

NEW DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS ANNOUNCED

Story on Page 2



The Ministry of Works finalizing work on the detour route that will run through Royals Estate during the SIDS Conference.

New diplomatic appointments announced

The Cabinet has given effect to the government’s stated position of providing employment opportunities and advancement to young, ambitious, hardworking females.

The Cabinet Notes for this week reported that the Cabinet has named several women to diplomatic positions. Among those identified is attorney, Amaya Athill, who has been appointed to serve as Antigua and Barbuda’s Consul General in Canada. Continuing



Amaya Athill along that vein, a decision was also taken to appoint Rulita Camacho-Thomas as Ambassador for Environmental Affairs; and



Karen Mae-Hill High Commissioner Karen Mae-Hill as Non-resident Ambassador to Malta. The appointments will take place following the issu-



Rulita Camacho-Thomas ance of the instruments by the Governor General and the presentation of credentials to the relevant authorities *cont'd on pg 3*

SUNDAY STARTER

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FOR PICKUP/DELIVERY:

World media to converge on Antigua and Barbuda for SIDS4

Close to thirty of the major international news agencies have been accredited to cover the Fourth Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) here in Antigua and Barbuda from May 27 to 30.

Head of the National SIDS4 Planning Committee, Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr. Aubrey Webson, said the conference organisers have already approved accreditation for news agencies such as BBC, CNN and other similar world-recognised news outlets.

“We have issued accreditation for more than twenty-five outlets so far which means that during this SIDS4 gathering, Antigua and Barbuda will get the full attention of the world as well as exposure to many who may not have heard or have visited the country before,” he observed.

Additionally, Amb. Webson says the nearly four thousand delegates are expected to provide a major shot in the arm for the local economy, especially



Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr. Aubrey Webson

the hospitality sector.

“SIDS4 delegates will be occupying more than 95 percent of the hotel rooms in the country and a large amount of the available Airbnb rooms. We are ready!” Ambassador Webson declared.

The final touches to the preparations are being done with just over a

week to go before the start of the conference.

Already, the organisers are indicating that an unprecedented security dragnet will be placed in and around the conference centre, the likes of which Antigua and Barbuda has never seen before.

Several presidents, prime ministers and senior governmental officials will travel to the country to participate in this, the biggest conference ever to be staged in the twin-island state.

Meanwhile, Wednesday’s Cabinet Notes stated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, E.P Chet Greene, provided both written and oral reports on the readiness on the SIDS venue to receive delegates. Cabinet insisted that a complete state of readiness must be achieved by Wednesday the 22nd May 2024. The Cabinet will therefore pay a visit to the conference center before the commencement of the SIDS4 on 27 May 2024.

cont’d from pg 2
ities.

During its deliberations on Wednesday, the Cabinet also addressed the issue of unemployment among the young, single mothers es-

pecially.

“The Cabinet found that their inability to meet the cost of daycare services tends to prevent them from acquiring jobs that match their skills. The Cabi-

net decided that crèches, owned and operated by the government could provide a significant cost-reduction on child-care services and allow for young mothers to accept employment,” the

Notes revealed.

It said areas that are densely populated, where incomes tend to be low, are to be targeted for this special, subsidized service.

As it continues to look at areas where it may provide greater assistance to those most vulnerable in the society, the Cabinet advises that minimum occupational pensions paid to former government employees will be increased to \$1,000.00 per month.

Tiered increases to higher earning pensioners will be calculated and paid on a declining percentage.

One man shot dead, and another hospitalised in nightclub incident

The police are investigating the circumstances surrounding a shooting incident that resulted in the death of one man, and another nursing gunshot wounds at the hospital.

The alleged incident occurred at G Spot Night Club sometime around 4:40 am on Wednesday, May 15. The police were on the scene early Wednesday morn-

ing carrying out further investigations.

The police are appealing to anyone with information surrounding this incident to contact the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913 or call the Crimestoppers Hotline at 800-Tips (8477).

Further details will be provided as the investigation unfolds.

Caribana 2024: 40 years of fun on the sister isle

The annual Caribana festivities on Barbuda start today with an opening parade and opening ceremony as Barbudans along with visitors from Antigua join to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Whit weekend event.

Head of the Caribana Planning Committee, Matthew John, said the parade starts off at 1:00 pm from the Fisheries Complex in Codrington and will make its way to Caribana City

on the River Road. Taking part in the parade will be the teenage pageant contestants, the Caribana Swimwear delegates and the competitors in the Calypso Monarch competition.

The opening exercises will feature addresses from a representative of the Ministry of Creative Industries, head of tourism and culture for the Barbuda Council, Nadia George, and John himself.

“We are not planning

a long opening ceremony as we have to return in the evening for the Teenage Pageant competition,” John explained.

The Teenage Pageant contestants are; Alaine Ambris, 15, Janaecia Butler, 15, Eden Beazer, 16, Jeniah Simon, 17, Alaina Ambris, 13, Alrique Barker, 12, and Jarrell Dyer, 13.

According to the head of the teenage sub-committee, Kerrian Walbrook, the competition will be judged

in five categories; introduction, creative wear, performing talent, research and interview.

The Caribana festivities continue on Friday night with the Caribana Cultural Swimwear competition where three delegates will compete in the show. The delegates are; Kalisha Brown, 20, Kenya Alexander, 22, and Saniqua Jeffrey, 21.

They will compete in four segments, three of which will be in various designs of swimwear. These are identical where all three will appear in identical swimwear, Caribana pride, and creative where their creativity in creating a swimwear will be on show.

The other segment in the show is an interview for which they will be judged. The Caribana Cultural Swimwear competition replaces the traditional Caribana Queen, once a staple of the festival.

The activities move to River Dock on Saturday for all-day and night festivities. These include a fishing tournament, beach events and these will be followed later in the night by an all-star show with the popular Burning Flames Band headlining.

Also appearing are Small Axe Band out of St.

cont'd on pg 5

Barbuda Caribana 2024 Schedule of Events

<p>APRIL 6 LAUNCH OF CARIBANA</p> <p>MAY 16 OPENING OF CARIBANA Parade Starts 2pm Opening Ceremony 5:30pm</p> <p>MR AND MS TEENAGE PAGEANT 7:30pm</p> <p>MAY 17 CARIBANA QUEEN SHOW 8pm</p> <p>OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY Backyard Bliss (Purple Haze)</p>	<p>MAY 18 CARIBANA BEACH DAY / JOHNNY DESOUZA FISHING TOURNAMENT / ALL STAR SHOW 10am - 11pm</p> <p>MAY 19 CARIBANA CLASSIC HORSE RACE 1pm - 7pm</p> <p>CALYPSO/ SOCA MONARCH 8pm</p> <p>MAY 20 JOUVERT MORNING 4am-10am</p> <p>LAST LAP 6pm - 10pm</p>
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CULTURE AND RHYTHM TO EXPLORE

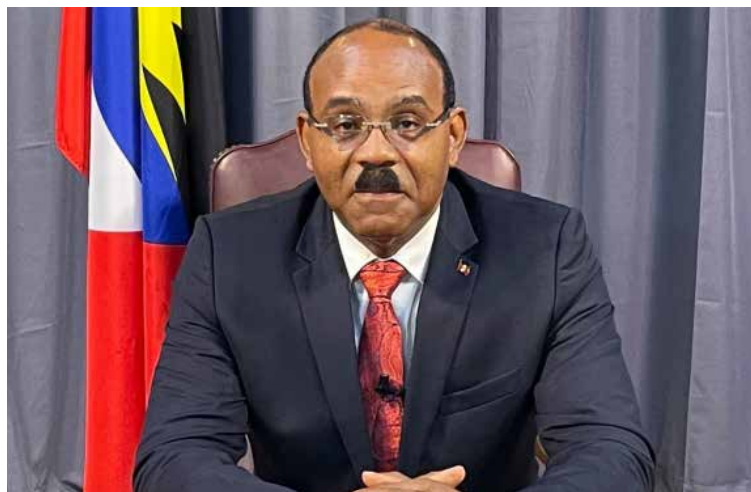
Prime Minister to convene town hall meeting to discuss Booby Alley Project

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who is also the parliamentary representative for the St. John's City West constituency, is convening a townhall meeting towards the end of the month to discuss matters of interest, including the Booby Alley Housing Project.

Constituency Aide to the PM, Kem Hodge, said the meeting will take place at

the Villa Polyclinic on May 30 when the prime minister is expected to speak in depth about the Booby Alley project as well as several other matters of interest to the constituents.

"This is an occasion for the prime minister to update the constituency about the much-discussed Booby Alley project and to get some feedback from the constit-



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

uents. It will also discuss the highly popular music programme that started at the Villa Primary School, as well as the upgrading and repairs to the road network in the area. The prime minister will also reveal plans to upgrade the football field as he has plans to launch a football league in the area," Hodge disclosed.

The Chinese government has placed a public bid, both here in Antigua and Barbuda and China, as a first step in the process to hire a contracting firm for

the project.

The government, through a grant provided by the government of the People's Republic of China, is constructing a multi-story housing facility for the residents of the Booby Alley area, who have been temporarily relocated.

The project is expected to provide a model for similar developments to take place across the country. The area generally referred to as Mongo Town has been identified as another likely area for a similar project.

NOTICE

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Magistrate for District "A"
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Antigua**

**TO: COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
Police Headquarters
American Road
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Antigua**

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A TAVERN LICENCE FOR BUSINESS REGISTERED AS DADLI-GEM ENTERPRISES

We, Tchaiko Christian and Malaika Christian, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE, that it is our intention to apply at the next sitting of the Liquor Licence court to be held at the Magistrate's court, Grays Farm, St. John's Antigua on Thursday 4th July, 2024 next ensuring for a Tavern license in respect of premises known as "Dadli-Gem Enterprises" situated Bishopgate Street, in the parish of St. John's, Antigua pursuant to Section 11(5) of the Licensing (Intoxicating Liquor) Act Cap 249 of the Laws of Antigua and Barbuda, Revised Edition 1992.

Dated the 15th May, 2024

Tchaiko Christian
268-725-2710
Malaika Christian
268-725-2710

cont'd from pg 4

Kitts and a host of local soca artists such as Claudette Peters, Empress, Menace XL and Kimmie, alongside Goldie Locks, Montgomery and Stabba out of Barbuda.

Goldie Locks is making an appearance as the first ever Caribana Calypso Monarch as a special honour 40 years later.

The 2024 Calypso Monarch takes place Sunday night with seven artists performing two songs each; one a soca/party song and the other a social commentary.

SNRA wins 2024 Inter-Secondary Debating Competition

The Sir Novelle Richards Academy has emerged as 2024 champions of the Inter-Secondary School Debating Competition, jointly organized by the Ministry of Education through its Education Broadcasting Unit and the Caribbean Union Bank (CUB).

The SNRA won the competition in the finals held this week when they came up against the team representing the Antigua Grammar School.

“The debating series showcased the exceptional talent and intellectual prowess of Antigua and Barbuda’s youths. It culminated in an exciting contest between The Antigua Grammar School and the Sir Novelle Richards Academy. The Ministry of Education is delighted to announce the successful conclusion of the Caribbean Union Bank 2024 Inter-secondary School Debate Competition,” a release from the ministry stated.

It said this year’s moot for the fi-



nals, “The Citizenship by Investment Programme (CIP) is both relevant and beneficial to the Antigua and Barbudan society,” inspired dynamic and

thought-provoking arguments from both teams. The Antigua Grammar School, advocating for the proposition, *cont’d on pg 7*

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cont'd from pg 6

highlighted the positive impacts of the Citizenship by Investment Programme (CIP). Their arguments centered on how the CIP has attracted substantial foreign investment to the twin-island state, leading to job creation and the enhancement of the tourism sector through the development of high-end resorts.

The Sir Novelle Richards Academy, opposing the moot, delivered a compelling case against the CIP. Led by first speaker Derisia Desiree and second speaker Janelle Charles, the team presented a passionate and well-researched argument.

They cited local and international news reports, economic data, and statistical records to illustrate how the program exacerbates inequality by disproportionately benefiting high-net-worth foreigners. Additionally, they

discussed the diplomatic tensions that arise when questionable individuals obtain Antigua and Barbuda passports, leading to restrictions from countries to include the UK, USA, and Canada. The opposition also raised concerns about the vetting process of CIP applicants.

After a spirited exchange, the judges adjudicated that The Sir Novelle Richards Academy was the better of the two teams, allowing them to retain the trophy for a second year in a row. Janelle Charles was also adjudged best speaker of the finals.

The Ministry of Education and Caribbean Union Bank extend heartfelt congratulations to the winning team for their exceptional performance and to all participants for their dedication and eloquence.

Highest commendations are also extended to the Antigua Grammar

School for their outstanding showing in the finals.

“The debates showcased the critical thinking, public speaking, and research skills of our students,” said Handel Spencer, Brand Engagement Associate of Caribbean Union Bank.

“We are proud to support initiatives that nurture these talents and contribute to the educational and personal growth of our youth. This year’s competition success is a testament to the hard work of the students, their coaches, and the Ministry of Education.

“Caribbean Union Bank remains committed to empowering the next generation through education and community engagement. We look forward to continuing our support for future educational programmes and events that inspire excellence and foster a spirit of healthy competition among our youths.”

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Stitches 365 to add upholstery to its product offerings

The newly rebranded Government Garment Manufacturing Initiative, Stitches 365, will soon be offering upholstery to the product line that it offers.

Trade Minister, E.P Chet Greene, who has di-

rect responsibility for the facility, said the company recently acquired a machine that will enable it to do upholstery for clients in need of the service.

“I have been informed by the Manager, (Lance

Bromfield) that we now need to recruit two trainees who will undergo training on how to operate the machine. The intention is to be able to offer the service as soon as possible. This shows the government’s programme of building capacity while at the same time providing a critical and needed service to the com-

munity,” he stated.

Bromfield said the skill of upholstery is no longer available in the numbers that it did many years ago and that this new offering seeks to retain the skill here in the country while at the same time teaching young people to operate the new technologies being introduced in the profession.

General Post Office will be relocating

The General Post Office (GPO) will be operating on a renewed schedule to facilitate customer satisfaction and its relocation exercise. As a result, the following arrangements will be in place:

Customers are asked to conduct business between the hours of 8:15 am and 1 pm Mondays to Fridays during the period 16th to 28th May, 2024.

The Post Office Headquarters will be CLOSED to the general public from the 28th of May to the 7th of June.

It is anticipated that business will resume on Monday 10th June, 2024.

Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted.





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US brothers arrested for stealing \$25m in crypto in just 12 seconds

By Max Matza

Two brothers who studied at one of the most prestigious universities in the US have been charged with stealing \$25m (£20m) in cryptocurrency in 12 seconds.

Anton Peraire-Bueno, 24, and James Peraire-Bueno, 28, are accused of wire fraud and money laundering.

The US Department of Justice said the alleged heist is the first of its kind.

Prosecutors also say the pair, reportedly educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), carried it out in April 2023.

“The Peraire-Bueno brothers stole \$25 million in Ethereum cryptocurrency through a technologically sophisticated, cutting-edge scheme they plotted for months and executed in seconds,” said Deputy Attorney Gen-

eral Lisa Monaco.

She added that agents from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) played a key role in unravelling the “first-of-its-kind wire fraud and money laundering scheme”.

Prosecutors allege the two used highly specialised skills that they learned at “one of the most prestigious universities in the world” to exploit Ethereum’s process for validating transactions.

The brothers studied mathematics and computer science, according to the indictments, and both attended MIT, according to news reports.

“The defendants’ scheme calls the very integrity of the blockchain into question,” US Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement on Wednesday, referring to the public ledger that

records crypto payments.

The brothers allegedly stole from Ethereum traders by fraudulently gaining access to pending private transactions and then altering the transactions to obtain their victims’ cryptocurrency.

The process, which investigators say they referred to as “the Exploit”, took only a matter of seconds to execute.

When confronted by a representative for Ethereum, officials say the brothers declined to return the funds and took steps to launder and hide their stolen gains.

Prosecutors note that this is the first time that such a “novel” form of fraud has ever been subject to criminal charges.

They each face over 20 years in prison if found guilty.

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David Copperfield: Magician accused of sexual misconduct

By Steven McIntosh

Magician David Copperfield has been accused of sexual misconduct and inappropriate behaviour by 16 women.

Some of the alleged offences took place when the women were under 18, the Guardian newspaper has reported.

The allegations date from the late 1980s to 2014.

A representative for Copperfield told BBC News the allegations were “false and scurrilous” and “the exact opposite of who David is”.

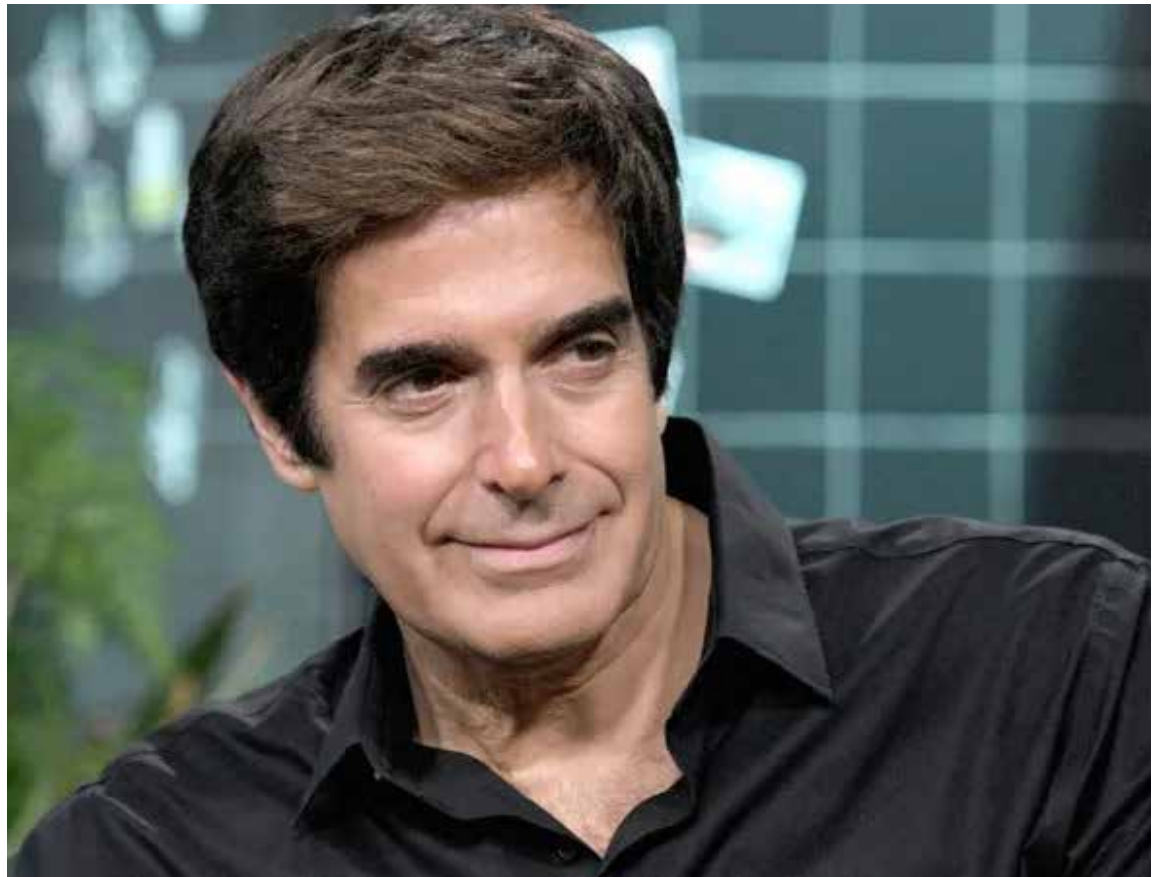
According to the Guardian, three of the women claim the magician drugged them before having sex with them. They said they did not feel able to consent.

In four instances, women alleged the magician groped them or made them touch him in a sexual manner during live performances on stage.

One woman said she met Copperfield in 1991 when she was 15 and he kept in contact with her through phone calls.

When she was 18, she says they had consensual sex, but the woman told the Guardian she believes she was groomed.

Copperfield’s lawyers acknowledged the relationship to the newspaper



The magician’s representatives described the claims as ‘the exact opposite of who David is’.

but denied any grooming took place.

In a separate statement to the BBC, his lawyers said: “Everyone that knows David Copperfield will tell you that these recent allegations from one newspaper are the exact opposite of who David is.

“In fact, David has a record of risking his career to help protect women from powerful predators.

“Most of these historic accusations have been made before, and all of them are as false now as they were then. David requested the ‘evidence’ upon which these false allegations claim to rely and

this has not been provided.

“By contrast, whenever US law enforcement has looked into such matters, they have been investigated thoroughly and it has been found that there is simply no case to answer.

“The Guardian’s characterization is not who David is, and he continues to support anyone who has experienced any form of abuse or discrimination.

The movement must succeed, but false accusations must stop for it to flourish. David will be considering the position with his legal team and will take such steps as may be appropriate over these

false and scurrilous allegations.”

Copperfield has previously been accused of inappropriate behaviour and in 2018 he denied historical allegations of sexual misconduct.

“I’ve lived with years of news reports about me being accused of fabricated, heinous acts, with few telling the story of the accuser getting arrested, and my innocence,” he wrote on X/Twitter at the time.

Copperfield is one of America’s best-known magicians. He has won 21 Emmy Awards and holds 11 Guinness World Records.



Deceased birds recovered from the ocean. (Photo credit: USCG)

Four indicted for smuggling birds from US to Dominican Republic

Four nationals from the Dominican Republic were charged with smuggling wildlife from the United States after a federal grand jury in the District of Puerto Rico returned an indictment last Thursday.

According to court documents, around May 3, 2024, Frankluis Carela De Jesús, Waner Balbuena, Juan Graviel Ramírez Cedano, and Domingo Heureau Altagracia travelled together in a flagless vessel departing from San Juan, Puerto Rico to the Dominican Republic.

The purpose of the travel was to smuggle various species of tropical birds to the Dominican Republic for financial gain. When the vessel was approximately 30 nautical miles north of Puerto Rico the United States Coast Guard (USCG) approached the vessel, witnessed the crew throwing objects overboard,

stopped the vessel, and boarded the vessel.

A number of the objects thrown overboard were successfully recovered by the USCG from the ocean waters and were identified as wood cages containing tropical birds.

A total of approximately 113 deceased birds, depicted in the indictment, were recovered from the ocean inside the wood cages jettisoned by the defendants. The defendants lacked any license to export the wildlife and failed to declare the tropical birds as required by federal regulations governing the exportation of wildlife.

“The defendants violated laws protecting tropical birds and regulating the international sale and exportation of wildlife. When confronted by law enforcement, the defendants tried to cover

up those crimes by killing the protected birds by throwing them into the sea while still in their wooden crates,” said US Attorney Muldrow.

The defendants had their arraignment and detention hearings before US Magistrate Judge Marcos E. López of the US District Court for the District of Puerto Rico and three were ordered detained pending trial.

Domingo Heureau-Altagracia was placed on home confinement. If convicted, they face a total maximum of 15 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the US Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, the United States Coast Guard, and Customs and Border Protection are investigating the case.

Regional News



Trini political analyst takes his detention in Suriname to CARICOM

CMC - Lawyers representing the Trinidad and Tobago-based political analyst, Derek Ramsamooj, have written to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, indicating that their client intends to challenge the conduct of the State of Suriname “both regionally and internationally if necessary,” following his detention in the Dutch-speaking CARICOM country in 2020.

In a May 15, 2024 letter to the Guyana-based CARICOM Secretariat and copied to the Attorney General in Suriname and the Barbados-based Office of Trade Negotiations, the law firm, Justin Phelps wrote of “the politically controlled prosecution” of their client in Suriname “which has involved serious violations of international law”.

The letter, a copy of which has been obtained by the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), noted that following a working visit in early 2020, Ramsamooj’s departure from Suriname was delayed due to the COVID -19 pandemic and that two days before he was expected to depart Suriname, he was detained at his hotel and told that he had been placed on a “no-fly” list as a witness in connection with fraud allegedly committed “by the previous government.”

The lawyers said that



Derek Ramsamooj.

their client, who has advised political parties across the region for over 25 years, “was interrogated about the work he had done for the previous government” and “thereafter held without access to a court or counsel for 18 days, and for a further 57 days without charge after access to counsel was permitted”.

The lawyers said that the “political prosecution” of their client by the current government headed by “Chan Santokhi, a former police chief and minister of justice, involved serious violations” of their client’s basic human rights and international law.

“He has been denied counsel, proper medical treatment, access to the courts and a fair and impar-

tial judicial tribunal. He was forced to place his signature on documents in the Dutch language (which he does not understand), subjected to prolonged detention without being taken before a court of law or being charged, was detained in conditions unfit even for animals and subjected to lengthy interrogation without the provision of basic human amenities such as food, medicine and sleep.”

The letter notes that the “acts attributable to the State of Suriname include the fabrication of charges” against their client, “motivated by the fact that he had worked for a rival political party.”

The lawyers claim that the “authorities in Suriname have for more than two years had in their possession doc-

umentary evidence” proving their client’s “innocence beyond any doubt and exposing the charges as utterly contrived and baseless”.

The law firm said that those documents were produced by Ramsamooj “promptly after his initial detention, that is to say, before he was charged.

“It is clear and obvious that the gross abuses of international law inflicted upon my client have been motivated by a desire to use the criminal process in Suriname to advance the political agenda of the Santokhi regime,” the letter noted.

The four-page letter noted that “the undeniable influence of politics in this case is more alarming still due to the structural flaws which exist within the constitutional framework in Suriname”.

The letter also notes that the “justice system in Suriname is congenitally flawed,” and makes several references to a 2021 report on Governance in Suriname prepared by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that “carefully considered the judicial infrastructure in Suriname.

“That report noted that the judiciary had little budgetary independence and that budgets for courts, prosecutors, police and prisons were subject to control by the Ministry of Justice and

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Police.

"In short, the State of Suriname has a tradition of political control over the judiciary and the IDB observed that the set-up," the letter stated, adding "there is therefore an independent and objective basis for the conclusion that, as the subject of a politically motivated prosecution, it is impossible for (their) client to get a fair and impartial trial in Suriname."

The lawyers recalled that in 1997, CARICOM leaders at their summit adopted the Charter of Civil Society which purports to afford basic rights to Caribbean citizens.

But they said that the facts of their client's case "show that the criminalisation of political differences can still happen within the Caribbean despite the terms of that Charter.

"In the contemporary international context, the acts of the State of Suriname can only be described as the acts of a rogue state engaged in primitive "cloak and dagger" politics and the prosecution of political rivals in order to control the outcome of elections."

The lawyers said that their client has "medical evidence that his treatment in Suriname has resulted in irreversible deterioration to his health.

"He suffered a stroke in Suriname which went undiagnosed. As I have tried to explain above, it is impossible for him to have a fair tri-

al in Suriname. His regional good reputation has been put at risk. In short, the unlawful conduct of the State of Suriname threatens to lead to the ruination of all facets of my client's life."

The lawyers are asking the CARICOM Secretariat to furnish the "with a list and copies of all records of the Community which contain the policy direction/s for the Community determined and provided by the Conference of Heads of Government under Article 12 (2) of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Ramsamooj, 62, who holds both Trinidad and To-

bago and British passports, was summarily detained in Paramaribo in October 2020 and was not allowed to leave the country until September 2022.

"He suffers from a range of medical issues including diabetes, hypertension and severe coronary artery disease."

A presiding judge had ordered the authorities in Suriname to return his passports, noting that Ramsamooj had, at all times, demonstrated a willingness to support due process, and had consistently stated his desire to clear his name through the legal routes.

The analyst, who has worked in several Caribbean countries, including Jamaica, Guyana, Grenada, St Lucia and St Kitts and Nevis, was told by Suriname police on October 6, 2020, that they only wanted a statement to support an enquiry into operations at the Surinamese Post Savings Bank (SPSB).

Ramsamooj had conducted for the SPSB customer surveys, as well as bank employee surveys, in addition to conducting two country risk assessments of Suriname in his capacity as an analyst and researcher. The activities were paid for by the financial institution.



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Slovak PM Robert Fico fights for life after assassination attempt

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico is fighting for his life in hospital after being shot in a small town north-east of Bratislava.

On Wednesday evening Defence Minister Robert Kalinak said Mr Fico had been in surgery for over three hours and that the situation was “bad”.

Slovak politicians including the president have called the shooting an “attack on democracy”.

The alleged assailant was detained at the scene but has not yet been formally identified by the authorities.

Earlier on Wednesday evening Defence Minister Robert Kalinak said Mr Fico had been in surgery for over three hours and that the situation was “bad”.

The attack happened at about 14:30 (12:30 GMT) in Handlova, about 180km (112 miles) from the capital Bratislava, as Mr Fico greeted people in front of a cultural community centre where a government meeting had been held.

Footage showed a man raising a gun and firing five times at the prime minister before being subdued by bodyguards while other members of Mr Fico’s security detail took the prime minister into his car.

He was airlifted by helicopter to a nearby hospital before being flown to another



A man was immediately detained by guards and bystanders in Handlova.

hospital in Banska Bystrica, east of Handlova.

Later on Wednesday Slovakia’s Deputy Prime Minister Tomas Taraba told the BBC’s Newshour programme he believed Mr Fico’s procedure in hospital had gone well.

“I guess in the end he will survive,” Mr Taraba said, adding: “He’s not in a life threatening situation at this moment.”

At a press conference on Wednesday, Interior Minister Matus Sutaj Estok said Mr Fico had been shot in the stomach.

“Initial information clearly points to political motivation,” he added.

Unconfirmed local media reports said the suspect was a 71-year-old writer and political activist.

A video being widely circulated on Slovak media purports to feature the suspect.

In the footage, the man says he disagrees with government policy and its stance towards state media. The BBC does not know if the person in the video is the perpetrator who was detained at the scene nor the circumstances under which it was filmed.

Slovakia’s outgoing president Zuzana Caputova said something “so serious had happened that we can’t even realise it yet”.

“The hateful rhetoric we witness in society leads to hateful acts,” she added.

Mr Kalinak and Mr Estok blamed the spread of hate speech on social media for the shooting and urged

citizens not to “respond to hate with hate”.

Mr Estok accused the media of contributing to the climate that led to Mr Fico’s shooting, telling a press conference: “Many of you were those who were sowing this hatred.”

He added that protection would be provided to constitutional officials as well as other groups who could be subject to similar attacks, including journalists and public figures.

Mr Fico, 59, returned to power in Slovakia after elections last September, at the head of a populist-nationalist coalition.

His first few months as prime minister have proved highly contentious politically. In January he halted mil-

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Crew trapped on Baltimore ship, seven weeks after bridge collapse

By Bernd Debusmann Jr

As a controlled explosion rocked the Dali on Monday, nearly two dozen sailors remained on board, below deck in the massive ship's hull.

The simultaneous blasts sent pieces of Baltimore's once iconic Francis Scott Key Bridge into the dark waters of Maryland's Patapsco River, seven weeks after its collapse left six people on the bridge dead and the Dali marooned.

Authorities - and the crew - hope that the demolition will mark the beginning of the end of a long process that has left the 21 men on board trapped and cut off from the world, thousands of miles from their homes.

But for now, it remains unclear when they will be

able to return home.

The Dali - a 948ft (289m) container ship - was at the start of a 27-day journey from Baltimore to Sri Lanka when it struck the Francis Scott Key Bridge, sending thousands of tonnes of steel and cement into the Patapsco. It left the ship stranded under a massive expanse of shredded metal.

A preliminary NTSB report found that two electrical blackouts disabled equipment ahead of the incident, and noted that the ship lost power twice in the 10 hours leading up to the crash.

The crew, made up of 20 Indians and a Sri Lankan national, has been unable to disembark because of visa restrictions, a lack of required shore passes and

parallel ongoing investigations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and FBI.

On Monday, the crew remained on board even as authorities used small explosive charges to deliberately "cut" an expanse of the bridge lying on the ship's bow.

Ahead of the controlled demolition, US Coast Guard Admiral Shannon Gilreath said that the crew would remain below deck with a fire crew at the ready.

"They're part of the ship. They are necessary to keep the ship staffed and operational," Adm Gilreath said. "They're the best responders on board the ship themselves."

While the ship is likely to be re-floated this week, it remains unclear when it

will be able to make the 2 nautical mile (3.7km) journey to port.

Among those who have been in touch with the crew is Joshua Messick, executive director of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center, a non-profit organisation that works to protect the rights of mariners.

According to Mr Messick, the crew has been left largely without communication with the outside world for "a couple of weeks" after their mobile phones were confiscated by the FBI as part of the investigation.

"They can't do any online banking. They can't pay their bills at home. They don't have any of their data or anyone's contact information, so they're really isolated right now," Mr Messick said. "They just can't reach out to the folks they need to, or even look at pictures of their children before they go to sleep. It's really a sad situation."

The plight of the sailors also attracted the attention of the two unions representing them, the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union and the Singapore Organisation of Seamen.

In a joint statement on 11 May, the unions said that "morale has understandably dipped", driven by "unfounded fear of person-

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itary aid to Ukraine and last month pushed through plans to abolish public broadcaster RTVS.

Thousands of Slovaks have protested against the proposed reform of the public broadcaster in recent weeks. However, a planned opposition-led demonstration was called off on Wednesday as news of the shooting emerged.

Parliament was sitting at the time of the attack and Slovak media reported that a party colleague of Mr Fico's shouted at opposition MPs, accusing them of stoking the attack.

President-elect Peter Pellegrini, who is a political ally of Mr Fico's, said he was horrified to hear of the attack and also

blamed the shooting on recent political divisions.

Describing the attack as an "unprecedented threat to Slovak democracy" he said people did not have to agree on everything, but there were ways to express disagreement democratically and legally.

World leaders have also condemned the attack on Mr Fico. US President Joe Biden condemned the "horrific act of violence" and said the US embassy was in "close touch" with the Slovakian government and was "ready to assist".

Russian President Vladimir Putin said there could "be no justification for this monstrous crime". European Council President Charles Michel said "nothing can ever justify violence or such attacks".

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al criminal liability” and emotional distress.

The statement also called for the “swift return” of the crews’ phones, noting that losing communication with family members is “causing significant hardship for crew members with young children at home.”

Dave Heindel, the president of the Seafarers International Union, said that “however long the investigation takes, the crew’s rights and welfare should not be infringed upon”.

“We call on the authorities to be mindful that seafarers utilise mobile devices to conduct personal business for bill payments, and, more important, transfer money to their home country to sustain families,” he said. “Crew members are becoming demoralised without the basic tools we all take for granted.”

Andrew Middleton, who runs Apostleship of Sea - a programme that ministers to ships coming through Baltimore - told the BBC he visited the sailors two weeks ago and found them in “good spirits” despite constant worries.

“Once we broke the ice and got everyone to say their name and what part of India they were from, and talk about if they were married or had children, we got the ball rolling,” he said. “They were willing to kind of poke fun at one another a little bit... we did our best to get them laughing and



The crew of the Dali remained on-board even as explosives were used to destroy part of the Key Bridge on its hull.

joking, hopefully to take their mind off things for even a few minutes.”

For the time being, the crew has been given SIM cards and temporary mobile phones without data included, according to Mr Messick.

They also received care packages from various community groups and private individuals, which in recent weeks have included batches of Indian snacks and handmade quilts.

The BBC has reached out to the “unified command” overseeing the government’s response to Dali and the bridge collapse for clarity on when the sailors might be able to leave the ship and, eventually, be repatriated.

Darrel Wilson, a spokesperson for Synergy Marine, the Dali’s Singapore-based management company, told the BBC that the crew is “holding up well” and that company representatives

dispatched to Baltimore have been “checking on them constantly, from day one.” “All their needs are being met to the best of our ability,” Mr Wilson said, adding that shipments of catered Indian food have been sent on-board to allow the cooks to rest. Various religious representatives, including Hindu priests, have been providing services and emotional support to those on-board. “It’s small things to us,” he said. “But those are big morale boosters.” Mr Wilson, however, said he was unable to provide a timeline for the crew to disembark, noting that - in addition to the investigations - “nobody knows the ship better than they do” and that they are integral for it to function.

Mr Messick said he expects to be able to board the ship to provide “emotional support” as soon as it is moved out of the shipping channel.

After that, he believes that small groups of sailors - perhaps five at a time - will be eligible for shore passes, albeit with heavy restrictions on their movements.

They will, for example, likely be required to have an escort for the duration of their time on shore.

“I’m trying to find out what the crew wants to do. I don’t want to take them to a baseball game if they are going to be bored,” he said. “So I’ve reached out to a local cricket club to see if they can organise a match.”

Some crew members, such as the ship’s captain, expressed an interest in being “somewhere contemplative, in nature”, Mr Messick said.

“We’re just trying to help them breathe a bit,” he said. “They’ve been stuck on board this whole time. They need to enjoy a little more of the freedom that we enjoy every day.”

Double Six Diamond leads ABNDA's three-hand domino competition

Double Six Diamond took over the lead in the opening three-hand competition of the 2024 Antigua and Barbuda National Domino Association's (ABNDA) domestic season after the latest round of matches.

The Double Six Diamond moved from second place to the top of the standings with an overall total of 295 points after the fourth round of matches in the Three-Hand Competition, which is being conducted in the accumulated points format, at the ABNDA's headquarters in Ottos.

The Double Six Diamond achieved the feat despite scoring just 63 points to finish second in their fourth-round match, which was won by Legacy Thunder with 87 points. Triple Diamond finished in third place with 59 points.

Triple Dynamite, who were leading the competition at the end of the third round, dropped to second place with an overall total of 293 points.

Legacy Thunder occupied 10th place with an overall total of 251 points from three rounds of matches.

Highly Favoured advanced to third place with an overall total of 288 points after scoring 67 points to finish in second place in their fourth-round match, which was won



by Unstoppables with 83 points. The Willikies Super Stars A team finished in third place with 57 points.

Despite their win, Unstoppables are occupying 16th place with an overall total of 223 points, while the Willikies Super Stars A team are in sixth place with an overall total of 276 points.

Double Six Ice, which occupied third place at the end of the third round with 231 points, got a bye along with Dominatrixx, and both teams did not compete in the fourth round.

The Rising Stars scored 72 points to win their fourth-round match and advanced to fourth place with an overall total of 285 points. The Full Clip B

team came in second with 70 points, and the Fire Police finished in third place with 69 points.

The score was good enough to allow Fire Police to move into fifth place with an overall total of 283 points.

The Full Clip A team won their fourth-round match to move into joint 11th place with the Ramplers with an overall total of 237 points.

Full Clip A scored 83 points to beat the Ramplers with 73 points and Bravo with 59 points.

The Bolans Revellers A and B teams forfeited their fourth-round matches. Bolans Revellers A failed to show up for their encounter with the Willikies Super Stars B team

and Parham Strikers, while Bolans Revellers B was a no-show against Legacy Lightening and Eagle Eyes International.

The Willikies Superstars maintained their dominance in the opening four-hand competition. The Willikies Super Stars extended their unbeaten run by beating Dominatrixx 41-29, claiming their fourth win in as many matches to lead the four-hand competition with eight points.

Double Six and Bolans Revellers recorded their third win in as many games to stay joint-second with six points. Double Six beat the Ramplers 52-15, and the Bolans Revellers prevailed 54-23 against the SK Eagles.

Sports News



Nuggets beat Timberwolves to take 3-2 series lead

DENVER (AP) - Nikola Jokic received the Michael Jordan award from Commissioner Adam Silver before tipoff, then delivered a memorable playoff performance to celebrate his third MVP trophy Tuesday night.

Jokic scored 40 points and dished out 13 assists and the Denver Nuggets shut down Anthony Edwards in a 112-97 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves that put the reigning NBA champs one win away from the Western Conference finals.

Jokic also had seven rebounds with no turnovers as the home team won for the first time in this semifinal series.

“He did everything for us tonight,” Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. “And it was fun to watch.”

Jokic’s domination even



Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, right, shoots over Minnesota Timberwolves center Rudy Gobert during the first half of Game 5 of their NBA basketball second-round playoff series in Denver, Tuesday, May 14, 2024. (AP)

had his opponents smiling. 16 points and assist on four er rout.

“I just laugh. That’s all other baskets in the third “I can’t be mad,” Ed- I can do,” Edwards said of quarter when the Nuggets wards said. “He’s good, watching Jokic go off for seized control for yet another *cont’d on pg 21*

Stingerz fight back against Flyers in ABBA’s Division 1 playoff finals



The Northside Stingerz have avoided being swept by defending champions the EZ Fit Flyers in the Antigua and Barbuda Basketball Association’s (ABBA) Division I playoff finals.

The Stingerz reduced the deficit in their best-of-five for the First Division playoff championship to 2-1 by pulling off a 76-58 victory against the Flyers in Game 3 at the JSC Sports Complex on Tuesday night.

Point guard Jaden Andrew produced a game-high 22 points, seven assists, and six rebounds; Joshua Min-

ner sank 16 points; and Keroi Lee converted 12 points and snatched eight rebounds for the Northside Stingerz.

Xavier Meade converted 19 points and claimed nine rebounds, and Adonis Humphreys scored 14 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for the Flyers.

The Flyers had taken a two-nil lead in the series by soaring to victories, 78-73 in Game 1 and 87-75 in Game 2.

Both sides will clash in Game 4 at the JSC Sports Complex today at 8 pm.

EPL clubs to discuss a proposal to scrap the use VAR

The English Premier League's (EPL) 20 clubs will discuss a proposal to scrap the use of video review — or VAR — for refereeing decisions.

Wolverhampton has submitted a resolution to trigger a vote at the league's annual general meeting on June 6. If at least 14 of the 20 clubs vote in favour, VAR can be removed.

Wolves said the use of VAR has “led to numerous unintended negative consequences that are damaging the relationship between fans and football, and undermining the value of the Premier League brand.”

“The decision to table the resolution has come after careful consideration and with the utmost respect for the Premier League, PGMOL (referees body) and our fellow competitors,” the club said.

“There is no blame to be placed — we are all just looking for the best possible



Bournemouth players appeal to referee Matt Donohue after he awards a penalty to Brentford A VAR check overturns the decision, during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Bournemouth, at the Vitality Stadium, in Bournemouth, England, Saturday, May 11, 2024. (AP)

outcome for football — and all stakeholders have been working hard to try and make the introduction of additional technology a success.”

However, Wolves said “it is time for a constructive and critical debate” on VAR future after five years of the technology.

“Our position,” the club

added, “is that the price we are paying for a small increase in accuracy is at odds with the spirit of our game, and as a result we should remove it from the 2024/25 season onwards.”

The English Premier League confirmed there will be a discussion about the future of VAR at the AGM and

said “we acknowledge the concerns and issues around the use of VAR.”

The league believes scrapping video review would lead to an increase in the number of incorrect decisions. According to the league, the number of correct decisions made in games has risen from 82 percent prior to the introduction of VAR to 96 percent this season.

“The league fully supports the use of VAR and remains committed, alongside PGMOL, to make continued improvements to the system for the benefit of the game and fans,” the competition said.

Currently, the Swedish league is the only one of Europe's top-30 ranked leagues not to use video review.

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man. I think I said that after Game 1 when we won, and Game 2, he's the MVP. He's the best player in NBA. He showed it the last three games, three games in a row. He was special tonight. I've got to give him his flowers. He was that guy tonight.”

Jokic even had another rim-rattling dunk, something he's not known for. When asked if Minnesota's collection of rim protectors necessitated such moves, Jokic cracked, “You know, I'm a freak of nature. Why not show off my athleticism?”

Aaron Gordon added 18 points and 10 boards, and Jamal Murray scored 16, saying when Jokic has it going, there's no need for anyone else to try to be the hero.

“If Jokic's scoring like that, there's no need to do anything special,” Murray said.

Trapped and doubled all night, Edwards was held to 18 points on 5-of-15 shooting. Karl Anthony-Towns led the Wolves with 23 points and Rudy Gobert scored 18.

“I think we did a great job, not just on (Edwards) but everybody,” Murray said.

Attacking Saints go third in First Division

The Attacking Saints have moved into third place in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) First Division.

They achieved the feat after Prince Walter and Defrante Braithwaite both scored hat tricks to lead the Attacking Saints to a 7-1 drubbing of Bolans at the ABFA Technical Center on Tuesday.

Walter scored in the 3rd, 47th, and 63rd minutes, while Braithwaite had conversions in the 30th, 74th, and 84th minutes. The other goal for the Attacking Saints came via an own goal, which was scored by Andre Martin of Bolans in the 57th minute.

Jahmeil Richmond of the Attacking Saints returned the favour when he scored an own goal in the 80th minute to give Bolans a consolation goal.

Their 12th win in 19 matches allows the Attacking Saints to leapfrog the Police from fourth to third place by advancing to 39 points with one game remaining.

However, the Police



Players of the Attacking Saints football team

have three games remaining.

Bolans will remain in seventh place in the 11-team round-robin competition with 17 points after suffering their 11th defeat in 18 matches.

Struggling Bendals and Fort Road picked up rare wins as both sides snatched one-nil victories in their latest First Division encounters.

Following a goalless first half, Darren Stevens

broke the deadlock with a 47th-minute conversion, which was sufficient for Bendals to snatch victory against the Liberta Blackhawks at the Bendals playing field on Tuesday.

Their fourth win in 19 matches allows Bendals to move from ninth to eighth place with 15 points.

Their 14th defeat in 19 matches allows the Liberta Blackhawks to remain on 13 points and drop from eighth place to second from

the bottom of the standings on goal difference.

Ezekiel Thomas converted a penalty kick in the 20th minute to give Fort Road their victory against Lion Hill at the Golden Grove playing field.

Their fourth win in 18 matches allows Fort Road to move out of the cellar and into ninth place via a superior goal difference by advancing to 13 points, the same as the Liberta Blackhawks.