



Staff of the Sanitation Service Authority were hard at work recently in Chapman Street in the City, removing bulky waste from that area and clearing debris from the side of the road.

# ‘RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT’

**THERE is a call for Barbadians to show greater respect for the environment and to dispose of their refuse, in particular bulky waste, in the correct way.**

It is coming from Carl Padmore, Public Relations Officer (PRO) at the Sanitation Service Authority (SSA).

Padmore made mention of this in an interview with *The Barbados Advocate*, as he spoke of the SSA's continuing efforts to get Barbadians to properly discard of such waste given the health hazards they can pose, as he reflected on the latest effort which included removal of such trash from Chapman Street in the City.

“The SSA from time to time has been conducting a number of bulky waste clean-up projects in

and around Bridgetown and what you would have witnessed would have been just the continuation. We are concerned that Barbadians are generating too much bulky waste, and bulky waste provides a haven for the rodents and wild animals, and therefore we encourage them to bring out their bulk waste on that particular day,” he said.

Padmore continued, “We do not ever encourage bulky waste to be commingled with the normal household waste, and so we don't like people to set down the bulky waste without notifying us.”

His comments came as he said that the SSA's bulky waste removal efforts are in keeping with their goal to help minimise the spread of dengue, while trying to keep Barbados beautiful. He

said this is work that they take very seriously and are committed to doing. Padmore made the point while noting that the SSA often works in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Environmental Health in this regard.

Asked if Barbadians are heeding the call to contact the SSA if they want bulky waste removed, Padmore said it is not as often as they would like.

“There are a lot of Barbadians who still are not showing any type of respect for the environment and it's concerning us a lot, because the truth is, we have to treat the environment like how, I can't even say how we treat our bodies, but we need to love our environment – that's the bottom line. We are not seeing the care and attention given to the envi-

ronment that should be given at all and we are very, very, very concerned about that,” he stated.

Padmore also lamented that too many people are disposing of their household waste with little regard for the environment.

“You see people sometimes even waiting until the garbage truck has passed and then within five minutes bringing out stuff. Why? We see that so often. You will see a community that has a skip, we would clear that skip today and you go back three hours later and a skip is full again. So where is that stuff coming from? So we are concerned about that type of behaviour and we are just really hoping that Barbadians would treat in a more respectful way to the environment,” he stated.

(JRT)

## Reverend: Don't be led astray

ONE religious leader believes that Christians can make the wrong decisions “in the name of Jesus”.

Reverend Davidson Bowen gave this message during a virtual service hosted by St. Christopher Anglican Church on the Second Sunday of Lent.

The theme of the sermon was “Get Behind Me Satan”, and the Reverend referred to Matthew 16 v 23, where Jesus told Peter the memorable quote.

In his sermon, Rev. Bowen noted that too often Christians imagine Satan as a black or red little guy, with a pointed tail and a pitchfork on their left shoulder, encouraging people to do the wrong things. However, he is of the belief that Satan creates certain thoughts but he is not of the imagination. He added that Satan usually appears by making subtle suggestions and providing opportunities.

Reverend Bowen said it is up to us to decide if we will let these thoughts into our minds. He reminded his virtual audience that anything that goes against God's will is sin, acknowledging that at times we are not sure which voice is speaking to us, but God knows His people.

“Jesus said He is the good shepherd and He knows His own and His own knows Him,” said Rev. Bowen.

The religious leader noted that many people come to church and perform the various rituals but do not have a relationship with God. He said Christians who possess the Holy Spirit must first submit their lives to God so that they can resist the temptation of Satan.

The reverend also warned that Satan offers secrets and monotony and not joy and guidance of God.

“We need to be mindful that our best interest is not at heart and no good can come from whatever the proposal is. [Satan's] job is to bring us in opposition with God's will and that leads to the death for us,” said Rev. Bowen.

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## PAHO to provide 100 800 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Barbados

ON Friday 26 February 2021, the COVAX Facility announced its final allocation of COVID-19 vaccines for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean countries, to receive a proportion of 16% to 20% of their population coverage.

The countries will receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine which recently was approved for Emergency Use List (EUL) by World Health Organisation. The countries were allocated the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine of 100,800 doses to Barbados; 74,400 doses to St. Lucia; 40,800 doses to Antigua and Barbuda; 21,600 doses to Saint Kitts and Nevis; 45,600 doses to

Grenada; 28,800 doses to Dominica; and 45,600 doses to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The PAHO Revolving Fund for Vaccines (RFV) will procure and deliver the COVAX vaccines to the countries in the Eastern Caribbean and Barbados. PAHO is working with its Member Countries to close the purchase orders and to expedite administrative, regulatory, and logistics procedures to scale up vaccinations in the region.

The countries will start receiving their first vaccines through COVAX in March if all the conditions are met. Countries received the letters from

COVAX informing about the volumes they will receive until May from the first producer that met the EUL authorisation from WHO and finalised the commercial agreement with COVAX.

The PAHO/WHO Representative for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean countries, Dr. Yitades Gebre, stated that, “the priority of the first phase of vaccination is to save lives. We will achieve this by vaccinating the most exposed groups – like the health professionals, and the most vulnerable groups to developing severe COVID-19 illness.”

COVAX is financially

supporting access to vaccines for the four Eastern Caribbean countries of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that probably would have to wait many months to get vaccines if the facility did not exist.

Dr. Gebre further stated that “the vaccines will not have an important impact on virus transmission itself in the next months. To achieve herd immunity, we will need to vaccinate at least 70% of the population.”

While we are vaccinating the most vulnerable and reducing the mortality, we need to keep all public health measures



**The PAHO/WHO Representative for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean countries, Dr. Yitades Gebre.**

that can reduce the transmission: the use of masks, physical distancing, avoiding closed and crowded spaces.

# Follow the rules!

**“YOU will get vaccinated. Please, just honour the appointment system so that targeted senior citizens, the most vulnerable and frontline workers who are serving us all, get theirs first.”**

This is the appeal being made to Barbadians by the Co-Coordinator of the National Vaccination Committee, Major David Clarke of the Barbados Defence Force.

The national vaccination effort and systems have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of Barbadians, many of whom without appointments or being on the urgent list, have created crowds and long lines at vaccination centres across the island. This is occurring even as officials have assured Barbadians that the country will receive a large shipment of vaccines within a few weeks and that every Barbadian who wishes to be vaccinated will receive one.

“The National Vaccination Unit once again apologises to Barbadians with an appointment who have presented at immunisation centres for vaccination, only to have been turned back,” said Major Clarke. He added, “This should not have occurred. We are currently prioritising frontline workers and select vulnerable groups, with NCDs and elderly persons. We ask that you please respect the direction given by officials and do not turn up at vaccination sites without an appointment. The numbers of people at vaccination centres, crowded together and not observing physical distancing rules, is itself a health risk and makes useless all systems that have been put in place for management and direction of the process.

“As you know, COVID loves crowds. We urge members of the public to cooperate with us and we thank you for your patience.”

## More needs to be done to improve road safety

WITH the United Nations declaring 2021-2030 the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety, a local road safety advocate is calling on the relevant authorities to play their part in ensuring that significantly more progress can be made during the coming ten years, than were achieved in the last decade.

President of the Barbados Road Safety Association (BRSA), Sharmane Roland-Bowen, indicated that while some legislative changes have been made in respect of road safety in this country, the authorities must ensure those laws are enforced, and where legislation still needs to be shored up, she is urging Government to make those changes sooner rather than later.

Roland-Bowen told *The Barbados Advocate* that the amendments to the Road Safety Act, which dealt the ban on the use of handheld cellphones while driving, the directive that persons riding bicycles and motorcycles must wear helmets, and breathalyser testing, was a step in the right direction, but she is concerned that persons are becoming complacent as enforcement seems low.

“If you’re not constantly vigilant, they’re going to become complacent and they’re going to go back into their bad habits. The possibility of you being caught using our cellphones and driving distracted seems low and so people take the risk and do it, putting themselves and others at risk,” she lamented.

She continued, “In the previous Decade of Action the focus was on having safer roads, safer vehicles, safer road users, as well as road safety management. Lighting on many of our roads has improved and we have seen new traffic lights and roundabouts put in place to improve traffic flow, but the Association is still concerned about the state of some of our roads and the number of potholes we are seeing continue to be a concern.”

Noting that there are other areas where Barbados has dropped the ball, she strongly believes that with commitment, dedication and resources, steps can be taken to ensure that the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety would be more successful.

“Barbados would have been one of the countries that signed onto the Decade, and even though we have the drink drive law that would have been

put in place, it does not seem that it has really gotten off the ground. We are not the only ones facing such challenges – some other countries have similar situations where they have not really lived up to what they had promised to do,” she stated.

### Education key

Roland-Bowen is hoping that in this coming decade greater attention will be paid to improving driver education, noting that education is a key component of road safety.

“You need to know the harm that a distracted driver can cause even as if it is you and how you can allow yourself to be a victim by driving distracted. Drivers need to be alert at all times, think ahead, plan ahead and that needs to be part of driving education if we want to produce safer drivers,” she maintained.

The BRSA president is also calling for an upgrade to the licensing system in this country, to make it more difficult for persons to get their licences. In that vein, she reiterated her call for a graduated licence programme to be introduced for new drivers, contending that restrictions should be placed on all newly licensed drivers, particularly those who



**President of the Barbados Road Safety Association (BRSA), Sharmane Roland-Bowen.**

are 16 years old, to help them develop good driving habits and better learn to operate the vehicles. Moreover, she is also advocating for the completion of a driver education course, of which defensive driving would be a part, to be a requirement to obtain a driver’s licence in this country.

“A licence is a privilege and not a right. People

act as if it is a right, and then they go and get the licence and abuse it. We need to be more proactive than reactive, and so it is imperative that persons understand about safe road use. When drivers have a solid foundation they learn how to prevent accidents and to look out for themselves and others on the roads,” she added. *(JRT)*

**St Lawrence Gap, usually a hive of activity and buzzing with people, is empty.**

**BELOW: Bars are set to remain closed in St Lawrence Gap, with only curbside pickup available now for the restaurants.**



## Quiet month for popular street

### ST. LAWRENCE GAP from Back Page

to reopen for curbside pickups and orders, so that is a positive. Hotels have remained open but with less and less visitors arriving, due to lockdowns in major source markets, the battle is uphill, especially after a harsh 2020 for owners and employees alike.

Unfortunately, bars will

remain closed and with only curbside pickup on the cards for the restaurants, it will be possibly another quiet month for the once immensely popular street. Government has declared that it will help small businesses with financial support during the down time, but realistically, despite the genuine gesture, it may not be enough to prop up or save all of them.

So the important but sombre question is, who will survive the hardship caused by COVID-19, amplified by the necessary National Pause? Who will be around when patrons are finally back on the streets to socialise from a distance? Will the favourite hotels, restaurants, bars, clubs, vendors be open, or just a distant memory when the dust settles? (AS)



It is a quiet hotel scene in The Gap

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# Markets reopening – but not all operations

**THE Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has advised that all markets across the island which sell**

**food, meat, dry goods, vegetables, and fruit will reopen from today, March 1. The opening hours will be from 8**

**a.m. to 4 p.m.** Manager of Markets, Sherlock King, said: “Even though the markets will be open, there will be no sale

of clothing, shoe repairs, hairdressing, or barbering. These operations, which are to be found at some markets, have not been al-

lowed under Directive No. 5.” He said, however, that food canteens would be allowed to operate, but with

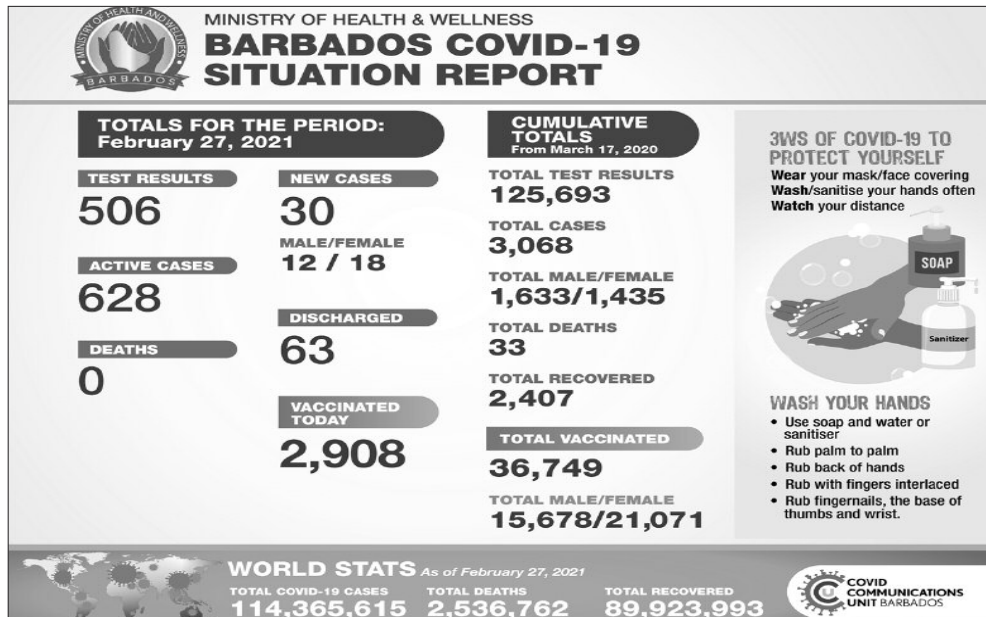
only a take-a-way service. Patrons are reminded that all health protocols must be adhered to at the markets.

## COVID-19 update: 30 new cases, 63 recoveries

BARBADOS recorded 30 positive COVID-19 cases on Saturday, February 27, from the 506 tests conducted by the Best-dos Santos Public Health Laboratory.

Sixty-three people recovered and were discharged from isolation. The number of active cases now stand at 628.

The 30 new cases comprised 12 men and 18 women. Three of them had been sent to the Harrison Point Isolation Facility for assessment to determine whether they were in fact newly positive, or had the virus in the past and were no



Barbados COVID-19 Situation Report for Saturday February 27, 2021.

longer infectious. Twenty-seven of them are Barbadians.

This island has recorded 3,068 confirmed cases – 1,435 females and 1,633 males – and 2,407 persons have recovered.

Thirty-three persons have succumbed to the viral illness. Since February 2020, the public health laboratory has completed 125,693 tests.

On Saturday, 2,908 persons were vaccinated as

part of the National Vaccination Programme for COVID-19. To date, a total of 36,749 vaccinations have been administered – 15,678 men and 21,071 women.

(BGIS)

## Cotton harvesting restarts today

BARBADIANS and others who had earlier applied to pick cotton at Searles Farm, Newton, Christ Church; Redland Farm, Wakefield, St. John, and Mt. Pleasant Farm, Parish Land, St. Philip are advised that harvesting will start today, March 1.

The fields will open from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m., with all COVID-19 protocols in full effect on site, and at all collection points.

Workers may also pick and store at their own convenience.

Cotton pickers are advised that harvesting attire must comprise the following: long sleeve

shirts, long pants, headgear (hat, scarf or head tie), and fully enclosed shoes. They should also have an umbrella and water.

Personnel from the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BAMC) will collect and weigh cotton at prescribed times during the day.

The opportunity to harvest cotton is being provided by the BAMC to give persons a chance to earn cash and contribute to the economy.

For further information on the cotton harvesting season, persons may call BAMC’s Area Office at 437-5465 or 422-2809.



### U.W.I. (CAVE HILL) CO-OPERATIVE CREDIT UNION LIMITED

The Nominations and Credentials Committee of The U.W.I. (Cave Hill) Co-operative Credit Union Limited is currently receiving nominations for members to serve on the following Committees:

- Board of Directors
- Supervisory Committee
- Credit Committee

Nomination and Consent to serve as an Officer forms are currently available from the Credit Union’s Office at the UWI, Caricom Research Building, Cave Hill, St. Michael, Barbados.

Completed forms along with the FSC Fit and Proper Questionnaire and Police Certificate of Character should reach the Credit Union’s office no later than 4.30 p.m. on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2021.

In accordance with By-Law 45, nominations will not be accepted from the floor.

Kindly contact us at:

Telephone (246) 417-4716 / 7550 FAX: (246) 424-0662  
Email: [creditunion@cavehill.uwi.edu](mailto:creditunion@cavehill.uwi.edu)

Or visit: <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/creditunion> for additional information.

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# Mother tells of disturbing encounter at clinic

**WITH the current setup for the national rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine already coming under heavy fire for needing to be more streamlined, some staff involved in supporting the health**

**care system continue to leave a sour taste in the mouths of patrons.**

One mother who took her 12-year-old son to the Randal Phillips Polyclinic recently is calling on government to have the requisite training in place

for their staff.

Issued with an appointment for February 11, the mother said that she called beforehand to ensure that she should still go. Upon being informed that she should, and being assured that there weren't many people there, she arrived at 12:45 p.m. but was met with an unsavoury experience.

"When we got there, I approached the door and told the female Ministry of Health security guard why we were there. While we waited on the outside, she checked inside and came back and told us that the one and only nurse who was administering the vaccine was at lunch. She then advised that we had to continue to wait outside until the nurse came back from lunch and was ready for us. I asked her if she knew how long the wait would be and she indicated that she did not. I said okay," she told *The Barbados Advocate*.

Going on to reveal that her son is disabled, she noted that things went south when she asked about seating arrangements.

"Upon noticing that there was no appropriate place for him to sit while we waited, I asked this same guard if I could get a chair for my son. The only other chair outside was occupied by a lady with a baby. She said no. I tried to explain to her that he has a disability (Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy) and would be unable to climb the embankment without me lift-



**These empty chairs could be seen from the outside.**



**The lone bench on the embankment where the mother would have had to lift her son.**

ing him up to reach the bench where I was directed to take him. This guard callously replied that she did not want to hear what I was saying, and reiterated that not only was she NOT going to provide me with a chair, but demanded that we move from in front of her so she could deal with the person behind me. Meanwhile, there were dozens of chairs stacked up right next to her."

Calling out the actions of the security guard as inhumane, insensitive and discriminatory, the mother said that no one should have to undergo that sort of treatment, and noted that persons whose jobs require that they interact with the infirmed, sick, disabled or elderly should possess some manner of empathy and basic idea of how to deal with these members of the population.

Council for the Disabled and its aim is to sensitise service providers to the needs of persons with disabilities.

"She also needs to be made aware from her employers that such disrespect and ill-treatment of the disabled has no place in this country's health care system and is inexcusable. Not to do so would condone such behaviour, and send the very unfortunate message that discrimination is acceptable. It is not and never will be," she said.

After this upsetting ordeal, this mom told *The Barbados Advocate* that she reached out to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr Kenneth George, her parliamentary representative, Ryan Straughn, among others, as she sought to highlight her experience at the Government-run facility. She revealed that both officials offered apologies, with the CMO promising to investigate further as he called such behaviour unacceptable.



**SUPREME COURT OF BARBADOS  
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**

**CLAIM NO. LTP 3 of 2021**

**IN THE MATTER OF:** *The Land (Title Proceedings) Act, 2011, section 3*

**AND IN THE MATTER OF:** ALL THAT the Parcel of Land situate at Baycroft New Road in the parish of Saint Michael in this island and being the lot numbered 14 and containing by admeasurement 260.1 square metres or thereabouts (which represents 237.6 square metres in land and 22.5 square metres in road) as shown on a Plan thereof made and certified on the 06th day of June 2020 by Andre P. G. Clarke, Land Surveyor and recorded in The Lands & Surveys Department on the 09th day of June 2020 as Plan No. 567 of 2020 **ABUTTING AND BOUNDING** to the North on the lot numbered 13 being lands of Nathaniel Collymore to the East on the lot numbered 28 being lands now or formerly of Christopher Waithe to the South on the lot numbered 15 being lands of Adriana Hunte and to West on a public road called Baycroft New Road or however else the same may abut and abound

## **NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR DECLARATION OF OWNERSHIP & CERTIFICATE OF TITLE**

**TAKE NOTICE** that Ewart DeCoursey Murrell, Retiree, of 5316 Trans Island, Montreal, Québec H3W 3A2, Canada, Retiree, has applied to the High Court of Justice for an order that he is the owner of the legal estate/a legal interest in respect of the Parcel of Land described in the heading of this Application and for a Certificate of Title in respect of the same.

Any person having any adverse claims, liens or charges or rights or interests against the said Parcel of Land should submit the claim duly authenticated on oath to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Bridgetown, on or before the 19th day of April 2021.

Any other person who has any information relating to the ownership of the said Parcel of Land is invited to give such information in writing to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Bridgetown, on or before the 19th day of April 2021.

Dated the 01st day of March 2021

K. S. MARSHALL, Attorney-at-law for the Claimant,  
whose place of business and address for service is  
1st Floor, "One Welches," Welches,  
St. Thomas, Barbados, W.I.

## **NOTICE**

### **Application for Work Permit**

Having received no suitable applications to our advertisement for the position of Director for our Advisory Services department, it is our intention to submit an application for a non-national to fill this position. Any person wishing to object to this application should do so in writing to the Chief Immigration Officer within 14 days of the first appearance of this notice, being **Monday 22 February, 2021.**

### **PricewaterhouseCoopers SRL**

The Financial Services Centre, Bishop's Court Hill,  
P.O. Box 111, St. Michael, Barbados.

### **Need for training**

"The fact that she was dismissive of his plight and refused to make any attempt to accommodate a reasonable request for assistance is ableist and falls into the category of disability discrimination. It is my hope that some sensitivity training be provided to this guard, in particular, but also to all those government employees who might have to interact with persons with disabilities.

"This Disability Sensitivity Training is offered by the Barbados

# China unveils the selected top 10 scientific advances of 2020

BEIJING – China's Ministry of Science and Technology unveiled the selected top 10 domestic scientific advances of 2020 Saturday.

Chinese scientists' remarkable progress in

tackling COVID-19, the Chang'e-5 probe's retrieval of lunar samples, and the deep-sea manned submersible Fendouzhe's diving record topped the list.

Other advances include

research on the transmission of human genetic materials, transparent ferroelectric single crystals with ultrahigh piezoelectricity, quantum interference in chemical reactions, as well as

biomarkers and potential intervention targets for organ aging in mammals.

Chinese scientists' efforts in measuring the new height of Mount Qomolangma, revealing

the evolution and migration history of Chinese populations with ancient DNA, and recreating the history of over 300 million years of biodiversity changes on Earth, are also listed.

## European countries turning to East for vaccines amid supply shortage

**BRUSSELS – As a looming third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the vaccine supply shortfalls in Europe, Hungary joined Serbia to launch mass inoculation with China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine earlier this week.**

To ease both citizens' impatience with the slow rollout of vaccinations and the world's urgent need of a global response to the pandemic, some European countries are turning to the East while the European Union (EU) strives to scale up production and reaffirms solidarity with third-party countries.

### Chinese vaccine

"Today is an important day because (on) this day we are starting to vaccinate with Chinese vaccines," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Wednesday in a video message on his Facebook page.

Hungary currently has stocks of COVID-19 vaccines from five producers. Two weeks after the country announced that it had reached a deal with China's Sinopharm, the first batch of Sinopharm vaccine arrived in Budapest on Feb. 16, which will enable a mass immunization of 2.5 million people.

"We are the first country in the European Union that uses Sinopharm vaccine. We try to save lives and preserve the economy, and we are fighting together with our Chinese friends against COVID-19," Tamas Menczer, state secretary from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, told Xinhua when receiving the shipment.

In Serbia, where a second shipment of Chinese vaccine arrived on Feb. 10, the Sinopharm vaccine is welcomed with full trust, and the early inoculation is seen as an opportunity, according to Ivona Ladjevac, head of the center for the Belt and Road Initiative at the Institute of International Politics and Economics in Serbia.

"We should use this opportunity," said Ladjevac.

"Serbia can do something like Israel, the first country that will finish this mass vaccination... We can achieve something like that too."

Under the state's mass inoculation drive, Serbian authorities have approved four vaccines, respectively developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, China's Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic told Xinhua that most people in his country are vaccinated with the Sinopharm vaccine.

"People here are very satisfied and we are very proud that we succeeded in delivering such good things for the better health of our people and for the future of this country," he said.

A shipment of Sinopharm vaccines will arrive in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) soon too, as ordered on Feb. 8 by Republika Srpska (RS), one of BiH's two entities, Minister of Health and Social Welfare of RS Alen Seranic told Xinhua.

"Based on other countries' experiences, where Chinese vaccines have already been approved, we decided that we also need to acquire a certain number of vaccines from China," Seranic said. "We already ordered vaccines for 20 percent of our population."

### Supply shortage

BiH has acquired vaccines through the COVAX mechanism, the World Health Organization (WHO)-led global initiative aimed at ensuring rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, and from the EU.

It is now urging all relevant international institutions to start vaccine delivery instead of prolonging it with new requirements, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH said on Wednesday.

Delivery of vaccines to BiH through the COVAX Facility was initially due to start by the end of January and later prolonged to mid-February. And the ministry said in a statement that BiH has provided refrigerators to receive,



**A family doctor shows a box of China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine in Varoslod, Hungary on Feb 24, 2021.**

transport, and distribute more than 1.2 million doses of Pfizer vaccines, in line with the ultra-cold chain procedure.

Meanwhile in Bulgaria, the NOVA television reported on Wednesday evening that the health ministry has accused AstraZeneca of delaying vaccine supplies, which was later confirmed on Thursday by Health Minister Kostadin Angelov at his regular weekly press conference.

Amid the "race against the virus, we were extremely unpleasantly surprised by another non-compliance with the agreement by the company," Angelov said.

By the end of August, Bulgaria booked 4,518,323 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. The country has received 117,600 doses by Feb. 26. "The quantity was reduced to 40 percent of those expected," Angelov said.

"Within three days we have had serious talks with the supplier company at various levels," he said. "We received only one letter stating that 'the production of vaccines is a process of a high degree of technical complexity' and 'we expect to be able to deliver vaccines to Bulgaria.'"

"We do not need your courtesy. We need vaccines," Angelov added.

### Faster pace

An EU summit on Thursday stressed the need to urgently

accelerate the authorization, production and distribution of vaccines, as well as inoculation.

To date, 51.5 million doses have so far been delivered across the EU and 29.17 million administered, with about 5 percent of citizens having had their first dose, according to data released by the EU.

With speeding up the production and delivery of vaccines being the top priority, the EU chief encouraged the executive to work with medical industries to identify bottlenecks, guarantee supply chains and scale up production, and urged pharmaceutical giants to honor their commitment.

Besides a long wait for increased production to curb supply fluctuations, the world also faces a "catastrophic moral failure" because of unequal COVID-19 vaccine policies, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned, adding it is not fair for "younger, healthy people in richer countries to get injections before vulnerable people in poorer ones."

European Commission President Von der Leyen admitted on Thursday that, though the EU has announced a doubling of its support to COVAX to 1 billion euros, "vaccine in kind is desperately needed" and EU member states are encouraged to organize donations of vaccines to third-party countries.

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron made similar comments when he proposed that Western countries transfer 3 to 5 percent of their stock of COVID-19 vaccines to Africa – a proposal firmly rejected by Washington which said, "the U.S. will not donate any coronavirus vaccine doses to developing countries until there is a plentiful supply of jobs in the U.S.," the Financial Times reported.

The French president called for international efforts to ensure equal access to vaccines against COVID-19, especially in Africa. For him, Chinese and Russian vaccines are necessary for the world to win the "war" against this pandemic.

In a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping on Thursday, Macron said France appreciates China's positive contribution to international cooperation against the pandemic, especially in helping other countries obtain vaccines at a faster pace, adding that he hopes to strengthen cooperation with China in this regard.

According to media reports, so far, China has provided vaccine assistance to 53 developing countries in need, and exported vaccines to 22 countries. It has also decided to provide 10 million vaccine doses to multilateral vaccine alliance COVAX to meet the urgent needs of developing countries, many of which are in Africa.

*'For the cause that lacks assistance, 'Gainst the wrongs that need resistance, For the future in the distance, And the good that I can do'*

## Editorial

# Pace of regional integration

ANOTHER meeting of Caribbean Heads of Government concluded last week and going forward we wonder whether this age old process is making a great leap forward or continues to be stagnant. Last week leaders held their Intersessional meeting as another in a series of deliberations aimed at driving regional integration forward.

One may be tempted to conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major negative impact on our region and it was not anticipated that regional matters could have taken precedent over national ones. However, the Communique issued following the meeting, showed that several of the themes from previous years are still harming integration and with the leaders calling for action to deal with them.

It was agreed among them that the CSME remains critical in the region's strategy for economic growth, create prosperity for Caribbean people, allow inhabitants of this region to share in the resources, and to build the capacity to withstand external and internal shocks.

However, leaders were still talking about the removal of barriers to trade, an issue that somehow remained on the agendas of these meetings and even the Heads of Governments ones.

The Communique also refers to commitments to improve intra-regional transportation, the transportation of agricultural produce, giving more attention to the development of a regional food plan, and repositioning economies.

Heads of Government mandated the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAR) to meet urgently, no later than the end of this month, to resolve the outstanding issue and reach agreement with respect to the CARICOM Financial Services Agreement, the Regional Securities Markets, the Community Investment Policy and Credit Reporting.

That leaders recognised that these are outstanding issues, signifies the point that these subjects were around for a long time while no resolution was brought to them.

The CSME region has somehow come to be recognised as a place with an implementation deficit, where decisions have been taken at the highest level but where implementing them takes years to happen.

This could very well be the case where implementing the CSME is for the long haul and nothing immediate although the rest of the world which Caribbean states want to interface in the fast pace environment is surging ahead.

Former Prime Minister of Barbados, the late Owen Arthur was reported as saying that while the decision was in 1989 to transform Caribbean economies into a single market and economy, it was a transformation that was never going to be easily achieved.

Arthur concluded therefore that the transformation was going to be more taxing if not attended by clarity of purpose, and the determination to hold to a steady course come what may.

Even as the Caribbean looks ahead, the way forward remains challenging. Our economies remain in crisis, we have not taken advantage of trade and investment opportunities offered under the CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, and we are still uncertain about what the region's post Brexit relationship with the British is going to look like.

There is a new administration in the United States and a presenter at a recent discussion on Caribbean-US relations urged us to become more active in setting an agenda with the USA. There is no time to waste on the path forward and regional meetings must set the pace.

# Hong Kong detains 47 activists on subversion charges

HONG KONG – Hong Kong police yesterday detained 47 pro-democracy activists on charges of conspiracy to commit subversion under the city's national security law, in the largest mass charge against the semi-autonomous Chinese territory's opposition camp since the law came into effect last June.

The former lawmakers and democracy advocates had been previously arrested in a sweeping police operation in January but were released. They have been detained again and will appear in court on Monday, police said in a statement.

They allegedly violated the national security law that was imposed by Beijing for participating in unofficial election primaries for Hong Kong's legislature last year.

The defendants include 39 men and eight women

aged between 23 and 64, police said.

The move is part of a continuing crackdown on the city's democracy movement, with a string of arrests and prosecutions of Hong Kong's democracy proponents — including outspoken activists Joshua Wong and Jimmy Lai — following months of anti-government protests in 2019.

The pro-democracy camp had held the primaries to determine the best candidates to field to win a majority in the legislature and had plans to vote down major bills that would eventually force Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign.

In January, 55 activists and former lawmakers were arrested for their roles in the primaries.

Authorities said that the activists' participation was part of a plan to paralyze the city's legislature and

subvert state power.

The legislative election that would have followed the unofficial primaries was postponed by a year by Lam, who cited public health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. Mass resignations and disqualifications of pro-democracy lawmakers have left the legislature largely a pro-Beijing body.

Among those arrested on Sunday was former lawmaker Eddie Chu. A post on his official Twitter account confirmed that he was being charged for conspiracy to commit subversion and that he was denied bail.

"Thank you to the people of Hong Kong for giving me the opportunity to contribute to society in the past 15 years," Chu said in a post on his Facebook page.

Another candidate in the primaries, Winnie Yu, was also charged and will

appear in court on Monday, according to a post on her official Facebook page.

American lawyer John Clancey, a member of the now-defunct political rights group "Power for Democracy" who was arrested in January for his involvement in the primary, was not among those detained on Sunday.

"I will give full support to those who have been charged and will be facing trial, because from my perspective, they have done nothing wrong," Clancey told reporters.

The security law criminalizes acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign powers to intervene in Hong Kong's affairs. Serious offenders could face a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. Nearly 100 people have been arrested since the law was implemented.

# US calls on African Union to exert pressure over worsening crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday called on the African Union and other international partners to help address a deepening crisis in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region as he condemned alleged atrocities in fighting there.

Blinken's statement suggested growing frustration with the response so far from Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea to what America's top diplomat described as a "worsening humanitarian crisis."

His remarks came a day after Amnesty International released a report accusing Eritrean forces of killing hundreds of civilians in Tigray in a 24-hour period last year, an incident it described as a potential crime against humanity.

Eritrea rejected the accusations.

"The United States is gravely concerned by reported atrocities and the

overall deteriorating situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia," Blinken said.

"We ask international partners, especially the African Union and regional partners, to work with us to address the crisis in Tigray, including through action at the U.N. and other relevant bodies."

On Sunday, Ethiopia's foreign ministry said in a statement that pronouncements by the United States on Ethiopia's internal affairs were "regrettable".

"It should be clear that such matters are the sole responsibility of the Ethiopian government, which as a sovereign nation, is responsible to deploy the necessary security structures and means available in ensuring the rule of law within all corners of its borders," the ministry said in a statement posted on Facebook.

Ethiopian Prime

Minister Abiy Ahmed's federal army ousted the former local ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), from the regional capital Mekelle in November, but low-level fighting has continued.

Thousands of people have died, hundreds of thousands have been forced from homes and there are shortages of food, water and medicine around the region of more than 5 million people.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have denied that Eritrean troops participated in the conflict, though dozens of witnesses, diplomats and an Ethiopian general have reported their presence.

Still, the state-run Ethiopian Human Rights Commission released a statement on Friday timed to coincide with the Amnesty report, saying preliminary investigations indicated that Eritrean soldiers had killed an unknown number of

civilians in Axum, an ancient city in northern Ethiopia. It said the killings were in retaliation for an earlier attack by TPLF soldiers.

Amnesty said Eritrean soldiers executed men and boys in the streets and engaged in extensive looting.

Blinken noted Ethiopian commitments to full accountability, including international support for investigations into human rights abuses and to allowing unhindered humanitarian access.

"The immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces and Amhara regional forces from Tigray are essential first steps," Blinken said.

"They should be accompanied by unilateral declarations of cessation of hostilities by all parties to the conflict and a commitment to permit unhindered delivery of assistance to those in Tigray."



PAHO's assistant director, Dr Jarbas Barbosa

# Work advancing on COVID-19 vaccine in Cuba

**THE Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) says work is advanced on the development of a COVID-19 vaccine in Cuba.**

Speaking during PAHO's COVID-19 digital briefing last Wednesday, PAHO's assistant director, Dr Jarbas Barbosa, said information received indicates that the vaccine's development will shortly enter the third and final stage of clinical trials.

He cautioned, however, that no time line could be determined for the completion of the process, "as the [third] phase takes the longest."

The Cuban vaccine producer joins several others, whose candidates are at various stages of development and analysis.

Among them are: the Moderna vaccine, which

Barbosa indicated is in the final stages of analysis; the Sinopharm vaccine, for which the producer has requested evaluation; and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine which, he pointed out, is "also being assessed."

Johnson & Johnson, yesterday, received clearance by the US Food and Drug Administration.

The Pfizer vaccine and both AstraZeneca vaccines, which are produced in India and South Korea, are the candidates already approved by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr Barbosa said it is imperative for PAHO member countries to be involved in the development and production of vaccines, medicines and other inputs that can potentially

control the pandemic across the region, and beyond.

"It is very important to have many producers so that they can provide the vaccines that the countries need. We believe that the more vaccines [that] can be developed, the better it will be to achieve this and for them to participate in the COVAX Facility," the Assistant Director further argued.

The WHO COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility is designed to accelerate equitable access by countries globally to appropriate, safe and efficacious vaccines.

Dr Barbosa said that while all vaccine producers are welcome to join the facility, "they all need to comply with the certification criteria as well as safety and efficacy [protocols]."

# IDB announces US\$3.5-billion initiative to advance technology and resilience in the Caribbean

THE Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) recently announced its new Build Forward initiative, a US\$3.5-billion multi-year programme to help Caribbean countries sustainably recover while making technological leaps that will facilitate a transformational future.

Build Forward includes a multi-donor facility to provide targeted grant and concessional financing for smart and resilient projects. The facility is expected to mobilise US\$1.5 billion in resources for a series of activities that include advisory services, project preparation and catalysing private capital for investments in resilient infrastructure, nature and disaster-risk based solutions.

The initiative was backed by IDB's six Caribbean member countries; Jamaica, The Bahamas, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname at the IDB annual meeting of Caribbean Governors

held virtually.

IDB management briefed the governors about Build Forward ahead of the annual meeting of IDB Group, which will take place March 17-21 in Barranquilla, Colombia, in a virtual format.

"Many Caribbean economies have been devastated by a tourism collapse caused by COVID-19, as well as a series of natural disasters. A key part of helping countries grow in ways that benefit all citizens is overcoming large infrastructure investment deficits, estimated at five per cent of [gross domestic product] for Latin America and the Caribbean. The multi-donor facility and other financing mechanisms will help governments finance key resilient investments at a time of limited fiscal space," the bank said.

According to the ODB, Build Forward will provide advanced digital-based solutions in areas such as schools and hospitals, grid systems, highways and more,

foster partnerships that will link private sector investors to smart resilient investments that will yield returns and solve a development challenge, as well as leverage partnerships with organisations such as the Caribbean Climate Smart Accelerator (CCSA) which is already supporting initiatives to build resilience in the region.

"We are thrilled to have donors join our Build Forward initiative, which will prepare the people and places of the Caribbean for the future we create together," said Therese Turner-Jones, the IDB general manager of the Department of the Caribbean region.

"Build Forward is focused on giving citizens of the Caribbean the opportunity to thrive in the more digital future. It will provide better infrastructure services for all citizens, creating jobs, reducing poverty, and bringing much-needed advanced technology into the region."



Therese Turner-Jones, the IDB general manager of the Department of the Caribbean

## Today's Weather

**FORECAST** **Mostly sunny with a few brief isolated light showers.**

**Yesterday's Temperatures**  
Max: 28.3 °C  
Min: 23.5 °C

**International Temperature**

- London 05 Fair
- Boston 03 Fair
- Montreal 04 Fair
- Toronto 04 Overcast
- New York 05 Overcast/Light Rain
- Miami 27 Cloudy

**Tides**

High Tide (First)	05:22
High tide (Second)	17:36
Low Tide (First)	11:12
Low tide (Second)	23:39

**Rainfall**

Yesterday: 1.5 mm  
For the month: 47.8 mm  
Fr the year: 175.1 mm

**SUNRISE - 6:14 am**

**SUNSET - 6:07 pm**

# Trinidad PM wants US to lift sanctions against Venezuela

**PRIME MINISTER Dr Keith Rowley is calling on the new United States government to begin dialogue aimed at removing sanctions against Venezuela.**

These sanctions, Dr Rowley says, are contributing to a widespread humanitarian crisis in the Caribbean.

Speaking virtually as chairman of Caricom during a Question and Answer segment hosted by the non-partisan organisation The Atlantic Council on Thursday, Dr Rowley said the entire Caribbean would benefit from a significant thawing of the relationship between Cuba and the US.

"Cuba is the Caribbean. Venezuela is the Caribbean. We know the nature of the issues and the history of the challenges in both areas however we were very disappointed when the US recently reversed the very welcome, halting steps towards normalisation of the relationship; and most recently the announcement of the unconvincing designation of Cuba as a terrorist-sponsoring state," Dr Rowley said.

He added, "As for the Venezuelan relationship we would like to see a dispassionate early review

of the US "scorched earth policy" here since, as the United Nations's assessment confirms what we always knew, and that is, that the ineffective harsh policies of unilateral sanctions are contributing immensely to widespread additional indiscriminate human suffering in this Caribbean Nation which needs help, a compassionate ingredient which is not beyond US leadership."

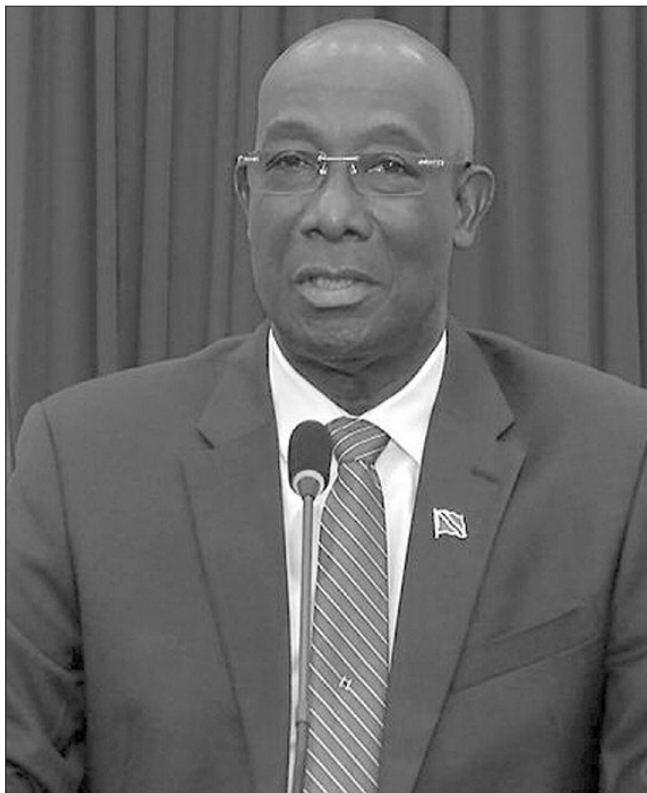
Saying Caribbean governments "anxiously look forward to the United States playing that leadership role with CARICOM and the nations of Mexico and Norway to assist Venezuelans in solving their seemingly intractable political problems," Dr Rowley said the way forward was through continued collaboration.

He revealed that early in his tenure his government succeeded in convincing Venezuela to export its natural gas.

However, he said, everything fell through because of US sanctions.

"All we ask of the new administration is to reset and give the dialogue a chance.

"Norway has encouraged that, so did Mexico," Dr Rowley said, noting that the



**Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley**

United States could bring all Venezuelan parties to a table with the support of Caricom and other nations, "read the Riot Act and agree that Venezuela must solve Venezuela's problems in the interest of Venezuela and all of us who are co-dependents."

He added, "I will ask the administrator to not be overly influenced by the dogma of the recent past and hawks of the recent flyings but to look at it with a clean tabletop."

"We are convinced that it is possible and some solutions can be had so sanctions can be removed and the hardships that are increasing the hardships and creating humanitarian crisis as identified by the United Nations independent assessment and that the United States be influenced by that."

He also appealed to the banking community to desist from blacklisting and de-risking activities

resulting in the withdrawal of correspondent banking services from the CARICOM Member States.

"Severing of these services, without acknowledging ongoing actions to comply with international standards, is to cut off our proverbial oxygen supply," he said.

On behalf of the region, Dr Rowley also called for the refinancing of COVID-related debt and the postponement of debt servicing payments; comprehensive debt relief; and appropriately priced funding to build economic and climate resilience.

He noted that concessional lending will also allow for expenditure on public infrastructure and training to support CARICOM's digital transformation. This, he said will allow Caribbean governments to pursue investments critical for nutrition and food security, and energy security.

# Schools in Guyana to remain closed in March

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – Guyana Education Minister Priya Manickchand says schools across the country will remain closed for face-to-face interaction during March, for every grade except Grades 10, 11 and 12.

During an update on the Ministry's social media page on Sunday, Manickchand said the Education Ministry continues to be advised by the Ministry of Health on safely reopening schools.

"For now, we remain closed to face-to-face learning for the month of March 2021 to all grades except grades 10, 11 and 12. We encourage teachers to continue to engage students online, through the internet and by the various means including WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook and Messenger and whatever else that you have been using."

Manickchand said the Government has been listening to international studies about the long-term impact of the closure of schools and is concerned about the impact it will have on the nation's children. As such, she expressed hope that with the Ministry of Health's comprehensive rollout of the COVID-19

Vaccine during March, there is a possibility of schools being reopened schools after the Easter holidays in April.

"Once that goes smoothly and as planned, we anticipate that we are going to be able to reopen schools sometime after the Easter holidays... Please remember I am saying that while that is an intention and it would be our desire, that would depend on further advice from the Ministry of Health," she said.

Since assuming office last August, several measures were taken to ensure students remain engaged. In addition to virtual engagements, these included restructuring the Guyana Learning Channel to deliver educational content in a scheduled manner and printing worksheets for every Grade. The Education Minister noted that while these have been effective, the Government is cognisant that it cannot replace the value of face-to-face interaction.

She also noted that the safety of students, teachers and other staff of learning institutions across the country continue to remain a top priority for the Ministry of Education.

# COVID-19 gazetted measures: 10.30pm to 4.00am curfew remains in place in Guyana

GUYANA – The Ministry of Health continues to keep strict measures in place to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The national curfew remains in place from 10.30pm to 4.00am for the month of March.

This was published in the Official Gazette on Friday. Aside from the curfew, many of the previous orders remain in place.

There would be continuous monitoring to assess the pandemic at the workplace and to ensure that ensure there is a period of quarantine or

isolation approved by the Health Ministry before resumption of work.

Banks, supermarkets, shops, beauty salons, barbershops, gas stations and stores such as clothing, shoes, books, hardware and plumbing are allowed to operate between the hours of 4.00am to 9.30pm.

While buffet dining is prohibited, indoor and outdoor dining at restaurants and bars are permitted, following strict COVID-19 guidelines.

All essential services such as hospitals, pharmacies, funeral

homes, airports, hotels and the judiciary, are allowed to operate on a 24-hour basis.

Restrictions also remain in place on visiting, hosting or attending a cinema, private parties, wakes, clubs, receptions and any other social activities. Gyms, fitness centres and places of worship can operate at limited capacity.

As of February 26, Guyana recorded 8,513 confirmed cases of Covid, with 7,945 recoveries and 195 deaths.

On Friday, Minister Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony said

Guyana would be receiving 80,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from India next week. It is also set to receive 104,000 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX mechanism, another 149,000 doses of vaccines through a purchase agreement under the CARICOM-African Union agreement and a donation of 20,000 Sinopharm vaccines from the Chinese Government. On February 10, Guyana received a donation of 3,000 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from Barbados.



**Guyana Education Minister Priya Manickchand**

# Dominican Republic to construct fence along border with Haiti

**SANTO DOMINGO – The Dominican Republic will begin constructing a fence along its 376-kilometer (234 mi) border with Haiti later this year to curb unauthorized migration and illicit trade, President Luis Abinader said on Saturday.**

“In a period of two years, we want to put an end to the serious problems of illegal immigration, drug trafficking and the movement of stolen vehicles,” Abinader said in a presentation to Congress.

Construction of the border fence, whose cost has not been disclosed, will begin in the second half of 2021, Abinader said.

The barrier will include a double-fence in the “most conflictive” sections, along with motion sensors, facial recognition cameras and infrared systems, he added, speaking on the 177th anniversary of the country’s independence from Haiti.

According to government estimates, about 500,000 Haitian immigrants resided in the Dominican Republic as of 2018, along with tens of thousands of their children born in the Caribbean country. A large part of the Haitian community, which makes up about 5% of the total population, does not have residency permits.

The announcement came a month after the government agreed to help Haiti provide identity documents to its citizens living in Dominican territory.



**FILE PHOTO: Border security soldiers guard border control as Haitians wait to cross the border, in Dajabon**

## On 1st anniversary of pandemic, Mexico has lost over 185,000

**MEXICO CITY –** In the year since the first coronavirus case was identified in Mexico, the disease has killed at least 185,257 people and sickened almost 2.1 million.

Mexico registered its first case on Feb. 26, 2020, in a man who had travelled to Italy.

The Health Department reported just over 8,000 more confirmed infections and 783 more confirmed deaths Saturday, but because Mexico does so little testing the real number is certainly much higher.

Excess death statistics, which have not been updated since the end of 2020, suggest the real death toll is probably well over 220,000 even before the surge of cases in January.

Mexico has administered a total of almost 2.4 million doses of various vaccines, but still has not received enough shots to vaccinate even 1 percent of the country’s 126 million people because most require two shots.

## Brazil’s capital enters two-week coronavirus lockdown

**BRASIL’S** capital entered a two-week lockdown yesterday, joining other states in adopting measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 as intensive care beds begin to fill in important cities.

At least eight Brazilian states adopted curfews over the past week due to the rise in cases and deaths from COVID-19. Thursday was Brazil’s deadliest day since the beginning of the pandemic, with 1,541 deaths confirmed from the virus. So far 254,000 people have died overall.

Brasilia Gov. Ibaneis Rocha decreed the total closure of bars, restaurants, shopping malls and schools until March 15 and prohibited gatherings of people. Sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited after 8 p.m.

In the federal district, 85% of hospital beds were occupied on Sunday, according to the local health ministry.

President Jair Bolsonaro again criticized such measures, saying on his Twitter account: “The people want to work.”

He threatened on Friday to cut off federal emergency pandemic assistance to states resorting to lockdowns, saying, “Governors who close down their states will have to provide for their own emergency aid.”

## Haitians who left Guyana illegally arrested in Brazil

**BRASILIA, Brazil –** Twenty six Haitians and one Cuban, all of whom left Guyana and entered Brazil have been arrested by members of the Brazilian Federal Police.

According to a release from the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) the interception occurred late Friday and early Saturday.

Also arrested were taxi drivers waiting to transport them onwards.

“Some of the Haitians arrived in

Lethem during this past week. They were initially denied entry into Brazil, but it was suspected that they would try to use other routes to cross over, hence the information was passed on to Brazilian Counterparts by CANU who then alerted their law enforcement units within the area,” the CANU statement noted.

Recently, Brazil’s Federal Police and CANU signed a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Guyana to share information and conduct joint operations, involving narcotics and other criminal activities.

“This is one of the successes coming out of this arrangement. The movement of persons through unofficial crossings not only poses a security risk but also a health risk due to the ongoing COVID Pandemic,” the CANU release stated.



**Haitians who left Guyana illegally were arrested in Brazil.**

## Truck-borne gunmen kill 11 in Mexico’s western state of Jalisco

**MEXICO CITY –** Unidentified gunmen riding in a truck opened fire with rifles on Saturday to kill 11 people in Mexico’s western state of Jalisco, causing injuries to a woman and a youth as well, authorities said.

Jalisco, where a former governor was

shot dead in December, is one of the epicenters of Mexico’s drug-related warfare, and home to the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).

The state prosecutor’s office said 10 men with gunshot wounds were found dead outside a home in Tonalá, a municipality

in the Guadalajara area, with another male body discovered inside.

The injured woman and young man, who appeared to be a minor, were treated, the office said in a statement.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took office in late 2018 pledging

to reduce entrenched violence, but he continues to grapple with mass killings and tens of thousands of homicides a year.

In December, former Jalisco Governor Aristoteles Sandoval was shot dead in a restaurant in the beach town of Puerto Vallarta.

# UK vaccinates over 20M with at least one dose

**LONDON, United Kingdom – Britain announced on Sunday that it has given more than 20 million people at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine, with the rapid rollout providing hope in a country with Europe's highest death toll.**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson called it “a huge national achievement” while praising National Health Service staff and others involved for “tireless work”.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock made the announcement in a video message on Twitter, say-

ing: “I’m absolutely delighted that over 20 million people have now been vaccinated.”

A total of 20,089,551 people have received a first dose, according to government figures released Sunday.

In mid-February, the UK met a government

target of 15 million of the most vulnerable people receiving first doses.

The government says it plans to offer a first jab to the whole adult population by the end of July.

Only Israel and the United Arab Emirates have vaccinated more people per head of popula-

tion.

Smiling, Hancock said “I want to thank every single person who has come forward to get the jab,” calling this “the route out of this for all of us.”

“There’s a long way to go but we’re making big strides,” he said.

The UK’s vaccination programme has rolled out fast since its start in early December, when it became the first country in the world to begin mass inoculation with a fully trialled vaccine.

Earlier failures in contact tracing and controlling the spread of infection saw cases soar in the UK and the country’s

death toll of 122,705 is the highest in Europe.

The country is still under national lockdown but daily cases, hospitalisations and deaths have all fallen dramatically since late January, despite the emergence of a more infectious variant.

There were 6,035 new daily cases reported Sunday and 144 deaths, the lowest figures since early autumn.

On Thursday, Britain lowered the country’s virus alert level down one notch from the highest possible, saying the fall in cases had reduced the threat to the state-run National Health Service.

## EU to clear Johnson & Johnson vaccine in March – France

**PARIS, France – A single-shot COVID-19 vaccine by US drug maker Johnson & Johnson is likely to be approved for use in the European Union in early March, a French minister said on Sunday.**

The vaccine was cleared for emergency use in the United States on Saturday, becoming the third available vaccine there.

The single-shot vaccine is highly effective in preventing severe COVID-19, including against newer variants, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said before giving it the green light.

French Industry Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told France 3 television that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) was also evaluating information transmitted by the US pharmaceuticals company.

An EU approval in



**Johnson & Johnson vaccine vials against the COVID-19 coronavirus are seen at the Klerksdorp Hospital as South Africa proceeds with its inoculation campaign on February 18, 2021.** (PHOTO: AFP)

early March would allow the vaccine to be rolled out in late March or early April, she said, adding this was “good news” because it offers protection with a single shot in contrast to other vaccines requiring two.

She said it was possible that a booster shot was needed later “but we can’t be sure yet”.

The EU hoped to receive 600 million doses of

the vaccine by the end of June, she said.

France has so far vaccinated 1.5 million people, the minister said. By June all 15 million people belonging to the country’s most vulnerable population segments will have been vaccinated, she added, acknowledging however that reaching that target might require a faster vaccine rollout.

In large clinical trials,

the J&J vaccine’s efficacy against severe disease was 85.9 per cent in the United States, 81.7 per cent in South Africa, and 87.6 per cent in Brazil.

The J&J shot appears less protective than Pfizer and Moderna’s two-shot regimens, which both have an efficacy of around 95 per cent against all forms of COVID-19 from the classic coronavirus strain.

## South Africa to ease virus restrictions after ‘dramatic decline’

**JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday said the country will start relaxing coronavirus restrictions, moving from alert level three down to level one, after a “dramatic decline” in infections.**

The easing of the measures, due to begin at midnight, will see most economic activity resume as the country moves to rebuild its virus-shattered economy.

In a televised address to the nation, Ramaphosa said the country had made big strides in the past eight weeks, recording a steady drop in infections and hospital admissions.

“Due to the decline in infections, the country can now ease some of the restrictions on movement and economic activity,” Ramaphosa announced.

“We do so cautiously,” he added.

Ramaphosa said the country had recorded just under 10,000 new infections over the past week, down from more than 40,000 in the last week of January and some 90,000 in the same week in December.

He attributed the “dramatic decline” to the public health measures, changes in behaviour, and accumulating immunity in those that had become infected.

Under level one restric-

tions, the country’s curfew will now only run from midnight to 4 a.m.

The head of state spoke a day after the country received the second batch of Johnson & Johnson vaccines arrived in the country.

So far, more than 63,600 healthcare workers have been vaccinated since the country began inoculations nearly a fortnight ago.

The elderly, teachers, miners, police officers, soldiers, civil servants and people older than 18 with co-morbidities will be vaccinated in the next phase of the three-phase rollout campaign from the end of April.

The government, which has been accused of being slow to acquire COVID vaccines, has secured an agreement to procure 11 million one-shot doses from Johnson & Johnson, 2.8 million of which are expected in the second quarter.

Twenty million Pfizer jabs have also been secured, while an additional 12 million doses expected via the COVAX facility, according to Ramaphosa.

Having recorded more than 1.5 million infections of which nearly 50,000 have been fatal, South Africa still has the highest number of cases and deaths on the continent.

It aims to inoculate around 40 million people – 67 per cent of the population – by the end of 2021.

## Iran dismisses idea of talks with EU and US to revive 2015 nuclear deal

**DUBAI – Iran on Sunday ruled out holding an informal meeting with the United States and European powers to discuss ways to revive its 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, insisting that Washington must lift all its unilateral sanctions.**

“Considering the recent actions and statements by the United States and three European powers,

Iran does not consider this the time to hold an informal meeting with these countries, which was proposed by the EU foreign policy chief,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said, according to Iranian media.

Iranian officials had said Tehran was studying a proposal by European Union foreign policy chief

Josep Borrell to hold an informal meeting with other parties to the nuclear pact and the United States, which reimposed sanctions on Iran after then-president Donald Trump quit the deal in 2018.

Iran and the new US administration of President Joe Biden have been at odds over who should take the first step to revive the

accord. Iran insists the United States must first lift sanctions while Washington says Tehran must first return to compliance with the deal, which it has been progressively breaching.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sketched out a potential choreography on Feb. 1 to overcome the impasse.

March 1, 2021

IT'S OUR BUSINESS TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS DO BUSINESS

# CALL FOR \$200M FUND

**THE new Joe Biden administration in the USA is being challenged to come up with a Bds\$200 million fund to assist Barbados and the Caribbean with their post-COVID economic revival.**

CEO of Invest Caribbean, Ms. Felicia Persaud, made the appeal last week, when she participated in a discussion

on strengthening US-Caribbean trade and investment relations. It was sponsored by the Shridath Ramphal Centre.

The CEO listed the funding among several demands from the USA administration, which she reasoned are necessary for rebuilding Caribbean economies hit hard by COVID-19.

Stating that the number one challenge to trade and investment in the Caribbean remains access to capital, Dr. Persaud said that is something they are finding whether it relates to large or small businesses.

According to her, American banks have already said up front they are not lending to the Caribbean. "So we are having to find private lenders and to go further afield globally for lenders including China, for our projects," Persaud said.

She said the Bds\$200 million Caribbean Development Fund should be used in the post-pandemic era to create jobs, grow the economies, and to invest in business projects across economic sectors.

In pressing for such support, Persaud argued that successive administrations in the United States have ignored the Caribbean and the Americas, treating the entire region as a step-child.

That fund, she explained, should be managed not by a government institution, but rather by a private hedge fund working with investment companies to give capital directly to those who require it.

Highlighting other components of her proposed action plan, Dr. Persaud said that:

- Mr. Biden should use his Caribbean roots – Vice President, Kamala Harris – to launch the fund;
- the Biden administration should co-host a conference on the future of the Caribbean;
- the US Government should foster partnerships between major US and Caribbean companies, so that products from this region can make it to the



**CEO of Invest Caribbean, Ms. Felicia Persaud, participated in a discussion on strengthening US-Caribbean trade and investment relations.**



**US President Joe Biden is being urged to use his Caribbean roots – Vice President, Kamala Harris – to launch the Caribbean Development Fund.**

American market;

- President Biden should create an Assistant Secretary of State for the Caribbean and not just for the Western hemisphere;

- Biden should choose his Caribbean ambassadors from among people who are knowledgeable about the region; and

- Caribbean governments should use the pandemic to hit the reset button while creating a five- to 10-year vision plan.

"From that we can move to trade that is coming from the region and investment from the region that is beyond tourism and just hotels," she suggested.

Ms. Persaud suggested further that "we create our own Silicon Valley with technical businesses, incubators, education and training, and easily access to funding". In light of this, she has found that while many tech start-ups are growing across the region, they lack the access to capital not just in one country, but across several of them.

**Will the EU continue to mount pressure on Barbados?**

**PAGE 3**

**USVI/CARICOM: Suggested steps for success**

**PAGE 4**

**BL&P: No change to the Fuel Clause Adjustment last month**

**PAGE 5**

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<b>Transit #:</b>	00001



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  - Live chat at [sagicor.com](https://www.sagicor.com)



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Wise Financial Thinking for Life

# Will the EU continue to mount pressure on B'dos?

**WITH Barbados having been removed from the European Union (EU) blacklist, questions remain as to whether that will be the end of it.**

But as one individual has told *Business Monday*, nothing is cast in stone and the EU will be back again in some form or fashion as they continue their

pressure on small jurisdictions like Barbados.

In fact, on the People's Business a week ago, Ian Carrington, Director of Finance and Economic Development, touched on the subject.

He said the goalpost continues to be shifted and that both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) and the EU believed that Barbados has become too successful in that area and is encroaching on developed countries.

Those comments were made prior to Minister of International Business, Ronald Toppin, announcing the removal of Barbados from the blacklist.

The sector is one of the

key areas of the local economy accounting for sizeable inflows of capital, job creation, and tax revenues. Data for 2020 show that the sector contributed heavily to corporate tax revenues. Income was given as \$397.4 million, below the \$458.5 million a year earlier.

However, evidence has demonstrated that

since 2000, Barbados has been battling with the OECD and its sister agencies and even the G20, for the survival of the sector.

They have accused this country of being a tax haven, a non-compliant jurisdiction and other charges in what now appears to be a campaign for the island to get out of the business.

In the interim, several amendments have been made to existing legislation in Barbados.

Between late 2019, several legislative changes were made. Apparently, this does not appear to be much in the eyes of the international community.

So the country awaits the next step in this ongoing issue.

## Critical CSME issues must be addressed and resolved urgently, say CARICOM leaders

HEADS of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have expressed continuing concern about the progress made and the outstanding actions still required to advance implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), particularly to support economic recovery in the face of the debilitating impact of COVID-19.

The heads said so in a communiqué that followed the Intersessional Meeting, which they held last week.

In the document, the leaders reaffirmed the critical role of the CSME in the Region's strategy for sustained economic growth, to build economic resilience by developing the capacity to withstand both external and internal shocks to the Community.

They agreed to review urgently the entire consultation and decision-making processes at all levels in an effort to establish the most effective strategy for effecting increased levels of implementation. They also agreed that an immediate step towards achieving implementation would be led by the Lead Head of Government with responsibility for the CSME, Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley.

"Heads of Government mandated the Council for Finance and Planning (COFAP) to meet urgently no later than end of March 2021, to resolve the outstanding issues and reach agreement with respect to the CARICOM Financial Services Agreement (CFSAs), the Regional Securities Market, the Community Investment Policy and Credit Reporting," according to the document.

They also urged the



**Lead Head of Government with responsibility for the CSME, Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley.**

removal of non-tariff barriers to trade among Member States and the simplification of administrative procedures for free movement of people in order to boost economic output.

They stressed the urgent need to address and resolve those critical issues that impede the benefits of the CSME being enjoyed by all, particularly the private sector on which the Region is depending to fuel the recovery of its economies and which needed to be fully engaged at both the national and regional levels.

The leaders have recommended that the Special Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED)-ICT to expedite the establishment of the Single ICT Space together with access to reduce

roaming rates and enhance access to broadband as well as to examine the feasibility of establishing a Single Regional Telecommunications Regulator for the consideration of the Forty-Second Meeting of the Conference in July 2021. This would be fundamental to advance the digital economy.

Recognising that the Multilateral Air Services Agreement (MASA) is now in effect, leaders instructed the Special COTED (Transportation) to work with Member States to take the action necessary for an effective air transportation system. The Council was also instructed to follow up on the initiatives aimed at building maritime capacity, especially for transportation of agricultural

produce.

Heads of Government directed that to develop further maritime transportation and support intra-regional cargo, a study be undertaken to review the status of existing port facilities in Member States; this with a view to determining those requiring update to their facilities.

In relation to the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), the leaders reiterated the important role of the CDF to the social and economic advancement of the Community. They noted that in the context of the dire fiscal, economic and social circumstances facing Member States arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CDF should be positioned to provide support to Member States' post-pandemic recovery efforts.

According to them, it was agreed to a further one-year extension to the CDF's second contribution and subvention cycle to June 30, 2022.

They recognised the potential impact of funding shortfalls and protracted payment delays on Member States' programmes and the CDF's liquidity, financial sustainability and capacity to fulfil its mandate.

Heads of Government instructed the CDF to continue its efforts at mobilising funds from international development partners (IDPs) and other agencies to assist in replenishing the capital fund of the CDF. They further instructed the CDF to submit a proposal to the Council for Finance and Planning for the issuance of a Growth and Resilience Bond to support the economic recovery and transformation of Member States.

## Persaud: Develop diaspora bonds

THE Barbados and Caribbean diaspora needs to be engaged in the development of a bond, which can be used to finance infrastructure and any kind of crisis development the region encounters.

In making the suggestion, Invest Caribbean CEO, Dr. Felicia Persaud, said that countries like India and Israel had embarked on similar approaches among their diaspora and with much success.

As such, she maintained that there is no reason why Barbados

and the Caribbean diaspora should not go that rout.

India, she pointed out, has had significant success with its diaspora bonds and Israel has been doing similarly with bonds and have in fact been reissuing them since 1951.

She would like to see the creation of a system in the diaspora where "we actually map key entrepreneurs, business owners, and talented people who can help by not only growing our economies, but also a community in the diaspora".

### BANK RATES

Commercial bank rates to the public at the close of business on Friday by the Central Bank of Barbados.

Valid for March 1, 2021

Notes:	Buying	Selling
<b>Currency</b>		
Belizean Dollar	1.00000	1.00000
Canadian Dollar	1.55347	1.59942
East Caribbean \$	0.73704	0.74445
Euro	2.36667	2.46633
Pound Sterling	2.73286	2.84794
United States Dollar	1.98000	2.02857
<b>Demand/Sight:</b>		
<b>Currency</b>	<b>Buying</b>	<b>Selling</b>
Belizean Dollar	0.99688	1.00313
Canadian Dollar	1.56231	1.59801
East Caribbean Dollar	0.73843	0.74306
Euro	2.40140	2.45102
Guyana Dollar	0.00942	0.00948
Pound Sterling	2.77296	2.83026
United States Dollar	1.99000	2.02768
<b>Telegraphic Transfer</b>		
<b>Currency</b>	<b>Buying</b>	<b>Selling</b>
Belizean Dollar	0.99688	1.00313
Canadian Dollar	1.56527	1.59801
East Caribbean Dollar	0.73843	0.74306
Euro	2.40592	2.45102
Guyana Dollar	0.00942	0.00948
Pound Sterling	2.77818	2.83026
United States Dollar	1.99375	2.02768

#### INDICATIVE RATES FOR SOME REGIONAL CURRENCIES AS ADVISED BY THE RESPECTIVE CENTRAL BANKS

N.B.: These rates are not meant to be used for trading.

	BDS\$
Guyana Dollar	0.00945
Jamaica Dollar	0.01326
T & T Dollar	0.29594

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

# Step up to the plate

### Make food production a vital policy

INCREASING food supplies and food security have always been put on the radar of successive governments in Barbados. Yet at the end of their day in office one hardly sees improvements and then the country is back to square one when a new government takes over.

Over the weekend this policy was announced by the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Indar Weir. One of the important things is that there is generally good buy in by the public and all stake holders in the country because they see justice in going that route in making food production a vital policy for the nation. So Mr. Weir will get the necessary support for this venture.

However, his challenge will be to make good his plans and to insist that the Ministry he heads and the support organisations in the same Ministry step up to the plate in making the commitments to the ideas outlined.

Right now figures on imported foods are running at well over \$600 million and that says a lot for a small country with 287 00 people and vast tracts of lands which remain idle. It seems that everything Barbadians want must be imported when in actual fact some of them can be produced right here. So let us do it.

## USVI/CARICOM: Suggested steps for success

*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." – Matthew 7:7*

A HEALTHY dialogue resulted from my recent column entitled "HOW CAN THE USVI ENERGIZE CARICOM?"

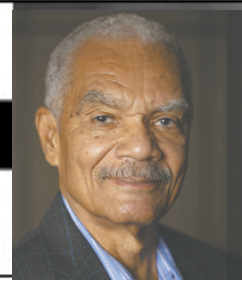
As a follow-up, I thought I would engage in lateral thinking and adopt a solution-oriented approach to the challenge: "Whither CARICOM (Caribbean Community) in the post COVID-19 dispensation?"

How can CARICOM pivot, using its own resources and talents, and how can we leverage the potential of USVI/CARICOM partnerships to our mutual benefit?

While there are real and meaningful examples of co-operation between the US and the Caribbean, we are in need of a reignited Third Border Initiative to solidify ties with our neighbours, which include our Caribbean cousins in the

### SERIOUS BUSINESS

by  
Dr. Basil Springer



US Virgin Islands, where I understand US President Joe Biden is a frequent visitor. In keeping with the ideals of inclusiveness, let us not overlook Puerto Rico, the largest US territory by population with approximately three million residents, and another example of a multicultural, multilingual Caribbean destination.

Here are some thoughts on the way forward.

Step 1 – Structure. Register a legal Trust between CARICOM and the USVI, the beneficiaries of which are the people of the Caribbean, including US Virgin Islanders. The value proposition of this Trust would be to mobilise

the strengths of each entity and positively exploit synergies between them to awaken dormant business opportunities for the mutual benefit of the people of the Caribbean and its Diaspora.

Step 2 – Financial security. Mount a quick response (seed, equity, working capital) profitable growth Fund (capitalised by investors and donors) under the Trust to provide financial security for start-up business enterprises and Fund investors. The efficient performance of this growth fund would facilitate (1) initial start-up capital seamlessly rolled into equity; (2) buy-back of the Fund's equity

by start-ups to regain 100 per cent ownership of their businesses as soon as cashflow permits; (3) short-term financing collateralized by marketing contracts; (4) investor return on financial investment; (5) the justification of the donors' corporate social responsibility outlay; and (6) a sustainable funding source for posterity. Including highly skilled Diaspora professionals to participate in and fund this initiative would be icing on the cake.

Step 3 – Marketing. One of the first objectives of a start-up enterprise is to establish markets for its products and services, close sales and show profitability. Public relations, marketing and media savvy aimed at the generation of revenue will enable the initiative to hit the ground running.

Step 4 – Operations. Business opportunities of mutual interest include education, training, tourism, renewable energy, food and beverage, cricket, oil refining, yachting, eco-tourism, and culture. The further challenge is to reverse the global start-up business failure rate, estimated to be 90 per cent in the first five years, to the converse – a 90 per cent success rate.

Step 5 – People development. The people of the Caribbean are multitalented. We must compile an inventory of these talents and develop them to the fullest. We should not only convert them into business opportunities but, through their success, inspire generations yet to come.

Yesterday marked the end of the celebration of Black History month in the United States for 2021. The Caribbean has played an indelible role in this history, so let's leverage the creative genius of our people to act on these five or other steps – on a bilateral or multilateral basis – rather than pontificate into oblivion.

Who is ready to knock?

*(Dr. Basil Springer GCM is a Change-Engine Consultant. His email address is basilgf@marketplaceexcellence.com. His columns may be found at nothingbeatsbusiness.com)*

### USVI & CARICOM: SUGGESTED STEPS FOR SUCCESS



- Structure – USVI/CARICOM partnership
- Financial Security – Regional and diasporic backing
- Marketing – Public relations and digital communications
- Operations – Low-hanging fruit initiatives
- People – Multitalented



marketplace  
EXCELLENCE

### Business Monday

## Calendar

WHAT'S UP IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

MARCH

- Barbadians will breathe a sigh of relief from this morning as the country comes out of the lockdown called to deal with COVID 19.

- Harvesting of this country's 2021 sugar cane crop will commence at estates around the country.

- Republic Bank Limited has announced new opening hours for its branches effective from today March 1.

## IDB bulletin shows barriers to financial access and inclusion remain

FOR years businesses and particularly small enterprises have complained about not being able to secure financing to support their operations.

Now the IDB in its latest Caribbean Quarterly Bulletin is highlighting that fact, saying that barriers to financial access and inclusion remain in Barbados.

“Despite the country enjoying high income levels and performing well on many socio-economic indicators, barriers to finance for individuals and firms remain,” according to the report dated December 31, 2020.

Bank officials said that Barbados performs well on indicators related to financial

access for individuals including the level of deposits in commercial banks which stand at 98.5 per cent of GDP compared to the Caribbean average of 57.9 per cent.

“The ratio of commercial bank loans to GDP is also higher in Barbados (64.6 per cent) than the average for all Caribbean countries (40.6 per cent),” the bulletin penned by said.

“However, some impediments remain with respect to the ability of individuals to access financial services, including increasingly stringent-know-your-client and documentation requirements,” they said.

“Firms and banks in

Barbados also report that the strict know your clients and regulatory burdens, including those related to anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism, hinder financial transactions and credit provision.

They recommended that fostering greater use of new and innovative financial technologies and revising relevant regulatory requirements to enhance access could help address some of the challenges.

“In this context, the authorities should consider policies and initiatives aimed at further exploring and addressing barriers to financial access and inclusion.

## PwC survey finds high level of ambition for digital transformation in Caribbean region

70% of organisations are meeting or exceeding targets on digitisation

**BARBADOS – Caribbean businesses have set bold ambitions for digitisation, but PwC’s Caribbean Digital Readiness Survey 2021 reveals a wide gap between organisations out in front and those struggling to make headway.**

Most respondents believe that they’re meeting or exceeding targets on integrating new technologies into business processes, and products and services (42% on target and 28% ahead).

But that leaves more than a quarter in the Caribbean region who acknowledge that they are behind target. Moreover, only 15% believe that their digital fitness is on a par with or ahead of the leaders in their industry (“transcenders”).

Key findings include:

- More than 80% of businesses in our survey are focusing their digital strategy on modernising their brand with new capabilities ahead of doing what they’ve always done faster and more efficiently (62%).

- Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents believe that use of digital technologies and behaviours has boosted workforce productivity. And over half (57%) believe it has increased employee satisfaction.

- The survey finds well over half (56%) of companies expect at least 30% of their employees to work remotely more than one day a week a year from now.

- However, for Caribbean organisations, further upskilling is critical. Nearly half of respondents (46%) believe their organisation is behind in training workers with skills for the digital era.

They cited lack of time and budget as the top barriers to upskilling their workforce with the lack of alignment/clarity on roles and responsibilities relating to digital ownership and inflexible or slow processes as the biggest challenges to their overall digital transformation.

Building on PwC’s Global Digital IQ framework, this is the first Caribbean region study to gauge progress on digital

transformation.

Frazer Lindsay, PwC in the Caribbean CEO, commented: “From boosting workforce productivity to improving customer experience, digital transformation is now competitively critical for businesses here in the Caribbean. The findings from our survey provide valuable insights into how far regional businesses have come in their digital journey, how they can accelerate progress, and what they can learn from the front-runners – the transcenders.

“The key take-away is that digital transformation is as much about workforce capabilities and empowerment as systems and technology. The transcenders are making the most of their investment in new technology by upskilling their workforce, instilling an innovative mindset within their organisations and encouraging their people to embrace experimentation and change even if sometimes they fail.

Across PwC in the Caribbean, we are pleased to bring our collective expertise and technology to help our clients solve these challenges and fast-track digital transformation.”

Arnold Niranjana, PwC East Caribbean advisory partner and digital leader, commented: “Our survey shows that digital transformation is front of mind for businesses in Barbados and the East Caribbean. From upskilling the workforce and overall operations, to providing a better customer experience by process automation and AI, it’s clear 2020 brought a major shift to digital and an increased pressure to accelerate progress.”

He continued, “It’s imperative at this point that all businesses embrace digital to minimise the growing gap between a select group of leaders out in front and a trailing pack with considerable work ahead to catch up. Leaders have to pass the rhetoric and get to action. As digitisation accelerates, this gap could grow and be increasingly hard to make up. This is particularly noticeable in the workforce where many businesses believe they are behind on upskilling employees. Digitisation is a game-changer with so many possibilities, it’s critical to invest in the right ones.”



The Barbados Light and Power Company.

## Barbados Light and Power: No change to the Fuel Clause Adjustment last month

THERE was no change to the Fuel Clause Adjustment (FCA) last month.

At .23 5182 cents per kilowatt hour, the FCA remained similar to that of January this year, the Barbados Light and Power Company revealed in a notice.

That meant that Barbadians and more so electricity consumers were not saddled with higher light bills, even as price gouging and higher charges for petroleum products

took place in the economy.

The FCA is used by Light and power to recover the cost of the fuel used in the generation of electricity.

The company said it is a policy used in several electric utilities across the world.

However, the current FCA was above those for the period September 2020 to December 2020. The FCA goes up and down reflecting the global price of energy which is used largely to indicate price movements in

the country.

Last January the Central Bank of Barbados reported that while prices eased somewhat in 2020, they were 2.0 per cent higher than in 2019. The 12-month average of prices was 3.5 per cent compared to 3.6 per cent in 2019.

Consumers in Barbados have been complaining repeatedly about some hikes in retail prices especially during the lockdown which came to a halt yesterday.

# Never let a good crisis go to waste

By Dr. Kai-Ann Skeete

## Revisiting the Caricom Single Domestic Space

FORMER British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill who led Britain through World War II is credited as saying “never let a good crisis go to waste.” It is with these words that I pen this article to advance my opinion on the way forward for the regional integration movement in light of the virtual 32nd Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of CARICOM Government, that would have taken place February 23-24 2021.

This regular meeting allowed the regional Prime Ministers and Presidents to further collaborate and discuss a plethora of regional topics such as the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, CSME Implementation, Regional Security, Reparations, new US-CARICOM relations and the regional economic recovery inclusive of solutions to increase resilience and to redesign regional tourism.

To our Regional Prime Ministers and Presidents, I say going forward, the battle will not be easy to rebuild and revitalize your respective territories. The data points to the regional risks on the horizon such as prolonged economic stagnation, livelihood crises, youth disillusionment, the erosion of social cohesion and the ever-increasing digital inequality regionally. Geopolitically, you have to be cognizant of any potential activities that could further erode the base of your state and be prepared to arm your

best negotiators and ambassadors with all available expertise to build strong and contemporary arguments supporting the cause of multilateralism as integral to our existence as small island states within the global arena. To compound the scenario, there is an increasing number of regional citizens disagreeing with the credible sources of scientific evidence on the efficacy of vaccines necessary to jumpstart national livelihoods, so your government must be prepared to prevent any additional backlash against science.

The impact of the global pandemic on the region has severely disrupted global supply chains. The average regional consumer has come to grips with the reality of food insecurity nationally where they are confronted with empty supermarket shelves, discontinued products by distributors, farmers with a surplus of agricultural produce and manufacturers willing to dump raw materials due to the unavailability of a ready market. From March 2020 to now, the region has had to grapple with the transformation of transient forms of poverty into chronic poverty and in the near future an increase in cases of abject poverty which may serve to significantly rollback our regional gains.

Prime Ministers and Presidents, over the years of pursuing Caribbean integration, several regional decisions were

### SRC TRADING THOUGHTS

agreed but with no follow up national action. Oftentimes it has been blamed on an implementation deficit and lack of political will. But it is in times of crisis that we reflect, we introspect and we project for the future. Your citizens have already paved the way for your collective action. Unable to secure a consistent livelihood outside their doors, several householders started looking inwards. They started at home and initiated DIY projects, they developed home/backyard gardens and they reconnected with their immediate neighbours and recreated that Community spirit. I propose it is time to cascade it up and outwards to our Caribbean community. Evidence-based decisions must now support difficult conversations with all in our community as to what is required and by when so the Caribbean can increase our individual, economic, social, infrastructural and environmental resilience to these crises.

After all, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us they we do not need high winds, long hours of rainfall or severe flooding to completely devastate our economies and decimate livelihoods. It has shown that by extensively opening borders that viruses creep in like parasites on

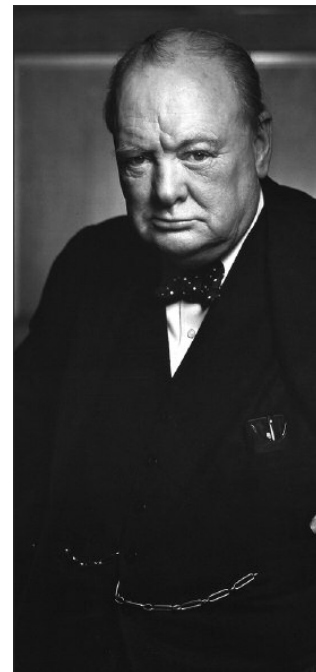
suitcase wheels and when we least expect it. As a region, we already have best practices for natural disasters but we are now in uncharted waters and we need to collectively conceptualize and design a regional response to COVID-19 that involves increasing intra-regional agricultural trade, increasing the resilience of MSMEs and increase the number of regional citizens accessing regional tourism products.

But that is not a reason to raise the white flag and surrender to the pandemic. Now is the time to directly confront past regional inaction and arrest the deficits plaguing the community. Let us start with reopening the Caribbean by utilizing the CARICOM Single Domestic Space (CSDS). The CSDS was initiated for the 9 Host Countries and Dominica as part of the International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup (ICC CWC) 2007. It included security components such as the Advance Passenger Information System, Advanced Cargo Information System and a CARICOM Travel Card with embedded biometrics. Together these security components can assist with national trade facilitation efforts and increasing the efficiency of the movement of goods and people across regional borders.

Looking inward again,

when Covid-19 caused the immediate cessation of intra-regional flights, the region saw the immediate repurposing of the Regional Security System (RSS) aircraft which delivered vital supplies and even the recent vaccines to several islands within the community. If it has not yet been realized, within a Community you need to have a permanent network of transportation options to connect countries and deliver vital supplies. Perhaps the establishment of an intra-regional airline not driven by profit or laden with taxes may be the answer to increasing intra-regional movement and intra-regional trade especially agricultural trade.

As we face the eventual Post-COVID-19 future together, let us decide to utilize new international measurements rather than the systemically flawed GDP per capita assessment to determine levels of development. I recommend the adoption of the UNCTAD Productive Capacities Index (PCI) which is the first comprehensive attempt to measure a country's productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages which together determine the capacity of a country to produce goods and services and enable it to grow and develop. The PCI utilizes 8 components of productive capacities and its scales range from 0 to 100 with 100 being the top score. PCI data for the



Former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill

region in 2016, show the following averages of 25.35 in Energy, 47.37 in Human Capital, 12.73 in ICTs, 58.43 in Institutions, 45.82 in Natural Capital, 79.14 in Private Sector, 17.45 in Structural Change and 25.98 in Transport. It is most noteworthy that the PCI for the Private Sector is the highest average among 11 CARICOM countries. This score represents the cost of exporting/importing a container and lead times to export/import goods among other items.

Prime Ministers and Presidents, if there is one lesson that everyone has learnt as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic is that individual as well as national resilience requires some form of adaptability accompanied by the capacity to innovate. Thus, now is the time to design plans to increase economic growth, industrial policies, increase innovative capabilities, increase local entrepreneurship and re-insert regional products into global value chains. All in all, the future of regional economic progress lies within your grasp, now is simply time for regional action. I will conclude with the words of an old African proverb, “if you walk alone you go faster, but if you walk together, you go farther.”

*(Dr. Kai-Ann Skeete is Trade Research Fellow with the Shridath Ramphal Centre for International Trade Law, Policy & Services of The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. Learn more about the SRC at [www.shridathramphalcentre.com](http://www.shridathramphalcentre.com).)*



The virtual 32nd Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of CARICOM Government would have allowed the regional Prime Ministers and Presidents to further collaborate and discuss a plethora of regional topics.

# BARBADOS STOCK REPORT

February 26, 2021

One security declined as 400,000 shares traded on the Regular Market, with a total value of \$224,000.00. Eppley Caribbean Property Fund SCC – Value Fund was the sole security trading 400,000 shares at \$0.56 to close down one (\$0.01) cent.

## BARBADOS STOCK EXCHANGE

### SHARE SUMMARY INFORMATION

Friday February 26, 2021

	LAST TRADE DATE	VOLUME	HIGH	LOW	LAST CLOSE	CURRENT CLOSE	PRICE CHANGE	BID PRICE	ASK PRICE	BID SIZE	ASK SIZE
ABV Investments Incorporated	15-Oct-20	-	-	-	\$0.05	\$0.05	-	\$0.02	\$0.30	8,080	10,498
BICO Limited	21-Sep-20	-	-	-	\$3.10	\$3.10	-	\$3.10	-	70	-
Banks Holdings Limited ++	09-Dec-19	-	-	-	\$4.85	\$4.85	-	-	-	-	-
Barbados Dairy Industries Limited ++	04-Oct-19	-	-	-	\$3.00	\$3.00	-	-	-	-	-
Barbados Farms Limited	22-Jan-21	-	-	-	\$0.40	\$0.40	-	\$0.35	\$0.40	1,000	6,561
Cave Shepherd and Company Limited	28-Jan-21	-	-	-	\$4.10	\$4.10	-	\$4.00	\$4.10	72	1,100
FirstCaribbean International Bank	05-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$1.80	\$1.80	0	\$1.77	\$1.80	2000	14251
Eppley Caribbean Property Fund SCC - Dev Fund	19-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$0.16	\$0.16	-	-	\$0.16	-	4,066
Eppley Caribbean Property Fund SCC -Value Fund	26-Feb-21	400000	0.56	0.56	\$0.57	\$0.56	-0.01	\$0.55	\$0.57	1,600	1000
Goddard Enterprises Limited	22-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$2.10	\$2.10	-	\$2.10	\$2.15	17,596	8,856
Insurance Corporation of B'dos Limited	23-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$2.00	\$2.00	0	\$1.78	\$2.00	78	7,200
One Caribbean Media Limited	18-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$1.80	\$1.80	-	-	\$1.80	-	215
Sagicor Financial Corporation Pref 6.5%	23-Jun-16	-	-	-	\$2.26	\$2.26	-	-	-	-	-
Sagicor Financial Corporation Limited ++	29-Nov-19	-	-	-	\$2.80	\$2.80	-	-	-	-	-
West India Biscuit Company Limited	19-Feb-21	-	-	-	\$31.05	\$31.05	-	\$30.00	\$31.40	5,000	500
Emera Deposit Receipt	14-Aug-20	-	-	-	\$19.48	\$19.58	\$0.10	\$30.00	-	50	-
<b>TOTAL SHARES BOUGHT &amp; SOLD</b>		<b>400000</b>									

\* = Security is Trading X-Div

\*+\* = Security is Suspended

\*\* = Rights Issued

## NOTICES

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

**FirstCaribbean International Bank** - Directors have fixed February 1st, 2021 as the record date for the determination of shareholders entitled to receive notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Company which will be held on March 12th, 2021. The meeting can be accessed virtually here: <https://web.lumiagm.com/286-507-132>. Shareholders who wish to attend the annual meeting must contact FirstCaribbean International Bank by March 10, 2021 at [agm@cibcfib.com](mailto:agm@cibcfib.com) to obtain the Meeting ID and Password to join the meeting.

**Emera Incorporated** - Directors have fixed March 22nd, 2021 as the record date for the determination of shareholders entitled to receive notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Company which will be held on May 20th, 2021.

**BICO Limited** – Notice is hereby given that the One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the shareholders of BICO Limited is scheduled to take place on April 13th, 2021 at the Company's registered address: Harbor Industrial Park, Bridgetown, BB11145 at 5:00 p.m.

### BSE NOTICES

#### COVID-19 PROCEDURAL UPDATE

Kindly note that effective February 15th, 2021, the offices of the Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. (BSE) and the Barbados Central Securities Depository Inc. (BCSDI) remain closed in accordance with the extension of the National Pause – February 17th, 2021 to February 28th, 2021 – announced by the Government of Barbados.

Kindly note, however, that while our physical offices will be closed, all trading, clearing and settlement operations will remain fully operational as staff will all be working remotely during this period. While our offices are closed, we remain easily accessible via email. For Stock Exchange related queries, kindly email us at [info@bse.com.bb](mailto:info@bse.com.bb) and for Shareholder related queries contact us at [bcstdi@bse.com.bb](mailto:bcstdi@bse.com.bb).

We wish to thank you in advance for your understanding and trust that all and sundry remain safe during this time.

#### TRADING SUSPENSION

The Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. (BSE) wishes to advise that due to non-compliance with Section 4.01.3 and subject to Section 3.01.5.(1)(b) of the Rules of the Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. trading in the Common Shares of Banks Holdings Limited were suspended effective December 10th, 2019.

The Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. (BSE) wishes to advise that due to non-compliance with Section 4.01.3 and subject to Section 3.01.5.(1)(b) of the Rules of the Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. trading in the Common Shares of Barbados Dairy Industries Limited were suspended effective December 10th, 2019.

The Barbados Stock Exchange Inc. (BSE) wishes to advise that to facilitate the closing of the Scheme of Arrangement effected by way of Section 99 of the Companies Act 1981 of Bermuda involving the transfer of all the issued and outstanding shares in Sagicor Financial Corporation Limited to Alignvest Acquisitio II, it has suspended trading in the security Sagicor Financial Corporation Limited.

### Regular Market

Security	Volume	High	Low	Market Price	Advance/Decline
EPPLEY C'BEAN PROPERTY FUND SCC - VAL FUND	400000	0.56	0.56	0.56	-\$0.01

### Deposit Receipts

Security	Previous Close	Current Close	Advance/Decline
EMERA DEPOSIT RECEIPT	\$19.57	\$19.91	\$0.34

### INDICES

	TODAY'S TRADING February 26, 2021	LAST TRADING February 25, 2021	CHANGES
Local	2,437.42	2,437.73	0.31
Cross-list	933.43	933.43	-
Composite	593.98	594.05	0.07

### MARKET CAPITALISATION (in millions)

	TODAY'S TRADING February 26, 2021	LAST TRADING February 25, 2021	CHANGES
Local	4,899.40	4,900.02	0.62
Cross-list	119.19	119.19	-
Composite	5,018.59	5,019.21	0.62

### MUTUAL FUND February 24, 2021

ENDED	NAME OF FUND	NAV	OFFER	BID	NAV CHANGE
19-Feb-21	REPUBLIC CAPITAL GROWTH FUND	w 1.2109			0.0137
19-Feb-21	REPUBLIC INCOME FUND	w 1.2581			-0.0098
19-Feb-21	REPUBLIC PROPERTY FUND	w 0.6723			-0.0003
12-Feb-21	FORTRESS CARIBBEAN GROWTH FUND	w 6.6328	6.6328	6.6328	0.0857
12-Feb-21	FORTRESS HIGH INTEREST FUND - ACC.	w 2.1045			0.0035
12-Feb-21	FORTRESS HIGH INTEREST FUND - DIST.	w 1.0244			0.0017
31-Jan-21	ROYAL FIDELITY SELECT BALANCED FUND	m 5.5698	5.5698	5.4584	-0.0020
31-Jan-21	ROYAL FIDELITY STRATEGIC GROWTH FUND	m 1.0241	1.0241	1.0036	0.0000
31-Jan-21	ROYAL FIDELITY PREMIUM INCOME FUND	m 1.6429	1.6429	1.6100	-0.0006
19-Feb-21	SAGICOR GLOBAL BALANCED FUND	w 2.77			-0.01
19-Feb-21	SAGICOR SELECT GROWTH FUND	w 1.70			0.00
19-Feb-21	SAGICOR PREFERRED INCOME FUND	w 0.98			-0.01

\* Indicates the Fund is currently ex-div

NOTES: QUOTATIONS AND NET ASSET VALUE PER SHARE ARE SUPPLIED BY THE FUND MANAGEMENT. THE OFFERING PRICE INCLUDES NET ASSET VALUE PLUS ENTRY COSTS.

m = monthly valuation, q = quarterly valuation, w = weekly

### Fixed Income

	Last Trade Date	Last Close	Current Close	Bid Price	Ask Price	Bid Size	Ask Size
GOB Series B	17-Feb-21	\$60.00	\$60.00	\$60.00	\$80.00	50,000	34,828
GOB Series D	12-Nov-19	\$50.00	\$50.00				
GOB Series F	03-Nov-20	\$89.00	\$89.00				
GOB Series I	24-Mar-20	\$65.00	\$65.00		\$70.00		19,617

## NEWS

# Porsche to participate in fund-raising of electric supercar maker Rimac: Automobilwoche

FRANKFURT – Volkswagen yesterday.

Porsche is participating in a financing round of Rimac Automobili that will see the electric supercar maker raise 130 million-150 million euros (\$157 million-\$181 million), its owner Mate Rimac told weekly Automobilwoche.

The fund-raising should be completed in two to three months and another round is planned at the end of the year, Rimac told the trade journal.

Porsche owns a 15.5 per cent stake in Rimac Automobili and could raise its stake to just below 50 per cent in a deal that would also include the transfer of Volkswagen's supercar brand Bugatti to Rimac, Automobilwoche said.

Volkswagen and Rimac were not immediately available for comment

Porsche Chief Executive Oliver Blume said earlier this month that intense discussions on Bugatti's future were ongoing and that Rimac could play a role as the brands were a good technological fit, adding that a decision was expected in the first half of 2021.

Rimac has developed an electric supercar platform, which it supplies to other carmakers, including Automobili Pininfarina.

"Supercars have a limited market, the market for components is much bigger. That is why we are planning to expand our company," Rimac told Automobilwoche.

That includes plans to more than double Rimac Automobili's workforce by early 2023 to 2 500 from 1 000 currently, he said.



Government's Chief Economic Adviser, Dr. Kevin Greenidge.

# GREENIDGE OPTIMISTIC

**DR. KEVIN GREENIDGE, the Government's Chief Economic Adviser, believes the Barbados economy is going to rebound in 2021, once the country sees the back of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Discussing the progress the country has made under the BERT (Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation) programme, Dr. Greenidge said that the island's economy has benefited from the measures pursued under BERT.

The overall national debt has been dealt with, Government's fiscal position has improved, and reserves have grown to \$2.6 billion from the \$400 million. "So we are in a better position," he reasoned.

This time last year, the economy contracted three per cent but deteriorated further once COVID

showed up, ending 2020 with a decline of 18 per cent, Central Bank of Barbados data have shown.

Admitting that it is a tough position to be in, Dr. Greenidge expressed confidence "we can get out of this".

"In 2020, all economic sectors in the Barbados economy contracted with the exception of agriculture... and while overall manufacturing contracted, it will improve," he maintained.

The Economist said the world economy is expected to grow this year and that the IMF had projected global growth of about five per cent.

He admitted too that while there is need for economic diversification in Barbados, it should be done around Tourism to broaden the economic base. To him, there should be more sectoral linkages and even within tourism some activities can be diversified.

## Don't expect too much from commercial banks: Dukharan

ECONOMIST Marla Dukharan is cautioning Barbadians not to expect too much from commercial banks in terms of support during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

She has said that while the banks have done a lot, they are nonetheless restricted by the regulators on the things they can do and that their first responsibility is to protect their depositors' money.

The Economist indicated that banks are required to maintain a certain level of capital. That capital, she explained, is at risk when there is less repayment coming into the institutions.

While acknowledging that the banks are well capitalised – meaning they have room to do things, there is still a certain amount of things they cannot do.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis a year ago, the banks – which are all foreign owned – have assisted their clients by granting moratoriums on loan and credit card payments in light of those clients having lost their jobs. But pressure continues to mount on them for the services to continue, with the period for the assistance having come to an end.

However, Dukharan believes that businesses which make sacrifices to keep on their workers should be given some assistance.

"People think banks are profitable and should be more lenient, but there are limits to what they can do," she added.



Economist, Marla Dukharan.

# UN Human Rights Office says 18 killed in Myanmar crackdown

**YANGON, Myanmar – Security forces in Myanmar opened fire and made mass arrests on Sunday as they sought to break up protests against the military’s seizure of power, and a UN human rights official said it had “credible information” that 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded.**

That would be the highest single-day death toll among protesters who are demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power after being ousted by a Feb. 1 coup. About 1,000 people are believed to have been detained on Sunday.

“Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of live

ammunition fired into crowds in Yangon, Dawei, Mandalay, Myeik, Bago and Pokokku,” the UN Human Rights Office said in a statement referring to several cities, adding that the forces also used tear gas, flash-bang grenades and stun grenades.

“We strongly condemn the escalating violence against protests in Myanmar and call on the military to immediately halt the use of force against peaceful protesters,” its spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani was quoted saying.

An Associated Press journalist was taken into police custody on Saturday morning while providing news coverage of the protests. The jour-

nalist, Thein Zaw, remains in police custody.

The Democratic Voice of Burma reported that as of 5 p.m. in Myanmar, there had been 19 confirmed deaths in nine cities, with another 10 deaths unconfirmed. The independent media company broadcasts on satellite and digital terrestrial television, as well as online.

DVB counted five deaths in Yangon and two in Mandalay, the largest and second-largest cities.

It registered five deaths in Dawei, a much smaller city in southeastern Myanmar that has seen tens of thousands of protesters nearly every day since the coup. Witnesses said Sunday’s march was also large and people were determined not to be



**In this image from a video, medics attend to a man in a street in Dawei, Myanmar, on Sunday.** (DAKKHINA INSIGHT VIA AP)

driven off the streets.

Confirming the deaths of protesters has been difficult amid the chaos and general lack of news from official sources, especially in areas outside Yangon, Mandalay and the capital of Naypyitaw. But in many cases, photos and video circulated showed circumstances of the killings and gruesome photos of bod-

ies.

The independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners reported it was aware that about 1,000 people were detained Sunday, of whom they were able to identify 270. That brought to 1,132 the total number of people the group has confirmed being arrested, charged or sentenced since the coup.

Gunfire was reported almost as soon the protests began Sunday morning in Yangon, as police also fired tear gas and water cannons while trying to clear the streets. Photos of shell casings from live ammunition used in assault rifles were posted on social media.

Initial reports on social media identified one young man believed to have been killed. His body was shown in photos and videos lying on a sidewalk until other protesters carried him away.

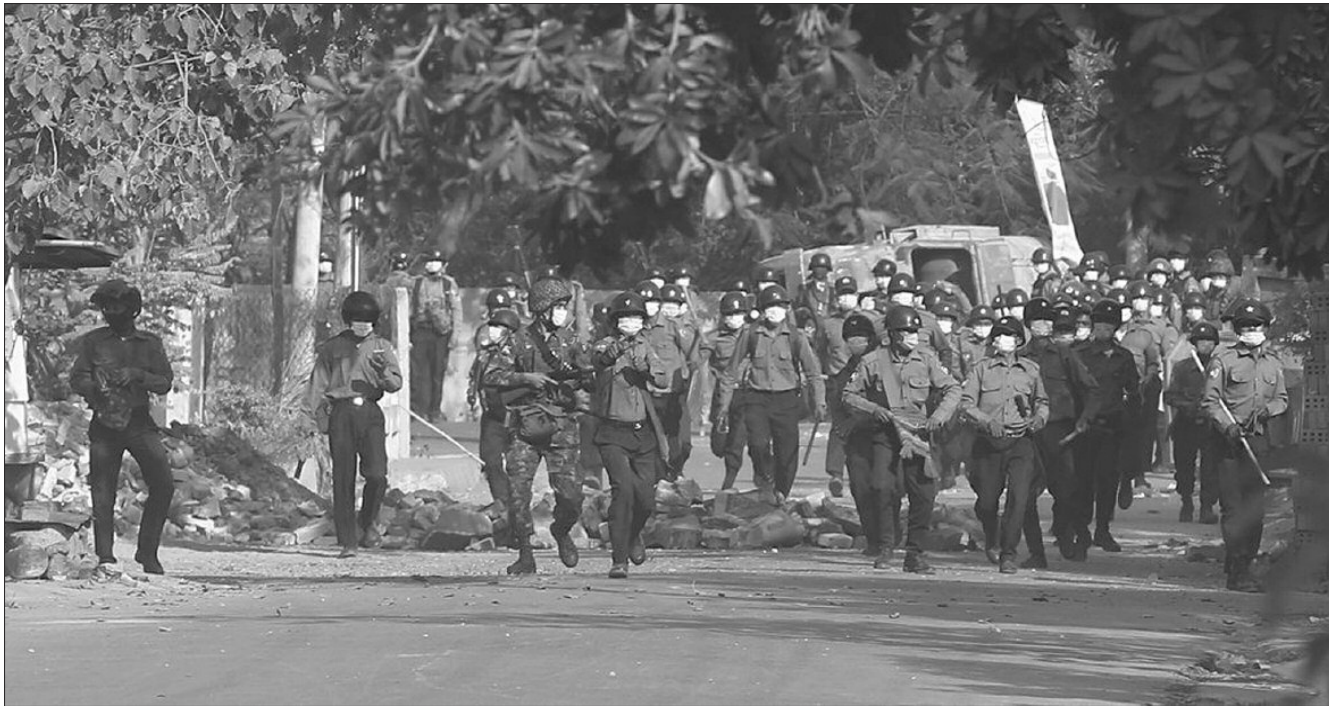
In Dawei, local media reported at least three people were killed during a protest march, supported by photos and video. Photos on social

media showed one wounded man in the care of medical personnel.

Before Sunday, there had been eight confirmed reports of killings linked to the army’s take-over, according to the independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners.

The Feb. 1 coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party would have been installed for a second five-year term in office, but the army blocked Parliament from convening and detained her and President Win Myint, as well as other top members of Suu Kyi’s government.

“The world is watching the actions of the Myanmar military junta, and will hold them accountable,” said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for New York-based Human Rights Watch. “Live ammunition should not be used to control or disperse protests and lethal force can only be used to protect life or prevent serious injury.”



**Myanmar riot police during a protest against the military coup in Mandalay.** (AP PHOTO)

## Families wait as Nigerian security forces search for 300 abducted girls

**GUSAU, Nigeria –** Relatives of more than 300 girls abducted by gunmen from their boarding school in northwest Nigeria endured an agonising wait for news amid rumours that they had been released, while security forces continued their search on Sunday.

An armed gang kidnapped 317 girls from the Government Girls Science Secondary School in the town of Jangebe, in Zamfara state, at around 1 a.m. on Friday.

Two Reuters’ correspondents saw a heavy mili-

tary presence in state capital Gusau on Sunday, with army trucks moving in convoy and police checkpoints on major roads.

Zamfara police have worked alongside the army in a search-and-rescue operation since Friday.

The raid in Zamfara state was the second such kidnapping in little over a week in the northwest of the country, where schools have become targets for mass kidnappings for ransom. Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari on Friday urged state governments not to reward

“bandits” with money or vehicles.

School kidnappings were first carried out by jihadist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province but the tactic has now been adopted by other militants whose agenda is unclear.

On Saturday, gunmen released 27 teenage boys who had been kidnapped from their school on Feb. 17 in neighbouring Niger state.

Parents in Zamfara are hopeful that they too will receive good news.

Balarabe Kagara, whose

two 14-year-old daughters are among those taken, said he was praying for their safe return and remained hopeful.

“I will be very happy if I see my daughters,” the 54-year-old farmer said, his voice cracking with emotion, while sitting on a mattress on the floor and gazing at pictures of the two girls.

Rumours circulated on social media on Sunday that the girls had been released. They prompted Zamfara state government to issue a statement in which it said the gover-

nor Bello Matawalle was unhappy that someone would “try to further hurt the victims’ parents” with “falsehood”.

Abubakar Isa, whose 17-year-old daughter is among those missing, said his hopes and those of other parents were initially lifted by the rumour.

“We heard that they will be released today, so we gathered at the school premises to receive them but it turned out to be rumours,” he told Reuters by telephone.

Isa said Saturday’s release of the boys taken in

Niger gave him hope, but he remained fearful of the gunmen’s motives.

On Friday, Zamfara’s governor ordered all boarding schools to close immediately.

At his home in Gusau, Kagara said he was unsure about whether children would eventually return to school.

“If there is enough security, I believe people will return their children to school,” he said. “But if there is no security, nobody will think of taking their children to school again.”

# Experts concerned about Pope trip to Iraq

**VATICAN CITY – Infectious disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.**

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip is expected to provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians while furthering the Vatican's bridge-building efforts with the Muslim world.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, as well as the public health message it sends, a papal trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

Their concerns were reinforced with the news on Sunday that the Vatican ambassador to Iraq, the main point person for the trip who would have escorted Francis to all his appointments, tested positive for COVID-19 and was



**Iraqi security forces pass by Iraq and the Vatican flags and posters announcing visit of the Pope Francis in a street in Qaraqosh, Iraq. (AP/Photo/Hadi Mizban)**

self-isolating.

In an email to The Associated Press, the embassy said Archbishop Mitja Leskovar's symptoms were mild and that he was continuing to prepare for Francis' visit.

Beyond his case, experts note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of

Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new COVID-19 infections are the highly-contagious variant first identified in Britain.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr. Navid Madani, virologist and

founding director of the Center for Science Health Education in the Middle East and North Africa at Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The Iranian-born Madani co-authored an article in The Lancet last year on the region's un-

even response to COVID-19, noting that Iraq, Syria and Yemen were poorly placed to cope, given they are still struggling with extremist insurgencies and have 40 million people who need humanitarian aid.

In a telephone interview, Madani said Middle

Easterners are known for their hospitality, and cautioned that the enthusiasm among Iraqis of welcoming a peace-maker like Francis to a neglected, war-torn part of the world might lead to inadvertent violations of virus control measures.

"This could potentially lead to unsafe or super-spreading risks," she said.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, an infectious disease control expert at the University of Exeter College of Medicine, concurred.

"It's a perfect storm for generating lots of cases which you won't be able to deal with," he said.

Organizers promise to enforce mask mandates, social distancing and crowd limits, as well as the possibility of increased testing sites, two Iraqi government officials said.

The health care protocols are "critical but can be managed," one government official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity.

And the Vatican has taken its own precautions, with the 84-year-old pope, his 20-member Vatican entourage and the 70-plus journalists on the papal plane all vaccinated.

## Germany to tighten COVID controls at French border

**BERLIN, Germany –** Germany on Sunday declared France's COVID-battered Moselle region a high-risk area for virus variants, prompting tougher entry rules for visitors at the border.

France's eastern Moselle region is now classed as an area "at particularly high risk of infection due to widespread occurrence of SARS-CoV-2 virus variants", Germany's Robert Koch Institute for disease control announced.

From Tuesday, travellers from Moselle – which lies next to Germany's Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate states – will need to be able to show a fresh negative coronavirus test.

Germany has already introduced tough checks at its land borders with the Czech Republic and Austria's Tyrol region, ignoring calls from Brussels to keep frontiers

within the European Union open.

At those crossings, only Germans and non-German residents are allowed to enter, as well as lorry drivers and cross-border commuters working in certain categories of jobs.

Every vehicle is stopped and occupants must produce a negative test that is less than 48 hours old.

The checks on the German side of the Moselle crossing are expected to be less strict, a German interior ministry spokesman told AFP.

Instead of systematic checks, police would randomly stop vehicles on the German side and ask drivers to show "a negative test and their online entry registration", he said.

Germany has grown increasingly concerned in recent weeks about the rapid spread of new, more

contagious strains of the coronavirus, especially those first detected in Britain and South Africa.

The coronavirus, including the more dangerous South African variant, is spreading faster in Moselle than elsewhere in France but French officials have pleaded with Berlin to avoid a full closure of the border.

The German classification "normally implies the extremely strict measure of a quasi-closure of borders", France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune said on Sunday.

"We don't want that," he said, adding that talks were ongoing with Berlin to find solutions for the 16,000 commuters who travel between Moselle and Germany every day for work.

The German interior ministry spokesman said the two neighbours would discuss details of the border implications today.

## At least two killed in skirmish at Chad opposition candidate's house

**N'DJAMENA –** At least two people were killed after security forces went to arrest Chad's opposition candidate Yaya Dillo at his home on Sunday morning, Dillo and the government said.

Dillo, who plans to run against President Idriss Deby in a presidential election in April, told Reuters he was attacked at home by members of the presidential guard and that five family members were killed, including his mother.

The government said in a statement that security forces went to Dillo's home to arrest him after he refused to respond to two judicial mandates and were met with armed resistance. It did not say what the mandates were concerning.

Two people were killed and five wounded in the ensuing fight, including three policemen, it said.

Internet has been cut in the capital N'Djamena

since early Sunday morning, said a Reuters witness.

Internet monitor NetBlocks said Internet disruption in the central African country was ongoing. Real-time data showed national connectivity was down to 60% of ordinary levels since 9:30 am local time (0830 GMT).

Dillo said his gate was crushed by an armoured vehicle and his house has been surrounded by government forces since the incident.

Videos shared on Twitter showed a Chadian military tank moving on a house, while a crowd pelted it with objects. Another video showed several similar armoured vehicles lining a street. Reuters has not verified the videos.

Dillo is a formal rebel leader who fought against Deby in 2006 before joining his government and becoming a minister. More recently, he served as

Chad's representative to the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC).

He is one of 16 people who have announced they will run against Deby in April's election.

Deby, who has been in power since 1990, pushed through a new constitution in 2018 that reinstated term limits but could let him stay in power until 2033.

Hundreds took to the streets earlier this month to protest his candidacy in the upcoming election.

Deby has faced strikes and protests in recent years over economic woes caused by low oil prices and armed rebellions in the north, but has drawn on his effective control of state media and institutions to maintain political dominance.

Chad is a key ally of Western nations in the fight against Islamist militants in West and Central Africa.

# Israel approves plan to vaccinate West Bank laborers

**ISRAEL on Sunday announced plans to vaccinate tens of thousands of Palestinians who work inside Israel and its West Bank settlements, at a time of vast disparities in access to vaccines between the Israeli and Palestinian populations.**

Israel has launched one of the world's most successful vaccination programs, inoculating over half of its population in just two months. But it has come under international criticism for not sharing its vaccine stockpile with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, even as it plans to share surplus vaccines with far-flung allies in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

The Israeli government approved the program for Palestinian workers to

“maintain public health and the functioning of the economy,” said COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs. It said the program is expected to begin in the coming days.

It said the vaccines would be administered by Israeli medical teams at various checkpoints and industrial zones across the West Bank.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has moved aggressively to vaccinate Israel's population, securing deals with drug makers Pfizer and Moderna to ensure enough supplies for Israel's 9.3 million people. He expects to have the vast majority of the adult population vaccinated by the end of March.

But before Sunday's announcement, Israel has shared just 2,000 vaccines

with the Palestinian Authority to protect front-line medical workers in the West Bank.

The Israeli program should provide some relief to the Palestinians, who have obtained just a few thousand vaccines on their own and were forced over the weekend to impose a new lockdown to control the latest coronavirus outbreak in the West Bank. Some 110,000 West Bank Palestinians have permits to work inside Israel or in the settlements.

The gap between Israel and the Palestinians has illustrated the global inequity between rich and poor nations in terms of access to vaccines.

UN officials and human rights groups have expressed concerns over the disparity, saying Israel is an occupying power that is responsible for the well-

being of the Palestinians. Israel says that under interim peace accords of the 1990s, it has no such responsibility. Israel has immunized its own Arab population, including Palestinians who live in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Netanyahu came under criticism last week when he announced that he was sharing small quantities of surplus vaccines with diplomatic allies. An Israeli TV station said the countries included Honduras, Guatemala, Chad and Mauritania.

US Sen. Bernie Sanders said it was “outrageous that Netanyahu would use spare vaccines to reward his foreign allies while so many Palestinians in the occupied territories are still waiting”. The plan was later frozen due to legal questions in Israel.

# Kremlin critic Navalny moved to penal colony outside Moscow to serve jail term

POKROV, Russia – Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has been transferred to a penal colony outside Moscow to serve his prison sentence, a public commission said on Sunday, weeks after he returned to Russia after being poisoned.

Navalny's whereabouts had been unknown since Thursday when his allies learned that he was transferred out of one of Moscow's most infamous jails to an undisclosed location.

Navalny, 44, was arrested on his return from Germany last month and has been sentenced to more than 2-1/2 years for parole violations that he said were trumped up.

He has been transferred to a penal colony in the Vladimir region, the Moscow Public Monitoring Commission that defends the rights of prisoners and has access to people in custody, said on its website.

The state news agency TASS specified that Navalny will serve his term in penal colony number 2 in the town of Pokrov, about 100 km (60 miles) east of Moscow.

Reuters pictures showed metallic grey buildings behind a grey fence and barbed wire inside the colony, as well as the gold domes of a church. A guard at the gate asked reporters to keep a distance of at least 100 metres (yards) if they wanted to film it.

Ruslan Vakhapov, a local activist of the prisoners' rights group Jailed Russia, described conditions as particularly se-

vere.

“In short, it's a bad colony,” Ruslan Vakhapov told Reuters by phone.

Many prisoners cooperate with the colony administration and help them to control other inmates closely, abusing them if they violate a strict daily schedule, Vakhapov said.

“If there is a need to prevent Navalny from communicating with others, nobody would talk to him,” the activist said.

“(If anything happens), he wouldn't be able to ask for help until his lawyer arrives,” he added.

A duty officer who took a call at the prison declined to answer questions about Navalny.

Navalny will be quarantined as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus before joining other prisoners in the colony, the monitoring commission said, according to the RIA news agency.

Earlier on Sunday a Navalny ally, Leonid Volkov, called on Twitter for authorities to provide official information about his whereabouts and access to him by his lawyers.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, suffered a near-fatal poisoning in Siberia in August with what many Western nations said was a nerve agent. Navalny accuses Putin of ordering his attempted murder.

Putin has dismissed that, alleging Navalny is part of a US-backed dirty tricks campaign to discredit him.

# Cuomo backs down on plan to pick lawyer to review his alleged sexual misconduct

NEW YORK Governor Andrew Cuomo's office backed down on its plan to choose an investigator to review sexual harassment allegations against him, saying on Sunday it had instead asked the state's attorney general and an appeals court judge to pick a lawyer to conduct an independent review.

Cuomo, one of the nation's most well-known Democratic politicians whose popularity soared during the early months of the pandemic, has faced a string of controversies in recent weeks including how his administration handled high numbers of COVID-19 deaths in the state's nursing homes.

Cuomo's administration said it wanted the probe to be done “in a manner beyond reproach” after two former aides came forward in recent days to make accusations of sexual misconduct by the governor, which he has denied.

It said that on Saturday it had selected a former federal judge, Barbara Jones, to lead the investigation, but wanted now to avoid “even the percep-

tion of a lack of independence or inference of politics.”

It said it had asked the Attorney General of New York State and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals to jointly select an independent lawyer without political affiliation to conduct a thorough review and issue a public report.

“All members of the Governor's office will co-operate fully. We will have no further comment until the report is issued,” special counsel to Cuomo Beth Garvey said in a statement.



**New York Governor Andrew Cuomo speaks during a news conference at a vaccination site in the Brooklyn borough of New York, US, on February 22, 2021.**

# Norway's capital tightens lockdown to fight faster virus spread

OSLO – Norway's capital Oslo will tighten lockdown measures to combat a sharp rise in coronavirus infections linked to a more contagious variant, the city's governing mayor said on Sunday.

The variant, which was first identified in Britain, started spreading in Oslo in January and now accounts for 50-70% of infections, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI) said on Saturday.

On Friday, Oslo registered a daily record of 245 new coronavirus infections.

“We have to tighten the measures,” Raymond Johansen, the governing mayor of Oslo, told a news conference.

The infection numbers rose due to increased mobility, faster virus spread, as well as more testing, he added.

In Oslo, all restaurants, except take-away services,

and non-essential shops, except groceries, pharmacies and liquor stores, will have to close from Tuesday, while the “red” level is imposed at upper secondary schools, meaning that students, who were fully back at school, will now do some online learning.

All organised outdoor leisure activities for adults, as well as private gatherings and home visits should be avoided,

except for kids, Johansen said.

The city also planned to start mass testing at schools later in March to better track the virus spread.

Oslo has already closed shopping centres due to the spread of the more contagious variant in January.

As of Feb. 25, the nation of 5.4 million has vaccinated close to 320,000 people with a first dose,

and nearly 150,000 have received two doses, according to data from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

Norway's 14-day cumulative number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants was at 70 in the week ending Feb. 21, the third-lowest in Europe behind Iceland and Liechtenstein, data from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control showed.

# TikTok agrees legal payout over facial recognition

**TIKTOK has agreed to pay \$92m (£66m) to settle a lawsuit accusing it of misusing artificial intelligence to track and store users' data.**

A group challenge alleged it breached laws by using software to recognise facial features in user videos and algorithms to identify age, gender and ethnicity.

It also alleged that user data was sent to China.

TikTok denied any wrongdoing but said it wanted to avoid a court case.

The case alleged that facial-recognition data collected by TikTok was used to track and profile users for the purpose of ad targeting, among other things.

TikTok said in a statement: "While we disagree with the assertions, rather than go through lengthy litigation, we'd like to focus our efforts on building a safe and joyful experience for the TikTok community."

If the settlement is agreed by a federal judge,



**TikTok has faced previous allegations about its use of customer data.**

the money will be divided up among US-based TikTok users. The case was heard in Illinois, which has strict laws around the use of biometrics.

The firm has also agreed to state in its privacy policy whether the apps collect users' biometric information or GPS data, as well as whether it stores or transmits user data outside the US.

Ray Walsh, a digital-privacy expert at virtual private network provider

ProPrivacy said; "That TikTok has opted to pay such a massive settlement in this privacy case suggests it knows it would not win.

"It is obvious that TikTok has the money to fight the case and yet it is choosing to pay a huge sum in order to make the case go away. The app's Chinese owner, ByteDance, obviously feels it is better off cutting its losses... than gaining more bad press further down the line."

ByteDance has faced similar claims before and in 2019 settled another case about violating the privacy of its young users.

However, it has strenuously denied that it sends any US data to China - one of the allegations from the former Trump administration when it sought to ban TikTok in the US over security concerns.

That move is currently in abeyance.

# Judge approves \$650 million Facebook privacy lawsuit settlement

**SAN FRANCISCO – A federal judge on Friday approved a \$650 million settlement of a privacy lawsuit against Facebook for allegedly using photo face-tagging and other biometric data without the permission of its users.**

US District Judge James Donato approved the deal in a class-action lawsuit that was filed in Illinois in 2015. Nearly 1.6 million Facebook users in Illinois who submitted claims will be affected.

Donato called it one of the largest settlements ever for a privacy violation.

"It will put at least \$345 into the hands of every class member interested in being compensated," he wrote, calling it "a major win for consumers in the hotly contested area of digital privacy."

Jay Edelson, a Chicago attorney who filed the lawsuit, told the Chicago Tribune that the checks could be in the mail within two months unless the

ruling is appealed.

"We are pleased to have reached a settlement so we can move past this matter, which is in the best interest of our community and our shareholders," Facebook, which is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, said in a statement.

The lawsuit accused the social media giant of violating an Illinois privacy law by failing to get consent before using facial-recognition technology to scan photos uploaded by users to create and store faces digitally.

The state's Biometric Information Privacy Act allowed consumers to sue companies that didn't get permission before harvesting data such as faces and fingerprints.

The case eventually wound up as a class-action lawsuit in California.

Facebook has since changed its photo-tagging system.

# Russia launches satellite to monitor climate in Arctic

**MOSCOW – Russia launched its space satellite Arktika-M yesterday on a mission to monitor the climate and environment in the Arctic amid a push by the Kremlin to expand the country's activities in the region.**

The Arctic has warmed more than twice as fast as the global average over the last three decades and Moscow is seeking to develop the energy-rich region, investing in the Northern Sea Route for shipping across its long northern flank as ice melts.

The satellite successfully reached its intended orbit after being launched from Kazakhstan's Baikonur cosmodrome by a Soyuz rocket, Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia's Roscosmos space agency, said in a post on Twitter.

plans to send up a second satellite in 2023 and, combined, the two will offer round-the-clock, all-weather monitoring of the Arctic Ocean and the



**Russia's Arktika-M spacecraft for monitoring climate and environment in the Arctic region, during lift-off from the launchpad in Kazakhstan on February 28.**

surface of the Earth, Roscosmos said.

The Arktika-M will have a highly elliptical

orbit that passes high over northern latitudes allowing it to monitor northern regions for

lengthy periods before it loops back down under Earth.

At the right orbit, the

satellite will be able to monitor and take images every 15-30 minutes of the Arctic, which can't be

continuously observed by satellites that orbit above the Earth's equator, Roscosmos said.

The satellite will also be able to retransmit distress signals from ships, aircraft or people in remote areas as part of the international Cospas-Sarsat satellite-based search and rescue programme, Roscosmos said.

"As more activity takes place in the Arctic and as it moves into higher latitudes, improving weather and ice forecasting abilities is crucial," said Mia Bennett, a geographer at the University of Hong Kong.

"There is also an element of data nationalism that is feeding into all this. Countries, especially those that see themselves as space powers, want to be able to rely on their own satellites and data to inform their activities, whether commercial or military in nature," she said.

## Archaeologists uncover ancient ceremonial carriage near Pompeii

**ROME – Archaeologists have unearthed a unique ancient-Roman ceremonial carriage from a villa just outside Pompeii, the city buried in a volcanic eruption in 79 AD.**

The almost perfectly preserved four-wheeled carriage made of iron, bronze and tin was found near the stables of an ancient villa at Civita Giuliana, around 700 metres (yards) north of the walls of ancient Pompeii.

Massimo Osanna, the outgoing director of the Pompeii archaeological site, said the carriage was the first of its kind discovered in the area, which had so far yielded functional vehicles used for transport and work, but not for ceremonies.

“This is an extraordinary discovery that advances our understanding of the ancient world,” Osanna said, adding that the carriage would have “accompanied festive moments for the community, (such as) parades and processions”.



**A photo handout by the archaeological park of Pompeii shows a detail of a large Roman four-wheeled ceremonial chariot after it was discovered near The archaeological park in Pompeii.**

The culture ministry called it “a unique find, without any precedent in Italy”.

Pompeii, 23 km (14 miles) southeast of Naples, was home to about 13 000 people when it was buried under ash, pumice pebbles and dust as it endured the force of an eruption equivalent to

many atomic bombs.

About two-thirds of the 66-hectare (165-acre) ancient town has been uncovered. The ruins were not discovered until the 16th century and organised excavations began in about 1750.

“Pompeii continues to amaze us with

its discoveries and it will do so for many years, with 20 hectares still to be dug up,” said Culture Minister Dario Franceschini.

A rare documentation of Greco-Roman life, Pompeii is one of Italy’s most popular attractions and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## Amazon rainforest plots sold via Facebook Marketplace ads

**PARTS of Brazil’s Amazon rainforest are being illegally sold on Facebook, the BBC has discovered.**

The protected areas include national forests and land reserved for indigenous peoples.

Some of the plots listed via Facebook’s classified ads service are as large as 1 000 football pitches.

Facebook said it was “ready to work with local authorities”, but indicated it would not take independent action of its own to halt the trade.

“Our commerce policies require buyers and sellers to comply with laws and regulations,” the Californian tech firm added.

The leader of one of the indigenous communities affected has urged the tech firm to do more.

And campaigners have claimed the country’s government is unwilling to halt the sales.

“The land invaders feel very empowered to the point that they are not ashamed of going on Facebook to make illegal land deals,” said Ivaneide Bandeira, head of environmental NGO Kanindé.

Anyone can find the illegally invaded plots by typing the Portuguese equivalents for search terms like “forest”, “native jungle” and “timber” into Facebook Marketplace’s search tool, and picking one of the Amazonian states as the location.

Some of the listings feature satellite images and GPS co-ordinates.

Many of the sellers openly admit they do not have a land title, the only document which proves ownership of land under Brazilian law.

The illegal activity is being fuelled by

Brazil’s cattle ranching industry.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon is at a ten-year high, and Facebook’s Marketplace has become a go-to site for sellers like Fabricio Guimarães, who was filmed by a hidden camera.

“There’s no risk of an inspection by state agents here,” he said as he walked through a patch of rainforest he had burnt to the ground.

With the land illegally cleared and ready for farming, he had tripled his initial asking price to \$35 000 (£25 000).

Fabricio is not a farmer. He has steady middle-class job in a city, and views the rainforest as being an investment opportunity.

The BBC later contacted Fabricio for his response to its investigation but he declined to comment.

Many of the ads came from Rondônia, the most deforested state in Brazil’s rainforest region.

The BBC arranged meetings between four sellers from the state and an undercover operative posing as a lawyer claiming to represent wealthy investors.

One man, called Alvim Souza Alves, was trying to sell a plot inside the Uru Eu Wau Wau indigenous reserve for about £16 400 in local currency.

It is the home to a community of more than 200 Uru Eu Wau Wau people. And at least five further groups that have had no contact with the outside world also live there, according to the Brazilian government.

However, at the meeting, Alves claimed: “There are no Indians [sic] there. From where my land is, they are 50km [31 miles] away. I am not going to

tell you that at one time or another they are not walking around.”

The BBC showed the Facebook ad to community leader Bitaté Uru Eu Wau Wau.

He said the lot was in an area used by his community to hunt, fish and collect fruits.

“This is a lack of respect,” he said.

“I don’t know these people. I think their objective is to deforest the indigenous land, to deforest what is standing. To deforest our lives, you could say.”

He said the authorities should intervene, and also urged Facebook – “the most accessed social media platform” – to take action of its own.

Another factor driving the illegal land market is the expectation of amnesty.

Alves revealed he was working with others to lobby politicians to help them legally own stolen land.

“I’ll tell you the truth: if this is not solved with [President] Bolsonaro there, it won’t be solved anymore,” he said of the current government.

A common strategy is to deforest the land and then plead with politicians to abolish its protected status, on the basis it no longer serves its original purpose.

The land grabbers can then officially buy the plots from the government, thereby legalising their claims.

Alves took the BBC’s undercover reporter to meet a man he described as the leader of the Curupira Association. Brazil’s federal police have described the group as being an illegal land-grabbing operation focused on invading indigenous territory.

The two men told the reporter that

high-profile politicians were helping them set up meetings with government agencies in the capital Brasília.

They said their main ally was congressman Colonel Chrisóstomo, a member of the Social Liberal Party, which Bolsonaro used to be a member of until he founded his own party in 2019.

When contacted by the BBC, Colonel Chrisóstomo acknowledged having helped arrange meetings, but said he did not know the group was involved in land invasions.

“They didn’t tell me,” he said. “If they invaded [the land], they don’t have my support anymore.”

When asked if he regretted setting up the meetings, he said: “No.”

The BBC contacted Alves for his response but he declined to comment.

The BBC also approached Brazil’s Minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles.

He said: “President Jair Bolsonaro’s government has always made it clear that his is a zero-tolerance government for any crime, including environmental ones.”

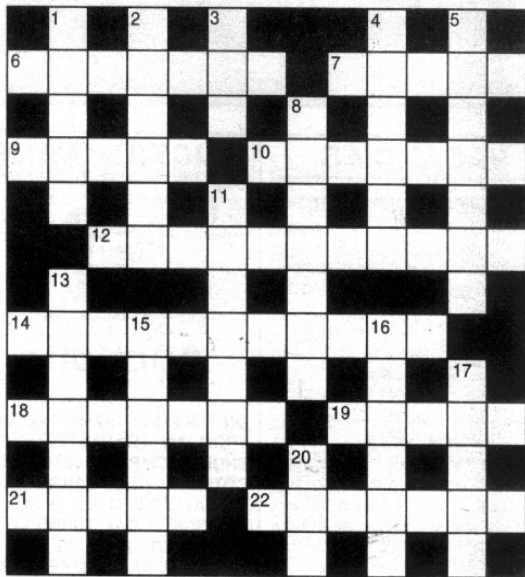
The government has cut the inspections budget for Ibama, the federal agency that in charge of regulating deforestation, by 40 per cent.

However, Salles said the coronavirus pandemic had hampered law enforcement in the Amazon, and that state governments also bore responsibility for the deforestation.

“This year the government has created operation Verde Brasil 2, which seeks to control illegal deforestation, illegal fires, and to join efforts between the federal government and the states,” he added.

# Quick Crossword

No 15,097



**ACROSS**

- 6. Respectability (7)
- 7. Inexpensive (5)
- 9. Seize (5)
- 10. Opposite (7)
- 12. Remorseless (11)
- 14. Agreeing (11)
- 18. Assert (7)
- 19. Leap (5)
- 21. Employees (5)
- 22. Gather (7)

**DOWN**

- 1. Centre (5)
- 2. Motive (6)
- 3. Freeze (3)
- 4. Menace (6)
- 5. Transitory (7)
- 8. Protection (7)
- 11. Merrymaking (7)
- 13. Speech (7)
- 15. Exaltation (6)
- 16. Almost (6)
- 17. Variegate (5)
- 20. Summit (3)

**SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE No 15,096**

**Across:** 1 Commercial; 7 Cider; 8 Transit; 10 Overseer; 11 Vain; 13 Nearly; 15 Serene; 17 Apse; 18 Toboggan; 21 Trawler; 22 Amass; 23 Ingredient.  
**Down:** 1 Cadge; 2 Morosely; 3 Esteem; 4 Clap; 5 Assuage; 6 Accountant; 9 Tenderness; 12 Detonate; 14 Abstain; 16 Horrid; 19 Grant; 20 Slur.

# Bridge

## Famous Hand

West dealer.  
Both sides vulnerable.

**NORTH**

- ♠ K J 5
- ♥ 7
- ♦ A Q 7 4
- ♣ K Q 9 4 2

**WEST**

- ♠ A 4 3
- ♥ 8 4 3 2
- ♦ K 9 6
- ♣ A 10 7

**EAST**

- ♠ Q 10 7 6
- ♥ 10 5
- ♦ J 10 5 3 2
- ♣ 6 3

**SOUTH**

- ♠ 9 8 2
- ♥ A K Q J 9 6
- ♦ 8
- ♣ J 8 5

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥

Opening lead four of spades.

Back in 1935, Ely and Jo Culbertson played a long challenge match against Hal and Dorothy Sims. Although it did not stir up as much public interest as the famous Lenz-Culbertson encounter two years earlier, the match was followed with great interest by most of the faithful in the bridge world.

Sims, a giant of a man with a dominating personality, was one of

the great card players of all time. He had an unerring instinct for good card play that produced the best possible result in virtually every hand.

But in this deal, Sims, South, met his match in the person of the brilliant but shy Jo Culbertson, who chose the four of spades as her opening lead against four hearts!

The underlead of an ace against a suit contract is a practice severely frowned upon in expert circles. But Mrs. Culbertson reasoned that Sims' unwillingness to play three notrump stemmed from a weakness in spades and that dummy was correspondingly marked with some spade strength by virtue of her three-notrump bid.

So Jo, taking advantage of what seemed an ideal occasion in view of the bidding, underled the ace of spades. After studying the situation at length, Sims played low from dummy, hoping Mrs. Culbertson had led low from either the ten or the queen, or both. Ely won with the ten and returned a club to his wife's ace, whereupon Jo led a low spade again!

Sims glared at Jo for quite a while before finally deciding she wouldn't dare underlead an ace twice against the likes of himself. Accordingly, he played the jack from dummy. Ely won with the queen and returned a spade to Jo's ace, and a scarlet-faced Sims went down one.

Tomorrow: Misdirection play.

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Johnny Briggs, with children (left to right) Mark, Stephanie, and Michael after collecting an MBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

## Coronation Street star Johnny Briggs dies aged 85

**ACTOR JOHNNY BRIGGS, who played Mike Baldwin in Coronation Street for 30 years, has died aged 85.**

His family said he died peacefully after "a long illness, with family by his side" and asked for privacy to "remember the wonderful times we had".

Briggs was made an MBE in the New Year's Honours in 2007, the year after his character left the ITV soap. Baldwin's affair with Deidre Barlow and his feud with her husband, Ken, were a long-running

ratings hit for the show.

Coronation Street colleagues have paid tribute to Briggs calling him a "wonderful actor" and describing Mike Baldwin as "one of the most iconic characters the Street has ever known".

William Roache, who played Baldwin's long-term rival Ken Barlow, said Briggs was a "strong character who will be greatly missed".

"Mike Baldwin and Ken Barlow were arch enemies for many years, but as an actor, Johnny was

impeccable, always good, and I was so fortunate to have worked with him for so many years," he said.

Sue Nicholls, who plays Audrey Roberts, said he was "a great friend" and was "always fun to be around".

"He played the part of Mike Baldwin so well that, despite all Mike's ducking and diving, you were always on his side," she said.

Helen Worth, who plays Gail Platt on the cobbles, said he was "one of the Street's most memorable characters".

# SUDOKU

NO. 5510

RATING: MEDIUM

	4				3	1		
1				8	7			5
		5						2
	5	6			9			
	1							
3	7	8			6		4	
6		7		5			8	
5		1		3				
4		3	9		1	7	5	2

Yesterday's Solution

4	8	9	5	7	1	6	3	2
1	2	6	3	9	8	4	5	7
7	3	5	4	2	6	8	9	1
3	1	7	6	5	2	9	8	4
5	9	4	7	8	3	1	2	6
2	6	8	9	1	4	3	7	5
6	7	3	8	4	5	2	1	9
8	5	1	2	6	9	7	4	3
9	4	2	1	3	7	5	6	8

Fill the grid so that every column, every row, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9

There's no maths involved- you solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic

Solution tomorrow

Tips at [www.sudoku.com](http://www.sudoku.com)

Comments or queries?

Direct them to [sudoku@barbadosadvocate.com](mailto:sudoku@barbadosadvocate.com)

# SPORTS

## Test captain Jason Holder always part of short format set up

WEST INDIES Test captain Jason Holder has always been in the set up for the limited overs version of the game.

This was the assertion from coach of the West Indies Phil Simmons who spoke to the media during a virtual press conference yesterday.

Simmons pointed out that his exclusion last year during the tours for England and New Zealand was because of the short turn around from the

different formats and they chose to prioritize the Test match for the Test captain.

Holder has appeared on the squad for all three formats of the game with his all round ability in the game.

Also included are some new faces and Simmons said he is excited not only about the bowling aspect of the two additions in Akeal Hosein and Kevin Sinclair but also the energy he has seen

them bring on the field.

It means they have been doing something that has interested us in the format that they have been chosen for said the coach.

However though there are three T20 games scheduled Simmons said that they don't have plans to rotate the team in order to see everyone as their priority is also to win the series.

The key to winning the series will be

“how we can limit their batsmen and how much we can assess the game as soon as possible,” said Simmons, as in the short format of the games there are batsmen who can hit the ball right down the order.

With a long summer of home tours ahead, Simmons said that they will look at each series as it comes as everyone knows that though there is a goal in mind there is also a process in order to reach it. (CG)



**Coach of the West Indies cricket team Phil Simmons**

## Road to the World Cup starts now

By Corey Greaves

**COACH of the West Indies cricket team Phil Simmons is looking to build a team for the T20 World Cup and believes the process begins from now.**

Simmons was speaking during a virtual press conference yesterday about the upcoming home series against Sri Lanka to be played in Antigua.

The shortest version of the game will get things going from March 3rd and there has been the recall of two of the region's senior veterans of the game Chris Gayle and Fidel Edwards.

Simmons acknowledged that both players will boost the team as they have been in form during recent competitions for various franchises despite their age.

With the ultimate goal to build a team

for the World Cup later this year, Simmons said this will be the start so they can see how the makeup of the final championship team will be.

Simmons said that the goal is to identify who will bat at the top of the order or middle as well as identifying as soon as possible who will bowl the new ball and who will bowl at the depth.

“It starts from now so when we play Australia in July we know.”

Despite some of the batsmen chosen maybe seen as opening batsmen, Simmons pointed out that “when we get to the game there is no set position they got to do what they have to do for the team whenever they are asked to do it.”

He even laughed and said that one may even see Gayle coming in at number six when the spinners come on.

Edwards has maintained his rapid

pace and shown he can still bowl around 90 mph with control at any stage of the game.

Simmons said he is part of the selection panel and he totally agrees with the fitness stance by the Cricket West Indies (CWI).

He said with the standard of fitness set for now it ensures that a certain standard of professionalism can be maintained. However he noted that though this is the minimum standard it will be moved up and moved up until they get to the stage where they are unbelievable.

Though fitness is one aspect of the improvement for the players Simmons said that the coaching staff is there to facilitate the players improvement as they work on weaknesses and strengths and even nutrition.

## Simmons' hundred propels Red Force to title

ST JOHN'S, Antigua – Ace opener Lendl Simmons blazed an imperious hundred as a dominant Trinidad and Tobago Red Force stormed to their first domestic 50-overs title in five years by crushing Guyana Jaguars by 152 runs in a lopsided final of the Regional Super50 Cup Saturday night.

Behind Simmons' pulsating career-best 146 off 145 balls, Red Force piled up a massive 362 for five off their 50 overs – the fifth highest total in Super50 history – after being asked to bat first for the first time in the tournament at Coolidge Cricket Ground.

Veteran fast bowler Ravi Rampaul (4-52) and his teenaged counterpart, Jayden Seales (3-40), then dismantled the Jaguars top order to send the innings crashing to 55 for six at the end of the 10th over.

With defeat all but certain, all-rounder Raymon Reifer top-scored with an unbeaten 97 off 112 deliveries, inspiring defiant lower order resistance before he was left stranded short of a well-deserved hundred, as Jaguars collapsed to 210 all out in the 44th over. The result gave Red Force the distinction of playing unbeaten in the tournament while for Jaguars, the defeat saw them extend their 16-year drought without a domestic 50-overs title.

“Winning is the only thing,” an emphatic Red Force skipper Kieron Pollard said afterwards.

“No matter what, every time I get the opportunity to step on the cricket field, you want to do well as an individual and a team and you want to win.

“I thank God for giving us the opportunity to come out here and actually prove

that we are the best team in the Caribbean this year.”

Jaguars captain Leon Johnson, meanwhile, lamented his side's efforts.

“We weren't on our A game today,” he said. “I thought Red Force were better than us. I think the execution of our shots in the power-play really cost us.”

Jaguars had earlier found themselves completely deflated after the 36-year-old Simmons took centre stage with his second hundred of the campaign and the highest score in a Super50 final.

He smashed 15 fours and seven sixes, inspiring several partnerships as Red Force took advantage of wayward Jaguars bowling.

His opening partner Evin Lewis stroked 57 off 53 deliveries while left-hander Darren Bravo hit 47 off 52 balls and Nicholas Pooran, another left-hander, a 15-ball 39.

Fast bowler Romario Shepherd finished with two for 105 but lacked discipline, and leaked runs throughout his 10-over spell.

Red Force's start was typically flamboyant as Simmons and Lewis put on 121 for the first wicket in quick time, to deny Jaguars any early success.

Left-hander Lewis, who struck three fours and four sixes, was the first to fall when he holed out to long off left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie in the 20th over but Bravo joined Simmons to add a further 100 for the second wicket.

Bravo hit three fours and two sixes and appeared set for his half-century when he slashed a wide ball from left-arm seamer Reifer for Shepherd to take a diving catch at short third man in the 39th over.

By then, Red Force were in full control at 221 for two and a string of solid partnerships then propelled them past the 300-run mark.

Simmons, who reached three figures in the 37th over to register his seventh List A hundred, posted 67 with Pooran for the third wicket and a further 21 for the fourth with captain Kieron Pollard (23), before eventually perishing in the 45th over, lifting Shepherd to Shimron Hetmyer running back at mid off.

Pollard and Denesh Ramdin, with an 18-ball unbeaten 27, then added 48 for the fifth wicket to further punish Jaguars.

Facing a steep required run rate of 7.26, Jaguars quickly crumbled under the scoreboard pressure.

Tevin Imlach played around a full length delivery from fast bowler Anderson Phillip (2-40) and was lbw for five in the third over with the score on 17.

Left-hander Hetmyer, fresh off a hundred in last Thursday's semi-final, arrived at the crease with the weight of the run chase on his shoulders and briefly raised hopes of another special innings.

In the next over from Phillip, the fifth of the innings, Hetmyer punished the 24-year-old, belting three fours and an upper cut for six, to race to 20 off 12 balls.

But three balls later in the next over from Rampaul, Hetmyer slashed impulsively at a wide delivery and edged a straightforward catch to wicketkeeper Ramdin at 40 for two.

His dismissal triggered a slide that saw five wickets tumble for 15 runs in the space of 28 balls, and erase any chance Jaguars had of victory.

Chandrapaul Hemraj pulled the first



**Red Force opener Lendl Simmons celebrates his century on the way to his career-best 146.**

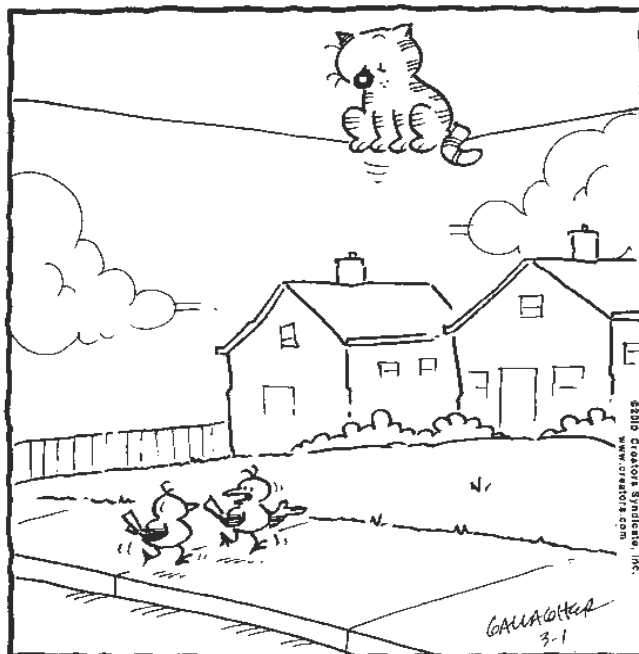
ball of the next over from Seales and was caught by Phillip on the ropes at deep backward square for 14 and seven balls later Johnson steered Rampaul to Phillip at gully to perish without scoring.

Chris Barnwell was caught at deep mid-wicket by Mohammed for five, top-edging a pull at Seales in the ninth before Shepherd (4) missed a forward defensive prod and had his off-stump pegged back by Rampaul at the end of the 10th over.

Reifer, who counted seven fours and three sixes, then put on 39 for the seventh wicket with Kevin Sinclair (19), 38 for the eighth wicket with Veerasammy Permaul (13) and 71 with Motie (28) for the ninth but those partnerships only delayed the inevitable.

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Standing on 4 acres  
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## Utah Jazz beat Orlando Magic; Dallas Mavericks win against Brooklyn Nets

DONOVAN MITCHELL starred with 31 points as the Utah Jazz returned to winning ways with a 124-109 victory over the Orlando Magic.

Guard Mitchell contributed five three-pointers and six assists for Utah, who suffered a rare loss to the Miami Heat on Friday, with Jordan Clarkson and Joe Ingles scoring 18 and 17 points each.

Nikola Vucevic scored 34 points for the Magic, who have lost three in a row.

The Dallas Mavericks were also back on track by beating the Brooklyn Nets.

Luka Doncic scored 27 points for the Mavericks, with the returning Kristaps Porzingis contributing 18, as they triumphed 115-98 and ended the Nets' season-high eight-game winning streak.

Bradley Beal scored a game-high 34 points and Russell Westbrook recorded a second straight triple-double with 19 points for the Washington Wolves in a 128-112 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Karl-Anthony Towns top scored 23 for the Wolves, but could not prevent a seventh loss in a row.

Meanwhile, the San Antonio Spurs beat the New Orleans Pelicans 117-114, with DeMar DeRozan claiming 32 points and 11 assists.

# Bale inspires Spurs to win over Burnley

**GARETH BALE** scored twice and made another as Tottenham cruised to an easy Premier League win over Burnley that boosted their hopes of European qualification.

Spurs had lost five of their previous six league matches but went ahead inside two minutes when Bale converted Son Heung-min's low cross.

Bale's superb long pass released Harry Kane to net Tottenham's second, before Lucas Moura added a third from Sergio Reguilon's delivery.

Son was the architect for the fourth as he ran at the Burnley defence before finding Bale, and the Wales forward curled a fine finish into the far corner to seal the emphatic win.

The victory takes Jose Mourinho's side up to eighth. They are six points behind fourth-placed West Ham, who occupy the final Champions League qualification spot, but have a game in hand on the Hammers.

After winning the Champions League four times with Real Madrid, much was expected from Bale on his return to Tottenham, where he had twice won the Professional Footballers' Association Players' Player of the Year Award before moving to La Liga.

However, after a couple of disrupted campaigns, Bale was carrying an injury when he rejoined Spurs in September on a season-long loan deal from Real and has struggled to build up a regular run of matches.

However, his recent form has shown glimpses of what Tottenham fans would have hoped to see and, following goals in both legs of the 8-1 aggregate win over Austrian side Wolfsberger in the Europa League last 32, he was given only his third Premier League start of the season yesterday.

Before the match, Mourinho said Bale "was happier than ever" and it took the 31-year-old only 70 seconds to score when

he had got in between the Burnley central defenders and steered Son's low cross past Nick Pope in the first chance of the game.

Kane shot just wide and Moura was denied by Pope, before the England keeper was beaten again after 15 minutes.

A brilliant long ball from Bale, 30 yards from his own goal, released Kane and the forward scored his 14th Premier League goal of the campaign, although his strike took a deflection off James Tarkowski to take it over Pope.

Tottenham won this fixture 5-0 last season and it then became a question of how many they would score.

The third came when Reguilon's cross was inadvertently flicked on by Tarkowski and Moura took a touch to set himself before firing into the net.

Bale, in arguably his best performance of the season, scored again with an excellent curling finish following a storming run forward from Son, before the Welshman was substituted after 69 minutes.

Bale spent six years at Tottenham before moving to Real Madrid in September 2013 for a then-world record fee of £85.3m

After the match, Bale said: "I'm delighted with the goals and the assist and whatever I can do for the team.

"I've been happy all season. In the dressing room I feel comfortable and I'm having fun. I'm happy and I'm sure it's showing on the pitch.

"I have been building up a little bit to get fully fit - I felt comfortable and my form is coming back. It's nice to help the team.

"It's been a while so I just continue to work hard. I know you get criticism but I am experienced enough to keep my head down, not say anything stupid and keep plugging away."

Only excellent goalkeeping from Pope denied the hosts a bigger win as he made fine saves from Kane and Son on a tough day for Burnley.

# Trainer 'to co-operate' with social media image investigation

**LEADING** Irish racehorse trainer Gordon Elliott says he will help an inquiry into a disputed photograph of him shared on social media.

The image, which some believe has been digitally altered, appears to show the 43-year-old sitting on a dead horse.

Elliott is a highly successful trainer who has won the Grand National three times, including twice with Tiger Roll.

"I'm aware of a photo in circulation on social media," the trainer posted on Twitter.

"The IHRB (Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board) have been in contact with me regarding this photo and I will be co-operating fully with their investigation."

The image appears to show Elliott making a peace gesture while sitting on a dead horse lying on its side. It has the caption "new work rider", although it has been described as a fake by



**Gordon Elliott has trained more than 140 winners this season and is second to Willie Mullins in the Irish trainers' championship.**

some on social media.

He issued his statement late on Saturday night after the IHRB said earlier that it was "aware of an image circulating on

social media and the matter is under investigation".

Elliott, who is based in County Meath, has been approached for comment.

An IHRB spokesman said yesterday: "The investigation is ongoing and will be dealt with as quickly as possible."

The British Horseracing

Authority (BHA) is aware of the image and officials are in contact with their Irish counterparts.

"We hope the Irish authorities will quickly

confirm how this shocking picture originated," said a BHA spokesperson.

"Respect for horses is a fundamental value of our sport, contrary to the impression in this picture.

"The IHRB have assured us that the investigation will be carried out as quickly as possible and that they will keep us informed as more information becomes available."

Elliott is preparing a strong squad of runners, including Envoi Allen and Zanahiy, for next month's Cheltenham Festival, where he has had 32 winners.

Tiger Roll is expected to run in the Cross-Country Chase at Cheltenham before seeking a record-equalling third National triumph at Aintree on April 10.

Elliott won the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 2016 with Don Cossack, owned by Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary's Gigginstown House Stud.

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# Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez will fight Billy Joe Saunders in May

**SAUL 'Canelo' Alvarez beat Avni Yildirim to set up a world title unification fight with Britain's Billy Joe Saunders on May 8.**

Mexico's Alvarez cruised past Turkish challenger Yildirim to retain his WBC and WBA titles on Saturday, before promoter Eddie Hearn confirmed the forthcoming bout with Saunders.

The Briton's WBO title will also be on the line when the pair meet.

The venue for the fight has yet to be decided.

Alvarez, 30, is a four-division world champion who now boasts a record of 55 wins, one defeat and two draws, including 37 knockouts.

Meanwhile, 31-year-old

Saunders boasts an unbeaten record, having won all 30 professional fights, with 11 knockouts.

The IBF belt is held by American Caleb Plant (21-0), but victory for Canelo will move him one step closer in his bid to become the first undisputed super-middleweight champion in boxing history.

"No-one has done it," Alvarez said. "I want to make history. No-one has done it at 168 [pounds]."

Following the announcement of the fight, Saunders said he was "ready to rock and roll".

"You have to dare to be great and you are not going to be a great if you don't beat the greats," said Saunders.

"I believe I am the only



**Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez retained his world titles by comfortably beating Avni Yildirim on Saturday.**

one with the footwork, know-how, skillset, mindset and brain to unlock that door in Canelo."

Yildirim retired before the start of the fourth

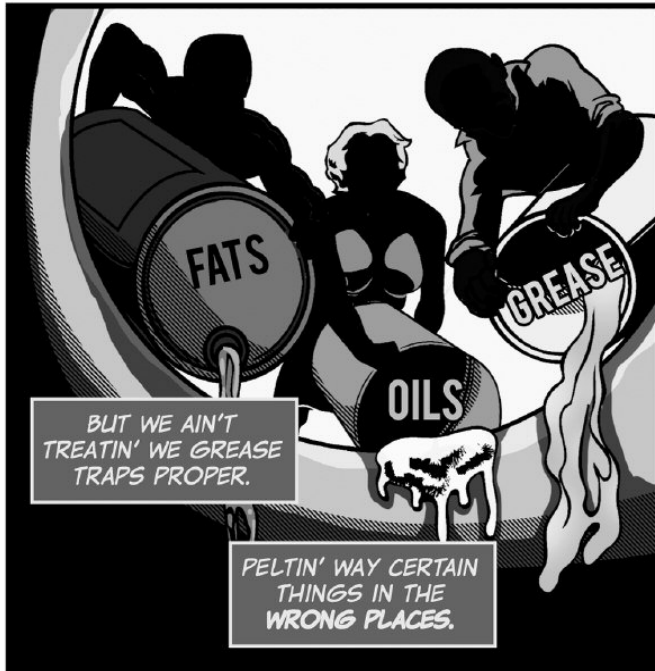
round after being knocked down by the Mexican in the third at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium.

"I wanted to have a great fight and I did what I had to do," said Alvarez.

"I needed a knockout and that's what I did. It doesn't matter if they're taller, if they've got more reach, or they've got a good trainer.

"I came to do my job, I came here to win."

Fighting in his first bout since beating Britain's Callum Smith in December, Alvarez dominated and floored his opponent with a crisp left-right combination.



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# HOROSCOPES



**ARIES:** Get into the social flow to stimulate your intellectual juices. Wide-ranging conversations with friends will benefit you, as will fresh concepts from people you cross paths with over the week. Talking with new friends or people in your group networks will open up potential new directions. This is a perfect time to work out any misunderstandings or glitches with buddies.



**TAURUS:** Career mentions, moves, and meetups are all possible this week, so schedule in time to share your ideas. Brainstorming with colleagues and discussion with superiors or mentors is more likely to pay off than keeping ideas entirely to yourself. It's full steam ahead, so take practical steps on a side hustle or any other way you can channel your drive to benefit your finances.



**GEMINI:** This is an active month for you – the perfect time to push your needle forward. Assert your personality, strike out in new directions and take the lead. Stand up for yourself and let out any excess steam through a brisk walk, run, or cycle. State your case, pitch for your passions, and don't wait for invitations; make them.



**CANCER:** Dedicate time to draw your energy inward over the next month or two. Refuel with aromatic baths, scent-infused meditation, or restful R & R cuddling up under a cozy blanket on the couch. It will give you much-needed space to recalibrate your direction, prep for new projects, and formulate how to best utilise your energy.



**LEO:** This is a great time to get out online or explore new social apps to mingle and make new friends. Sidestep any head to heads and direct energy into something productive. Perhaps promote a cause you care for. If there's something on your wish list, this is the time to put power behind making it happen. Take action on your hopes and dreams.



**VIRGO:** Your career zone is energised over the next two months, so take swift action on your ideas. At least in the short term, a leadership opportunity is possible but don't wait around for someone else to hand you the baton. Pioneering and room to move are supported, and if you're sedentary, get up and get moving a few times a day as a physical outlet.



**LIBRA:** Excitement and adventure, if not physically then intellectually, are calling you. Explore topics that ignite your curiosity and follow information rabbit holes that add to your knowledge base. Short circuit any debates veering into an argument with a topic change, opportune exit, or initiating a tea break. In any and all cases taking the lead is favoured.



**SCORPIO:** You have the energy to dig deep and get to the core of an issue over the next couple of months. Take control and responsibility for your actions, and face any fears around severing a connection or contract you don't want to continue with. Direct excess energy into a combined project if you're in a position to join forces. Perhaps team up to research ways of increasing your resources to keep you accountable and on track. In intimacy, make love, not war if things heat up.



**SAGITTARIUS:** Initiate collaborations, commit to an ardent pursuit of your dream boat, or debate with gusto. Over the next two months, it's beneficial for you to team up, take the lead or cheerlead in one or more mutually beneficial relationships, either personal or professional. This doesn't mean you need to park your independence or get someone to do what you're capable of doing yourself.



**CAPRICORN:** Put your back into it, Capricorn; you have a hall pass to pour extra energy into your work. Leadership and assertiveness are beneficial now, so take charge or pioneer an idea you've had brewing. Balance it out with a routine that replenishes your body, like massage, stretching, and nutrients. Are you as physically active as you are mentally?



**AQUARIUS:** Pursuing your interests for pleasure, curiosity, or broadening your horizons is favoured over the next two months. Wedge aside your usual commitments to make room for play, speed dating, speed friending, and whatever else tickles your proverbial. You're more directed and assertive and perhaps ardent.

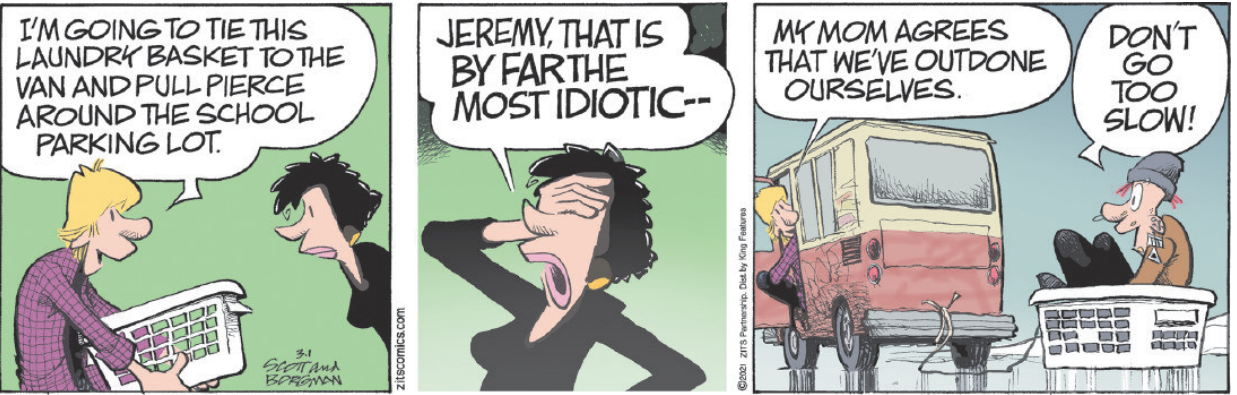


**PISCES:** Put excess energy into a project at home, step into leadership, and role model assertive and dynamic for your family. Allow any tensions to push you forward in your personal pursuits rather than getting caught up in family disputes or emotional sinkholes from your past. Keep your mind on what you're doing physically, and be sure you act for yourself, not against, supporting your direction and goals.

## PROS AND CONS



## ZITS



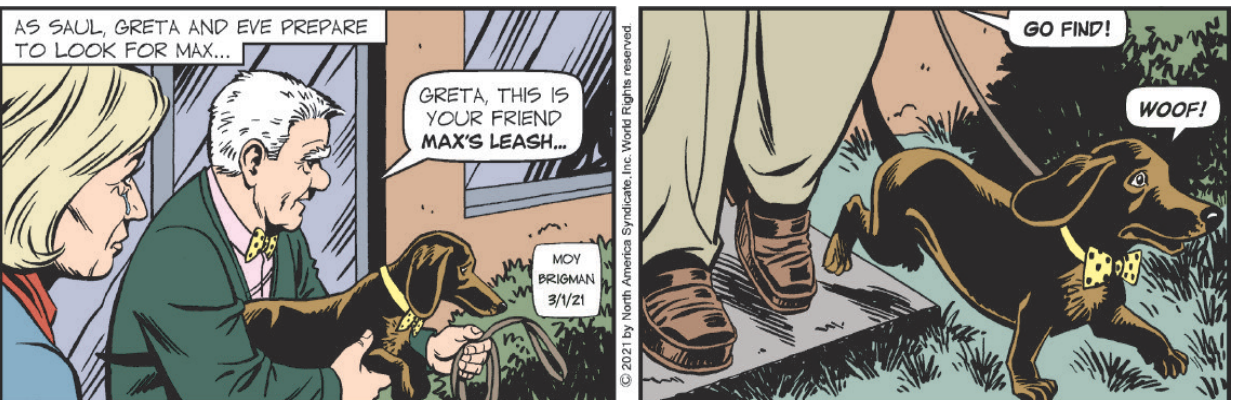
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MOY BRIGMAN 3/1/21

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Monday March 1, 2021

# SECOND JAB CRITICAL

**RECEIVING the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccination is important if the vaccine is a two-dose schedule.**

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan said that it doesn't matter if it's early by a few days, or late by a few days, or even a couple of weeks.

"It's important to go back and get that second dose because the first dose actually presents this new antigen to the immune system to prime it," the World Health Organisation (WHO) Chief Scientist explained.

"And the second dose is the

one that really gives a boost to the immune system so that the antibody response, as well as T cell mediated response, they are very strong and they also develop a memory response, which then lasts for a long time, so that when the body sees this antigen again, this virus protein again, it knows that it needs to react quickly."

She said that the interval between the doses depends on which vaccine is being administered, also pointing out that the local authorities – the Government – would provide guidelines and inform

recipients about when the second dose is due.

"Most of the two-dose vaccines currently are being given between three to four weeks between the first and the second dose. But there is some data from some vaccines like the AstraZeneca vaccine, where delaying the second dose up to 12 weeks actually gives a better immune boost."

As it relates to having your two doses from two different manufacturers, Dr. Swaminathan said that the science is changing and evolving, and the knowledge

base is growing.

She went on to reveal that there are now clinical trials ongoing in some countries that are looking at interchangeability, "which means the first dose with one vaccine and the second dose with a different vaccine, maybe even a different platform vaccine. And immunologically, there are reasons why this would make sense. However, at the present time, there isn't enough data for us to recommend this type of interchangeable two-dose schedules".

"And so, for the time being, the policy advice that WHO has put out, which is the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) guidelines on how to use vaccines, we've done it for the Pfizer vaccine, the Moderna vaccine, the AstraZeneca vaccine, and currently SAGE is reviewing the data from the other vaccines that are in the pipeline. And so, we need to follow what's in that policy advice and for the time being, it is recommended to have the second dose with the same vaccine as you had the first dose," she advised. (TL)

## Will businesses in St. Lawrence Gap survive?

THERE is a common phrase, 'When the dust settles...', and COVID-19 has left many businesses in St. Lawrence Gap floundering with many owners and patrons wondering what will happen when things reopen in the popular nightlife tourist spot.

In reality, it could be said that The Gap has been struggling for years, with many bars and clubs changing hands or failing to adapt in order to stay current with the times. Years ago, the one street wonder was the talk of Barbados, where tourists and locals alike could take a drive and find ample places to chill, relax, party or get something to eat. However, in recent times, there is not as much foot traffic, local or otherwise, as previous years.

The one-month pause, mandated by the current Government administration, has been necessary for the protection of all residing in Barbados. The issue is that with no business allowed for restaurants, clubs and bars alike, what was a struggle before, could possibly be the 'last going down' for some local entities in the St. Lawrence Gap. Today, March 1, the phased reopening begins and restaurants will be allowed



**ST. LAWRENCE GAP on Page 4**

**A view of St. Lawrence Gap, which is usually bustling with activity is now quiet.**