



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

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TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

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FLASH FLOOD THREAT



Story on Page 2

8 FEB 2024 2:00 AM GMT / 7 FEB 2024 9:00 PM EST

The
Weather
Channel

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Flash flood watch statement

Antigua and Barbuda is under a flash flood watch which went into effect overnight and which should last until 8:00 o'clock tonight. The notification also extends to the neighbouring islands of Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis.

The Met Office says a flash flood watch means that moderate to major flooding is possible but not imminent in the watch area. Flash flooding is a very dangerous situation.

These watches could be upgraded to warnings if necessary.

The Met Office is alert-

ing residents in low lying and flood prone areas to begin making preparations for flooding and to make moves to safeguard life and property.

These residents should be prepared to move to higher ground if flooding rains develop or a flash flood warning is issued.

The Met Office has reported that a frontal trough moved over the British Virgin Islands causing periodic heavy showers.

Overnight, the report suggested that this system is moving towards the east and will likely be in the vicinity of the Leeward Is-

lands from last night.

According to the report, the British Virgin Islands have indicated that up to four inches of rain fell in some places over the last 24-36 hours.

They anticipated that a further 4 inches is possible by 8:00 o'clock tonight resulting in moderate to major flooding in low lying and flood prone areas.

One forecaster at the Met Office reported that the rainfall from the system was expected to begin between 8:00 and 11:00 o'clock last night.

The rain has been forecast to intensify overnight

into the early hours of Thursday morning. The heavy showers are expected to continue through most of Thursday.

The flash flood watch has been described as an advanced warning of possible heavy rainfall of as much as two inches per hour and accumulation of the water on the ground.

The flash flood warning follows intense rainfall with a more rapid accumulation of water on the ground

The Met Office is asking everyone to be alert and to follow all the latest weather updates.

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KEEP ANTIGUA CLEAN

\$1 million for repairs to operating theatre, A/C unit at SLBMC

The government is spending approximately one million dollars in repairs and upgrade of the operating theatres at the SLBMC as well as an overhaul of the air conditioning system.

Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph said half the amount is going towards the laying down of new flooring for the operating theatre at the hospital. He reported that the current flooring at the facility had become severely undermined after more than a decade of being compromised by leaking water.

The minister expressed dissatisfaction in the current management of the hospital noting that for more than a month he has been visiting the hospital on a daily basis to ensure that the necessary repairs and upgrade needs for the facility are being done in a timely manner.

According to Sir Molwyn, prior to his intervention the plan was to replace the flooring without first removing the damaged flooring material.

Currently, the minister is overseeing the removing of the flooring and the government has contracted a firm out of Miami to install new flooring material that is comparable with flooring of operating theatres worldwide.

“When I arrived, I realized that any new surface laid down before removing what appears to be scales from the flooring would not have last-



Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph overseeing the work on the theatre floor.

ed. “The good thing is that we had to contract a company out of Miami that is associated with the products used in first-world hospitals, to put down a proper surface on the concrete. The guarantee for that surface is twenty-five years,” he stated.

The health minister also revealed that at the end of the repairs/upgrade, all five operating rooms will be returned to service. Prior to the reports, four were in use with the fifth being used for storage. Following the repairs, the fifth operating room will be re-commissioned and used specifically for cardiology patients.

The health minister ex-

plained that he gave word that a comprehensive review of the operating theatre should be done and all that needs to be repaired will be completed prior to the re-commissioning of the theatre.

Already, that review has uncovered the need for the replacement of some of the filters of the theatre and those new filters are being installed.

Regarding the air conditioner system, Sir Molwyn

reported that following work on the system, there have been improvements in cooling more areas of the hospital.

The areas reporting improvements include Emergency Room, the pediatric unit and the laboratory. He disclosed that a specialist is being hired to carry out regular maintenance of the A/C system of the hospital to ensure that all areas of the facility remain cool.

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY given that **RICARDO CARRILLO HERRERA** of Golden Grove, St. John’s, Antigua is applying to the Ministry for Naturalization and that any person who knows any reason why Naturalization should not be granted should send a written and signed statement of facts to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

Commissioning of new cemetery at Tomlinson's could come by month-end

The commissioning of the new cemetery being developed at Tomlinson's is on track to take place before the end of February with burials expected to start soon after.

Making the announcement, Health Minister Sir Molwyn Joseph said the actual date could be announced following Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

"I have to make one final visit there this week to check on the progress of the preparatory work that is being done by the Ministry of Works, which is responsible for building roadways in the cemetery and after the Cabinet we will possibly announce a date when burials will begin at the Tomlinson's cemetery," he disclosed.

He said the roadways inside the cemetery are very important so that



Ministries of Works and Health combined efforts to complete the new cemetery.

traffic can traverse the area without 'any inconvenience'.

On the issue of the crematorium, Sir Molwyn said this remains an area where any member of the private sector may invest in such a facility noting that the government will offer all the necessary concessions that a project of this magnitude attracts according to law.

He clarified public statements indicating that the government and a Canadian group were at odds on details of the proposal they presented last week.

The minister explained that perhaps the confusion may have arisen because there were no written proposals; the commitment from the group, he suggested, were communicated verbally.

He added that the way is clear for them to proceed with the investment.



Road construction at the new Tomlinson's Cemetery

New Indian HC to Antigua & Barbuda suggests cricket diplomacy

The new Indian High Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda, Dr. Amit Telang, is suggesting that Antigua and Barbuda and India should build on their common love for the game of cricket to further deepen their relationship.

The new High Commissioner paid his first official visit to the country this week where he met with senior government officials, the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus management as well as representatives of the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

He said growing up as a child in India he followed the exploits of the West Indies Cricket team whose members were household names in India.

“Our connection to cricket is quite unique and if it is one thing that has strengthened this relationship has been our common values and our love for cricket.

“However, as a diplomat, I believe that we now have to go further than that. India considers its relationship with Antigua and Barbuda as very special for more than one reason, and if there is something that India can do for Antigua and Barbuda, we are willing to assist,” he remarked at a special social event held in his honour on Tuesday night.

The High Commissioner recalled that each time one of India’s candidates is nominated to hold a position on an international body, it has always been able to count on the support of Antigua and Barbuda.

As the Indian High Commissioner to St. John’s based in Guyana, he has identified three areas of priority whilst being posted in the Caribbean.

These are; food security, energy



Indian High Commissioner Dr. Amit Telang (second from right) with President of the ABCIC, Yves Ephraim (Right) Principal of UWI FIC, Prof. Justin Robinson (second from left) and Indian Honorary Consul, Vijay Tewani (left)

security and capacity building. He noted that these three areas are able to make significant differences in the lives of everyone.

In response, Governor General Sir Rodney Williams noted that India takes the relationship with Antigua and Barbuda seriously based on the level of representation it appoints.

He recalled that India has been very helpful to Antigua and Barbuda especially in the area of human resource development and most notably during the COVID-19 pandemic when at one point India was the only country willing to provide Antigua and Barbuda with the critical vaccines to help ward off the disease.

UNICEF's 'beat the heat' campaign comes to Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda has been included in the 'Beat the Heat' campaign that has been launched by UNICEF aimed at safeguarding children from heat-related illnesses.

The Ministry of Health has initiated the campaign in partnership with UNICEF Eastern Caribbean, according to a press statement it released.

Launched in 2023, the "Beat the Heat" campaign focuses on raising awareness about the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, as well as promoting the importance of staying hydrated, especially during hot weather conditions. The initiative comes as a response to the increasing concern over the

health risks posed by rising temperatures, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children.

To support the campaign's objectives, educational posters have been developed to illustrate the warning signs of heat-related illnesses and provide preventive measures. These posters are being distributed to schools nationwide in Antigua and Barbuda to educate children about the risks and to encourage proactive measures to stay safe during hot weather.

As part of the campaign, the ministry's Public Relations Officer, J'noure Smith-Kellman, is actively engaging with schools in Antigua and Barbuda to provide



PRO J'noure Smith-Kellman with students during one of her visits to the schools. These items include refill-essential items that can help children cope with the heat. *cont'd on pg 7*



Students proudly show the posters as well as wear their sunshades

Cabinet agrees to a proposal to encourage more movie-making here

A proposal that will help promote Antigua and Barbuda as a location for movie-making has been approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on Wednesday.

The proposal was presented to the Cabinet by the Antigua and Barbuda Film Commission and it is aimed at increasing the attractiveness of Antigua and Barbuda as a venue for movie making.

Accordingly, the government has agreed to allow movie makers free access to all historical sites in Antigua and Barbuda and to assist in acquiring licenses for drones and helicopters aerial filming. It was noted that other destinations in the Caribbean are seeking to attract Film making and they offer even more generous terms than Antigua and Barbuda.

cont'd from pg 6

able water bottles to promote hydration, sun shades to shield against harmful UV rays, and portable hand fans for immediate cooling relief in classrooms.

Early feedback from participating schools, such as Sir Luther Winter Preschool and St. John's Lutheran Primary School in Antigua and Barbuda, has been overwhelmingly positive.

Students have expressed gratitude for the practical solutions provided by the campaign and have eagerly embraced the initiative to stay cool and hydrated.

In recognition of their active participation and enthusiasm, students at these schools in

Antigua and Barbuda will be awarded with the essential items, including water bottles, sun shades, and hand fans, to support their well-being during the summer months.

The Ministry of Health extends its sincere appreciation to UNICEF Eastern Caribbean for their unwavering dedication to supporting children's health and well-being in Antigua and Barbuda.

This collaboration underscores a shared commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of children in the country, and both organizations look forward to continued collaboration on future initiatives aimed at protecting the health of children across the region.

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Caribbean Maritime, Ferry, Trade & e-Commerce Company to launch new intra-regional ferry service

According to recent news updates, private sector-led efforts to create a regional transport system interconnecting countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have given life to a new ferry service – Connect Caribe – promising not only passenger movement but the shipment of cargo.

Connect Caribe says that the Cargo Division will be able to significantly move light goods,

e-commerce packages and agriculture produce across the region, plus heavy cargo on the main cargo route.

CEO of Caribbean Israel Finance (CIF) and UN Peace Ambassador Andre Thomas is quoted as saying that the services that Connect Caribe will provide complement proposed initiatives by the Governments of Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

“We are in talks with

the governments... there is a significant discussion on how we can integrate and tackle this huge opportunity and problem. I believe that where there are problems there are opportunities.

“There will be significant collaboration between the service that will be done by the governments and our service,” Thomas said.

Connect Caribe views this as a game changer in

the transportation industry. It indicated that the three vessels will have the capacity to transport up to 8,000 passengers, cargo, and manufactured goods and produce.

It forecasts that during the last quarter of 2024, the first phase of the estimated US\$50-million project would come on-stream, following which it will be expanded to new island routes in the Caribbean Sea.

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Snoop Dogg and Master P launched their food production company in 2022.

Snoop Dogg and Master P sue Walmart over cereal sabotage claim

By Lou Newton

American rappers Snoop Dogg and Master P are suing supermarket giant Walmart and a food manufacturing company for sabotaging their cereal brand.

A lawsuit filed on Tuesday accuses Walmart and Post Consumer Brands of hiding boxes of Snoop Cereal and incorrectly saying it was out of stock.

Lawyer Benjamin Crump called it a “blatant disregard” of a black-owned business.

In statements, both companies point to low sales of the product.

Walmart said it has a “strong history of supporting entrepreneurs” and “many factors affect the

sales of any given product”.

Meanwhile Post said: “We were equally disappointed that consumer demand did not meet expectations.”

Snoop Dogg and Master P founded their own food company, Broadus Foods, in 2022. According to its website, it produces breakfast cereals, pancake mix, maple syrup and more.

According to the complaint, cited by US media, Post tried to “choke Broadus Foods out of the market” because the rappers refused to sell their upstart company to the manufacturer.

But they did agree to a partnership whereby Post would produce and distribute the products to major

retailers.

Mr Crump, who is one of America’s most prominent civil rights lawyers posted a video online, saying: “They wouldn’t put the cereal on the aisles, they kept it in the back of the storeroom.”

The lawsuit claims that Walmart and Post Consumer Brands “ensured that Snoop Cereal would not be available to consumers” or that Broadus Foods would “incur exorbitant costs that would eliminate any profit”.

“Post essentially worked with Walmart to ensure that none of the boxes of Snoop Cereal would ever appear on the store shelves.”

Master P posted a video on his Instagram page that purports to show a number

of Walmart stores not stocking the product.

In the footage, unidentified Walmart employees in several stores are asked if they sell the cereal, and when they search the Walmart system it says the product is out of stock.

They then appear to discover unopened shipments of Snoop Cereal in the storeroom.

In its statement, Post Consumer Brands also said that it had been “excited to partner with Broadus Foods” and said it made “substantial investments” in the business.

Walmart said it would “respond as appropriate with the court” once it had seen the full complaint.

**TUES - FRIDAY
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WeWork's ousted boss plots buyback of bankrupt firm

By **Natalie Sherman**

WeWork's former boss, Adam Neumann, wants to buy back the bankrupt shared office company, according to a letter made public on Tuesday.

He approached the firm in December about a potential deal, the message from his lawyer to WeWork said.

It accused WeWork of resisting the idea, despite its bleak financial situation.

WeWork said it received offers on a "regular basis" and was focused on "the best interests" of the firm.

"We continue to believe that the work we are currently doing - addressing our unsustainable rent expenses and restructuring our business - will ensure WeWork is best positioned as an independent, valuable, financially strong and sustainable company long into the future," it said.

Mr Neumann was ousted from WeWork in 2019 after a disastrous - and ultimately fruitless - attempt to list the company on the stock exchange exposed its financial weaknesses and raised questions about his leadership.

WeWork was hit by the shutdown of offices during the pandemic a few months later and never fully recovered. Mr Neumann's time



WeWork co-founder and boss Adam Neumann was ousted from the firm.

at WeWork was later portrayed by the actor Jared Leto in an Apple TV series called *WeCrashed*.

The company filed for bankruptcy last November when it sought court protection as it tried to renegotiate leases with its landlords.

Mr Neumann, who now leads a new property firm called Flow, approached WeWork in December about a possible deal.

WeWork initially "resisted" the overtures, according to the letter from Mr Neumann's lawyers, worried that it would hurt talks with landlords.

Eventually WeWork said it would consider a financing proposal, but the letter said Mr Neumann has yet to receive information to help inform its

offer.

It also claimed WeWork cancelled a meeting in 2022 to discuss a proposed \$1bn (£790m) in financing from Mr Neumann while he was en route in the air.

"We write to express our dismay with WeWork's lack of engagement even to provide information to my clients in what is intended to be a value-maximizing transaction for all stakeholders," wrote lawyer Alex Spiro of Quinn Emanuel, who confirmed the authenticity of the letter, which was first reported by the New York Times.

Mr Spiro wrote that Mr Neumann offered "management expertise" and a takeover could boost the value of the firm.

"WeWork should at

least educate itself about that potential and not preclude itself from maximizing value," he said.

According to the letter, Mr Neumann is "partnering" with investors, including the hedge fund Third Point.

In a statement, the New York based firm said it had only had "preliminary conversations with Flow and Adam Neumann about their ideas for WeWork, and has not made a commitment to participate in any transaction".

WeWork, founded in 2010, was once hailed as the future of the office, expanding to more than 800 locations around the world.

But the growth proved too costly to sustain, leaving the firm with multi-billion dollar losses.



Teachers assembled outside the Region Three Education Office.

Teachers rubbish gov't claims that strike for better salaries is political

By **Rehanna Ramsay**

While the Guyana Teachers Union (GTU) led strike action has been deemed political and unwarranted by the Ministry of Education and other state operatives, teachers on the protest line on Tuesday rejected this notion asserting that the action has more to do with their bread and butter.

On Tuesday teachers intensified their strike action across the various regions and the GTU shared images and videos via its Facebook page of hundreds of teachers taking to the streets in Region One, Two, Three, Four, Six, and Ten demanding better wages and working conditions through collective bargaining.

In Region Three, scores of teachers stood in front the Regional Education Office (REO) at Plantain Walk West Bank Demerara with umbrellas and placards demanding that the Government engage the GTU on matters that pertain to their livelihoods. Devi-

ka Sugrim stated emphatically that she was protesting for her rights and was not strong-armed by the GTU to be out on the streets.

“I would like to make it clear to the public, the President, and the Minister of Education that nobody is bullying me or any of the teachers to be here to join this protest or strike. I was never coerced by anyone to do anything. This doesn't have anything to do with politics. This has to do with our bread and butter!”

“Mr. President you need to come and listen to the cries of teachers. A lot of things are happening to teachers and that is why we are here,” she added.

Ms. Paul a retired teacher who was on the protest line on Tuesday explained that their many issues that teachers continue to face without any redress from the Ministry of Education. “For instance, they need to revive the formula they use to calculate gratuity. I retired after more than 20 years

and all they gave me was \$ 2 million and even a proper pension and I dedicated my life to this profession. It's an injustice we have been receiving at the hands of the Ministry of Education all this time.”

Alicia Mangru shared that she is a trained and qualified teacher who completed her degree at the University of Guyana but is unable to get a promotion. “It has been more than two years now since I applied to be on the list of seniors and can't get it. But you know what is funny the same Ministry of Education encourages teachers to qualify themselves and then when we do, it is not reflected on our salary scale. For you to get a promotion, you probably have to ask to be transferred to another school. It is frustrating and highly disrespectful,” the teacher explained.

Shauna Evelyn noted that she would rather be in her classroom
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Regional News



Court quashes \$8.5m award to manager fired for sexual harassment

Jamaica Gleaner - The Judicial Review Court has quashed an Industrial Disputes Tribunal (IDT) award of \$8.5 million, which Outsourcing Management International Inc was ordered to pay to a manager who was dismissed over a sexual harassment case.

Justice Simone Wolfe-Reece ruled that the finding of unjustifiable dismissal by the tribunal was irrational and unreasonable.

The judge also found that, on the totality of the evidence, there was no evidence of procedural unfairness or a breach of the principles of natural justice by the company at the hearing which led to the dismissal of the employee. No order was



made as to costs.

The company, which trades as Alliance One, took the issue to the Supreme Court after the award was handed down in August 2022, contending that the award was illegal and irrational.

Attorneys-at-law Gavin Goffe and Jovan Bowes, instructed by Myers, Fletcher and Gordon, represented the company and grounded their submissions on the fact that the employee's admission to sending sexually explicit messages to a sub-

ordinate employee made the tribunal's award unreasonable. They also noted that the Labour Relations Code had been followed by the company in conducting the hearing as well as the appeal.

The case stemmed from a verbal complaint made in May 2015 by a female employee that she was being sexually harassed by Alton Morris, who was in a senior position to her.

Morris was alerted about the complaint and, on June 2, 2015, a disciplinary hearing was convened. Morris participated in the hearing. The complainant was at the hearing and presented text messages and voice notes
cont'd on pg 15

cont'd from pg 13

working but the issues are too pressing to be ignored. "This is not about politics. Teachers are affected. We want to live and not just survive. In addition to us needing a proper raise in salary, our working conditions need to be addressed. The toilet facilities in some schools are in such a poor state that it could trigger a health crisis," she said.

Samantha Allicock, another teacher opined that the government is seeking to devalue teachers. "Teachers are the most important public servants; we have to produce doctors, lawyers, nurses, ministers, and presidents. We are the chief stone in nation-building and the government should pay us as such."

She noted that "teachers have been keeping their mouths shut and bearing up but now we are joining with

our union to cry shame at the Ministry of Education for refusing to meet the Union to meet address our concerns, three years and counting." "If they talk to the GTU like how they talk to GAWU, we will go home," another teacher was heard saying. She noted that the government is quick to politicise their actions when they are the ones that have refused to engage with the GTU. "If it was GAWU, a friend of the Government they would have quickly found a way to meet their demands," she said.

In Georgetown, hundreds of teachers stood on Brickdam in front of the Minister of Education's office. The teachers there demanded an apology from the Minister, claiming that she accused them of misusing the funds given to purchase school supplies.

"Priya's eye pass teachers...We

don't thief. We want our money!" the crowd shouted as vehicles at intervals honked their horns in support of their chants.

The GTU representatives and civil society members also joined the protest line. President of Guyana Trades Union Congress, Norris Witter noted that support of civil society is necessary for teachers. "They are playing the race card with the hope of alienating some teachers but the Union, not the teachers should back down."

According to Witter, the stance taken by the Ministry to stop remittances of the Union dues is nothing but wickedness. "It is devilish it makes Satan appear to be an angel! The union will have to advise on the way forward but as it stands, they will not back down until teachers are given what they rightfully deserve," he said.

cont'd from pg 14

that Morris had sent her. Morris was informed by a letter dated June 3, 2015 that he was dismissed.

He appealed against dismissal to the company but was not successful. Aggrieved by the outcome, Morris made a complaint to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security that he was unjustifiably dismissed. Conciliatory attempts failed and so the matter was referred to the tribunal for a resolution.

After a full hearing, the tribunal found that Morris was unjustifiably dismissed and awarded him \$8.5 million. Morris was employed to the company from December 1999 to the time of his dismissal.

Goffe submitted that the award was unreasonable in a number of aspects. He contended that, based solely on Morris' admission at the disciplinary hearing to sending sexual messages to his subordinate, his actions constituted sexual harassment.

He said the tribunal failed to ask itself the correct questions, resulting in the members misdirecting themselves. Goffe stressed that the misdirection was another basis of the unreasonableness of the defendant's award.

He said the correct question the tribunal should have asked was whether Morris sexually harassed a subordinate. Instead, the tribunal focused on whether there had been an alleged consensual

relationship in the past and whether that relationship had been disclosed to the company as required by its policy.

Morris had admitted at the disciplinary hearing that he sent the messages to the complainant but at the tribunal he alleged that he had been in a consensual relationship with the complainant.

Regarding the quantum of the award, the company contended that no reasonable tribunal could have awarded that amount to someone who confessed to making sexual advances to a subordinate.

The tribunal, which was the defendant, contended that it acted reasonably within the scope of its statutory powers, the award was final and the claimant had provided no basis in law to challenge the award.

Wolfe disagreed with the submissions and found in favour of the company. The company had contended that the delay in handing down the award breached section 12 of the Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act.

It stated that under the act, the award should have been handed down within 21 days of the completion of

the hearing but was not until 467 days later.

The defendant opposed the submission and its attorneys argued that the act specifically stated that the award should be made within 21 days or as soon as may be practicable thereafter and the judge agreed with the defendant.

In quashing the award, the judge found that the company did not breach the rules of natural justice.

Attorneys-at-law Analiaesa Lindsay, Jevaughnia Clarke and Karessian Gray, instructed by the director of state proceedings, represented the tribunal.



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Pakistan election: Two blasts kill 28 in Balochistan day before vote

Two bomb explosions near candidates' offices in the Pakistani province of Balochistan killed at least 28 people and wounded dozens on the eve of general elections, officials said.

The first blast killed 16 people in Pishin district, north of Quetta city.

The second explosion left 12 people dead in Qila Saifullah to the east. The Islamic State (IS) group said it was responsible for both attacks.

The vote has been marred by violence and claims of poll-rigging.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan is banned from standing, jailed on corruption charges he claims are politically motivated.

IS said both of Wednesday's bombings were carried out using motorbikes rigged with explosives.

Resource-rich Balochistan - Pakistan's largest, and poorest, province - has a history of violence. It has seen a decades-long struggle for greater autonomy by various groups, some of them armed. Islamist militants, including the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), operate along the border with Afghanistan.

The bomb in Pishin, a town about 100km (62 miles) south-east of the Afghan border, went off in front of an independent candidate's party office. The provincial authorities said



Nawaz Sharif, who was ousted five years ago, is now the front-runner in Pakistan's elections. 25 people were also wounded. was not unexpected.

Images on social media showed cars and motorbikes blown apart by the force of the explosion. Officials told the BBC the candidate was meeting his polling agent at the time.

The second blast targeted the election office of the JUI-F party. A senior police official told AFP news agency it took place in the main bazaar of Qila Saifullah, about 190km (120 miles) east of Quetta.

Twenty people were wounded in the incident and the number of casualties in the two attacks could rise, officials said.

There have been violent incidents in both Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces in the week before Thursday's vote, and the violence in Pishin and Qila Saifullah

In mid-January, Baloch Liberation Army-Azad (BLA) insurgents released a pamphlet after claiming responsibility for bombing an election training office. The pamphlet urged people to boycott the elections. Soon after, reports of hand grenade attacks on political party offices were reported from various cities in the province.

Many voters in Balochistan feel neglected by the country's political parties, given the province has so few seats in parliament. They often feel candidates are foisted on them, with few if any links to Balochistan.

And many feel the vote is unfair. "It is a selection," numerous people told BBC Urdu in the city of Turbat last month.

Following Wednesday's

attacks, the Balochistan government said Thursday's vote would proceed as planned.

"Rest assured, we will not allow terrorists to undermine or sabotage this crucial democratic process," provincial information minister Jan Achakzai posted on X, formerly Twitter.

More than 128 million voters are eligible to cast ballots in the election. In Pakistan's first-past-the-post system, 266 of 336 National Assembly seats are directly elected.

But many people are questioning the credibility of the vote as Khan and his party, the PTI, have been sidelined.

The PTI won the largest number of seats in the last general election but Khan was jailed on corruption charges last year and dis-

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US drone strike kills Iran-aligned militia leader in Baghdad

A senior commander of an Iran-backed militia has been killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad.

The leader of Kataib Hezbollah and two of his guards were in a vehicle when it was targeted in the east of the Iraqi capital. All three of them died.

The Pentagon said the militia leader was responsible for directing attacks on American forces in the region.

The US has linked the militia to a drone attack in Jordan that killed three US troops last month.

In the wake of that attack, Kataib Hezbollah said it was suspending attacks on American troops.

Wednesday night's drone raid happened in Baghdad's Mashtal neighbourhood, sparking several loud explosions.

It was a precise strike on a moving vehicle in a busy street and the car was re-



duced to a fiery wreck.

When a BBC team reached the scene, crowds of protesters gathered chanting: "America is the biggest devil."

There was a heavy police presence, and Swat teams from Iraq's interior ministry joined them.

The BBC team tried to get close to the burnt-out vehicle, but were driven back by onlookers who in-

sisted that journalists were not welcome.

"You are foreigners," one man shouted, adding "and foreigners are to blame for this".

There are reports of crowds heading to the heavily fortified US embassy to protest.

A US official confirmed earlier to CBS the individual targeted was a Kataib Hezbollah commander in

charge of operations in Syria for the group.

It comes days after the US launched 85 strikes in Syria and Iraq in retaliation for the fatal 28 January drone attack on US troops.

The raid in the Iraqi capital will be seen as a major escalation in the US response. Previous strikes have only hit area along the Iraq-Syria border.

In January, the US launched an airstrike in Baghdad against the leader of Harakat al Nujaba, a group also blamed for attacks against American troops.

The US has some 2,500 troops in Iraq and 900 in neighbouring Syria in a mission to combat the Islamic State terror group.

The US forces have been hit with near-daily rocket and drone strikes since the Israel Gaza war began on 7 October.

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qualified from running for public office. Last week he was convicted in three other cases and is facing years in prison. He says all the charges are politically motivated.

The authorities deny carrying out a crackdown, but many PTI leaders are behind bars, in hiding or have defected. Thousands of the party's supporters were rounded up after protests - at times violent - when Khan was taken into custody last year.

PTI candidates are having to run as independents following the electoral commission's decision to strip the party of its

cricket bat symbol. Electoral symbols are vital in helping voters mark their ballots in a country with high rates of illiteracy.

The man tipped to win Thursday's election is three-time former PM Nawaz Sharif, who himself was behind bars at the last election. Analysts say it appears he has done a deal with the military to facilitate his return to politics.

A high turnout will be key to the PTI's chances, many analysts say. How to tackle, and who to blame for, the country's economic crisis will be high in voters' minds. Results must be announced within 14 days of the election.

PMS among winners in school basketball championships

The Princess Margaret School (PMS) was among the winners in the Cool and Smooth Inter-School Basketball Championships on Tuesday.

Princess Margaret School cruised to an 18-6 victory against Irene B. Williams Secondary in their Senior Girls Division affair at the JSC Sports Complex.

Kayla Melvin converted eight points, and Sanura Lewis scored six points for Princess Margaret School.

Greenbay and T.N. Kirnon also recorded wins in the Miniboys Primary Division on Tuesday.

Greenbay Primary prevailed 12-9 against Combined. Malik Leblanc and Kobe Alphonso each had six points for Greenbay



PMS' coach Cedric 'Supa' David, right in blue shirt, watches as Kayla Melvin (#16) makes a pass during their Senior Girls Division encounter against Irene B. Williams Secondary at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday, February 6, 2024. (Photo courtesy School Basketball Unit)

Primary, while Derrick Perez scored seven points for Combined.

T.N. Kirnon Primary claimed a 20-4 victory against Potters Primary. Troy Charles scored eight points for T.N. Kirnon Primary.

The competition will continue at the JSC Sports Complex today.

Antigua Grammar School will meet Clare Hall Secondary in the Miniboys Secondary Division.

Ottos Comprehensive School will tackle Anti-

gua Grammar School in the first game of a double header in the Senior Boys Division.

The defending champions, Princess Margaret School, will face St. Anthony's Secondary School in the second encounter.

NZ thrash weakened Proteas by 281 runs in first Test

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand (Reuters) - New Zealand took their time but eased to a comprehensive victory over an inexperienced South Africa side by 281 runs late on the fourth day of the first Test on Wednesday to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

The Black Caps had held a first-innings lead of 349 and declared their second innings on 179 for four

just before the start of play at Bay Oval to present the Proteas with an imposing victory target of 529.

They never looked like getting close to it, but showed some resistance before seamer Kyle Jamieson, who finished with four for 58, made key breakthroughs, and spinner Mitchell Santner, with three for 59, mopped up the tail to bowl out the South Africans

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South Africa's Raynard van Tonder reacts after he was dismissed on day four of the first cricket Test between New Zealand and South Africa at Bay Oval, Mt Maunganui, New Zealand, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024. (AP)



Players of the English Harbour football team. (File photo)

English Harbour advance to third place in Second Division

English Harbour advanced into third place on goal difference in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division on Tuesday.

The advancement up the Second Division point standings occurred after Oshane Blackwood scored four times to lead English Harbour to a six-nil drubbing of Real Blizzard at the New Winthorpes playing

field.

Blackwood had conversions in the 15th, 25th, 38th, and 57th minutes, while Yakira Hughes scored in the 24th minute and Nigel Graham scored in the 32nd minute for English Harbour.

Their fourth win in nine matches allows English Harbour to move from sixth place to join Sea View Farm and Soccer Academy on 18 points.

However, English Harbour jumped in front of Sea View Farm, who have played eight matches, and stayed ahead of Soccer Academy by virtue of a superior goal difference.

Real Blizzard remained on 12 points after suffering their second defeat in eight matches.

Soccer Academy moved ahead of Sea View Farm into fourth place on goal

difference as well by prevailing two-nil against the Celtics at the Radio Range playing field in Ottos.

It was the seventh loss in nine games for the Celtics, who remained fourth from the bottom of the 20-team competition on six points.

The Second Division will continue with four matches today at 4:15 pm. Sea View Farm will challenge Earthquakes at the ABFA Technical Center.

Lingies CPTSA Wings will meet the Young Warriors at the Buckleys Primary School playing field.

TAMO FC will tackle Bethesda at the Golden Grove playing field, and Freemans Ville will face West Ham at the Freemans Village playing field.

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New Zealand have never beaten South Africa in a Test series in almost a century of trying, but if they finish the job in the second Test in Hamilton next week, the breakthrough triumph will come with a hefty asterisk.

The Proteas sent a severely weakened squad featuring eight uncapped players to New Zealand for the series as Cricket

South Africa prioritised their financially lucrative Twenty20 competition (SA20).

The Black Caps could only play what was in front of them, however, and simply outclassed their opponents over four, mostly sunny, days at Mount Maunganui.

Local hero Kane Williamson became only the fifth New Zealander to score a century in each innings and all-rounder Rachin Ravindra was named Man of the Match for his mammoth 240 in the first.



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Players of the Jennings United team. (Photo courtesy Jennings United FC)

Jennings United and Young Lions get wins in First Division

Jennings United and Young Lions of Old Road recorded wins in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division League on Tuesday.

Jennings United snatched a 2-1 win against the Liberta Blackhawks in the second game of a First Division double header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Kemon Samuel and Daryl Mascot each scored once for Jennings United, while Lennox "Fox" Julian had a conversion for the Liberta Blackhawks.

Their fifth win in 10 matches has allowed Jennings United to leapfrog the Attacking Saints into fourth place on goal difference. The win ensures that Jennings United join the Attack-

ing Saints on 17 points.

However, Jennings United have a superior goal difference to that of the Attacking Saints, which have a game in hand.

The Liberta Blackhawks remained second from the bottom of the standings with six points after crashing to their seventh loss in nine matches.

The bottom team, the Young Lions, recorded their first win in the Second Division when they snatched a 2-1 win against Bendals in the first game of the double header.

Marcus Joseph put the Young Lions ahead with an 11th-minute conversion, but Darren Stevens scored an equalizer for Bendals in the 35th minute as both teams reached halftime deadlocked at 1-1.

In the second half, Akeem Masson scored the winner for the Young Lions in the 54th minute to secure their first win and points in nine matches.

The Young Lions will remain in the cellar of the 11-team round-robin competition after picking up their first three points in the league.

Bendals remained in eighth place on nine points after suffering their fifth loss in 10 matches.

The First Division will continue with three matches on Friday. Leaders Five Islands will host Bolans at Five Islands at 4:30 pm.

The Potters Tigers and Police will clash at the ABFA Technical Center at 6:30 pm, and the Attacking Saints will meet Lion Hill at Golden Grove at 4:30 pm.

Baksh says T20 World Cup will be a party with a purpose

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The Twenty20 World Cup in June will be an unforgettable party with strong Caribbean flavours that will help plant cricket firmly in the US sporting landscape, tournament director Fawwaz Baksh said.

Six Caribbean countries, including Antigua and Barbuda, will co-host the tournament along with the United States, a market which cricket's powerbrokers see as crucial if it is to flourish beyond Commonwealth countries and become a truly global game.

New York, Miami, and Dallas will host a combined 16 matches and Baksh is convinced the best way to inject cricket into a packed US sports market is by making the global showpiece a grand party.

"When you pair up West Indies and USA, it's a recipe for success," the Guyanese sports administrator told Reuters.

"We in the West Indies are known for a great time and we're known for the party atmosphere. When fans come here and watch the games, they should expect that.

"So come here to watch



The T20 World Cup Trophy is pictured during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Tour at Uluru, Australia, on August 9, 2022. (Getty Images)

great cricket, but come here also to have a great experience."

Demand for tickets has been encouraging. Since the public ballot was launched last week, more than 1.2 million applications from 126 countries were received within the first 48 hours, Baksh said.

That included 900,000 applications from the United States and West Indies.

"Introducing cricket into the US, which is a new market to us, we weren't quite sure what the response would be," he added.

The ninth edition of the

T20 World Cup will be the biggest yet, with the increase to 20 teams from 16 opening up a wider pool of expatriate fans in the United States.

Poor attendance figures marred the 50-overs World Cup when it was staged in West Indies in 2007, but Baksh said Caribbean administrators had learned their lesson. Ticket prices for this year's tournament start at only US\$6.

"If you want to introduce the sport in the US, if you want to revitalise cricket in the West Indies, you have to get the fans here," he said.

"And the only way you can get the fans here is by making tickets attractive, making them accessible."

The 43-year-old believes the World Cup can set the standard for future global tournaments.

"We all wanted this tournament here, and we all want to capitalise on it," Baksh said.

"When the tournament is over, people all across the world will say 'T20 World Cup should only be hosted in the West Indies and the US'.

"That's our goal and that's what we're going to make it."