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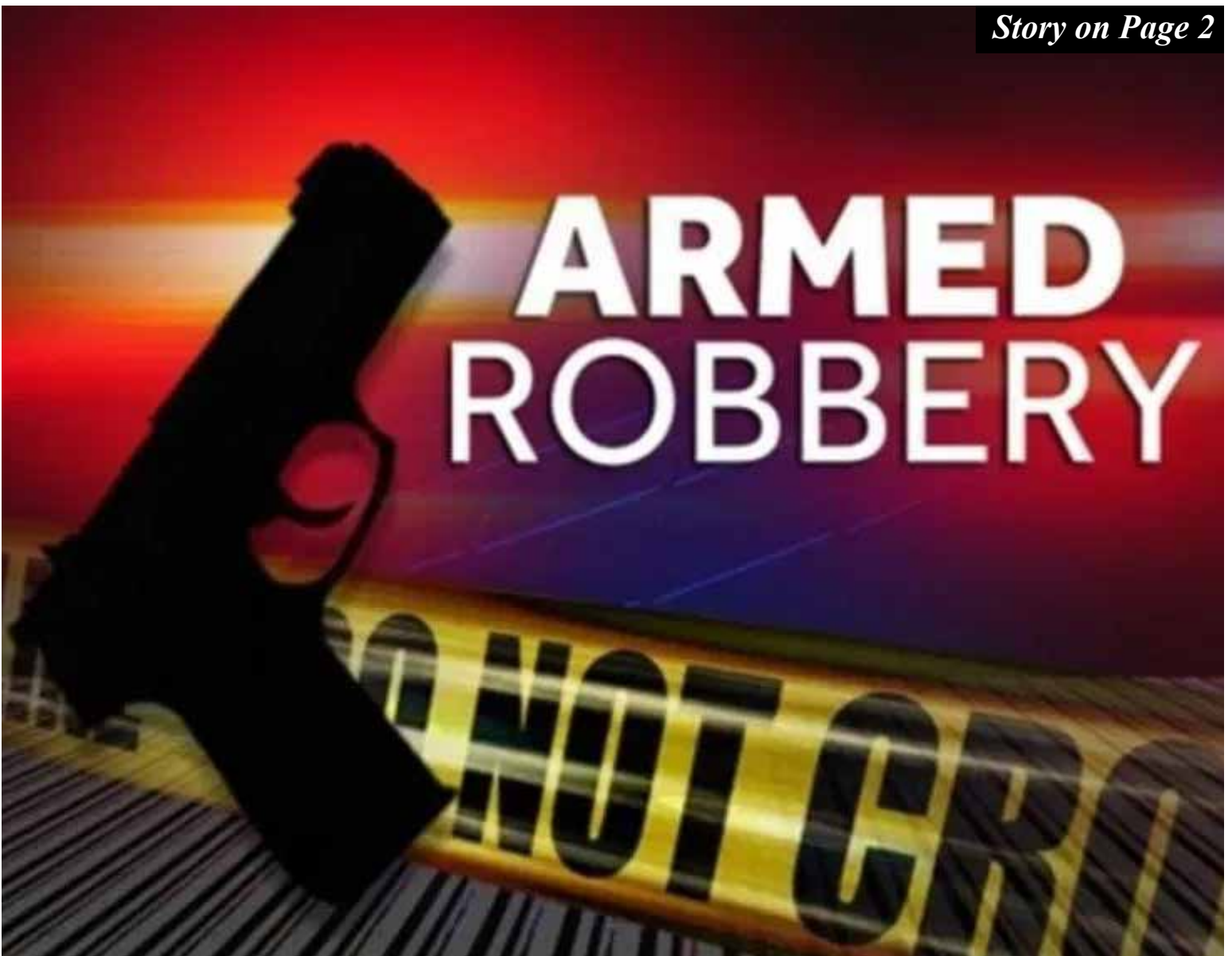
FRIDAY 16TH AUGUST 2024

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PUBLIC SAFETY MINISTER COMMENDS POLICE ON QUICK ACTION

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Public Safety Minister commends police on quick action

The Minister of Public Safety and Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin, has commended members of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda for their quick action in apprehending three men alleged to have been involved in an armed robbery at Parham on Thursday.

The men were intercepted in the Ebenezer area sometime after the robbery at which time they reportedly engaged with the police in gunfire. During the shootout that ensued, all three were injured by gunshots, one fatally.

In his initial response to the exchange of gunfire between the alleged robbers and the police, Sir Steadroy said he is aware of the strategy of the police in dealing with the spate of robberies that has plagued the island in recent times.

“It is not surprising therefore to learn of the quick action of the police in response to the robbery reported earlier on Thursday.

“The police presence will be seen and felt in all quarters of the island, especially in those ‘hot spot’ areas where crime is a special concern,” he stated.

The Public Safety minister also issued a stern warning to those who are involved in criminal activities and who, when cornered, may wish to engage with the police in an exchange of gunfire.

“It is to be noted, that wherever the police, in the conduct of their lawful duties, are fired upon by those believed to be engaged in unlawful acts, that the police will return fire. The police have a right to defend themselves!” he declared.

Sir Steadroy is commending the police for their quick action in response to the robbery at Parham and he revealed that both he and the police High Command have been inundated with phone calls from members of the



Sir Steadroy Benjamin

public praising the police for their quick and decisive action.

“I am very pleased and satisfied as Minister of Public Safety because I know,

and I am confident that the police will deal with these matters effectively. Crime will not pay and those involved in criminal activities will pay!” he warned.



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One man is dead, two hospitalized following shoot-out with police

One man has died from suspected gunshot wounds and two others have been hospitalized following a robbery and a shoot-out with police on Thursday afternoon.

The shooting happened in the village of Ebenezer shortly after the motorcar in which the three men were traveling was intercepted by the police. The police suspected that the men were the ones who had earlier robbed a superette in Parham and stole approximately \$2,000 from the proprietor.

After the report of the robbery was made, the vehicle believed to have been used as their getaway vehicle, a silver Toyota Mark-X motor car, was spotted in Ebenezer by police and according to the police, the suspects opened fire on the police prompting the lawmen to return fire.

They were rushed to the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre nursing gunshot wounds. One succumbed to his injuries while another is said to be in critical condition at the hospital. The other is said to be in stable condition.

Police Commissioner Atlee Rodney did not disclose the identity of any of the men involved in the shoot-out with the police. All he stated was that they were 'quite young' men.

Commissioner Rodney is urging those inclined to engage in criminal behavior not to engage the police in gunfire as the lawmen have

a right to defend themselves and that they will return gunfire if fired upon.

He also wants members of the society, especially parents and guardians, to caution their young men to desist from criminal activities as the consequences may be quite severe.

In a release overnight, STRATCOM provided further details on the incident.

"Police are continuing investigations into a robbery and a shooting incident involving three suspects.

Around 1:05 p.m. on Thursday, August 15th, the police responded to a report of robbery at Parham where two men allegedly assaulted and robbed the owners of a business place of an undisclosed sum of money.



Atlee Rodney

The assailants fled the scene in a silver Toyota Mark-X motor car that was later intercepted by police at Ebenezer. A confrontation ensued, resulting in an exchange of fire between the police and the suspects, and all three were injured and taken to the hospital.

One man was pronounced dead, while the other two are receiving medical treatment. The police recovered a firearm and a modified flare gun,

among other items from the crime scene. Further investigation is ongoing.

Meanwhile, Police Commissioner, Atlee Rodney is thanking the public for their support as the police continue to address the crime situation in the country. He encouraged business owners to be vigilant and report suspicious activities to the police in a timely manner.

Commissioner Rodney is also commending his officers for remaining resolute and committed in their fight against crime.

Anyone with information surrounding this or any other crime is asked to contact the Criminal Investigations Department at 462-3913 or call the Crimestoppers Hotline at 800-Tips (8477)."

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Electoral ID Card Replacement Drive gathers steam

The Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC) launched its electoral ID card replacement drive on Monday, August 12, 2024, marking a significant step in updating the na-

tion's voter registration system. This initiative, aimed at replacing expired voter identification cards, has faced both technical challenges and political scrutiny in its early days.

ABEC's Public Relations Officer, Elisa Graham, provided insights into the process and its initial hurdles. "On Monday, all 16 constituencies on the main island were fully online,

with only Barbuda experiencing difficulties," Graham stated. She explained that systems were temporarily taken offline due to tropical storm Ernesto, leading to connectivity issues when restarted.

The process faced further complications when, upon reactivation, some registration units encountered operational problems. "We realized that there were some connectivity issues which would have been affecting some of the units. Some units were operational, some units were not," Graham elaborated.

As of the latest update, Graham confirmed that 16 out of 17 registration units are now fully functional. "We're still working with the internet provider in Barbuda to resolve their technical connectivity issues," she added, emphasizing ABEC's commitment to full nationwide coverage.

The technical difficulties have not gone unnoticed by political entities. Graham acknowledged that the United Progressive Party (UPP) had expressed displeasure over what ABEC termed "technical issues."

She defended ABEC's approach, stating, "It is our responsibility as an electoral management body to communicate to the public at the time exactly what it is that we saw as technical issues which needed to be

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communicated to the public.”

Despite these challenges, the replacement process is moving forward. It is scheduled to run Monday through Friday, from 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Residents are advised to visit their constituency’s designated registration unit with the following:

- Their expired voter’s ID
- A valid government-issued ID
- Documents updating marital status (if applicable)
- Proof of address

The process may include updating demographics with a new photo, signature, and fingerprint validation. Replacement cards are expected to be available within two weeks of application at no cost to citizens.

Registration units are located at various sites across the islands, including schools, community centers, and



government buildings. A full list of these locations can be viewed on the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission’s social media pages.

For those who have lost their expired ID cards, ABEC advises presenting a valid government-issued ID to complete the process. The commission emphasizes that the replacement of expired electoral IDs is free of cost.

ABEC encourages all eligible vot-

ers with expired ID cards to participate in this crucial update to ensure a smooth electoral process in future elections.

The commission stresses the importance of this initiative in maintaining an accurate and up-to-date voter registry.

As the process continues, ABEC remains committed to transparency and efficiency. They have pledged to keep the public informed of any further developments or changes to the replacement drive.

For the latest information and updates, citizens can connect with ABEC on 562-4191, abecpublicities@gmail.com or at abec.gov.ag

The commission urges all eligible voters to take advantage of this opportunity to update their electoral identification and contribute to the democratic process of Antigua and Barbuda.

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Antigua and Barbuda responds to WHO's declaration of MPox as an international public health emergency

Subsequent to the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring Mpox a public health emergency of international concern on Wednesday 14th August 2024, the Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, immediately called an emergency meeting with the Health Disaster Executive of the Ministry of Health, Wellness, Social Transformation and the Environment (MOHWSTE) on Thursday.

The Health Disaster Executive, which was formed pre-COVID, is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the response to health emergencies and disasters in



Antigua and Barbuda, and it is made up of senior officials within the MOHWSTE.

Led by the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Permanent Secretaries, Medical Officers of Health, Principal Nursing

Officer, Public Health Nurse Epidemiologist and other members of the Health Disaster Executive, engaged stakeholders which included the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Antigua and Barbuda Port Authority, Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority, Department of Immigration, Customs and Excise Division, Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre, and the Antigua and Barbuda Emergency Medical Services to apprise them of the recent development.

A decision has been made for a multi-stakeholder approach to increase surveillance at the ports of entry of

Antigua and Barbuda and at health care facilities across the country.

The laboratory of Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre is equipped to conduct diagnostic testing of suspected cases, should the need arise.

Mpox is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus which is similar to the smallpox virus. Persons typically experience a fever, rash, swollen lymph nodes, muscle pain, back pain and/or fatigue. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek attention from their health care provider. Suspected cases of Mpox will be reported to the MOHWSTE's Epide-



cont'd on pg 7

Antigua Barbuda Festivals Commission calls for stakeholders post-mortem meetings

The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission (ABFC) is pleased to announce a series of post-mortem sessions to assess the recently concluded Carnival

festivities. These sessions will involve various stakeholders and cover the following areas:

Mon. 19th Aug, Mas Bands and Groups, 6:00

pm (T-Shirt Mas, Marching Bands, Cheerleaders, J’ouvert, Junior Carnival Mas, Carnival Monday and Tuesday Mas)

Tues. 20th Aug, Soca

5:00 pm (Songwriters, Arrangers, and Artists)

Calypso 8:00 pm (Songwriters, Arrangers, and Artists)

All meetings will be held at the Office of the Prime Minister, Conference Room on Queen Elizabeth Highway.

All Carnival stakeholders are strongly encouraged to attend their respective meetings and come prepared to offer constructive feedback as we begin collaborating to plan for Carnival 2025.

cont’d from pg 6

miology and Surveillance Unit.

The virus is spread from person to person by direct contact with the rash, bodily fluids (fluid, pus or blood from skin lesions), and scabs. Clothing, sheets, towels and other objects can also be sources of infection. The virus can also be transmitted from a pregnant mother to her unborn child. Respiratory secretions can be a potential source of infection.

Although there is no specific treatment for Mpox, preventative measures are key to reducing the risk of transmission. The public is advised that frequent handwashing, and routine wet cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces may prevent infection. Persons are therefore strongly advised to adopt these public health measures to avoid becoming infected with the Mpox virus.

ABHTA’s Anthea Watkins gains acceptance to JICA Programme

The Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association (ABHTA) staff member Anthea Watkins has been accepted into the prestigious Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) training programme.

Watkins will participate in the course titled *Human Resource Development for Creating Tourism Destination for Sustainable Tourism - Transforming Tourism Destination*, which will be held in Japan from August 26 to September 20, 2024.

This training, facilitated by JICA, is a significant milestone for Watkins and by extension, the ABHTA. As a professional dedicated to the growth and development of Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism sector, Watkins is expected to gain invaluable insights and strategies that align with sustainable tourism practices.

Reflecting on her upcoming par-

ticipation, Watkins shared, “I am truly honoured to be selected for this transformative opportunity. I look forward to expanding my knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism development.

“My goal is to apply these new skills to enhance the strategic initiatives of the ABHTA upon my return, contributing to the long-term growth and success of our tourism industry.”

Craig Marshall, Chairman of the ABHTA, expressed his enthusiasm for Watkins’ achievement: “Anthea’s acceptance into the JICA programme is a testament to her dedication and the value she brings to our organization.

“We are confident that the knowledge she will gain from this experience will not only benefit her professionally but also significantly impact the tourism landscape of Antigua and Barbuda. The ABHTA fully supports her in



Anthea Watkins this endeavour and looks forward to her contributions upon her return.”

The ABHTA extends its best wishes to Watkins for a successful and enriching experience in Japan.



Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams attends ceremony in Dominican Republic

Governor General Sir Rodney Williams, accompanied by Lady Williams, is in the Dominican Republic for the swearing-in ceremony of President Luis Abinader and his deputy. President Abinader and Vice President Raquel Pena will be sworn in at the National Assembly Hall in

Santo Domingo on Friday.

Both President Abinader and his vice president were re-elected in national elections held earlier this year.

Sir Rodney and Lady Williams joined a long list of dignitaries who have traveled to the Dominican Republic to witness the swearing-in ceremony.

Indian diaspora in Antigua and Barbuda celebrate Independence Day

The members of the Indian diaspora in Antigua and Barbuda gathered at the residence of the Honorary Indian Consul, Vijay Tewani, on Thursday to celebrate that nation's 77th Independence Day.

India, with perhaps the world's largest population, is the world's largest democracy as the country concluded general elections in June this year returning Prime Minister Narendra Modi to office.

Tewani said the Independence Day was celebrated with much enthusiasm and the Indian community gave thanks to the progress that their country has made since independence. "The Indian community appreciated this important occasion," Tewani stated.

According to the Honorary Consul the event highlighted the strong connections between India and Antigua



and Barbuda.

A congratulatory note was sent by Prime Minister Gaston Browne to PM Modi, and the government and people of India. It also commended India for its support for South-South cooperation, especially India's support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as issues related to cli-

mate change.

The prime minister also drew attention to efforts at showcasing the vibrant culture of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean region.

Consul Tewani expressed gratitude to the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda for their continued support and longstanding friendship.

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St. John's City East

St. John's City South

St. John's Rural West

St. John's Rural South

St. John's Rural East

St. John's Rural North

St. Mary's North

St. Mary's South

All Saints East & St. Luke

All Saints West

St. George

St. Peter

St. Philip North

St. Philip South

St. Paul

Barbuda

Villa Primary School

Central Registration Unit, Sir Sydney Walling Highway

Central Registration Unit, Sir Sydney Walling Highway

Multipurpose Cultural & Exhibition Centre

Noel Nyah Roberts Sports Complex

Chaia's Building (opposite the Lions Den)

Yorks Community Centre

Moravian Conference Centre, Cashew Hill

Turner's Apartments, Bolans

Roman Catholic Church Hall, Roman Hill

Former Community Access Centre, All Saints

Registration Unit, Potters Village

Precision Centre, Paynters

Glanvilles Community Centre

St. Philip Post Office

Former Real Local Art Gallery, Horsford Hill

Low School, Barbuda



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Venezuelan Embassy to host discussion on post-elections issues

The Venezuelan Embassy in St. John's will host a special discussion on Saturday that will focus on issues arising from the July 28 presidential elections in that country.

Since the elections, there have been calls both locally (in Venezuela) and internationally questioning the outcome of the polls, and Saturday's discussion is seen as the embassy's attempt to 'push back' on these suggestions emanating from both local and outside sources.

"The Antigua and Barbuda and Venezuela Friendship Association in collaboration with the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela invites you to participate in the 'Meeting with friends of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,'" a release from the embassy stated.



Nicolás Maduro maintains he has been re-elected to a third term, but the opposition says it has evidence showing it won the election

The discussion will take place on the topic: *Aggression against Venezuela: media disinformation and extremist violence in the context of the Presidential Elections of July 28, 2024.*

The event takes place at the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Antigua and Barbuda located in Old Parham Road, on Saturday, August 17, at 10:00 am.



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- ✓ Your demographics may be updated with a new photo, signature, and validated with fingerprints.
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First case of more dangerous mpox found outside Africa

Sweden's public health agency has recorded what it says is the first case of a more dangerous type of mpox outside the African continent.

The person became infected during a stay in an area of Africa where there is currently a major outbreak of mpox Clade 1, the agency said.

The news comes just hours after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of mpox in parts of Africa was now a public health emergency of international concern.

At least 450 people died during an initial outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the disease has since spread to areas of Central and East Africa.

According to Olivia Wigzell, the acting head of the Swedish public health agency, the infected person had sought care in the Stockholm area and the fact that they were receiving treatment in Sweden did not mean there was a risk to the broader population.

"The affected person has also been infected during a stay in an area of Africa where there is a large outbreak of mpox Clade 1," she told a news conference.

Mpox, which was previously known as monkeypox, is transmitted through close contact, such as sex,



Hundreds of deaths from mpox have been recorded in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda, before the new case identified in Sweden.

It causes flu-like symptoms, skin lesions and can be fatal, with four in 100 cases leading to death. It is most common in the tropical rainforests of West and Central Africa and there are thousands of infections every year.

There are currently a number of outbreaks of mpox that are taking place simultaneously and they are partly fuelled by the newer and more serious type of Clade 1b, identified in September last year.

There are two types of Clade 1 and the Swedish case has been identified as Clade 1b. Since mpox Clade 1b was first witnessed in Democratic Republic of Congo there have been confirmed cases in

Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda, before the new case identified in Sweden.

While Clade 2 did cause a public health emergency in 2022, it was relatively mild and some 300 cases have already been identified in Sweden.

WHO/Europe said it was actively engaging with Sweden's health authorities on "how best to manage the first confirmed case of mpox Clade 1b".

It urged other countries to act quickly and transparently like Sweden, as there were likely to be further "imported cases of Clade 1 in the European region over the coming days and weeks".

The Swedish public health agency said the more dangerous outbreak was likely to be linked to "a higher rise of a more severe

course of disease and higher mortality".

Dr Jonas Albarnaz, who specialises in pox viruses at the Pirbright Institute, said the first case outside of Africa was concerning as it meant the spread "might be larger than we knew yesterday".

Dr Brian Ferguson, Associate Professor of Immunology at the University of Cambridge agreed it was "clearly a concerning development" but unsurprising given the severity and spread of the outbreak in Africa.

The WHO hopes its latest declaration, that mpox is a public health emergency of international concern, will trigger greater support to the areas most affected.

Vaccines are available, for those at greatest risk or

cont'd on pg 13

Five charged over Matthew Perry's death

Five people have been charged in the drug-related death of Matthew Perry last year, police say, including two doctors and the actor's personal assistant.

Police said on Thursday that their investigation, launched in May, uncovered a "broad underground criminal network" of drug suppliers who distributed large quantities of ketamine.

Perry, 54, died at his Los Angeles home in October. A post-mortem examination found a high concentration of ketamine in his blood and determined the "acute effects" of the controlled substance had killed him.

"These defendants took advantage of Mr Perry's addiction issues to enrich themselves," US Attorney Martin Estrada said on Thursday. "They knew what they were doing was risking great danger to Mr Perry, but they did it anyway."

Three of the defendants - including Perry's assistant -

have already pleaded guilty to drug charges, while two others - a doctor and a woman known as "The Ketamine Queen" - were arrested on Thursday, according to the justice department.

Ketamine - a powerful anaesthetic - is used as a treatment for depression, anxiety and pain. People close to Perry, who starred as one of the lead characters on the NBC television show *Friends*, told a coroner's investigation after his death that he was undergoing ketamine infusion therapy.

But his last session had taken place more than a week before his death. The medical examiner said the ketamine in Perry's system could not have been from the infusion therapy because of the drug's short half-life.

The levels of ketamine in his body were as high as the amount given during general anaesthesia, according to the medical examiner.

An indictment filed in



federal court detailed the elaborate drug purchasing scheme that prosecutors say ultimately led to Perry's death.

Prosecutors said Perry's assistant, Kenneth Iwamasa, worked with two doctors to provide the actor with over \$50,000 (£38,000) of ketamine in the weeks before his death.

Officials argued those involved in the scheme tried to profit from Perry's well-known substance abuse issues. One of the doctors, Salvador Plasencia, is alleged to have written in a

text message: "I wonder how much this moron will pay."

Mr Plasencia, 42, provided Perry ketamine "outside the usual course of professional practice and without a legitimate medical purpose", according to the indictment.

He also allegedly taught Iwamasa how to inject Perry with ketamine without proper safety procedures and surveillance, the police indictment says.

In the four days before his death, Iwamasa gave Perry at least 27 shots of ketamine, prosecutors alleged.

He did so even after a large dose of ketamine earlier that month caused Perry to "freeze up", leading Mr Plasencia to advise against a similar-sized dose in the future, prosecutors said. The doctor still left several vials of the drug with the actor and his assistant after the incident, according to the indictment.

Others charged in the *cont'd on pg 14*

cont'd from pg 12

who have been in close contact with an infected person, but many experts worry there are not enough jabs or funding to get them to the people who need them most.

The mortality rate from the Clade 1b variant in Sweden will not be as high as that seen in parts of Africa, because of the high quality of healthcare in Europe.

However, Dr Ferguson said there would likely be further cases in Europe and other parts of the world "as there are currently no mechanisms in place to stop imported cases of mpox happening".

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said symptoms usually appeared 6-13 days after infection, through fevers and headaches, rashes or sores and muscle ache.

Most people experienced mild to moderate symptoms followed by a full recovery, but immuno-compromised individuals were at greater risk.

While news of the first case outside Africa may cause alarm, it was to be expected.

As other disease outbreaks have shown, swift international action can help stop the disease spreading further.

Regional News



Dominican Republic: Wander Franco's hearing postponed until September

The second phase of Wander Franco's trial on charges of sexually abusing a minor was delayed until September 26.

The decision of the court in the province of Puerto Plata, in the north of the Dominican Republic, was due to the defence team of the Tampa Bay shortstop not being notified of audiovisual evidence that was going to be shown during a hearing scheduled for Wednesday.

The 23-year-old has been charged with sexually abusing a 14-year-old girl. Prosecutors filed charges in January, six months after a judge ordered he be investigated.

Dominican law splits the court proceedings into a preparatory phase, a preliminary ruling and a final ruling.

Franco attended the hearing with a lawyer and family members. He did not speak to reporters.

Documents that prosecutors presented to a judge in July and were viewed by The Associated Press alleged Franco through his mother, Yudelka Aybar, transferred one million pesos or \$17,000 to the mother of the minor on January 5, 2023.



Tampa Bay Rays shortstop Wander Franco, center, who is charged with sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl, leaves court after his trial was postponed, in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, Wednesday, August 14, 2024. (AP Photo/Ricardo Hernandez)

Franco was conditionally released on January 5, four days after his arrest. The mother of the underage girl is under house arrest.

Franco is charged with sexual and commercial exploitation against a minor, sexual abuse and human trafficking.

Franco, who turned 23 on March

1, was in the midst of his third major league season when his career was halted in August 2023.

He agreed to a \$182 million, 11-year contract in November 2021.

Tampa Bay placed him on the restricted list last month, cutting off the pay he had been receiving while on administrative leave.

cont'd from pg 13

case include Jasveen Sangha, the so-called "Ketamine Queen" who supplied the drug to Plasencia through the help of two other co-defendants, Erik Fleming and doctor Mark Chavez.

Chavez, Fleming and Iwamasa have all pleaded guilty.

Ms Sangha and Mr Plasencia both made their initial appearances in Los Angeles court on Thursday afternoon and pleaded not

guilty, the US Department of Justice said.

Both suspects had tentative trial dates set for October. Mr Plasencia was given a bond of \$100,000 and Ms Sangha was ordered to be held without bond.

Prosecutors say the defendants attempted to cover up their alleged crimes after Perry's death.

Ms Sangha allegedly texted another suspect, telling him to "delete all our messages". Mr Plasencia

also falsified medical records, according to the indictment.

Drowning was also listed as a contributing factor in Perry's death, which was ruled an accident. Other contributing factors were coronary artery disease and the effects of buprenorphine, which is used to treat opioid use disorder.

At the height of his fame, Perry was battling with addiction to painkillers and alcohol, and attended

rehabilitation on multiple occasions. He detailed his struggle with substance use in his memoir, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing*.

In 2016, he told BBC Radio 2 that he could not remember three years of filming during *Friends*, because of drink and drugs.

After attempts at treatment, he wrote in his memoir that he had been mostly sober since 2001 - "save for about 60 or 70 mishaps".



A flooded area in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Ernesto heads for Bermuda after causing power cuts in Puerto Rico

By Ruth Comerford

Hurricane Ernesto is heading for the Caribbean island of Bermuda, having crossed Puerto Rico where it left more than half of homes and businesses without power.

Puerto Rico's main power supplier Luma Energy was reporting that some 410,000 customers did not have access to electricity by around midday Thursday, according to Reuters news agency.

Ernesto, which grew into a category-one hurricane on Wednesday, is continuing to strengthen with gusts of up to 90mph (150km/h) ahead of its expected landfall in Bermuda on Friday.

Forecasters predict it could become a major hurricane in the next 48 hours, and have warned of flash flooding, strong winds and dangerous ocean swells.

Ernesto is expected to continue to strengthen as it heads towards Bermuda - a British territory made up of 181

islands in the Atlantic ocean.

By Saturday it is expected to become a "large hurricane", according to US weather forecasters. It will then move back out to sea as it travels up the US East Coast. Next week it could brush Atlantic Canada.

Forecasters have previously warned of the role of climate change in making storms like this one more intense. Ernesto swept past Puerto Rico overnight, with up to 10in (25cm) of rain expected in some places, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

"Preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion," the agency warned in a bulletin on Thursday evening.

Juan Saca, Luma's president and chief executive, said more than 1,500 employees were working in the field to "re-establish service" and switch the electricity back on.

"We have to evaluate what needs to be done to be able to resolve it," he

told Reuters.

Puerto Rico's power grid has been wiped out before by hurricanes. In 2022, when Hurricane Fiona hit the island, around 80% of homes and businesses were cut off for almost a month.

Ernesto is the fifth named Atlantic storm to occur this season.

Hurricane Beryl was the earliest Category 5 storm on record in the Atlantic when it swept through the Caribbean and the Texas Gulf Coast last month, killing dozens of people and leaving millions without electricity.

Earlier this year, US weather agency Noaa warned that the North Atlantic could get as many as seven major hurricanes of category-three strength or over this year, which would be more than double the usual number.

While there is no evidence climate change is producing more hurricanes, it is making the most powerful ones more likely, and bringing heavier rainfall.

Ukraine sets up military office inside Russia

Ukraine has set up a military administrative office in Russia's western Kursk region, where its surprise incursion into Russian territory continues, according to its top military commander.

Gen Oleksandr Syrsky said the office would "maintain law and order" and "meet the immediate needs" of the population in the area.

In a video posted on social media, Gen Syrsky is seen telling a meeting chaired by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that the office has been created "on the territories controlled by Ukraine".

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov has said Moscow will send reinforcements to "safeguard" the population in the region.

Ukraine also claimed to have made further gains in its incursion on Thursday.

Ukrainian troops were 35km inside the Kursk region, where they control 1,150sq km of territory, including 82 settlements, Gen Syrsky said.

Now on its 10th day, this is Ukraine's deepest incursion into Russia since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in 2022.

But Kyiv has said it is not interested in "taking over" Russian territory.

Instead, the incursion is an attempt to pressure Moscow into agreeing to "restore a just peace", Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Heorhiy Tykhy told reporters on Wednesday.

In light of the incursion, Russian officials have prepared plans for "additional measures" to safeguard the population and infrastructure in areas bordering Ukraine.

The measures involve improving the "management of troops" in the Belgorod region, which neighbours Kursk, according to a video published on the Russian defence ministry's Telegram



Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov chaired a meeting in Moscow to discuss security in regions bordering Ukraine.

channel.

Interfax news agency said the plan would also apply to Kursk and Bryansk regions. All three border Ukraine.

Russia has also declared a federal level emergency in the Belgorod region. On Monday, 11,000 people were evacuated from the Krasnaya Yaruga district in Belgorod, according to Russian state news agency Tass.

Despite this, Moscow also claims it has recaptured some lost territory. In a statement, the defence ministry said it had regained control of the Krupets settlement in the Kursk region.

The developments came as a UK source confirmed to the BBC that tanks donated by the UK had been used during Ukraine's Russian incursion.

The UK Ministry of Defence did not officially comment on which specific UK weapons have been used by Ukraine, but the department reiterated that Ukraine had a "clear right" to use UK-supplied weapons for "self-defence against Russia's illegal attacks".

The UK was one of the first countries to provide modern Western battle tanks to Ukraine, donating 14 Challenger 2 tanks in the past year. But that was for a Ukrainian offensive to recap-

ture its own territory.

The Ministry of Defence has insisted that there has been no change in policy.

Military equipment supplied by the United States and Germany is also being used for Ukraine's incursion.

None of those countries have raised objections about their equipment being used for the offensive. But given the secrecy surrounding the operation, few would have known Ukraine's intentions in advance.

There may still be concerns in the West about what happens next. Not just over whether Ukraine could suffer significant losses and come back asking for more. But more importantly, there will be some who may worry about how Russia responds.

The Kremlin has already accused the West of being behind the attack on its territory. The fact that Western weapons are involved could be seen as evidence for that charge.

Escalation is always a worry when it involves a nuclear armed state, and the Kremlin has not been afraid to occasionally rattle its nuclear sabre.

But it has also set down many red

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Millions more Colombians living in conflict zones - NGO

The number of Colombians living in areas in which armed groups operate has shot up by 70% over the past three years, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) warns.

The NGO says there are now almost 8.4 million civilians living in conflict zones in which armed groups use intimidation and violence to control their lives.

The head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Jan Egeland, told the BBC how rural communities in particular had come “under siege”.

Mr Egeland, who is on a visit to Colombia, said rampant violence was not just harming Colombians, but also refugees and migrants passing through these areas.

Eight years after the Colombian government signed a peace agreement with the country’s largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc), violence has reached “devastating” levels, according to the NRC.

While the demobilisation of the majority of the Farc rebels created a sense of hope in violence-wracked areas,



The indigenous communities have to get permission from armed groups to travel by river.

the vacuum left behind was quickly filled by other armed groups.

Mr Egeland said that the battle between rival groups for control of territory and drug routes meant that in many regions, the situation was now worse than in the immediate aftermath of the peace deal.

Entire families are affected by the violence.

One tactic used by the armed groups as a show of strength is to declare so-called “paros armados” (armed strikes), during which they order the civilian population to stay at home and refrain from going to work.

This does not just cause disruption to the community thus “shut down”, it also

deprives family breadwinners of their income and prevents children from going to school.

NRC figures suggest that since January 2022, nearly 30,000 pupils have been affected by armed violence, some of them forcibly recruited by the gangs, while others have seen their schools attacked or taken over by armed groups.

Indigenous and rural communities have been particularly hard hit by the expansion of the armed groups.

Mr Egeland described meeting members of the Eperara Siapidaria indigenous group in south-western Nariño province who told him of their fears for the survival of their culture amid

the threats and restrictions imposed by armed groups.

Already displaced by previous flare-ups of armed conflict, the group lives in a hard-to-reach jungle area north of the town of Tumaco.

Roadblocks and mines placed by warring groups fighting in the region means they cannot move freely and are unable to hunt.

The conflict in some parts of the country is so intense that communities are not just confined to their villages, but under virtual house arrest, Mr Egeland told the BBC.

He also stressed the effect that armed violence was having on those who have sought refuge in Colombia and the migrants who cross it on their way north to the United States.

“They’re beyond desperation,” he said, urging the international community to “stop talking about border security and focus about human security instead”.

cont’d from pg 16

lines that have already been crossed.

It warned the West not to supply Ukraine with tanks in the first place. That warning was eventually ignored.

There is, however, still one big restriction. No Western country has given Kyiv the green light to use their long-range mis-

siles to strike targets inside Russia.

Britain, France and the US have all provided some – but with the caveat they must be used inside Ukraine, which does include its southern Crimea peninsula that Russia illegally annexed in 2014.

President Zelensky has repeatedly pleaded for those caveats to be lifted.

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Teenage prodigy named in South Africa T20 squad for Windies series

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - Teenage fast bowler Kwena Maphaka and all-rounder Jason Smith have been called up to South Africa's Twenty20 squad for the first time for a three-match series in the West Indies, Cricket South Africa announced on Wednesday.

The 18-year-old Maphaka was named player of the tournament at this year's under-19 World Cup in South Africa and later landed a contract in the Indian Premier League, while hard-hitting middle-order batter Smith impressed with both his batting and bowling in domestic T20 competition.

The 15-man South African side returned to the Caribbean after finishing runners-up to India at the T20 World Cup in June but with a changed squad that is



South Africa's Teenage fast bowler Kwena Maphaka

without several key players.

"Several players were not considered for this series due to either injury, being in a conditioning block that is related to workload management, or their par-

ticipation in ongoing T20 leagues," said coach Rob Walter.

"This tour allows us to continue developing our player pool whilst maintaining the core of experi-

enced players. It will also expose our emerging talent to quality international opposition, similar to the last time we played against the West Indies in May.

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Bullets get first win in Parham Super League

Defending champions Pigotts Bullets recorded their first win in defense of their title in the second annual Parham Super League on Wednesday.

After securing a 1-1 draw with the Garden Stars in the opening match of the league last Saturday, the Bullets snatched a 1-0 victory against the Attacking Saints in the first match of a double at the Parham playing field on Wednesday night.

Striker Akeem Isaac scored the only goal and the match winner for the Pigotts Bullets.

Garden Stars also recorded their first win of the competition by grabbing a 4-2 victory against Parham in Wednesday's second encounter.

Wilden Cornwall Jr., Courtney Clarke, Karique Knight, and Sedique Adams each scored once for the Garden Stars. Denie Henry and Ramone Montana each converted once for Parham.

The Parham Super League will continue with another double header on Friday. The Greenbay Hoppers will tackle SAP FC at 6 pm, and All Saints United will take on John

Hughes at 7:30 pm.

In Saturday's triple header, the Attacking Saints and Willikies will clash at 5 pm; the Garden Stars will face Freeman's Village at 6:30 pm; and Parham FC will meet the Pigotts Bullets at 8 pm.

The second annual Parham Super League, which is organized by Eastboys Promotions, is featuring 12 teams this year.

The 12 teams, an increase of four teams, are competing in two zones, with the winner taking home a grand prize of EC\$5,000.



Players of the Cyclone International Domino Club of Antigua and Barbuda. (ABNDA)

Host Cyclone International leads triangular domino series

Host Cyclone International Domino Club of Antigua and Barbuda is holding a slender lead after three test matches in their annual triangular series with the visiting Barbados Union of Teachers (BUT) Travellers and the In-Time Domino Club of Guyana.

The Cyclones have re-

corded an overall total of 230 points to lead the series, with the BUT Travellers in second place with 224 points, two points more than the In-Time Domino Club, which have 222 points.

Cyclones won the opening test by scoring 87 points to prevail against BUT Travellers with 85 points

and In-Time Domino Club with 65 points.

Cyclones also took the second test with a score of 79 points, beating In-Time Domino Club with 73 points and the BUT Travellers with 66 points.

In-Time Domino Club rebounded to win the third test with a score of 84

points, beating the BUT Travellers with 73 points and the Cyclones International Domino Club with 64 points.

The teams took a break from the triangular series on Wednesday night, but the two visiting teams took the opportunity to play some matches against Antiguan clubs Double Six, Eagle Eyes, Willikies Super Stars, and Full Clip.

The triangular series was slated to resume on Thursday night and will conclude on Friday night.

The BUT Travellers hosted the triangular series in 2023, and In-Time will host the event in Guyana next year.

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“Kwena has been identified as a player with significant potential, and this tour presents a great opportunity to include him in the Proteas environment and gain valuable international experience,” he said in a statement.

There is a recall for Rassie van der Dussen, who was a surprise omission from the World Cup line-up.

The three matches will all be played

at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, on August 23, 25 and 27.

Full South Africa T20 Squad: Aiden Markram (captain), Ottneil Baartman, Nandre Burger, Donovan Ferreira, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Patrick Kruger, Kwena Maphaka, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Ryan Rickelton, Jason Smith, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen, and Lizaad Williams.



From left to right: CEO of the ICC Geoff Allardice, captain of India women's team Harmanpreet Kaur, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, captain of Bangladesh women's team Nigar Sultana, and President of the Bangladesh Cricket Board Nazmul Hassan attend the official 2024 ICC Women's T20 World Cup fixture launch in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on May 5, 2024. (ICC Media)

India says 'no' to hosting women's T20 Cricket World Cup in October

ISLAMABAD (AP) — India has turned down an offer from the International Cricket Council (ICC) to replace Bangladesh as host of the Twenty20 World Cup for women in October.

The ICC is contemplating a change of venue following political turmoil in Bangladesh.

More than 300 have been killed during unrest

that started in July, with protests against a quota system for government jobs that later morphed into a movement against what was considered Prime Minister Hasina Wajid's increasingly autocratic administration.

The uprising eventually forced Hasina to leave office and flee to India, ending her 15-year rule.

"They (ICC) have asked us if we would stage the World Cup. I have categorically said no," Jay Shah, secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India told the Times of India on Thursday.

"We would be in the monsoon season and on top of that we will host the Women's ODI World Cup next year. I don't want to

give any kind of signals that I want to hold consecutive World Cups."

The United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka are also being considered as possible hosts.

The ICC said earlier this week it is "closely monitoring developments" in Bangladesh along with the domestic cricket board, with the priority being the safety and well-being of the players.

Several countries, including England, India and Australia, have issued strong travel advisories since an interim government was installed in Bangladesh.

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Ellie Shaw and Jadon Wuilliez are fresh from representing Antigua and Barbuda at the recent Summer Olympic Games in Paris, France.

The meet in Puerto Rico will be a qualifying event for the 2025 World Aquatics Junior Swimming Championships in Singapore from July 11 to August 3, and

the 2025 Pan American Junior Games in Asuncion, Paraguay, from July 11-25.

The management team at the PanAm Aquatic Age Group Swimming Championship comprise of Coach Nelson Molina and team manager Daniela Casmiro, while Coach J'air Smith and team manager Ayedele Warner will lead the Goodwill Games team.

Antiguan swimmers off to meet in St. Lucia

Several swimmers will be representing Antigua and Barbuda at the Goodwill Games Swim Meet at the Rodney Heights Aquatic Center in Gros Islet, St. Lucia, this weekend.

According to a media release from the Antigua and Barbuda Swimming Federation (ABSF), a team of eight swimmers will be carrying Antigua and Barbuda's flag at the August 16-18 meet, which is geared for young, developing swimmers who missed qualifying for the CARIFTA Games in the Bahamas and CCCAN Games in Mexico earlier this year.

The Antiguan swimmers are Elianna Spencer, Kaylee Warner, Alysia Watkins, Isabel Nicholas, Tristan Nicholas, Christopher Walter, Zahid Derrick, and Jadon Green.

Ten (10) countries will be partic-



The national team to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the Goodwill Games Swim Meet at the Rodney Heights Aquatic Center in Gros Islet, St. Lucia, this weekend. (ABSF)

ipating at this weekend's meet in St. Lucia. They are Trinidad and Tobago,

Barbados, the Bahamas, Suriname, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Curacao, and Antigua and Barbuda.

A team of five swimmers will also be representing Antigua and Barbuda at the PanAm Aquatics Age Group Swimming Championships in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from August 22-25.

They are Alandra Dublin, Aunjelique Liddie, Ellie Shaw, Espirit Shaw, Tivon Benjamin, Naeem De Souza, Jai Sindhi, and Alex Bazzoni.

Two additional swimmers, endorsed by the ABSW, will also be attending the meet in Puerto Rico as representatives of the Vipers Swim Club of Antigua and Barbuda. They are Neil Noronha and Jamie Tranter.

cont'd on pg 21



The national team to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the PanAm Aquatics Age Group Swimming Championships in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from August 22-25.