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Aruba objects to new conditions The Hague

THE HAGUE/ORANJESTAD-The Aruba government is objecting to the decision of the Kingdom Council of Ministers to defer a decision on the next tranche of liquidity support, and has asked the Aruba Council of Advice for advice on what Oranjestad called the setting of additional conditions.

During its meeting last Friday, the Kingdom Council of Ministers decided to postpone the handling of Aruba's request for liquidity support for the first quarter of 2022, as well as the decision-taking with regard to the

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CBCS repeals capital restriction as of Jan. 1

PHILIPSBURG--The Central Bank for Curaçao and St. Maarten (CBCS) decided to repeal the capital restriction effective January 1, 2022.

This restriction was introduced on March 20, 2020, to limit possible capital flight after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying worldwide crisis.

Under the capital restriction, no foreign exchange licences were granted for capital transfers abroad, to limit the outflow of foreign exchange. A foreign exchange licence is required for transaction amounts of NAF. 150,000 or more which were, therefore, not possible anymore under the restriction. No foreign exchange licence is required for

transaction amounts of less than Naf. 150,000. As a result, these transactions could be executed as usual allowing capital transfers abroad to a limited extent.

The capital restriction, together with the substantial inflow of foreign exchange from the liquidity support by the Netherlands to Curaçao and St. Maarten and the lower imports resulting from the deep economic crisis caused by the pandemic, contributed to the maintenance of a solid foreign exchange position and import coverage in the monetary union.

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Ninety-five St. Maarten Academy students graduated under the theme "Out of Adversity Comes Triumph" at a ceremony on the school's campus on Thursday, December 16. In photo: The St. Maarten Academy class of 2021. Story on page 8.

CPS notes an increase in active COVID-19 cases

PHILIPSBURG--Collective Prevention Services (CPS) says the number of COVID-19 cases is on the rise and therefore calls on members of the community to get vaccinated; for those who already have been vaccinated twice, to get boosted with the booster vaccine.

As of Monday, December 20, 59 active cases have been reported. The total number of confirmed cases is 4,696.

CPS advises to continue to practice preventive public health measures such as handwashing, wearing your mask in most indoor public places, cough and sneeze etiquette, and social distancing; let fresh air in if you

meet indoors; get tested and self-isolate once you test positive. Do not provide opportunities for the further transmission of the virus.

Families and friends meeting up this Christmas weekend should keep gatherings small.

On November 26, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated Omicron a variant of concern.

Everyone ages 18 and older should get a COVID-19 booster shot. Persons who have received their COVID-19 vaccination series (two vaccines, first and second dose), at least three months after completing the aforementioned, should get their booster. The booster vaccine remains the best protection against the new variant and is more effective than two doses alone, said CPS.

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Simons enquires about reconstruction funding

THE HAGUE--Member of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament Sylvana Simons of the BIJ1 party has sought clarity with regard to the slow pace of the execution of reconstruction projects in St. Maarten.

Simon recently submitted a series of questions to Dutch caretaker State Secretary of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Raymond Knops following media reports about the Dutch financial reconstruction aid still being held up.

"How do you explain the fact that about half of the money that the Dutch government made available four years ago for St. Maarten's reconstruction after Hurricane Irma is still at the World Bank, and as such can still not be used to

repair buildings, homes and the infrastructure?"

Simons wanted to know what role the Dutch government had in speeding up this process, and which geopolitical and diplomatic means The Hague has to get the World Bank to allocate the funds "with great urgency."

The Member of Parliament (MP) asked the State Secretary whether he had been approached several times by the Ombudsman of the Netherlands, St. Maarten and Curaçao about the slow dispatching of funding for St. Maarten's reconstruction. "How did you respond to those requests for attention and urgency? What did you subsequently do to speed up the allocation of available

funding and how did this influence the process?"

Simons further asked Knops "what needed to happen" before people in St. Maarten who are still living in damaged houses will finally assisted. She impressed on Knops to guarantee that his successor in the next Dutch government would do everything in his/her power to have the remaining funding allocated with the "greatest speed and urgency."

"Are you of the opinion that it is also the responsibility of the Dutch government to make sure that every citizen within the Dutch kingdom can have a safe life with a roof over their head?"



The scene of the accident in Cole Bay.

Man drives into oncoming car, appeared under the influence

COLE BAY--The driver of a passenger car was arrested by police on Sunday evening after he drove into an SUV in Cole Bay, in front of SOL gas station. The man proceeded to behave erratically, shouting at cars on the road.

"All of a sudden I saw lights coming at me, and boom," the driver of the SUV told police at the scene, still in shock. Her car was badly damaged, but the driver

herself was more fortunate: thanks to functioning airbags she only suffered minor injuries.

Meanwhile, the driver of the other car was standing across the street waving his arms and shouting in both English and Spanish. The man had completely totalled his car, but did not pay it much attention. He seemed mostly frustrated with passers-by, according to bystanders who

had heard the sound of the accident and had come to look at what happened. Witnesses said the driver was clearly under the influence and behaving "out of control."

When the police arrived at the scene, the man was arrested, as could be seen in a video that was shared on social media. He tried to resist arrest but was quickly handcuffed.

First Omicron cases in Aruba

ORANJESTAD--The first COVID-19 cases of the Omicron variant have been detected in Aruba. The island is preparing for the fifth wave.

Aruba Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes made the announcement during a press conference on Monday morning. On Sunday, it turned out that several persons who tested positive three days before were infected with the highly contagious Omicron variant. According to media reports, there are 17 Omicron cases in Aruba.



Aruba Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes.

It concerns a few persons who came from abroad, but also a few local residents with no recent travel history. This means that the Omicron variant is already being transmitted locally. For now, the safety measures that are already in place, will remain.

"Aruba has been preparing for this for a while now. That is why we took measures from early on. We see an increase in COVID-19 cases, but not a drastic one. We ask everyone to be cautious, but don't panic. Wear your facemask, keep distance and apply all hygienic measures. Always and with discipline. We are fighting an invisible enemy, but we can fight it through discipline," said Wever-Croes.

Some of the measures that are in effect in Aruba are, besides the obligatory facemask inside public buildings: 8 persons maximum at a table in and outside restaurants, no more than 4 persons per table at bars and rum shops, all restaurants and bars must

close at 1:00am and casinos at 2:00am.

No alcoholic beverages are allowed in public properties, a maximum of 150 persons at funerals, inside sports events, indoor parties and nightclubs. Indoor dancing is not allowed on dancefloors, only besides the table where one is seated, and everyone must be seated at a table at parties and nightclubs. Not more than 8 persons may congregate and people are not allowed to venture on the beaches and parking lots from 7:00pm to 5:00am.

Aruba has already implemented stricter measures for

arriving passengers. Since the end of November, persons arriving from a very high-risk country, such as the Netherlands, must test 24 hours before boarding the aircraft. Passengers may not opt to only get tested upon their arrival in Aruba.

"These measures are not to harass you, government, or visitors, and are surely not meant to give government greater power. The only reason is to protect you and your family from getting infected," said Wever-Croes.

Tourism Office invites submission of partnership requests for 2022

MARIGOT-St. Martin Tourism Office is inviting individuals, associations, companies, and others who may be planning to launch a tourism-related event between January and December 2022 to download a partnership request file on the tourism office's website section « news » or by using the link <https://bit.ly/Partenariat2022>.

The complete request must be returned before January 31, 2022, by 5:00pm. For each event please send: a PowerPoint presentation of the event, a description, the date and place, assets (poster, flyers, photos) and contact information (phone, e-mail, social networks). Note the tourism office may

not accept applications after the deadline.

Please provide all the information by e-mail to the Local Development Department: g.dumel@st-martin.org/ or n.pinthiere@st-martin.org

The tourism office teams are available to assist with the organisation of projects. An appointment can be scheduled with one of the staff from Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

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Kidz at Sea: 527 pounds of debris removed from Simpson Bay area

PHILIPSBURG--SXM Coastal CleanUp Project hosted the 2021 Underwater CleanUp on Saturday, December 4. Volunteers, participants, and dive crew removed 527 pounds of debris from the water in Simpson Bay during the event. This project and event were made possible by the support of Resources for Community Resilience R4CR as part of the Quick Win Grant Scheme Round 2.

"We are so pleased with the results of the 2021 Underwater CleanUp," said Kidz at Sea Project Coordinator Leslie Hickerson. "The participants worked very hard this year to receive the proper training to execute this project and their efforts clearly paid off with the huge amount of debris we were able to remove during the event."

"Not only did they execute this part of the project im-

peccably, but also many of the participants have shown interest in taking part in more clean-ups to help make St. Maarten's bays cleaner, safer, and more beautiful."

Throughout the year the SXM Coastal CleanUp Project has coordinated dive training for several St. Maarten volunteers so they could safely and efficiently remove debris from one bay area of the island. "It is one thing to clean up the ocean, it's another to do it properly," explained project participant Star Peterson.

On completion of these courses the volunteers took part in several mapping dives in different coastal areas of St. Maarten. These dives were used to evaluate the conditions and amount of debris in the areas and to help select which bay would be the best to execute the clean-up with the assistance of Nature Foundation St. Maarten.

After returning to shore the debris was weighed and sorted so data could be collected. Of the more than 500 pieces of garbage removed, approximately 40 per cent was plastic. Removing plastic from the ocean was a high priority for the project, as plastic does not biodegrade, but just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. While these pieces sometimes become too small to see they are still there and can be ingested by marine life or even humans.

"Unfortunately, thanks to hurricanes and the continued use of single use plastics, we will continue to need underwater coastal cleanups around the island, but now we have our first group of trained St. Maarten volunteers who are excited to be able to continue to do this," said Kim Frye of The Scuba Shop. "The hard work and enthusiasm of the volunteer participants has inspired all those involved to continue partnering with this project."

Kidz at Sea thanked R4CR for its support of this programme and belief in Kidz at Sea being able to execute such an ambitious project in the time allotted. "The support we received has truly made a difference, not only for our island, but also in the lives of our participants. The training that they have received can be



The first group of trained St. Maarten volunteers who are excited to continue cleanups.



Volunteers took part in several mapping dives in different coastal areas.

Ansary's daughter to appeal court ruling

WILLEMSTAD--Hushang Ansary's daughter Nina Ansary will appeal the conviction to pay hundreds of millions in damages to the ENNIA insurance group.

Nina Ansary's daughter confirmed this. The appeal has not yet been filed. "But that will happen," says lawyer Roderick Van Hees. "There is a statutory term of six weeks for filing an appeal. The deadline has not yet expired." It is unknown whether the other defendants will also appeal.

Due to mismanagement by former policymakers and shareholders, ENNIA would have suffered damage of at least 700 million guilders, according to supervisor, the Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten (CBCS). Lawyers for the insurance company argued in October that the damage would have been even high-

er. The insurance company demanded compensation of 1.1 billion guilders in the liability proceedings against Ansary and other former directors, including Nina Ansary, who was in charge around 2018. The judge established that after the acquisition of ENNIA in 2006 there was a change in policy and in transactions and expenditure, which was very detrimental to ENNIA.

The court holds the defendants liable for the damage suffered and has drawn up compensation of more than one billion guilders. Ansary's daughter was not only a shareholder in ENNIA, but also a supervisory director between 2009 and 2018. The judge stated that she had seriously failed in her supervisory task and sentenced Ansary to a payment of 945.5 million guilders.

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used to further their careers in the maritime, tourism and environmental sectors."

Kidz at Sea thanked independent dive instructors Cayley, Jen and Ryan, the

staff of Dive Adventures, Ocean Explorers, SXM Divers, The Scuba Shop and Magnis for the time and support they gave this project.

If you would like to find

out about future SXM Coastal CleanUp events, training and scuba diving community outreach, follow SXMCoastalCleanUp on Facebook and Instagram.

Emmanuel wants reports at hospital project investigated

CAY HILL--Independent Member of Parliament (MP) Christophe Emmanuel on Monday said that it has been brought to his attention that something is amiss with the ongoing construction/expansion of St. Maarten General Hospital (SMGH), and has called on Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labor VSA Omar Ottley to investigate the matter and inform Parliament and the public.

Emmanuel said for the past few weeks little to no work has been executed at the project site, with key players in the project reportedly unhappy with the fact that they have not been paid. Reliable sources informed the MP that progress has been slow after a year since it commenced due to various changes with

the company, and the company not living up to its obligations.

One such obligation is the payment to the main contractor that reportedly hasn't been paid for a time, Emmanuel said in a press statement. The same goes for the local companies providing steel works and tiling. Allegedly, the company entrusted with the execution of the project FINSO (formerly INSO) has had internal issues maintaining finance personnel, as well as challenges with banking in St. Maarten.

"There are too many grumblings that are starting to get louder, and the progress after a full year seems stagnant," MP Emmanuel said. "We can barely see any work ongoing at the site, even before the holidays.

Minister Ottley should look into the matter and determine if there is any truth to these reports. Virtual tours and the like are all fine and well, but this is the second major project that the trust fund committee likes to boast about. And just like the first (PJIA), here too we see little happening," the MP said in a press statement.

The MP would like to know if the project is delayed, when will it be completed and, if true, why are key players not paid on time? "After a full year, I believe it is time that a truthful update on this project be presented, and hopefully more truthful than what we have been getting about the airport," Emmanuel concluded.

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US Party: Invisible 'savings' from cuts do nothing for socio-economic hardships

PHILIPSBURG--United St. Maarten Party (US Party) board president Cecil Nicholas said on Monday that his board is baffled as to why the 12.5 per cent cut imposed by government on civil servants and government-owned companies, specifically GEBE and TelEm, has not been followed up with an instruction for the "savings" to be used as a supplement to directly offset citizens' bills.

"Obviously because the savings, a motivation used to impose the cuts, have not materialised and people's lives were made harder for nothing," he said in a press release.

Nicholas said the budget has ballooned to more than 500 million guilders, an increase of more than 100 million guilders. Countries around the world, US Party said, have found themselves in a similar position because of the economic impact of COVID-19.

"And while all recognised the importance of the socio-economic wellbeing of their citizens and found ways and means to alleviate and aggressively address such, the NA/UP coalition and supporting MPs



Cecil Nicholas
{Members of Parliament – Ed.} in Parliament from the inception of the pandemic have continuously found ways to place the burden on the backs of the people and their families," he said. "However, and perhaps more accurately, we are not seeing any relief for our people, because the so-called savings that the cuts were supposed to generate have not materialised and were nullified and increased due to new hires,

in essence nullifying the objective sought by burdening the civil corps with cuts in the first place," Nicholas said.

As such, government's actions have created an environment which has led to a record number of resignations, and growing absenteeism. "Have the policies that have led to the standardisation of civil servants being placed in life-long acting positions been addressed to stem further flight? What is the monetary value of the 12.5 per cent cut and what social initiative has it been assigned to?" Nicholas questioned.

"The NA/UP coalition and its supporting members in Parliament voted their conscience and passed the motion on the 12.5 per cent cut, and based on their motivations for that vote, knowingly imposed the current hardships being faced by people and their families today, while promising a review within six months. That review has yet to materialise, a review which is a moot point based on the statements made by [Dutch] State Secretary [of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Raymond]

Knops."

Nicholas said the same MPs who voted for the cuts are now questioning government about the cuts "as if they had an out-of-body experience when they cast their vote, in an attempt to distance themselves from the decision, while full-heartedly acknowledging the ramifications of said vote in their motivations of "we need the money and don't have a choice."

He further questioned whether it would not have made more practical sense for government to promote from within, creating opportunities for the dedicated staff who in most cases were already doing the jobs and fulfilling tasks that fall within the competence of the open positions. "Hence creating a more rewarding working environment, instead of the demotivated unappreciated environment that currently exists?"

Nicholas reminded the public that Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs had stated recently that the cuts imposed on civil servants and workers at government-owned companies remained unfair. This, he pointed out, came after

previously expressing her joy at being "vindicated" by the Constitutional Court judgment that upheld the unconscionable act of government and parliament on the backs of the people.

"The approval of COHO is up next to be rubber-stamped by Parliament, and if this proposed budget and the almost two-year history of this National Alliance-led coalition and the Members of Parliament who support it stands as any example, the people will be brought to their knees while our sworn representatives vote themselves into spectator status.

"The blunder of fruitlessly debating the proposed budget without first being granted permission to deviate from the balanced budget norms is also being blamed on the Dutch. There is a never-ending game being played by this National Alliance-led government and its coalition partners in Parliament of rubber-stamping any- and everything government presents to Parliament.

"Then Parliament ques-

tioning government about the same motions and decisions they passed and agreed too is a mockery, especially since government's answers all seem to reference the 'Dutch.'

"The budget with its increase of over 100 million guilders with no specific attention and/or tangible focus being placed on the socio-economic well-being and 'human dimension' of the families and individuals whose backs are being broken carrying the weight of the decisions being made cannot and should not be placed as the fault of the 'Dutch' because they did not prepare this proposed budget.

"The people deserve more than just sub-par representation and finger-pointing, and it is your duty to be accountable to the oath that you have sworn to uphold," Nicholas concluded.

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PATIENT VISITING HOURS: DUE TO THE COVID-19 SITUATION, VISITING HOURS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

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95 graduate from the St. Maarten Academy

~ 100 per cent school, 96 per cent college passes ~

CUL DE SAC--Ninety-five St. Maarten Academy students graduated under the theme "Out of Adversity Comes Triumph" at a ceremony on the school's campus on Thursday, December 16.

Of the 95, 72 were Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) graduates and 23 Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exams (CAPE) graduates.

The graduates were praised during addresses from Principal Tallulah Baly-Vanterpool, school board President Roland Duncan, CSEC valedictorian Khushal Punjabi and CAPE valedictorian David Beek. The feature address was delivered by alumnus, soca artiste and media personality Darren "King Vers" Hodge.

During her welcome address, Baly-Vanterpool said the academic journey of the Class of 2021 had all the makings of an epic novel. "From the outset, you have had to overcome challenges that would have left those of weaker mental constitution distraught and defeated," she said.

She said the Class of 2021 had faced and overcome many challenges, including Hurricane Irma, which hit the island just as they entered second form, sharing the campus of sister school PSVE for 19 months, an arrangement that led to truncated periods and classes that went well into the evening; then COVID-19, which, in March 2020, resulted in the abrupt suspension of face-to-face instruc-



CSEC valedictorian Khushal Punjabi

tion and the overnight transition to online classes.

"For nearly one year, you logged on dutifully to your virtual classes and also took the initiative of creating your own virtual study groups via Zoom and used platforms such as Discord to connect with like-minded students around the Caribbean," she said. She also credited the students' success to the hard work and dedication of the exceptional teachers and support staff, parents, supporters and friends of the Academy.

During his engaging address, Hodge encouraged

the graduates to not allow others' opinions to dissuade them from their dreams. "Do not let other people's fears stop you from achieving what you want to do," he said.

Punjabi congratulated the members of the Class of 2021 on completing this leg of their academic journey despite their challenges. "The lessons learnt here at our school, the achievements and failures we experienced demonstrate that we have the skills to learn, the aptitude to succeed and the ability to triumph in the face of adversity," he said.

It was a sentiment echoed by Beek. "Our adversities, though many, will shape and mould us to become victorious persons if we choose to fight and not give up," he said.

Baly-Vanterpool revealed during the ceremony that the CSEC Class of 2021 had returned 100 per cent school passes and an impressive 96 per cent college passes, obtaining grades 1-3 in at least five subjects, which qualifies them to matriculate at most tertiary institutions both in the Caribbean and further afield.

A total of 72 candidates sat 19 subject offerings at the CSEC level this year and achieved 100 per cent school passes (grades 1-4), while nine of the 19 subject offerings returned 100 per cent college passes: Biol-

ogy, Human and Social Biology, English A, English B, Geography, Social Studies, Physics, Visual Arts and Electronic Document Preparation and Management (EDPM). EDPM, taught by Kester Small, returned the highest number of grade one at 84 per cent.

Academy students again outperformed their regional counterparts in Mathematics, returning 97 per cent school passes and 79 per cent college passes. Also returning stellar results was the Information Technology Department, which returned 100 per cent school passes, and 90 per cent college passes.

Notable performances were also returned in Integrated Science, which returned 100 per cent school passes and 97 per cent college passes, and Chemistry, which returned 100 per cent school passes, and 73 per cent college passes.

Punjabi wrote 13 subjects, one of which was CAPE Communication

Studies. He returned eight grade one passes, five with straight "A" profiles, three grade two passes, and a grade three in CAPE Communication Studies, which he wrote in fifth form, having written English A in form four and returning a grade one.

Salutatorian Aquilla Pemberton secured passes in 11 subjects, including seven grade ones, four with straight "A" profiles, three grade twos, and one grade three.

Second runner-up valedictorian Joselyna George wrote 11 subjects and returned eight grade ones, four with straight "A" profiles, one grade four, and a grade three in CAPE Communication Studies.

Rounding out the top four students is Desmond Jones, who wrote 10 subjects and returned nine grade ones, three with straight "A", and a grade two.

Of the 23 to graduate from the CAPE, seven earned their Associate of Science

degree, nine their Associate of Arts degree, six earned diplomas in the areas of Tourism, Information and Communications Technology, Entrepreneurship and Natural Science, and one a certificate in Mathematics.

Beek graduated with an Associate of Science degree with a specialisation in Mathematics. He earned five grade ones out of the 10 units he sat, while salutatorian Shuling Luo, who pursued an Associate of Arts in Business Studies degree with a specialisation in Accounts obtained two grade one passes out of the 12 units she sat.

The Foundation for Academic and Vocational Education (FAVE) board, under which the school falls, congratulated all students, their parents, teachers, and the management team for another year of outstanding results, and remains committed to providing a quality education for all students entrusted to the school's care.

Bell: 'Tourism is our business, and we need to treat it right'

PHILIPSBURG--"Tourism is our business, and we need to treat it right," says William Bell, who marks 35 years working at the St. Maarten Tourism Bureau (STB).

"Nothing should ever come before our people. When we do right by our people, our visitors will love this island even more, because our people then will do their utmost to give better service when they are happy. This is my wish for my island going forward."

Bell started working at STB on September 1, 1986. Prior to joining STB, Bell worked at Windward Islands Bank (WIB). STB at the time was looking for a person who could do statistical analysis, etc., and Bell applied for the available position.

Bell worked his way up the ladder to Public Relations and then to the Marketing Department over the years. During Bell's 35-year tenure at STB, he has seen the destination grow from a sleepy town to a bustling tourism mecca in the northeastern Caribbean.



William Bell

One of the key reasons Bell remained working at STB is the great people with whom he works on a daily basis. His colleagues said he is a great asset to STB and they would like to

wish him all the best for the future.

STB's management and staff congratulated Bell on his 35th anniversary working at STB.

CPS notes an increase

Continued from page 1.

International research data so far suggest an increase in overall re-infection rates of persons who already have had COVID-19, alongside an increase in first infections.

Scientific research has shown that COVID-19 vaccines protect against serious illness and death should you get infected with the disease. Getting vaccinated is a personal choice, however, strongly consider protecting your health, that of your family and members of your community, CPS advised.

The CPS office at the Vineyard Office Complex is

open for COVID-19 vaccinations up until Thursday, December 23.

The CPS office at the Vineyard Office Complex will be closed Friday, December 24; Saturday, December 25; and Sunday, December 26. Besides regular office operations, this also includes COVID-19 testing and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Persons who need assistance can call 914 on either one of those days between 8:00am and 12:00pm.

After the holiday period, persons who have flu-like symptoms should get tested.



BENU pharmacy representatives

10-day fun promotion at BENU+DA Pharmacy

PHILIPSBURG -- The recent collaboration of BENU Pharmacy and DA Drugstore will be celebrated with ten days of promotions. The promotion began on December 13 and will continue until December 24.

When Fun Miles cardholders use their Fun Miles card, they will receive two times Fun Miles. Cardholders will also get a chance to win 20,000 Fun Miles as part of the promotion.

The BENU+DA pharmacy located at Bush Road #79 is open from 8:00am

to 7:00pm Monday to Saturday and is closed on Sundays.

BENU and DA recently joined forces to offer a wider product range at competitive prices and a better shopping experience to customers. DA is (on the ABC islands) part of Super Retail Holding and BENU is part of Visser Pharma Group.

Visser Pharma Group has been active as a pharmacist on the islands for more than 50 years and has grown into an important player in the healthcare sector with

two pharmaceutical import and distribution companies and 11 pharmacies. Super Retail has been active in retail on the ABC islands for more than 21 years with eight different retail store formulas and a total of 17 retail stores.

The collaboration means that BENU will take care of all prescription drugs and that DA will take care of all personal care items, including the DA private label. This creates a DA shopping area and a BENU pharmacy area in one store.

RSM party accuses Gibbs of 'hypocrisy and manoeuvring'

MARIGOT--New political party Rassemblement Saint-Martinois (RSM) has accused President of the Collectivité Daniel Gibbs of "engaging in cheap political manoeuvres and hypocrisy in an effort to win back his lost electorate."

RSM in its press release referred to Gibbs's intention to apply the "local preference for hiring" scheme through the inclusion of the social and professional integration clause in his public contracts. While the approach is commendable, RSM questions the timing, three months before the next election in March 2022.

"Who can believe in the sincerity of this action? We say loud and clear that this is pure demagoguery. We know that President Gibbs has sat in Parliament where he had the opportunity to introduce a bill, requesting the application of this initiative in the territory under the provisions of Article 74 of the French Constitution, unfortunately he did not even consider it useful to study the issue."

RSM said the same opportunity arose during his term of office and, again, no particular measure was envisaged in favour of the unemployed. Now that there is pressure from the street, and especially with the approach of the territorial elections, the island's political decision-maker believes that it is necessary to introduce this measure in its public contracts in a hurry, in accordance with the regulations in force.

"The hypocrisy of the executive can be explained by the fact that on several occasions, and since 2018, we have alerted during meetings of the territorial council, to the urgent need to introduce a social clause in its public contracts, knowing that the system has been in force since 2001 on the national level. It has to be said that we were neither listened to nor heard."

"In spite of the fact that various reports from the national bureau of statistics and economic studies (Institut National de la Statistiques et des Etudes Economique INSEE) and l'Institut d'Emission des Départements d'Outre Mer (IEDOM) highlighted a high unemployment rate in the territory of St. Martin, he did not consider it important and necessary to envisage and seriously consider such a measure in order to reach out to a fringe of the youth

in misery (far from employment for a long time) and in rupture with the established system. The observation is simple to establish; the sad fate of these young people has never been the concern of the president."

RSM further emphasised that since the social revolt of December 2019, everyone knew that the young people were suffering, but instead of providing answers to their difficulties, the public authorities deliberately concealed the social reality, and applied the policy of the ostrich. The social actions of the street in November 2021 only confirmed the obvious, an expression of an uncontrolled anger.

"Of course, RSM condemns the actions committed by some who had a different agenda from those who favoured social dialogue with the decision-makers, and also had the courage to present a platform of demands."

"The question of the inadequacy of school education in St. Martin, the training of young people without qualifications, the social despair in the various districts of the territory, the record rate of unemployment, the exorbitant cost of the m2 of land on the "50 geometric steps", the absence of price control, etcetera, are on the list of points to be settled."

"Who can reasonably object to this list of grievances? Whatever the team in place tomorrow, we admit that all

these issues will have to be dealt with seriously and with a sense of responsibility."

Faced with the current situation, RSM notes that there have been some interesting steps taken through the social dialogue that attract its attention. The state has made financial commitments to neighbourhoods considered sensitive.

"Yes, we approve the construction of a socio-administrative centre and installation of a postal office in Quartier d'Orléans. The renovation of sports facilities is also one of our priorities. Social mediation in the neighbourhoods must be permanent. There is an urgent need to recruit and train young people to become street mediators."

"Community life must be structured and better supported financially, as it is a source of recruitment for young people. A housing and habitat plan must be considered very seriously if we wanted to improve the living conditions of our population. The signing of the education agreement, provided for in the organic law, must be drafted taking into account the socio-linguistic reality, with the aim of encouraging a better rate of school success."

"These are some of the non-exhaustive measures that are needed to meet the expectations of the population and that are free of all forms of hypocrisy," RSM concluded.

Aruba objects to new conditions

Continued from page 1.

request of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten to deviate from the Financial Supervision Kingdom Law to allow a budget deficit.

The Netherlands now demands that the three countries give their political support for the Consensus Kingdom Law to establish the Caribbean Entity for Reform and Development COHO. All three countries are vehemently protesting this new, unilateral condition.

"Reason for this is the setting of additional conditions by the Netherlands, outside the already made agreements. Specifically, it concerns conditions that infringe on Aruba's Constitution whereby the Netherlands expects Aruba's Prime Minister to act in violation of the Constitution, and circumvents the Aruba Parliament by affirming a protocol without an end term," it was stated in a

press release on Monday.

"Aruba has repeatedly tried to arrive at a compromise that does not violate the constitutional structures of our country. The Netherlands did not accept this compromise. Aside from signing a financial supervision protocol that infringes on the foundation of the constitutional state, the Netherlands refuses to give perspective about the salary cuts of civil servants and employees in the semi-public sector."

According to Oranjestad, these workers want clarity and perspective. Since May 2020, their salaries have been cut by 12.5 per cent and now that Aruba is recovering economically, it is justified to offer this perspective and to decrease the salary cut. "Unfortunately, the Netherlands does not hear our plea."

The Aruba government said that it "very much de-

plores" the Dutch stance, also because the civil servants' team from Aruba has worked hard to help materialise the Consensus Kingdom Law COHO. The Aruba government maintained that it had complied with almost all conditions that were agreed upon earlier.

"Working with continuous moving goal posts is not beneficial for the mutual relations within the kingdom. Aruba hopes that the coalition accord of the new Dutch government which talks about decreasing the democratic deficit, will serve as a basis for further talks. Talks will be resumed in January 2022, and hopefully a compromise can be reached. Aruba is positive that this will be accomplished through a constructive collaboration with the Netherlands," the press release ended.

CBCS repeals

Continued from page 1.

"Because of this, the fixed peg of the guilder to the US dollar was safeguarded despite the unprecedented economic crisis," said CBCS Executive Director José Jardim.

The official foreign exchange reserves increased by Naf. 612 million to Naf. 2.9 billion in 2020, while the import coverage rose from 6.2 to 7.1 months. The foreign exchange position strengthened further during 2021, increasing by Naf. 338 million to Naf. 3.2 billion on December 10, 2021, while the import coverage rose to 7.5 months.

Based on the sound level and import coverage of the official reserves and the signs of recovery of the economies of Curaçao and St. Maarten, CBCS started to phase out the capital restriction as of October 1,

2021.

From that date, the granting of foreign exchange licences for transactions that result in an outflow of foreign exchange was resumed for amounts up to Naf. 300,000. In addition, special provisions became effective for foreign investments by pension funds and insurance companies and the distribution of dividends and profits to non-residents.

"Also, after the easing of the capital restriction, the foreign exchange position and import coverage remained solid. In addition, the economic recovery of Curaçao and St. Maarten seems to strengthen. Based on these developments, the CBCS decided to repeal the capital restriction effective January 1, 2022," concluded Jardim.



Students have been showing great interest in environmental protection, Nature Foundation manager Melanie Meijer said.

Nature Foundation visits schools to educate students on plastics

PHILIPSBURG--Nature Foundation St. Maarten has started to give presentations at local schools on St. Maarten about plastic and how to keep our environment safe and healthy. The educational programme is part of In-No-Plastic Project, a European Union-funded global initiative.

Local students will learn how to limit their plastic use, and the effects plastic has on the island's ecosystem. "We are very excited to be back in the classrooms and talking to local students about how we protect St. Maarten's environment," said Project Coordinator Alice Manley. "These presentations are impactful and interactive. Through this programme

we hope to push students to think critically about their actions."

In-No-Plastic concentrates on innovative methods towards the prevention, removal, and re-use of marine plastic litter. Nature Foundation and In-No-Plastic staff will introduce various social strategies to reduce the plastic usage on the island by providing information on various social platforms, and presenting to the local school groups. Staff will also monitor the amount of plastic found in our coastal areas over time. In addition, this project offers a large contribution to the Nature Foundation's conservation educational materials, as well as outreach efforts and

activities.

Within the school presentations, topics such as Nature Foundation's tasks, In-No-Plastic project tasks, differences between single-use and multi-use plastic, the St. Maarten plastic ban, and further information about plastic and its effects on the environment are discussed. Students are also given the opportunity to take part in hands-on activities, and groups can add practical applications to the presentations such as a field trip to participate in a clean-up.

Students have been showing great interest in environmental protection, with some older students asking how they can volunteer or be more active in conservation. "This will help to create members of our community who are advocates for the protection of our island and its natural resources," said Melanie Meijer zu Schlochtern, Nature Foundation manager. "We are very glad to be back in the classrooms with the students. The youth of St. Maarten is our future, and Nature Foundation will continue to protect and preserve our environment for generations to come. We believe that sharing this vital information with students, residents and tourists, will expand their knowledge of the work we do and why we do it."

Schools, groups, and businesses are welcome to reach out to Nature Foundation to request a presentation or assistance for any educational activity. These activities could take place in a classroom, or at another location by the group's organization. If you would like to request a presentation from Nature Foundation, please contact info@naturefoundationsxm.org.

Launch of renewed website Politiecn.com

CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS--The Dutch Caribbean Police Force KPCN is launching the renewed Police CN website.

In addition to a new look and feel, the renewed website offers even more options for getting in touch with the police and the possibility to highlight police-related topics.

Taking into account the constant digital developments and the needs of the inhabitants of and visitors to the Caribbean Netherlands, KPCN entered into a partnership with the Dutch Police NP at the beginning of 2021. This collaboration is an extension of the existing agreements with the NP. The renewed KPCN website is therefore also drawn up according to the same structure and based on the same quality requirements as those of the NP.

Making contact with the police is now also easier – possible digitally. The renewed website makes contacting the police even more accessible. On the website, it is possible to send a tip, complaint, compliment or report via the "Contact" tab.

It is not (yet) possible to file declarations via the website. For the time being, this must proceed through the desk/police officers. Urgent reports can only be made via the 911 emergency line.

With the launch of the renewed website, it is now possible to fill in a digital complaint form again. This possibility has previously been discussed with the National Ombudsman and offers inhabitants the opportunity to report a complaint about

both the handling of an ongoing case and the behaviour of the police. This report will be checked by an external and independent party. The party issues advice to the Chief of Police, who can then make a decision about the conduct.

If the complainant is dissatisfied, he can appeal to the National Ombudsman.

With this set of procedures and laws, which work well in accordance with the recent

law enforcement report, KPCN tries to be as transparent as possible and to learn from eventual mistakes.

There are currently a number of featured topics on the website's homepage. In addition to the complaints procedure, they currently victim support and information about cybercrime. In the course of next year, KPCN will share many other topics. These can always be found via the Topics tab.

Pisas II Cabinet shuns Amnesty International

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao's government ignored a delegation from Amnesty International (AI) Netherlands last week that wanted to talk about the violation of human rights against Venezuelan refugees. They were also prohibited from visiting the deportee barracks.

On Friday, director of AI Netherlands Dagmar Oudshoorn and researcher Yara Boff Tonella told Dutch news agency ANP that they regretted not reaching an agreement with local authorities.

In its report published on October 11, the human rights organisation said Curaçao is violating the rights of Venezuelans fleeing to the neighbouring island. They are said to be humiliated and held in inhumane conditions, while in some cases children are sent back separately from their parents.

So far, there has been no response from the Pisas II Cabinet on the report.

AI also published a similar statement in 2018. At the time, the former government pledged to adhere to international laws and agreements.

Current Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Gilmar Pisas said he could not receive the delegation. The barracks were not accessible due to renovation, the human rights activists' team was told.

In Aruba, they were given a tour of the foreigners' detention facility despite a renovation.

Oudshoorn said she was pleased to have been able to speak with human rights organizations during her visit to Curaçao, as well as with acting Governor Michele Russel-Capriles and the Dutch Representation in Willemstad. "But in the interest of human rights, we will continue to try to talk to the government," Oudshoorn added.

Schiphol criticised for keeping shops inside the airport open

AMSTERDAM--Shop employees at Schiphol airport are reported to be angry and distressed at being exempted from the lockdown rules that came into force on Sunday morning.

All stores in the departures area beyond security have been allowed to stay open, even though other non-essential shops have been ordered to close until January 14.

NH Nieuws quoted one anonymous retail worker who said staff were worried about the risk of infection but unable to report their concerns to their employers because they feared reprisals. "Our employer says we should be glad we still have our jobs," the retail worker said. "There is a culture of anxiety here. If they learn that we have contacted the media in our despair, we risk being fired."

The Animal Rights Party (PvdD) has called for all non-essential shops at the airport to be closed, in line with the rest of the country. MP Christine Teunissen said: "There are two different sets of rules being applied, and I don't understand it. Schiphol clearly believes making money is more important than showing solidarity with the rest of the Netherlands. I think it is indefensible. The cabinet needs to make the situation clear."

A spokesman for the airport said keeping the shops open had no impact on the spread of the virus because passengers' main reason for being in the airport was to travel. "It is not the case that the shops beyond security at Schiphol make any difference to the number of people present or limit the movement of people, which is the main focus of the cabinet's coronavirus policies."

Workshops on urban development plan to continue in February 2022

MARIGOT--Work related to elaboration of the St. Martin Planning and Development Plan (Plan d'Aménagement et de Développement de Saint-Martin (PADSM) has been underway since January 2021. After the participative workshops organised last October, open to the whole population, the next step consists of proposing workshops on urban planning, during the month of February 2022.

The workshops will take place over two weeks of exchanges in four working groups deployed in the main districts of St. Martin: Quartier d'Orléans, Grand Case, Marigot and Sandy Ground. The objective of this col-

lective format is to be able to work on the scale of the neighbourhoods on the creation of urban development plans.

The workshops will be open to the entire population: residents wishing to take part in the process, representatives of the neighbourhood councils, members of socio-professional federations and associations, whatever their field of intervention. Everyone is welcome to attend these collective work sessions.

The administrative teams in charge of running the workshops will be accompanied by various professionals in the field of spatial planning: urban planners, architects,

landscape architects, etcetera.

The active participation of the population, as well as the multi-disciplinary nature of the groups, are necessary to approach the urban planning of the territory in its entirety by pooling the know-how and ideas of each person in order to think and design the St. Martin of tomorrow.

By drawing up proposals that are essential to the design of development plans, the workshops will be decisive in the construction of the PADSM. At the beginning of next year, details will be provided on the dates, locations, registration procedures and the conduct of these workshops.

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30 Inch Steel 4 Sealed Burners Electrical or Manual Ignition. Double glass oven Dual Oven Rack



\$349



\$399 Blue Silver Legs Futon



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\$295



All Libraries



\$395

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All China Cabinets



\$795 solid wood

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\$225

\$225

\$225



Queen Bed Bedframe **\$495**



Queen Bed Bedframe **\$495**



Queen Bed Bedframe **\$495**



Queen Bed Bedframe **\$495**



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will be interrupted on Wednesday, December 22nd, 2021
from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

The outage will allow us to carry out the necessary maintenance to our distribution system.

We apologize for the inconvenience this may cause.

Sincerely,
NV GEBE



St. Eustatius Auxiliary Home treated many persons to a delectable holiday treat during its annual Christmas luncheon on Thursday, December 16, held at the Home. Entertainment was provided by Marlon "DJ Runn Things" Hook. In photo, Gina Hassell (centre) and St. Eustatius Auxiliary Home head nurse Donna Kalmera with seniors and their relatives.

Cooking classes business wins Startup Launchpad

WILLEMSTAD--Kimberly Schoop's "Lil' Foodies" company has won the fourth "Startup Launchpad" competition of Curaçao. In addition to 5,000 Netherlands Antillean guilders, the entrepreneur will also receive training and coaching to stimulate the growth of her business.

Apart from cooking classes for children, Lil'

Foodies offers an online dining environment for youngsters between 4 and 12 years old, who get acquainted with the basics of preparing meals. They are introduced to new ingredients and learn how to use their senses in the kitchen, stimulating their creativity while improving their taste, confidence and social skills.

Tim Martina's "Brabu" finished in second place. It provides technology to gather market insights without violating privacy regulations.

Startup Launchpad is a programme of Curaçao Innovation & Technology Institute (CITI) and the Ministry of Economic Development MEO.

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Stay connected with Family & Friends this Holiday Season



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Purchase a \$20 or \$40 Prepaid mobile cards
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Wednesday, December 22nd, 2021

*Conditions apply

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Free Top-Up card is of equal value as the purchased card.

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AGENDA

ST. EUSTATIUS

Police Station 182333
Emergency 111
Hot Line 108
Fire Department 120
Hospital 182211/182371
Landsradio 182210
Post Office 182207
St. Eustatius Historical Foundation Museum 182288
Winair Office 182362
Lions Club meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday at the "Den" next to the Airport
Drug Prevention Foundation meets every Tuesday 5:30pm at the Golden Era Hotel.
Coastguard NA&A 113
St. Eustatius National parks: Gallows Bay: 318 2884

SABA

Police Station
The Bottom, tel. 4163237
Emergency 111/112
Hospital
 The Bottom, tel. 4163288/4163289
Fire Department Airport
 Flat Point tel. 4162210
SATEL
The Bottom, tel. 4163211
WINAIR, Airport
 Flat Point, tel. 4162255/2713
Taxi Service Airport
 Flat Point, tel. 160
Administration Building
 The Bottom, tel. 4163311/4163312/4163313
Tourist Office
 Windwardside, tel. 4162231
Harbour Office
 Fort Bay, tel. 4163294
Saba Marine Park
 Fort Bay, tel. 4163295
Nature & Hike Guide
 James Johnson
 The Bottom, tel. 4163307
Service Club
 Saba Lions Club general meeting every 1st and 3rd Tuesday 8:00 p.m. at Eugenius A. Johnson Center.
Coastguard NA&A 113
Red Cross
 General meeting every last Monday, 6 p.m. Eugenius A. Johnson Center.

ANGUILLA

EMERGENCY
Police 911
Fire 911
Ambulance 911
Police Station 497 2333
Hospital 497 2551
Disaster Department 497 2926
Radio Anguilla 497 2218
Tourism 497 2759

AIRLINES
 Anguilla Air Services 498 5922
 Trans Anguilla 497 8690

COURIER SERVICE
 DHL 497 3400
 Fedex 497 2719
 UPS 497 2239

SERVICE CLUBS
Rotary
 Meets at Roy's Restaurant Every Thursday 6 pm
Soroptimist International
 Meets at Day Care Centre 2nd Tuesday in month 4.30 pm
Lions Club
 1st and 3rd Tuesday
Arts and Craft Centre 5.30 pm
Toastmasters Club
 Every 2nd and 4th Saturday
 Anguilla Community College 6.45pm

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'Makana' ferry: two-day pause due to mechanical issue, back-up on the way

ANGUILLA/SABA--*MV Makana* encountered a mechanical issue on Sunday, December 19, that caused the cancellation of all Saba and Statia routes.

According to Captain Dwayne Hodge, the output flange failed. The part is being sourced and mechanical technicians are on standby to make the repair.

Meanwhile in Anguilla, standby vessel *MV Niki V* is currently undergoing annual re-inspection, which made it impossible for her to be used for backup. Trips on Monday, December 20, were also cancelled as a result. Due to the Anguilla holiday on Monday *MV Niki V* is expected to be deployed to Saba and Statia

on Tuesday, December 21. Samuel Connor of Blues & Blues Ltd. assures the travelling public that the company will resume service with *MV Makana* on Thursday, December 23, according to the regular schedule.

"The Makana ferry is currently one of the highest equipped vessels in the region with qualified captains and crew," it was stated in a press release. The company remains committed to passenger safety and quality service, the release said. Customers can visit www.makanaferryservice.com for updates or contact their local agent for assistance.



The "Makana" ferry.

Curaçao with 39 new cases

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao reported 39 COVID-19 infections after testing 1,749 people including travellers, of which 16 were imported.

There were 21 recoveries, bringing the number of active cases to 232.

According to the epidemiology department, further investigation showed that two results had been recorded incorrectly. The necessary adjustment was made.


Curaçao Medical Center (CMC) had 11 patients with COVID-19 symptoms, four of them in intensive care.

The pandemic's total death count on the island stands at 184.




Car damaged after being stolen, taken for joy ride


ST. EUSTATIUS--A company car belonging to an organisation on Leonard E. Sadler Road in St. Eustatius was stolen and taken on a joy ride during which time it was damaged.

The incident occurred between Monday, December 13, and Tuesday, December 14. According to authorities, the car was taken by an unknown person and after a while returned with damage to the front bumper. The car was parked in the parking lot in front of the business' location at the time of the theft. The case is under investigation.



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Posthumous honour for Jewish nurse Thelma Polak born in Saba



Island Governor Jonathan Johnson and Saba Cares Director Judith Meijer unveiled the plaque for Thelma Esther Polak, the Jewish nurse who was born in Saba 101 years ago, on December 19, 1920.

Week church service in May this year.

Volunteer

Island Governor Jonathan Johnson recounted some of the interesting heroic facts about Thelma Polak. Thelma lost her mother Estelle Arrias when she was barely two years old. In the early 1930s, Thelma, her brother Samuel Jacques and her father moved to Amsterdam. Thelma proudly told her schoolmates that she was born in Saba and that one day she wanted to work in Saba as a doctor.

As a Jew, Thelma was not allowed to study medicine during the war, so she volunteered at Apeldoornsche Bos, a hospital for mentally and physically challenged people near Apeldoorn, where she worked as a student nurse.

Deportation

When the Germans raided the institution in January 1943 and removed all 1,300 patients to deport them afterwards, Thelma volunteered to accompany the patients. Among her favourite patients was 77-year-old Abigail Santcroos from Curaçao whom Thelma was said to quickly dress in warm clothes and for whom she prepared a small suitcase.

At the Dutch camp Westerbork, Thelma married her love, Izak Cohen, who also worked as a nurse at Apel-



The plaque for Thelma Esther Polak was unveiled at the war monument, next to the plaque that has been there for many years bearing the names of 129 persons of the Netherlands Antilles, including 11 Sabans, who perished during World War II.

doornsche Bos. A month after her marriage, Thelma was deported to Sobibor where she was gassed on March 5, 1943, at the age of 22. Thelma was the only Holocaust victim who was born in Saba. Her name is stated on the Jewish Monument in Amsterdam.

Island Governor Johnson said it was important to tell Thelma's story and the history of WWII not only for the general public, but also in schools. Johnson and Meijer unveiled the plaque in Thelma's honour after Anya Danilova of the Jewish Student Association of Saba University School of Medicine addressed the small gathering.

Courage

"Though her life was short, Thelma Polak gave her life to her work as a nurse to the patients in her care at the Apeldoorn Jewish Home for the disabled. Her service, determination and courage are a light that shines in darkness. The Nazis sought to minimise and dehumanise, reducing people to numbers based on a moral and scientific depravity, whereas Thelma's work was to spread light and see a patient as worthy of care because they were simply human," said Danilova.

"Whether we are nurses, physicians, governors, teachers, office workers or fishermen, we all have special

qualities to give to others and the world; remembering that no one is insignificant. In this way, we rob the Nazis of their goals. Today, we remember and honour Thelma on her birthday and all the countless victims. Through our endeavours, we make their lives and our own a blessing. Shalom [peace - Ed.]," said Danilova.

The small, wooden plaque for Thelma Polak was placed next to the larger plaque on the war monument with the names of 129 persons of the Netherlands Antilles, including 11 Sabans, who perished during World War II. Saba observes Memorial Day at this monument every year on May 4.

Candlelight service held at Bethel Methodist Chapel

ST. EUSTATIUS--A large section of the community attended a candlelight service held at Bethel Methodist Church on Sunday, December 19. The event was a collaborative effort of the Jeems and Bethel Chapels. Island Councilwoman Adelka

Spanner, Bethel Methodist Reverend Telford Matthew, his spouse Petra Matthew and representatives of several denominations and invited guests attended the event which was conducted by Beryl Fortin-van Putten. During the event different choirs marched with lit

candles. Several songs were performed including "Hallelujah" in English, Dutch and Spanish. The service also included the reciting of poems, singing of hymns and more. A group from Suriname also entertained guests.



The song "Hallelujah" being sung.



The Junior Choir performed at the event.



The different choirs.

Marie Pampoen project continues

WILLEMSTAD--The construction contract for phase 3 of the Marie Pampoen Recreational Area was recently signed by Curaçao Tourist Board (CTB) deputy director Hugo Clarinda and Wendell Bonafacio, director of "Curaçaoose Wegenbouw Maatschappij" (CWM) infrastructure company, in the presence of Minister of Economic Development MEO Ruisandro Cijntje.

A number of facilities have been added over the last few years and are being widely used by different groups of the local community and international visitors as well. The development is part of a master plan for a seaside recreational area with economic activities for the community in general and especially those living in the neighbourhood.

At the same time, it will also serve as a tourism product where guests can mingle with the local population and experience the island for themselves.

The project's third phase will focus on several recreational and sports facilities, such as a beach with palapas, multiple play and entertainment activities for children and youths, an open-air fitness area, a pier, a beach volleyball court, three business kiosks, benches, picnic areas, restrooms, landscaping, illumina-

tion, coastal protection, as well as running water and electricity infrastructure.

CTB has been tasked with coordinating the project, while its financing is provided by the MEO. Heren2 Caribbean supervising the construction, which is planned to start early in 2022.



Recreational area

Booster shots now after three months

WILLEMSTAD--Some 88,000 people in Curaçao are eligible for a coronavirus vaccination booster shot. This may now be given three instead of six months after the second injection.

The first group of more than 30,000 are persons 60 years of age and older. According to health authorities, these third shots are important to make the population resistant to the highly contagious new Omicron variant.

People who already had COVID-19 are also advised to get injected.

At this moment, 96,000 people have been fully vaccinated, while 7,500 will soon receive their second shot.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



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The Windward Islands Bank Ltd hereby informs that effective **December 31st 2021**, all WIB American Express (AMEX) cards will be cancelled.

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Government: CBCS can't sell gold reserve

WILLEMSTAD--Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten (CBCS) is not allowed to sell the gold

of country Curaçao. The Council of Ministers recently decided such on a proposal from Minister of Finance Javier Silvania (MFK), who announced this on his Facebook page.

CBCS manages the official reserves in both currency and gold. Their management is regularly assessed for the possibilities of further optimising its effectiveness.

Last April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assisted CBCS in evaluating its related policies. One of the recommendations was to have less gold in stock.

Compared to other central banks of comparable size, CBCS has a much larger share of gold in its official reserves. The current value of the gold stock is 1.3 billion Netherlands Antillean guilders and covers more than a quarter of all assets.

According to CBCS, the gold reserve acts as an ul-

time buffer in cases of a major external shock on the economies of Curaçao and St. Maarten, resulting in a rapid decline in foreign exchange reserves. In the event of such an exceptional balance-of-payments crisis, the gold reserve can guarantee foreign exchange attracting by the central bank to contin-

ue financing the necessary imports.

In principle, the finance minister has no powers regarding the management of official reserves by the central bank. Because both parties attach importance to careful communication and want to avoid unnecessary unrest, there is mutual coordination.



On December 14 and 15, during three separate naturalisation ceremonies, a total of 72 people made their "statement of solidarity" before Curaçao's acting Governor Michel Rusesl-Capriles. All thus acquired Dutch citizenship.

Immigration lines at Curaçao airport

WILLEMSTAD--Significant understaffing led to enormous frustration on Friday afternoon among passengers departing from Curaçao, who had to wait for up to three hours to pass the immigration counters.

While there already was massive congestion due to many planes leaving at the same time, the lack of personnel led to what appeared endless queues.

Travellers having just checked in for their flight joined at the back of the line, which at certain moments took up two to three rows the length of the departure hall. Several airlines, including KLM, Tui and Avianca, left more than an hour late due to the delay. Some passengers, especially from KLM and Tui, only arrived at the gate after three hours.

Staff of Curaçao Airport Partners (CAP) tried to manage the flow of travellers, but at a certain point they could no longer handle the great number. This led to considerable annoyance. Passengers on their way to Bonaire with Divi Divi and EZ Air, among others, also had to que up for hours.

The situation, with hundreds of people standing close to each other, could also be described as less than optimal from the point of view of COVID-19 prevention.

Last corona aid payment today

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao's Ministry of Social Development, Labour and Wellbeing SOAW will pay out COVID-19 support to the unemployed for the last time today, Tuesday.

At the end of this month, the Dutch Caribbean country will stop providing related assistance to all individuals, businesses and companies affected by the pandemic. Government's financial resources are exhausted.

In addition, the economy is showing signs of recovery. Particularly tourism is having a peak year, with better figures than before the coronavirus outbreak.

This will put an end to the credit card that welfare recipients and the persons out of work received for their monthly grocery shopping. The payment of a job loss benefit of a maximum of 1,000 Netherlands Antillean guilders per month will also stop.

This year, government will not pay an end-of-year bonus to welfare recipients. Pre-corona they received an extra NAF. 100 in December, but since they already got emergency aid throughout the year, it was decided to skip the annual gesture.

SER: Top incomes of court must also be cut

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao's Social and Economic Council SER believes that the highest incomes at the Court of Justice should also be cut. Until now, the court had been excluded from both the cap on top earners and the 12.5-per-cent cut in benefits for the public sector.

SER says this decision "shows little solidarity" by the court. The exemption applies to the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Chief Prosecutor, the Court President, the Board of Directors and the Council of Law Enforcement.

The tri-partite body advised government to reconsider its position on this.



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Our aspiration is to continue supporting each other in the coming year. Small gestures can make all the difference.

We wish everyone a heartwarming holiday season with those you hold dear.



Minister Hamilton applauds hard work of public sector employees

ST. KITTS--The payment of a second salary today, Tuesday, December 21, for public sector employees in St. Kitts and Nevis as well as for pensioners and Skills Training Empowerment Programme (STEP) workers is in recognition of government's appreciation for the dedicated work performed over the last twenty months amid a pandemic.

Minister of Social Security Eugene Hamilton used part of his budget presentation in the National House of Assembly on Monday, December 20, to applaud the contributions from employees.

"Here Mr. Speaker is an employer, I will say recognising hard work, feeling and understanding the pain of



Eugene Hamilton

the last 20 months, recognising that given the economic surpluses generated despite COVID realities, those who

have been burdened, must be rewarded," Hamilton stated.

He summed up the payment of a double salary by government in two words. "Our country has felt the generosity and compassion of my government with the announcement of a double salary," Minister Hamilton expressed. "Day one [of the budget - Ed.] we learnt of a double salary making it five double salaries in seven years. That is without any legislation requiring us to give a double salary and I will say it is unprecedented."

The double salary is essentially an extra month's pay within the same month. It is traditionally paid during the Christmas and Carnival seasons.



Staff Captain Daniel (left) of the "MV World Voyager" receiving a copy of a historic old map of Nevis from Spencer Brand (right), who is representing Premier of Nevis and Minister of Tourism Mark Brantley, as a token of appreciation at a welcoming ceremony at the Charlestown Port during the vessel's inaugural call to Nevis on December 17, 2021.

'MV World Voyager' makes inaugural call

NEVIS--Minister in the Nevis Island Administration (NIA) Spencer Brand welcomed the captain, crew and guests of the *MV World Voyager* to Nevis, as the vessel made its inaugural call to the island on December 17, 2021.

During a small ceremony at the Charlestown Port, the minister who represented Premier of Nevis and Minister of Tourism Mark Brantley told the cruise ship's Staff Captain David that they had chosen one of the premier destinations in the Caribbean. He described the island as one steeped in history.

"Nevis is an island that is rich in history. I would share with you that the island of Nevis is the place where the first hotel in the Caribbean was constructed, the Bath Hotel. I would also share with you that Nevis is the birthplace of one of the founding members of the United States of America, Alexander Hamilton. So, we have a very rich history here on the island of Nevis," he said.

Brand expressed hope that the vessel's inaugural visit to the island would be the first of many; that the captain and crew would find the island a place they would be drawn to; and that the guests would have rave reviews at the end of their visit which would result in placing Nevis on the *MV World Voyager's* itinerary.

He described the visit as a pleasurable one for Nevis, mindful that the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic had disseminated the island's tourism industry over the past two years.

"We are indeed delighted to see that there is some buoyancy again in the tourism

sector here on the island of Nevis. We hope that your visit here on Nevis would be a long-lasting partnership with your entity and the island of Nevis, and we hope that at the end of the day it will be mutually rewarding and beneficial for both.

"So welcome on behalf of the premier, on behalf of the cabinet and the people of Nevis, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you officially to the island," Minister Brand said.

In response, the vessel's Staff Captain Daniel thanked everyone for the warm welcome and expressed hope that the vessel would return to the island. He used the opportunity to speak about the visit.

"This inaugural call has been very calm, very smooth so we hope to come back as the *Navigator* and any sister ship that's going to come out soon next year.

We hope to come back here and return to this nice Caribbean island with all this beautiful weather, and I am sure our guests are going to be enjoying today and maybe also, they love it and they are going to come also for their own private vacations," he said.

Devon Liburd, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Nevis Tourism Authority (NTA) who chaired the event, described Nevis as a tranquil, peaceful and calm destination, and added that he was certain the passengers would be satisfied with the destination, and make recommendations for the *MV World Voyager* to return to Nevis.

At the end of the ceremony, Minister Brand and Staff Captain Daniel, who was accompanied by crew member Anastasia, exchanged tokens of appreciation.



Former chairman of Curaçao's soccer association "Federashon di Fubòl Kòrsou" (FFK) Rinaal "Jean" Francisca (third from right) was declared honorary member on Sunday. FFK's own stadium at National Sports Centre SDK in Brevengat has also been given his name. Francisca stepped down at the end of 2019 after 20 years.

STEP workers to step up as public servants in 2022

ST. KITTS--The government of St. Kitts and Nevis will move to regularise workers employed under the Skills Training Empowerment Programme (STEP) into the public service as Government Auxiliary Workers (GAEs) in 2022.

"For 2022, we will move forward in our commitment to make STEP workers permanent. Mr. Speaker, part of the government employee base," said Prime Minister Timothy Harris during the tabling of The Appropriation (2022) Bill, 2021, at the St. Kitts Marriott Ballroom, on Tuesday, December 14.

Harris noted that this will be done via a phased approach.

"We do so on a phased basis. Our first phase would

involve those in the government service, Customs, the ministries, the prisons - wherever they work, because we have immediate control. In our first phase, we would look at those who have been doing a wonderful job and we will give them the benefit of moving forward. That is our commitment for 2022," said Harris. "We have STEP workers in the private sector; of course, they are not within our reach in terms of making them permanent because the government can't go and say to TDC you must, but we certainly can say if you're not going to at least try, we will have to take back our worker from you."

Harris noted that the government is also committed to

keeping the promise made to GAE workers.

"In addition, the Government Auxiliary Employees, our commitment to them will continue to be satisfied in 2022. We said that we will allow them to continue to receive honorarium until they are regularised," said Harris. "It was a promise made ... and so, in addition to getting their double, they will also receive their honorarium this year, thanks to the Team Unity government: promise made, a promise we have committed to."

The first phase of the regularisation of the STEP workers is estimated to cost EC \$16.4 million.

Popular music festival to return in June 2022

ST. KITTS--Tourism Minister Lindsay Grant is encouraging all music lovers to keep the dates Friday, June 24 and Saturday, June 25, 2022, open for the return of the popular St. Kitts Music Festival.

The minister shared the date for the spectacular event on Thursday, December 16's sitting of the National Assembly. While contributing to the third day of the Budget Debate, Minister Grant said the two nights will feature spectacular music and fun at the Kim Collins Athletic Stadium.

The event was scaled down to two days as a result of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Best practices, based on the successful health and safety protocols developed for local mass events such as the 2021 Caribbean Premier League and Sugar Mas 50 will be implemented to keep patrons safe.

"To survive, we must adapt and evolve as we learn to live with the virus," Minister Grant said. "And so, over the next few months, we will fine-tune bold, innovative, efficient frameworks for hosting a safe, enjoyable and memorable event."

The list of performers will be published early in the new year so that patrons can begin planning to join the festivities, Grant stated.



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Landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen, van de 15e december 2021 ter uitvoering van artikel 61a van de Algemene landsverordening landsbelastingen (Landsbesluit internationale bijstandverlening bij de heffing van belastingen)

Datum inwerkingtreding: 28 januari 2022 en werkt terug tot en met 01 januari 2018 **AB 2021, no. 77**

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 Please email: jzw@sintmaartengov.org for more information.

ADJUSTED OPERATIONAL HOURS MAIN LANDFILL HOLIDAY SEASON

The Ministry of VROMI, department of infrastructure management announces a change in the operational hours of the Main Landfill:

Christmas day December 25, 2021: The Sanitary & IRMA landfill will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Boxing Day December 26, 2021 : The sanitary will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Boxing Day December 26, 2021 : The IRMA landfill will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

New Year's Day January 01, 2022 : The Sanitary & IRMA landfill will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Regular operational hours will resume on Monday January 3, 2022.

The Ministry of VROMI apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause.



Vacature voor:

HOOFD AFDELING JUSTITIËLE ZAKEN

voor de afdeling Justitiële Zaken van het Ministerie van Justitie

Wie zijn wij?

Het Ministerie van Justitie heeft als doelstelling het scheppen van randvoorwaarden voor de handhaving van de veiligheid, orde en rust, en de waarborging van het recht binnen de samenleving. De hoofdstructuur van het ministerie wordt naast de minister en diens kabinet gevormd door de secretaris-generaal en diens stafbureau, de afdeling Justitiële Zaken en de volgende uitvoerende organisaties: het Korps Politie Sint Maarten, het Gevangeniswezen, de Immigratie- en Grensbewakingsdienst, de Landsrecherche, de Douane en het Meldpunt Ongebruikelijke Transacties. De Kustwacht alsook de rechterlijke macht en het Openbaar Ministerie bedienen naast Sint Maarten ook andere landen binnen het Koninkrijk en zijn bij zogenoemde consensusrijkswetten geregeld.

De afdeling Justitiële Zaken zorgt voor de juridische en beleidsmatige ondersteuning van het Ministerie van Justitie. Het is een kleine afdeling met een breed takenpakket en werkgebied. Zij is verantwoordelijk voor het ontwikkelen, bijstellen, bewaken en (doen) uitvoeren van het beleid betreffende de werkzaamheden van bovengenoemde uitvoerende organisaties en de overige ketenpartners van het ministerie. Daarnaast is de afdeling belast met het voorbereiden, implementeren en beheren van de landelijke wet- en regelgeving op het gebied van het straf(proces)recht, burgerlijk (proces)recht en bestuurs(proces)recht. Ook is zij verantwoordelijk voor het bewaken van de kwaliteit van de rechtshandhaving en justitiële klachtenbehandeling, de politie en het openbaar ministerie, de detentiezorg, het reclasseringswezen, de slachtofferzorg en de justitiële jeugdbescherming.

De functie

Als hoofd van de Afdeling Justitiële Zaken voer je, onder andere, de volgende taken uit. Je vertaalt beleidsuitgangspunten van het ministerie naar de afdeling, waarbij de strategische doelstellingen op langere termijn worden vastgelegd in het meerjaren beleidsplan; je speelt in op een breed scala van maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen en coördineer je onderzoek; je ontwikkelt strategische beleidskaders en stelt ontwikkelingsplannen op; je bewaakt het verband tussen ontwikkelingsplanning en de begrotingscyclus en adviseert daarover; je stuurt de totstandkoming van het afdelingsbeleid en de bijbehorende beleids- en uitvoeringsinstrumenten aan, draagt zorg voor de evaluatie daarvan en pleegt afstemmingsoverleg met de ambtelijke en politieke top; je dient verzoekschriften in en voert procedures voor de rechtbank; je informeert en adviseert de politieke en ambtelijke leiding over alle vraagstukken gerelateerd aan de uitvoering van beleid voor de verschillende deelgebieden van het ministerie en draagt op die manier bij aan de versterking van de rechtsstaat.

Functie-eisen

Je hebt een afgeronde universitaire rechtenopleiding en bent een gedreven manager met een brede juridische kennis en minimaal 8 jaar ervaring in advisering op juridische en beleidsmatige vraagstukken, alsmede het aansturen van medewerkers binnen het justitiedomein. Je bent analytisch, conceptueel en creatief en hebt een heldere en overtuigende communicatiestijl, in woord en geschrift. Je hebt een proactieve, flexibele, constructieve en collegiale werkhouding en zoekt de samenwerking op. Je hebt oog voor de politiek-bestuurlijke omgeving waarbinnen je functioneert.

Het aanbod

Het betreft hier in beginsel een aanstelling voor drie jaar met uitzicht op een vaste aanstelling. Het salaris is afhankelijk van kennis en ervaring. De functieschaal bedraagt minimaal ANG.12.285,- bruto per maand bij een volledige werkweek van 40 uur.
 Ben je woonachtig buiten Sint Maarten dan worden de met de verhuizing verband houdende kosten volgens het geldende beleid vergoed.

Sollicitaties

Ben je geïnteresseerd in deze vacature, stuur dan **vóór 14 januari 2022** je curriculum vitae met een motivatiebrief per e-mail naar de heer Rudy Richardson, rudy.richardson@justice.gov.sx en voor nadere informatie over de functie kunt u contact opnemen met mw.dr.s. L. Stella, secretaris-generaal van het ministerie van Justitie (Wnd.), telefoon +1721 5423025 tst. 113, e-mail: lms@sintmaarten.net.



Vacature voor:

JURIDISCH BELEIDSMEDEWERKER

voor de afdeling Justitiële Zaken van het Ministerie van Justitie

Wie zijn wij?

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De afdeling Justitiële Zaken zorgt voor de juridische en beleidsmatige ondersteuning van het Ministerie van Justitie. Het is een kleine afdeling met een breed takenpakket en werkgebied. Zij is verantwoordelijk voor het ontwikkelen, bijstellen, bewaken en (doen) uitvoeren van het beleid betreffende de werkzaamheden van bovengenoemde uitvoerende organisaties en de overige ketenpartners van het ministerie. Daarnaast is de afdeling belast met het voorbereiden, implementeren en beheren van de landelijke wet- en regelgeving op het gebied van het straf(proces)recht, burgerlijk (proces)recht en bestuurs(proces)recht. Ook is zij verantwoordelijk voor het bewaken van de kwaliteit van de rechtshandhaving en justitiële klachtenbehandeling, de politie en het openbaar ministerie, de detentiezorg, het reclasseringswezen, de slachtofferzorg en de justitiële jeugdbescherming.

De functie

Als juridisch beleidsmedewerker krijg je veel verantwoordelijkheden, heb je een divers takenpakket, bestaande uit, onder andere, de volgende werkgebieden. Je ontwikkelt instrumenten en procedures voor de implementatie van het beleid en geeft voorlichting; je adviseert over de uitvoeringsaspecten van beleidsvoornemens en het oplossen van knelpunten op het betreffende beleidsterrein; je monitort en begeleidt de uitvoering van beleid(plannen en -activiteiten) en veranderingstrajecten en adviseert over aanpassingen daarvan; je controleert en toetst aan de hand van verantwoordingsrapportages de beleidsuitvoering; je stelt regelgeving, uitvoeringsbesluiten, vergunningen en subsidietoekenningen op. Je draagt voorts bij aan de ontwikkeling en uitvoering van beleid voor de verschillende deelgebieden van het ministerie en draagt op die manier bij aan de versterking van de rechtsstaat.

Functie-eisen

Je hebt een afgeronde universitaire rechtenopleiding en bent een gedreven en flexibele collega met een brede juridische achtergrond en minimaal 4 jaar werkervaring op gebied van juridische beleidsontwikkeling. Ervaring binnen het justitiedomein strekt tot aanbeveling. Je hebt voorts ervaring met de behandeling van bezwaarschriften en bestuursrechtelijke procesvertegenwoordiging in (hoger) beroep. Je bent analytisch, conceptueel en creatief en hebt een heldere en overtuigende communicatiestijl, in woord en geschrift. Je hebt een proactieve, flexibele, constructieve en collegiale werkhouding en zoekt de samenwerking op. Je hebt oog voor de politiek-bestuurlijke en beleidsmatige omgeving waarbinnen je functioneert.

Het aanbod

Het betreft hier in beginsel een aanstelling voor drie jaar met uitzicht op een vaste aanstelling. Het salaris is afhankelijk van kennis en ervaring. De functieschaal bedraagt minimaal ANG 5.945 en maximaal ANG 8.662 bruto per maand (schaal 11) bij een volledige werkweek van 40 uur.
 Ben je woonachtig buiten Sint Maarten dan worden de met de verhuizing verband houdende kosten volgens het geldende beleid vergoed.

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The offices of De Nederlandsche bank in Amsterdam.

Dutch Central Bank slashes 2022 economic forecast, inflation high

THE HAGUE--The Dutch Central Bank DNB (De Nederlandsche Bank) reduced its economic growth forecast for the Netherlands in 2022, predicting that the hard lockdown announced last weekend will be a blow to the Dutch economy.

The central bank predicted the country will achieve growth of 2.2 per cent next year, down from the 3.6 per cent it previously projected. In a hastily produced calculation, Olaf Sleijpen, the DNB director of monetary affairs and financial stability, said the organization is assuming the lockdown will last throughout the entire first quarter of the new year.

In 2023, the economy will further recover with an economic growth of 2.1 per cent. In the original estimate that DNB had prepared, that expected to be a contraction of about 1.7 per cent. The economy has grown by 4.5 per cent this

year, the central bank believes.

Although the lockdown and the Omicron variant will have a short-term negative impact on the economy, DNB expects that the coalition plans will give the economy some support in the medium term. "The government wants to spend more, and that in itself will have a positive impact on growth," explained Sleijpen.

DNB has not yet made in-depth calculations about the coalition agreement, which was formally announced last week.

DNB is also assuming that inflation will peak at the end of this year. On average, currency depreciation this year is 2.7 per cent, while inflation will remain on the high side in the coming years. Inflation could hit 3 per cent next year, and 2.9 per cent in 2023.

The sharp rise in energy prices this autumn will not

be repeated in next year's figures, DNB predicted. At the same time, there will still be shortages of raw materials and materials for companies, which can also push prices higher.

Unemployment reached a low this year, falling to a level of 3.3 per cent, according to DNB. It will rise to 3.4 per cent next year and will pick up another 0.1 percentage point in 2023. DNB said that worker shortages are "increasingly pressing."

Politicians must take the lead and work out solutions for the issue, Sleijpen said. They can achieve this by working to improve labour participation, and also encourage transition between sectors. Labour migrants may also be able to help solve the shortage.

The central bank has further appealed to the government to come up with a longer-term strategy for dealing with coronavirus. The extra financial support being offered now is perfectly understandable, Sleijpen said. "But in the long run, the generic way in which it is now distributed will have an economically disruptive effect." DNB is advocating for more customization in the government's pandemic relief programmes.

In addition, DNB warns the government must come up with plans about how the country will control the pandemic moving forward. This should give companies more certainty so that they may need less financial support over time.

Furthermore, the government must ensure that the national debt does not exceed 60 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). For the time being, the debt ratio is expected to peak at 55.7 per cent this year.

Tenants no longer face eviction after 2 months when parents die

THE HAGUE--Young people whose parents die while they are living together in rented accommodation will no longer have to move out after two months after the incoming government said it would change the law.

Housing corporations will be able to offer grown-up children of deceased tenants a temporary lease of up to two years. They will also have to offer social support and help with moving when the tenants leave the accommodation.

Private and social landlords have agreed with the minister to take more steps to help young residents and prevent them from becoming homeless until the law is formally passed.

The issue came to light in August when Fabiënne Valk, 19, and her 18-year-old sister Valerie were told they would have to leave the house in Enschede



Fabiënne Valk (left) and her sister Valerie were told they would have to leave their home after their mother died.

where they grew up after their mother died. They were ineligible for housing subsidies because they were under 23.

An article in local newspaper *Tubantia* about the sisters' plight sparked an outcry, during which a building belonging to housing corporation Ons Huis was daubed with graffiti and two cars were set on fire. The corporation eventually agreed to let the sisters stay in the house.

Caretaker home affairs minister Kajsa Ollongren said the move would give people space to grieve without having to worry about losing their home. "Young adults who lose their parents should be able to focus on coming to terms with their loss, Ollongren said. "Thanks to these agreements they can continue living in their parents' home for longer and will not have to worry about their housing situation."

Gambling ads have doubled after legalizing online casinos

AMSTERDAM--The number of gambling advertisements has doubled since last year, newspaper *De Volkskrant* reported based on research by Nielsen. In October and November 2020, there were 170,066 gambling commercials in the Netherlands. This year, there were 366,631 in that same period.

The rise in gambling ads is mainly due to the legalization of online gambling in October. Eleven casinos in the Netherlands have a licence for online gambling.

Of the eleven, Holland Casino spent the most money on advertising during October and November, dropping 6.4 million euros on commercials for its online offering. Toto spent nearly 4.6 million euros. The two firms are owned by the Dutch state.

FairPlayCasino has spent 3.3 million euros, followed by BataviaCasino, which paid 3.2 million euros for advertising, and the 2.6 million euros spent by Tombole, the newspaper reported.

The money allowed for a total of about 370,000 gambling advertisements during the two-month period, according to Nielsen. Roughly 273,000 of them

were for online gambling.

That on its own eclipsed the 170,000 adverts for offline gambling during the same two-month period last year.

Nielsen data also showed that about 88 per cent of gambling advertisements appear on websites, including social media platforms, which are not as well-regulated as television adverts. Gambling spots can only appear on television during specific times of the day to prevent barraging younger people with gambling messages.

A majority of members of the Second Chamber of Parliament are concerned about the increase in gambling advertisements. They said the commercials can lead to a rise in people addicted to gambling.

Members of Parliament suggested tightening regulations around gambling ads. The vast majority of gambling ads are on the Internet, where they are not subjected to the same restrictions as on TV.

The Second Chamber wants a ban on gambling ads on the Internet before 9:00pm, similar as has been done on TV. They also demanded a ban on "untargeted ads for risk-taking

games."

The MPs and experts are concerned about the impact gambling can have on the social norm. "As an individual, I get to see a gambling commercial, but I also know that others see the same advertisements. Combined with legalization, it leads to a change in social norms. It will definitely lead to a rise in addiction," health psychologist Arie Dijkstra said.

Minister of Legal Protection Sander Dekker said he would consider the wishes of the Tweede Kamer, but thinks it is "too early" for a ban.

Director of the Consumer's Union Sandra Molenaar has also raised concerns that profit trumps the well-being of the consumer and the impact particularly young people who are more susceptible to the ads.

"Apparently, the commercial interest of the gambling industry outweighs the well-being of consumers," Molenaar said about the lack of regulations surrounding gambling ads that are allowed to be broadcast to children, as long as they do not make up more than 30 per cent of the audience.

Vulnerable children under 12 to get vaccine from this week

THE HAGUE--Children under 12 with a medical condition such as a congenital heart defect can receive a vaccine against coronavirus from this week, the Dutch health council said.

Around 40,000 children between the ages of 5 and 11 will be eligible for a reduced dose of the Pfizer or Biotech vaccine, paediatrician and immunologist Emmeline Buddingh of Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC) told NOS.

Young children in general are less at risk of serious illness from coronavirus, Buddingh said. "But those children who end up in intensive care are children with underlying conditions. Vaccination helps protect these children from rare and severe illness."

The vaccines will be rolled out to all children under 12 in the second half of January. A gap of at least four weeks will be required between the first and second dose.

The European Union announced on Sunday it had ordered an extra 20 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine for countries that need extra booster shots, bringing its total stock to 215 million doses.

Cuba soars to near top of COVID-19 vaccination charts on decades-old bet

HAVANA, Cuba--Cuba has vaccinated more of its citizens against coronavirus COVID-19 than most of the world's largest and richest nations, a milestone that will make the poor, communist-run country a test case as the highly contagious Omicron variant begins to circle the globe.

The Caribbean Island has vaccinated over 90 per cent of its population with at least one dose, and 83 per cent of the population is now fully inoculated, placing it second globally behind only the United Arab Emirates among countries of at least 1 million people, according to official statistics compiled by Our World in Data.

What is Cuba's secret? While many of its neighbours in Latin America, as well as emerging economies globally, have competed for vaccines produced



People wait to receive booster doses of the Abdala vaccine against the coronavirus COVID-19, in Havana, Cuba, December 10, 2021.

by wealthier nations, health officials say Cuba vaulted ahead by developing its own.

Infections and deaths from COVID-19 have plunged on the island in recent weeks, falling to less than 1 per cent of their peak on August 22, when fewer than

half its citizens were vaccinated.

Nearly all of Cuba's children aged 2 to 18 have now been vaccinated with home-grown vaccines.

Schools have reopened and foreign tourists are once again welcome. Hospitals and morgues, over-

flowing in August, appear to be operating at pre-pandemic levels, according to Reuters witnesses.

"It is a truly remarkable accomplishment, given the size of Cuba, and also the [United States - Ed.] US embargo, that restricts their ability to import," said William Moss, director of the Johns Hopkins International Vaccine Access Center, a US-based university group that works to ensure equitable access for low-income countries.

Cuba has said its home-grown, protein-based Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus shots give upwards of 90 per cent protection against symptomatic COVID-19 when offered in three-dose schemes.

However, Cuba has not yet published results of its large-scale clinical trials in peer-reviewed journals, nor has it submitted the documents required by the World Health Organization (WHO) for approval of its vaccines, according to the WHO's online tally.

As a result, some public health experts in other countries remain leery of recommending them until the results are vetted.

The vaccines, which can be produced affordably and do not require deep-freezing, are seen by international health officials as a potential source for much needed doses in low-income countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

"They have been slow to publish results," said Moss. "If [the vaccines - Ed.] got WHO qualification...that could be really important globally."

Cuba's progress is being tracked by COVAX, a global scheme designed to ensure fair access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Cuba is also studying whether the Omicron variant, which was first reported on the island on December 8, will impact protection.

In the last week, new research has shown that some of the most widely-used global vaccines are likely to be less protective against infection from Omicron. The shots are expected to remain effective against severe illness and death.

The documents and data necessary for vetting the Soberana vaccines, developed by Cuba's Finlay Vaccine Institute, will be

delivered to the WHO in the first quarter of 2022, Vicente Verez, Finlay's head, told Reuters.

Verez said WHO standards, which assess not only the vaccine but also manufacturing facilities, had slowed Cuba down.

"It is a first-world standard," Verez said, noting the expense involved to bring facilities to that level. "We need to advance on our manufacturing process to ensure that when we apply, we get WHO pre-qualification."

Cuba's biotech industry began to grow in the 1980s, backed by late revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who saw the sector as vital to the communist nation's self-sufficiency in the face of the US embargo. But some of its facilities are aging.

Verez said Cuba is nego-

tiating with both Canada and Italy to produce its vaccines in those countries for export to regions in need, including Africa.

Brazil-based virologist Amilcar Perez Riverol said Cuba will meanwhile face a new test with Omicron.

The lofty vaccination rates, a large group that gained immunity from prior infection, plus Cuba's early move to fully inoculate its children "put the country in a really positive position in the face of the future evolution of the pandemic," Riverol said.

But he said Cuba's comparatively large elderly population, lack of medical supplies, and a teetering healthcare system nonetheless leave it vulnerable.

"In no way is it time to be proclaiming victory yet," he said. ~ Reuters ~

Assistant Company Secretary & Paralegal

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- Providing support on legal due diligence exercises and regulatory issues generally;
- Assist with the due diligence documentation for Incorporation of new Companies and/or entrants to new markets;
- Ensuring payment of Annual licenses, Chamber of Commerce and business license fees throughout the NAGICO Group;
- Maintain corporate registers - Shareholders, Directors, Senior Officers.
- Ensure that all compliance and regulatory reporting, annual returns are duly submitted within the set deadlines;
- Bank Accounts: Opening new accounts, completion/ update of bank forms regarding corporate, directors', officers' and signatories' data etc.;
- Research, prepare and or coordinate requests for various Corporate documents e.g. board resolutions, position papers, chamber of commerce updates, and notarization/ legalization of documents;
- Other assigned duties as may be required by the Company Secretary

Required Qualification & Experience

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Signs on the door of the Christian Aid Ministries give updates on the Haiti kidnapping and show that the offices are closed in Millersburg, Ohio.

Missionaries kidnapped in Haiti escaped after ransom money raised

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti--Ransom money was raised to pay for the release of a group of Canadian and American missionaries kidnapped in Haiti, but a dozen of them escaped captivity on their own, the United States (US) based Christian ministry group which organised their trip to the Caribbean country said on Monday.

"Other people who sought to help us provided funds to pay a ransom and allow the negotiation process to continue," Director of Christian Aid Ministries David Troyer said during a news conference at the group's Millersburg, Ohio, headquarters.

"After many days of waiting and no action on the part of the kidnappers, God worked in a miraculous way to enable the hostages to escape," Troyer said.

The missionaries, who were abducted in October by a gang known as 400 Mawozo after visiting an orphanage, originally numbered 17 people.

Two hostages were freed in late November and three were released earlier this month.

On Thursday, Haitian police said that the final dozen hostages had been found by authorities on a mountain called Morne à Cabrit. The mountain is about 37 kilometres south of the capital Port-Au-Prince.

A spokesman for the missionary group, Weston Showalter, told the news conference in Millersburg that the last 12 hostages had plotted their escape and eventually walked miles to a point of safety where they could contact authorities.

"They were finally free," he said.

The ordeal has brought global attention to the Caribbean country's growing problem of gang abductions. ~ Reuters ~

American families fear hunger after child-tax credit expires

WASHINGTON--The phone calls to Yvanka Hall's health nonprofit in northeastern Ohio from families begging for help feeding their children started in March 2020, and slowed down only when an expanded child tax credit came into effect last summer.

Now, Hall fears the calls will ramp up again as U.S. lawmakers quibble over renewing this programme that expired after making final payments on Dec. 15, despite having been credited with helping millions of poor children.

"It's easy when you make \$200,000 a year to drag your feet on someone that may be making \$10,000 a year," Hall said referring to the \$174,000 annual salaries earned by members of Congress.

The expanded Child Tax Credit's monthly payments of \$300 for each child under the age of 6 and \$250 for children 6 to 17, lifted some 3.6 million American children out of poverty in October, according to Columbia University research. "It allowed our families to be able to live," Hall said.

The Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition in Cleveland, where Hall is executive director, has had to start setting aside \$10,000 per month to fund an ad hoc food bank since the COVID-19 pan-

demic began. When the expanded Child Tax Credit monthly payments kicked in, the calls to the ad hoc food bank dropped off and many families were able to move into better, more stable housing.

Hopes for a one-year extension dimmed on Sunday after moderate Democratic Senator Joe Manchin said he would not vote for President Joe Biden's \$1.75 trillion "Build Back Better" programme, which includes the tax credit provision. In so doing, he joined Republicans who are in lock-step opposition to Biden's plan, instead wanting a scaled-back child tax credit.

Republicans oppose the size of the credit, as well as the aim of Democrats to attach it to the \$1.75 trillion "Build Back Better" programme. Senator Lindsey Graham, the senior Senate Budget Committee Republican, described the Democrats' tax credit provision as an "inflationary bomb."

Without the expanded tax credit, the programme for poor families reverts to a lump-sum payment that families need to file a tax return to claim, and a reduction to \$2,000 annually per child from up to \$3,600 this year. The Treasury Department in June estimated that families

with as many as 2.3 million children did not file returns in 2019 or 2020 because their incomes were below the threshold for filing.

That presents a problem for Tiquanda Newton, a 43-year-old mother of daughters aged 21, 17, seven and four. "I walk into the store and I have to figure out who gets what and who doesn't get what. The truth is, I don't get. I just make sure I stay hydrated," Newton said in a telephone interview from her home in New Haven, Connecticut.

Newton has been unemployed since the birth of her 7-year-old and has guardianship of her eldest daughter, who has a life-long disability. A broken heater in her car goes unrepaired and she



U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer holds a press conference on the expanded Child Tax Credit payments at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, U.S., July 15, 2021.

despairs over the rising costs of basics like food and school supplies.

"These babies are growing quicker than we can even buy clothes," she said.

Despite the breakdown in

negotiations, "The fight to pass Build Back Better is not over," said House Appropriations Chair Rosa DeLauro, a leading advocate for maintaining the expanded tax credit. Already, there have

been hints Democrats could move to shrink the \$1.75 billion plan to win support from Manchin and Democratic Senator Krysten Sinema, who together oppose various parts of the bill.

Manchin blames White House staff for breakdown in Biden bill talks

WASHINGTON-- U.S. Democratic Senator Joe Manchin said on Monday that White House staff did "inexcusable" things that led to his decision to publicly reject President Joe Biden's social and climate policy plan, a move that imperils the legislation.

Manchin made the comments during an interview on West Virginia MetroNews radio, after telling Fox News on Sunday he would not be able to vote for the \$1.75 trillion Build Back Better bill. Manchin said he would not say "the real reason" talks failed.

But when asked what that was, he said: "The bottom line is ... it's staff. It's staff purely. ... It's not the president. It's staff. And they drove some things and put some things out that were absolutely inexcusable."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement

on Sunday that Manchin's halting negotiations on the bill would represent a "sudden and inexplicable reversal in his position, and a breach of his commitments to the President and the Senator's colleagues in the House and Senate."

Manchin's move prompted Goldman Sachs to lower its forecasts for U.S. economic growth.

A Manchin aide called the White House shortly before the senator's Fox interview, people familiar with the matter said. The White House was unable to reach the senator directly in response before he announced on air that he was done with the discussions.

Biden and Manchin spoke on Sunday night, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity, leading to some hope that talks can continue in the new year on cordial terms. Manchin has voiced concerns with a number of proposals in Biden's signature domestic policy bill, including multiple climate proposals and extending monthly child tax credit payments, which Columbia University said lifted 3.6 million children out of poverty in October.

The senator has also been frustrated by statements from the administration singling him out as an obstacle, according to a person familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity.

No verdict as yet in Daunte Wright case

MINNEAPOLIS--Jurors retired for the evening on Monday after starting deliberations in the manslaughter trial of Kimberly Potter, the former Minnesota police officer who mistook her handgun for her Taser and shot Black motorist Daunte Wright during a traffic stop.

In final remarks to the jury, prosecutors said Potter acted recklessly and with "culpable negligence" in drawing the wrong weapon, while the defense argued the young Black man caused his own death by resisting arrest and attempting to flee. The jury will resume deliberations on Tuesday morning.

Erin Eldridge, assistant Minnesota attorney general, walked the jury through Potter's extensive training during her 26-year career as a police officer in the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center, arguing it made her actions indefensible.

"She was no rookie. It wasn't her first day on the job," Eldridge said in her

one-hour closing argument. "We are here because this was entirely preventable. It was a tragedy of her own making. And it's not just a tragedy. It's manslaughter."

Potter, 49, has pleaded not guilty to first- and second-degree manslaughter charges, which carry maximum sentences of 15 and 10 years, respectively, saying she thought she was drawing her Taser when she shot Wright in the chest with her 9 mm handgun on April 11.

Potter is white and the shooting of Wright triggered several nights of intense protests outside the police station in Brooklyn Center, with critics calling it another example of police brutality against Black Americans. The incident occurred just a few miles (km) north of where Derek Chauvin, a white former Minneapolis police officer, was standing trial at the same time in the case of George Floyd, a Black man whose 2020 death during an arrest set off racial



Kimberly Potter, the white former Minnesota police officer who killed Black motorist Daunte Wright in April after claiming she mistook her handgun for her Taser, breaks down in tears as she testifies during her trial in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, U.S., December 17, 2021 in this image taken from court television footage.

justice protests in many U.S. cities. Chauvin was convicted of murder.

Earl Gray, one of Potter's attorneys, sought to cast blame for the shooting on Wright, arguing that Wright's decision to resist arrest and his attempt to drive away had put another officer on the scene at risk and required Potter to use force. "The causation was Daunte Wright," Gray told the jury in his closing argument, which lasted about 50 minutes. "Those

are the cold, hard facts."

Gray highlighted the testimony of Dr. Laurence Miller, a psychologist who told the jury last week about "action error," or when a person takes one action while intending to do another. Miller testified about how such mistakes are common in daily life, such as inputting the wrong computer password or writing down the wrong date, and can be triggered by stress.

Prosecutors have conceded

that Potter made a mistake and did not intend to kill Wright. To secure a conviction on the first-degree charge, they must prove she caused his death while committing the misdemeanor offense of recklessly using her firearm. For the second-degree charge, the jury must find Potter guilty of "culpable negligence" by creating an "unreasonable risk and consciously" taking a chance of causing him great harm.

Russia presses for urgent US response on security guarantees

MOSCOW—Russia said on Monday it urgently needed a response from the United States on its sweeping security demands and again warned of a possible Russian military response unless it saw political action to assuage its concerns.

Moscow, which has unnerved the West with a troop buildup near Ukraine, last week unveiled a wish list of security proposals it wants to negotiate, including a promise NATO would give up any military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

Washington has said some of Russia's proposals are obviously unacceptable, but that the United States will respond some time this week with more concrete proposals on the format of any talks. Emily Horne, spokesperson for the White House National Security Council, said Biden's na-



Ryabkov

tional security adviser Jake Sullivan spoke by phone with his Russian counterpart, Yuriy Ushakov, to stress the United States is prepared to communicate through multiple channels including bilateral engagement.

Sullivan "made clear that any dialogue must be based on reciprocity and address our concerns about Russia's actions, and take place in full coordination with

our European allies and partners. He also noted that substantive progress can only occur in an environment of de-escalation rather than escalation," she said.

Konstantin Gavrillov, a Russian diplomat in Vienna, said that relations between Moscow and NATO had reached a "moment of truth".

"The conversation needs to be serious and everyone in NATO understands perfectly well despite their strength and power that concrete political action needs to be taken, otherwise the alternative is a military-technical and military response from Russia," he was quoted as saying by RIA news agency.

The U.S. response is likely to shape Moscow's calculus over Ukraine, which has become the main flashpoint in East-West relations. The



A Russian service member is seen atop of a T-72B3 main battle tank during military drills at the Kadamovsky range in the Rostov region, Russia on Monday.

United States and Ukraine say Russia may be preparing an invasion of its ex-Soviet neighbour. Russia denies that and says it is Ukraine's growing relationship with NATO that has caused the standoff to escalate. It has compared it to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the world came to the brink of nuclear war.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that Moscow had so far received no response from the United States.

"I think they'll try to turn this into a slow-moving process, but we need it to be urgent, because the situation is very difficult, it is acute, it tends to become more complicated," he was quoted by RIA as saying.

The Kremlin said it was still too early to assess the West's response, but that information from "various sources" about a readiness to discuss the ideas was positive.

Asked separately about a

Belarusian proposal to host Russian nuclear weapons in the event of similar deployments in its vicinity by the West, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow had numerous options. "It's no secret the deployment of different types of armaments near our borders that could pose a danger would require corresponding steps to be taken to balance the situation. There are all sorts of options here," he said.

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NOTE TO OUR READERS, ADVERTISERS AND OUTLETS

Christmas falls in the weekend this year, so there will be NO The Daily Herald on Monday, December 27th, 2021 and the office is also closed.

Deadline for all ads in the newspaper of Tuesday, December 28th, 2021 is Friday, December 24th, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

Happy Holidays.

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Iran: Sound near Bushehr nuclear plant was related to military drill

DUBAI--Iran said on Monday that sounds heard near its Bushehr nuclear power plant were related to an air defence drill, Iranian state media reported, while warning that Tehran would give a "crushing response" to any Israeli attack.

"This air defence exercise took place at 5 a.m. with full preparation and coordination with the armed forces," Bushehr's deputy governor Mohammadtaqi Irani told Iranian state media. Some media outlets reported earlier that anti-aircraft fire had been heard in the area.

Earlier this month, Iranian authorities said air defences had fired a missile as part of a military drill after state media reported a large explosion above the central town of Natanz, which houses Iran's main nuclear facility.

Iran has accused Israel of several attacks on facilities linked to its nuclear programme, including the one in April at the Natanz site, and of killing its nuclear scientists, over the past years. Israel has neither denied nor confirmed the allegations. Opposing efforts by world powers to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear deal, Israel has long threatened military action against its arch enemy, Iran, if diplomacy fails to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear bomb. The Islamic Republic says its nuclear ambitions are peaceful. Israel is widely believed to have the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal.

Iran has warned of a "crushing" response to any Israeli move against it. "If Israel carries out attacks against Iran, our armed

forces will immediately attack all centres, bases, routes, and spaces used to carry out the aggression," said Gholamali Rashid, a senior commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. "Any threat to Iran's nuclear sites and military bases by the Zionist regime (Israel) is not possible without the green light of America."

Indirect talks between Iran and the United States to reinstate the nuclear pact have made little discernible progress since they resumed last month for the first time since Iran's hardline president, Ebrahim Raisi, was elected in June. The talks are expected to resume this year, while some officials have mentioned Dec. 27 as a tentative date.

"In the coming days, the coordinator of nuclear talks (the European Union's Enrique Mora) will announce the exact date," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman told a news conference.

The 2015 deal lifted sanctions against Tehran in return for tough restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities aimed at extending the time Tehran would need to obtain enough fissile material for a nuclear bomb if it chose to - so-called breakout time - to at least a year from roughly two to three months. In response to Trump's "maximum pressure" policy, Iran in 2019 started gradually breaching the deal's nuclear restrictions and pressing ahead further with its atomic activities. Tehran says its nuclear steps are reversible if all sanctions are lifted in a verifiable process.

Iran says further talks with Saudis depend on Riyadh's "seriousness"

DUBAI--Iran said on Monday that further talks with Saudi Arabia aimed at reducing tension between the Gulf's rival Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim powers depend on Riyadh's "seriousness".

Saudi Arabia and Iran launched direct talks this year at a time when global powers are trying to salvage a nuclear pact with Tehran, and as U.N.-led efforts to end war in Yemen stall.

"We call on Riyadh (to take on) political and diplomatic solutions as well as avoid interference in the affairs of

other countries, because we believe that comprehensive regional arrangements will be achieved through mutual respect and understanding of the facts by the countries of the region," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a news conference. "We invite Riyadh (to take) a diplomatic and political approach and respect the principle of non-interference in other countries, which is the only way forward for the region."

The kingdom, which cut ties with Iran in 2016, has



Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva adjusts his tie as he poses for a picture during an interview with Reuters in Sao Paulo, Brazil December 17, 2021.

"I'm back" says Lula, promising a broad alliance ahead of election

SAO PAULO--Brazil's former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is currently leading in the polls ahead of next year's election, said if reelected he would seek to build a broad range of alliances in a bid to unite a deeply polarized country.

In an interview on Friday, the 76-year-old former union leader promised to more fairly distribute wealth under a Workers Party government, and stressed the need to get rich Brazilians to pay more tax.

He also vowed to regain Brazil's international credibility, damaged by President Jair Bolsonaro. A South American trade deal with the European Union would be a priority, he said, as would strengthening ties with the United States and China.

"I don't want to fight: I want to join forces so we can build," he said at the

Workers Party offices in downtown Sao Paulo.

It marks quite the reversal. Just over two years ago he was in prison convicted of corruption, and until eight months ago he was banned from running for Brazil's top job.

With those convictions annulled by the Supreme Court, the former leftist leader is back in the running. While there is a long way to go until the October presidential elections - and Lula has yet to officially declare his candidacy - current polls show him notching 48%. Bolsonaro, widely criticized for his handling of the pandemic, is a distant second with 21%. "A resurrection," Lula called it.

Lula governed Brazil from 2003 until 2010 and oversaw a period of dramatic economic growth - driven by a commodity boom - that helped lift millions out of poverty. Under his government, deforestation in the Amazon rainforest fell and Brazil emerged as a global force. He left office with approval ratings of around 80%.

Polls suggest the memory of those years is selling well. But today's reality, despite some parallels, is markedly different. Brazil's political spectrum is far more polarized, the pandemic has killed over 600,000 people and thrown many more into poverty.

As the world reopens, inflationary pressures have become a global problem, not just a Brazilian one - and harder to fix as a result. Environmentally, South America's largest country has become a pariah.

Lula said he would reestablish Brazil as a regional and global player. "Together with the European Union, we (South America) could form an economic bloc, a bloc with similar political positions, with similar environmental views, to face up to the two giants... the United States and China," he said.

On the economy, he called for a council of 100 people, taken from all sections of society, to help form economic and social policy. He said he would like to see the inheritance tax, which is around 4% in Brazil, brought closer to European levels of about 50%.

But, for Lula, more money in the hands of the poor helps to grow the consumer base, creating a bigger market for companies to sell their goods. He dismissed investor concerns of a fu-

Continued on page 28

Russia expels two German diplomats in tit-for-tat move

MOSCOW--Russia said on Monday it was expelling two German diplomats in retaliation for similar expulsions by Germany, a move the German foreign ministry said was unfounded and put renewed strain on bilateral relations.

Berlin last week ejected two Russian diplomats after a German court found Moscow had ordered the killing of a former Chechen militant, who was murdered in broad daylight in Berlin's Tiergarten park.

On Monday, the Russian foreign ministry summoned the German ambassador to inform him of the expulsion of two German diplomats and note a protest against Germany's earlier decision to declare two Russian diplomats "persona non grata". Germany's Foreign Office said the Russian side had told it that the expulsion was a reciprocal measure.

"This move comes as no surprise, but it is completely unwarranted from the federal government's perspective," it said in a statement. "Today's decision by Russia's foreign ministry puts renewed strain on the relationship."

The Russian foreign ministry said the German court verdict was of a "clear political order" in nature, promising to retaliate accordingly to any potential confrontational action from Berlin in the future.

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Boric pledges an orderly economy, swift naming of new Chile Cabinet

SANTIAGO--Chilean leftist Gabriel Boric on Monday pledged to maintain an "orderly economy" and to move swiftly on naming a Cabinet, a day after a sweeping electoral victory propelled him to become Chile's youngest-ever democratically elected president.

Boric, a former student protest leader who leads a leftist coalition and has pledged to overhaul Chile's economic model, firmly beat out far-right rival Jose Antonio Kast, who quickly conceded defeat, helping give certainty to the result.

The win marked another advance for Latin Ameri-

ca's left, and bolstered talk of a new "pink tide" in the region, as raging poverty fanned by the coronavirus pandemic sways voters toward those who promise bigger government and higher social spending. His rise - and the wider polarization of the vote - had rattled Chile's markets and spooked mining firms concerned about his rhetoric to "bury" the country's market-orientated economic model, push higher taxes and tighten environmental regulation.

Boric, the 35-year-old former law student, had previously pledged to bury Chile's "neoliberal" economic model but in recent weeks softened his tone in an apparent nod to more centrist voters. "This is something that we discussed with our academic economic advisory team, it is something that I maintain, it was not merely an electoral strategy, but rather a conviction," Boric said. "Chile needs transparent accounts, an orderly economy, because otherwise reforms we do can wind up being reversed."

He said he would strive to have a Cabinet named within a month's time.

In his victory speech on Sunday, he touched upon indigenous rights, gender equality and the environment, though he also talked

about fiscal responsibility and said he would look after the economy. He took aim, however, at mining projects that hurt the environment.

"We have an enormous challenge. I know that in the coming years, the future of our country is at stake, so I guarantee that I will be a president who cares for democracy and does not risk it," he said. "I will firmly fight against the privileges of the few, and I will work every day for the quality of the Chilean family."

Progressives in Chile partied into the early hours of Monday with thousands taking to the streets with flags and banners in capital Santiago to celebrate the election win. "I'm very excited because this is an achievement of the people. There have been many years of abuse, and we need a renovation within politics," said Boric supporter Patricia Garrido amid crowds celebrating on the streets of the capital. "I have a lot of faith and hope in the youth."

Leftist leaders around the region cheered his win: Alberto Fernandez in Argentina, Luis Arce in Bolivia, Brazilian former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and Pedro Castillo - another outsider leftist who became Peru's president in July.



Chilean presidential candidate Gabriel Boric speaks during his closing campaign rally in Santiago, Chile, December 16, 2021.

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UN chief lays wreath at Beirut port, urges blast accountability

BEIRUT--U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday said Lebanon needed proper accountability for the August 2020 Beirut port explosion and that elections due to be held next year could usher in political stability in the troubled country.

His comments followed a meeting with Lebanese House Speaker Nabih Berri and a visit to the port, where he laid a wreath at a memorial for the more than 215 people killed when chemicals stored at the port for nearly seven years exploded.

"I know the will of the people to know the truth, the will of the people to have proper accountability," Guterres said on the second day of a visit aimed at rallying international support for Lebanon.

The blast 16 months ago was a strong blow to a country already crushed by an economic meltdown described by the World Bank as one of the world's worst since 1850. Many Lebanese are looking to elections scheduled for the spring of next year to chal-

lenge the political establishment they hold responsible for the crisis and the blast.

Guterres said he had received a "guarantee" from Lebanese leaders that the elections would be held and said they could create "new political stability for the future."

Guterres, who arrived on Sunday, has also called on Lebanon's politicians to work to address an economic crisis that has left four in five Lebanese poor. "Lebanese political leaders do not have the right to be divided and paralyse the country," he said.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati's government has not met for more than two months amid a push by parties close to powerful politicians charged in connection with the blast to remove the judge leading the investigation. The blast has been widely blamed on the corruption and dysfunction normalized by a political elite that has been in power since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war.

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British PM calls COVID surge 'extremely difficult'

LONDON--British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Monday he would tighten coronavirus curbs to slow the spread of the Omicron variant if needed, after the Netherlands began a fourth lockdown and as other European nations consider Christmas restrictions.

Speaking after UK media reported Britain might impose new curbs after Christmas, Johnson said the situation was "extremely difficult" and hospitalisations were rising steeply in London.

"I have to say to the British public, and I say to everybody, we will not exclude the possibility of going further if we have to do things to protect the public," Johnson said after a cabinet meeting.

Omicron infections are multiplying rapidly across Europe and the United States, doubling every two or three days in London and elsewhere and taking a heavy toll on financial markets, which fear the impact on the global economic recovery. The variant was first detected last month in southern Africa and Hong Kong and so far been re-

ported in at least 89 countries. The severity of illness it causes remains unclear.

Any limits on Christmas celebrations would come at a high political cost for Johnson, already under fire over reports he and his staff broke lockdown rules last year. Asked about speculation the government would ban indoor socialising and limit tourism, Johnson said: "We're looking at all kinds of things ... we will rule nothing out."

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced a shutdown on Saturday, ordering the closure of all but essential stores, as well as restaurants, hairdressers, gyms, museums and other public places until at least Jan. 14.

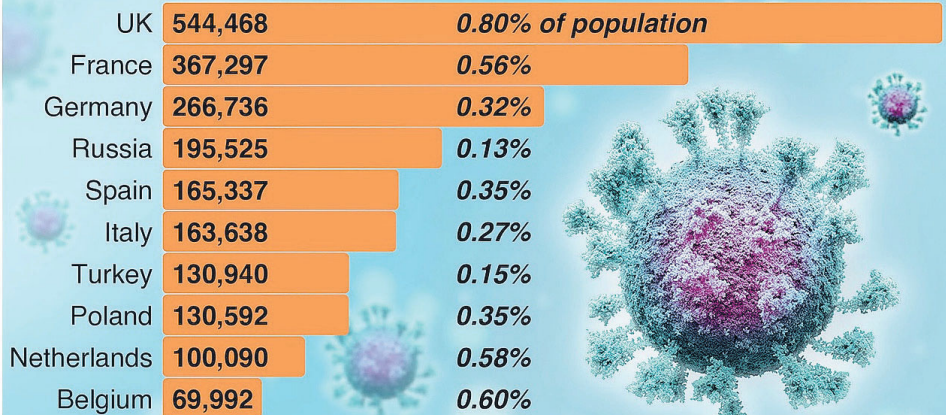
Germany plans to limit private gatherings from Dec. 28 to a maximum of 10 people who have been vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19, according to a draft of proposed steps. The document also said access to restaurants would remain limited to people who could provide proof of vaccination or recovery.

Ireland on Friday ordered bars and restaurants to close at 8 p.m. and reduced

Europe tries to stem pandemic surge

Europe tightens restrictions to curb the spread of the Omicron variant after the UK suffers more than 540,000 new Covid-19 cases in a week

HIGHEST WEEKLY NEW CASES IN EUROPE (Dec 13-19)



Sources: Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg, Worldometers

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the capacity in all public events. Italy is also considering new measures, newspapers reported on Sunday.

Coronavirus cases surged in New York City and around the United States over the weekend, dashing hopes for a more normal holiday season and stretching the country's testing infrastructure just days before Christmas.

In Washington D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser said the city would reinstate an indoor mask mandate beginning Tuesday and running until the morning of

Jan. 31. All employees, contractors and grantees of the District of Columbia government must be fully vaccinated against COVID and have a booster shot, she said.

Wall Street's main indexes opened lower on Monday, dragged down by concerns about the impact of tighter COVID-19 curbs on the global economy. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down more than 500 points, or nearly 1.5% in afternoon trading.

European stocks were down 1.33%. Shopper num-

bers across Britain's high streets fell 2.6% over the Dec. 18-19 weekend versus the previous weekend, researcher Springboard said.

Last week, the European Central Bank cut its euro zone growth forecast for next year to 4.2% from 4.6% previously, citing the pandemic among "headwinds". ECB President Christine Lagarde said, even if economies were learning to adapt to living with COVID-19, tighter restrictions could delay the recovery.

Israel added the United

States to its "no-fly" list, citing concerns over the Omicron variant. U.S. infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci said Omicron was "raging through the world" as he urged Americans to get booster shots.

Booster shots, on top of two-shot vaccinations, appear critical to fighting the variant. Moderna Inc said a booster dose of its vaccine seemed to be protective against Omicron in laboratory testing, and the current version of the shot would remain Moderna's "first line of defence".

WHO sounds warning over fast-spreading Omicron

GENEVA--The Omicron variant of the coronavirus is spreading faster than the Delta variant and is causing infections in people already vaccinated or who have recovered from the COVID-19 disease, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday.

WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan added it would be "unwise" to conclude from early evidence that Omicron was a milder variant than previous ones. "... with the numbers going up, all health systems are going to be under strain," Soumya Swaminathan told Geneva-based journalists.

The variant is successfully evading some immune responses, she said, meaning that the booster programmes being rolled out in many countries ought to be targeted towards people with weaker immune systems. "There is now consistent evidence that Omicron is spreading significantly faster than the Delta variant," WHO



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), speaks during a news conference in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday.

director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the briefing.

"And it is more likely people vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 could be infected or reinfected," Tedros said.

Their comments echoed the finding of study by Imperial College London, which said last week

the risk of reinfection was more than five times higher and it has shown no sign of being milder than Delta. WHO officials said however that other forms of immunity vaccinations may prevent infection and disease.

While the antibody defences from some actions have been undermined,

there has been hope that T-cells, the second pillar of an immune response, can prevent severe disease by attacking infected human cells. WHO expert Abdi Mahamud added: "Although we are seeing a reduction in the neutralisation antibodies, almost all preliminary analysis shows T-cell mediated immunity

remains intact, that is what we really require."

However, highlighting how little is known about how to handle the new variant that was only detected last month, Swaminathan also said: "Of course there is a challenge, many of the monoclonals will not work with Omicron."

She gave no details as she referred to the treatments that mimic natural antibodies in fighting off infections. Some drug makers have suggested the same.

In the short term, Tedros said that holiday festivities would in many places lead to "increased cases, overwhelmed health systems and more deaths" and urged people to postpone gatherings. "An event cancelled is better than a life cancelled," he said.

But the WHO team also offered some hope to a weary world facing the new wave that 2022 would be the year that the pandemic, which already killed more than 5.6 million people worldwide, would end.

It pointed towards the development of second and third generation vaccines, and the further development of antimicrobial treatments and other innovations.

"(We) hope to consign this disease to a relatively mild disease that is easily prevented, that is easily treated," Mike Ryan, the WHO's top emergency expert, told the briefing. "If we can keep virus transmission to minimum, then we can bring the pandemic to an end."

However Tedros also said China, where the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was first detected at the end of 2019, must be forthcoming with data and information related to its origin to help the response going forward.

"We need to continue until we know the origins, we need to push harder because we should learn from what happened this time in order to (do) better in the future," Tedros said.

Turkish lira rallies late after Erdogan props up currency

ANKARA—Turkey's lira ended the session up over 20% on Monday after President Tayyip Erdogan introduced a series of steps that he said will ease the burden of the weakened currency on Turks, while vowing to press on with a low-rates policy that led to the lira's slide in the first place.

The lira, which was down more than 10% at 18.4 to the dollar earlier, strengthened sharply and ended up 25% on the day at 13.15 in reaction to Erdogan's announcement, in its largest daily trading range on record. It remains down 45% so far this year.

Around \$1 billion was sold in markets after Erdogan unveiled the measures, the head of the Turkish Banks Association said. "I imagine the market was very short the lira and the measures announced by Erdogan to protect domestic investors' savings from lira fluctuations provided some impetus

to cover those shorts," said Shaun Osborne, chief FX strategist at Scotiabank in Toronto.

Speaking after a Cabinet meeting, Erdogan said the measures would ensure citizens would not have to convert their lira into foreign currency over the lira crash, including a deposit guarantee promise. "We are presenting a new financial alternative to citizens who want to alleviate their concerns stemming from the rise in exchange rates when they evaluate their savings," Erdogan said.

"With the interest rate cuts, we will all see how inflation will start falling within months," he said. "This country will no longer be a heaven for those adding to their money with high interest rates, it will not be an import haven."

He also called on "everyone with money, access to finance" to contribute to in-



Customers wait to be served at a butcher shop in Istanbul, Turkey on Monday.

vestments and pledged steps to aid exporters and pensioners. "Today's move is solely based on the Turkish government's announcement that it would protect against fluctuations in the currency," said John Doyle, vice president of dealing and trading at FX payments firm Tempus Inc.

"The most important piece is that the government says that it will make up for losses in lira deposits if the lira de-

clines exceed interest rates promised by banks. The government did not say how exactly they would execute this plan," Doyle said.

Erdogan's push for 500 basis points of interest rate cuts since September has set off Turkey's worst currency crisis in two decades, with the lira crashing near 40% in just the five weeks to last Friday. "I think that if you continue to see rate cuts (...) you should

continue to expect ample volatility going forward and that many investors will still target fresh record lows despite this historic reversal that we've seen," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst for the Americas at Oanda in New York.

Economists have called Erdogan's low-rates model reckless and said inflation would soar to beyond 30% next year.

Top British court partly rules in favour of Guaido in Venezuela gold case

LONDON--Britain's Supreme Court on Monday ruled to allow in part an appeal by Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido in a case over whether he or President Nicolas Maduro controls over \$1 billion worth of Venezuelan gold stored at the Bank of England.

The tug-of-war over the gold has centered on the issue of whether the British government recognizes Guaido as Venezuela's head of state. The Maduro and Guaido camps have each appointed a different board to the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) and the two have issued conflicting instructions concerning the gold reserves and a similar sum held by Deutsche Bank.

The court said a decision last year by the English Court of Appeal to overturn an earlier High Court ruling was "misplaced" as the British government's recognition of Guaido as Venezuela's interim president was "clear and unequivocal". In a press release, the Supreme Court said British courts were bound to accept that the British government does not recognise Maduro as Venezuela's president "for any purpose".

However, the court said it remained necessary to consider whether to recognise judgments by Venezuela's Supreme Court ruling that Guaido's transition statute was null and void, and it asked the English Commercial Court to do so.

Maduro's BCV sued the Bank of England in May 2020 to recover control of the gold, which it says it will sell to finance Venezuela's response to the coronavirus pandemic and bolster a health system gutted by years of economic crisis. The BoE has refused to release the gold since the British government in early 2019 joined dozens of nations in backing Guaido on the basis that Maduro's election win the previous year had been rigged. Venezuela's opposition has alleged that Maduro's cash-strapped administration wants to use the money to pay off his foreign allies, which his lawyers deny.

Sarosh Zaiwalla, a London-based lawyer at Zaiwalla & Co, which represents the Maduro BCV board, said on Monday: "Our client looks forward to continuing this case, with a view to showing that the Board of the BCV in Caracas is the only validly appointed authority to deal with Venezuela's foreign assets in the interests of the Venezuelan population."

Oil driller sees future in electric rigs, carbon offsets

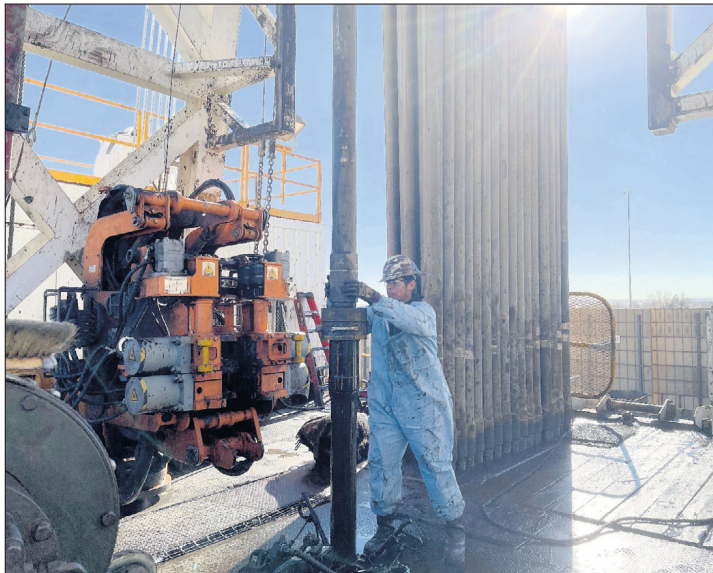
BROOMFIELD, Colorado--In a Denver suburb, an oil drilling rig plumbs the earth near a wealthy enclave framed by snow-capped mountains. The site is quieter, cleaner and less visible than similar oil and gas operations. It might just be the future of drilling in the United States.

Oil firm Civitas Resources designed the operation to run largely on the city's electric grid, eliminating daily runs by more than a dozen diesel fuel trucks. The electric rig has none of the soot or sulfur smell of diesel exhaust and is muffled enough that rig hands can converse without yelling.

As investors and lawmakers push the oil industry to lower its carbon emissions, this drill site and others run by Civitas offer one model for drillers looking to migrate to low- or no-carbon emissions operations.

An extra incentive for Civitas is that it must be mindful of neighbours of its drilling sites in relatively affluent suburban areas, where it also has easier access to the power grid. It is unclear whether drillers in more remote areas will be able to adopt the same technology as easily.

Civitas, Colorado's largest oil and gas producer, says it is the state's first "carbon neutral" producer. To get there, it has eliminated some diesel-powered pumps,



A rig hand works on an electric drilling rig for oil producer Civitas Resources, at the Denver suburbs, in Broomfield, Colorado, U.S., December 2, 2021.

makes modifications to drilling and hydraulic fracturing equipment and its production sites. It also buys carbon credits to offset remaining emissions.

A few miles away, another Civitas pad with 18 wells is hidden behind an earthen berm, largely invisible to the surrounding community. It has dozens of air-monitoring sensors to detect greenhouse gas emissions. Its pneumatic controls have been adapted to avoid methane leaks. It is Civitas' first facility to do

away with oil and waste water storage tanks.

"Everything is piped directly off location. There is no dust, no truck traffic necessary to produce the hydrocarbons," said Matt Owens, Civitas' chief operating officer.

Colorado, among the top oil producers among U.S. states, also has some of the toughest state emissions regulations. It has told energy firms they must cut methane emissions from drilling by 2030 to less than half of 2005 levels. More drillers also face strict-

er mandates as President Joe Biden's administration enacts tougher federal methane rules.

"Electrifying drilling, upgrading pneumatics and going tankless are certainly steps in the right direction," said Deborah Gordon, a senior principal in the Rocky Mountain Institute's climate intelligence group.

Colorado's tougher regulatory environment has partially evolved from the industry's proximity to homes and businesses. For Civitas, that sub-

urban life means strong local electric power supplies.

"All the power lines that have been built out for urban expansion, we're able to tap into those," said Brian Cain, Civitas' chief sustainability officer during a tour of a drilling site. He estimates switching from diesel to line power reduces emissions by 20% to 25%. "The landscape is a lot different than west Texas," where operators do not have easy access to the adequate electric power, he said.

Some environmentalists have said lowering greenhouse gas emissions from oil drilling is not enough, and instead advocate for moving society away from fossil fuel usage altogether. This year, the International Energy Agency said investors should halt funding to new oil, gas and coal supply projects if the world wants to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century.

While electrification offers a quick way to cut emissions from production, there are other hurdles. Civitas shifts work schedules to avoid overtaxing the grid during peak heating or cooling times, said Cain.

In Texas, however, top oil fields "tend not to be urban environments" with ample electricity, said Don Whaley, president of Texas retail power provider OhmConnect Energy.

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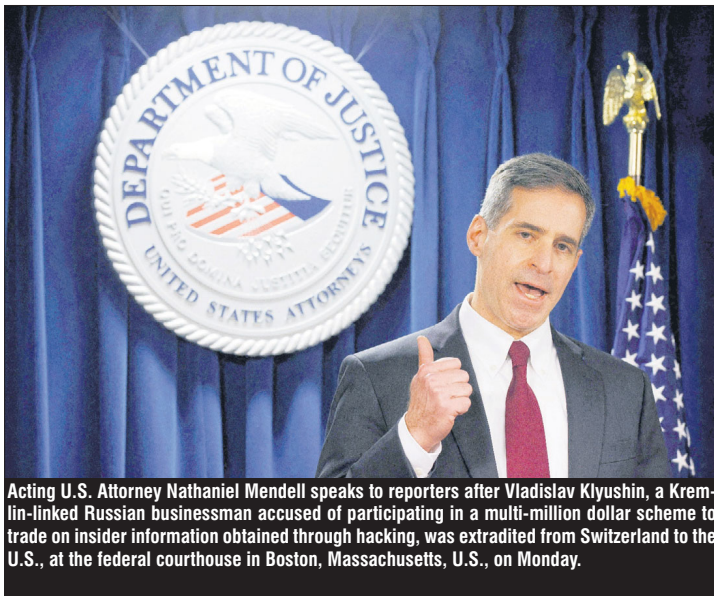
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Acting U.S. Attorney Nathaniel Mendell speaks to reporters after Vladislav Klyushin, a Kremlin-linked Russian businessman accused of participating in a multi-million dollar scheme to trade on insider information obtained through hacking, was extradited from Switzerland to the U.S., at the federal courthouse in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S., on Monday.

US says Russian businessman, others made millions in insider trading through hacking

BOSTON—Five Russians including a Kremlin-linked businessman now in U.S. custody carried out a vast, \$82 million insider trading scheme that allowed them to profit from corporate information stolen through hacking, U.S. authorities said on Monday.

Vladislav Klyushin, the owner of a Moscow-based information technology company that prosecutors said had extensive ties to the Russian government, was extradited on Saturday from Switzerland to face conspiracy, securities fraud and other charges in Boston.

Klyushin, who was arrested in Switzerland in March while on a ski trip, appeared briefly from a Massachusetts jail during a virtual court hearing. A bail hearing is tentatively set for Thursday.

Prosecutors accused him and others of trading on corporate earnings reports obtained by hacking into the computer systems of two vendors that help companies filing quarterly and annual reports with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. (SEC). Those companies included IBM Corp, Snap Inc and Tesla Inc. Prosecutors said Klyushin, 41, and employees of his company M-13 LLC placed trades for themselves as well for clients in exchange for a cut of their profits.

Authorities said the computer systems were hacked into by Ivan Yermakov, an M-13 employee who was among several Russian military intelligence officers charged in 2018 with carrying out hacking schemes to

interfere in the 2016 presidential election and target anti-doping agencies.

The scheme in total netted at least \$82.5 million from 2018 to 2020, the SEC said in a related lawsuit. Yermakov remains at large, along with three other defendants: M-13 director Nikolai Rumiantev and two Russian businessmen who prosecutors say traded on the hacked information, Mikhail Irzak and Igor Sladkov. They could not be reached for comment.

Klyushin's lawyers have

called the case politically motivated and argued the real reason he was sought was his work and contacts within the Russian government, which calls the case part of a hunt for Russians by Washington.

But while Acting U.S. Attorney Nathaniel Mendell stressed Klyushin's "extensive ties" to the Kremlin, he said authorities did not know at the outset of the two-year probe "where the facts and investigation would lead us."

LULA IS BACK

Continued from page 23.

ture Lula government. "I will offer you a market," he said.

Although many Brazilians remember Lula's presidency fondly, the years that followed soured the Workers Party legacy. Under his successor, Dilma Rousseff, the economy first slowed, then fell off a cliff. As the party's political star fell, Rousseff lost support in Congress and was impeached. Prosecutors uncovered a massive corruption scheme. "If there was (graft in my government), we created the whole apparatus that investigated corruption," he said, referencing investment in police intelligence, the passing of transparency laws and the autonomy of public prosecutors.

Analysts had expected a resurgent Lula to stoke support for Bolsonaro. But that has not yet materialized. Instead the pandemic, rising poverty and inflation have dented the president's popularity.

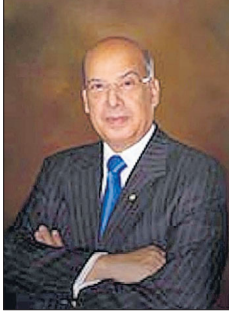
Lula has been careful not to help his rival too, presenting himself as peacemaker with little of the fiery rhetoric for which he became known as a union boss. "The polarization is not between Lula and Bolsonaro: the polarization is between Bolsonaro and everyone else," he said.

As part of that strategy, sources close to Lula say he is considering ex-rival Geraldo Alckmin as a centrist running mate. A four-term former governor of business powerhouse Sao Paulo, Alckmin is an unlikely partner but one brimming with market credibility.

Lula said no decision had been taken but was full of praise for the man who ran against him for the presidency in 2006. "Alckmin is a very important political figure," he said.

About his own future, Lula was more forthright. "I'm back in the game. I want to play, and I want to win."

Reform the OAS or oversee its irrelevance



By Sir Ronald Sanders

Our world exists today in troubled circumstances, governed by outmoded charters and laws that are no longer fit for purpose and do not respond to human needs.

When most of these Charters were signed 70 or more years ago, more than 70 countries were not independent and had no say in their formulation. Therefore, the conditions of underdevelopment, poverty and disease that today plague nations around the globe were not considered; if anything, they were regarded as the natural condition of colonized people that would be addressed by their predictable death. Life was cheap.

The charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) is one such governing document. It was signed in 1948 but brought into force on December 13, 1951 – 70 years ago. The leaders of the 14 countries that signed the Charter were mostly autocrats who were more concerned with avoiding being overthrown by military coups d'état than they were about the will of their own people. They were especially concerned that, notwithstanding any actions they took to repress dissent among their own people, no other country should have any right to criticize.

Only one present day CARICOM country – Haiti – was a Member of the Organization at that time.

The leaders were also concerned with settling disputes between themselves peacefully and in acting collectively against external aggression against any of them. Not all of them succeeded in pursuing peaceful dispute settlements with

neighbours. Military skirmishes, saber-rattling, and other acts of aggression continued.

Significantly, while the 70th anniversary, on December 13, 2021, of the Charter coming into force should have been an occasion for celebration, the date came and went with no commemoration by the OAS.

The Charter has been amended only four times in the last 70 years, and then only in response to urgent political crises. Yet, it cries out for reform.

The CARICOM member countries of the OAS place great value on the major cornerstones of the Charter, particularly: the effective exercise of representative democracy, non-aggression, the pacific settlements of disputes, the multi-dimensionality of security, the recognition that economic cooperation is essential to the common welfare and prosperity of our peoples, and the proclamation of the fundamental rights of the individual without distinction as to race, nationality, creed or sex.

However, knowing that many of these principles, particularly as they refer to development, are recognized more by omission than commission, CARICOM countries have, at various times, urged that the Charter be rejuvenated, making it relevant to the present challenges that confront the Americas.

It is not sufficient for the Charter to recognize the indispensability of economic cooperation without commitment to ensuring economic development. It is not enough for the Charter to proclaim fundamental rights of the individual without distinction as to race; and yet be silent on positive action to end racism which still lurks in the shadows of some governance systems and, sometimes, displays itself even in the bright daylight of their flawed justice machinery. Nowhere in the Charter is it inscribed that Member States should implement machinery to eradicate the scourge of racism from the Americas.

Is it adequate that the Charter declares, as a prin-

ciple, that education of peoples should be directed toward justice, freedom and peace without acknowledging that justice, freedom and peace will not be served while inequities of access to education continue to exist across the hemisphere?

In today's interconnected world where borders are no barriers to disease and no walls against Climate Change, is it right that the Charter should declare that "Development is the primary responsibility of each country", when today small states are ravaged by the effects of CO2 emissions from other countries that retard and erode their development with impunity?

Is it right that, against the reality of the loss and damage that are inflicted by climate change and global warming, that all the Charter says is that "member states should refrain from practicing policies and adopting actions or measures that have serious adverse effects on the development of other member states", and yet not provide for adequate compensation or measures that would cause offending countries to cease and desist?

When the Charter entered into force, it suited the requirements of the leaders of the 14 countries that directed its authorship. But 1951 conditions and preoccupations of 14 leaders should not continue to prevail in 2021 circumstances for 33 countries. I say 33 because Cuba and Venezuela that were among the original signatories have withdrawn from the Organization, although there is a fiction that Cuba is still a member, and that Venezuela is represented by a nominee of an "Interim" President who is recognized by fewer than 50 countries globally (and then only barely).

If the members of the OAS want the Organization to be relevant to the lives of their people, to their economic advancement, and to their social improvement, they have to make its framework fit for purpose.

Governments should consider the establishment of a Group of Wise Persons, reflective of the regional

membership, to analyze the Charter and to make recommendations on how it should be reformed. The alternative is to limp along – mostly to be paralyzed – in the illusion that yesterday's Charter is still fit for purpose in our hemisphere of today.

There is a Biblical prescription against pouring new wine into old wine skins, for surely, the old wine skins will burst, and the new wine will spill, wasting the years and effort that were devoted to its production.

By seeking to retain a 70-year-old document, written at a very different time by representatives of only 14 countries, and to apply its outmoded approaches to 33 countries in modern day realities, the OAS members are pursuing an effort that can no longer be sustained.

After 70 years, the governments of the OAS member states should recognize that it is time for a comprehensive study to recommend its reform, renewal, and relevance.

Responses and previous commentaries: www.sir-ronaldsanders.com

(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States and the OAS. He is a Senior Fellow at Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, and Massey College in University of Toronto. The views expressed are his own.)

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

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

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3 x 3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

Previous puzzle solution

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

12/21 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆
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- ACROSS**
- 1 East Asian desert
 - 5 Bitter feeling
 - 10 Grand ___;
 - pitcher's eye
 - 14 Deserve
 - 15 Fork parts
 - 16 Use a PC keyboard
 - 17 Long journey
 - 18 Nabs an escapee
 - 20 As free ___ bird
 - 21 Flying insect
 - 22 Musical drama
 - 23 Bananas
 - 25 Yogi's buddy, for short
 - 26 Awaken from sleep
 - 28 Beat in a footrace
 - 31 Hay storage areas
 - 32 Piece of chicken
 - 34 Last month; abbr.
 - 36 Bath bubbles
 - 37 Implements
 - 38 ___ in; relent
 - 39 ___ tear; rushing around
 - 40 Salary
 - 41 Thin cracker
 - 42 Bundle of energy
 - 44 Saloon frequenter
 - 45 Wrath
 - 46 Uplight
 - 47 Tango or twist
 - 50 Resting in peace
 - 51 NBC rival
 - 54 Horseman
 - 57 Foot attached to ___ foot or side
 - 58 ___ up with; tolerates
 - 59 Antlered animal
 - 60 Señor in Stuttgart
 - 61 In the ___; once
 - 62 Subdivided
 - 63 Tense; anxious

- DOWN**
- 1 "___ life!"; cry to a busybody
 - 2 Doesn't have both ___ in the water
 - 3 Sunup
 - 4 Pen fluid
 - 5 High blood pressure danger
 - 6 Sainly quality
 - 7 ___ along; move slowly
 - 8 Drink served hot or cold
 - 9 Sixth sense, for short
 - 10 In a ___; dazed
 - 11 Harp of old
 - 12 Copycat
 - 13 Small plateau
 - 19 Dental implant
 - 21 Playwright Hart
 - 24 Pitcher's delights
 - 25 Household pests
 - 26 As well
 - 27 Circular
 - 28 Paints for Manet
 - 29 ___ by; impervious to
 - 30 Fictional book
 - 32 Like fast food
 - 33 Tilling tool
 - 35 Quite
 - 37 Subdue
 - 38 Alamo rentals
 - 40 Merchandise
 - 41 Fairy godmother's prop
 - 43 Most courteous
 - 44 Conked on the head
 - 46 Razz
 - 47 Actor Johnny
 - 48 Pool water color
 - 49 Filberts & cashews
 - 50 Singer Celine
 - 52 Titanic's downfall
 - 53 Energetic
 - 55 Celebrity gossip site
 - 56 One of Winnie the Pooh's pals
 - 57 That woman

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/21/21

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15						16			
17				18						19			
20				21						22			
23	24							25					
26	27						28			29	30		
31					32	33				34		35	
36					37					38			
39				40						41			
42				43						44			
45									46				
47	48	49					50				51	52	53
54						55	56				57		
58						59					60		
61						62						63	

Monday's Puzzle Solved

R	A	M	S	E	A	R	B	L	A	B			
I	J	A	A	C	P	A	P	A	R	A	G	E	
C	A	R	G	O	O	U	T	S	P	O	K	E	N
O	N	A	P	O	I	H	O	N	E	S	T		
T	R	I	A	L	N	U	T						
A	S	H	I	E	R	D	E	T	E	S	T		
A	L	O	S	S	L	O	U	S	Y	K	L	I	D
A	O	N	E	P	O	L	E	S	K	E	N	O	
A	P	E	G	A	T	E	S	D	I	N	G	O	
E	R	R	O	R	S	W	I	L	D	E	R		
A	M	A	F	O	R	T	E						
A	L	F	R	E	D	E	W	E	R	F	K		
C	O	L	E	R	I	D	G	E	C	L	E	A	N
H	O	E	S	G	O	A	D	T	A	S	T	E	
S	P	A	T	M	E	S	S	T	E	W			

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Eugene Goodman should be 'Time's' Person of the Year

By Eugene Robinson

WASHINGTON -- *Time* magazine was dead wrong. The magazine's choice as Person of the Year should have been Eugene Goodman, the U.S. Capitol Police officer who stood alone against an angry mob during the January 6 insurrection and taunted rioters into following him away from the Senate chamber.

Bazillionaire Elon Musk, who gazes somewhat spookily from the magazine's cover, could justifiably be lauded as Twitter Troll of the Year. But Goodman -- representing all the law enforcement officers who defended the Capitol on that bloody day -- helped save our democracy. He stood firm against an unprecedented attempt to violently overturn the result of the 2020 election and keep Donald Trump, the big loser, in power.

Call me old-fashioned, but I believe bravery in service of one's country is more worthy of thanks and praise than snarkiness in service of one's preening ego.

The House select committee investigating the insurrection has done a good job this week in putting the events of January 6 back in the headlines, where they belong. Thanks to the committee, we now know that at least three Fox News anchors -- Laura Ingraham, Sean

Hannity and Brian Kilmeade -- were apparently as horrified as the rest of us when they saw the mob invading the Capitol. They sent text messages to Mark Meadows, then the White House chief of staff, begging him to get Trump to make a public statement telling the rioters to go home.

Shock and horror diminish with time. Trauma fades. After the insurrection, the 24/7 news cycle moved on to the initiatives of President Biden's fledgling administration, the vicissitudes of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tumultuous U.S. exit from Afghanistan, the triumphs and travails of the Democrats' slim majorities in Congress, and the death and destruction wreaked by extreme weather events that are being exacerbated by climate change.

Still, even with all of that, the biggest and most consequential news event of the year took place on January 6. For the first time in our nation's history, an organized rabble -- egged on by a defeated incumbent and some of his Republican allies -- overran the U.S. Capitol seeking to prevent Congress and the outgoing vice president from doing their constitutional duty and counting the electoral votes that certified Biden as the legitimately elected president.

And the mob succeeded, at least for several hours. In the process, the insurrectionists in-

jured scores of police officers and trashed the hallowed building revered as the citadel of our democracy. Chanting "Hang Mike Pence," they threatened the sitting vice president's life. They bashed police officers with poles bearing the American flag. They carried the Confederate battle flag through the Capitol rotunda. They despoiled the building with their urine and feces.

Police trying to defend the Capitol were hopelessly outnumbered as the rioters smashed their way inside. For the first time, the most important act in our democracy -- the peaceful transfer of power -- hung in the balance.

Goodman, a veteran officer with the U.S. Capitol Police, saw a mob ascending a staircase toward an entrance to the Senate chamber where senators were sheltering. Pence had been hustled out only minutes earlier. Goodman coolly drew the rioters' attention, inviting them to focus their rage on him, as he led them away from the chamber. I have no doubt that by risking his own life, he potentially saved the lives of those senators hunkered down just yards away.

At another point, Goodman encountered Senator Mitt Romney (Republican-Utah), who was unknowingly walking toward the danger zone. Goodman turned Romney around

and sent him toward relative safety.

Goodman was quick and clever enough to avoid injury. Many other officers of the U.S. Capitol Police and D.C. police were not so fortunate as they engaged the rioters in what was described as desperate, almost medieval hand-to-hand combat.

Pence, to his credit, refused to leave the building -- he was hidden in the subterranean bowels of the Capitol complex. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

(Democrat-California) and then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Republican-Kentucky) insisted that Congress reconvene to do its duty as soon as the building was cleared and secured. The electoral count was finished in the predawn hours of January 7. Our democracy survived.

This actually happened. A brownshirt-style attempted putsch took place in the capital of the nation that thinks of itself as a beacon of democracy. How was such a rupture

possible? Yes, Trump lit the fuse. But the dynamite was already there, ready to explode.

The police officers who protected the Capitol and our elected representatives on January 6 were indeed a thin blue line between democracy and authoritarianism. History should remember Eugene Goodman, representing all of those patriots, as 2021's Person of the Year -- long after Musk and Twitter fade into footnotes.

'Defund the police' runs into reality

By Marc A. Thiessen

WASHINGTON -- Irving Kristol famously said that "a neoconservative is a liberal who's been mugged by reality." Well, in San Francisco, it appears that liberal Mayor London Breed, D, has not only been mugged, but assaulted, robbed and smash-and-grabbed by reality.

In July 2020, Breed announced her plan to defund the police -- cutting \$120 million from law enforcement to fund social programs. Result? Crime skyrocketed. Today, San Francisco is more dangerous than 98 per cent of U.S. cities. In November alone, there were 3,375 reports of larceny theft citywide.

In the Central District, home to many of the city's tourist hot spots, there were 876 reports of smash-and-grabs -- almost 30 a day -- a 98 per cent increase from the year before. In the Tenderloin district, there are midday shootings and residents are forced to walk in the middle of the streets to avoid drug dealers and homeless people lying on the sidewalk shooting up. San Francisco residents now have a 1 in 16 chance of becoming a victim of either violent or property crime.

This crime wave finally convinced Breed to reverse course. "It's time the reign of criminals who are destroying our city ... to come to an end," the mayor declared in a news

conference this week. She is refunding the police, increasing the SFPD budget to \$689 million in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, nearly matching the all-time high in 2019-2020. And she is ordering police to combat the rash of retail thefts, conduct felony warrant sweeps, stop open air-drug dealing and substance abuse, and establish safe passage for citizens.

"What I'm proposing today, and what I will be proposing in the future will make a lot of people uncomfortable, and I don't care," Breed said. The time has come to be "more aggressive with law enforcement, more aggressive with the changes in our policies,

Continued on page 31



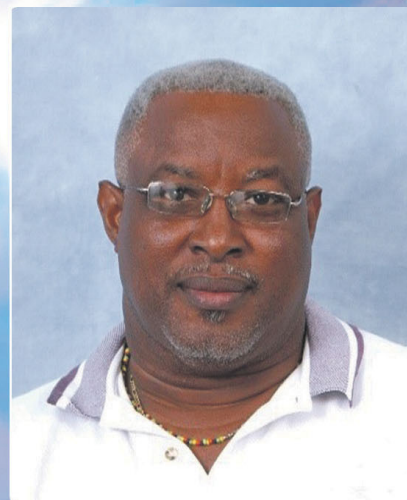
Management and Staff of NV GEBE would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of our former colleague,

Mr. Elliot Richardson

Our hearts are saddened by your loss.

May the Lord bless and comfort you during this time of grief.

May he rest in peace



'DEFUND THE POLICE' RUNS INTO REALITY...

Continued from page 30.

and less tolerant of all the bull**** that has destroyed our city."

Good for her. One of the hardest things to do in politics is admitting that you were wrong. So, when will her fellow Democratic mayors across the country do the same? San Francisco is far from alone. At least 12 cities have already broken annual homicide records in 2021 – five topping records that were just set or tied last year – and homicides are rising in other major cities across the country as well.

While some cities experiencing a crime surge have increased police budgets, many of the worst hit cities have defunded the police and eliminated officer positions. Minneapolis cut \$8 million from the police budget. Oakland cut \$14.6 million. Portland cut \$15 million. Philadelphia cut \$33 million. Seattle reduced its police budget by \$46 million, and the SPD has shrunk by nearly 270 police officers in the past 18 months. New York cut police funding last year by a whopping \$1 billion, while more than 2,500 officers left the department.

And yet many of the Democratic mayors who backed these cuts are in denial about their impact. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot recently blamed the victims of smash-and-grabs, declaring that too many retailers had failed to hire private security. They would not need to hire private security if Lightfoot hadn't let the city's police force shrink by nearly 400 officers. Or take New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who recently boasted that New York is "the safest of the top 20 big cities in this coun-

try." Last year, New York saw a 44 per cent increase in homicides over 2019. This year, the homicide rate is down 0.5 per cent – virtually unchanged. So de Blasio wants credit for maintaining the disastrous homicide rates of 2020?

It's not just police funding, but police morale has plunged. Officers no longer believe politicians have their backs, which has led to less vigorous policing and more difficulty in recruiting new officers along with soaring retirements and resignations. According to NPR, there has been a 45 per cent increase in police retirements, a nearly 20 per cent increase in resignations and a 5 per cent decrease in new police hiring nationwide.

It's time for all of America's major cities to take the same steps as San Francisco and restore police funding. But refunding the police is not enough. As Breed explained, "It's critical that our entire criminal justice system holds these individuals accountable when arrests are made. Our residents should not see the same criminals back on the streets ... again and again, in an endless cycle of fear and frustration."

It's also time for President Joe Biden to exercise some leadership on crime. On taking office, Biden ended the Justice Department's Operation Legend – named for 4-year-old LeGend Taliferro, who was shot and killed in Kansas City last year – which deployed federal officers to aid and assist local law enforcement and helped arrest more than 6,000 violent criminals.

A new ABC News/Ipsos poll finds only 36 per cent of Americans approve of

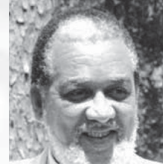
Biden's handling of crime – down from 43 per cent in late October. If the president wants to change that, maybe he should order the Justice Department to stop using the FBI to intimidate

school board moms and focus on arresting violent criminals again. If not, Republicans will lay blame for the current crime wave at his feet – and deservedly so.

R Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **R** I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. **John 14: 1-3**

We regret to announce the death of:



ARTHUR JUDE ROLLE LUGISSE

affectionately known as "Tatoe"

Sunrise: October 10th, 1951

Sunset: December 7th, 2021

Left to mourn are his:

- Wife:** Gabriela Mao-Cheia Lugisse a.k.a. Mamita
- Son:** Arturo Lugisse & Fiance Anouska Oliente
- Daughters:** Marva Rolle a.k.a. Valentine
Vanessa Lake
Mylene Lugisse

Special son & daughter:

- Clifton James, Tamara James
- James Gederon, Aline Gederon, Kimisha Lugisse, Malachi Domville, Alijah Lugisse, Aisaiah Lugisse, Caliana Lugisse, Aisaac Lugisse, Danielle Hodge, Aliyah Lugisse, Ailani Lugisse, Janiska Oliente, Alura Lugisse

Brothers and sisters:

- Royston Rolle, Jennifer Makonnen and Family, Richard Rolle and Family, Jackie Rolle

Godchildren:

- Xavern Labega, Sheldon Ottley, Janilla Antoine, Rhonda Etienne, James Casey

Special aunt:

- Beatrice Cabrera
- Cousins:** Donald Shillingford and Family, Glenda Shillingford and Family, Lynna Rolle and Family, Karen Rolle, Renny Rolle and Family, Dinsdale Lawrence and Family, Creswell Lawrence and Family, Ryan Bertrand and Family, Glenn Alie and Family

Special brothers:

- Tony Olivacce, Roger LouLou Hyman, Dr. Dennaoui, Don Hughes, John Spencer, Robelto Babadu Flanders, Bernard Hunt, Carlos van Heyninggen, Andy Ingraham, Julian Rollocks, Lloyd Roger, Cecil Lake, Norman Etienne, Alvin Obersti, Rudi Groman, Nicholas Sutton
- Special sisters:** Jean Christian, Roma Etienne
- Tallahassee family:** Anita Favors, Ben Harris, Sandra Manning, Jesse Rios

He was related to the Mao-Cheia, Cabrera, Walle, Persad, Oliente, Rolle, Shillingford, Lawrence, Lancelot, Etienne, Bertrand, Alie, Querol, Ruiz, Gonzalves and Hook families.

Other family members and friends too numerous to mention. We do apologize that if in our bereavement we have omitted anyone.

The funeral service for late ARTHUR JUDE ROLLE LUGISSE, affectionately known as "Tatoe", will be held on Thursday, December 23rd, 2021 at the Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium. Viewing and tributes will be from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and the service will commence at 11:00 a.m. with a private cremation service following.

The family requests no visitors before or after the service to allow them time to mourn the loss of their loved one.

Due to the COVID-19, the family kindly requests the cooperation of persons attending the service to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines. Wearing of masks is mandatory and the social distancing rules should be observed at the service.

R All services entrusted to the Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium. **R**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, I will give you rest." Mathew 11:28



Elliott Conrad Richardson a.k.a. Elli, Daddy Elliott or Pops

has passed away on Friday, November 26th, 2021. Elliott Richardson was born on September 9th, 1954 in Anguilla, but resided in St. Maarten from a young age. He was 67 years old.

He leaves to mourn his:

Children:

- Francis Conrad Richardson in SXM
- Fabien Queeley in the U.S.A.
- Fabiana Richardson in SXM
- Tamisha Richardson in AXA
- Tevaun Richardson in AXA

Grandchildren:

- Kelby Richardson in SXM
- Tristan Richardson in SXM
- Nichelle Richardson in SXM
- T'iana Beuperthuy Richardson in SXM
- O'ceane Beuperthuy Richardson in SXM

Godchildren:

- Diana Cocks-Nisbeth in SXM
- Christine Uranie in SXM
- Michael Peters in SXM
- Genario Richardson in SXM
- Riechel Cranston in SXM

Companion: Gloria Boxill

Children's mothers:

- Jasmine Queeley in the U.S.A.
- Madeleine Jacob in SXM
- Tamar Richardson in AXA
- Catherine Williams (deceased)

Daughter-in-law:

- Tawonia Queeley in the U.S.A.

Son-in-law:

- Dimitri Beuperthuy in SXM

Grandchildren's mothers:

- Jessica Remy in SXM
- Vania Maynard in SXM

Brothers:

- Fred Richardson and Martin Wilson in SXM
- Clive Carty (deceased)

Sisters:

- Carlson Richardson (deceased)
- Mavis Carty in SXM
- Claudette Carty in the U.S.A.

Nephews:

- Whitfield Richardson, Davon Carty, Verne Carty, Darian Carty and Adrian Carty in AXA
- Terrance Baly, Kevin Baly, Carlson Richardson Jr., Allan Richardson, Martin Wilson Jr., Evemar Wilson, Gustavo Richardson, Genario Richardson and Etnaldo in SXM.
- Harold in the Dominican Republic.
- Jason Halman & Jared Halman in the U.S.A.
- Antonio Richardson in the Netherlands.

Nieces:

- Stella Gumbs, Rose Richardson, Judy Richardson, Ismania Richardson and Avon Carty in AXA.
- Carina Richardson in FRANCE.
- Kelly Hunt, Sharanda Richardson, and Adeline Chittick in SXM.

Sisters-in-law:

- Adelaida Carty in AXA (wife of Clive Carty)
- Emma Richardson in SXM (wife of Carlson Richardson)

Close friends:

- DJ Ruby, Atab, Lloyd Euson, Johnny Richardson, Daniel Maccow, Maria DeWeever, Cassilda Van der Neut, Frantz Jacob, Remy Williams, Hessesus Pantophlet, William Marlin, Cleo Carti, Jamal Lynch, Ruby Bute, Bernard Max, Agnes Aventurin, Dennis Casseres, Oliver Spencer, Anselmo Hunt, Anselmo Boasman, Mickaella Riner, Claudius Pantophlet, Helena Brooks, Louis Pantophlet, Priscilla Gumbs, Avril Gumbs, Ashton Gumbs, Priscilla Woodley, Jules Henry, Tony Hodge, Pauline Gumbs, Roslyn Flanders, Marcia Lee, Berthille Chittick, Ashurrin Hodge, Ghyslaine Barry, Cynthia Richardson, Albert Kelly and Staff of GEBE.

He was the Founder of Elli's Powerhouse Gym and Recreational Foundation, Elli's Record Shop in Anguilla and a former employee & Supervisor of the Meter Reading Department of GEBE.

Date: Tuesday, December 21st, 2021,

Family viewing at Elli's Powerhouse Gym on the Pond fill from 10am to 11am.

Funeral service viewing and Tributes at the Philipsburg Methodist Church at 12pm to 12:50pm

Service starts at 1pm to 2pm followed by a private Cremation at Royal Funeral Home.

Elliott lived a simple life, he was humble and kind. Elliott was loved by many and he loved all his children, family and friends.

May his soul continue to Rest in Eternal Peace.

R It is with sorrow in our hearts that we announce the passing of: **R**



Mrs. Lilliette Mahalia Ballantyne-Myers

b.k.a. Lilly or Dica

Sunrise: October 9th, 1952

Sunset: December 11th, 2021

Funeral service will be held on Tuesday, December 28th, 2021

Location: Christian Fellowship Church - Welfare Road, Cole Bay

Open tributes & viewing: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Service starts at 11:00 a.m.

Interment: Cay Bay Cemetery

All services entrusted to Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium.

R **All services entrusted to the Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium.** **R**



HOROSCOPE

By Nancy Black

Today's Birthday (December 21) – Fortune blesses your income and cash flow this year. Financial discipline pays extra dividends. Make a spiritual connection this winter, before falling in love again next spring. Adapting to changes with a group project next summer leads to autumn team victories. Profits abound. To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

Aries (March 21-April 19) – Today is an 8 – Generate creativity and fun. Advance your career this month, with the Sun in Capricorn. Take charge for a professional prize. Put love into your work.

Taurus (April 20-May 20) – Today is an 8 – Plot upcoming adventures from your home base. Expand your boundaries under the Capricorn Sun. Begin a month-long expansion phase. Explore and investigate possibilities.

Gemini (May 21-June 20) – Today is an 8 – Communication unlocks doors. The next month is good for financial planning. Begin a collaborative business phase, with the Sun in Capricorn. Profits await.

Cancer (June 21-July 22) – Today is an 8 – Collaboration gets lucrative. Get into a four-week partnership phase, with the Sun in Capricorn. Share mutual support. Amplify each other's creativity. Provide backup.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22) – Today is a 9 – You're entering a busy month under the Capricorn Sun. Put your heart and your back into your work. Maintain healthy practices for optimal physical performance.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) – Today is an 8 – This next month gets especially fun, with the Sun in Capricorn. You're especially lucky, and the game is heating up. Take action for love.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) – Today is an 8 – Gather advice and info from experienced friends. Enjoy a homebody phase this month, with the Capricorn Sun. Energize domestic improvements, home renovation and repair.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) – Today is an 8 – With the Sun in Capricorn, your communications are especially effective, research produces results and you learn quickly. Write, film and share your discoveries.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) – Today is an 8 – Explore and investigate. The next month is good for making money, with the Sun in Capricorn. Develop lucrative opportunities. Take action for a profitable harvest.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) – Today is a 9 – Collaborate to grow shared accounts. You have an extra advantage over the next month, with the Sun in your sign. Take ambitious steps confidently.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) – Today is an 8 – Rely on a strong partner. Finish up and follow through this month under the Capricorn Sun. Enjoy privacy and introspection. Consider long-term plans.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20) – Today is an 8 – A four-week socially active phase begins. Advance team projects for shared gain, with the Capricorn Sun. Collaborate with talented colleagues. Have fun with friends.



Speak your mind

By Queenie

**SEND LETTERS TO
P.O. BOX 828
FAX +721 542 5913
OR E-MAIL
queenie@thedailyherald.com**

Dear Queenie,

I saw something about a friend on Facebook and mentioned it to them the next time I saw them. They seemed offended said something about how did I know their personal business.

Queenie, did I do something rude?—Online Etty Ket

Dear Etty Ket,

No. When you put things on Facebook they are there for everyone to see unless you set the controls to limit who can see it. If you do not do so, it is silly to be offended when someone sees it and comments on it.

All the same, the best thing you could have done would have been to apologise for offending them and change the subject or move away.

Only notices and events of non-profit or educational organisations will be placed in the Events/Notices column. Notices/Events should be sent to notices@thedailyherald.com in the wording format used on this page. Do not send fliers, photos, locked files or press releases to this address.

NOTICES

Volunteer.sx Registration

St. Maarten Development Fund (SMDF) and NPOwer invite persons and non-profit organisations to register on volunteer.sx to find volunteering opportunities and/or to post volunteer events. To register go to volunteer.sx, follow the sign up process and start building a better future for St. Maarten.

Player Selection

St. Martin Pony League reminds players 9 - 16 years that in connection with the upcoming 2022 Pony Caribbean Zone Tournaments in Bonaire (9-10 years) - the Dominican Republic (11-12 years) – Puerto Rico (13-14 years) and Colombia (15-16 years), pre selection practice has begun at the John Cooper/Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark from 3:00 - 6:00pm. Practice takes place every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Players are also reminded to take a copy of their travel and required documents to the St. Martin Pony League Office at Cannegieter Street 93, Philipsburg as to be able to participate in the Caribbean Zone Tournaments.

Duplicate Bridge

The St Maarten Duplicate Bridge Club is now meeting Wednesday nights at 7:15pm at LaVista Resort on Billy Folly Road in Pelican Key. Bring a partner for a fun night of bridge. US \$10 per person, coffee and water provided, cash bar. Proof of COVID vaccination is required, masks optional. For information call Jan Peter 721-520-0594.

Club Meeting

Cobraced Toastmasters Club meets virtually on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month at 6:30pm. Zoom Meeting ID 379 297 3244 Password: today.

AA Meetings

Al-Anon is a non-profit 12-step programme of men and women who may have a common problem and solution to stop drinking. The support group meets at Red Cross on Airport Boulevard every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:00pm, and on Sundays at Guana Bay Beach (near old restaurant) at 8:30am.

Read a Book

Philipsburg Jubilee Library's online reading service is available to all readers. All current library members who have not yet activated their digital service are encouraged to e-mail admin@sxmlibrary.org to get this going. Non-library members are also encouraged to contact the library via admin@sxmlibrary.org for more information about activating their access to the library of digital books. For more information about the library and its services, visit www.stmaartenlibrary.org or Philipsburg Jubilee Library.

Club Meeting

Elite Soualiga Toastmasters Club meets virtually on Zoom from 2:00 to 3:30pm on the first and fourth Sunday of every month. For more information, please email: elite.soualigatm@gmail.com.

Consular Services

The Office of the Honorary Consul of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana operates on Wednesdays from 1:00 to 5:00pm and on Saturdays from 10:00am to 2:00pm by appointment only. For further information, please call 580-1617, 527-3198, or 527-0704.

Homework Guidance

Oranje Community School is looking for dynamic youth leaders and homework guidance persons. Pass by the Oranje Community School at 11:00am or call 580-2882.

Basketball Academy

The St. Maarten National Basketball Association will be starting the SXMNBA Basketball Academy for boys and girls born between 2000 and 2009. Requirements: Copy of valid identification (passport, ID card, etc.); one ID picture; completed registration form. There is a Naf. 72 or US \$40 monthly fee and Naf. 18 or \$10 one-time registration fee per member. Training sessions will be two

hours held once per week. Contact Alex Ferdinand, cell/ WhatsApp 520-2151, or e-mail sxmmba@gmail.com for more information.

Positive Thinking

Brahma Kumaris St. Maarten invites persons to its ongoing free meditation and Positive Thinking courses at Raj Yoga Centre, 16 Front Street. Call 524-2554 or 542-0541 for more information.

Church Service

Grace International Baptist Church invites you to its services that are currently virtual-only. Follow us on Facebook at Grace International Baptist Church for the live stream of Sunday's sermon at 11:45am. Visit our website at graceinternationalbaptist.com and contact 1 721 586-2738/554-9590 or all-becauseofgrace@gmail.com for more information.

Club Meeting

Soualiga Corporate Toastmasters Club meets at the new Government Administration Building on the second and fourth Wednesday every month from 5:30 to 7:00pm.

Club Meeting

SXM Achievers Toastmasters Club meets on Zoom every second and fourth Thursday (except on holidays) of the month from 7:30 to 9:00pm. All are welcome to join. Please email sxmachieverspresident@gmail.com for the zoom meeting details.

Community Service

Foundation Judicial Institutes St. Maarten requests foundations, associations, schools, clubs and other public organisations, including Government organisations, to contact the Probation Office to register as community service workplace. For more information e-mail greta.pantophlet@sjis-sxm.org

Foster Parents Needed

Foundation Judiciary Institutes Windward Islands (FJIWI)/Stichting Justitiele Inrichtingen Bovenwinden (SJIB), is looking for foster parents: Interested persons ages 24-67 can apply. Contact Meredith Concincionor at number 526-4310.

Volunteers Needed

St. Maarten Animal Welfare Foundation is seeking volunteers for special activities. For more information call 520-8887.

Animal Volunteer

Animals R Friends (ARF) Foundation needs volunteers 15 years and older who are not afraid of handling animals for various tasks: feeding cats and dogs, walking dogs, guest-speakers for ARF, lesson materials for schools, etc. For more information call 556-1191/520-7365/526-0113 or e-mail: arf_sxm@yahoo.com

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Spain returns smuggled figurines, jars to Egypt

MADRID--Spain returned 36 stolen antiquities to Egyptian officials on Monday, including figurines of gods and goddesses and ancient jars meant to hold human remains.

The artefacts - among them a granite carving of the lion's head of the warrior goddess Sekhmet - were taken illegally from archaeological sites, officials said. Smugglers brought them to Spain where police seized Egyptian and Spanish authorities," he said.

The artefacts, worth more than 150,000 euros (\$170,000), were all probably looted from sites at Saqqara and Mit Rahina, Spanish police said.

Egypt and other states have stepped up campaigns for the return of artefacts taken by smugglers or looted by imperial powers.



Some of the antiquities, which are to be returned to Egypt by the Spanish Civil Guard, are seen before the news conference at the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, Spain, on Monday.

Titane director Ducournau flies flag for genre films, female voices

LONDON--Director and writer Julia Ducournau says France's decision to pick her movie "Titane" as its official contender in the Oscar race for best international feature film shows changing attitudes towards genre movies in her home country.

The film, which won the Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival, was chosen over box office hits and other critically acclaimed movies to represent France.

"Honestly, I was not expecting it. We're not a country that values genre films very much," Ducournau, 38, told Reuters in an

interview. "For many years it's been looked down on as not being serious enough or valuable enough and it feels like now there is a rising awareness that genre films very much talk about humanity and individuality as well in a deep manner."

"Titane", Ducournau's second feature film, is a body horror that has shocked and wowed audiences with its violence, a sex act scene between the main character and a vintage Cadillac car, and themes of gender-bending, grief and love.

"When you make films like my films, you always have this fear that you're going to be misunderstood or

mis-transcribed... I was very happily surprised with how open-minded and ready to live the experience all the audiences that I met were," Ducournau said.

The title refers to a titanium plate placed in heroine Alexia's head following a car accident in childhood. The plate attracts her to metallic elements and following the act with the car, Alexia becomes pregnant.

Following a series of violent outbursts, the adult Alexia, played by newcomer Agathe Rousselle, meets a firefighter (Vincent Lindon), who has never recovered from the disappearance of his young son. Convinced that Alexia is his adult child, he takes her in.



Director Julia Ducournau reacts after receiving the Palme d'Or award for the film "Titane" at the Cannes film festival, France earlier this year.

On the sex scene with the car, Ducournau said she was pleased it had become a talking point and elicited a reaction from audiences.

"As far as the sex act was concerned, I knew that I

was not going to show it extensively, obviously, and that it was just going to be like flashes to show that her desire overcomes the ridiculous cliché that goes with this kind of car," she said. "It's like the feminine desire would overcome the car, (which is) an extension of a form of toxic masculinity ... So I'm very happy with this scene. I really like it."

triumphs by women filmmakers at festivals and awards ceremonies this year. "This year has proven that we cannot keep ignoring female voices in the arts," Ducournau said.

The international feature film category shortlist for the 2022 Academy Awards will be announced next Tuesday, with the final nominees revealed on Feb. 8 ahead of the Oscars ceremony in late March.

Ducournau's Palme d'Or win is one of several major



TV-CARIB (local)
Channel 010 WTN

Tuesday, December 21

- 8:00am Good Morning Beautiful
- 9:00am Morning Show (Pearl FM)
- 12:05pm Viewpoint (PJD2)
- 5:00pm Animated Kids Program
- 6:30pm Voice of Our Kids News
- 7:00pm Special
- 7:30pm TV-Carib Informer
- 8:00pm Special
- 10:00pm Noticias en Español
- 10:20pm Late Night
- Program Rotation



TV 15 (local)
Channel 115 SXM Cable

Tuesday, December 21

- 8:00am SXM Daily News
- 8:30pm DComm Program
- 9:00am Oral Gibbes Live
- 10:00am Caribbean Newslines
- 10:30am Special Program
- 4:00pm Parliament Replay
- 5:30pm Caribbean Newslines
- 6:00pm Special Program
- 7:00pm DComm Program
- 7:30pm SXM Daily News
- 8:00pm Oral Gibbes Live
- 9:00pm Special Program
- 9:30pm Our News French St. Martin
- 10:00pm Late Night/Caribbean Lottery
- 11:00pm SXM Daily News
- 11:30pm Caribbean Newslines



BVN (Dutch/Flemish) TV
Channel 122 SXM Cable
Channel 204 WTN

Tuesday, December 21

- 11:00am NOS Journaal
- 11:15am MAX Geheugentrainer
- 11:35am Nederland in Beweging
- 11:50am Kook mee met MAX
- 12:05pm NOS Journaal
- 12:20pm De 3 sterren camping
- 1:05pm NOS Journaal
- 1:20pm Typisch Eijsden
- 1:45pm Noord-Zuid-Oost-West
- 2:05pm NOS Journaal
- 2:20pm Andere Tijden
- 2:50pm De slapelozen
- 3:20pm Sesamstraat
- 3:40pm Sesamstraat 10 voor...
- 3:50pm Het Klokhuis
- 4:05pm NOS Jeugdjournaal
- 4:25pm 70 jaar TV: Je Beste Vriend
- 5:05pm NOS Journaal
- 5:20pm BinnensteBuiten
- 5:50pm EenVandaag
- 6:15pm Een huis vol
- 7:00pm NOS Journaal
- 7:25pm Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
- 7:30pm Droomhuis Gezocht
- 8:15pm De slimste mens
- 9:00pm Nieuwsuur
- 9:30pm Weerbericht Amerika/Caribiën
- 9:35pm Opsporing Verzocht Inter.
- 9:40pm Scheefgroei
- 10:35pm Studio Sport Eredvisie



TeleCuraçao
Channel 130 SXM Cable
Channel 202 WTN

Tuesday, December 21

- 4:00am Na Kaminda pa Misa di Ourora
- 5:00am Misa di Ourora na Coromoto
- 6:00am Serada Misa di Ourora
- 6:30am Mòru Bon Dia
- 9:30am Ban Hals a Standarte
- 10:00pm Gustoso ku Maristella
- 11:00am Dun'e un Chèns
- 12:00pm TeleNotisia Mèrdia/Extra Journaal
- 1:00pm Tra'i Mèrdia 3.0
- 3:30pm Punto Final (r)
- 4:30pm Ban Hals a Standarte (r)
- 5:00pm Overdrive ku Nahason
- 6:00pm Bonochi Kòrsou
- 7:00pm Den Fin di Aña (r)
- 7:30pm Caribbean Passport (r)
- 8:00pm TeleNotisia
- 9:00pm Wega di Number Kòrsou
- 9:10pm Partisipashon di Morto
- 9:15pm Pagina Sosial
- 9:30pm Punto Final
- 11:00pm TeleNotisia (r)

Licorice Pizza turns on charm in quirky coming-of-age tale

LOS ANGELES--There's no pizza and no licorice in director Paul Thomas Anderson's latest movie, but like a lot of the quirky characters and events in his coming-of-age story set in 1970s suburban Los Angeles, something about the title seemed right.

"Licorice Pizza is actually a really famous San Fernando Valley record store that was very popular in the '70s," said Alana Haim, the musician who makes her screen debut as the witty

but prickly young woman at the heart of the story. The film arrives in U.S. movie theaters nationwide on Dec. 25.

"It took us a second to figure out what we were going to name the film. The second that 'Licorice Pizza' was in the mix all of us in our gut felt like this is the title," Haim, 29, said.

Greeted by critics as the funniest and most personal film in Anderson's 30-year career, "Licorice Pizza" is on several 2021 top movie

lists and is expected to do well at the Oscars next year. It tracks the unconventional relationship between Haim's photographer's assistant character and a 15-year-old budding entrepreneur played by Cooper Hoffman, the son of the late actor Philip Seymour Hoffman.

Sean Penn and Bradley Cooper make cameo appearances as larger-than-life figures during a summer of mischief that involves water beds, pinball

machines, gasoline shortages, city politics and first love. Haim, who with her two sisters form the rock band Haim, described her character as "ferocious and strong, and (she) kind of feels like she knows everything about the world, but she knows absolutely nothing."

"She's very complicated," Haim added.

Anderson, whose films range from the comedy "Punch Drunk Love" to the drama "There Will Be Blood," is a Haim family friend. Haim's mother was his art teacher and he has directed music videos for the band Haim. But Haim never dreamed of acting in his movies.



Musicians Danielle Haim, Este Haim and Alana Haim of Haim arrive to attend the 2018 MusiCares Person of the Year show honoring Fleetwood Mac at Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan, New York, U.S., January 26, 2018.

"It came about very spontaneously," she said. "I just heard rumblings. He would mention, 'I'm working on a movie,' and I would hear, like, water beds or some-

thing like that. But the pieces never came together until he had sent me the script and I had seen my name on the page."

Opening box office milestones

Sony and Marvel's *Spider-Man: No Way Home* – the first pandemic-era film to surpass the \$100 million mark in its debut weekend of release – becomes the third-highest opening in box office history



Opening box office (US\$)	U.S., Canada	Rest of world	Totals
1. <i>Avengers: Endgame</i> Walt Disney Studios (2019)	\$357.12m	\$866.52m	\$1,223.64m
2. <i>Avengers: Infinity War</i> Walt Disney Studios (2018)	\$257.70m	\$382.82m	\$640.52m
3. <i>Spider-Man: No Way Home</i> Sony Pictures (2021)	\$253.00m	\$334.20m	\$587.20m
4. <i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i> Walt Disney Studios (2015)	\$247.97m	\$281.00m	\$528.97m
5. <i>Star Wars: The Last Jedi</i> Walt Disney Studios (2017)	\$220.01m	\$230.81m	\$450.82m

Sources: Variety, IMDb, Box Office Mojo Picture: Sony Pictures © GRAPHIC NEWS

Spider-Man numbers climb in record books

LOS ANGELES--Final box office figures showed "Spider-Man: No Way Home" hauled in an even bigger audience than originally estimated, for a weekend total of \$260 million at U.S. and Canadian theaters, distributor Sony Corp said on Monday.

That lifted the superhero adventure to second on the list of all-time domestic openings for Hollywood films, just ahead of the nearly \$258 million in 2018 for "Avengers: Infinity War". International ticket sales for "No Way Home" also rose to \$340.8 million for a global total of \$600.8 million.

On Sunday, Sony had forecast that "No Way Home"

would finish the weekend in third place domestically with \$253 million and a worldwide total of \$587.2 million. Monday's figures included actual ticket sales from Thursday through Sunday night.

"Avengers: Endgame" holds the opening weekend record in the United States and Canada with a \$357 million debut in 2019.

The performance of "No Way Home," which stars Tom Holland as the web-slinging hero and Zendaya as his girlfriend, boosted theater chains such as AMC Entertainment and Cinemark Holdings. Theaters are trying to recover from extended closures during the CO-

VID-19 pandemic and face new concerns from the omicron variant heading into the normally busy week around Christmas. Analysts said "No Way Home" proved interest in superhero movies remains high. The film also added to the intrigue by bringing in older Marvel characters in the conclusion of a popular trilogy. The movie played exclusively in theaters without an at-home streaming option.

Other films have struggled to draw people to cinemas. Director Guillermo del Toro's thriller "Nightmare Alley," for example, sold roughly \$3 million worth of tickets over the weekend.

Maxwell's fate in jury's hands in sex abuse trial

NEW YORK--The jury in Ghislaine Maxwell's sex abuse trial began deliberations on Monday after hearing closing arguments over whether the British socialite set up teenage girls to have sexual encounters with the late financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Maxwell, 59, is accused of recruiting and grooming four teenage girls for Epstein to abuse between 1994 and 2004. On trial for three weeks in federal court in Manhattan, she has pleaded not guilty to charges of sex trafficking and other crimes. Epstein killed himself in a jail cell in 2019 at the age of 66 while awaiting trial on sex abuse charges.

Earlier on Monday, prosecutor Alison Moe said in her closing argument that Maxwell was Epstein's "partner in crime." Jurors previously heard from four women who said Maxwell groomed them for abuse by Epstein when they were teenagers. Three of the women said Maxwell herself touched their bare breasts.

Moe argued that Maxwell's presence made young girls feel comfortable spending time with Epstein. Otherwise, receiving an invitation to be with a middle-aged man would have seemed "creepy" and "set off alarm bells," Moe said.

"Epstein could not have done this alone," Moe said. "When that man is accompanied by a posh, smiling, respectable, age-appropriate woman, that's when every-

thing starts to seem legitimate. And when that woman ... acts like it's totally normal for that man to touch those girls, it lures them into a trap." Maxwell defense attorney Laura Menninger countered that Maxwell was an "innocent woman" whom prosecutors had targeted because Epstein is no longer alive. She argued that the women's memories had been corrupted over the decades and said they were motivated by money to implicate Maxwell. All four women said

they received millions of dollars from a victims' compensation fund established by Epstein's estate.

The defense had repeatedly pressed the women during cross-examinations as to why they did not mention Maxwell during their initial conversations with law enforcement agents about Epstein.

"They all changed their stories when the Epstein victims' compensation fund was opened up," Menninger told the jury. "That should make you hesitate."



Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid (21) shoots against the Boston Celtics in the first quarter at TD Garden in Boston. 76ers won 108-103. (David Butler II-USA TODAY Sports.)

Joel Embiid scores 41 points to lift 76ers past Celtics 108-103

BOSTON--Joel Embiid scored nine straight points in the final 1:22 and finished with 41 points and 10 rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers rallied past the host Boston Celtics for a 108-103 win on Monday night.

Seth Curry added 26 points and seven assists and Tobias Harris had 25 points with seven boards for the 76ers, who snapped their three-game skid.

Jaylen Brown had a team-high 30 points for Boston. Jayson Tatum totaled 17 points, nine boards and six assists, Enes Freedom added 15 points and 11 rebounds and Marcus Smart scored 15 for the Celtics.

Boston had won two of three coming in, but has now dropped five of seven overall.

Philadelphia was playing for the first time since last Thursday after its Sunday game against New Orleans was postponed due to the team's COVID-19 outbreak.

76ers center Andre Drummond, forward Georges Niang and guard Shake Milton were all sidelined Monday while in the league's COVID health and safety protocols.

Philadelphia guard Tyrese Maxey was scratched after being questionable with a left quad contusion. Guards Furkan Korkmaz (non-COVID illness) and Jaden Springer (concussion protocol) were also sidelined.

Celtics starting center Al Horford, forwards Grant Williams, Jabari Parker, Juancho Hernangomez and Sam Hauser and guards

Josh Richardson and Brodrick Thomas all missed the game in COVID protocols. Center Robert Williams III was a late scratch for personal reasons.

Philadelphia led 51-49 at halftime after leading by as many as nine in the first quarter.

The Celtics took their first lead of the night at 55-53 after a pair of free throws by Brown at 10:33 of the third quarter.

Leading 80-75 through three quarters, Boston went up 97-90 late in the fourth

before surrendering an 8-1 run to give Philadelphia the lead for good at 99-98 on Danny Green's 3-pointer with 1:43 left.

Embiid made three straight jumpers and sank three of four free throws to seal the win.

Embiid (right ankle soreness) and Green (right hip soreness) played despite being questionable. Tatum, Dennis Schroder and Romeo Langford were also active after being deemed game-time decisions for undisclosed reasons.

LaLiga talking points

MADRID-- Talking points from the weekend in LaLiga.

Sevilla Aiming High

Sevilla strengthened their case as the strongest challengers to LaLiga leaders Real Madrid after beating Atletico Madrid 2-1 on Sunday.

They have lost only two games this season so far and their 37 points from 17 league matches equals their best start in the club's history (2006-07).

That team won the UEFA Cup and the Copa del Rey, in addition to fighting for the league title until the last day of the season.

With a game in hand, Sevilla will try to cut Real's six point lead at the top with a win against struggling Barcelona on Tuesday.

"We are showing heart against some of the best teams in the world, with extraordinary players. We are

doing a great job," coach Julen Lopetegui said.

Pressure Mounting On Atletico

Defending LaLiga champions Atletico Madrid are in a slump and pressure is mounting on their manager Diego Simeone, who is starting to be questioned by club supporters and Spanish media.

His reluctance to play young Portuguese striker Joao Felix and the surprising fragility of his side's defence are threatening to bring an end to his decade in charge of the club.

Atletico have only managed to win half of their home games so far this season and at the same point last campaign, they had 14 wins and only one defeat, 15 points better off.

The usually rock-solid defensive side have conceded 20 goals in 17 games.

It is the first time Simeone

Serie A weekend talking points

ITALY--Talking points from the weekend's Serie A matches

Inter Winter Champions

Inter Milan's sixth consecutive Serie A victory, a 5-0 thrashing of bottom side Salernitana on Friday, coupled with AC Milan's 1-0 defeat by Napoli on Sunday, meant Simone Inzaghi's side have been crowned Italy's winter champions this term.

The mid-season title is taken seriously in Italy, mostly due to historic precedent. Only three times since the league reverted to 20 teams in 2004 have the winter champions failed to finish on top - Napoli in 2015-16 and 2017-18, and last season.

Milan were top of a tightly-contested table going into last season's winter break, only for Inter to eventually win the Scudetto.

Inter's form, as their rivals falter, however, means Inzaghi's men are firm favourites to ensure normality will resume this season and the winter leaders see out a title success once more.

When Ibra Doesn't Fire, Neither Do Milan

A lengthy injury list has not helped matters, but Milan's hopes of winning their first Scudetto since 2011 are fading fast, with a strikeforce too reliant on veteran Swede Zlatan Ibrahimovic costing them dear.

With Olivier Giroud having

only just battled back to fitness and Croatian forward Ante Rebic on the sidelines, the onus was again on Ibrahimovic to produce the goods against Napoli on Sunday at the San Siro.

The 40-year-old rescued a point for a well below-par Milan at Udinese in their previous match, and Ibrahimovic had his side's only real efforts at goal on Sunday. This time, however, he could not find the net, and Napoli took home a crucial three points.

"You need the individual moment of quality in the final third and we didn't have that tonight," Milan coach Stefano Pioli said.

"I think it was one of our best performances in terms of aggression, intensity and focus. We just lacked ideas."

With Inter threatening to pull away, now four points clear at the top of the standings, Ibrahimovic is going to need more help keep his side

in the title race.

Mourinho's Bolt Out Of The Blue

On paper, Atalanta looked primed to make seven league wins in a row on Saturday against Jose Mourinho's AS Roma, who have struggled for form following their impressive start to the season.

However, Roma threw the form book out of the window as a double from English striker Tammy Abraham helped Mourinho's men to a 4-1 success - their first win over a top five opponent in 19 months.

A title challenge looks beyond them at this stage, but such a ruthless display - Roma scored four goals from eight shots - could be just the boost the capital club need.

"This is a really big step forward mentally," Mourinho said. In the past, when under pressure, we did not do well.

"Today, we were excellent in every way."

Trail Blazers, Pelicans put fragile streaks on line in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS --The Portland Trail Blazers and the New Orleans Pelicans have both struggled this season. Both have records below .500, but both are showing signs of improvement.

The Blazers and the Pelicans have both won two games in a row as they prepare to meet Tuesday night in New Orleans.

"What I see is that we're growing, and early in the season we were giving ourselves an opportunity, but we were falling short," Pelicans first-year coach Willie Green said. "Now we still have a ton of games left ahead of us, but I like what we're doing. We're starting to find our rhythm, starting to find what environments that we can play in down the stretch of games."

New Orleans beat the Thunder in Oklahoma City last Wednesday when Devonte' Graham banked in a 61-foot, buzzer-beating, tie-breaking 3-pointer.

Two nights later, Graham made eight 3-pointers and the host Pelicans defeated a shorthanded Milwaukee team in overtime. Graham scored 26 points while taking just 12 shots.

"We have the utmost and extreme confidence in Devonte' and his ability to shoot the ball and play-make for us," Green said. "I just like the fact that he's being more aggressive. Those are shots that he can make. We want him taking them with confidence."

New Orleans has gone 7-5 after a 3-16 start.

The Pelicans, who haven't had a player enter the NBA's health and safety protocols this season, lost an opportunity to win a third consecutive game Sunday when their game at Philadelphia was postponed because COVID-19 issues and injuries left the 76ers without the minimum eight players necessary to play a game.

The Blazers cooled off the red-hot Grizzlies on Sunday in Memphis. Damian Lillard scored 32 points and Norman Powell added 28 in a 105-100 victory that ended Memphis' five-game win streak and handed the Grizzlies just their second loss in 12 games.

"We had to execute," Lillard said. "We had to get stops. We had to weather a few storms. It was a great win. Pulling a game out like this shows growth."

Powell scored 20 in the second half for Portland, which had lost seven straight before the consecutive wins.

"We knew at halftime that somebody had to take some pressure off of (Lillard), and Norm was huge," Blazers first-year coach Chauncey Billups said. "He was big-time on both ends of the floor."

The result was Portland's second road win of the season and its second consecutive win for the first time since Nov. 23.

"This is a big-time win for us," Billups said. "I thought we just showed great resolve. It could have gone a lot of different ways. We just kept fighting."



Spain's Rafael Nadal in action in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in this December 18 file photo.

Nadal tests positive for COVID after Abu Dhabi comeback

SPAIN - Rafa Nadal said on Monday he had tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from his comeback appearance at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition event in Abu Dhabi last week.

The 20-times Grand Slam champion and former world number one said he was having some "unpleasant moments" but was hoping to feel better soon and would keep people informed about his plans over future tournaments.

The positive test casts further doubt on whether the 35-year-old participates in next month's Australian Open -- a tournament

he has won once and finished runner-up four times -- having already said he could not guarantee he would play.

"I wanted to announce that on my return home after playing the Abu Dhabi tournament, I have tested positive for COVID in the PCR test that has been performed on me when I arrived in Spain," Nadal wrote on Twitter.

Nadal said he had tested negative at all times when he was in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, and had last tested negative on Friday last week.

During his stay in Abu Dhabi, Nadal met former Spanish king Juan Car-

los, who tested negative for COVID, Spain's Royal Household said on Monday. The monarch, who lives in the United Arab Emirates, is feeling good, the palace added.

Nadal's comeback from injury at the exhibition event -- his first tournament appearance since the Citi Open in Washington in August -- ended in two defeats by Andy Murray and Denis Shapovalov.

"I am having some unpleasant moments but I hope that I will improve little by little. I am now homebound and have reported the result to those who have been in contact with me," he wrote.

"As a result of the situation I have to have total flexibility with my calendar and I will analyse my options depending on my evolution. I will keep you informed of any decisions about my future tournaments."

Murray was forced to withdraw from the season's opening Grand Slam earlier this year after testing positive for the coronavirus in January.

Nadal spent the last four months on the sidelines with a foot injury. He was knocked out at Roland Garros in the semi-finals and was forced to pull out of Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympics and the U.S. Open.

He also missed the Davis Cup which concluded in Madrid earlier this month and will not feature for Spain at the Jan. 1-9 ATP Cup in Sydney.

The Australian Open begins on Jan. 17.

Suns to seize opportunity versus vulnerable Lakers

LOS ANGELES --With leading scorer Devin Booker back from a nearly three-week absence because of a hamstring injury, the Phoenix Suns celebrated Sunday as only they know how.

One of the NBA's highest scoring teams put up a season-best 137 points in Booker's return against the Charlotte Hornets and now will take the league's best record at 24-5 into Los Angeles on Tuesday to face the depleted Lakers.

Booker missed seven games in total, with the Suns still going 5-2 in that stretch. But their 18-game winning streak ended while he was away, with their Dec. 3 streak-busting defeat to the Golden State Warriors marking their first loss in more than a month.

Booker has scored 22.9 points per game on a Suns team that delivers 111.9 per contest, and his 16 points in 26 minutes of his return shows that he still has some rust to consider. He did go 4-of-8 from 3-point range as Phoenix hit a season best 20 3-pointers, went 48.8 percent from distance and was 56.8 percent overall.

"I feel good, man. I'm playing basketball again," Booker said. "It's not easy sitting on that sideline for a substantial amount of time but we have a really good team, and I learned some things and saw some things from the sideline that I tried to implement (Sunday) and I will use moving forward."

Perhaps the Suns can become more of an all-around team as they move past the opening two months of the season. Nine different players scored in double figures against the Hornets, with Javale McGee leading the way off the bench with 19.

McGee is scoring 10.9 points per game, the fourth-highest average of his 14-year career, and he has averaged 12.9 points since Booker first went to the sideline on Dec. 2. He has at least 13 points in five of his last six games.

"The machine keeps moving," Booker said. "Even in the games we've had people out, somebody steps up and jumps right into that (scoring) role."

The Lakers know all too well how the machine keeps moving no matter the player-personnel status. Los Angeles has been ravaged by COVID-19-related absences and also without star Anthony Davis for four weeks because of a knee injury.

The Lakers were even without head coach Frank Vogel in Sunday's 115-110 road loss

to the Chicago Bulls. COVID-19 absences on Sunday also included Kent Bazemore, Malik Monk, Austin Reaves, Avery Bradley, Dwight Howard and Talen Horton-Tucker.

In order to get through the shorthanded stretch, the Lakers signed veteran guard Isaiah Thomas on Friday. By Sunday, he was in the starting lineup and has averaged 16.0 points in his two games in a Lakers uniform.

"We were getting into it

and now something else happened," Davis said. "It's our entire team, though. Like, we started playing well, start getting a rhythm with each other and then all the COVID stuff happened and then more injuries."

After two consecutive defeats, the Lakers are just 16-15 with the new year fast approaching.

"So it's not where we want to be, but we're not in a terrible spot," Davis said.

Pacers hope for good news ahead of matchup vs. Heat

FLORIDA--When the Indiana Pacers visit the Miami Heat on Tuesday night, the medical report will be at least as important as the scouting report.

The Pacers, for example, are expected to get coach Rick Carlisle back after he missed four games due to COVID-19.

In addition, Pacers point guard Malcolm Brogdon missed Indiana's most recent game -- a 122-113 win over the Detroit Pistons on Thursday -- due to a foot injury. Caris LeVert stepped up in that game for the Pacers, scoring a season-high 31 points.

Brogdon leads the Pacers this season in scoring (19.7 points) and assists (6.2), and if he is unable to return on Tuesday, LeVert will become even more important.

"He has a lot of wiggle to his game," Pacers assistant coach Lloyd Pierce said of LeVert, who ranks third on the Pacers in scoring (16.3). "He finds a way to get into the paint."

The Pacers' medical report also includes T.J. McConnell, who was second on the team in assists last season but is out due to a wrist injury; and T.J. Warren, who has been out since early January due to a foot injury.

With those absences, Pacers rookie Chris Duarte has emerged, tying for fourth on the team in scoring (12.9). Among NBA rookies this season, he ranks sixth in scoring.

Inside, the Pacers have a pair of stars in Domantas Sabonis and Myles Turner, both of whom are reportedly on the trading block as Indiana executives ponder a massive rebuild.

Sabonis leads the Pacers in rebounds (11.8) and ranks second in scoring (18.3). Turner leads the team in blocks (2.9) while scoring 12.9 points and grabbing 7.4

rebounds.

The Pacers have split their two games against the Heat so far this season, beating Miami 102-91 in overtime on Oct. 23 before falling in the rematch on Dec. 3, 113-104.

Miami, though, has been severely shorthanded of late as Jimmy Butler, Bam Adebayo, Tyler Herro, Caleb Martin, Markieff Morris and Victor Oladipo all missed Sunday's 100-90 loss at Detroit.

Butler, Adebayo and Herro are Miami's top three scorers, combining to average 61.8 points. Adebayo (thumb surgery) is out another couple of weeks, but the Heat are hoping Herro (quad contusion) and Butler (tailbone) can make it back in time for Tuesday.

Oladipo (knee injury), traded from Indiana to Miami last March, has been out all season. Morris (neck) has been out for weeks, and Martin is on COVID-19 protocol.

Given those absences, a lot has fallen on the shoulders of the Heat's veteran point guard Kyle Lowry, who leads the team in assists (8.2) and ranks fourth in scoring (13.9).

But the Heat have also squeezed production out of unlikely sources such as third-year pros Max Strus and Gabe Vincent.

Strus is averaging a career-best 10.0 points, shooting 58.0 percent on two-pointers and 41.1 percent on threes.

Vincent is averaging a career-best 8.1 points while shooting 54.8 percent on two-pointers and 37.5 percent from distance.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra compared Strus and Vincent to Herro and teammate Duncan Robinson.

"They're ignitable," Spoelstra said. "They hit two 3-pointers, they're immediately thinking three, four and five."

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the express speed of Mark Wood, in an all-seam attack but the move did not really pay off.

The sight of seamer Ollie Robinson bowling off-spin on Sunday perfectly captured the plight of an England side who have looked inferior in all departments of the games.

Captain Joe Root urged them to replicate Buttler's fight to stay alive in the series.

"The Ashes are on the line here, if that is not motivation, I don't know what is," Root said.

"I am extremely proud of the way the guys fought today, that attitude and desire that's how we need to go about a whole test match."

It was Root's 23rd test defeat as captain, the most for an England skipper, while Australia maintained

their perfect pink-ball record by winning their ninth day-night test in as many matches.

For the hosts, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon led their inexperienced bowling attack, while Steve Smith smashed 93 in the first innings, took some sharp catches in the slip, and adroitly marshalled his bowlers to lead them to victory.

Replacing Hazlewood in the playing XI, Jhye Richardson gave a good account of himself claiming 5-42 in England's second innings.

Cummins and Hazlewood will be back for the Boxing Day test in Melbourne and Smith ruled out taking their foot off the pedal.

"England are a good side and we have not really let them back into the contest yet. That's how we want to keep it," he said.



Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr. File photo. (Mark J. Rebilas-USA TODAY Sports.)

Kerr named head coach of U.S. men's basketball national team

CALIFORNIA-- The Golden State Warriors' Steve Kerr has been named head coach for the United States men's basketball team and will lead them as they look to defend their Olympic gold medal at the 2024 Games in Paris.

Kerr has won eight NBA championships as a player and a coach and was assistant coach on the most recent USA staff.

"I'm incredibly honored and humbled to represent our country as the head coach for the USA basketball men's national team," Kerr said.

"It's a thrilling opportunity and I'm excited for the challenge."

Gonzaga University head

coach Mark Few, Miami Heat head coach Erik Spoelstra and Phoenix Suns head coach Monty Williams will complete the 2022-24 U.S. national team coaching staff as assistant coaches.

"I'm also beyond excited to work with three coaches I have enormous respect for in Erik Spoelstra, Monty Williams and Mark Few," Kerr said.

"Coaching the USA Men's National Team comes with great responsibility -- one that calls for a group effort with a team of coaches committed to the team, to the goal and to each other -- and I couldn't ask for a finer group of high character individuals to help me

lead our national team.

"Our goal, of course, is to win and make our country proud. We will work hard to do so."

The U.S. men have won four consecutive Olympic gold medals (2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020) and have claimed FIBA World Cup championships in two of the past three competitions (2010, 2014).

Since first fielding the "Dream Team" NBA stars in 1992, U.S. men's teams have claimed gold medals in 15 of 19 major FIBA basketball competitions, while compiling a 146-10 overall record (.936 winning percentage) in those competitions.

Falcons drawing the line at performance up front

ATLANTA--In Arthur Smith's eyes, the Atlanta Falcons' game against the San Francisco 49ers Sunday was lost in the trenches.

En route to a 31-13 victory, the host 49ers sacked Matt Ryan three times and hit him 10 times while recording two tackles for loss and limiting Atlanta to 68 rushing yards, its lowest total in a month.

Whether it was run blocking or pass protection, the Falcons' offensive line had to answer for a subpar performance.

"Certainly we felt in the last couple weeks we had been playing better," Smith said Monday, citing the Falcons' Week 14 victory over the Panthers. "I thought we went up there and played pretty well, especially up front. It was kind of the polar opposite this week. You look at going up to Carolina, I thought we played really well on both sides of the line of scrimmage. Go out to San Francisco, or Santa Clara, and they got after us on both sides of the line of scrimmage."

"We've made progress. Certainly (Sunday) wasn't what we wanted. We'll continue to work at, continue to look at every option on the table."

The Falcons tried to use more play-action to get dual-threat playmaker Cordarrelle Patterson involved, but it was in vain. Patterson was held to 18 rushing yards on 11 attempts along with two receptions for 5 yards.

According to ESPN Stats and Info, Patterson was hit behind the line of scrimmage on seven of his 11 runs Sunday.

"When he's back there at

running back, whether you had Eric Dickerson or Walter Payton back there, you're getting hit in the backfield," Smith said. "Maybe Barry Sanders could make three guys miss back there, but that's just stating the obvious there."

"It's one thing after another. That's what the game came down to, inside on the line of scrimmage, and credit to them. They had a say. We felt we'd been playing better. That's the consistency you gotta bring in the NFL. That's why you see all these crazy scores week in and week out. It's the hardest thing to do, to sustain that level of play. But I have all the confidence in our guys that we'll bounce back this week. They did a nice job, San Fran did, on both sides."

The Falcons' loss knocked them down to 6-8 and on the outside looking in at a crowded NFC wild-card hunt.

The 49ers moved into the conference's No. 6 seed by beating Atlanta, while NFC South rival New Orleans Saints occupied the seventh and final playoff spot at 7-7 after a 9-0 win over the Buccaneers later Sunday night. Atlanta also has to contend with the Minnesota Vikings, who were 6-7 entering Mon-

day night's game, as well as the Washington Football Team and Philadelphia Eagles, both 6-7 before they were set to face off Tuesday.

Still, Ryan said after Sunday's game that Atlanta had to hold up its end of the bargain and not worry about the external requirements to qualify for the postseason.

"So you're saying there's a chance?" he said. "Isn't that the old movie line or whatever?"

Like Ryan, Smith has seen crazy things happen in his time in the NFL. His team is home Sunday, presented with a supposedly cupcake opponent next week in the 2-11-1 Detroit Lions, but the Falcons are just 1-5 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium this season. And the Lions are coming off a victory over the NFC West-leading Arizona Cardinals.

"Those things can snowball you and we've got to do something to change that narrative, certainly," Smith said. "The most important thing, whether we were playing in Atlanta, Detroit, Barcelona, Cabo, we've got to get ready to play a good team and go out there and execute and play better up front."

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capped a 56-yard march.

Meanwhile, Cleveland's offense didn't even cross midfield until 21 seconds remained in the half. The Browns used a pass interference flag on the next play to get in position for a 47-yard field-goal try that

Chase McLaughlin hit.

But Raiders interim coach Rich Bisaccia canceled out the make with a time-out just before the snap. McLaughlin's second shot from 47 drifted wide right, leaving the score 10-0 at intermission.

NBA-worst Pistons hope to build on win versus struggling Knicks

NEW YORK--Playing against their former team Saturday night apparently sparked the struggling New York Knicks' duo of Evan Fournier and Kemba Walker.

But if the Knicks are going to begin climbing back into the Eastern Conference playoff race, they'll probably need Fournier and Walker to continue their surges Tuesday night when New York hosts the Detroit Pistons.

Both teams head into the game in extended swoons, though the Pistons snapped a 14-game losing streak Sunday night by beating the visiting Miami

Heat 100-90.

The Knicks lost for the eighth time in 10 games Saturday, when they overcame a 15-point halftime deficit to carry a two-point lead into the fourth quarter before falling to the host Celtics 114-107.

Fournier -- 32 points, tying the season high he set against the Celtics in the season opener Oct. 20 -- and Walker (season-high 29 points) combined to score more than half the points Saturday for the Knicks. They were especially prolific in the third quarter, when Walker scored 17 and Fournier added 11 as New York out-

scored Boston 41-24.

"We fell short and couldn't come out with the win, which is the most important thing," Walker said.

Such performances were what the Knicks had in mind when they traded for Fournier, who finished 2020-21 with the Celtics following a trade from the Orlando Magic, and signed Walker, who played the last two years in Boston, as part of a summertime shopping spree intended to help New York take another step following last season's surprising trip to the playoffs.

But the season hasn't gone

as anticipated for anyone in New York. The Knicks have gone 8-16 since a 5-1 start to fall into 12th place in the Eastern Conference. Fournier has been held to less than 10 points 12 times in 30 games while seeing his minutes reduced.

And Walker was a healthy scratch the previous nine games before Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau -- overseeing a roster missing six players due to COVID-19 protocols as well as Derrick Rose (ankle) -- had no choice but to put him back in the lineup Saturday.

"When you're watching, you don't really (know) how much (of) an impact it

has on you sitting so long with rhythm and confidence," Fournier said. "It was good to see Kemba smiling again."

The Pistons, who have the worst record in the NBA at 5-24, finally got to smile Sunday after ending what was tied for the longest losing streak in franchise history Detroit also suffered 14 straight losses during the 1979-80 and 1993-94 seasons.

Saddiq Bey scored 26 points Sunday as the youthful Pistons -- who suffered seven losses in their skid by 10 points or less -- were able to close out the Heat, who got within five points

in the fourth quarter.

The 22-year-old Bey qualifies as an elder statesman in a starting lineup Sunday that featured three 20-year-olds -- 2021 No. 1 pick Cade Cunningham as well as Isaiah Stewart and Killian Hayes -- and 23-year-old Hamidou Diallo.

"(The losing) bothers you, but that's not what this season is about," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "I'm not caught up in 14 straight. I'm caught up in these guys growing and developing. Sooner or later, all this stuff is going to click."



Fifa President Gianni Infantino.

Infantino says he has majority backing for biennial World Cup

SWITZERLAND-- FIFA president Gianni Infantino believes he has majority backing for his biennial World Cup plan, after national football leaders were told the switch would create an extra \$4.4 billion in revenues for the world body.

FIFA held a 'global summit' of leaders of national football federations to discuss its proposal to increase the frequency of the World Cup from every four years to two.

The financial data forms part of an overall feasibility study, of which FIFA presented a summary on Monday with a full 700-page report set to be published.

The upbeat findings are in marked contrast to analysis put forward by critics of the proposals.

There has been opposition from European clubs, the top leagues and European governing body UEFA, whose president Aleksander Ceferin has threatened to boycott any additional tournament.

No vote is yet scheduled for the plan, but Infantino said a majority was in place for the idea but it needed to be dealt with as part of the broader overhaul of the international match calendar.

"If I was going to a vote tomorrow probably the majority would vote in favour of a World Cup every two years," Infantino told a news conference after the summit.

"But it is not the topic, we are looking at the entire calendar and how we can make football better and how many we can bring on board with a new way of organising the future in football," he added.

'Open And Flexible'

Infantino would not state when any vote would be held or whether it would be on the agenda at the FIFA congress in Doha on March 31.

"It is about getting the right decisions for football at the end of the day and we will take the time that it takes, to come to this decision. I will not commit to anything at the congress. Everything is open and flexible," he said.

"We continue the dialogue, the analysis, we hope we can make progress, one way or the other, or some middle way, we will see," he said.

One compromise solution has been floated by CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani, who heads the confederation for North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Montagliani told Reuters earlier this month that an additional tournament could be a revamped version of the old Confederations Cup rather than a full World Cup with a separate qualifying process.

Last month, a report commissioned by the World Leagues Forum said the FIFA proposal, allied with changes to the Club World Cup could cost the big domestic soccer leagues and UEFA around 8 billion euros (\$9 billion) per season in lost TV rights and match day and commercial agreements.

UEFA, on Friday, published a report which it had commissioned from consultancy firm Oliver & Ohlbaum which warned that the changes to the international calendar would see revenues for European national federations drop between 2.5 and 3 billion euros (\$3.38

billion) over a four-year cycle.

'Opposition Based On Fear'

The delegates at Monday's summit were told that a report by Italian company Open Economics had found that the revenues of domestic leagues and UEFA competitions were not hurt by national team and international club competitions.

A report from Nielsen predicted that the biennial World Cup plan would see revenues rise from an expected \$7 billion - for a 48-team tournament - to \$11.4 billion over a four-year cycle thanks to increased ticket receipts and media rights and sponsorship revenues.

FIFA officials told the delegates that \$3.5 billion of the extra revenue would go to a new 'Member Association Solidarity Fund' with each national federation allocated around \$16 million in a four-year period, while extra funds would also be given to the FIFA Forward Program for development projects.

FIFA said that the funds would help reduce the gap in revenues between the developed and less developed football markets.

Along with UEFA, South American confederation CONMEBOL has opposed the proposal.

Arsene Wenger, FIFA's head of Global Football Development said he hoped the debate would change in the coming weeks.

"We face opposition but what I regret is that 90% of this opposition is emotion and not facts and not analysis, we have to get over this fear because most of the emotions that we face are based on fear," he said.

Premier League to plough through festive schedule despite COVID surge

ENGLAND - Premier League clubs have agreed to continue playing games scheduled over the festive period despite several fixtures being postponed due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the league announced after a meeting between all teams on Monday.

Ten Premier League games have been postponed this month due to outbreaks amid a busy schedule where teams are set to play three times between Boxing Day and Jan. 3.

The Premier League released a statement shortly after the meeting saying that a record 90 new COVID-19 cases were detected among players and staff in the past week, a significant increase from its total of 42 in the previous round on Dec. 6-12.

"The safety of everybody is a priority and the Premier League is taking all precautionary steps in light of the recent rise in COVID-19 cases across the country," the league said in a statement.

Only four of the weekend's 10 fixtures were played after teams told the Premier League they were missing players due to COVID-19.

The Premier League only grants a postponement if a club has fewer than 14 players available, with the board examining requests on a case-by-case basis.

"While recognising a number of clubs are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and challenges, it is the league's collective intention to continue the current fixture schedule where safely possible," the Premier League said.

"A range of issues were discussed at this afternoon's meeting, including the adaptation of the Premier League COVID-19 postponement process in response to the impact of the Omicron variant.

"The league also confirmed to its clubs today that 92% of players and club staff have received one, two or three COVID-19 vaccination doses, with 84% of players on the vaccination journey."

Fa Cup Replays Scrapped

England's Football Association (FA) said FA Cup replays in rounds three and four have been scrapped to

help clear the fixture backlog after several postponements.

"Ties in the third and fourth rounds of this season's competition will be played to a finish on the day, with extra-time and penalties if required," the FA said.

However, the English Football League (EFL), which also organises the League Cup, said its fixtures will be played as scheduled.

League Cup semi-finals are played over two legs in January. The competition's quarter-final matches -- with seven Premier League teams in action -- are set to be played this week.

"While the League acknowledges there will likely be future postponements to

navigate where COVID-19 cases are identified, there is optimism that disruption can be minimised following implementation of RED protocols, a daily testing regime and ongoing vaccination rollout," the EFL said.

EFL Chief Executive Trevor Birch said: "We will continue to work with clubs, authorities and other agencies to monitor the COVID-19 case rate and be prepared to respond accordingly."

"For now the view remains that we can continue to deliver games safely where clubs have sufficient healthy personnel in place, on and off the pitch."

The EFL had 19 games across its divisions postponed last weekend due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

Hernandez thinks Sevilla should serve as example to Barcelona

SPAIN - Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez wants his team to be aggressive and fearless as they face second placed Sevilla in LaLiga on Tuesday, while also showing great respect and admiration for their rivals.

"They are doing things very well," Xavi told a news conference on Monday.

"You can look at Bayern (Munich), they are playing great, but I what I like about Sevilla is how they work, their coach (Julen Lopetegui) is one of the best, they also have Monchi (sports director). Sevilla should be an example for us."

In a match postponed from week four, Barcelona will have a difficult task to stop a Sevilla side who are in great form, having lost only two league games so far this season. Their 2-1 win over Atletico Madrid on Sunday kept them within six points of LaLiga leaders Real Madrid with one game in hand.

"We have to be daring to beat teams like Sevilla. We were daring against Bayern and lost 3-0 because of details. We won't change that, it's in our identity to be aggressive but Sevilla is also like that. It will be an extraordi-

nary match on Tuesday," Xavi said.

Barcelona are seventh in the standings, 16 points behind Real Madrid. However, Sevilla manager Julen Lopetegui said that he is seeing progression at the Nou Camp since the arrival of Xavi a month ago.

"We had a tough game on Saturday and now will have a tougher one against a much improved rival," Lopetegui told a news conference on Monday. "What I see is one of the best Barcelona in a long time. They are developing types of players that are difficult to see, young and talented, plus they have Ousmane Dembele back from injury."

"I expect a very powerful, very complex Barcelona, with the clear touch that Xavi has given to them."

Sevilla have some injury concerns, however, with their training session on Monday including only 15 players from the first team.

Lucas Ocampos, Diego Carlos, Marcos Acuna and Gonzalo Montiel all left the match against Atletico injured and are a doubt to face Barcelona. Jesus Navas and Erik Lamela are out but Youssef En-Nesyri could be back after missing several weeks.

SPORTS ARENA

Inter looking to see out memorable 2021 in style

ITALY- - Inter Milan will look to go out with a bang in the Italian top flight's final round of fixtures before the winter break this week after a year to remember for Simone Inzaghi's Serie A table toppers.

Inter lifted their first Scudetto in 11 years in May, finishing 12 points ahead of rivals AC Milan in second.

After losing key figures in that title success during the close season - coach Antonio Conte, top goalscorer Romelu Lukaku and flying fullback Achraf Hakimi - things did not start well this term, with Inter playing catch up until recent weeks.

They have found top gear

again, however, to sit top of the standings by four points. Inter were crowned winter champions, too, following their sixth successive league win, at Salernitana on Friday, and Milan's loss to Napoli on Sunday.

Friday's 5-0 success took Inter to 100 goals in a calendar year for the first time in their Serie A history, with Torino their final opponent of a successful 2021 on Wednesday.

By their high standards, Juventus's 2021 has been nothing short of woeful.

Looking to make it 10 successive league titles last season, rookie coach Andrea Pirlo could only steer Juve to fourth position - a return that

cost him his job.

Massimiliano Allegri returned to save the day in the close season, taking charge of the Turin club for the second time, but he has fared even worse, with Juve languishing down in seventh ahead of Tuesday's clash with Cagliari.

Allegri is fully aware he has it all to do to turn things around.

"We have to win tomorrow and then see where we can get," Allegri told a news conference on Monday. "On February 28, we'll know if we are in the race for the top four. There's a lot of work to do over the next two months."

Milan are again looking likely to be one of Inter's main title challengers, but Stefano Pioli's side, who went unbeaten in their opening 12 league matches of the season, have stuttered of late, losing three of their last six league games.

Empoli are Milan's final opponent before the winter break on Wednesday and will be no pushovers, having already beaten Juve and Napoli this season.

Napoli's 1-0 win in the San Siro on Sunday saw them climb above Milan to sit second on goal difference. They too went unbeaten in their opening 12 league games before falling away. Victory over Spezia on Wednesday will keep them in the title hunt.

Fourth-placed Atalanta's six-game Serie A winning streak was ended by AS Roma on Sunday, meaning they cannot afford more dropped points at Genoa on Tuesday if they are to keep Inter in their sights.



Las Vegas Raiders wide receiver Bryan Edwards (89) makes a touchdown reception in the end zone against Cleveland Browns cornerback Denzel Ward (21) during the first quarter at FirstEnergy Stadium in Ohio. Raiders won 16-14. (Scott Galvin-USA TODAY Sports.)

Raiders hit last-second FG to rally past undermanned Browns 16-14

OHIO--Daniel Carlson connected on a 48-yard field goal Monday as time expired, lifting the visiting Las Vegas Raiders to a 16-14 win over the short-handed Cleveland Browns.

It was the third field goal of the game for Carlson, who hit from 40 14 seconds into the fourth quarter for a 13-7 edge. But the Browns (7-7) took their first lead of the game when Nick Mullens threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Harrison Bryant with 3:45 left.

Cleveland had a chance to wrap up the game after Greedy Williams intercept-

ed Derek Carr with 2:47 remaining, but couldn't gain a first down and had to punt. Carr led a 41-yard drive in the final 1:50, finding Zay Jones for a 15-yard gain to put Carlson in range for his 31st field goal in 34 attempts this year.

Carr finished 25 of 38 for 236 yards with a touchdown and an interception for Las Vegas (7-7), which stayed in contention for an AFC wild-card spot.

Mullens, starting because Baker Mayfield and Case Keenum were two of 18 Browns inactive due to COVID-19, hit on 20 of

30 passes for 147 yards with a score. Cleveland (7-7) missed on a chance to take first place in the AFC North.

Las Vegas opened the scoring with an impressive first drive. The Raiders overcame a pair of holding penalties to drive 58 yards in just over seven minutes, Carr finding Bryan Edwards on a fade pattern from the 5 with 3:41 left in the first quarter.

Carlson upped Las Vegas' lead to 10-0 with 56 seconds remaining in the half with a 24-yard field goal that

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Lawsuit challenges MLB's antitrust status

WASHINGTON--Four minor league baseball clubs are swinging for the fences in a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court on Monday.

The suit challenges Major League Baseball's ability to operate as a legalized monopoly.

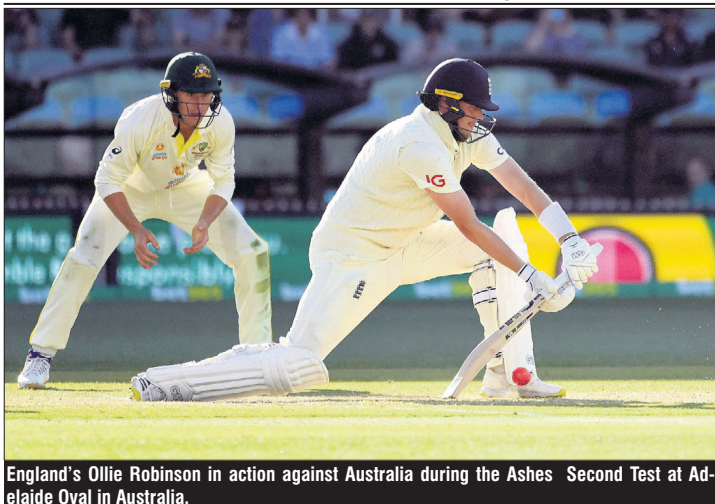
Filed in conjunction between the Staten Island Yankees, Tri-City Valley Cats, Norwich Sea Unicorns and Salem-Keizer Volcanoes, the suit takes aim MLB's ability to avoid operating under the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.

Passed by Congress, the Sherman Act prevents anticompetitive agreements and monopolies on markets. MLB has been immune from

the legislation since 1922 when it was determined that it did not operate as interstate commerce and was therefore not subject to restrictions, despite having teams across the country that cross state lines in order to play each other.

The minor league teams filing suit against "the office of the commissioner of baseball" are four of 40 that lost their MLB-affiliated status in an overhaul of the minor leagues in 2020.

The 33-page complaint says that MLB clubs "collectively decided" to eliminate minor league teams that have long been used to develop baseball talent.



England's Ollie Robinson in action against Australia during the Ashes Second Test at Adelaide Oval in Australia.

Australia remain pink perfect, England lose Ashes plot again

ADELAIDE- - England have not won an Ashes series in Australia since 2010-11, and their decade of drought Down Under is almost certain to continue after Joe Root's team slipped 2-0 behind their nemesis on Monday.

Unlike in the series opener in Brisbane, England managed to take the day-night second test to its final day, but the nature of their 275-run defeat was equally

deflating.

It came against an Australia side depleted by the absence of regular skipper Pat Cummins, withdrawn hours before the match for being a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case, and the injured Josh Hazlewood.

England's second successive loss was a matter of when and not if after Australia set them an improbable victory target of 468 and made early dents with

the pink ball.

Jos Buttler, who dropped catches behind the stumps, tried to redeem himself with a dogged 26 off 207 balls in an obdurate rearguard spread over more than four hours, but could not gloss over England's batting frailties as they folded for 192.

England brought back veterans James Anderson and Stuart Broad, sacrificing *Continued on page 37*