

BACK IN THE GAME!



Sports Minister Daryll Matthew, right, Krishna (Kris) Persaud, Founder and President of WORLDWIDE Sports Management Group.

Back in the game!

The newest franchise in the Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League (CPL) has been launched. The Antigua & Barbuda Falcons were officially unveiled during a gala opening ceremony hosted by the franchise owners – WORLDWIDE Sports Management Group. Parimatch, the number one global gaming platform will proudly serve as the Title Sponsor of the team.

The event was held on Tuesday evening at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, which will be the home of Antigua & Barbuda Falcons when they compete in the 2024 edition of the Republic Bank CPL – the Biggest Party in Sport.

Krishna (Kris) Persaud, Founder and President of WORLDWIDE Sports Management Group, was thrilled as he showcased the new team's name and the colourful and dynamic logo for the



first time to excited guests. Mr. Persaud also expressed delight in having the team officially on board for the regional event, which attracts sold-out audiences for matches.

Persaud said: “We are brand new; we are here, we are ready ... let's get ready to play! The Antigua & Barbuda Falcons will bring a unique energy and vitality to the Republic Bank CPL. We are ready to fly high and conquer what is before us. We want to establish a winner's culture within the team and also a culture of winning and

success off the field – among every individual associated with this franchise and the amazing fans we will have at our special home base at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in lovely Antigua.”

Persaud added: “What you are witnessing today as we unveil the Antigua & Barbuda Falcons, is something truly special and I want to thank the Government of Antigua & Barbuda, who have worked closely with us to bring the Antigua & Barbuda Falcons to life. Antigua is our home ... this country has a rich cricket history and the Antigua & Barbuda Falcons will create more great history on these shores. It is now time for the Falcons to fly high!”

Details on the overall structure of the Antigua & Barbuda Falcons and the coaching and management staff for the team will be announced at a later date.

The 2024 Republic Bank CPL will take place from August 28 to October 6 with games taking place in Antigua for the first time in 10 years. The final will once

again take place in Guyana at The National Stadium in Providence. The tournament will also have matches in Barbados, Guyana, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago. Once again, the window for the CPL will not clash with West Indies fixtures, so the best Caribbean talent will be on show at the Biggest Party in Sport.

Jeff Miller, CEO and General Manager of the Franchise said: “Welcome back Antigua & Barbuda! This is where the ‘party’ in cricket started, and we are delighted to be back for this exciting event. We plan to have a full house for every match with our Antigua & Barbuda Falcons on show.

“This is what we have been waiting for. It will be amazing to see the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium packed and our lovely super fans enjoying the action and the atmosphere, as well as seeing great cricket on the field, the non-stop party in the stands and all the festivities that come with cricket in the West Indies.”



Fifteen schools are taking part in the first-ever Interschool Garden Competition

Several schools have registered to participate in the inaugural Interschool Garden Competition which is designed to put on national display the work being done in the agricultural science departments in many schools



Buckley's Primary School farm.

in the country.

Education Officer for Agricultural Science, Nicolette Francis said registration for the competition closed last Friday with the judging set to take place from March 11-15. The announcement of the winners and prize giving will take place at an Agro-Expo that the ministries of education and agriculture will jointly mount on March 26.

“There is much taking place in the agricultural departments in schools across both islands – Antigua and Barbuda – and much of this goes unnoticed by the general public. This garden competition and the expo that will follow are designed to raise that awareness and also to stimulate more schools to get involved in operating a garden within their compounds,” Francis explained.

To emphasise her point, Francis mentioned two schools; the Jennings Secondary where they are operating a chicken farm that rears fowl for meat



Jennings Secondary Students processing broiler chicken

purposes and Cedar Grove primary where their farm generates its own funds when the produce are sold.

Francis revealed that at two other schools, members of the community have come forward to offer their assistance to these institutions on a voluntary basis. At Clare Hall Secondary, Birchfield Osborne, the top winner in the 2023 Community Garden Beautification Competition, has offered his expertise and has been working alongside the students for the past several weeks. While at the Sir Luther Wynter Pre-School, Neil Gomes, has been performing similar tasks.

The head of the Ministry of Education’s Agricultural Science said the idea to host the competition has been around for many years, but after she was appointed last year August, she decided that this was something she wanted to implement as soon as possible.

The competition is a joint undertaking of the Ministry of Education and the Citizen’s Engagement Unit



Buckley's Primary School recently started egg production.

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Local News



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within the Community Development Division of the Ministry of Social Transformation. The judging will be done by a team put together by the Community Development Division. Francis said for transparency and ethical reasons the Ministry of Education will not participate in the judging exercise.

The participating schools are as follows;

Pre-schools

- 11 Hours Sunshine Preschool and Nanny Cove
- Sir Luther Wynter Preschool
- Simon Bolivar Preschool
- Villa Preschool

Primary Schools

- Cedar Grove Primary
- Buckleys Primary
- Villa Primary
- Old Road Primary

Secondary Schools

- Clare Hall Secondary School
- Sir Mc Chesney George Secondary School
- Sir Novelle Richards Academy
- Antigua Grammar School
- Jennings Secondary School
- Glanvilles Secondary School
- Irene B Williams Secondary School

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AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

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Veterinary officer, Dr. Nneka Hull James seconded to CAHFSA

Veterinary Officer Dr. Nneka Hull James is leaving at the end of the month to take up a two-year appointment with the Suriname-based Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA).

Dr. Hull James will be assuming the position of Animal Health Specialist at CAHFSA which is a CARICOM institution focused on supporting, efficiently coordinating and harmonizing good agricultural practices and providing supporting mechanisms in the areas of animal health, plant health and food safety across the region.

This role will entail the

coordination, facilitation, monitoring and evaluation of national programmes across CARICOM to successfully address the harmonization.

“Essentially, my role is to work along with the Chief Veterinary Officers across CARICOM member states to see how best we can coordinate their work in our efforts to harmonise the protocols across the region. This comes in hand especially in cases where there may be an outbreak of a particular animal disease. We all need to have similar methods to both prevent the disease from spreading internally and also to prevent it from spreading to other countries,” she explained.

plained.

She gave as an example the case where African swine fever broke out among animals in a particular country and the efforts to keep the disease localized. “How do we set up a safe barrier; how do we deal with the movement of animals from country to country; and how do we prevent the disease from spreading to other countries are issues that we have to plan for,” she stated.

Another area where Dr Hull James said her role would become critical is in those cases where some countries may need to have certain specimens tested but do not have the laboratories



Dr. Nneka Hull James to have these done. Through her office, such arrangements can be easily worked out.

She is being seconded in the regional post from her substantive position in the ministry of agriculture for the two-year period.



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Murder-accused remanded

After making his first appearance in court on Monday, murder accused Eric Burton will remain behind bars until his committal hearing on April 4.

The 59-year-old Villa man appeared before Acting Chief Magistrate Dexter Wason in the St. John's Magistrate's Court after being charged over the weekend with the murder of 22-year-old Jamal Ryner of Yorks.

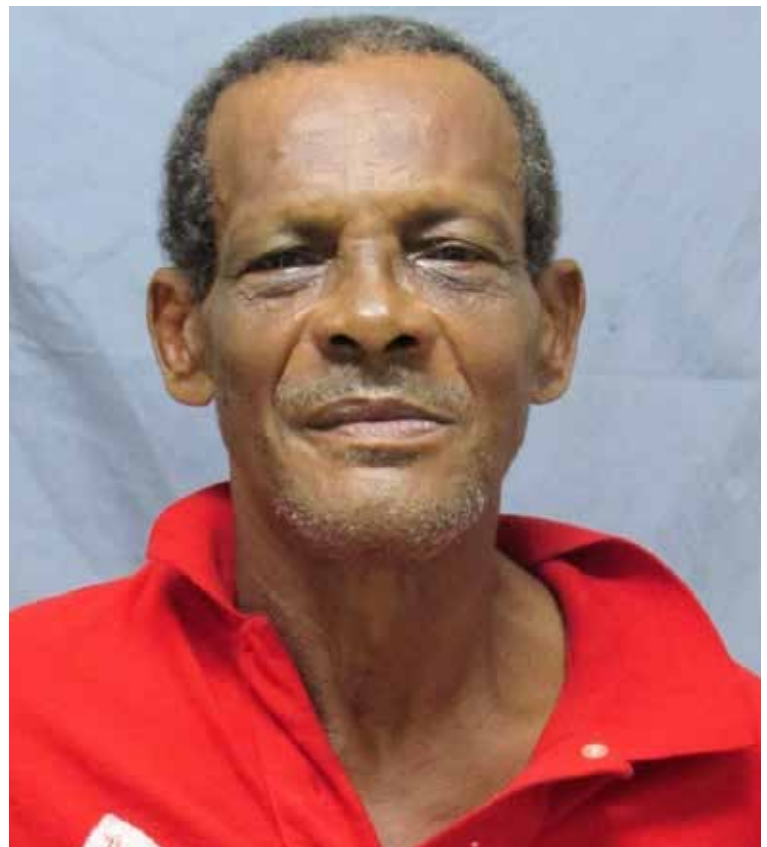
The incident occurred on February 13 around 8:30 pm on Rowan Henry Street where both men were involved in an altercation. It was during that scuffle that Ryner was stabbed in the chest.

He was pronounced dead shortly after 10 that evening.

Burton reportedly fled the scene and was apprehended days later.

This homicide is the second for the year.

Last month, another Yorks resident, Kieron Hutson was gunned down on Christian Street, Grays Farm while attending a party.



Eric Burton

Annual event geared towards empowering women set for next month

Women in Antigua and Barbuda are being encouraged to sign up and attend a special event geared towards their empowerment.

The second annual VIP International Women's Day Conference is set to take place on Friday, March 8 on International Women's Day.

Organizer Koren Norton gave some details about the event.

"The theme for this year is Still I Rise. That's what we want the women of Antigua and Barbuda to leave with, that despite the odds, they will rise in spite of challenges, inspite of the barriers I have had to face. We want every woman in Antigua and Barbuda to be able to have that theme for 2024.

"We have speakers like Octavia Nicholas, who is an entrepreneur, a spoken word artiste, someone who is a beautician, who herself has a story to tell that can inspire and motivate others. We have several prizes and

surprises. We have a lot of giveaways. We have some senior women in Antigua who will speak, some in politics, some in the arts who are going to be performing as well to our participants, and our participants themselves have the opportunity to share if they want to but we have a really good lineup. It's going to be really interesting," Norton explained.

The featured speaker is Renee Edwards.

Edwards is a highly experienced Maintenance and Engineering Professional with more than 19 years of experience in technical knowledge, project management, team leadership, health and safety, and administration. She has a proven track record of leading cross-functional teams and implementing innovative solutions that have contributed to the success of the organizations with which she has worked.

Norton who is a certified counsel-

or, is encouraging all women to attend.

"Listen, we have a lot to celebrate. We have a lot to be thankful for and we have a lot of women who are struggling, and we need to be in a room with a lot of power, with energy, with vibrance so that we can grow together. We cannot allow anything to hold us back.

"We are going to be up on the hill, the food is tasty and so, we would like to invite all the women in Antigua and Barbuda. If you can't come, send your daughter, send your sister, sponsor a ticket for your best friend," Norton added.

Interested persons can get tickets from Norton by calling 784-5015. Tickets can also be acquired from Pro Lash on Friars Hill Road and on the Ticketing App for \$200.

The event will run from 9 am- 1 pm at the Antigua Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI).

Deadline for cervical cancer awareness poster competition postponed

The deadline for submission of entries in the Cervical Cancer Awareness Poster Competition has been postponed.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Cervical Cancer Elimination Team, has announced an extension of the deadline for the Cervical Cancer Awareness Poster Competition in an effort to attract more participation.

The new date for the submission of entries is February 23. The previous deadline was February 16.

The competition is for students aged 8-18 across schools in Antigua and Barbuda.

By extending the deadline, the Ministry aims to provide aspiring participants with additional time to finalize and submit their entries, ensuring maximum

participation and contribution to the initiative's success.

The competition, themed "Her Health, Our Mission, and Cervical Cancer," encourages participants to design posters that highlight the significance of eradicating cervical cancer in the region.

Entries will be evaluated based on creativity, alignment with the theme,

and visual appeal.

Winners of the competition, to be announced on February 23rd, will receive prizes in two age categories: 8-12 and 13-18.

The winning posters will be prominently showcased on the Ministry of Health's Facebook page and displayed at various locations, amplifying the message of cervical cancer awareness within the community.

Sandals Grande Antigua staff member sings the praise of Sandals University

Spa Therapist at Sandals Grande Antigua Resort and Spa, Threcia Thorpe, is sharing her success story with others on the importance of tapping into learning and development opportunities that companies provide for their team members and how these can play a role in an individual's success.

Thorpe, who has been employed by the regional resort chain for the last 15 years, has been actively engaged in professional development courses through the Sandals Corporate University (SCU), an innovative corporate strategy focused on building Team Members knowledge, skills and attitudes, developing future leaders for Sandals.

She said, "being enrolled in the various hospitality courses throughout my tenure with the company has aided in my personal and professional development goals. The courses are very timely and have motivated me to gain additional international certification with the goal of one day becoming a spa manager."

The Sandals Corporate University continues to break new ground in the



Sandals General Manager David Latchimy Caribbean by offering a unique opportunity for the resort's team members.

"This university is the first of its kind in the region, providing a chance for every team member, to receive certification.

"This is a game-changer for employees who have a desire to advance themselves through education and training," Sandals General Manager David Latchimy added.

The SCU offers a wide range of programmes, catering to the diverse needs of its employees. From basic hospitality-specific training to advanced degrees, the university has something for everyone. By partnering



Sandals Spa Therapist Threcia Thorpe with internationally recognized universities, professional organizations, and local educational institutions, the SCU ensures that its programmes are of the highest quality and meet industry standards.

Thorpe, who is now currently enrolled at the Spa Education Academy in England where she is pursuing a program in Spa and Salon Management, encourages her fellow team members and colleagues to take advantage of the courses available on SCU's interactive learning platform.

PHOTO ESSAY

Prime Minister Gaston Browne visits the Adele School for Special Children on Tuesday



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The Body Shop to shut up to half of its UK stores

By Lucy Hooker

The Body Shop is set to shut up to half of its 198 stores in the UK and cut the size of its head office, leading to hundreds of job losses.

Closures will begin immediately on Tuesday, the firm that is overseeing the restructuring of the beauty retailer said.

The Body Shop employs around 2,200 people in the UK, including 750 staff at its head office.

The cuts would “help re-energise” the brand, the administrators said.

The stores immediately affected include four in London, where rents and other overheads are highest. The chain’s remaining shops and the website will trade as normal as the restructuring proceeds.

“It is expected that at the conclusion of the restructuring, more than half of The Body Shop’s 198 UK stores will remain open,” said the administrator, FRP Advisory.

It is understood that The Body Shop’s global franchises in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the rest of Europe are not affected by closures.

The UK arm of The Body Shop was put into administration last week, a couple of months after it was bought up by Aurelius, a German private equity firm.

Consumer expert Kate Hardcastle, who spent time with The Body Shop founder Dame Anita Roddick, said the closures were a stark reminder of the current “volatile” retail landscape.

“However, relevance is equally crucial. A brand must evolve with its audience. The challenge lies not just in upholding these values but in communicating them effectively to a generation that demands authenticity and action,” she said.

FRP said: “A reduced store foot-



print, will coincide with a renewed focus on the brand’s products, online sales channels and wholesale strategies.”

Staff headcount at the head office in London will be reduced by approximately 40%, as part of a “more nimble, financially viable model” following the earlier sale of loss-making businesses in mainland Europe and parts of Asia.

The Body Shop’s Ambassador Programme, which allows representatives to sell the firm’s products directly to customers, will also close, FRP said.

The retailer has already announced that its original direct selling network, The Body Shop at Home, which operated for 30 years, will close this month.

Aurelius bought The Body Shop for £207m at the end of last year from Brazilian beauty giant Natura.

But the private equity firm said the chain’s performance over the festive period was “worse than [their] worst-case assumptions”, prompting the move to call in administrators.

It is the first major retail failure in the UK this year.

Aurelius is The Body Shop’s main secured creditor - meaning it is first in line to receive payments from the company as it is restructured. As a result, it is also considered to be in pole position to take back control of the retailer.

Retail analyst Natalie Berg said the closure was a “reminder of the dangers of complacency”.

“The Body Shop was once a trailblazer, but they’ve settled into the status quo. Standing still is the most dangerous thing you can do in retail. You have to continuously evolve in order to stay relevant to customers. If you don’t, someone else certainly will,” she said.

The Body Shop was founded by the pioneering British businesswoman and activist Dame Anita Roddick and her husband in 1976, and quickly established itself as a ground breaking ethical, sustainable brand - rejecting animal testing on cosmetics, and promoting environmentally-friendly products and ethical sourcing practices.

However, since then it has faced increasing competition, in particular from High Street rival Lush which was co-founded by Mark Constantine who used to be a supplier to The Body Shop.

In 2006, Dame Anita and her husband sold The Body Shop to French beauty giant L’Oreal, which some of its original customer base viewed as a sell-out.

Later its adoption of aggressive sales tactics, including ferocious discounting, put people off paying full prices for its products.



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Climate change: Polar bears face starvation threat as ice melts

By Matt McGrath

Some polar bears face starvation as the Arctic sea ice melts because they are unable to adapt their diets to living on land, scientists have found.

The iconic Arctic species normally feed on ringed seals that they catch on ice floes offshore.

But as the ice disappears in a warming world, many bears are spending greater amounts of time on shore, eating bird's eggs, berries and grass.

However the animals rapidly lose weight on land, increasing the risk of death.

The polar bear has become the poster child for the growing threat of climate change in the Arctic, but the reality of the impact on this species is complicated.

While the number of bears plummeted up to the 1980s this was mainly due to unsustainable hunting.

With greater legal protection, polar bear numbers have risen. But increasing global temperatures are now seen as their biggest threat.

That's because the frozen Arctic seas are key to their survival.

The animals use the sea ice as a platform to hunt ringed seals, which have high concentrations of fat, mostly in late spring and early summer.

But during the warmer months many parts of the Arctic are now increasingly



Polar bears in the study lost weight when spending more time on land as the sea ice melted.

ice-free. In Western Manitoba where this study was carried out, the ice-free period has increased by three weeks between 1979 and 2015.

To understand how the animals survive as the ice disappears, researchers followed the activities of 20 polar bears during the summer months over a three-year period.

As well as taking blood samples, and weighing the bears, the animals were fitted with GPS-equipped video camera collars.

This allowed the scientists to record the animals movements, their activities and what they ate.

In the ice-free summer months, the bears adopted different strategies to survive, with some essentially resting and conserving their energy.

The majority tried to

forage for vegetation or berries or swim to see if they could find food.

Both approaches failed, with 19 of the 20 bears in the study losing body mass, by up to 11% in some cases.

On average they lost one kilogramme per day.

"Regardless of which strategy they were trying to use, there was no real benefit to either approach as far as being able to prolong the period that they could survive on land," according to lead author Dr Anthony Pagano, from the US Geological Survey in Alaska.

"Polar bears are not grizzly bears wearing white coats," said co-author Charles Robbins from the Washington State University Bear Center.

"They're very, very different."

Two of the three bears that took to the water found

carcasses of dead animals but spent only a short time eating, as they were too tired from their exertions.

"One sub-adult female found a dead beluga whale, she took a couple of bites from it, but she mostly used it as a buoy to rest on," Dr Pagano told BBC News.

"It really suggests to us that that these bears can't eat and swim at the same time."

An intriguing finding in the study was that one bear gained 32kg in weight.

The researchers believe that this bear, who had spent much of his time resting and conserving his strength, was fortunate to stumble across an animal carcass.

While previous research has outlined the challenges that climate poses over the decades to come, this new work raises

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Widow, aides of Haiti's President Moïse indicted in his assassination

A judge in Haiti responsible for investigating the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse has indicted his widow, Martine Moïse, ex-prime minister Claude Joseph and the former chief of Haiti's National Police, Léon Charles, among others, according to a report obtained Monday.

The indictments are expected to further destabilize Haiti as it struggles with a surge in gang violence and recovers from a spate of violent protests demanding the resignation of current Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Dozens of suspects were indicted in the 122-page report issued by Walter Wesser Voltaire, who is the fifth judge to lead the investigation after previous ones stepped down for various reasons, including fear of being killed.

Charles, who was police chief when Moïse was killed and now serves as Haiti's permanent representative to the Organization of the American States, faces the most serious charges: murder; attempted mur-



Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse sits with his wife Martine during his swearing-in ceremony at Parliament in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday February 7, 2017. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery, File)

der; possession and illegal carrying of weapons; conspiracy against the internal security of the state; and criminal association.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Martine Moïse, who was injured in the attack, are accused of complicity and criminal association.

Charles could not be immediately reached for comment, and Martine Moïse's attorney did not return a message for comment.

Meanwhile, Joseph, the former prime minister, shared a statement with The Associated Press accusing Henry of "undermining" the investigation and benefiting from the president's death.

"Henry ... is weaponizing the Haitian justice system, prosecuting political opponents like me. It's a classic coup d'état," Joseph said. "They failed to kill me and Martine Moïse on July

7 2021, now they are using the Haitian justice system to advance their Machiavellian agenda."

Joseph again called on Henry to resign and noted that while he was still prime minister, he invited the FBI to help local authorities investigate the killing and wrote the UN and OAS for help.

"I won't stop my fight. Justice must be served," he said.

In his report, the judge noted that the former secretary general of the National Palace, Lyonel Valbrun, told authorities that he received "strong pressure" from Martine Moïse to put the president's office at the disposal of Joseph because

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important questions about the species' ability to adapt.

However other researchers say the impacts of climate change on polar bears would differ, depending on location.

"It is likely polar bears will disappear from areas where sea ice will be lost in future, but difficult to say just when and

where," said Jon Aars from the Norwegian Polar Institute who was not involved in the study.

"Some areas will have good conditions for bears also many decades from now."

"The area of this study is one where conditions may be very difficult for bears within a short time, if sea ice continues to disappear as predicted."

Regional News



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he needed it to “organize a council of ministers.”

Valbrun also said that two days before her husband was killed, Martine Moïse visited the National Palace and spent nearly five hours, from 10pm to 3am, removing “a bunch of things.”

He said that two days after Jovenel Moïse was slain, Martine Moïse called to tell him that, “Jovenel didn’t do anything for us. You have to open the office. The president told Ti Klod to create a council of ministers; he will hold elections in three months so I can become president, now we will have power.”

While the document did not identify Ti Klod, the former prime minister, Claude Joseph, is known by that name.

The judge also stated in his report that Martine Moïse “suggested” she took refuge under the marital bed to protect herself from the attackers, but he noted that authorities at the scene found that not “even a giant rat... whose size measures between 35 and 45 centimetres” could fit under the bed.

The judge said the former first lady’s statements were “so tainted with contradictions that they leave something to be desired and discredit her.”

Others who face charges including murder are Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a Haitian-American pastor who visualized himself as Haiti’s next president and said he thought Moïse was only going to be arrested; Joseph Vincent, a Haitian-American and former informant for the US Drug Enforcement Administration; Dimitri Hérard, presidential security chief; John Joël Joseph, a former Haitian senator; and Windelle Coq, a Haitian judge whom authorities say is a fugitive.

Sanon, Vincent and Joseph were extradited to the US, where a total of 11 suspects face federal charges in the slaying of Haiti’s president. At least

three of them already have been sentenced.

Meanwhile, more than 40 suspects are languishing in prison in Haiti awaiting trial, although it was not immediately clear how quickly one would be held following Monday’s indictments. Among them are 20 former Colombian soldiers.

Milena Carmona, wife of Jheyner Alberto Carmona Flórez, told The Associated Press that he is innocent.

“What’s happening is that this crime is a conspiracy of great magnitudes in which powerful people are behind the scenes running everything, and that’s why they’re not given freedom,” she said of the former soldiers.

US prosecutors have described it as a plot hatched in both Haiti and Florida to hire mercenaries to kidnap or kill Moïse, who was 53 when he was slain at his private home near the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince.

The attack began late July 6 and ended July 7, according to witnesses.

Martine Moïse and others who were interrogated said they heard heavy gunfire starting around 1am that lasted between 30 to to 45 minutes before armed men burst into the bedroom of the presidential couple.

Moïse said she was lying on the ground when she heard the attackers yell, “That’s not it! That’s not it! That’s not it!”

She said the suspects made a video call to identify the exact location of what they were searching as they killed the president. She added that she was face down when the suspects tilted her head and tugged on one of her toes “to ensure that she wasn’t alive.”

Once they left, Moïse said she dragged herself on the ground and whispered to her husband that she was going to try and go to the hospital.

“That’s when she noticed that the president was dead and that his left eye had been removed from the sock-

et,” the report stated.

Moïse said a group of about 30 to 50 police officers were supposed to guard the presidential residence, but the judge noted that only a handful of officers were present that night. One officer told the judge that he heard explosions and a voice through a megaphone saying, “Do not shoot! It’s a DEA operation! US Army! We know how many officers are inside. Exit with two hands lowered.”

Another officer said the head of security of the first lady found her “in critical condition” surrounded by her two children. He said he also saw an undetermined number of people coming out of the president’s residence “with briefcases and several envelopes in their possession.”

The report quotes Inspector General André Vladimir Paraison saying that the president called him at 1:46 a.m. and told him, “Paraison! Man, hurry up! I’m in trouble! Come quickly and save my life.” He said he encountered heavily armed men and couldn’t access the residence immediately.

Officers at the scene said they found cars, windows and doors at the president’s private home riddled with bullet holes, along with surveillance cameras cut off and a broken lock on the double-wooden door leading to the presidential bedroom.

The judge said some police officers at the residence were disarmed and handcuffed, while others “had time to throw themselves down a ravine” for safety. In addition, the police officer overseeing presidential security was accused of receiving \$80,000 to bribe certain officers “to remain inactive” during the assassination, according to the report.

The judge noted how “none of the police providing security to the head of state was in danger. Unfortunately, the head of state was assassinated with ease.”

The Bahamas to enter realm of space tourism

The Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation (MOTIA) has announced the successful negotiation and execution of a groundbreaking Letter of Agreement (LOA) with SpaceX (Space Exploration Technologies Corp.), marking a revolutionary leap for The Bahamas into the realm of space tourism.

The LOA establishes a strategic collaboration that positions The Bahamas as a global destination for witnessing booster landings.

SpaceX, a pioneer in space exploration, is currently finalising mission designs where one of the company's autonomous drone ships will serve as a Falcon 9 landing location east of The Exumas, offering a spectacle that will be visible only in The Bahamas.

This unique opportunity sets the stage for tourists to witness awe-inspiring space events from cruise ships, resorts, and various tourist hotspots, solidifying The Bahamas' position as a key player in the emerging space tourism industry.

The exclusive visibility of rocket landings on an autonomous drone ship from various Bahamian islands distinguishes this destination as the only one of its kind worldwide.

The respective Bahamian landings covered in the



LOA will not only support SpaceX's Starlink mission but also contribute to saving lives, enhancing first responders' capabilities, and ensuring connectivity in times of disasters.

"This Letter of Agreement with SpaceX marks a new era for The Bahamas. We are honoured to work with SpaceX to enable their Falcon 9 rockets to safely land on an autonomous dronship within Bahamian waters, helping to continue their rocket reusability efforts," said Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments & Aviation.

"Simultaneously, through Starlink's high-speed internet from space, this agreement opens doors to unprecedented opportunities for our citizens, fostering long-term advantages for education, emergency response and innovation," Cooper said. "The Bahamian government aims to utilise this partner-

ship for economic growth, job creation and enhanced educational opportunities."

In tandem with the LOA, SpaceX has committed to supporting the creation of a space installation or exhibit showcasing recognisable hardware and a SpaceX spacesuit. This exhibit, the only one outside the United States, is expected to draw significant attention and attendance from both Bahamian citizens and international tourists.

In addition to potential revenue growth, The Bahamas has secured Starlink internet connectivity at multiple locations across the Family Islands.

These terminals, specifically designated for schools lacking sufficient internet capacity, will also bolster the capabilities and operations of first responders in the area.

SpaceX's commitment to educational outreach through STEM and space-focused presenta-

tions on a quarterly basis will leave a lasting impact on the growth of STEM education in The Bahamas, providing invaluable opportunities for students and teachers.

Aisha Bowe, former NASA rocket scientist, and STEMBoard Founder & CEO played a significant role in this achievement. In 2024, she is set to become an astronaut, marking her as the first Bahamian in space. Her inspiring journey shared globally through interviews, presentations, and a documentary, aligns with the Bahamas' vision for innovation and education. In collaboration with SpaceX over the past fifteen months, Bowe's expertise and STEMBoard's contributions were integral in outlining procedures for space operations in Bahamian territory.

Cooper expressed the Government's commitment to expanding impact beyond tourism.

"The Bahamas is poised to embrace its newfound role in the global space industry, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's history. We look forward to a future where The Bahamas stands proudly as a trailblazer in space tourism and technology in line with our Blueprint for change and our Innovate242 initiative," he said.



One person was killed and 22 others were injured during the 14 February shooting in Kansas City.

Super Bowl parade shooting: Two men charged with murder

By Bernd Debusmann Jr

Two men have been charged with murder for last week's deadly shooting at the Super Bowl victory parade in Kansas City.

A woman died and 22 others were injured during the shooting, which police said stemmed from the two men arguing.

The charged men - identified as Dominic Miller and Lyndell Mays - were both shot and wounded during the incident. Two teenagers were charged with gun and resisting arrest violations last week.

Prosecutor Jean Peters Baker of Jackson County said at a press conference on Tuesday that the two men had been charged with second-degree murder, two counts of armed criminal action and unlawful use of a weapon.

Mr Mays was the one who got into an argument at the event and drew a handgun, Ms Peters Baker alleged.

Other people then drew guns during

the incident, officials said. That included Mr Miller, who prosecutors believe is the one who shot and killed Lisa Lopez Galvan, 43, during the incident.

Both men are being held on a \$1m (£792,000) bond. The two were initially taken to a hospital to be treated for their injuries after the shooting. They remain in hospital, where they are recovering.

Ms Lopez Galvan's family said in a statement that they were thankful for the arrest of the two suspects.

"Though it does not bring back our beloved Lisa, it is comforting to know that the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office and the KCPD made it a top priority to seek justice for Lisa, the other shooting victims, those who had to witness this tragedy unfold and the Kansas City community," the statement said.

Their charges are in addition to the two teenagers who were charged last week.

"These are adults," Ms Peters Baker said, clarifying confusion about the new

charges. "There are two juveniles that has been reported already pretty broadly by the news media. Those are being handled by a different office at this point in time."

It is unclear what led to the altercation, and the investigation into the shooting remains ongoing. Ms Peters Baker said that further charges may follow.

"We seek to hold every shooter accountable for their actions on that day - every single one," she said. "So while we're not there yet on every single individual, we're going to get there."

The 22 people wounded in the incident ranged in age from eight to 47, according to Kansas City police.

The shooting was one of several to take place at sports celebrations across the US in recent memory.

In June last year, a shooting at a celebration for the Denver Nuggets NBA team left 10 people wounded, including one of two people charged in relation to the incident.

US vetoes call for immediate Gaza ceasefire at UN

The US has vetoed a resolution at the UN demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza after proposing its own draft urging a temporary ceasefire.

Washington said the Algerian-proposed resolution would “jeopardise” talks to end the war.

But the move has been condemned, with US allies expressing regret the original ceasefire motion was blocked by the White House.

In its own resolution the US warned Israel not to invade the city of Rafah.

The US has previously avoided the word “ceasefire” during UN votes on the war, but President Joe Biden has recently made similar comments.

Thirteen countries on the 15-member body backed Algeria’s resolution, while the UK abstained.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Washington’s ambassador to the UN, said it was not the right time to call for an immediate ceasefire while negotiations between Hamas and Israel were continuing.

The draft resolution proposed by the US calls for a temporary ceasefire “as soon as practicable” and on the condition that all hostages are released, as well as urging barriers on aid reaching Gaza to be lifted.

However, it is unclear if



Rafah is sheltering more than a million people who have been forced to flee other parts of the Gaza Strip.

or when the Security Council will vote on the form of words proposed by Washington.

After the US vetoed Algeria’s ceasefire resolution, the north African nation’s envoy to the UN said it “would have sent a strong message to Palestinians” and declared that “unfortunately the Security Council failed once again.”

“Examine your conscience, how will history judge you,” Amar Bendjama said.

Palestinian representative to the UN Riyad Mansour said the US veto was “absolutely reckless and

dangerous”.

Heavy criticism also came from a series of Israeli and US allies. France’s representative, Nicolas de Rivière, expressed regret that the resolution was “not adopted given the disastrous situation on the ground”.

But Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was “committed to continuing the war until we achieve all of its goals”. “There is no pressure, none, that can change this,” he added.

Washington has come under immense international pressure to use its leverage to rein in Israel’s dev-

astating operations, having spent much of the war emphasising its ally’s right to self-defence.

Israel would be bound to follow any Security Council resolution, as these are legally binding. This issue distinguishes the Security Council from the General Assembly.

It is the first time the US has called for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza at the UN, having vetoed previous resolutions using the word.

Frank Lowenstein, who served as US special envoy for Middle East peace under President Obama, called

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Sports News



AGHS I beat Island Academy in schools' volleyball competition

The first team of Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) pulled off a two-nil victory against defending champion Island Academy in the girls' division of the Ministry of Sports Inter-Schools Volleyball Championships on Monday.

Antigua Girls High School I prevailed 25-12, 25-14 at the indoor stadium at the YMCA Sports Complex.

However, the first team of Island Academy, who are the defending boys' division champion, recorded

two wins on Monday.

Island Academy I defeated Princess Margaret School 25-8, 25-13, while they also prevailed against their colleagues, Island Academy II, 25-14, 25-14.

In other results, Antigua Girls High School's second team beat All Saints Secondary School 25-8, 25-14 in a girls' division affair.

The girls of Princess Margaret School also pulled off a 2-1 victory against Ottos Comprehensive School.

Princess Margaret School took the opening set 25-19, and Ottos Compre-

hensive School drew level by clinching the second set 25-18. The Princess Margaret School Girls won the match by taking the decisive third set 15-13.

All Saints Secondary School clinched a 2-1 win against Ottos Comprehensive School in the boys' division.

All Saints Secondary won the first set 25-15, but Ottos Comprehensive hit back by taking the second set 25-11. All Saints Secondary recovered their poise to win the match by clinching the third and de-

clining set 17-15.

The Sir Novelle Richards Academy had mixed fortunes in the competition. Sir Novelle Richards Academy beat Princess Margaret School 2-1 in the girls' division.

After losing the opening set 21-25, Sir Novelle Richards Academy rebounded to win the match by taking the next two sets, 25-11 and 17-15.

However, Pares Secondary School defeated Sir Novelle Richards Academy 2-0 in the boys' division, prevailing 25-13 and 29-27.

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the move "a pretty significant shift" in American policy.

"What I think is most significant is what this says about the frustration level the Biden administration has with Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli government," he told the BBC World Service. "They've just consistently ignored us when it comes to humanitarian assistance, reducing civilian casualties and now they are dug in on this Rafah invasion that we are strongly counselling against."

Mr Lowenstein also noted that President Biden is under pressure from Arab-Americans to do more to halt the killings of Palestinians.

A former Israeli ambassador to the US said the American ceasefire resolution "is going to be a problem for the Israeli government".

Michael Oren told BBC Newshour a key issue was any temporary ceasefire linked to talks on hostages releases would give "immense leverage to Hamas", who could then "drag out

those negotiations" indefinitely.

"Any Israeli government would not meet those terms, it would mean Hamas wins the war and Israel loses," he said.

The US draft resolution states that a major ground offensive in Rafah would result in more harm to civilians and their further displacement, including potentially into neighbouring countries - a reference to Egypt.

It also says such a move would have serious implications for regional peace and security.

More than a million displaced Palestinians, who represent about half of Gaza's population, are crammed into Rafah after being forced to seek shelter there.

The southern city, which borders Egypt, was home to only 250,000 people before the war.

Many of the displaced are living in makeshift shelters or tents in squalid conditions, with scarce access to safe drinking water or food.

The UN has issued its own warn-

ing that a planned Israeli offensive in the city could lead to a "slaughter".

Its aid chief says civilians in Rafah, "like the entire population of Gaza, are the victims of an assault that is unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope".

The UN says women and children continue to be killed in air strikes. The Israeli military has previously insisted it only targets Hamas fighters.

Israeli war cabinet member Benny Gantz has warned the manoeuvre will be launched unless Hamas frees all its hostages by 10 March. The date marks the start of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

Israel launched its operations in Gaza following an attack by Hamas gunmen on southern Israel on 7 October, during which about 1,200 people were killed and more than 240 others taken hostage.

The Israeli military campaign has killed 29,000 people in the Palestinian territory, according to the Hamas-run health ministry there.

Joseph signs on as brand ambassador for GTT

The West Indies' newly-minted star bowler, Guyanese Shamar Joseph and children in the east Berbice community of Baracara, are set to benefit significantly from Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Co. Ltd. now that he has signed on to be the telecommunications provider's brand ambassador, company officials said.

GTT's Chief Commercial Officer, Kerchelle Charles said, through the three-year agreement, Joseph would receive business mentorship and the children of Baracara, a community on the Canje River, would be supported in their sport and educational pursuits.

She said GTT would



Shamar Joseph

assist in supplying cricket gear to the students.

"We've seen the school; we understand the needs.

We see them playing a lot of

cricket so we want to help them with cricket gear, the students with school books, uniforms. You know, the necessities of schools we will

support," she said.

The GTT official said a business mentor would be assigned to the cricketer to support his ambition of becoming a businessman.

Joseph, who has hauled 13 Test wickets from two Test matches, rose to international fame after he led the West Indies to its first Test victory against Australia in 27 years with seven for 68 in the second innings of the second Test in Brisbane in January.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer of GTT, Richard Stanton announced that, in conjunction with WANSAT, that high speed "quality internet solution" has been installed at Baracara.

Swetes get first win in Premier League

Swetes recorded their first win in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division on Monday night.

Following a goalless first half, Swetes beat Parham 2-0 at the ABFA Technical Center.

Shalon Knight broke the deadlock with a 77th-minute conversion, and Jondale Jno-Lewis scored the second goal for Swetes in the 82nd minute.

It was Swetes first win in 10 matches, allowing them to move out of the cellar by leapfrogging Empire to second from the bottom of the standings on goal difference.

The result allows Swetes, which boasts a superior goal difference, to join Empire on five points.

The result left Parham on six points

from 10 matches and in 13th place, a position that is one place above Swetes in the 15-team round-robin competition.

ABAYA and Belmont FC also recorded wins in the ABFA Second Division on Monday.

ABAYA claimed their second win in 10 matches by beating the Young Warriors 3-0 at the Parham playing field.

Keun Wyre put ABAYA ahead with a 20th-minute conversion, Jahvante Harriet doubled their lead by scoring in the 26th minute, and Joshua James converted the team's final goal in the 82nd minute.

The win carries ABAYA to six points, but the team remained third from the bottom of the standings.

It was the ninth defeat in 10 matches for the Young Warriors, who remained second from the bottom of the standings with three points.

Belmont FC ended a four-match losing streak by securing a four-nil victory against Real Blizzard at the New Winthropes playing field.

Kamaal Greene scored twice with conversions in the 65th and 81st minutes after Ryan Morrison opened the scoring with a strike in the 22nd minute. Malique Edwards scored the other goal for Belmont FC in the 24th minute.

Their sixth win in 11 matches carries Belmont FC to 19 points, while Real Blizzard remained on 15 points after suffering their third loss in 10 encounters.

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Sabalenka falls to old foe Vekic in Dubai second round

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) - Aryna Sabalenka lost her first match since successfully defending her Australian Open title when she was overhauled by an old foe at the Dubai Championships on Tuesday.

The No. 2-ranked Sabalenka blew a set and 2-0 lead as Donna Vekic of Croatia rallied to win 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-0 in the second round.

No. 3 Elena Rybakina avoided an upset when Victoria Azarenka retired in distress. Azarenka won the first set 6-4, but lost the second 6-2 in increasing pain.

Sabalenka and Vekic go back eight years on the tour, and Vekic dominated the early matchups. But Sabalenka made the Grand Slam breakthrough when she beat Vekic in the Australian quarterfinals a year ago en route to her first major title.

Vekic referenced Sabalenka winning "the big one" of their career matchups on Tuesday but her sixth win in their eight contests wasn't too shabby either.



Donna Vekic from Croatia celebrates after beating Aryna Sabalenka during a match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024. (AP)

Sabalenka led 5-3 before settling the first set in a tie-breaker. Sabalenka, coming off a three-week layoff after her Melbourne triumph, then led 2-0 with a point for 3-0.

"I was on the beach already," Vekic admitted, but a sliced backhand passing winner that Sabalenka let go saved the game and launched her comeback.

"I won the first set. I was up with break. I didn't feel like I was up," Sabalenka said. "The level of play was so bad today from me. I feel like the conditions here don't fit me well at all."

Staying aggressive but with improving accuracy, Vekic won the next three games, broke for 5-3 and served out to level the set

score after nearly two hours.

Sabalenka, forced to her first three-set game of the year, showed more second serves and exasperation, and Vekic was merciless.

A sixth double fault by Sabalenka put her 3-0 down in the third and two more double faults dropped her 5-0 behind. Moments later, Vekic won a ninth straight game and wrapped up her first win over a top-two player since 2019.

Also, Wimbledon champion and No. 7 seed Marketa Vondrousova defeated Peyton Stearns 6-1, 5-7, 6-2 for the third time in eight months.

No. 8 Maria Sakkari and former champions Jelena Ostapenko and Elina Svitolina also advanced to the last 16.

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contract from Cricket West Indies but was unable to represent the West Indies due to injury problems.

Hector has worked hard to overcome her injury problems and returned to competitive domestic and regional cricket in 2022. She was drafted and represented the Trinbago Knight Riders in the inaugural Women's Caribbean Premier League in 2022.

She also represented the Leeward Is-

lands in the CWI West Indies Senior Women's Championships that same year.

However, Hector was controversially omitted from the Antigua and Barbuda women's team for the Leeward Islands tournament in 2023.

Subsequently, she was also overlooked by the Leeward Islands for the 2023 CWI Senior Women's Championships.

Hence, Hector has turned to league cricket in Australia to re-launch her promising cricketering career.

Hector completes club cricket stint in Australia

Antigua and Barbuda's only professional women's cricketer, Shawnisha Britney Hector, has completed her first stint playing club cricket in Australia.

In an effort to resuscitate her career, Hector has been plying her trade, representing Plenty Valley Premier Women's 2nd XI in the Victorian Premier Cricket and Kookaburra Women's Premier Seconds in Yarrambat, Victoria, Australia.

Hector has played a total of 17 matches, comprising T20 and one-day encounters, for Plenty Valley during the 2023-24 Australian domestic cricket season.

Hector has the highest overall aggregate for Plenty Valley and the best batting average of 32.17. She has amassed a total of 390 runs, including two half centuries, and the highest score of 93 in 16 innings.

The right-arm medium pacer is also the third-leading wicket-taker for Plenty Valley, with 14 scalps at an average of 21.64. She has a best bowling figure of three for 17.

Teammates Anusha Joshi and Emma Hallissey are the joint leading wick-

et takers for Plenty Valley, with 15 wickets each.

Hector is her team's leading scorer in the T20 competition, with an aggregate of 158 runs at an impressive average of 52.67. But she only took two wickets in the T20 competition.

Hector is the second-leading run-getter for Plenty Valley in the one-day competition, with 228 runs at an average of 25.33. Silvia Kinyua has the highest aggregate of 266 runs at an average of 26.6.

Hector is the third-leading wicket-taker for her team in the one-day competition, with 12 scalps at an average of 18.0. Hector is expected to return home to Antigua later this week.

In October 2019, she was named in the West Indies' squad for their series against India. She became the first Antiguan female cricketer to be selected for the West Indies team.

Hector made her Women's One Day International (WODI) debut for the West Indies against India on November 1, 2019, in Antigua.

In May 2021, Hector was awarded with a central

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Antiguan Shawnisha Britney Hector in her Plenty Valley Premier Women's 2nd XI uniform