

GOV'T INTRODUCES FUEL PRICING PASS-THROUGH

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Government to implement fuel pass-through mechanism

The Ministry of Finance has announced the implementation of a refined pass-through mechanism for fuel prices to achieve the 2024 budgetary target for consumption tax revenue.

This is part of the Government’s strategic initiative to bolster fiscal resilience through enhanced fiscal performance.

“The intention is to ensure increased transparency and predictability regarding the partial pass-through of international oil price changes.

“This pricing mechanism will allow the Government to continue providing subsidies for certain petroleum products and support vulnerable segments of the population while

maintaining some level of revenue assurance,” a release from the ministry of finance said.

It added that despite the recent increase in the cost of gasoline and diesel, as reported by the West Indies Oil Company (WIOC), the Government has opted to maintain the retail prices at the pump.

The pricing structure for gasoline and diesel, along with the margins for WIOC, inland transport, and gas station dealers, will remain unchanged.

Effective Thursday 15, February 2024, fuel prices will be as follows:

- Gasoline: \$13.99 per gallon
- Diesel: \$14.25 per gallon
- 20 Pound LPG: \$32.00 per Bottle

- 25 Pound LPG: \$40.00 per Bottle
- 100 Pound LPG: \$155.00 per Cylinder

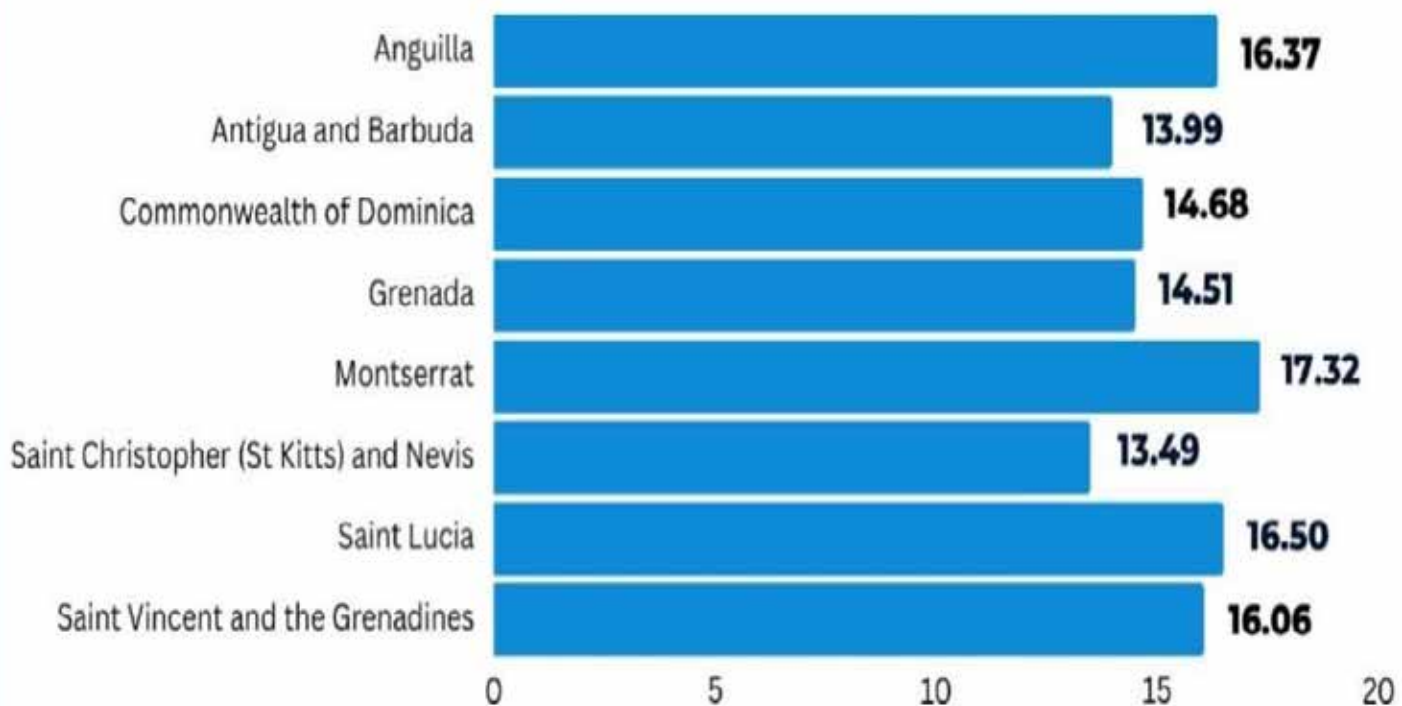
Additionally, to support affordability for consumers, the Government will continue to provide the following subsidies:

- 20 Pound LPG: Subsidy of \$5.16 per bottle
- 25 Pound LPG: Subsidy of \$6.45 per bottle
- 100 Pound LPG: Subsidy of \$17.64 per cylinder

The refined fuel pass-through mechanism aims to strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and consumer welfare, ensuring a sustainable and equitable approach to fuel pricing.

IN JANUARY 2024, CONSUMERS IN THE ECCU PAID AN AVERAGE OF \$15.36 PER GALLON OF GASOLINE

Average Gasoline Prices (EC\$) Per Gallon in January 2024





Shots fired at school's event

An incident where shots were fired from a gun near a sporting event organized by the Ottos Comprehensive School has brought an abrupt end to planned outdoor sporting activities by the school.

Principal of the OCS, Foster Roberts, said the school was holding Day-3 of the 4-day annual sporting events at the YMCA complex when a group of boys, who are not associated with the school, stood outside the complex and fired the shots. (It is believed that the shots were fired into the air).

No one was wounded from the shooting, however, according to Roberts. One female student sprained her ankle during the melee that ensued and two other females were sufficiently traumatized that the parents for one were called to get her.

The principal explained that he was at the southern entrance gate of the complex going through the students' bags as they entered to ensure that no one was carrying into the complex any offensive weapons.

"Most of the students were seated

on the northern stand of the complex watching the basketball game that had just started.

"The students reported that they saw a group of guys outside the complex and one boy reached into a bag and took out a gun.

"He then proceeded to fire what I believed to have been warning shots," he added.

That action caused pandemonium among the students as they ran from the stands to escape from what they felt was imminent danger.

"We suspected that the motive of those who fired the shots was to have the students run into the street. Instead, we locked the gates and asked the students to congregate in the middle of the courts.

"Luckily, an off-duty police officer who happened to be passing and hearing the commotion entered the compound and spoke with me. I then turned over to him three young men, our students, who I believed had information that could lead to the arrest of those who fired the shots," he dis-

closed.

The Criminal Investigations Department was summoned and the three young men were turned over to the CID officers who took them away for questioning.

Roberts said they kept the students at YMCA until the school buses arrived to take them home immediately.

He said he believes that the shots were fired to get the students to stampede into the streets as it appears as though the perpetrators had particular targets in mind.

"Day 4 of the sporting events was scheduled for Thursday, but we have decided to cancel it in the interest of the safety of our students. I am concerned that steps must be taken to end these developments before something more serious than an ankle sprain happens," he cautioned.

Roberts is to present a formal report to the Ministry of Education on the matter.

There is no word about the status of those who were taken by the police for questioning.



Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre

Senior medical officials meet with the Cabinet

The Cabinet invited senior management officials of the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre to its meeting on Wednesday to address a number of pressing issues of concern to the Cabinet and the public at large.

Those in attendance included the Chief Medical Director and four (4) other management officials who were asked to provide an update on the several improvements that are taking place at the country's premiere medical center.

The Cabinet Notes reported that for more than an hour they answered 'piercing and probing questions of the Cabinet Ministers'.

"The members focused upon the Emergency Room Care, Hospital Care, Medication availability and the central air conditioning system.

"The Medical Director noted that there is a higher volume of patients making use of the medical center and

that the patients must be divided into Urgent Care and Emergency Care.

"He pointed out that 35 medical practitioners are employed by the SLBMC in addition to 14 consultants, 12 interns, and six student interns.

"There is no shortage of doctors; however, there is a shortage of nurses," he revealed.

He reported that 19 physicians and three nurses serve the Emergency Room 24 hours daily, but it is perpetually busy especially during peak hours from 5am to 7pm. The IT department in the hospital proposes an electronic system to count the actual number of persons using the ER operations daily.

The UWI Five Islands Campus Nursing programme is training a cadre of nurses every year who will find employment at the SLBMC to address the shortage of nurses.

A second issue had to do with the air conditioning system, which is proving to be one of the biggest challenges faced by the SLBMC.

"On an inspection, the Minister and the new manager of the hospital's maintenance discovered 20 empty bottles of the substance utilized by A/Cs and refrigerators to lower temperatures in these machines.

There was a recognition that all the systems required strong maintenance.

"Until such time that the central unit is either repaired or replaced, 30 individual units have been installed in critical places in the hospital.

"A 50-ton Chiller has been purchased for the Operating Theatres at the SLBMC; the chiller produces cold water which plays a critical role in the cooling of the air that enters into the operating theatre," the Notes detailed.

Statistics Division encounters pushback over fake census officers

The Statistics Division is distancing itself from recent reports being circulated on social media, of individuals posing as home affairs officers, working along with the upcoming census.

The social media post alleges that these individuals are using this opportunity to carry out unlawful acts on vulnerable residents and as such, the Statistics Division has unequivocally distanced its officers from any such incidents.

In late January, the Statistics Division embarked on a Mapping and Listing Exercise which forms part of the pre-enumeration activities for the 2024 Population and Housing Census.

However, as a result of this recent development where alleged imposters are posing as census workers, the mapping officers are now facing difficulty

while carrying out their duties in the field. It has been reported that some residents now are apprehensive about dealing with the officers.

The Statistics Division assures the public that at no time would the mapping officers need entry to your prop-

erty nor interview members of your household requesting personal information at this stage of the exercise.

There are three stages to executing a census. The first, is the pre-enumeration stage which is what the *cont'd on pg 6*



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Local News



Recent reports of violence involving young people get Cabinet attention

The Cabinet held a discussion concerning violence among youth especially so among youngsters attending Secondary Schools. They noted a decision rendered

by a US Court to find guilty a parent for the actions of her son.

The parent had knowledge of the sons' ownership of a weapon and had also

learned of the son's threats to do harm to others. That parent did nothing to ensure that the child would be deprived of his weapon nor did the parent take the child

for counselling. The Court therefore found that she was complicit in the actions of her son and imposed a lengthy jail term on the parent for the crime committed by the child.

The Cabinet encourages parents whose youthful offspring seem intent on doing harm to others to seek professional assistance in discouraging their child(ren) from anti-social violent behaviour. The Cabinet was responding to the second murder that had taken place Tuesday night in Antigua and Barbuda for 2024.

cont'd from pg 5

Census Office is currently embarking on and is key.

Second, is the enumeration which is the data collection stage and is the critical component of the Census.

Third, is the post-enumeration stage, where the data collected is verified, analyzed, and statistics, reports, and other outputs are produced and disseminated.

This pre-enumeration exercise helps census workers locate dwellings, busi-

nesses, and other buildings quickly and efficiently.

The Census Office, which is responsible for implementing the Census, further adds that Mapping Officers are appropriately attired in T-shirts bearing the Division's logo on the front and "Census Mapping Exercise" on the back along with official picture IDs.

The Statistics Division continues to solicit the full cooperation of the public when the mapping officers visit your area.

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The student journal – call for students and teachers

Efforts are afoot to launch a Journalism Club in Antigua and Barbuda that will seek to help young people stay informed as well as to introduce them to the field of journalism and research.

“Journalism is a great avenue for young people to stay informed and entertained, whilst sharing their experiences or perspectives with their community.

“This is the motivation behind the upcoming launch of a digital educational publication and mobile app called – “The Student Journal”; a pilot project which is being supported by the US Embassy Bridgetown and

the American Corner Antigua which is located on the second floor at the National Public Library, a press release from the organisers stated.

It said students aged 12 – 18 years old and any teacher from public or private schools across Antigua and Barbuda will be provided with support to establish journalism clubs geared at fostering peer to peer engagement amongst young people about important topics such as democracy, volunteerism and business.

For persons who are interested they are free to join a series of webinars which are being hosted to answer questions about the initiative:

Students – www.studentjournal.app

Teachers – www.studentjournal.app/webinar

The main goal of “The Student Journal” is to provide a safe space for youth to express themselves whilst learning about life skills and better understanding the roles, rights and responsibilities that they should play in being a good citizen, employer or employee within their community.

In Journalism Club, students will take on the different roles of a publication team; gaining real world experiences that will not only look good on their resume’, but can also build confidence for any future professional career paths they may wish to explore.

On a weekly basis students will work collaboratively with other students to curate and decide what they would like to feature, particularly reporting on current affairs, key events and even providing opinion articles from their respective schools.

In turn teachers are also being encouraged to submit any content they think would help to foster positive learning amongst the student population; as each school will have their own dedicated sections in the Student Journal.

Opportunities for scholarships and skills training will also be provided to students in several areas including videography, graphic design and data research. It is hoped that with greater access to shared knowledge more young people will be equipped with the information needed to make better decisions towards a more successful personal or professional future.

Questions and feedback about this initiative can be send via email to – antiguaandbarbuda@studentjournal.app



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Volunteer Meeting

All persons who have volunteered for the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States are invited to attend an informative meeting on Thursday, February 15th, at 5:00 pm.

The meeting will take place at the Secretariat office of the SIDS4 Conference on the AUA campus, Jabberwok Main Road. (Kindly take first entrance to the campus if coming from Sir George Walter Highway)

Additionally, for security purposes, we kindly request that each volunteer brings a valid form of identification to the meeting.

We thank you for your time, and look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

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American Spaces

Meta boss Zuckerberg takes a swipe at rival Apple

By Tom Gerken

Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg has taken a personal swipe at rival company Apple's new headset.

The Vision Pro grabbed headlines as celebrities including Diplo and T-Pain wore it in public, with the "passthrough" feature allowing them to see their surroundings while using it.

But in a video shot using the Meta Quest 3's own passthrough, Zuckerberg insisted his company's headset is "the best product, period".

Apple has been approached for comment.

Passthrough is a feature used by the most recent mixed reality headsets, which allows people to see beyond the screen strapped to their head.

By utilising cameras on the outside of the headset, users are given a live, high-definition video feed of their surroundings - meaning they can wear a headset while walking or exercising.

Meta has been working on this technology for the better part of a decade, and it also features on rival products such as Sony's PlayStation VR 2.

But it is clearly the source of frustration for Zuckerberg that the Vision Pro is being praised over technology that exists elsewhere.



Mark Zuckerberg

"I think Quest is the better product, period," he said.

"It seems like there are a lot of people who just assumed that Vision Pro would be higher quality because it's Apple and it costs \$3,000 (£2,400) more.

"But honestly, I'm pretty surprised that Quest is so much better for the vast majority of things that people use these headsets for with that price differential."

It comes as several people have started to post on social media about returning their Apple headsets, with product manager Parker Ortolani among those praising the device but saying the "physical trade-offs are just not worth it".

Zuckerberg spent much of the video trying to stress why the Quest 3 was better, with reasons ranging from

the ability to move around easily without a cable, and socialising - but above all making multiple digs at the difference in price.

"I expected that Quest would be the better value for most people since it's really good and it's like seven times less expensive," he said.

"I think it's just a lot more comfortable, and we designed it to weigh 120 grams less which makes a really big difference on your face.

"There's no wires that get in the way when you move around - it's a big deal."

He also said the Quest 3 had a wider field of view, and he believed it had a brighter screen too.

Zuckerberg did accept the Vision Pro had some

advantages - in particular a higher resolution - but said he was "surprised by how many trade-offs they had to make" in other areas to achieve it.

He also praised the eye-tracking on Apple's headset, which is a feature not present in the Quest 3.

Zuckerberg ended the video by talking about what mixed reality might look like in the future.

In a surprising move, he directly criticised "fanboys" who "get upset whenever anyone dares to question if Apple's going to be the leader" in a type of technology.

"But the reality is that every generation of computing has an open and a closed model," he said, referring to how Apple controls what

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Madame Web: Critics savage Dakota Johnson's Spider-Man spin-off

By Yasmin Rufo

Madame Web, the fourth film in Sony's Spider-Man Universe, has been branded a "tangled mess" by critics, who have largely savaged it.

Starring Dakota Johnson and Sydney Sweeney, both the film premise and the acting have come under fire in a string of one-star reviews.

Based on Marvel Comics, the film centres around a paramedic with arachnid-based psychic powers.

Last year the trailer went viral for its "laughably unsure tone".

In a single-star review, the Guardian's Benjamin Lee called the film "as dumb and schlocky as the worst of the genre, with lousy network TV effects, uninvolved action and unfunny and inelegant dialogue".

Variety's Peter Debruge also slated the film, saying it felt «superfluous» in a «world already a little overcrowded with arachnid-related superheroes».

The title character has "ill-defined powers and nothing especially interesting to do", he added.

In the Marvel comics, Madame Web is an elderly blind woman with psychic powers. As a clairvoyant,



Dakota Johnson is best known for her role in Fifty Shades of Grey.

she assists Spider-Man but is little more than a "fringe character" in the original stories, according to Variety.

On screen, Web - played by Johnson - is presented as a "an athletic Gen X ambulance driver".

Rolling Stone called the latest in the SSU franchise «the Cats of superhero movies» - a reference to the derided 2019 film adaptation of the Andrew Lloyd-Webber musical.

Madame Web is "so much worse" than you have heard, David Fear brutally wrote, adding: "You look forward to a future in which this film's end credits are in your rearview mirror and gone from your memory."

The Hollywood Reporter said Madame Web was yet

another film that falls into the category where «every year, studio executives dig up minor characters, dress them in a fog of hype and leave moviegoers to debate, defend or discard the finished product».

Critics were somewhat more split about the acting.

While the Guardian dismissed Johnson as "one of the most ill-fitting tentpole leads I can remember", IndieWire said the leading lady «does her best to save a hilariously retrograde Superhero».

"Johnson is one of the most naturally honest and gifted performers to ever play the lead role in one of these things, and while that allows her to elevate certain moments in this movie way

beyond where they have any right to be, it also makes it impossible for her to hide in the moments that lay bare their own miserableness," David Ehrlich wrote.

The movie is not the first of Sony's superhero films to have been received negatively by critics.

Its 2022 film Morbius, about a living vampire, was branded a "hopeless Marvel venture" by the Telegraph.

Since Avengers: Endgame made box office history in 2019 by taking a record-breaking \$1.2bn (£980m) in global ticket sales in its opening run, many superhero films have struggled to take off.

In November, The Marvels made just \$47m (£38m) in its first weekend, while Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania, Shazam! Fury of the Gods and Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom also all underperformed at the box office in 2023.

cont'd from pg 10

can and can't be installed on its devices.

"And yeah, in mobile, Apple's closed model won, but it's not always that way - if you go back to the PC era, Microsoft's

open model was the winner.

"In this next generation, Meta is going to be the open model, and I really want to make sure that the open model wins out again."

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Regional News



Guyana: Teachers Union says national wide strike would continue

CMC - The Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU) Wednesday said that the national strike by teachers, which is now into its eighth day, would continue indefinitely, hinting that other trade unions would join the industrial action in solidarity.

"We have gotten the solidarity and the support from the other unions and they are going to show their solidarity in a tangible way as well so you may very well have other unions coming out, calling out their members and having a massive shutdown of the state," said GTU president, Dr Mark Lyte.

"Is that what this government wants so close to a next election? Is it that you want to anger the people that thrust you into office?," he asked.

Last year, the government ignored repeated calls for collective bargaining and instead engaged a cross-section of teachers to hear their grievances and requests.

Senior Finance Minister Dr Ashni Singh in a statement last December announced an across the board salary increase of 6.5 per cent that will benefit over 54,000 public servants, teachers, members of the disciplined services and government pensioners and will place an additional GUY\$7.5 billion in disposable income annually in the



hands of these employees.

Lyte said that the industrial action by teachers, which the government has deemed to be "illegal", had been discussed at Tuesday's meeting between the GTU and its umbrella confederation, Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC).

Lyte said the protest by teachers is expected to widen in the coming days, with plans afoot to stage a major protest in the capital, Georgetown, by as many as 1,500 persons, as the union seeks to pressure the Irfaan Ali government into returning to the negotiating table.

"We ain't going back to the classroom until our demands are met. I give you my word, colleagues.

"This has got to end through productive dialogue and a commitment from the government that they are going to meet with the representatives of the Teachers' Union and they are going to settle our grievance in an amicable way," the GTU

president said.

He urged teachers to "stop complaining about salary cut" for being off the job as "we are in this for the long haul," estimating that as many as 6,000 teachers stand to lose pay for being on strike.

The GTU has already said it will "challenge this undemocratic decision of the government in the courts of Guyana," adding "we have followed the requisite legal steps with adequate notification for this strike action.

"Colleagues, let us not be intimidated by a group that believes Guyana belongs to them," the GTU said, re-assuring teachers that it is aware of the "mis-sive in circulation from the Ministries of Education and Local Government" regarding the threat of docking the salaries of teachers.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Anil Nandlall has not rule out the police being called in on the union for

failing to submit its annual financial returns.

He accused the GTU of engaging in a politically motivated and "unlawful" strike against the government, maintaining also that the union's failure to submit audited and financial statements to the Auditor General and the Registrar of Commerce amounted to breaches of the law that could see the police being asked to conduct an investigation.

"For the non-filing of these annual returns, criminal offences have been committed dating back some 20 years.

"Now, if we were really vindictive and we wanted to go after the union, we could have passed the file over to the police and say 'look, investigate'.

"These are criminal offences that have been committed. I am not saying that the government will close the option, but I am saying that it is an option that is there," he said.

Unusual juror situation may lead to a mistrial for former BVI premier

CMC - Judge Kathleen Williams has ordered both sides to file motions by Thursday after two jurors have sought to recant their positions regarding the unanimous verdict against former British Virgin Islands (BVI) Premier, Andrew Fahie, who was found guilty of drug and racketeering related charges earlier this month.

Fahie was scheduled to be sentenced on April 29, 2024, after he was convicted on February 8 after a trial that lasted eight days, with the 12 member jury returning guilty verdicts of conspiracy to import a controlled substance, conspiracy to engage in money laundering, attempted money laundering, and interstate and foreign travel in aid of racketeering.

But in an unusual situation, two of the jurors have contacted the judge to say they did not actually agree with the guilty verdicts, presenting a rare predicament on whether or not a jury's verdict stands if members later recant their on-the-record position.

Fahie's defence lawyer, Theresa Van Vliet, has acknowledged that she too could not find a similar case, but has requested re-polling the two dissenting jurors, if not all 12. But the prosecution argues the unanimous verdicts must stand since no "mistake" was made on the



Andrew Fahie.
verdict form.

The matter is further complicated by constitutional restrictions on probing jury deliberations. The judge has called this scenario unprecedented and acknowledged her limited options and has since ordered both sides to file motions on the matter by this Thursday.

She told the prosecution and defence teams that she looked at other cases and said there was none with this particular scenario where some jurors changed their minds immediately after giving a guilty verdict.

"I have extremely limited avenues to explore," the judge said.

Legal experts said the judge could let the verdicts stand or declare a mistrial, requiring Fahie to be retried before a separate jury panel.

During the original tri-

al, the prosecution relied on the information provided by a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) informant, who had initially made contact with Fahie's co-conspirators, Oleanvine and Kadeem Maynard – the British Virgin Islands' former head of ports and her son.

The conspiracy's objective was to bribe BVI authorities to ignore the movement of cocaine-laden ships using the Tortola coastline as a transient haven en route to US ports.

The prosecution alleged that for his involvement, Fahie was to receive a share from each cocaine sale, part for personal gain and part to ensure the complicity of key public officials.

The court heard that while in Miami, Fahie and Ms. Maynard, inspected what they believed to be their initial shipment of

cash, US\$700,000, to be divided between them, aboard a private jet at Miami-Opa Locka Executive Airport.

During the trial, Fahie maintained his innocence of the charges carry severe penalties, with the money laundering counts each warranting up to 20 years in prison and the racketeering charge up to five years. The conspiracy to traffic cocaine could lead to a life sentence and a fine of up to US\$10 million.

Fahie, who pleaded not guilty, was arrested in April 2022 by officers posing as cartel members and the Maynards, who had previously entered guilty pleas to their charges were granted lighter sentences.

Fahie, who had been on bail and residing at his daughter's Miami apartment, has since been taken into custody.

Israel launches deadly air strikes in Lebanon after rockets hit army base

By David Gritten

At least seven civilians have been killed in Israeli strikes in Lebanon, security sources say, after Hezbollah rocket fire killed a soldier in Israel.

A woman and two children were killed in Souaneh, and at least four members of a family were later killed in Nabatieh.

At least two Hezbollah fighters were also killed in attacks in southern Lebanon, the group said.

Israel's military said it hit Hezbollah infrastructure in response to a deadly rocket attack on northern Israel.

Hezbollah fighters have exchanged fire with Israeli forces almost every day along the border since the start of the war between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas in the Gaza Strip in October.

The clashes have raised fears of a wider regional conflict.

On Wednesday morning, sirens sounded across northern Israel as barrages of rockets were fired towards the border communities of Netua and Manara, and the town of Safed, which is 14 km (9 miles) south of the frontier.

One Israeli soldier was killed and seven others were wounded after their base in Safed was hit by rockets, Israeli media and emergency services said. The soldier who died was later identi-



The rocket attack from Lebanon targeted several areas in northern Israel, including town of Safed. The soldier was identified as Staff-Sergeant Omer Sarah Benjo.

A video showed that another rocket landed near the gate of Safed's hospital.

Hezbollah later claimed it had attacked an "enemy position" in Safed "in support of the people and resistance of Gaza which is being subjected to brutal Zionist aggression with a US green light".

In the afternoon, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that fighter jets had "struck a series of Hezbollah terror targets" in Souaneh, Aadchit, Jabal al-Braij, Kfar Houneh and Kfar Dunin in response to the rocket fire.

"Among the targets struck were military compounds, operational control rooms, and terror infrastructure," it said, adding that several targets belonged to Hezbollah's elite Radwan

Force, whose well-trained members are considered the group's special forces.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said a strike on a home in Souaneh killed a Syrian woman, Rawaa al-Mohammed, and her two sons, Hassan Mohsen, 13, and Amir Mohsen, two.

Video from the town showed residents inspecting the rubble of at least one destroyed building and the burned-out wreckage of a car.

NNA also reported that one man was killed and 10 other people were injured in Aadchit. It named the dead man as Hassan Ali Najm, a Hezbollah fighter whose death the group confirmed in a statement on Telegram.

Later on Wednesday, a security source told AFP four members of the same family, including two wom-

en, were killed in a subsequent strike. The source said they had no links to Hezbollah.

"As we have made clear time and time again, Israel is not interested in a war on two fronts. But if provoked, we will respond forcefully," Israeli government spokesperson Ilana Stein told Reuters news agency.

"The current reality, where tens of thousands of Israelis are displaced [in the north] and cannot return to their homes, is unbearable. They must be able to return home and live in peace and security."

The IDF's chief of staff, Lt Gen Herzi Halevi, meanwhile told the heads of northern municipalities: "There are great achievements striking Hezbollah in Lebanon, but we continue to operate - this is not the time

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Prabowo Subianto on track to win Indonesia presidential race - early results

Indonesia's defence minister Prabowo Subianto is on course to become the country's next president after early results showed him winning more than half of votes cast in the first round.

"This victory is victory for all Indonesians," he told cheering supporters, hours after polls closed.

Early polling samples showed the feared former general winning more than 57% of votes, avoiding a second round run-off.

Full results in the world's largest single-day vote are not due for weeks.

But Indonesia's state-approved polling samples - so-called "quick counts" performed within hours of voting - have been relatively accurate in previous years.

Mr Prabowo, 72, is a polarising figure whose popularity has prompted fears that Indonesia is in danger of sliding back towards its authoritarian past. A former special forces commander under the dictator General Suharto, and his son-in-law, he has been dogged by allegations of human rights abuses.

He was greeted by



More than 200 million were eligible to vote over three time zones in the 17,000-island archipelago. Crowds of cheering supporters at an indoor arena in Jakarta shortly after polls closed - and cautioned jubilant supporters not to be arrogant.

"Even though we should be grateful, we must not be arrogant, not euphoric, remain humble; this victory must be a victory for all the people of Indonesia," said Mr Prabowo, who heads the Advanced Indonesia Coalition.

He also mentioned the names of former presidents, including a note of gratitude to outgoing President Joko Widodo whose policies he

has promised to continue.

He ran unsuccessfully against Mr Widodo, who remains hugely popular, in the last two elections. However, the man known as "Jokowi" must now stand down after two five-year terms.

Many voters said they were disillusioned with their voting options. "The difficulty of this election is that none of the choices is clear-cut on the issues, so the challenge for us voters is to choose the least-worst option," a businessman in central Jakarta told the BBC.

But another voter, cur-

rently living in Germany, said "Indonesia really needs a strong figure", supporting the idea of the former general gaining office.

"Prabowo could be a good president," she said.

More than 205 million voters across Indonesia's 17,000 islands and three time zones were eligible to vote in the world's biggest and most complex one-day election.

Mr Prabowo faced two former provincial governors, Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan. By late evening local time, quick counts showed them trailing far behind him, on 17% and 25% respectively.

Prabowo Subianto ran a clever, upbeat social media campaign which completely refashioned his image, from tough-talking soldier, to that of an avuncular, slightly

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to stop.

"We are intensifying the strikes all the time, and Hezbollah are paying an increasingly heavy price."

On Tuesday, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned Israeli leaders in a speech that launching a war against the group would result in a "million evacuees"

from northern Israel.

"To those who threaten us with a widening of the war: if you widen, we will too," he said, adding that "those who think the resistance might be afraid are very mistaken".

He also vowed that Hezbollah would only cease fire "when the aggression stops and there is a ceasefire in Gaza"

Strictly Business beat Sisserou in ABSCA T10 Mixed Softball Competition

Rackaman Construction Strictly Business claimed a nine-wicket win against Sisserou in the Antigua & Barbuda Softball Cricket Association (ABSCA) T10 Mixed (male and female) Competition on Tuesday night.

Sisserou Mixed won the toss and batted, scoring 53 for one from 10 overs. Anthony Mathurin struck 29 not out, and Stacey Telemacque scored 20. Ann Anthony claimed one wicket for one run in one over.

In reply, Strictly Business Mixed made 56 for one in 2.4 overs. Kerry Mentore slammed 34, and Kim George hit 17 not out.

Meanwhile, the Antigua and Barbuda Cricket Association's (ABCA) two-day championship will resume with its sixth round of matches this weekend.

Five matches are slated to bowl off across the island on Saturday at 11 am.

The New Winthorpes Lions will face the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB)

Bethesda Golden Eagles at New Winthorpes, and the Jennings Tigers will face the WES Rising Sun Spartans at the Pigotts playing field.

All Saints Pythons will entertain the Pigotts Crushers at the Mack Pond playing field in All Saints.

Last season's finalists, cup-holders PIC insurance Liberta Black Hawks will meet Empire Nation at the Rising Sun playing field in St. John's, and Bolans Blasters will tackle Com-

bined Schools in a bottom-of-the-table clash at Factory.

Candis Butler and Fitzroy Langley will umpire at New Winthorpes. Female umpires Keller Joseph and Melissa Lawrie will officiate at Pigotts.

Bertil Baltimore and Anderson Andrew will umpire at All Saints. Calvin Thomas and James Trotman will officiate at Rising Sun, and Donald Sheckle and Hayden-Ann Walsh-Palmer will umpire at Factory.

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comical, elder statesman.

It proved very effective, in particular with younger Indonesians who have little knowledge of Mr Prabowo's controversial past.

As a member and later commander of Indonesia's elite special forces he was accused of serious human rights abuses during the occupation of East Timor, and of ordering the abduction and torture of student activists in the last days of the Suharto regime in the 1990s.

He denies the allegations and has not been convicted of anything.

He was helped in the election by the support of Mr Widodo, who came in for criticism when his eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, joined Mr Prabowo as running mate.

There were cheers from supporters when the pair entered the arena on Wednesday night. Mr Prabowo re-

minded them they must still wait for official results from the election commission.

But he told the cheering crowd: "We are grateful for the quick count results. All the calculation, all pollsters including those on our rivals' side - the figures showed a Prabowo-Gibran win in one round."

Given the size of Mr Prabowo's early lead, there were few signs of optimism from his opponents.

Anies Baswedan, his nearest challenger going by the quick counts, said he planned to continue his movement for change and pointed out that vote tallying was not over.

"We will wait until the official result and we will respect it," the Coalition of Change for Unity (KPP) leader and former governor of Jakarta told reporters at his campaign headquarters.

Ganjar Pranowo, whose Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

(PDI-P) supported Mr Widodo's election runs, had been tipped to succeed him early on before the latter distanced himself from his party's campaign.

Mr Ganjar was nowhere to be seen when BBC Indonesian visited his headquarters in central Jakarta. "Ganjar left, just saying he wanted to go home. I don't know where he is," one journalist said.

Even after 10 years in power, outgoing President Widodo has high approval ratings in Southeast Asia's largest economy, thanks to his informal leadership style and signature infrastructure projects.

But he has been accused of weakening Indonesia's democratic institutions, and abusing his power in his alliance with Mr Prabowo.

For many Indonesians Mr Prabowo's all-but-certain victory sets a new and troubling direction for their young democracy.



Players of the Attacking Saints football team. (File photo)

Tigers and Saints win in First Division

The Potters Tigers and the Attacking Saints recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division on Tuesday.

The Potters Tigers moved to the top of the First Division by trouncing the bottom team, the Young Lions of Old Road, 5-2 in the first game of a double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Keon Greene had a double conversion with goals in the 19th and 78th minutes, and Xavon Browne also scored twice with goals in the 47th and 67th minutes. Kelvin Carr scored the other goal for the Potters Tigers in the 32nd minute.

Zavier Joseph scored both goals for the Young Lions with conversions in the 48th and 79th minutes.

Their seventh win in 10 matches allows the Potters Tigers to leapfrog Five Islands into the top spot in the First Division. The Tigers advanced to

24 points, two ahead Five Islands, who are now in second place with a game in hand.

The Young Lions will remain in the cellar on three points after suffering their ninth loss in 10 matches.

The Attacking Saints moved into third place by overcoming a two-nil deficit to prevail 4-2 against Bendals in the second encounter at the ABFA Technical Center.

Joshua Samuel struck twice, converting a penalty kick in the 69th minute and scoring his second goal of the match in the 84th minute for the Attacking Saints.

Jahmeil Richmond scored in the 64th minute, and Tarique Whyte had an 89th-minute conversion for the Attacking Saints.

Alvah Guishard's 11th-minute strike gave Bendals a one-nil halftime lead, and Darren Stevens scored in the 55th minute to double their advantage

before the Attacking Saints recovered to score four times in the second half and secure their victory.

Their sixth win in 10 matches allows the Attacking Saints to leapfrog the Police into third place in the standings. The Attacking Saints advanced to 20 points, two ahead of the Police, who have a game in hand.

Bendals will remain in 8th place on nine points after suffering their sixth loss in 11 matches.

The ABFA's Second Division will continue with four matches today at 4:15 pm. Sea View Farm will face Bethesda at the ABFA Technical Center, and the Young Warriors will take on West Ham at the Buckleys Primary School playing field.

Freemans Ville will host Soccer Academy at the Freemans Village playing field, and TAMO FC will clash with English Harbour at the Golden Grove playing field.



Players of Antigua Girls High School (blue and black uniform) compete against their peers from St. Anthony's Secondary School at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, February 13, 2024. (Photo courtesy of CPTSA Wings Sports Club)

AGHS among winners in school basketball

Antigua Girls High School and Irene B. Williams Secondary School claimed victories in the Senior Girls Division of the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball Championships on Tuesday.

Antigua Girls High School prevailed 19-14 against St. Anthony's Secondary School at the JSC Sports Complex. Alana Clarke scored six points, and Joy Shaw had five points for Antigua Girls High School.

Kinaya Lewis converted six points, and Jenah Andrew sank five points for St. Anthony's Secondary School.

Irene B. Williams Secondary School pulled off a 29-21 victory in overtime against Christ the King High

School. Christ the King's chances of victory vanished when star player Jodaliah Constant was ejected in the first half.

Constant was ejected after receiving the second of two technical fouls for briefly holding the ball after it fell through the baskets after scoring. Christ the King High was leading at the time of Constant's ejection and failed to score a basket after their star player's dismissal.

Irene B. Williams capitalized on Constant's absence and managed to draw level 21-21 with Christ the King at the end of regulation to force the game into overtime.

Irene B. Williams went on to se-

cure the win with an 8-0 run in the overtime period. Constant finished with 10 points, and Ruiya Thomas scored five points for Christ the King High School.

Greenbay and Potters recorded wins in the Minboys Primary Division.

Greenbay Primary claimed a 12-8 victory against J.T. Ambrose Primary. Trevaughn Adams scored six points for Greenbay Primary, while Temani Decosta converted four points for J.T. Ambrose Primary.

Potters Primary snatched a narrow 10-9 victory against Combined. Mano Lambert scored all 10 points for Potters Primary, while Dereck Perez had five points for Combined.

CWI congratulates Joseph on winning ICC Player of the Month award

Miles Bascombe, Cricket West Indies (CWI) Director of Cricket, has congratulated West Indies fast bowler Shamar Joseph, who has been named the International Cricket Council (ICC) Player of the Month for January, after his heroics in the two-match drawn Test Series against Australia.

Bascombe states, “On behalf of Cricket West Indies, I wish to congratulate Shamar on this award; may it be the first of many in what is hopefully a long career in maroon.”

In his first Test Match at the Adelaide Oval, Joseph scored 36 off 41 balls with the bat, including three fours and a six, in an innings where he took on the formidable Australian pace attack.

He then took an impressive five-wicket-haul, including having Steve Smith caught at slip off his first ever delivery in Test cricket, before claiming the wickets of Marnus Labuschagne, Cameron Green, Mitchell Starc, and Nathan Lyon.

Building on his success in the first Test, Shamar came back in the second



Shamar Joseph. (File photo)

Test at the Gabba, Brisbane, still hungry for more.

He took one wicket in the first innings and had to retire hurt at the end of Day 3 after being hit flush in the toe by a yorker from Mitchell Starc while batting.

In serious doubt of being able to take any further part in the match, Day 4 is when Shamar Joseph forever

etched his name into the history books.

After coming onto the field late, due to not having his uniform at the ground, he emerged from the tunnel and immediately started bowling.

In an incredible spell of 11.5 overs, he took seven wickets and led the West Indies to their first Test match win in Australia for 27 years, tying the series in the process.

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Skepple and assistant coaches Auckland “Pin Up” Jarvis and Gayson “Bubbler” Gregory, the players were selected from an initial training squad of over 30 players, which was subsequently reduced to 28, from which the final selections were made.

The squad, which started training on December 28, 2023, will go into

camp on February 21, two days before the start of the tournament.

Teams from Suriname, Guyana, El Salvador, Turks and Caicos, and host Antigua and Barbuda will be competing in the group for a chance to advance to the next round.

Matches will be held daily at 10:30 am and 3:30 pm, providing ample opportunity for football en-

thusiasts and supporters to witness the action-packed games.

Antigua and Barbuda’s young Benna Boys will open their campaign against Guyana on February 23. The host nation will tackle Suriname in their second encounter on February 25.

The young Benna Boys will play their penultimate group B encounter against

the Turks and Caicos Islands on February 27 and will clash with El Salvador in their final match on March 2.

After round-robin play between February 23 and March 2, 2024, the first-place team from each group will advance to the 2024 CONCACAF Men’s U-20 Championship, joining the six pre-seeded top-ranked nations.

Antigua select squad to contest CONCACAF U-20 Qualifying Tournament

Host Antigua and Barbuda has selected its 21-member squad and three reserves to represent the twin-island nation in the CONCACAF Under-20 Men's Qualifying Tournament later this month.

Antigua and Barbuda will be hosting CONCACAF Group B, which is one of six qualifying group competitions that is set to take place at the ABFA's state-of-the-art Technical Center at Paynters from February 23 to March 2.

Most of the players were chosen from teams currently contesting the nation's top domestic league, the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division.

New York Red Bulls midfielder Aiden Jarvis will captain the team, and Villa Lions midfielder Tyrrik Hughes is the vice-captain.

The other midfielders in the squad are Jevaughn Jarvis (Garden Stars), Jevaughn Parker (SAP), and Dajari Barthley (Villa Lions). The goalkeepers are



The national Under-20 Benna Boys training squad with the West Indies women's cricket team captain and the 2023 ICC T20 International Player of the Year Hayley Matthews, center, at the ABFA Technical Center on Wednesday, January 31, 2024. (Photo courtesy of the ABFA)

Tegan Gomes, Meyer Bailey, and Taj Moore.

Seven defenders were selected. They are Jahzime Barthley (Greenbay Hoppers), Jaden Bowen (Villa Lions), Roneba Cordice (All Saints United), Kylan Isaac (Ottos Rangers), Jordan Francis (Villa Lions), Timothy Sanasie

(SAP), and Davian Gomes (Northern Michigan University).

The squad is comprised of six forwards. They are Eroy Gonsalves (Villa Lions), Karique Knight (Garden Stars), Daryl Masicot (Jennings United), Christopher Douglas (The Webb School), Sedique

Adams (Garden Stars), and Wilden Cornwall Jr. (Garden Stars).

The three reserves are Josue Arias (Ottos Rangers), Jahquanda George (Greenbay Hoppers), and James Simon (Willikies).

Under the guidance of head coach Kerry "Arab" *cont'd on pg 21*