

AG ON JUDGEMENT: NO CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

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Sir Clive Lloyd, centre, has been selected as the recipient of the Order of the Caribbean Community but it will be bestowed upon him in Grenada in July. Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley described him as a “true Caribbean giant” when she took her turn to comment on the accolade.

Local News



AG: Barbudan duo's victory at the Privy Council may be a 'pyrrhic victory'

Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin, has confirmed that he has had a chance to review the judgement handed down by the London-based Privy Council in the Barbuda case regarding the construction of the soon-to-be-opened airport.

"The ruling from the Privy Council turned on one issue; that is whether or not the two litigants – John Mussington and Jackie Frank – had locus standi; that is the right to bring the matters before the court.

"The Privy Council found that they had a special interest in the environment and that under those special circumstances the narrow interpretation by the Eastern Caribbean Appeal Court was relied upon when it ought not to," Sir Steadroy explained.

Under the ruling from the Privy Council, the Barbudan duo can now proceed to the court with their application.

"They will have to decide what to do as I now have two questions; one is whether or not this lawsuit is for academic interest now that the airport has been completed and awaiting final permits to start operations and second, whether the litigants are financially sound enough to pursue the matter further," he queried.

He explained that if an injunction is filed before the court and a trial follows, whether or not the litigants have the financial means to compensate the other party should the ruling go against them in the court, is a concern.

"My worry is that this may turn out to be 'pyrrhic victory' for the litigants as they may find themselves liable in the tune of millions of dollars in damages should a court rule against them should they pursue the matter.

"Clearly, that is a matter for consid-



Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin
eration so under these circumstances I see no reason to celebrate," Sir Steadroy declared.

Lead attorney for the Development Control Authority in the case, Dr. David Dorsett said the Privy Council disagreed with the Appeal Court's narrow interpretation of who has standing in a case such as the one under review.

He noted that the London-based court has over time been ruling in favour of a broader interpretation of the law.

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PM Browne praises Brazil's leadership efforts to reduce global poverty

The just-concluded 46th Heads of Government Meeting of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, issued a number of special invitations to heads of state and other dignitaries and officials.

Among them was the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The Brazilian president held one-on-one meetings with several Caribbean leaders, one of whom was the Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister, Gaston Browne.

Prime Minister Browne remarked on Brazil's efforts to end hunger throughout the Americas. The Prime Minister noted the global leadership of President Lula who he lauded for lifting many Brazilians out of poverty and reducing inequality. He also requested that Brazil use its

position within the G20 to advocate on behalf of CARICOM Member States in the area of climate change, access to concessional financing and the plight of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The Prime Minister further suggested that CARICOM and Brazil establish an effective trade and investment framework to enhance cooperation between Brazil and the region. He further suggested that significant trade between Brazil and the region could lead to the reduction of cost of living for CARICOM States.

He thanked Brazil for its support for the establishment of a global Loss and Damage Fund, which will help developing countries cope with the effects of climate change. Prime Minister Browne also



Prime Minister Gaston Browne shakes hands with President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He took the opportunity to extend an invitation for President Lula to attend the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States, scheduled for 27 to 30 May, 2024 in St. Johns, Antigua.



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Dated *29th* of February, 2024.

Damien Benjamin, Esq.
 Barrister/Notary Public

Antigua and Barbuda wants full CARICOM participation at SIDS4 conference

Antigua and Barbuda is hoping for a full turn out of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries when it hosts the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in May this year.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne said regional countries have been invited to participate in the “excellent” conference that will be held in St. John’s from May 27-30 under the theme “Charting the Course Toward Resilient Prosperity”.

“The United Nations is committed to supporting islands in their quest for a more resilient and sustainable future. They may be geographically remote, but their problems are not theirs to face alone,” said Li Junhua, the Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The SIDS conference was among items discussed on the first full day of the CARICOM summit that ended later on Wednesday and Prime Minister Browne told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that it is a very important conference for SIDS globally.

“It is literally an inflection point as we seek to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals),” he

said, noting that the SDGs had been derailed “to some extent by the myriad crises that they had to contend with.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015 and provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

At its heart are the 17 SDGs, which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

“We are hoping that within this decade in which Antigua and Barbuda will take leadership that we will certainly introduce strategies and programmes to achieve the SDGs to make sure that we all achieve some level of resilient prosperity within the various SIDS states,” Browne said.

He said he had taken the opportunity during the summit to “invite all of my CARICOM colleagues. SIDS must show solidarity with each other. So high



Prime Minister Gaston Browne level attendance is very important.

“We expect all of the CARICOM heads to attend the conference in Antigua, which as I said before is poised to become a very impactful and certainly a very exciting conference for SIDS globally.”

He said in terms of issues, the agenda will include climate change, “certainly debt which is a major problem for SIDS... and areas which we can really adapt to mitigate

against climate change, and increase accessibility to funding”

Prime Minister Browne told CMC that youth crime and violence, which is a major issue among developing countries, will also be addressed during the conference.

According to the UN, SIDS are in the crossfires of multiple crises, climate change, the economic and social repercussions of COVID-19, and a crisis of debt.

PM Browne concerned over removal of CDB President

Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne Wednesday said concerns have been raised over the method used to send the President of the Barbados-based Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Dr. Hyginus “Gene” Leon, on administrative leave since January.

The CDB has remained mum on the circumstances surrounding the decision to send the St. Lucian-born economist on administrative leave, with the acting president Isaac Solomon, confirming at a bank news conference earlier this month that “there is an internal administrative process involving the president.

“The bank is extremely focused on preserving the independence, confidentiality and integrity of the process and as you can well appreciate, in order for us to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the process we are unable to provide any other details at this time,” Solomon said then.

Prime Minister Browne speaking to reporters on Wednesday, said “well it is a process that is taking place and there were concerns about the procedure that led to that process and at some point, we will have to address the issue of the procedures and the fact that subordinates within an institution can literally take



Dr. Hyginus “Gene” Leon

disciplinary action against their superior without even consulting with the directors or the governors of the bank.

“I mean there is something fundamentally flawed about that and you would have seen two developments, not only the sending on leave or the institution of disciplinary action against the president but even prior to that when the race for the candidature was taking place between Leon and Professor Avinash (D. Persaud of Barbados) I recall that same whistle blower system was activated.”

Prime Minister Browne told reporters by virtue of that ‘they practically would have eliminated Professor Avinash,

Prime Minister Browne said that the process “could be abused ,” adding “we don’t know for a fact that

it is being abused currently, but we have concerns it may have been abused and in that case we will have to make some changes.

“But I imagine that the investigation that is taking place will confirm whether or not the ...suspended president is guilty of any malpractice within the bank or if he would have breached whatever rules and regulations.

“So I think we have to await the outcome of that investigation before we start to make the adjustments,” Browne said, noting “making too strident arguments about making adjustments against a system that may not be broken.

“On first blush I think the whole process is somewhat flawed and I am of the view that even if it may be applicable to lower members of staff, certainly when

it comes to the president there has to be some, at least notification, even out of decency to the directors and the governors.”

He said maybe perhaps based on the issue “there could be some form of intervention at the level of the governors.

“So it is a process we will be hopefully reviewing in the future to ensure that we do not have a system that potentially can be abused and could be weaponised against future presidents of the bank or senior members of the bank,” Prime Minister Browne told reporters.

Leon is the sixth president of the regional development finance institution. He was elected at a special meeting of the CDB Board of Governors held on January 19, 2021, for a five-year term, and assumed office on May 4, 2021.

Leon heads a team of more than 200 employees headquartered in Bridgetown, and came to the assignment with 35 years of experience in economics, financial policy development, and executive management, more than 20 of which were spent working with the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF). He had succeeded the Jamaican-born Dr. Warren Smith who retired in 2021 after serving as president for 10 years.

Passport scandal duo set to hear ruling in no-case submission

Today (Thursday February 29) is the day when suspended Superintendent of Police Ray John and his former partner, Shakema Charles will know if the trial against them will move on or be dismissed.

Acting Director of Public Prosecutions Shannon Jones-Gittens is expected to give the ruling on the no-case submission. Defense Attorneys Hugh Marshall for John and Michael Archibald for Charles would have filed stating that their clients should not stand trial because there is insufficient evidence tying them to the crimes.

John and Charles are on trial for allegedly conspiring with Vincentian resident Lonzel Jones to forge passport bio pages using unauthorized Multi-Layered Infilling Sheets between January 1 and April 7, 2018.

According to media reports, Charles, who worked at the Antigua and Barbuda Passport Office, is accused of conspiring with John, who allegedly received 16 of the infilling sheets.

Evidence presented in court suggests that John and Charles provided infilling sheets and other documents to Jones in St Vincent.

John had reportedly contacted Jones some time prior and hired him to create fake passport bio pages for persons wishing to purchase land, promising him substantial compensation.

Witness testimonies indicate that John asked a longtime police friend, Superintendent Lisborn Michael, who was traveling to St Vincent in April, to deliver an envelope to Jones without disclosing its contents.

Jones then created the documents and delivered them to John's nephew, Geraldo James, but the transaction was intercepted by Vincentian police.

CARICOM Heads reaffirm commitment to fight crime and violence head-on

CARICOM Heads who concluded their 46th Heads of Government meeting on Wednesday, say they remain committed to finding solutions to the prevailing dire state of crime, violence, and public safety amongst its member states.

The CARICOM Heads discussed the issue in caucus during their February 25 to 28 meeting in Georgetown Guyana.

That caucus session was a follow-up to the inaugural symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Safety Issue and the Declaration of the Heads made in Trinidad and Tobago on 17-18 April 2023.

CARICOM Heads reiterated their firm commitment to the principles stated in, and to the implementation of the actions set out in the Declaration on Crime



and Violence as a Public Health Safety Issue.

In reaffirming the right to freedom of expression and to public speech CARICOM Heads strongly condemned the development, presence, tolerance, or acceptance of violent, anti-so-

cial music and social media content that denigrate women and encourage or promote or support the use of violence, guns, and other anti-social behaviour, particularly targeted to the region's youth.

CARICOM Heads af-

firm their support for engaging with young people in the creative economy, including the entertainment and music industry, and the sporting industry to develop, support and spread across the region positive content to offset the

cont'd on pg 7

Tumasie Blair attends pre-SIDS4 meeting in Thailand

The current and looming challenges being faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are getting the attention of major international agencies and development partners as Antigua and Barbuda prepares to host the May 27-30 SIDS4 Conference.

In Thailand, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UK Government and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific hosted a workshop-type session under the specific theme of “Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity strengthening in Small Island Developing States.”

Some 60 participants, to include representatives from SIDS, development partners, stakeholders and regional bodies from over 30 countries around the globe participated in the engaging two-day meeting at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok last week. The attendees explored ways that development partners



can improve working in SIDS for more sustainable, impactful, and contextualised capacity strengthening support.

In attendance was Antigua and Barbuda’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tumasie Blair, who noted the opportunity was a fruitful and productive exercise in building support for SIDS and for bringing focused attention on the need for the SIDS4 Conference to deliver the strongest possible outcome.

Delivering remarks as the featured speaker in



Antigua and Barbuda’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tumasie Blair

the opening session of the workshop, Blair informed attendees on the preparations for the Fourth SIDS Conference and the anticipated outcomes of the Con-

ference.

“SIDS4, must be seen as a reset, a rethinking and a reinvigorated approach of the relationship between SIDS and the international community,” Blair stressed.

“When we leave St. John’s, there must be a sense of relief that we, the international community, got it right, and the next 10-year framework for SIDS, will be less about promises but more about action,” he further emphasised.

cont’d from pg 6

negative impact of anti-social, violent, and criminal behaviour which some elements in that sector promote and support.

Given the serious, significant and chronic negative developmental impact that crime and violence is having on member states, CARICOM Heads commit to working with all sectors and institutions, including civil society, academia, labour,

churches, the creatives, law enforcement, the judiciary, political parties, employers and businesses, and our external partners to implement all of the measures set out in the Declaration on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Safety Issue.

CARICOM Heads remain committed to maintaining this region as a zone of domestic peace and safety to ensure the preservation of our Caribbean civilisation.

ABTA announces launch of Beach 366 as part of Cricket World Cup festivities

In a unique blend of celebration and sportsmanship, Antigua and Barbuda has announced the creation of the world's first Leap Year Beach 'Beach 366' set to be officially unveiled at the Sir Vivian Richards stadium, in alignment with the cricket World Cup festivities this June. This innovative initiative not only celebrates those born on February 29th but also highlights Antigua and Barbuda's rich cricketing heritage and its role as a premier destination for cricket enthusiasts from around the globe.

Acknowledging the oversight of not having a beach for leap year babies, despite boasting one beach for every day of the year, Antigua and Barbuda has gone a step further by tying the launch of 'Beach 366' to the excitement of the cricket World Cup. This strategic move underlines the islands' commitment to sports and celebration, offering both leap year babies and cricket fans a new venue to enjoy unforgettable moments.

"The launch of Beach 366 during the cricket World Cup is more than just an addition to the islands' already impressive array of beaches; it's a celebration of community, sport, and the unique quirks of the calen-



Aerial view of the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.

dar. Antigua and Barbuda extend a warm invitation to cricket fans, leap year babies, and travelers from all walks of life to join in this one-of-a-kind event for 2024. Get ready to be captivated by exciting cricket, while enjoying the vibes and exclusiveness of Beach 366", said CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority, Colin C. James.

As the cricket World Cup descends upon the region, Antiguan and Barbudans are ready to showcase their legendary hospitality alongside the thrill of international cricket. Beach 366

will serve as a hub for cricket-related festivities, offering fans a unique spot to relax, celebrate, and engage with the sport in a stunning beachfront setting.

In celebration of this momentous year, visitors to Beach 366 can expect a host of special perks, including:

- Cricket-themed events; Engage in a series of cricket-related activities and pop-up events at Beach 366, celebrating the sport's rich legacy in the Caribbean.

- Special Treatment for Leap Year Babies; Those born on February 29th will receive exclusive benefits,

such as fast track service at the airport* and special recognition during the World Cup festivities.

- A Celebration of Sport and Community: Join locals and visitors alike in a vibrant display of Antiguan and Barbudan culture, with food, music, and sportsmanship.

With the cricket World Cup as the backdrop, Beach 366 is set to become a new landmark for sports and celebration in the Caribbean. This leap year, experience the best of cricket, culture, and community in Antigua and Barbuda.

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Curb Your Enthusiasm star Richard Lewis dies aged 76

By Madeline Halpert

Stand-up comedian and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* co-star Richard Lewis has died aged 76.

Lewis announced last April that he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and would retire from stand-up comedy.

He died peacefully in his home in Los Angeles Tuesday night after suffering a heart attack, his publicist, Jeff Abraham, told the BBC's US partner CBS News.

Known for his self-deprecating humour, Lewis rose to prominence in the 1980s.

For years, the actor and writer starred alongside Larry David in his HBO show, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, where he played a semi-fictionalized version of himself.

He had most recently appeared in Season 12 of the show, which is airing on HBO.

In a statement shared by Lewis' publicist, his wife, Joyce Lapinsky, said she "thanks everyone for all the love, friendship and support and asks for privacy at this time".

Nicknamed "The Prince of Pain", Lewis was known for poking fun at his own neuroses and hypochondria during his comedy routines.

Dressed nearly always all in black, he once joked he was the "Descartes of anxiety; I panic, therefore I am."

Born in Brooklyn and raised in New Jersey, Lewis made a name for himself in the 1970s performing in clubs in New York City and on late-night TV.

Lewis had to take a break from starring in Season 11 of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* due to a series of surgeries.

"I've had sort of a rocky time," he said last year announcing the

news of his diagnosis.

He added that he had undergone back surgery, shoulder surgery, shoulder replacement surgery and hip replacement surgery. "I had four surgeries, back to back to back... It was bad luck, but it's life."

Lewis starred in Mel Brooks' *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* and has also appeared in TV shows, including the sitcom *Anything but Love*, where he played opposite Jamie Lee Curtis from 1989 to 1992.

Comedy Central had called him one of the top 50 stand-up comedians of all time and *GQ Magazine* included him in its list of the 20th Century's Most Influential Humourists.

In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, fellow comedian Bill Burr called Lewis a "true original".

"An absolutely fearless comedian who did and said what he wanted", Burr wrote.

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

Technology

Apple unplugs self-driving electric car project, reports say

By Mariko Oi

Apple has reportedly cancelled its plans to build electric vehicles (EV) a decade after the iPhone maker was rumoured to be working on the project.

The firm has never publicly acknowledged the project, which involves around two thousand people.

Many employees from the project will be moved to the iPhone maker's artificial intelligence (AI) division, according to Bloomberg News.

Apple did not immediately respond to a BBC request for a comment.

The Apple car team was reportedly known as the Special Projects Group as part of its chief executive Tim Cook's Project Titan.

As it spent billions of dollars on research and development, the company was initially rumoured to be working on a fully autonomous vehicle without a steering wheel and pedals.

The team was understood to still be years away from producing a vehicle.

"This is a smart and long awaited decision," Ray Wang, founder and chief executive of Silicon Valley-based consultancy Constellation Research told the BBC.

"The market demand for EVs is not there and AI



is where all the action is," he added.

Apple has been exploring other opportunities beyond the iPhone and computers, including its recently launched Vision Pro virtual reality headset.

Research firm Counterpoint highlighted that the decision came as the market for AI in consumer electronics is growing sharply.

"Preliminary data suggests shipments of generative AI smartphones will exceed 100 million units in 2024," said its senior analyst, Ivan Lam.

Counterpoint predicts that number could hit more than 500 million by 2027.

Demand for EVs has slowed in recent months as borrowing costs remain high, which has made the market increasingly competitive as major players try to win over customers.

In recent months, US motor industry giants Ford and General Motors have postponed plans to expand EV production.

Last week, electric truck maker Rivian announced it would cut its workforce by 10% and said it did not expect any growth in its production

this year.

In January, Tesla warned that its sales growth would be weaker this year than in 2023.

The company, which is led by multi-billionaire Elon Musk, has been cutting prices in key markets around the world, including Europe and China, as it faces tough competition from Chinese rivals such as BYD.

Mr Musk responded on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, to a report that the Apple project was being wound down with emojis of a salute and a cigarette.



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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

St Vincent PM defends Sandals Resort from 'mindless' criticism

By Melissa Wong

Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves has expressed disappointment with those persons who he says are mindlessly criticising the soon-to-open Sandals Resort in Buccament Bay with incorrect information and falsehoods.

Sandals St Vincent will officially open on March 27 but before that, is the venue for the staging of the VIII Summit for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on March 1, 2024.

There has been uproar from certain quarters in St Vincent that local fishermen, farmers and taxi operators are not benefiting as they should in supplying their produce and service.

The most recent anger came with the news that Island Routes will be expanding to St Vincent and the Grenadines, with many persons viewing this as direct competition with local taxi and tour operators.

Responding to concerns about this issue, the prime minister said Sandals had five or six consultations with taxi and minibus operators relevant to transportation, and overwhelmingly, the people who are being moved from the airport to the hotel and back are local taximen, and people who are doing the tours in the tour buses, taxi and minibus



Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonsalves.

operators etc overwhelmingly are local providers of these services.

Gonsalves explained that five-star hotels always have specific facilities for VVIPs for which they will make their own transportation arrangements. He noted that Sandals will require a big fleet of motor vehicles to transport people from the airport to Sandals and back, and common sense shows this would require local input.

Turning to the issue of local fishermen, the prime minister said Sandals also had consultations with fishermen and farmers as he explained that hotels of that kind, as a matter of policy, do not buy from a multiplicity of individual suppliers.

He said the suppliers have to put themselves together or somebody put them together.

“The idea that you can pull up your boat on the shores of Sandals and sell 15 pounds of tuna and 20 pounds of snapper and a few pounds of jacks and robin... No.”

The prime minister pointed out that selling to Sandals would require items being properly packaged, as it must be brought in a condition where they are assured of quality.

“Rainforest Seafoods which buys fish, lobster and conch not from people on Mars... or people in Brazil or Timbuktu... they buy them from fishermen and women in St Vincent and

the Grenadines.”

Gonsalves said the aggregator, Rainforest Seafoods, is buying from local fisherfolk.

“I feel absolutely sure that if 15 fishermen, 10 fishermen, 5 fishermen in a cooperative decide to do an operation and they have the necessary resources and they want to sell directly to them, I’m sure that they would purchase. But you have to maintain the standards.”

The prime minister said the same thing goes for the local taxi operators; they will have to maintain their standards. He said the St Vincent Tourism Authority gives the approval, training and certification to taxi op-

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Guyanese opposition leader stands firm in support of teachers' strike

By Dillon De Shang

Guyanese Opposition leader Aubrey Norton has restated the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change's (AP-NU+AFC) support for the ongoing teachers' strike.

Norton accused the government of being "uncaring" about the teachers' concerns and the hundreds of students affected by their absence from the classroom for over two weeks.

He said: "The government may be thinking that they don't want to show weakness and must hold out against all comers but let me be clear – this is not a time for one upmanship... Our teachers are suffering, our children are suffering, the vendors who work around the schools are suffering, the transportation workers who transport our students and teachers are suffering, every parent who has a child is suffering, all our people



are suffering because this government considers itself above the people and refuses to understand that they are there to serve rather than to dictate and we condemn this intransigence by the government in the harshest terms possible."

"It is regrettable that the current regime has allowed this impasse to endure for so long, despite the availability of the oil revenues as

referenced by the recent trillion-dollar budget. Clearly, for this administration, roads are more important than people. Cheddi Jagan, a leader who stood for the rights of the people, must be turning in his grave."

The opposition leader said the government cannot claim it doesn't have the money since the country can afford to pay public servants better salaries.

"Our children should not be held hostage to political brinkmanship. The longer this strike persists, the greater the harm inflicted upon the most vulnerable members of our society. Government should note that by their actions they are creating the conditions for all public servants to consider whether they too should come out on the picket line, because as the cost-of-living skyrockets wages have not kept up," he stated.

He also hit back at claims that the Guyana Teachers Union's protest is political saying the issue of public servants remuneration packages should not be a partisan issue.

Norton said if the APNU/AFC wins next year's Regional and General Election they will prioritise the well-being of teachers and public servants.

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erators for what the marketplace requires in dealing with tourists.

Circling back to food production, the prime minister said on more than one occasion he urged businesspeople to get involved in this question of aggregating the agricultural products for sale, but it would appear no one was paying attention.

Gonsalves said, "A man named Rayneau, who is a St Lucian, he comes here... his first agreement is for the quarry down in Richmond.

"Of course, COVID came, volca-

nic eruptions, political melee... different things deterred him.

I am told they are going to start to sell stones... aggregate from April into May. In the meanwhile, Rayneau, (he has a good nose for business), he sees an opportunity to aggregate agricultural products."

Rayneau Gadjadhar, a St Lucian entrepreneur, has also faced criticism for this venture from some Vincentians.

Prime Minister Gonsalves was speaking during his Face to Face programme on NBC Radio St Vincent and the Grenadines on Wednesday.

Ghana passes bill making identifying as LGBTQ+ illegal

By Thomas Naadi

Ghana's parliament has passed a tough new bill that imposes a prison sentence of up to three years for anyone convicted of identifying as LGBTQ+.

It also imposes a maximum five-year jail term for forming or funding LGBTQ+ groups.

Lawmakers heckled down attempts to replace prison sentences with community service and counselling.

It is the latest sign of growing opposition to LGBTQ+ rights in the conservative West African nation. The bill, which had the backing of Ghana's two major political parties, will come into effect only if President Nana Akufo-Addo signs it into law.

He previously said that he would do so if the majority of Ghanaians want him to.

Gay sex is already against the law in Ghana - it carries a three-year prison sentence.

Last month Amnesty International warned that the bill «poses significant threats to the fundamental rights and freedoms» of LGBTQ+ people.

Activists fear there will now be witch-hunts against members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who campaign for their rights, and say some will have to



go into hiding.

This was echoed by the head of the UN body tackling Aids, Winnie Byanyima, who said: "If Human Sexual rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill becomes a law, it will exacerbate fear and hatred, could incite violence against fellow Ghanaian citizens, and will negatively impact on free speech, freedom of movement and freedom of association."

She added that it would "obstruct access to life-saving services" and "jeopardize Ghana's development success".

The bill proposes a jail term of up to 10 years for anyone involved in LGBTQ+ advocacy campaigns aimed at children

It also encourages the public to report members of

the LGBTQ+ community to authorities for "necessary action".

MPs said the bill was drafted in response to the opening of Ghana's first LGBTQ+ community centre in the capital, Accra, in January 2021.

Police shut the centre following public protests, and pressure from religious bodies and traditional leaders in the largely Christian nation.

At the time, the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council said in a joint statement that being LGBTQ+ was "alien to the Ghanaian culture and family value system and, as such, the citizens of this nation cannot accept it".

The bill approved

by lawmakers is a watered-down version of an earlier draft - for instance, jail terms have been shortened and a controversial clause on conversion therapy has been removed.

During the days-long debate, the deputy parliamentary leader of the governing party, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, suggested further changes.

He said lawmakers should decide, via a secret ballot, whether people convicted of being members of the LGBTQ+ community should be imprisoned by the courts or ordered to do community service and undergo counselling.

However, he was heckled into submission by lawmakers who supported prison sentences.

Villavicencio murder 'planned from jail' by Los Lobos gang - prosecutors

By Vanessa Buschschlüter

Prosecutors investigating the murder of Ecuadorian presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio say his assassination was planned from jail.

They have asked for six suspects - five Ecuadorians and one Colombian - to be charged in connection with the murder.

Villavicencio, 59, was shot dead as he was leaving a campaign rally in the capital, Quito, days before the presidential election in August 2023.

He had denounced the influence of gangs and promised to tackle them.

In the weeks leading up to the election, the politician had received death threats and been given a security detail.

But he continued to campaign and was gunned down by a group of assailants on 9 August outside a school in the north of Quito.

In a court hearing on Tuesday, Prosecutor Ana Hidalgo described how the investigation had unfolded.

She said that the gunman who is believed to have fired the fatal shot was himself killed in a shoot-out with police after Villavicencio's assassina-



There has been a heavy police presence at the hearings.

With the help of CCTV footage, police managed to identify one of the other assailants and traced him to a house in the east of the city.

There, they arrested six Colombian suspects and seized weapons, ammunition and grenades.

Weeks later, the six were found dead in El Litoral prison, where they were being held in pre-trial detention.

Forensic experts said they had suffocated. Spanish newspaper El País quoted a source as saying that they had been hanged.

A seventh suspect was killed the following day in another jail.

Prosecutors say that the seven men killed in jail were the assailants who attacked Villavicencio, but suspect that they were hired gunmen and that the order to kill the politician came from inside an Ecuadorian jail.

Prosecutors added that they had traced messages sent to one of the gunmen to an inmate in Latacunga jail.

Both that inmate and a woman who prosecutors accuse of providing logistical support to the assailants are thought to belong to Los Lobos criminal gang.

Prosecutors said the remaining four suspects were their accomplices - a

court will decide on later on Wednesday whether to charge them.

Los Lobos (The Wolves) is estimated to have 8,000 members and is one of the most powerful criminal organisations in Ecuador.

Many of its members are in jail and the gang is thought to have instigated some of Ecuador's bloodiest prison riots.

The gang is thought to have links to the powerful Jalisco New Generation cartel in Mexico.

There has been an explosion in gang violence in Ecuador in recent years which has led President Daniel Noboa to declare a state of emergency.



The Antigua and Barbuda national Under-20 squad. (File photo)

Mexico announced as host for the 2024 Concacaf Men's U-20 Championship

Antigua and Barbuda's young Benna Boys will have to travel to Mexico if they qualify for the 2024 Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship.

Concacaf has announced that the cities of Irapuato and Celaya, in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, will host the event during the summer.

Antigua and Barbuda's young Benna Boys are among 27 teams that are currently competing across five different ven-

ues in Central America and the Caribbean in the 2024 Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship Qualifying Competition, which is set to conclude on March 2.

The teams have been divided into three groups of five and three groups of four, with the winner of each group advancing to the 2024 Concacaf Men's Under-20 Championship to be held in Mexico.

Antigua and Barbuda is currently hosting qualifying matches among five

teams in Group B at the ABFA Technical Center from February 23 to March 2.

The Benna Boys and Suriname are jointly tied at the top of Group B with six points each, but the hosts have played three matches, one more than the team from South America.

They are followed by El Salvador on four points, Guyana with one point, and the Turks and Caicos Islands are occupying the cellar without a point.

The 2025 World Cup qualifying competition will take place in Mexico from July 19 to August 4 and will feature the participation of the 12 best Concacaf Under-20 men's national teams.

"The Concacaf Men's U-20 Championship is a very important competition for the continued development of the best young players in our region. It provides them with a platform to compete with

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Rebels and Wadadli Elite win in ABBA's Division II League

Rebels and Wadadli Elite notched up their first wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's (ABBA) Second Division League on Tuesday night.

The Rebels launched their Division II campaign with a 75-44 trouncing of Cecil Charles Christos United in the first game of a double header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Buell Henry produced 17 points, 11 rebounds, and five steals; Bruce Whyte had 15 points and six rebounds; Kirwan Petersen converted 13 points; and Kentacka Lake scored 10 points for the Rebels.

Lawson Kirby sank 14 points and grabbed 13 rebounds; Dwayne Samuel converted 10 points and snatched nine rebounds; and Manlight Simmons claimed



11 rebounds and scored seven points for Christos United.

The Wadadli Elite won for the first time in two games by romping to an emphatic 77-29 victory against MJ Gray's Green Phoenix in Tuesday's second encounter.

Aiden Christian produced 19 points and snapped up 12 rebounds, and Orion Seraphine sank 17 points and claimed 13 rebounds for Wadadli Elite.

Yohhan Nicholas converted 19 points and grabbed seven rebounds for the Green Phoenix.

Action in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association's Division I league will resume on Thursday evening with a double header at the JSC Sports Complex.

Potters Steelers will meet All Saints Slam at 6:45 pm, and Northside Stingerz will face Ottos Full Throttle at 8:30 pm.

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the best in Concacaf and to qualify to play on the global stage at a FIFA Under-20 World Cup," said Concacaf General Secretary Philippe Moggio.

"We are very excited to work hand in hand with the Mexican Football Federation, the Government of Guanajuato, and all local stakeholders to offer the participating national teams and fans an unforgettable tournament," added Moggio.

The 2024 Concacaf Under-20 Championship will begin with a group stage of 12 teams, including the six highest-ranked teams accord-

ing to the Concacaf U-20 Rankings and six that will qualify through the current qualifying phase.

The six best-ranked teams are the United States of America (1), Honduras (2), Mexico (3), Panama (4), Costa Rica (5), and the Dominican Republic (6).

At the conclusion of the group stage, where each team will play three games, the top two finishers in each group and the two best third place finishers will advance to the quarterfinals.

The knockout stage will include eight teams, starting with the quarterfinals, followed by the semifinals

and final, where the new regional champion will be crowned.

In addition, the four semifinalists of the tournament will guarantee their participation in the 2025 FIFA Under-20 World Cup.

The competition's 25 matches will be divided into two venues, Estadio Sergio León Chávez in Irapuato and Estadio Miguel Alemán Valdés in Celaya.

The official draw, where the 12 participating teams will be divided into three groups of four, will take place in April 2024 at the Concacaf headquarters in Miami, Florida, USA.

CKHS outlasts PMS in senior girls' inter-school basketball contest

Christ the King High School (CKHS) pulled off a hard-fought six-point victory in double overtime in the Senior Girls Division of the Cool and Smooth Inter-Schools' Basketball Championships on Tuesday.

Christ the King High School prevailed 29-23 against the Princess Margaret School senior girls in one of five matches at the JSC Sports Complex.

Jodaliah Constant shot a game-high 17 points for Christ the King High School, while Kayla Melvin converted 14 points for Princess Margaret School.

Antigua Girls High School also claimed a 20-6 victory against Irene B. Williams Secondary in another senior girls encounter.

Shakorah Prince had six points, and Ruchira Daley scored four points for Antigua Girls High School.

There were mixed fortunes for Antigua Grammar School, while defending champion Clare Hall Secondary School recorded victory in the junior boys division.

St. Mary's Secondary prevailed 27-22 against the second team of the Antigua Grammar School.

Arnez Chastanet scored



Players of the Christ the King High School listen to their coach during a timeout in their senior girls encounter at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, February 27, 2024. (Photo courtesy of School Basketball Unit)

five points for St. Mary's Secondary School, while Chace Joseph sank seven points, and Joyan Gordon scored five points for the second team of the Antigua Grammar School.

But the first team of Antigua Grammar School

romped to a 36-8 victory against Irene B. Williams Secondary. Najee Simons scored 12 points for Antigua Grammar School.

Clare Hall Secondary School cruised to a 39-11 victory against Ottos Comprehensive School.

Tajahron Davis produced 14 points, and Aiden Tonge sank 13 points for Clare Hall Secondary School. Ajani Adams converted six points, and Jalen Isaac scored four points for Ottos Comprehensive School.

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Meanwhile, USA-based swimmer Alandra Dublin set a national record in the 200-meter freestyle category while participating at the 2024 MR West Metro Silver Chaps Central (short course yards).

Dublin, who competed in the 15 to 17 age group category, completed the 200-meter freestyle swim in two minutes and 04.13 seconds and also set an age-group record in the 200-meter breaststroke, clocking two minutes and 40.27 seconds.

The Antigua and Barbuda Swimming Federation is preparing to name its squad for the CARIFTA Games to be held in the Bahamas from March 28 to April 7.

The ABSF is commending the athletes for the high level of athleticism and dedication to the sport displayed at last

weekend's national championships.

The federation is also lauding the swimmers who created the five new national records and three age group short course records at the event.

Seventy-three (73) swimmers participated in the national championships, including five swimmers from Anguilla.

They came from five participating clubs: Anguilla's Aqua Stars, Vipers Swim Club, Wadadli Aquatic Racers (WAR), Antigua Aquatic Club (Storm), and Marlins Swim Club, which specializes in open water swimming.

Medals will be distributed to swimmers who placed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in the various events by the clubs 'coaches on behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda Swimming Federation.

The overall high point awardees at the 8th Annual



Aunjelique Liddie

ABSF National Championship are:

- 8 and under Girls
 - 1st Isabel Nicholas
 - 2nd Hanna Gauducheau
- 8 and under Boys
 - 1st Jalen Weste
 - 2nd Adam Camacho
- 9 - 10 Girls
 - 1st Kaylee Warner
 - 2nd Alyssa Watkins
 - 3rd Jordin Howell
- 9- 10 Boys
 - 1st Christopher Walter
 - 2nd Zane Williams
- 11 – 12 Girls
 - 1st Anya DeGannes
 - 2nd Keziah Joseph
 - 3rd Alaysia Liddie
- 11 – 12 Boys
 - 1st Jamie Tranter
 - 2nd Alessandro Bazzoni
 - 3rd Ny'riq West
- 13 – 14 Girls
 - 1st Davina Barton
 - 2nd Paradise Carlisle
- 13 – 14 Boys
 - 1st Reuben Edwards
 - 2nd Espriit Shaw
 - 3rd Zahid Derrick
- 15 - 17 Girls
 - 1st Ellie Shaw
 - 2nd Madison MacMillan
 - 3rd Elianna Spencer
- 15 – 17 Boys
 - 1st Manav Sindhi
 - 2nd Tivon Benjamin
 - 3rd Naeem DeSouza
- 18 and over Girls
 - 1st Bianca Mitchell
 - 2nd Anisa Lewis
 - 3rd Kimberlee Warner
- 18 and over Boys
 - 1st Yacine Williams
 - 2nd Zardad Jan
 - 3rd Osayaba Browne



Alandra Dublin

New records set at National Swimming Championships

Five new national records and three age group short course records were set at the 8th Annual Antigua and Barbuda Swimming Federation's (ABSF) National Championships, which concluded over the weekend.

Bianca Mitchell established a national record in the girls 18 and over age group for the 200-meter breaststroke, clocking two minutes and 47.8 seconds.

She also set an age record for the 200-meter individual medley (IM) in two minutes and 29.22 seconds.

Madison MacMillan established a national record in the 200-meter backstroke, clocking two minutes and 28.31 seconds in the girls 15 to 17 age group.

Tivon Benjamin set a national record in the boys 15-17 age group, completing the 800-meter freestyle swim in nine minutes and 01.48 seconds.

An age record was set by Anya DeGannes in the 200-meter butterfly and 100-meter free style races in the 11-12-year-old age group.

Ellie Shaw, who recently returned home from an impressive performance at the World Aquatic Championships in Doha, Qatar, created two national records at last weekend's event.

Shaw clocked two minutes and 27.3 seconds in the 200-meter IM and 32.58 seconds in the 50-meter breaststroke in the girls 15 to 17 age group.

In Doha, Ellie Shaw achieved an exceptional time of 32.73 seconds in the women's 50-meter breaststroke, long course. She is the second woman from the Eastern Caribbean to better the 33-second barrier.

Aunjelique Liddie also achieved a historic result at the World Aquatic Championships in Doha by



Ellie Shaw

being the first Antigua and Barbudan athlete to break the one-minute barrier in the 100-meter freestyle race.

Liddie clocked 59.78

seconds in that long-course race to beat the previous record held by Samantha Roberts and set a new national record.

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