"He enjoyed the fact that he was able to hold it and be responsible - he embraced all of it," Sandrine said.

And at the end of April 2023, Arthur had the final operation to remove the tubing from his arm.

"It was a big step - he was free," Sandrine said.

Doctors say blina can replace big chunks of chemo - perhaps up to 80% of it. About 450 children a year in the UK are diagnosed with Arthur's type of cancer.

Chief investigator and consultant paediatric haematologist Prof Ajay Vora said: "Chemotherapies are poisons that kill the leukaemic cells but also kill and damage normal cells - and that is what causes their side effects.

"Blinatumomab is a gentler, kinder treatment."

Another targeted immunotherapy drug, chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy (CAR-T), has also recently become available.

But it is more expensive than blina and the patient's own cells must be taken and then altered in the lab before being given back as the medicine, which takes time.

Thanks to all the treatment, Arthur's cancer has now gone.

Sandrine said: "New Year was when we found out that the blina had worked and there was no residual cancer - and so that was just amazing and so we had double celebrations."

OECS leaders condemn power grab by BVI Governor

CMC - The leaders of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Tuesday expressed their “alarming concern” at the current situation in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) where the Governor of that British Overseas Territory, John Rankin, is moving to implement the recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry (COI) for governance reform.

The OECS groups the islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Anguilla and the BVI.

In a statement, the leaders said that they have noted “the request by the Governor for additional powers which will allow him to bypass the Territorial Government, and implement unilaterally, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) for governance reforms in the BVI”.

They said they condemn “strongly any efforts to undermine the legitimate Government of the BVI and expressed solidarity with the Government and people of the BVI in the undertaking of the process for reforms.”

They are also condemning “the considerable diligence exercised by the democratically elected government and people of the British Virgin Islands and the progress made thus far in implementing governance reforms which have no doubt strengthened the BVI systems and institutions, following the elections which were successfully held in April 2023”.

Earlier this month, Rankin, who is due to leave his post on Thursday and be replaced by Daniel Pruce at the end of January, said he would continue to “work hard during my remaining time in the BVI” and that “with determination and resolve together, the reforms

which the people of the Virgin Islands want and deserve can be achieved”.

In his statement, Rankin said that he was also publishing his fifth quarterly review of the implementation of the COI recommendations.

“The COI report was published in April 2022, twenty-one months ago. The COI found poor governance, a lack of accountability and the misuse of public funds. Members of the House of Assembly weren’t declaring their interests, two-thirds of all contracts over \$100k weren’t being openly tendered. There were serious concerns over the system of assistance grants, which were further clearly shown in the audits that have been carried out by the Auditor General,” he wrote.

He said the COI made 49 recommendations to help resolve these issues and place the BVI on a better path to good governance.

Rankin said in June 2022, the Government of National Unity accepted 48 of those 49 recommendations and committed themselves to delivering them, adding that politicians from across political parties agreed that delivering these reforms was vital.

“I am disappointed however to report that in recent months progress on these commitments has significantly stalled. My previous Quarterly Review was relatively positive, but it called for a concerted effort and prioritisation from Ministers to make further progress. This has not happened.”

Rankin said that last September, 24 of the 48 recommendations had been delivered by the Government’s own count and “as of today, only one more recommendation has been delivered. Namely, the receipt of the Constitutional Review Commission Report, which of course was not carried



BVI Governor John Rankin. out by Government but by an independent review body”.

He recalled that in April last year, he published a letter from the then United Kingdom Minister for the Overseas Territories, Lord Goldsmith who “said if the necessary reforms have taken root no later than May 2024, this should allow the Order in Council to be lifted.

“I do not now foresee that reforms will have taken root at that point, and it is clear that more time will be required. I have accordingly suggested in my Quarterly Review that an extension to the end of November 2024 would be appropriate.

“While I believe an extension is necessary, additional time alone will not be enough. The initial deadlines were agreed by BVI Government. Some (not all) of the deadlines were tight and the Government asked for extensions on two occasions, last January and again in September. Those extensions were accepted by the UK. But even these are still being consistently missed.”

Rankin said in addition to a deadline extension to the end of November, there is clearly a need for some further step or steps to drive forward

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Regional News



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implementation of the COI recommendations.

“I am not recommending triggering of the Order in Council in order to establish an interim administration led by the Governor. But I have come to the conclusion that additional powers for the Governor are required to help ensure that the BVI Government delivers its commitments.”

He said he would be writing to the UK Minister “with a recommendation to that effect,” adding that “I know that implementation of some of the recommendations isn’t easy.

“Indeed I have faced challenges in delivering a couple of the recommendations for which I am responsible,” he said, citing as an example the Vetting Project, to conduct checks to ensure that all law enforcement officers are suitable for their roles.

“When we realised matters weren’t moving quickly enough, my team and I stepped in to provide greater oversight, with additional time and resources devoted to the project. In particular, we successfully pushed for and got a full-time project manager, who has helped to bring this work back on track.

“Similarly, we’ve ensured that the Law Enforcement Review is now fully underway, with an expert team now in place who have made two intensive visits to the Territory, supported by one million dollars funding from the UK Government. I expect to receive their report by the end of March.”

Rankin said that there is a need for similar interventions when other recommendations are lagging behind.

He is warning that “without such reforms, the better governance which the people of the BVI need and deserve will not be achieved and the issues which the COI identified could more easily return.

“I want the BVI to succeed. It is precisely for that reason that I believe

that simply proposing another extension in deadlines is insufficient and that additional steps are required. The potential of these beautiful Virgin Islands is there for all to see and I want to see that potential wholly fulfilled,” Rankin added.

But in their statement, the OECS leaders said they have noted “that much work remains to be done in the process for the reforms as recommended by the Commission of Inquiry and called on the United Kingdom to provide the Government of the British Virgin Islands with any required technical assistance to support the process”.

They have also “noted with deep concern that efforts to bypass the elected Government of the BVI demonstrate a flagrant disrespect for fundamental principles of democracy which aim essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and rights of the individual, respect the will of the majority, foster economic and social development, strengthen cohesion of society and to maintain/enhance national tranquillity”.

The sub-regional leaders have also “noted the further concern that the Governor’s request for additional powers is undemocratic, and unwarranted,” adding that “such powers could only serve as a deterrent in the ongoing reforms process and would jeopardise the progress that has been achieved; and undermine the democratically elected government of the BVI.”

They have concurred with the views expressed by the Government and people of the BVI, that granting additional powers to the Governor is a “Colonial Act” and one which has no place in modern democratic governance in the OECS region.

The leaders have “reiterated that the historical responsibility for strengthening governance in the BVI must rest on the shoulders of the elect-

ed representatives and the people of the BVI,” and that “ultimately will be the guarantee of good governance, and full and transparent accountability; and that the inalienable right of the people of the British Virgin Islands to self-determination, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, must be preserved.”

In their statement, the OECS leaders “reiterated further that a decision to grant the Governor this request would contravene the democratic principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights – Declarations and Conventions to which the United Kingdom is Party;

Endorsed the UN resolution on the Question of the British Virgin Islands adopted by the 78th General Assembly”.

They said that the resolution “expresses deep concern that the United Kingdom is holding an Order in Council in reserve that can suspend the islands’ constitution and calls for the democratic and human rights of the people of the British Virgin Islands to be respected, including their rights to self-govern UK government “continues to work constructively and collaboratively with the democratically elected Government of the BVI to support completion of the ongoing reforms process”.

They “strongly” urge that London refrains from granting the undemocratic powers requested by the Governor.

“This act will hinder democracy in the BVI and destroy existing trust between the Government and people of the BVI and the United Kingdom,” they said, reaffirming the “OECS’ willingness to provide technical and other support to the BVI (as an Associate Member of the Organisation) in its governance reforms process.”

Iran admits carrying out deadly strike on Pakistan territory

Iran has admitted carrying out a missile and drone attack on western Pakistan on Tuesday.

Officials in Islamabad said two children were killed and three others injured in the attack in Balochistan.

Iran's foreign minister said the operation targeted the militant group Jaish al-Adli, which he described as an "Iranian terrorist group" in Pakistan.

As a result the Pakistan's government recalled its ambassador to Iran and has blocked Tehran's envoy from returning.

The Balochistan attack comes after Iran attacked targets in Iraq and Syria earlier this week.

Islamabad said the attack was "illegal" and warned of "serious consequences".

However Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, speaking in Davos, insisted that no Pakistani citizens had been targeted, only members of Jaish al-Adl.

"We only targeted Iranian terrorists on the soil of Pakistan," Mr Amir-Abdollahian said.

He added he had spoken to his Pakistani counterpart and "assured him that we do respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan and Iraq".

The latest air strike



Iranian missiles - seen here during a training drill - have hit Pakistan, Iraq and Syria in recent days.

comes at a time of growing tension across the Middle East, with war raging between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza.

Tehran says it does not want to get involved in a wider conflict. But groups in its so-called "Axis of Resistance", which include the Houthi militants in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon and various groups in Syria and Iraq, have been carrying out attacks on Israel and its allies to show solidarity with the Palestinians. The US and UK have launched air strikes on the Houthis after they attacked commercial shipping.

China on Wednesday urged Pakistan and Iran to show "restraint" and "avoid actions that would lead to an escalation of tension". Foreign ministry spokes-

person Mao Ning added that Beijing saw the countries as "close neighbours".

Perhaps stung by recent deadly attacks on home soil, Iran seems intent on exacting revenge on those it sees as responsible.

At a time of heightened regional tensions, Iran is keen to portray strength and demonstrate to its own population that acts of violence will not go unpunished.

Tuesday's strike in Pakistan hit a village in the vast south-western border province of Balochistan. Tehran said it was targeting Jaish al-Adl, or "army of justice", an ethnic Baloch Sunni Muslim group that has carried out attacks inside Iran as well as on Pakistani government forces.

Last December Jaish al-Adl attacked a police station in Rask, a town close to

the border with Pakistan.

Two weeks ago Iran suffered its worst domestic attack since the Islamic Revolution, when two bombs killed 84 people at a ceremony in Kerman to commemorate the US assassination of Iran's notorious Revolutionary Guard general, Qasem Soleimani.

On Monday, Iran fired ballistic missiles at Syria and Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Iran said it was targeting Islamic State and Israel's Mossad spy agency, both of whom it said had been involved in the Kerman bombings.

The strike on Iraq hit a building in the northern city of Irbil. Four civilians were killed and six hurt in the attack, local authorities said. The US condemned the attack.

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Yemen strikes: Houthis hit US-owned ship after 'terror' designation

By Matt Murphy

Yemen's Houthis have targeted a US-owned vessel in the Red Sea after Washington said it will re-designate the group as "global terrorists".

The group said they hit the "Genco Picardy" bulk carrier with missiles which resulted in a "direct hit".

The US military says the vessel was hit by a drone on Wednesday evening.

Washington's new designation of the Houthis will require US financial institutions to freeze Houthi funds and its members will be banned from the US.

The Houthi Red Sea attacks are a response to Israel's military operation in Gaza.

Earlier this month, the UK and US launched air strikes on dozens of Houthi targets in Yemen in an at-

tempt to stop the group from targeting vessels in the Red Sea.

On Wednesday evening, a Houthi spokesperson said the group had successfully targeted the Genco Picardy, and that the attack was a response to "the American-British aggression against our country".

The US military said the ship was hit by a drone launched from Houthi con-

trolled areas in Yemen. It said there was some damage but no injuries, and the vessel remained seaworthy.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the re-designation of the Houthis as "global terrorists" is in response to the Iran-backed group's attacks on commercial shipping in the region.

The move to re-designate the Houthis reverses Secretary of State Antony Blinken's 2021 decision to remove the rebels from the US Specially Designated Global Terrorist List (SDGT).

In a statement, Mr Sullivan said the recent Houthi attacks "fit the textbook definition of terrorism", as they have put US personnel in danger and jeopardized global trade operations.

"If the Houthis cease their attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the United States will immediately re-evaluate this designation," Mr Sullivan added.

In the waning days of the Trump administration officials imposed the SDGT and foreign terrorist organisation (FTO) labels on the Houthis.

This action was taken despite warnings from the UN and aid groups that it could push war-torn Yemen into a large-scale famine.

But in 2021, shortly after President Joe Biden's inau-

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Iran then struck Syria's north-western Idlib province, which is the last remaining opposition stronghold in the country and home to 2.9 million displaced people.

But hitting its nuclear-armed eastern neighbour Pakistan is a dramatic escalation. Pakistan expressed outrage, saying the attack took place "despite the existence of several channels of communication" between the countries.

On Wednesday Islamabad said it had recalled its ambassador to Iran and the Iranian ambassador would not be allowed back into the country for the time being.

Pakistan and Iran have a delicate but cordial relationship. This attack took place on the same day as Pakistan's prime minister and Iran's foreign minister met in Davos and while the Iranian and Pakistan navies held military drills together in the Gulf.

Yet both have accused one another of harbouring militant groups that carry out attacks on the other in their border areas for years.

Security on either side of their shared border, which runs for about 900km (559 miles), has been a long-running concern for both governments.

The Iranian strike is believed to have hit Sabz Koh village about 45km from the

Iranian border and 90km from the nearest town Panjgur. Local officials described it as a sparsely populated area home to livestock-owning Baloch tribes where smuggling of goods, drugs and weapons is rife.

"People on both sides of the border consider themselves to be deprived of basic necessities, face discrimination and demand a larger share from their own resources," security commentator Zaigham Khan told the BBC.

In Iran, the Sunni Muslim Baloch minority complains of discrimination in the Shia Muslim-majority state, while Baloch separatist groups are continuing an insurgent movement against the Pakistani government.

Jaish al-Adl is the "most active and influential" Sunni militant group operating in Sistan-Baluchestan, according to the office of the US Director of National Intelligence. It is designated as a terrorist group by Washington and Tehran.

Another security commentator in Pakistan, Aamir Rana, told the BBC he thought the diplomatic crisis "would take a while to calm down but this is also something that Pakistan would not like to escalate".

He said in the past Pakistan had not reacted to Iran's actions along the border - "but now the ball is in Iran's court, whether it wants to get its act right".

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guration, that decision was reversed by Mr Blinken, the newly installed Secretary of State. He cited the dire humanitarian situation faced by the people of Yemen.

Speaking to reporters ahead of Wednesday's announcement, senior administration officials defended the decision to reinstate the SDGT designation but not the FTO designation, which they said had been taken to ensure the continued flow of aid into Yemen.

"It was the correct step to revoke," one official said, arguing that it was a move taken in "recognition of a very dire humanitarian situation" in the country and to ensure that "US policies weren't impeding" civilians' access to urgent aid.

But they accepted that the Houthis' campaign of attacks on commercial shipping, which has now seen dozens of missiles fired at vessels in the Red Sea, has become "unacceptable".

The new SDGT designation will also bar people and companies in the US from offering any support to the Houthis.

However, officials were keen to

emphasise that a range of exemptions will be worked into the new designation to ensure humanitarian aid continues to flow into Yemen, a country devastated by almost a decade of civil war.

"We are rolling out unprecedented carve outs and licenses to help prevent adverse impacts on the Yemeni people," said Mr Sullivan in his statement. "The people of Yemen should not pay the price for the actions of the Houthis."

The Houthis began attacking merchant vessels in November, saying they were responding to Israel's military operation in Gaza. Since then, the group has launched dozens of attacks on commercial tankers passing through the Red Sea, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

In response, the US and UK launched a wave of air strikes against dozens of Houthi targets on 11 January. The strikes - supported by Australia, Bahrain, the Netherlands and Canada - began after Houthi forces ignored an ultimatum to cease their attacks in the region. Biden administration officials denied that the new terrorist designation was an acceptance that the air campaign may not deter further Houthi

attacks.

"We see these sanctions as one piece of a broader effort to bring the Houthis back from the terror attacks they are currently committing," one official said. "Our sanctions are best not seen in isolation but as part of a broader effort."

In the wake of last week's strikes, the Houthis said the US and UK would "soon realise" the action was "the greatest folly in their history".

"America and Britain made a mistake in launching the war on Yemen because they did not benefit from their previous experiences," senior Houthi official Mohammed al-Bukhaiti wrote on social media.

Yemen has been devastated by a civil war that escalated in 2015, when the Houthis seized control of large parts of the west of the country from the internationally recognised government and a Saudi-led coalition intervened in an effort to restore its rule.

The fighting has reportedly left more than 160,000 people dead and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with two thirds of the population - 21 million people - in need of some form of aid.

Sports News



Leaders Five Islands open four-point gap in first division

Five Islands have opened up a four-point gap at the top of the standings in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division.

They pulled off a two-nil win against Bendals at the Bendals playing field on Tuesday, with goals by Samuel Semper in the 16th and 37th minutes.

Their sixth win in eight matches has allowed Five

Islands to maintain their lead at the top of the league by advancing to 19 points, four clear of their nearest rivals, the Potters Tigers.

Bendals continue to struggle and have plummeted to second from bottom on five points after slumping to their fourth loss in seven games.

The Liberta Black Hawks ended a run of four consecutive defeats to

leapfrog Bendals by surging to their second win in six matches.

Veteran forward Lennox "Fox" Julian struck a hat-trick to propel the Black Hawks to a 5-2 victory against Bolans at the ABFA Technical Center.

After Wilton Rhodes' 23rd-minute conversion gave Liberta a one-nil half-time lead, Julian scored his team's next three goals

with conversions in the 69th, 82nd, and 83rd minutes.

Tijahni Isaac scored Liberta's final goal in the second minute of added time (90+2 minutes).

Adrian Browne scored both goals for Bolans in the 71st and 76th minutes. Bolans finished the match with 10 men after Alex Joseph was given a red card for using offensive, abusive, and insulting language towards the referee.

The result lifted the Black Hawks to third from the bottom of the standings in the 11-team round-robin competition on six points, one adrift of Bolans, who suffered their fourth loss in seven matches.

The Police continued their surge up the table by recording their third win in seven matches with a three-nil victory against Jennings United at the ABFA Technical Center.

Javere Joseph scored twice, slotting home in the 66th minute and converting a penalty kick in the 86th minute. Carl Kirby scored the opening goal for Police when he converted a penalty kick in first half added time (45+1 minute).

The result carries Police to 12 points, while Jennings United would remain on 10 points after losing for the third time in seven matches.

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Coach George Hughes holds the trophy as the Flyers celebrate winning the ABBA Division One Playoff title at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, August 1, 2023. (File photo)

ABBA postpones start of 2024 domestic season

The Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association (ABBA) has postponed the start of its 2024 domestic season.

According to a media release, the division one and two leagues, which were slated to commence on Sunday, January 21, have been postponed until sometime next month.

“As previously indicated, the 2024 ABBA league was originally scheduled to start on Sunday, January 21. However, after discussions with several key stakeholders, primarily the teams due to participate in the upcoming league, the level of readiness is not up to par to host a successful domestic league,” ABBA stated in its release.

“Despite efforts to announce the start date for the league opening well in advance, some teams have indicated that they are still recruiting players, have recently commenced practices, and are still in the process of soliciting sponsors, among other reasons.

“As such, the decision was made by the executive of ABBA to take these factors into consideration and postpone the league until February.”

The ABBA executive will be hosting follow-up meetings with all its division one and two teams, who are mandated to attend.

All second division teams are asked to meet with the ABBA executive at its office at the JSC Sports Complex on Monday, January 22, at

7 pm.

A meeting for all first-division teams will be held at the same venue and time on Tuesday, January 23.

Meanwhile, the ABBA will be hosting its awards ceremony for the 2023 season on Saturday.

Awards and prizes will be presented to outstanding teams, players, and other officials during the formal dress code event, which will be held at the John E. St. Luce Finance and Conference Centre, starting at 7 pm.

Spanish Heat won the Second Division title, while Flyers Basketball claimed the Division One playoff championship, and Cuties Ovals OJays won the D-I round-robin league title last season.

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Windies struggle on day one of first Test against Australia

ADELAIDE (Reuters) - Australia's Steve Smith's first outing as a Test opener did not go according to plan, but his team still looked in control of the series opener against the West Indies after bowling out the visitors for 188 at the Adelaide Oval on Wednesday.

Australia's captain Pat Cummins made the early inroads and Josh Hazlewood mowed down the West Indies middle order to bowl out the visitors in a little over two sessions.

Number three batter Kirk McKenzie hit 50 and debutant Shamar Joseph (36) offered some resistance, but the touring batters looked largely lost against Australia's quality fast bowling.

Joseph then dismissed Smith for 12 with the first ball of his Test career and bounced out Marnus Labuschagne, but Australia finished day one on 59 for two, and will fancy their chances of building a handy lead when play resumes on Thursday.

Joseph became the 23rd man to take a wicket with his first Test delivery. Opener Usman Khawaja capitalised on an early reprieve to be not out on 30, while Cameron Green, occupying the number four slot vacated by Smith, was on six.

The West Indies have arrived with a depleted



West Indies' Shamar Joseph, right, celebrates taking the wicket of Australia's Steve Smith on the first day of the first cricket Test match in Adelaide, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024. (AP)

squad for a two-match series Down Under, where they have not won a test since 1997, and it did not take long for world champions Australia to seize control of the contest.

Cummins (four for 41) elected to field after winning the toss and led by example removing both the openers, Tagenarine Chanderpaul (six) perishing in the gully while West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (13) lost his off-stump.

The West Indies went to lunch at 64 for three after Alick Athanaze (13) was bowled offering no shot to an incoming delivery to give Hazlewood (four for

44) his 250th Test wicket.

McKenzie, playing his second Test, offered some resistance but the West Indies slumped to 133 for nine, losing six wickets for 35 runs and risking being bowled out inside two sessions.

They did not, which was due largely to Shamar Joseph, one of the three West Indies players making their Test debut in the match.

Shamar Joseph, batting at 11, decided to counter-attack and added 55 runs with Kemar Roach, who made 17 not out, in what turned out to be the biggest partnership in the West Indies' innings.

When Australia came

out to bat, Khawaja, then on three, got a reprieve when he edged Alzarri Joseph, but wicketkeeper Joshua Da Silva floored a regulation catch.

Smith, who has replaced the retired David Warner at the top of the batting order, was not so lucky.

The right-hander edged Shamar Joseph's first delivery to third slip and debutant Justin Greaves made no mistake taking the low, sharp catch.

West Indies are without their best all-rounders Jason Holder and Kyle Mayers, with the duo having opted to play in lucrative Twenty20 leagues.



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Allen pummels Pakistan with record hundred, NZ clinch T20 series

WELLINGTON (Reuters) - Finn Allen blasted 137 off 62 balls, the highest score by a New Zealand batsman in a T20 International, to secure his team's series-clinching 45-run victory against Pakistan in the third match in Dunedin on Wednesday.

The opener clobbered 16 sixes, the joint-most in an innings in men's T20 Internationals, to power New Zealand to an imposing 224 for seven at the University Oval.

Pakistan managed 179-7 in reply, including Babar Azam's (58) third fifty of the series, as New Zealand took an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

Allen toyed with the entire Pakistan attack but was particularly harsh on Haris Rauf, plundering 28 runs, including three sixes, in the fast bowler's second over, taking him out of the attack.

The bowler was brought back in after New Zealand cruised to 109-1 at the



New Zealand's Finn Allen bats during the T20 cricket international between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park in Auckland, New Zealand, Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024. (AP)

halfway stage and Allen smacked three sixes in that over from Rauf, who bled 60 runs for his two wickets.

Babar kept Pakistan in the hunt for a while, but Tim Southee (two for 29)

led New Zealand's disciplined bowling to ensure they were never really threatened.

This is Pakistan's first series under new T20 captain Shaheen Afridi ahead

of this year's 20-overs World Cup in the West Indies and USA in June.

The last two matches of the series are scheduled to be played in Christchurch on Friday and Sunday.

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group of people, and it was my absolute pleasure to get to spend time with them over the last couple of days. Their questions on outreach, engagement, and athlete presentations were so insightful, highlighting their willingness to learn and to deliver effective education, as well as to train the next generation of educators.”

Caribbean RADO Chairman Patrick Werleman is eagerly looking for-

ward to the contributions of the new instructors.

“For the first time in our history, we gathered experienced anti-doping education personnel together with facilitators from UKAD and USADA to be trained to become anti-doping educator instructors. This is a necessary step in ensuring all of our member countries implement an education plan.”

Doping Control Officers (DCOs)

and Blood Collection Officers (BCOs) are responsible for the urine and blood sample collection from athletes as part of an anti-doping program managed by the International Testing Agency, WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency).

The Caribbean Regional Anti-Doping Organization is based in Barbados and acts as the secretariat for anti-doping issues for 18 member countries including Antigua and Barbuda.

Dickenson among new anti-doping educator instructors

Antigua and Barbuda's certified international Doping Control Officer (DCO), Kristy Dickenson, is among eleven (11) new anti-doping educator instructors in the Caribbean, following the successful completion of the first ever regional anti-doping educator instructor training.

The January 11-14 workshop, held in Aruba, was a joint partnership with the Caribbean Regional Anti-Doping Organization (RADO), the Aruba Olympic Committee and the Aruba Anti-Doping Commission.

The course was facilitated by instructors from the United Kingdom Anti-Doping (UKAD) and the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), following strategic discussions held with both anti-doping organizations over recent years.

Wendy Henderson, UKAD National Trainer, says the partnership between the two organizations is an invaluable one.

"This train-the-trainer course was a hugely important opportunity to bring together 'Clean Sport' educators from across the Ca-



Participants at the Opening Ceremony of the Regional Anti-Doping Educator Instructor Training workshop in Oranjestad, Aruba, on January 11, 2024.

ibbean RADO and, with the support of UKAD, be able to develop their delivery techniques, as well as their trainer and mentor skills, to train and empower more educators, building capacity across the Caribbean.

Tammy Hanson, USA-DA Director of Elite Education, who delivered the modules on athlete outreach and engagement, has had high praise for the participants.

"I was so impressed by all of the participation from the members of the group and their eagerness to learn more and grow their education programmes.

"It's a very special
cont'd on pg 23



Participants, including Kristy Dickenson, right, in discussion with UKAD National Trainer Joanna Bohannan Walker, left, at the first ever Regional Anti-Doping Educator Instructor Training workshop in Oranjestad, Aruba, from January 11-14, 2024. (Caribbean RADO)