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VOL 31 NO. 154

Wednesday, December 22, 2021

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## Ministry of Justice Function Book established by National Decree

PHILIPSBURG--Governor Eugene Holiday and Minister of Justice Anna Richardson have approved and signed the National Decree containing the General Measures, thereby establishing the completed Function Book. The signing took place on Monday, December 20.

The legal position "Rechtspositie Regeling" KPSM (St. Maarten

Police Force), amendments to the Police Ordinance ("Politie Landsverordening"), the Organisation decree for the Justice Ministry ("Organisatie besluit Justitie") and several decrees relating to the Immigration and Border Protection Services have all been completed and are on the legislative route. The focus will now be geared towards the completion

of the "Rechtspositie regelingen" (Legal status of regulations) and the new salary tables ("Bezoldigingsbesluit"), Richardson said.

According to Richardson, the newly-approved and -established Function Book will be seeing some updates in the foreseeable future as departments such as the Court of Guardianship, Judicial Institutes of St. Maarten SJIB, Miss Lalie Center (MLC), and the Law Enforcement Institute of St. Maarten, formerly known as the Justice Academy, require an update to the National Ordinance on the Organisation of Government LIOL incorporating them and thereby must first be approved by the Parliament of St. Maarten.

"The steps are underway for this process to be completed," Richardson said.

The date 12-20-21 marks a monumental day for the Ministry of Justice, the personnel of this ministry and, by extension, the people of St. Maarten, Richardson said. "Technical staff and monitoring bodies engaged in a very meticu-



Minister of Justice Anna Richardson signed the National Decree establishing the Function Book on December 20, calling it a monumental day.

lous process to ensure that the proper legislative process was carried out for the long-overdue Function Book of the Ministry of Justice.

"From the onset, I had taken a firm position that this process would be done the correct way to ensure the Function Book for the Ministry of Justice would be legally established, eliminating any further inconsistencies, stag-

Continued on page 8

## Licence plates to be phased out, pilot of stickers with QR code being tested

PHILIPSBURG--Motor vehicle owners will no longer be required to change their licence plates annually in the future, as plans are in the pipeline to phase out plates and replace them with stickers equipped with QR codes that can be scanned to determine whether motorists are up to date with their motor vehicle tax payments.

Currently, government has begun a pilot programme to eliminate the need to renew licence plates annually, Finance Minister Ardwell Irion informed Parliament recently. He was responding at the time to questions from a member of parliament (MP) who asked, during the draft 2022

budget debate, about the phasing out of licence plates in 2023; whether it is budgeted and what the savings will be.

Irion said the Ministry has already engaged with one of its major stakeholders in the justice system for feedback on the pilot

Continued on page 7

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**IN BRIEF**

- **Philipsburg NABP EXPLAINS**  
Police union NABP St. Maarten says there has been no agreement from the union on the approved function books for justice system workers. Page 3.
- **Philipsburg ARMED THIEF SHOT IN LEG**  
A police officer shot a robbery suspect in the leg in the night from Monday to Tuesday. The officer then managed to handcuff the man, who was armed. Page 8.
- **Philipsburg BUSINESSES CAN OPEN**  
Businesses in the country can open their doors to serve customers on December 25, Christmas Day, and on January 1, New Year's Day. Page 4.

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# NAPB explains disagreement with approved function books

PHILIPSBURG--Police union NAPB St. Maarten says there has been no agreement from the union on the approved function books for justice system workers.

"The board of the NAPB wants to make it emphatically clear that neither the membership of the NAPB nor the board of the NAPB has approved the latest version of the function books," the union said in a press statement on Tuesday.

"NAPB has not signed off with this Minister of Justice or the Minister of General Affairs on any function book as part of a covenant or part of a collective labour agreement."

NAPB said that there had been intentions to involve union representatives in the process of reviewing the function books in the Committee of Civil Servants Unions (CCSU) but it was only allowed to participate as "observer".

"As observer, we have fol-

lowed all meetings held by this consultative body reviewing the function books. The advice prepared by the CCSU was very critical," said the union.

NAPB said that at no time had CCSU and the minister reached a consensus for the minister to continue. "The minister was advised to take all the legislative concerns of the union representatives in the CCSU into account prior to resubmitting her request to the CCSU," NAPB said. It said the Minister had never resubmitted an amended version of the function book to the CCSU. "In other words, no consensus was reached with the CCSU members."

"What happened to the controversial issues pointed out by the union representatives in the CCSU?" they asked.

The unions said there are decisions that are in conflict with established legislation, such as article four of the National Ord-

nance on the Organisation of Government LIOL, all legislation regulating the range of justice personnel, all legislation regulating the Reporting Center for Unusual Transactions MOT, legislation regulating the functioning of the National Detectives and legislation regulating the functioning of the St. Maarten Police Force KPSM.

They added that legal advice of the Legal Affairs Department was missing, "which is considered critical when proposing amendments that deviate from established legislation."

"The proposed amendments to reduce previously-agreed-on fees are not in accordance with the conditions of the country package of December 2020, the Plan of Approach Strengthening Border Control 2018, and recommendations of the Progress Committee of 2019-2020," NAPB added.

The union further stated that the draft National

Decree containing general measures (Landsbesluit Houdeinde algemene maatregelen LB HAM) contains information that is not in accordance with the proposed formation in the respective formation plans submitted. These differences result in a financial paragraph containing an inaccurate financial analysis.

"The intention of the Minister of Justice to centralise the 'bedrijfsvoering' of Justice, in doing so make 33 Justice employees 'boven formatief'. This is contrary to legislations of all justice departments (with the exception of Justitie Zaken and Stafbureau), which clearly indicate that by law all departments within Justice have their own 'bedrijfsvoering' that handles sensitive information," the union pointed out.

"In her answer to the CCSU the Minister of Justice did not ask the CCSU for further clarification or elucidation, but informed the CCSU that she would proceed to send the function books to the Advisory Council," the union said in its statement. "In other words, neither the unions represented in the CCSU, nor the police union has given their approval to the function books version the minister sent to the Advisory Council.

"If the function books approved yesterday are the version which the CCSU members have criticised, how can the minister thank the unions, where NAPB for sure did not have any agreement with the minister on the function books, which has to regulate the legal position of its members in the justice system?" the union asked.

NAPB said there had been several instances of discriminatory treatment

of police officers regarding overtime allowance, the salary scales and the promotion policy for police officers.

It also noted the lack of a cost-of-living allowance since 2011 and lack of clarity on the budget and what it could mean for members of KPSM.

"On top of that the minister started to talk publicly about incorrect police action and police brutality, which is not boosting the motivation and the morale of police officers," said the union.

The union stated that every union as well as the NAPB has the right to collective bargaining. "The right to collective bargaining is the right to negotiate collective labour agreements for its members," it stated.

"The Minister of Justice still denies the right to collective bargaining to the NAPB. Where in the Netherlands police unions negotiate collective labour agreements for their members, in St. Maarten this is still not the case.

"In St. Maarten the CCSU is still the consultative body which addresses all changes in the legal position of civil servants, also of the police. NAPB has demanded that, just as in the Netherlands the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Collective Bargaining C154 already resulted in collective labour agreements negotiated by the police unions with the Minister of Justice, the Chief of Police, this also should be happening in St. Maarten.

"In conclusion, based on the 'statement of assent' that was exposed on social media, we, the board of the NAPB, would like to explain that these signatures were pertaining to the change of the number of FTEs [Full Time Equivalents - Ed.] on the formation plan and not for the Function Book that was never seen. This, according to us, is not good governance and shows a lack of integrity," the union concluded.

## Fire Commander gives advice on fire safety during holiday season

PHILIPSBURG--Disaster Coordinator and Fire Commander Clive Richardson stressed that fire safety is important during the holiday season as families come together to celebrate. "Place Christmas trees at least 3 ft. from any heat source."

Richardson pointed out that there are a number of simple precautionary measures that households can put in place to prevent home fires in order to avoid injury to persons or damage to homes while members of the family and friends remain safe enjoying the holiday season.

Typical holiday season fires result from the Christmas trees, candles, and unattended cooking, he said. The Fire Commander advises to hydrate the Christmas trees on a regular basis, as trees should

have fresh green needles, and dispose of them safely within four weeks of setting them up. "Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn. Preferably, choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant."

Richardson recommended replacing any string lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. "Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Use clips, not nails to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.

Turn off all string lights be-

fore leaving home or going to bed, he said. "And blow out lit candles when leaving the room." Richardson warns against burning Christmas tree branches or wrapping paper, and said to keep children and pets away from lit candles. "Stay in the kitchen while cooking on the stovetop, and test your smoke alarms if you have one in your home," the Fire Commander said.

The Fire Department management and staff wishes everyone a happy, safe, and fire-free holiday season. In the event of an emergency, call 919.

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Motorworld Representatives including Managing Director Tariq Amjad and CEO Rena Amjad with Miss Lalie Youth Care and Rehabilitation Center representatives and the donated items.

## Motorworld donates Christmas baskets to Miss Lalie Center

COLE BAY--Motorworld's management and staff continued their annual tradition by coming together to give back to the community this holiday season.

The company donated a number of items including Christmas baskets to the Miss Lalie Youth Care and Rehabilitation Center. The Christmas baskets contain items such as hygiene products, snacks, cookies and cider. A mix of perishable and non-perishable goods were also donated to the Miss Lalie Youth Care and Rehabilitation Center to help the centre prepare its Christmas dinner. Each member of staff also received a ham and chicken as a show of appreciation for their hard work with the residents. Representatives

of Motorworld visited the centre to surprise the residents and staff and present them with their Christmas baskets and goods.

"The boys had a great time when you all arrived, and the staff was very grateful to the donation because they had no idea that this was possible in these hard times. We would like to wish a sincere thank you to Motorworld and all of your colleagues," said Miss Lalie Center manager, Rikson Martina.

The centre opened in 2011 and is currently home to eleven young boys. Supported by its twelve staff members, the goal of the centre is to correct, educate, guide and offer perspective to the young men. It serves as a safe space where they

can work positively towards self-improvement. "I would like to applaud the entire company for always going out of their way and contributing towards this very special event. We strongly believe that sharing is caring," says Motorworld Representative Annesa Dwarka.

## SNSM sea rescue volunteers victim of another false alarm

MARIGOT--French-side sea rescue service SNSM fell victim to another distress beacon set off apparently by accident on Sunday evening after responding to what normally is an emergency.

An Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) was triggered at sea some 8.4 nautical miles east of Tintamarre Island. Regional Operational Centre for Surveillance and Rescue - Antilles-Guyane (CROSS-AG) based in Martinique first launched a "mayday relay" on Channel 16 at 7:20pm asking vessels in transit between St. Martin and St. Barthélemy to divert to the position.

There were not many people at sea, given the weather conditions, and only one skipper, on a catamaran, replied that he was willing to divert to the announced position. He was far away and his estimated time of arrival (ETA) was more than an hour and a half. CROSS asked him to head towards

the area anyway.

CROSS then contacted the SNSM station in St. Martin at 7:58pm to provide assistance. A team of seven volunteer rescue crew members prepared the SNS 129 boat and left Fort Louis Marina at 8:42pm in search of the beacon.

There was no additional information; CROSS only knew that it was an American beacon but did not have any information on the name of the boat or who it belonged to. It only transmitted its position once (at 7:12p) and nothing else since.

The sea was rough with 2.50- to 3.50-metre waves, and a lot of wind (21-29 knots). Fortunately, there was a full moon which, in spite of many clouds and some rainy squalls, helped to light up the water.

SNS 129 proceeded slowly towards the given position, with the bow facing the wind and the waves, and arrived in the area at 10:33pm, just before the catamaran which

had diverted. There was absolutely nothing to report on the spot: no sign of life, no raft, no people in the water, no light, no debris, no floating beacon.

The SNS 129 crew scanned with their thermal binoculars; and the Gonio was switched on to detect a possible signal from a beacon; but after turning for 20 minutes without any other clues, the SNS 129 and the catamaran received from CROSS freedom to return to their respective harbours (Marigot for the SNS 129 and Gustavia for the catamaran).

The SNSM station of St. Martin gave this reminder to all mariners: "If ever your beacon is accidentally triggered, you can turn it off. But you must immediately contact CROSS to say that it is an accidental triggering and that there is no urgent distress."

"Please do this even if you think you stopped it immediately when it went off without having had time to transmit its position. It is better to warn for nothing, rather than to turn it off without saying anything as this may cause a rescue to be launched by SNSM or other kind sailors, who end up searching for hours for nothing."

SNSM thanked the skipper of the catamaran for being willing to participate in this search in the open sea, far from the coast, despite the bad weather conditions.

## Businesses can open on Christmas, New Year's

PHILIPSBURG--Businesses in the country can open their doors to serve customers on December 25, Christmas Day, and on January 1, New Year's Day.

Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication (TE-

ATT) Roger Lawrence said on Tuesday that in an effort to promote economic activity during "these extraordinary times," businesses will be permitted to open to the public on Christmas Day, December 25, and New Year's Day, January 1.

Businesses that choose to open on these days must adhere strictly to the stipulations on the relevant business and operational licences as well as all applicable labour regulations, Lawrence said in a press statement.



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# Integrity CBCS' payments system 'not compromised'

PHILIPSBURG--The Central Bank for Curaçao and St. Maarten (CBCS) recently received the final report on the forensic investigation conducted in response to the cyberattack on its IT-environment, finding that the integrity of the payments system was not compromised.

Furthermore, no information systems of any of the supervised institutions were affected by the attack, nor did the CBCS incur any data loss, it was stated in a press release.

On Thursday, September 2, CBCS was alerted by INTERPOL of a possible cyberattack on its IT environment. In response, an incident response team was immediately established and a forensic investigation was launched, focusing primarily on safeguarding the integrity of the CBCS's payments system. A preliminary analysis had already found that the payments system had not

been compromised, which has now been confirmed.

Following the Interpol alert, the expert team, consisting of the CBCS' ICT team and local and international experts, took immediate measures to restore data and network security on the Bank's systems. During the investigation, evidence of the breach was found on the CBCS's corporate network. The corporate network was cleaned up and the attack was foiled. Thanks to the effective intervention of the expert team. For security reasons, the CBCS does not make any substantive announcements about the (cyber)security and mitigation measures taken.

Hackers succeeded in gaining access to the CBCS' network in spite of the fact that the Bank's cyber security is set up along the lines of best international practices and that continuous investigations are being made in that area. "This has been an eye-

opening incident from which lessons must be drawn for ourselves, in the first place. But it should also serve as a wake-up call for others. Multiple exchanges have therefore been held with the Information Risk departments of local financial institutions to share our experiences," said CBCS President Richard Doornbosch.

CBCS has been in touch with financial institutions and other stakeholders at various times and is keeping them directly informed of any relevant developments. The Ministers of Finance of both countries were also briefed, in strict confidentiality, on the incident as it was developing, as well as on the results of the forensic investigation.

The CBCS considers its cyber security an internal matter and will not be communicating further on the subject in the media, CBCS said in a press release.

## Licence plates to be phased out

Continued from page 1.

programme and positive feedback was given. By July 2022 the Ministry will have sufficient data to confirm whether the pilot project will be ready for 2023.

Irion said now that the payment of motor vehicle tax has been placed online, which he hopes everyone makes use of, the ministry was looking at what the next step would be. Given that there had been longstanding complaints in the community about the annual changing of number plates, this was looked at.

"What we did was we took advantage of the current technology, so the DCC [Digital COVID Certificate technology - Ed.] from COVID, the whole QR Code concept - we took that concept and we built upon that," Irion said. "We currently have an app built for the Ministry of Finance. ... It says official road tax app," he said, adding that the app is now in the BETA phase.

"We had a meeting ... with the Justice Ministry regarding this app and how we can use it with the Justice Ministry," Irion said, adding that 10 police officers will be able to use the app to control vehicles in the pilot phase.

For the pilot, a special

sticker will be placed on 50 government vehicles. Ten fake stickers will also be placed on other vehicles. The size of the stickers has been reduced (compared to the stickers used in 2020). The stickers have a QR code on them. During a two-month trial period, officers will control the vehicles and scan them using the app. Information on the vehicle and its owner as well as information on whether the motor vehicle tax has been paid will immediately pop up when the vehicle is scanned.

This new method is a more effective form of control and it would mean that police officers will then be able to spend more time doing other things that need their attention. "Controlling the motor vehicle tax payments can be done more efficiently with this method."

The ministry is looking into updating the software in the cameras on the public roadways to be able to read the QR codes on the stickers when a vehicle is being operated. When the QR code is read, information on the vehicle will pop up in the system and will indicate whether or not a vehicle is up to date with its road tax payment.

The system can also be set to automatically send an email to the vehicle owner informing them that they are not up to date with their motor vehicle tax payment. Another feature that can be enabled is for the same message to be sent to the motor vehicle owner's WhatsApp number.

It was suggested during the recent meeting with the Justice Ministry that the colour of the stickers be changed annually to facilitate easier controls.



After being sworn in as members, new Rotarians Natalie Humphrey (middle) and Ruth Linger (second from right) were congratulated by District Governor (DG) Louis Wever (second from left).

# Rotary Club Mid Isle proudly welcomes two new members

PHILIPSBURG--Rotary Club of St. Maarten-Mid Isle inducted two new members at its annual Christmas Dinner, held on December 18. Joining Rotary Mid Isle are Ruth Linger and Natalie Humphrey. The inductees took the oath and were sworn in by Secretary Jon Hart.

Ruth Linger, sponsored by Service Projects Director Grace Linger, is Senior Project Manager of the Division of Education Innovations from the Ministry of Education, Culture Youth and Sport (MECYS), and her classification within Rotary is Education.

Natalie Humphrey, sponsored by District Governor of District 7020 Louis Wever, is the Assistant Dean of Community Engagement at the American University of the Caribbean (AUC).

After completing the membership plan, both professionals were identified as great additions to the club. From the onset, they made themselves available to assist with projects, attend meetings, events and fellowships.

The members of Rotary Mid Isle look forward to serving humanity with them onboard. Each new member was pinned by their sponsor amongst members, family and guests who cheerfully congratulated them during the ceremony. "Once again congratulations to Rotarian Ruth Linger and Rotarian Natalie Humphrey, and welcome to the Rotary Family," Secretary Jon Hart said.

Furthermore, former Rotarian Dr. Sonia Meade-Swanston was welcomed



Honorary Member Sonia was decorated by District Governor (DG) Louis Wever.

back as an Honorary Member of Mid Isle.

Honorary Membership is the highest distinction that a club may bestow on members who have distinguished

themselves by meritorious service in the furtherance of Rotary ideals.

Honorary Member Sonia was pinned by District Governor (DG) Louis Wever.

# 42 active cases of COVID in Anguilla

ANGUILLA--The Ministry of Health has announced that currently there are 42 active cases of COVID-19 in Anguilla. There were 37 new cases in the last two days and 66 recoveries. There are now nine people in hospital and there has been one additional death, bringing the total of deaths to five since the start of the pandemic.

The total cases in Anguilla are 1,629 and 1,582 have so far recovered.

Last week more than 2,300 additional doses of the Pfizer vaccine arrived in Anguilla. Governor Dileeni Daniel Selvaratnam said that given the rise of the Omicron variant there are more reasons than ever to get vaccinated and to receive the booster shot sooner rather than later. "We urge everyone over the age of 12 to protect themselves and their loved ones by getting the vaccine while it is available on island," she said. "Apart from protecting vulnerable people, there are increasing restrictions for people who remain unvaccinated. Most countries now require proof of vaccination as a condition of entry and there have been several instances recently where hospitals in the region have refused to take in medical evacuations where patients were unvaccinated." Boosters are now open to anyone over the age of 18 who received their second dose no less than three months ago.

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# CPS offers tips for a safe holiday meal preparation

PHILIPSBURG--As part of the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor VSA Collective Prevention Services' (CPS) Safe Holiday Season calendar of observances, in collaboration with the Department of Communications DComm, residents are advised to keep the season safe by following tips on how to enjoy holiday meals safely.

With just a couple of days until Christmas 2021, fami-

lies have already been looking at their holiday meal options and shopping requirements, and these final days will be very busy.

"Cooking up a storm for this holiday season is one of the Christmas traditions and proper food preparation is key to avoid food-borne health hazards that can ruin more than just a holiday meal - they can cause serious illness and even death," CPS stated in a press release on Tuesday.

While out and about shopping, persons are urged to make sure they adhere to COVID-19 public health measures such as wearing a mask, social distancing (six feet away from the other person), washing hands frequently with soap and water or using a hand sanitiser with more than 60 per cent alcohol content.

CPS provided tips to make sure bacteria are not allowed to grow. Ensure that stuffing, chicken and

any other poultry dishes are cooked thoroughly to 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F); ground beef and ham must be cooked thoroughly to 155 F. All other foods, including eggs, should be cooked to 145 F. Use a thermometer.

Do not leave foods containing meat, milk, eggs, fish or poultry at room temperature for more than four hours. This includes pudding and custard-type pies that are popular during the holidays. Cool all leftovers to 41 F within four hours after cooking.

Do not thaw foods at room temperature. Plan ahead and thaw them in the refrigerator. If the food needs to be thawed quickly, use the microwave or cold running water and then cook promptly after it has thawed.

CPS said if you are traveling with food to keep it cold (41 F) or hot (140 F or above) while transporting.

After the big meal, be sure to refrigerate any leftovers within one hour. "Bacteria love room temperatures and grow quickly in amounts enough to make people ill," CPS cautioned.

CPS provided additional tips to prevent food from becoming contaminated.

Wash hands frequently

and thoroughly with soap and warm water before food preparation and after coughing, sneezing, using the toilet, changing diapers, eating, drinking or smoking.

Do not prepare or handle foods if you are ill; a cook's gastrointestinal illness could be spread to others sharing the meal.

Thoroughly clean and sanitise knives, cutting boards and other utensils before and after preparing raw foods and foods that do not require further cooking. Sanitise with a solution of one tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water.

Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Contrary to popular belief, if you do become ill from contaminated food, it is not always the last meal you ate that's the culprit. Food-borne illness can occur anywhere from one hour to 72 hours and even longer after eating contaminated food.

"Please help make the 2021 holiday season be safer by paying attention to proper food preparation and handling techniques, and observe the COVID-19 public health measures. Happy Holidays," said CPS.

## Armed thief shot in leg by police and arrested

PHILIPSBURG--A police officer shot a robbery suspect in the leg in the night from Monday to Tuesday. The officer then managed to handcuff the man, who was armed.

Several bystanders had seen the man fleeing in the vicinity of Simpson Bay Yacht Club after he had stolen a cell phone. The St. Maarten Police Force Central Dispatch received a call around 1:40am Tuesday about theft of a phone at an establishment on Welfare Road in

Simpson Bay, close to the bridge.

Guests at the establishment witnessed the man stealing the cell phone. He immediately ran away. During his escape, the suspect used a firearm to threaten a security guard and other individuals who were running after him.

Police were informed at the scene by several bystanders that the suspect was possibly hiding somewhere on the premises. The suspect was later found on the roof of the complex. He attempted

to flee from the police, who held him at gunpoint.

The suspect was repeatedly requested to give himself up, which he refused to do. Considering the fact that he was armed, he was then shot in the leg by police.

Ambulance personnel treated the suspect's gunshot wound on site and then transported him to St. Maarten Medical Center for further treatment.

The investigation into this incident is still ongoing.

## Another suspect in police station heist

WILLEMSTAD--Yet another suspect was held in Curaçao's Inex 2.0 investigation on Monday, December 20. A man (38 years old) was detained by the Arrest Team (AT) in his home for involvement in the drugs theft from the Rio Canario police station.

He is suspected of having sold the narcotics that were stolen, but also of the actual execution of the robbery.

This arrest follows two made earlier on December 15 and 16. The previously held suspects have been brought before the examining magistrate and will remain behind bars at the SDDK prison.

The relationship between this trio is being investigated further. More detentions are not excluded.

The new suspect is being held in confinement and will be brought before the examining magistrate this week. In the interest of the investigation, no further statements can be made at this time.



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## Justice Function Book established

*Continued from page 1.*

nation and instability for the personnel of this ministry. With the teamwork and input of many, this goal has been achieved."

On taking office in March 2020, Richardson made the function book her number one priority. "The function book has been an unresolved matter since 10-10-10 and has contributed to various challenges (also legally) within the Ministry of Justice," Richardson said.

"It regulates an important part of the legal status of each civil servant which ultimately defines their task, responsibilities and their salary scales."

The Ministry of Justice's Function Book was handed over to the Committee of Civil Servants Unions (CCSU) on December 22, 2020, three months after the installation of the workgroup, for their review and advice as required by law.

After having received feedback from the Progress Committee, the CCSU and

the unions representing the civil servants in the Ministry of Justice, the function book was submitted to the Advisory Council for legal review before it was approved by the Council of Ministers on May 11, 2021.

Based on the Advisory Council's advice, the minister's retained attorney sat together with the unions and made the necessary adjustments, to which all parties agreed and signed a statement of assent on July 28, 2021, confirming their agreement with the updated draft.

With the approval and signatures of Governor Eugene Holiday and Minister Richardson, the function book will now be heading to the Office of the Ombudsman for a period of six weeks, during which a constitutional review will be done to review the laws that were ratified. Additionally, Richardson will be presenting a detailed description of the next step-by-step pro-

cess to be followed during the upcoming budget debate in Parliament in January 2022.

Richardson expressed gratitude, saying: "I'd like to give a heartfelt 'thank you' to the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of General Affairs, the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the unions, His Excellency Governor Eugene B. Holiday and his Cabinet, my legal team, the Progress Committee and Advisory Council and all stakeholders who played a role in making this day a reality.

"I take this moment to bid each and every person who makes up the staff in service to this ministry and to the country as a whole a heartfelt 'congratulations'. There is still more work ahead to be done. However, rest assured, I am committed to seeing it through."

# UCF wants monument for enslaved African ancestors



Ruins of the waterfort (Fort Amsterdam) in which the slave house was located. The Godet African burial ground is in the background.

ST. EUSTATIUS--Ubuntu Connected Front (UCF) Caribbean wants a "Monument of Honour" erected in St. Eustatius for all African people who ever set foot on the island in the slavery era.

Rather than focusing on the abolition of slavery, UCF wants a prominent and permanent memorial site where the spirit and strength of their ancestors can be honoured. UCF Caribbean Chairman Kenneth Cuvalay said the monument would be "a place where we can recognise the crimes that were inflicted upon them and how their abuse by the colonial powers contributed to the economic power structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was built on."

UCF would like the monument to be a gathering point for memories, African traditional ceremonies and prayers, not just for the residents of St. Eustatius, but for other Africans in the diaspora as well. Tens of thousands of African children, women and men were forced to set foot on St. Eustatius during the trans-Atlantic and inter-island slave trade to endure all horrors of slavery, said Cuvalay. The hope is to give these persons the dignified respect they earned but never received.

"St. Eustatius has a difficult relationship with its slavery past. Many cities in the Netherlands are now diving into history in search of traces of its slavery past. In St. Eustatius, it seems that you

are still walking around in colonial times with colonial images, names in the public spaces and with landmarks such as Fort Oranje, battery De Windt, a memorial for coloniser Michiel de Ruyter, a former Queen, and the first salute that was given by a slave owner," he said.

"Not one sign of recognition of the crimes that our ancestors endured was given."

He added that the role of government should be creating preconditions for rewriting the history of slavery of St. Eustatius and thus doing justice to their ancestors.

"Recognition is the first step, as it is important to teach children that they are descended from African warriors and survivors and that their history is full of struggle

and resistance. In that regard the prescriptive Eurocentric curriculum must be decolonised," he said

Earlier this month, UCF started the family heritage project "Make the Connection" organised under the umbrella of the St. Eustatius African Burial Ground. It is a community-based research project and the first volunteers have already registered.

Cuvalay: "Telling our own story is important to replace the Eurocentric narrative. We don't need Piet Hein in the school curriculum, we need Marcus Garvey. We don't need Michiel de Ruyter, we need Tula and Dupersoy, and so many more names of our African inventors and heroes which are never spoken of." In that regard, he believes that the prescriptive Eurocentric curriculum must be decolonised.

One of the early discoveries of the family heritage project is the discovery that the parents of the famous pan-Africanist Edward Wilmot Blyden were born in St. Eustatius.

With the family trees of participants, the project is trying to make a connection to names of enslaved Africans in colonial archives. Eventually the organisation wants the names of all ancestors who were born before the abolition of slavery to be memorialised on the monument, says Cuvalay.

"Structural funding for research and education about our slavery past from our

perspective should be part of it."

UCF is working on a community-based inventory survey on the realisation of the monument. The Old Market, the group suggests, could be a symbolic location for the memorial, as this was the place where the auction sales of their ancestors took place. UCF believes the community should discuss and decide on what the memorial should look like.

The project intends to raise awareness for the deplorable condition of the ruins of the Waterfort (Fort Amsterdam) in which their ancestors were stored for trans-shipment

and to find funding for its restoration. The "Memorial of Honour" and the restored Water Fort together with the Slave Path would make what UCF says would be "a powerful tribute, a guide and inspiration to persons of the African descendant community."

"The struggle of our ancestors is not yet over, though, not until we regain our full sovereignty, restoring our dignity and full reparations. We people of African descent must now accept and continue with responsibility the moral duty of the struggle our ancestors waged, as their legacy," said Cuvalay.

## SOAB approves funding for CMC

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao Medical Center (CMC) will receive another 4.1 million Netherlands Antillean guilders to cover elective care in December. This was reported by Minister of Finance Javier Sylvania on social media.

Government accountant bureau SOAB approved the additional financing. Payment is made by the Social Insurance Bank SVB.

Earlier this month the Council of Ministers on Sylvania's recommendation agreed to provide an advance to the hospital to continue non-urgent surgeries. These had been halted in October for lack of funds and to keep providing acute medical treatment.

CMC is struggling with major shortages due to an insufficient budget from the collective insurer for its patients. The advance guarantees all care to SVB-covered persons until December 31. The CMC must also systematically reduce the waiting lists.

The money could only be paid after the hospital in Otrobanda accounted for the use of extra resources in November. Management also had to cooperate in an investigation into the rates charged.

The latter is being conducted by the Dutch Healthcare Authority, in collaboration with its local counterpart and other related entities on the island. The resulting recommendations "are not without obligation," it was stated.

# Closing arguments in murder trial over downed MH17 flight

AMSTERDAM--Dutch prosecutors on Monday began their closing arguments in the trial of suspects in the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine and said the victims "didn't stand a chance" once a rocket hit the plane.

Three Russians and a Ukrainian – all of whom remain at large – could face sentences of up to life imprisonment if found guilty of helping supply the missile system used to fire the rocket at the passenger jet as it flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. All 298 people onboard were killed.

A sentencing demand is expected today, Wednesday, at the end of a 20-month trial.

In their closing arguments, prosecutors said the plane was shot down by a Russian-made missile. Prosecutor

Thijs Berger recalled the moment on July 17, 2014, when Ukrainian air traffic control lost contact with flight MH17.

"At that moment a warhead from a Buk missile detonated to the left of the cockpit, shrapnel and missile parts pierced the left of the cockpit and the accompanying blast does the rest," Berger said. "The passengers of flight MH17 didn't stand a chance," he added.

None of the defendants was present in court. One suspect, Russian Oleg Pulatov, sent lawyers to represent him during the trial. The others, Russians Sergey Dubinsky and Igor Girkin and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko, have never cooperated with the court and are being tried in absentia.

Flight MH17 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala

Lumpur when it was shot down by a missile fired from territory held by pro-Russian rebels during fighting with Ukrainian government troops, international investigators say.

After years of collecting evidence, a Dutch-led international Joint Investigation Team (JIT) concluded in 2019 that the missile launcher used to hit the civilian airplane came from a Russian army base just across the border.

The Dutch government has said it holds Russia responsible, but Moscow has always denied involvement and has promoted a range of alternative theories, which the international investigators rejected as unsupported by evidence.

On Monday, prosecutors went into detail about how they linked certain phone

numbers to the suspects and described the situation on the ground in eastern Ukraine in July 2014.

They cited intercepted conversations from pro-Russian separatists who complained they did not have anti-aircraft weapons and were being bombed by the Ukrainian air force.

In a phone call prosecutors say was between suspects Dubinsky and Pulatov, intercepted just one day before the MH17 blast, the man identified as Dubinsky is heard telling Pulatov a Buk missile system should arrive soon.

"Buk is our only hope," Dubinsky adds, according to the translation provided by the prosecution.

A verdict is likely to be handed down late next year.

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# Tourism performance figures for November

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao Hospitality and Tourism Association (CHATA) and Curaçao Apartments and Small Hotels Association (CASHA) published figures regarding resorts, alternative accommodations, car rentals and diving schools in November.

For CASHA, the average occupancy was 83.1 per cent, up 17.7 per cent from October. It was such a good month that three accommodations registered a 100 per cent rate, evenly spread out over Pietermaai, Saliña and Banda'bou.

Four others reached an occupancy of respectively 99, 93, 93 and 91 per cent. Two of these are situated in Jan Thiel, one at Blue Bay and one in Banda'bou. The remaining accommodations had rates between 50 and 88.33 per cent.

None reported zero occupancy.

Car rentals had an average occupancy of 79.7 per cent and dive schools of 58.8 per cent.

CASHA members are still experiencing bookings from 2019 that had already been paid for by guests who could not come in 2020 or early this year due to COVID-19. They had offered these the option and free service to rebook their stay later.

It is currently the traveller's responsibility to secure their visit with additional insurance. Accommodation owners not being able to guarantee any free refunds is reason enough for people not to book or to cancel in advance.

CASHA announces that thankfully cancellations are happening less frequently. In such cases it is mostly due to a positive test result in the country of departure.

Lately, not being able to book a rental car is also reason for travellers to choose another destination, as there is a serious shortage of such vehicles locally. Many rental agencies were forced to sell (parts of) their fleet to minimise cost and keep business afloat. Currently they are not able to invest yet in replacements and/or the delivery time from abroad is longer due to supply chain challenges in the world.

Even the mosquitoes on the island are said to be reason for cancellations these days.

There is a clear shift in booking behaviour. They are not being made very long in advance and are mostly last-minute. Travelers decide at the very last moment where they want to go, dependent on the restrictive measures at that moment.

Next-day arrivals are very normal. Accommodations are even being contacted upon arrival at the airport, for bookings.

"Looking at the current situation, it looks like a positive closing of the year, as December as well as the first quarter of 2022 are hopeful," said CASHA.

The stress and complexity of filling out forms needed to enter the Dutch Caribbean country as well

as continued uncertainty remain issues. However, once the passengers arrive and can enjoy the island, they are happy that they visited after all.

The sector hopes to be able to maintain this positive trend, despite the expected wave due to the new coronavirus variant Omicron.

When it comes to medium to larger hotels, November's figures clearly indicate growth, so the positive trend continues. CHATA members had an average room occupancy of 77.8 per cent, which compared to the same month of 2020 (39.8 per cent) is an increase of 95 per cent. Compared to the hotel occupancy of November 2019, this is also a slight increase of 4.4 per cent.

The average daily rate in November 2021 was US \$187.87. Compared to the same month of last year, this is an increase of 52.3 per cent and compared to 2019 of 28.3 per cent.

As for the revenue per available room, there is also a significant increase of 197.5 per cent compared to last year, from US \$49.14 to \$146.20. Also compared to 2019 (pre-COVID) this is an increase of 38.2 per cent.

The increases compared to 2019 carried on structurally since July this year. CHATA remains cautiously optimistic for the coming high season and expects hotel occupancy for the last month of 2021 and first month of 2022 to be at least that of 2019.

"With this we expect an average occupancy of around 70 per cent, provided there are no drastic changes and/or measures due to the Omicron variant," according to CHATA.

"Since the strong tourism recovery after the second lockdown this year, we see clearly that tourists who visit our island stay longer and spend more. This is reflected in the increasing daily rates and the revenue per available room – a very positive trend."

November is the second month in a row that Curaçao has scored highest compared to other islands in the Caribbean in terms of hotel occupancy, when it comes to bigger hotels.



Deputy Government Commissioner Claudia Toet (third right) with the new Dutch citizens.

## 5 become Dutch citizens in Statia

ST. EUSTATIUS--Five persons became Dutch citizens in St. Eustatius on Monday, December 20, when they took the oath of citizenship during a naturalisation ceremony held at the Government Guesthouse.

The new Dutch citizens are Darold Doest, Evelin Fortuna Tejada, Lunaise Etienne, Remy Lloyd Clenne and Wanda Yarilda.

The new citizens took their oath before Deputy Government Commissioner Claudia Toet, who congratulated the new Dutch citizens for their hard work on achieving this goal.

The new citizens were all smiles once the ceremony had concluded. Their families and friends attended the event and shared in the joyous occasion.

ulated the new Dutch citizens for their hard work on achieving this goal. The new citizens were all smiles once the ceremony had concluded. Their families and friends attended the event and shared in the joyous occasion.



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If you think this applies to you, please send in your letter and resume before January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

**Further information:**  
For more information regarding the job description, take a further look at our website: [www.roacn.com](http://www.roacn.com). Or mail/call Judette Frederiks, Manager Labor Market ROA CN. E-mail: [j.frederiks@ROACN.com](mailto:j.frederiks@ROACN.com) / GSM: +5997965440

**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

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**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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**No major impact from COHO row**

**WILLEMSTAD**--The fact that Curaçao has not yet approved the amended draft law to establish the Caribbean Body for Reform and Development COHO has no major consequences for government meeting its obligations, said Minister of Finance Javier Sylvania on his Facebook page.

Last Friday Dutch caretaker State Secretary Raymond Knops of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations confirmed that Curaçao, Aruba and St. Maarten still did not approve the now-proposed, revised Kingdom Act.

An administrative agreement was signed on December 2. However, the three Caribbean countries have now put this on hold. "It is in fact only a signature and then the law can pass to the various parliaments," Knops had argued.

The Kingdom Council of Ministers therefore decided to defer handling of the relevant documents until its next meeting on January 21. Until then, no liquidity support will be paid.

"This does not have a big negative effect on the public finances," said Sylvania. "If the announced budget for 2022 is not forthcoming, the 2021 budget will be leading."

According to the government in Willemstad, all conditions have been met. However, Knops is said to have come up with extra demands at the last minute, so that no signature has yet been placed.

"The Council of State has criticised the Memorandum of Amendment," Sylvania wrote in his message. According to him, there have not yet been discussions at governmental level between the four countries about the change.



The Spigt Dutch Caribbean Open 2021 golf tournament took place at Blue Bay Curaçao Golf & Beach Resort. In total 76 players divided in teams of four competed for a good cause. Optique Ana won it for the third time with a score of 54 (18 under par). The law firm had pledged 100 Netherlands Antillean guilders for each participant to a charity of the winning team's choice. A Naf. 7,600 cheque went to the Churandy Martina Foundation. The Olympic medallist sprinter (right), whose team did not win, was thankful for the funds to help create equal chances among local children by combining sports, games and education.

**Venezuelan traders want borders open**

**CARACAS**--Venezuelan traders want borders with Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (the so-called ABC islands) to reopen. According to sources, there have been consultations with former local business part-

ners and both sides would like to resume their joint commercial activities.

When President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro banned traffic to and from the Dutch Caribbean territories off the South Ameri-

can nation's coast, fresh produce suppliers from the seaside city of Coro were particularly affected. The maritime border is now expected to open soon.

However, there will be some tension again be-

tween the governments in Caracas and The Hague. That is because Dutch authorities reportedly did not give Venezuelan airline Co-viasa permission to fly to the Netherlands.



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# Higher max rates for lights, drinking water in Bonaire, Saba and Statia

CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS-The maximum rates for the production and distribution of electricity and drinking water in Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius will increase effective January 1, 2022. This increase is mainly due to the fact that the price of oil needed to produce electricity and drinking water has risen sharply.

The Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM) annually sets the maximum rates for electricity for Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius. The ACM also sets the

maximum rates for drinking water for Bonaire and St. Eustatius. The ACM determines the rates on the basis of the costs incurred by the producers and distributors. These companies then determine themselves, on the basis of these maximum rates, what they actually charge customers.

Unpredictable oil prices have a major impact on production costs and thus on (maximum) rates for electricity. That is why a vigorous further increase in sustainability of production on the islands will not

only contribute to a better climate, but actually also to more stable electricity and drinking water rates, because sustainability reduces the dependence on oil, it was stated in a press release.

In previous years, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management have always provided subsidies to the companies so that they could charge lower rates to customers. The Ministries indicated that they would do the same for 2022.

## Bonaire

For Bonaire, the maximum usage rate for electricity increases from approximately US \$0.29/kWh to approximately US \$0.33/kWh. The maximum limit for the Pagabon rate (pre-paid) increases from approximately US \$0.50/kWh to approximately US \$0.53/kWh. These increases are mainly due to expected higher costs of the production of electricity. For the consumption of an average household, this means an increase of approximately US \$8 per month on the electricity bill.

The maximum rate for the consumption of drinking water decreases from approximately US \$3.81/m<sup>3</sup> to approximately US \$3.74/m<sup>3</sup>. For an average household, this means a drop of approximately US \$0.75 per month on the bill.

## Saba

For Saba, the maximum electricity usage rate increases from approximately US \$0.37/kWh to approximately US \$0.41/kWh. This is mainly due to expected higher costs for the production of electricity. For the consumption of an average household, this means an increase of about US \$9 per month on the electricity bill.

## St. Eustatius

For St. Eustatius, the maximum electricity usage rate increases from approximately US \$0.32/kWh to approximately US

\$0.36/kWh. This increase is mainly due to expected higher costs for the production of electricity. For the consumption of an average household, this means an increase of approximately US \$8 per month on the electricity bill.

The maximum rate for the use of drinking water increases from approximately US \$6.73/m<sup>3</sup> to approximately US \$8.62/m<sup>3</sup>. For an average household, this means an increase of approximately US \$19 per month on the bill. Part of this increase is not only due to the increased oil price, but also because repairs were necessary to the transport pipeline.

Annually, the ACM determines the maximum rates on the basis of the expected costs that the producers and distributors will have to incur in order to supply and to be able to continue supplying. To this end, the ACM continuously analyses the realised and expected costs of these companies and the ACM assesses these costs, for example, on necessity. The ACM determines the expected costs on the basis of the investments envisaged by the companies. The ACM also includes these plans in its analysis and assessment.

To incentivise the companies to work as cost-efficiently as possible, the ACM applies the principle of profit-sharing. This means that if a company succeeds in incurring fewer costs than estimated, it may keep half of the difference as a reward for its performance. But if, on the other hand, the costs are higher, then the company is only compensated for half of that difference through the rates. Annually, the ACM incorporates this bonus-malus rule into the maximum tariffs.

What makes the maximum rates for electricity and drinking water increase or decrease? Increases or decreases in the maximum rates usually have several causes, but the most important is usually the development of the international oil price, because the costs for the production of electricity and drinking water on the islands Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba are strongly dependent on the international development of the oil price.

In addition, scheduled investments also play a

major role, because an investment in a pipeline or installation is usually a relatively large cost item compared to the total costs. The latter is partly due to the small scale of production and distribution on the islands Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba and their isolated location. Any investment is then quickly relatively large and consequently noticeable in rates.

Also, incidental settlements from previous years often play a role in the rates. An important example is the so-called profit-sharing. The ACM applies the principle of profit-sharing to encourage companies to work as cost-efficiently as possible. This means that if a company succeeds in incurring fewer costs than estimated, it may keep half of the difference as a reward for that performance. But if, on the other hand, the costs are higher, then the company is only compensated for half of that difference through the rates. Annually, the ACM incorporates this bonus-malus rule in the maximum rates and it can sometimes have a great impact on rates.

Finally, it happens that companies successfully challenge decisions of the ACM. Often, this also has a material impact that is settled in rates in later years. In short, the reasons for decreases or increases are usually not unambiguous, but depend on many factors. The oil price is usually the most important factor.

Producers and distributors determine the level of the rates that they charge to customers. However, the rates cannot exceed the maximum rates set by the ACM.

For the time being, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management are subsidising the rates in the Caribbean Netherlands. These subsidies are passed on to the customers via the producers and distributors in the form of lower rates. As a result, the rates charged, particularly to small-scale consumers, were generally well below the maximum rates. At the time of writing, it is not yet known whether and how much subsidy is provided for 2022, but it is expected that there shall also be subsidies in 2022.



Former Major League Baseball (MLB) player and current coach Hensley "Bam Bam" Meulens (back row centre) opened the Bam Bam Tech Sports Zone (BBTSZ) in his native Curaçao at megamall Sambil, where people can practise their baseball skills. He invited a group of about 30 youngsters from the local Wishi-Marchena club, who – as a surprise offered by "Grupo India" – also watched the new Spiderman movie in the shopping centre's theatre. Standing next to Meulens (right) is Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Kenley Jansen, who gave the kids some motivational tips.

## BOOGAARD INSURANCE B.V.

### in liquidatie

De aandeelhouder heeft bij besluit van 1 april 2021 de vennootschap op 1 november 2021 ontbonden.

De vereffenaar heeft vastgesteld dat haar geen bekende baten aanwezig zijn, de slotverantwoording is ter inzage beschikbaar ten kantore van de vereffenaar en de kamer van koophandel.

Philipsburg, 22 december 2021 plaatsing in National Gazette.

**De vereffenaar.**

# Curaçao with 95 new cases

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao on Tuesday reported 95 coronavirus infections after testing 2,258 people including travellers, of which eleven were imported.

There were 22 recoveries, bringing the number of active cases to 304. 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 12 patients with COVID-19 symptoms, five of them in intensive care.

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



Some of the uprooted cannabis plants.

# RAPF uproots cannabis plants

ANGUILLA--As part of continuous operations being carried out by the crime group of the Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF), an operation was executed in the Stoney Ground area on Friday, December 17. As a result, a quantity of 75 mature cannabis plants and 35 seedlings were uprooted. The police report that no one is in custody as a result of the operation and the discovery of the plants.

The police are also reporting that there were two separate incidents in the Back Street, South Hill area, on Sunday, December 19, and two firearms were recovered. In one of the incidents a .38 millimetre (mm) handgun was recovered, and in the other, a Glock 40mm handgun with 18 rounds of ammunition.

At present, there is a 22-year-old man from

George Hill and a 20-year-old man from The Valley in custody assisting the officers with their investigation. Both incidents were intercepted by off-duty police officers attached to the Crime Group of the RAPF. Charges relating to those recovered firearms are expected to go to the Magistrate's Court in the near future.



A 20-metre-long pier is being built at Spanish Water – near Caracasbaai – in Curaçao, as it turns out without approval from the Spatial Planning Department ROP and Domain Affairs. A parcel of land on that location was given out in long lease since 2018 to Miro-aha NV, with which businessman Amparo dos Santos is known to have ties. However, any structure in the inlet requires permits from both government entities. A Ministry of Traffic, Transport and Spatial Planning VVRP inspector has already visited the site.



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**will be interrupted on Wednesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 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



*President of Curaçao's Parliament Charetti America-Francisca during her recent visit to the Netherlands met with President of the Dutch First Chamber (Senate) Jan Antonie Bruijn. They discussed matters of common interest, including relations between the two countries, socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a so-called democratic deficit within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the current Kingdom Charter.*

**Bars/restaurants now obeying corona rules**

WILLEMSTAD--The COVID-19 measures in Curaçao appear well respected by the catering industry, say local authorities.

The inspection team of the Ministry of Economic Development MEO and the Curaçao Police Force KPC checked 12 establishments for violations

on Monday, December 20. All were found to be adhering to the rules, including Netto Bar, Tesoro Plaza, Dutch Treat and Mr. Porter.

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Some of the 55 fishers on Nevis showing off the hand-held GPS devices donated to them by the Ministry of Marine Resources, with training facilitator Captain Frankie Tyson (front row, left), owner of SKN Executive Travel, after the handing-over ceremony in Charlestown on December 20.

## Fishermen on Nevis benefit from safety device donation

NEVIS--Fifty-five fishers on Nevis were presented with hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, by the Ministry of Marine Resources through the Department of Marine Resources on Nevis, on December 20.

The handing-over was held at the main pavilion at the Elquemedo T. Willett Park in Charlestown. Huey Sargeant, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Marine Resources, while

delivering remarks on behalf of Minister Alexis Jeffers, said the key reason for the distribution was safety at sea.

He acknowledged that fishing could be a very dangerous activity, and the use of technology to improve fishers' safety was an important investment in fishers by the government.

The Garmin GPSMAP 78 device is valued at just over EC \$600, bringing the total value of those distributed

so far to \$33,000.

In addition to navigation, the devices are also outfitted with a "Home" feature, which can direct fishers to their home port in the event they are lost at sea; a "Man Overboard" feature, which marks the point at which the event occurs, as well as plotting points for fish traps and fish aggregating devices (FADs).

Following the distribution, a short training session on the use of the device was done by Captain Frankie Tyson, owner of SKN Executive Travel (Apple Syder). He also offered to assist any fisher who needed assistance.

The donation was funded by the federal government through the Department of Marine Resources. Priority was given to fishers who did not have a GPS device on their vessel.



Eugene Hamilton

## Federation working to introduce universal healthcare legislation

ST. KITTS--Legislation to introduce universal healthcare in St. Kitts and Nevis is currently being drafted by a legal expert, which will then go to Cabinet for consideration.

Minister responsible for National Health Insurance, Eugene Hamilton told the Federal Parliament on Monday, December 20, that a legal draftsman was retained with assistance from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to assist with the creation of the legislative framework.

"That person has been engaged since September," Hamilton said, during day four of the Budget Debate. "And if my estimation is correct ... within the first quarter of 2022, we will be in a position to present to Cabinet, and say Cabinet this is ...

the proposed legislation, this is the cost if you do A, if you do B, if you do C; and then we will begin to determine how we implement."

The minister said the process had been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the government is committed to completing the implementation, which will be a signature piece of legislation.

He added that a component of universal healthcare will strongly encourage residents of St. Kitts and Nevis to lead healthier lifestyles, particularly as it relates to diet and exercise. An education component on the nutritional value of products and those that contribute to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will be undertaken as part of the implementation plan.

## Minister Evelyn outlines plans for Ministry of Environment in 2022

ST. KITTS--Minister of Environment and Cooperatives, Eric Evelyn outlined several initiatives that his ministry will be embarking on come 2022, to continue to conserve, preserve and protect the environment.

One of the plans is for the passage of the National Conservation and Environmental Management Bill (NCEMA). Once passed, the act will be the overarching legislation used to govern all environmental matters.

"We want to complete and update the draft NCEMA Bill and we want to have that passed in Parliament in 2022," said Evelyn during his Budget 2022 presentation on Thursday, December 16. "In terms of the [Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management - Ed.] IWECO project, we want to do some work as well, and in terms of establishing the Environment Council, that is part of our mandate and we want to have that Environmental Council constituted."

The NCEMA will replace the current National Conservation and Environmental Protection Act (NCEPA) to ensure that the Department of Environment has the legislative framework to guide its work.

Equally important, Evelyn noted that the ministry is looking forward to continuing its work towards the development of its water policy, as well as upgrading the water supply monitoring protocols.

Training of relevant per-



Eric Evelyn

sonnel and outreach programmes are also on the agenda for the ministry in 2022.

"We want to do some training for our rangers. They are doing a great job in our forest reserve and we want to do some ranger training for next year," he said. "We want to prepare some outreach materials for the pro-

sonnel and outreach programmes are also on the agenda for the ministry in 2022.

Other initiatives include but are not limited to developing an implementation strategy to control the ticks within the deer population. Ensuring that the deer have a reliable and adequate supply of water is also critical.

The 2022 budget allocation for the Ministry of Environment and Cooperatives is EC \$2,950,731.

## Ireland downgrades travel alert for St. Kitts and Nevis

ST. KITTS--The government of the Republic of Ireland has downgraded advice on travel to St. Kitts and Nevis from "Avoid non-essential travel" to "High degree of caution" in a recent Travel Alert on its country website.

The move, which took effect from December 17, advises Irish nationals desirous of travelling to St. Kitts and Nevis, to undertake proper research and carefully consider the necessity of their travel at this time. They are also being asked to be aware of possible limitations to consular services and ensure travel insurance coverage before they travel.

St. Kitts and Nevis, on the other hand, continues to uphold its May 29 decision that only fully vaccinated arrivals will be allowed entry into the Federation, with exemptions being in place for citizens and residents and children under the age of 18 coming from international destinations. Non-vaccinated children under 18 travelling with fully vaccinated parents are welcomed but must observe the same protocols associated with "Vacation in Place" as their parents.



OMBUDSMAN

SINT MAARTEN

### CLOSURE NOTICE BUREAU OMBUDSMAN

Please be informed that the Bureau Ombudsman will be closed from 24 December until 31 December, 2021

We will re-open on 3 January, 2022

We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

Season Greetings & Happy New Year!



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221221



## Season's Greetings



Vacature voor:  
**SENIOR JURIDISCH BELEIDSMEDEWERKER**  
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 senior 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(splannen en -activiteiten) en veranderingstrajecten en adviseert over aanpassingen daarvan; je controleert en toetst aan de hand van verantwoordingsrapportages de beleidsuitvoering; je stelt 'terms of references', financieringsverzoeken, bestekken, plannen van aanpak, en dergelijke op, je beoordeelt offertes, je stelt gunningsadviezen op en voert voorbereidende contractbesprekingen en beheert contracten; 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 kennis en minimaal 5 jaar werkervaring op gebied van juridische beleidsontwikkeling. Ervaren binnen het justitiedomein strekt tot aanbeveling. 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 de kennis en ervaring. De functieschaal bedraagt minimaal ANG 7.232,- (schaal 11) en maximaal ANG 9.821,- (schaal 12) 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.

### Solicitaties

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](mailto:rudy.richardson@justice.gov.sx) en voor nadere informatie over de functie kunt u contact opnemen met mw.drs. L. Stella, secretaris-generaal van het ministerie van Justitie (Wnd.), telefoon +1721 5423025 ext. 113, e-mail: [ims@sintmaarten.net](mailto:ims@sintmaarten.net).

### 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.

# THANK YOU

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, FAMILY & HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (CDFHA) DEPARTMENT WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & LABOR WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FAMILY, NON-GOVERNMENTAL (NGO) AND COMPANIES WITHIN AND OUT OF THE DUTCH QUARTER COMMUNITY FOR COLLABORATING IN THE DUTCH QUARTER FAMILY FUN DAY INITIATIVE.

MS. & MR. DE WEEVER FOR MAKING THEIR PROPERTY AVAILABLE  
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FLOW  
CCI  
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PRIME

### ST. MAARTEN Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor

Collective Prevention Services (CPS) is a department within the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor responsible for infectious disease surveillance, health promotion, vector control, youth health care and health promotion.

The department is currently recruiting for an epidemiologist to join this dynamic team of public health professionals.

### Epidemiologist

#### Major Responsibilities:

Reporting to the Department Head of Collective Prevention Services (CPS), the Epidemiologist provides epidemiological expertise and support to the department including Sections General Health Care and Youth Care. In this role, the epidemiologist will provide advice and support related to the collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of surveillance data, which is used for assessing community health status and communicable disease control and prevention.

- Initiates, plans, designs, organizes, implements and evaluates epidemiological research on health status factors that affect the health of the population of Sint Maarten
- Develops and analyzes epidemiological and other related indicators and research strategies.
- Performs epidemiological analysis, interprets data, and summarizes relevant findings in reports for internal and external stakeholders. Uses appropriate computer applications and presents results in an understandable format.
- Facilitates the use of epidemiological evidence by providing and integrating community health status information in program and service planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Identifies emerging issues and trends related to communicable disease and community health status and proposes appropriate response.
- Liaises with regional and international health agencies to provide access to current communicable disease data, and for collaborative epidemiological research.
- Responds to requests for communicable disease and community health status information from Ministry staff (Minister's cabinet), the public, external agencies, community organizations, and the media as directed.
- Identifies new opportunities, technologies, and methods for communicable disease surveillance, including reporting, data analysis and dissemination mechanisms.

The candidate must have the following **qualities and qualifications:**

- Master's degree in Epidemiology, or a related discipline, or the approved equivalent combination of education and related experience.
- Considerable experience working as an epidemiologist in a public health agency or related organization.
- Experience in applied communicable disease epidemiology, including the management and analysis of infectious disease data and providing support for outbreak investigations.
- Considerable experience using statistical analysis software and other software packages currently used to collect, manage and analyze epidemiological data.
- Knowledge of health policy; including developing and advising.

Kindly submit your Cover Letter and Resume to:  
Collective Prevention Services  
Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor (VSA)  
W.G. Buncamper Road #33, Philipsburg Sint Maarten

Attn: Careers [Careers@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:Careers@sintmaartengov.org)  
Eva Lista-de Weever [Eva.lista-deweever@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:Eva.lista-deweever@sintmaartengov.org)  
Annan Benjamin [Annan.Benjamin@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:Annan.Benjamin@sintmaartengov.org)

Deadline to submit application is January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022



Tune in to the Official Government Station SXMGOV Radio 107.9 FM





Royce de Vries (left) with his father Peter R. de Vries who was murdered in Amsterdam in July 2021.

## Murdered crime reporter had asked for protection, son says

AMSTERDAM--Crime journalist Peter R. de Vries, who was murdered in July, did not want personal security

but did ask for other forms of protection, but talks with security organisers did not proceed smoothly, De Vries'

son Royce de Vries said on Sunday during Nieuwsuur.

"Conversations about security did not always go well," De Vries' son said. He added that there was a pattern of unanswered or late emails and phone calls.

In a previously unseen Nieuwsuur interview with Peter de Vries recorded in February, the crime journalist spoke about the lawyer Derk Wiersum, who was gunned down in front of his house in 2019. Wiersum's client was Crown witness in the "Marengo" trial of Nabil B.

De Vries said he did not know whether Wiersum had refused personal protection, but said other forms of protection also exist "with cameras and all the technology there is today." The same applied to B.'s brother, who was also killed, De Vries said.

"It was something you could have seen coming," Peter de Vries said about the murder of Wiersum. Other people who were involved in the Marengo process were already targeted. The fact that the government's role in the case was never investigated is because there are "many people who are interested in not exposing the truth due to the large number of serious mistakes that were made," De Vries said.

After the murder of Wiersum, Peter de Vries decided to become B.'s confidant. De Vries said he realised the danger he was in. "Anyone who helps B. is at risk," De Vries said in February.

His son Royce told Nieuwsuur that his father still wanted to continue because it "showed Wiersum's murderer: You can do this, but there will always be people who will take Wiersum's place."

The Dutch Safety Board is currently investigating the security of Peter de Vries. At the request of his family, this investigation was broadened to include the security of Wiersum and B.'s brother.

## Islands/Dutch Kingdom 19 Opposition criticises 'late' policy that led to lockdown

THE HAGUE--Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) have criticised the government for doing too little to prevent the latest lockdown, in an emergency parliamentary debate on the severe restrictions which came into force on Sunday.

Maarten Hijink, for the Socialist Party, was blisteringly critical: "Other countries are taking less extensive measures because they don't have their backs against the wall like this government," he said. "There's no space in healthcare, the booster campaign is too late, measures were taken too late and this is why we have our backs against this wall."

Meanwhile Nülüfer Gündoğan, MP for Volt, pointed out the lack of a long-term strategy. "I've handed in motion after motion calling for a long-term strategy that could have been employed when infections were low," she said. "If we had done this, we wouldn't be in the trouble we're in now."

Aukje de Vries, MP for the VVD, defended the government's actions – particularly a loosening of restrictions and distancing rules in September. She said: "You can choose to have rules for a very long time, but I think that is hard to explain to win people's support, for their well-being and for businesses,

when at that moment hospital and intensive care occupancy did not indicate doing this."

She added that once urgent matters are dealt with, the government does need to change its strategy. "We do need to look at long-term policy for this winter, for the next winters and for the next pandemic," she said.

A Dutch coalition deal was agreed on last week, 271 days after the general election and 11 months since the government resigned over the childcare benefits scandal. Prime Minister Mark Rutte will put together a new and extended cabinet during the current winter break.

## Exception for Caribbean islands in case of compulsory testing

AMSTERDAM--The new entry rules of the Netherlands for travellers outside the European Union (EU) do not apply to the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. From December 22, all travellers from outside the EU or Schengen countries must carry a negative test result, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated or not.

The evidence to be submitted is of a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test up to 48 hours before departure or an antigen test up to 24 hours before departure. In addition, travellers from very-high-risk areas must always be quarantined for 10 days from Wednesday. This rule also applies to travellers with a vaccination or recovery certificate. This quarantine period can be shortened with

a negative test at the Public Health Department GGD on the fifth day of quarantine.

The new rules do not apply to travellers from Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

Travellers who cannot show proof of vaccination must be able to present a negative test result. A recovery certificate is also valid for residents within the EU.

The Netherlands is still a very-high-risk area for Curaçao due to the high number of coronavirus infections. All travellers ages 12 years and older must show a negative PCR test result for their stay in Curaçao, which is not older than 48 hours before departure. This rule also applies to people who are fully vaccinated.

## 'Prikspijt' selected as Dutch word of the year

AMSTERDAM--"Prikspijt", a new word for regretting getting a vaccination, has been voted Dutch "word of the year" after a social media campaign, reports dictionary-maker Van Dale.

The word had 82.2 per cent of almost 49,000 votes cast, followed by "woonprotest" (protests about the Dutch housing crisis) and "wappiegeluid" (a derogatory term applied to COVID-19 conspiracy theorists).

Van Dale defines "prikspijt" as "a feeling of regret someone has about having been vaccinated against any infectious disease". Ton den Boon, editor in chief at Dikke van Dale, told NOS Radio 1 Journaal. He said the vote was driven by a Twitter campaign and "mirrors the polarisation in society around the vaccination and booster shots."

Other words that were in the shortlist included the vacuum left by lack of contact ("intimiteitsvacuüm"), feeling like you are stuck in your cave after lockdowns ("grot-syndroom") and the social division caused by debates about vaccination ("prikpolarisatie").

Belgium, meanwhile, voted for the far more uplifting "knaaldrang", the desire to party once again.



Jaap van Dissel

## Van Dissel: Omicron responsible for up to 15 per cent of infections

THE HAGUE--Coronavirus infections and hospital admissions are continuing to decline, but the rapid spread of the Omicron variant poses a serious risk, health chiefs said on Tuesday.

Jaap van Dissel, director of the centre for disease control at National Institute for Public Health and the Environment RIVM, said the new variant was currently responsible for between 10 and 15 per cent of infections, but cases were doubling every two and a half days.

He said pressure on the healthcare system would increase in the next few weeks, even with the lockdown that came into force on Sunday. "Even with a rapid lockdown we can expect 100 to 150 intensive care admissions per day,

assuming Omicron leads to the same number of hospital admissions as the Delta variant," Van Dissel told a technical briefing in parliament.

He added that there was no evidence so far to show that Omicron was less likely to cause severe illness than previous strains of coronavirus.

The latest weekly bulletin from the RIVM showed total infections were down by 18.6 per cent in the last seven days, with another 94,864 cases reported. The positivity rate increased by 0.5 per cent to 23.9 per cent.

Hospital admissions declined by 32.8 per cent to 1,335, the lowest weekly figure for six weeks, while 248 people were admitted to intensive care, 26.6 per cent fewer than in the pre-

vious week. The number of reported deaths was also down by 27.6 per cent to 322.

Cases fell fastest in school-age children and people over age-70, with the number of positive tests down by up to 40 per cent in the over-85s age group. The infection rate was 544 per 100,000 people, ranging from 440 in Groningen to 649 in Zuid-Holland-Zuid.

The RIVM said it expected Omicron to become the dominant strain of coronavirus before the end of the year.

The total number of positive coronavirus tests since the start of the pandemic passed the three million marks on Tuesday, with another 9,450 confirmed cases recorded by the RIVM in the past 24 hours.

# BirdsCaribbean alarmed at rise in illegal bird trafficking in Cuba

WASHINGTON, DC—BirdsCaribbean is extremely concerned at the drastic increase in the capture and trafficking of wild birds in Cuba over the past two years, and is urging the Cuban government to enforce laws put in place to curb the practice, according to a BirdsCaribbean press release.

The economic strain brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred a return to the centuries-old tradition of trapping and selling birds as a way to make a living – and it has reached un-



Birds in cages on a rooftop.

precedented levels, putting already declining populations of birds at risk. These birds are sold on social media platforms, in particular, Facebook and WhatsApp, the release states.

It adds, “The numbers are frightening. The November issue of the Cuban Birder includes a list of 36 Facebook groups that are openly selling wild birds. BirdsCaribbean recorded

daily catches from images shared by trappers in just one of these groups (with 46,000 members). Our data showed that 3,270 birds from 28 different species were captured during the month of October 2021 alone. The highest numbers of captures were of indigo buntings (2,041), painted buntings (785) and rose-breasted grosbeaks (235).”

BirdsCaribbean Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Sorenson commented on the numbers, noting that social media posts reviewed only reflect a fraction of the actual numbers trapped and sold.

“It is sobering and worrying that so many birds were removed from the wild in the space of one month. When you consider all the Facebook groups dedicated to the trafficking of birds, paired with sales made via alternative social networks, such as WhatsApp, the dire extent of the situation becomes clear – that bird captures likely add up to tens of thousands of birds each season,” Dr. Sorenson lamented.

The ease of selling wild birds online provides an opportunity for residents to substantially boost their income. Many sales of captured birds are local, but international demand has also increased. Trappers obtain high prices for a Cuban bullfinch (negrito) or a tomeguín del pinar (Cuban grassquit) among the Cuban-American community in Florida, according to the release, adding that the capture and sale of these birds has become a part of the international wildlife trade, which often has links to organised crime.

## Impact on bird populations

The Cuban archipelago is a critical area for migratory species, many of which are already in decline in their breeding territories in North America, the release explains. Some use Cuba as a stopover to rest and refuel during their long migrations to countries in Central and South America; others spend many months wintering in Cuba. The tired, hungry birds arrive in large flocks on the coast, giving trappers the opportunity to catch thousands.

They use abrasive, often cruel methods, including the use of lyre traps spread with glue. Many birds suffer and die in the process. Migratory birds account

for approximately 70 per cent of the bird population on Cuba, with some species spending at least half of each year on the island. The brightly-coloured painted bunting, indigo bunting and rose-breasted grosbeak are among the most targeted birds for capture. Many of these species are on the US Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern 2020 List. This list identifies species that may warrant Endangered Species status in the near future if immediate conservation actions are not taken, according to the release.

Some iconic endemic bird species are also targeted by trappers, including the Cuban bullfinch, a popular bird for singing competitions, the Cuban grassquit, Cuban parrot and Cuban parakeet. Some of these birds are categorised as Threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The increase in trapping comes at a time when the very survival of Caribbean birds is in jeopardy. Wild bird populations have been severely impacted by climate change and resulting extreme weather events, as well as habitat loss due to development. A recent study found that nearly three billion birds have been lost since 1970, the release states.

It adds, “BirdsCaribbean would like to express its deep appreciation to the dedicated Cuban ornithologists and conservationists who continue to work diligently on this issue through education and outreach initiatives. It is vital to build on their valuable work through an expanded national environmental education campaign in schools, communities, and national media. This sensitisation should target children and young people, who are increasingly involved in the illegal trade. It is essential to also inspire changes in behaviour and attitudes of older Cubans and families, who traditionally keep birds as pets.

“It is also vital to invest in alternative and sustainable ways to make a living, providing incentives for Cuban citizens to protect wildlife instead of destroying it. Community-based tourism, including bird and nature guides and engaging citizens in birding as a hobby, as well as citizen science

monitoring programmes such as eBird, could be expanded.”

Cuba reopened to tourism on November 15 and its population is now approximately 87 per cent vaccinated. As tourists return, community tourism, including eco-tourism and nature guiding, could be expanded as alternative livelihoods, catering for an increasingly environmentally conscious tourism market – benefiting all involved, the release suggests.

It continues, “At BirdsCaribbean, we believe in long-term, sustainable solutions that benefit both nature and the local community. In collaboration with our partners in Cuba, whom we have long supported, we have been working to educate communities on the beauty and value of wild birds. Birds provide essential ecosystem services that are critical for the health of communities and quality of life.

“Cuba is a signatory to international treaties aimed at the conservation of species and the island’s biodiversity in general, such as the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. It is also a contracting party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1990, and has an excellent record of protecting its natural resources through establishing many parks and protected areas throughout the country.”

BirdsCaribbean concludes, “We are urgently appealing to the Cuban government to take stronger action to protect its migratory and endemic birds, a vital piece of their natural heritage and national pride. We ask the international conservation community to help Cuba in its efforts to put a stop to bird trapping and trafficking. Efforts to raise the level of awareness of Cuba’s unique avifauna – many of which are significantly declining in numbers – must also continue.”

To learn more about this issue and view photos and videos, visit: <https://www.birdscaribbean.org/2021/12/birdscaribbean-expresses-alarm-at-the-escalating-illegal-bird-trafficking-problem-in-cuba/> or Youtube page: <https://bit.ly/BirdTrappingYoutube>.



Caskets draped in a Haitian flag are displayed at a mass funeral for victims of a fuel truck explosion, in Cap-Haitien, Haiti, on December 21. Photo credit Reuters/Ralph Tedy Erol.

# Haitians mourn victims of fuel truck blast as anger simmers

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Haitians on Tuesday mourned victims of a fuel truck blast that killed ninety people last week, though many stayed home out of anger at the government amid a string of tragedies in a Caribbean nation plagued by gang violence, poverty and political turmoil.

The coffins of several of the victims, some draped in Haitian flags and flowers, were carried by firefighters through the streets to a church in Cap-Haitien, the country’s second-largest city, where the explosion took place.

The death toll from the accident soared to 90 in little over a week as authorities pieced through the rubble, identifying the charred remains of many still missing following the massive blast. Others have since died in the hospital.

Residents facing chronic fuel shortages had flocked to the truck after it tipped

over a week ago, hoping to extract fuel from it. Instead, the truck exploded, engulfing them and neighbourhood homes in flames, officials said.

Residents interviewed by Reuters who attended the funeral said the government had not done enough for those who lost loved ones or their homes following the explosion, providing little support or relief.

“The government shouldn’t treat us like this,” said mourner Charite Jean, who lost 15 relatives in the blaze. “Where is the international community?”

Guylaine Charles, a neighbourhood resident who lost seven of her children in the explosion, held a separate funeral in protest of the state’s treatment.

She told Reuters she’d been unable to find the remains of five of them after they were swept into a mass grave.

“The Haitian state came

with ... loaders and picked them all up. They threw them away without any conditions, without even the chance to identify our loved ones,” she told Reuters.

The accident has cemented among some Haitians a sense of a societal crisis that has stirred anger against the government.

Kidnappings and violence have soared this year, added to the still-unresolved assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July. Weeks later, a devastating earthquake killed more than 2,000 people.

Fuel supplies in Haiti were severely limited in October and November after a coalition of gangs blocked transport trucks from accessing fuel port terminals in a bid to force the resignation of interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry. The gangs last month lifted the blockade, but Haitians continue struggling to obtain gasoline and diesel fuel. ~ Reuters ~

# European Union-financed PPE and test kits given to Jamaica

KINGSTON, Jamaica--In a handover ceremony on December 15, the European Union (EU) together with the Caribbean Public Health Agency CARPHA provided the government of Jamaica with a donation of personal protective equipment (PPE) and laboratory supplies. The consignment included 12,500 N95 respirators, 18,750 isolation gowns and 60 viral RNA test kits, according to a CARPHA press release.

The supplies were procured through the Programme of Support for Health Security Strengthening for Prevention and Control of Outbreaks of Communicable Diseases in the Caribbean, which is being implemented by CARPHA and financed by the EU.

"We at CARPHA are pleased to provide support to the government and people of Jamaica in their continued fight against COVID-19. This ceremony today [December 15 - Ed.] signals our continued efforts to aid

the citizens of our Member States. CARPHA works closely with Member States to identify needs and provides support as necessary," said Dr. Joy St. John, Executive Director of CARPHA, who joined the ceremony remotely from the agency's headquarters in Trinidad.

"The European Union has provided support to aid CARPHA Member States' national COVID-19 preparedness and response and has financed the procurement of much-needed medical supplies, inclusive of personal protective equipment and laboratory equipment. The provision of PPE and test kits to Jamaica would not have been possible without this support. The PPE will help front-line workers to stay safe while performing their duties amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The test kits capable of producing 15,000 tests (250 tests per kit) will go a long way to help Jamaica conduct tests expeditiously, thus contributing to detecting infections early," she added.

Fredrik Ekfeldt, acting Chargé d'Affaires European Union Delegation to Jamaica stated, "This supply of equipment is only one of the many interventions supported through our grant funding with CARPHA. Additional equipment and technical assistance form part of a shared strategic approach, aimed at strengthening the capacity of public health systems in the region to deliver quality and efficient health services.

"The scientists tell us that vaccination of the majority of the population is an absolute certainty to reduce the effects of this pandemic. I would like to thank CARPHA for their continuous work in public health with the countries of the Caribbean region; and the government of Jamaica for affording the EU this opportunity to partner on this and other interventions as together we fight against COVID-19," he added.

Receiving the commodities, Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn, Minister of State, Ministry of Health & Wellness, Jamaica, said, "Our nation is pleased to note the programme funding provided by the EU, a longstanding international partner, and CARPHA's leadership and its implementation as it moves the region towards improved public health and sustainable health security. These continue to be valuable partnerships symbolising international and regional coordination that effectively supports the

island in the face of public health emergencies. Today's [Wednesday, December 15.] ceremony shows that strengthening health systems in Caribbean populations is a priority."

The EU grant seeks to improve health security and strengthen the capacity of CARPHA Member States for the detection, surveillance, prevention, control and response to epidemics of communicable diseases, such as COVID-19, the release states. The grant supports CARPHA Member

States' national COVID-19 preparedness and response and has financed the procurement of requisite medical supplies. The grant is part of the much larger programme to strengthen health systems for Universal Health Coverage. The Secretariat of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), an important partner of CARPHA, has supported the agency's access to these important resources for its regional COVID-19 response, the release concludes.



From left: Gabrio Marinuzzi, Attaché, Cooperation Section, Delegation of the European Union to Jamaica, Belize, The Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands; Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn, Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Wellness, Jamaica; Nicole Ennis, Head, CARPHA Medicines Quality and Control Surveillance Department; and Fredrik Ekfeldt, acting Chargé d'Affaires European Union Delegation to Jamaica.

## IWC helps 2 charities

HAMILTON, Bermuda--Two charities have been given a holiday boost from the International Women's Club (IWC).

The IWC donated US \$9,000 to the Women's Resource Centre to support its Transformational Living Centre's (TLC's) education and life skills programme.

The soon-to-be-opened TLC on Parson's Road, Pembroke, was established to help homeless mothers and their children get back on track.

Outgoing executive director of the Women's Resource Centre, Elaine Butterfield said: "This gift will allow us to support and provide tools to women and their families who are underperforming in life and enable them to not just survive but to thrive."

The IWC also donated \$2,600 to the Bermuda Diabetes Association (BDA) to support the charity's educational programmes - particularly cookery demonstrations intended to help mothers make affordable and healthy meals.

BDA Executive Director Kim Day said the grant would help prevent type two diabetes in those at risk and help people who already had the condition to manage it. ~ The Royal Gazette ~

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# With warning for unvaccinated, Biden lays out plan to fight surging Omicron

WASHINGTON--U.S. President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday more federal vaccination and testing sites would open to tackle a surge in COVID-19 driven by the Omicron variant, and said 500 million free at-home rapid tests will be available to Americans starting in January.

Biden offered both a warning to the unvaccinated, who he said have "good reason to be concerned," and reassurance that those who are inoculated can gather for the holidays despite the new variant sweeping the country.

"No this is not March of 2020," Biden told reporters at the White House. "Two hundred million people are fully vaccinated, we're prepared, we know more."

Striking a dire tone about the risks to the one-in-four American adults who are not fully vaccinated, Biden said they "have a significantly higher risk of ending up in the hospital or even dying."

Biden noted that former

President Donald Trump has also received his booster shot. "Maybe one of the few things he and I agree on," he said.

The measures laid out on Tuesday include activating new pop-up vaccination clinics run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and federal testing sites starting this week, including in hot spot New York City. Biden also said that some 1,000 military medical doctors, nurses and medics have been deployed to support hospitals already being overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients in some areas.

Biden's pandemic response has been criticized for focusing on vaccines at the detriment of testing and masking, and for underestimating the impact of the anti-vaccine movement in the United States. In his speech, Biden said Americans had a patriotic duty to get vaccinated and called out social media companies and TV networks for "peddling lies and allow-

ing misinformation that can kill their own customers."

The new federal measures will not be fully in place by Christmas, leaving many Americans scrambling to find available tests ahead of holiday gatherings and travel - and confused about whether it is safe to press ahead with their plans.

The Omicron variant, which was first detected last month and now accounts for 73% of U.S. cases, is causing infections to double in 1.5 to 3 days, according to the World Health Organization. It is not yet known whether it causes more serious illness than the Delta variant.

The rapid rise of infections is once again disrupting life across the country, cancelling events from Broadway shows to professional sports. In New York, Washington and other U.S. cities there were long lines for COVID-19 tests as people sought to find out if they were infected before celebrating the holidays.

"If I don't I could take a



A boy receives a vaccination dose for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at a McDonald's, as the Omicron coronavirus variant spreads through the country, in Chicago, Illinois, U.S., on Tuesday.

chance of sending it home to my family, and I'm not trying to do that," said Ronald Tives as he lined up in Washington's Farragut Square on Tuesday.

The January rollout of 500 million at-home rapid tests that Americans will be able to order online adds to Biden's plan announced earlier this month that called on health insurers to provide test kits at no cost to individuals with coverage, also

expected to begin in January. Top White House medical adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday the government also is mulling reducing the recommended 10-day quarantine time for people who get infected to help asymptomatic people return to work or school.

With new infections spiking, local officials are also taking steps to encourage vaccinations, including boosters, and increase testing and mitiga-

tion measures. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on Tuesday a \$100 incentive for residents who get a COVID-19 vaccine booster at city-run sites by the end of the year.

Chicago will require patrons to present proof of COVID-19 vaccinations for entry to restaurants, bars, gyms and some other indoor spaces, effective Jan. 3, Mayor Lori Lightfoot said on Tuesday.

# Republicans see election opportunity in Biden border struggles

WASHINGTON--The leading Republican vying to unseat an Arizona Democrat in a crucial U.S. Senate race next year gets heated when he talks about Democratic President Joe Biden's "failed border policies," occasionally throwing in expletives when decrying their alleged financial cost and what he says is the threat they pose to Americans.

The candidate, Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich, is betting the message will resonate with voters Republicans need to mobilize in the 2022 elections to change the balance of power in Congress. "Immigration in and of itself is not a bad thing," Brnovich, himself the son of immigrants from Montenegro and Croatia, said in an interview with Reuters. "But illegal immigration undermines the rule of law."

Echoing some of the hard-line rhetoric of Republican former President Donald Trump, Brnovich supports the construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico and tougher immigration enforcement.

His opponent, incumbent Democratic Senator Mark Kelly, is a well-known retired astronaut and husband to former U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords. His seat has been rated as vulnerable



A group of asylum seekers from Mexico, Cuba and Haiti are detained by U.S. Border Patrol in San Luis, Arizona, U.S., April 19, 2021.

by election trackers after he won a close victory in a special election last year.

While the Arizona race is one of the most high-profile contests where immigration has emerged as an attack line for Republicans, the strategy is not limited to the Southwestern border state. Republicans across the country are targeting the policy vulnerability for Biden, whose administration has struggled to curb record arrests of migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border. Some critics say he has failed to find a consistent approach on immigration, keeping some Trump policies in place while rolling back others, inviting attacks on

both the right and left.

"We have gone heavily on offense," said Emma Vaughn, national press secretary for the Republican National Committee, which plays a central role in shaping the party's election strategy. "Immigration doesn't just impact border towns; it impacts Americans everywhere."

Reuters polling backs up the idea that immigration is a prime motivator for likely Republican voters. A Reuters opinion survey in October of nearly 1,600 Republicans found immigration topped the list of issues that would make them "very angry" if the government acted

in opposition to their views.

Democrats, on the other hand, did not rank immigration in any of their top 12 anger-provoking issues. Researchers have found anger is more likely to encourage voting compared with other emotions.

Heading into the November 2022 midterm elections, Democrats currently control both chambers of Congress by a narrow margin. The Senate has 48 Democrats and two independents who caucus with them to 50 Republicans, giving Vice President Kamala Harris a tie-breaking vote. In the House of Representatives, Democrats hold 221 seats to the Republicans'

213, with one seat vacant.

As attorney general, Brnovich filed four lawsuits this year challenging Biden's immigration actions, including a lawsuit that said Biden failed to assess the environmental effects of illegal immigration, such as pollution and stress on natural resources.

Democrat Kelly has also criticized Biden's approach to the southern border at times, most recently sending a Dec. 16 letter to the president calling on him to close existing gaps in Arizona's border barriers. At the same time, Kelly urged Biden to restore areas damaged by Trump-era border wall construction.

"Your administration must make it a priority to address these issues," Kelly wrote. "Arizona deserves better from Washington on the border."

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said it would take steps to close "small gaps" remaining from previous border wall construction and perform other construction work, with a focus on a stretch of the border in Arizona.

Kelly's tougher border stance contrasts with most of his Democratic colleagues, who disdain Trump's immigration tactics, a reflection

of the threat immigration-focused attacks on the incumbent could pose in the race. Biden took office in January promising to roll back almost all of Trump's restrictive immigration measures, but he has so far been stymied by internal tensions within his administration and ongoing court battles.

Some of the friction has been evident on the president's Domestic Policy Council. The council's director, Susan Rice, has tended to push for tougher enforcement at the border, clashing at times with her own more liberal staffers, according to a former U.S. official with knowledge of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Immigrant advocates who joined the Biden administration have been disappointed with his approach to the border, including the mass deportation of Haitians caught trying to cross from Mexico, a second official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters. Some Biden officials have acknowledged internally that large numbers of migrants arriving at the border could derail the president's broader immigration agenda, Reuters reported earlier this year.

# Putin says Russia has 'nowhere to retreat' over Ukraine

MOSCOW--President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russia had no room to retreat in a stand-off with the United States over Ukraine and would be forced into a tough response unless the West dropped its "aggressive line".

Putin addressed his remarks to military officials as Russia pressed for an urgent U.S. and NATO reply to proposals it made last week for a binding set of security guarantees from the West.

"What the U.S. is doing in Ukraine is at our doorstep... And they should understand that we have nowhere further to retreat to. Do they think we'll just watch idly?" Putin said. "If the aggressive line of our Western colleagues continues, we will take adequate military-technical response measures and react harshly to unfriendly steps."

Putin did not spell out the nature of these measures but his phrasing mirrored that used previously by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who has warned that Russia may re-deploy intermediate-range



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu attend a military exhibition before an expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board in Moscow, Russia on Tuesday.

nuclear missiles in Europe in response to what it regards as NATO plans to do the same.

Russia rejects Ukrainian and U.S. accusations that it may be preparing an invasion of Ukraine as early as next month by tens of thousands of Russian troops poised within reach of the border. It says it needs pledges from the West - including a promise

not to conduct NATO military activity in Eastern Europe - because its security is threatened by Ukraine's growing ties with the Western alliance and the possibility of NATO missiles being deployed against it on Ukrainian territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Friday that he was ready to meet Russia for "direct talks, tête-à-tête, we don't

A Kremlin statement said Putin stressed in a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron that reconvening the four-power Normandy group - which brings together the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany - would require concrete steps by Kyiv to implement existing peace agreements. Ukraine says it is Russia and its proxies who are refusing to engage.

With Western powers keen to show Russia they are solid in their support of Ukraine and NATO, Germany's new Chancellor Olaf Scholz also spoke by phone with Putin.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday ruled out an in-person meeting between Biden and Putin for now. "I think we have to see if, in the first instance, there's any progress diplomatically," Blink-

en said in a news briefing when asked if an in-person summit could happen to try to ease the tensions.

Karen Donfried, the U.S. State Department's top diplomat for Europe, said in a briefing with reporters that Washington was prepared to engage with Moscow via three channels - bilaterally, through the NATO-Russia Council that last met in 2019, and at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the meantime, she said, the United States would continue to send military equipment and supplies to Ukraine in the weeks and months ahead - something that has antagonised Moscow.

"As President (Joe) Biden has told President Putin, should Russia further invade Ukraine, we will provide additional defensive

*Continued on page 28*

## 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 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and the office is also closed.

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

Happy Holidays.

### STICHTING VOORTGEZET ONDERWIJS

P.O. Box 913  
C. E. Voges Street 14B  
Philipsburg  
SINT MAARTEN

Phone : +1 721 542 3427 / 542 3190  
Fax: +1 721 542 2329  
E-mail: [svobe@svobe.org](mailto:svobe@svobe.org)

#### The Foundation for Secondary Education (S.V.O.B.E.)

has vacancies for the following teaching positions effective August 1st, 2022 in connection with the schoolyear 2022-2023.

**Milton Peters College and Sundial School are the schools that form part of the Foundation for Secondary Education S.V.O.B.E.**

**Duties & responsibilities:**

- Teaching specific subject areas to our students.
- Apply various didactic methods and techniques.
- Guiding students in their learning process.

**Education & experience requirements:**

Language of instruction Dutch		
• French/Frans	2 fte	Master's & Bachelor's degree
• Mathematics/Wiskunde	2 fte	Master's & Bachelor's degree
• Dutch/Nederlands	2 fte	Master's & Bachelor's degree
• Spanish/Spaans		Bachelor's degree
• Music/Muziek		Bachelor's degree
• Geschiedenis/M&M/ASW		Bachelor's degree
• Bouwkunde		Bachelor's degree

Language of instruction English		
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• Hospitality Food Preparation and Services		Bachelor's degree

**Conditions:**

We offer a salary that is in accordance with your qualifications, experience and lies within the regulation of The Government of St. Maarten salary scale.

The employment contract will be for the scholastic year 2022-2023. There may be a possibility for a two (2) or three (3) year employment contract.

**Applications:**

All interested candidates should submit their application no later than **February 11th, 2022** addressed to the Human Resources Manager of SVOBE, **Mrs. B.A. Davis-Gijsbertha** to the abovementioned email address and **MUST** carbon copy the National Employment Service Center (NESC) via [apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org).

Applicants should include an application letter, copy of identification, a complete CV, copies of diplomas, copies of diploma transcripts, photo and references.

**Suitable applicants will be contacted for an interview.**

## Man pleads not guilty to murder of British MP

LONDON--A man accused of stabbing to death British lawmaker David Amess at a church where he was meeting voters in October pleaded not guilty to a court hearing on Tuesday.

Ali Harbi Ali, 25, the son of an ex-media adviser to a former prime minister of Somalia, is accused of repeatedly knifing Amess in a church hall where he was meeting voters in his constituency.

The suspect, who is charged with murder and preparing acts of terrorism, pleaded not guilty on both counts. He is due to stand trial in March next year.

The killing of 69-year-old Amess, a father of five children, five years after another British member of parliament was murdered on the street, prompted calls for better protection of lawmakers.

A member of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party, he was attacked at the Bel-fairs Methodist Church in Leigh-on-Sea, northeast of London, and died there despite the efforts of paramedics.

British lawmakers regularly hold "surgeries", or one-to-one meetings with voters in their constituencies, a tradition considered a bedrock of democracy. But with little or no security and an emphasis on access for all, surgeries can make lawmakers vulnerable.



Cardinal Peter Turkson attends a news conference for the presentation of Pope Francis' message for 2022 World Day of Peace at the Vatican, on Tuesday.

## Spend on education, not weapons, pope says in annual peace message

VATICAN CITY--Nations should divert money spent on armaments to invest in education, Pope Francis says in a yearly peace message, decrying growing military costs at the expense of social services.

In his message issued on Tuesday for the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, which is celebrated on Jan. 1, Francis also called for a better balance between a free market economy and the need to help the needy and protect the environment.

He dedicated about a third of the four-page message to education, saying there had been a "significant reduction" in education and training spending worldwide while military expenditure had increased beyond the levels at the end of the Cold War and "seem certain to grow exorbitantly". He did not give any

sources for the statistics.

"It is high time, then, that governments develop economic policies aimed at inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry," he said in the message, which is sent to heads of state and international organisations.

"The pursuit of a genuine process of international disarmament can only prove beneficial for the development of peoples and nations, freeing up financial resources better used for health care, schools, infrastructure, care of the land and so forth," he said.

The proportions of military and education spending differ from country to country, but positions on what to increase and what to cut often follow partisan lines. A poll by the Pew Research Center in 2019 showed that in the United

States, 84% of Democrats favoured more spending on education versus 56 percent of Republicans and that 56% of Republicans wanted more military spending as opposed to 26% of Democrats.

Francis has called for disarmament, a ban on nuclear weapons and has said that military funds should also be diverted into the fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and research to prevent future pandemics.

"Despite numerous efforts aimed at constructive dialogue between nations, the deafening noise of war and conflict is intensifying. While diseases of pandemic proportions are spreading, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are worsening, the tragedy of hunger and thirst is increasing," he said in the message.

## EU sets 9-month validity of vaccinations for travel pass

BRUSSELS--The European Commission on Tuesday adopted rules that will make the European Union COVID-19 certificate valid for travel nine months after the completion of the primary vaccination schedule.

The proposal comes as several EU states introduce additional requirements on travellers in a bid to reduce the spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant. EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders told Reuters the EU Commission was against additional requirements, and was assessing the measures.

The new rules will be binding on the 27 EU states from Feb. 1. The rule can be blocked by a qualified majority of EU governments or a simple majority of European Parliament members, but officials have said there is sufficient support for it. The rule replaces a non-binding recommendation the EU Commission put forward in November.

Once the rule is effective, EU states will be obliged to let fully vaccinated travellers with a valid pass access their territory. However, as an exception justified by a deteriorating situation, they could still impose further requirements, such as negative tests or quarantines, as long as they are proportionate.

Seven EU states are currently requiring fully vaccinated travellers from other EU countries to also show a negative COVID-19 test upon arrival, measures some see as damaging the credibility of the EU

pass. The states are Italy, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Latvia, Cyprus and Austria.

"We prefer to use for the free movement in Europe only the certificate without additional measures," Reynders said.

He noted that the additional requirements could be justified by concerns caused by the spread of the Omicron variant, but governments had to prove they were proportionate and necessary. The Commission was still assessing the measures, Reynders said, adding that infringements proceedings for time-limited restrictions made little sense.

The national measures are mostly limited to the Christmas period, although Italy's extend until the end of January. The new rules apply only for international travel.

Governments will be able to have a different duration of the COVID-19 pass for access to events or indoor activities within their territories. After a booster shot, the validity of the COVID-19 pass will be extended further without a set limit, because at the moment there is not enough information about the duration of protection from boosters, an EU official said.

A primary vaccination schedule for COVID-19 is currently composed in the EU of two shots of vaccines produced by Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca and Moderna, or a single jab of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

## France vaccination pass set to replace health pass in January

PARIS--France will pass a law transforming its health pass needed to exercise some professions and to go to cinemas and bars into a "vaccination" pass in the first half of January, the government said on Tuesday.

"The wave awaiting us will be high," government spokesman Gabriel Attal told journalists, adding that the Omicron variant accounts for 20% of new COVID-19 infections in France and is spreading rapidly, particularly in the Paris region.

He added that in the last 24 hours, France had registered around 73,000 new infections.

The main aim of a vaccination pass will be to do away with the option of obtaining a valid certificate by testing negative instead of having the jabs. However, the government ditched the idea of making the pass mandatory at the workplace, a measure France's Labour Minister had tested out in recent talks with unions and employers. "There is no consensus for this measure", Attal said.

A draft law will be discussed by the government in an off-schedule meeting on Monday, and subject to a vote in parliament in the first two weeks of January, Attal said, speeding up an initial government plan to pass the new law by late January.

In contrast to other European governments, Attal on Tuesday ruled out further restrictions, saying that the country had the means to battle the next wave of cases with its vaccination campaign and mass testing and reinforced controls.



A demonstrator holds a placard that reads "No to the health passport" as people attend a demonstration called by French political party "Les Patriotes" against COVID-19 health pass as France sees an increase in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases and hospitalisations, in Paris, France, December 18, 2021.

# Japan to pay \$9.33 bln for US forces over five years to 2026

TOKYO--Japan has agreed with the United States to pay 1.06 trillion yen (\$9.33 billion) to share the upkeep of U.S. forces stationed in Japan over five years from next April, Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Tuesday.

That amounts to 211 billion yen a year, up from 201.7 billion yen for the current year ending March 2022. About 54,000 U.S. military personnel are sta-

tioned in Japan.

"With the security environment surrounding Japan getting tougher, we have been negotiating (with the U.S.) to support the stable presence of the U.S. forces and strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance's deterrence and response capability," Hayashi said.

A spokesperson for the U.S. State Department confirmed that agreement has been reached on the issue.

"We can confirm that representatives of the Governments of the United States

and Japan have reached consensus on the contents of a new proposed Special Measures Agreement and Host Nation Support Framework between the United States and Japan, the spokesperson said, referring to the financing agreements. "This demonstrates the strength of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, which is the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and beyond."

The United States and Japan are long-term allies and have deepened their cooperation in recent years



F-35C prepares to catapult from the deck of the USS Carl Vinson in the Western Pacific, south of Japan, November 30, 2021.

## Punches thrown in Ghana parliament over electronic payments tax

ACCRA--A brawl broke out on the floor of Ghana's parliament late on Monday as lawmakers debated a proposed tax on electronic transactions that has divided the house for weeks.

The 1.75% e-levy, which would include taxes on mobile money payments, has been fiercely challenged by the opposition since it was first proposed last month and held up the passing of the national budget.

Members of parliament rushed the front of the chamber after Deputy Speaker Joseph Osei-Owusu suggested the tax be debated and voted upon under a hastened "urgency" procedure. Some threw punches and grappled while others restrained their colleagues. A vote on whether to proceed with the urgency procedure was postponed to Jan. 18.

"We need to demonstrate to the country that our democracy is growing, and will not suffer some of these unacceptable sins and spectacles we've witnessed on the floor," minority leader Haruna Iddrisu said on Tuesday.

Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta argues that the levy would widen the tax net and raise an additional 6.9 billion Ghanaian cedi (\$1.15 billion) in 2022. But his proposal was met with boos and jeers in parliament when it was first announced. Those opposed to the levy say it would disproportionately affect lower-income people and those outside the formal banking system who rely heavily on mobile money transfers, reducing overall economic



China will give pregnant women the right to choose a caesarean birth for babies even if husbands object, state media reported on Tuesday.

# China to give women right to decide on a caesarean birth

BEIJING--China will give pregnant women the right to choose a caesarean birth for babies even if husbands object, state media reported on Tuesday, one of the latest steps to safeguard women's rights in a society in which traditions can play a powerful role.

China's top law-making body, the standing committee of parliament, is meeting this week to discuss bills, including a draft amendment to the Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law, which was first passed in 1992. He Yiting, a parliament official for societal issues, said that while the law had been in place for years, some old problems had not been resolved while some new ones had arisen as society and the economy progressed, the Beijing News reported. Currently, a hospital can

only let a pregnant women deliver by caesarean section if her husband approves. Under the law, women are supposed to enjoy equal rights but in reality their options and decisions on getting married, having children or having a career are often constrained by pressure from the family or authorities. For decades China imposed a tough one-child policy aimed at limiting population growth.

Some Chinese families believe that caesarean-sections can harm the baby and the mother will take longer to recover from the birth, possibly delaying the time when she's ready to have another baby. The rule requiring a husband's permission led to a case in 2017 in which a pregnant woman jumped to her death at a hospital because she was in pain and her husband ob-

jected to a caesarean, the hospital said at the time.

Under the proposed new rules, if a pregnant woman and her family have different opinions about a delivery, the hospital should respect the woman's wish, said He.

Beijing scrapped the one-child policy in 2016, replacing it with a two-child limit to try and stave off risks to its economy from a rapidly aging population. But that failed to result in more births given the cost of raising children, a challenge that persists. Many women now worry they could be pressed to have more babies than they want. A state-run magazine last month suggested Communist Party members could not refuse to get married or have fewer than two children without good reason.

Another State Department spokesperson said details would be released after the formal agreement is concluded in the near future.

"The proposed agreement represents a modernized, forward-looking framework under which U.S. forces in Japan help ensure security and regional stability," the official said. "It promotes greater mutual investment in defence and improvements to our forces' interoperability, and includes an increase in cost-sharing contributions

from Japan."

While in office, former U.S. President Donald Trump called for Japan to pay more for U.S. forces, saying the security treaty between the two countries dating back to 1951 was "unfair." The treaty obligates the United States to defend Japan, which under its U.S.-drafted constitution, renounced the right to wage war after World War Two. Japan in return provides military bases used by the United States to project power in Asia. (\$1 = 113.5900 yen)

# Israel set to offer fourth dose of vaccine to people over 60

JERUSALEM--Israel announced on Tuesday that it will offer a fourth dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to people older than 60, amid concern about the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

A Health Ministry expert panel recommended the fourth shot, a decision that was swiftly welcomed by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as "great news that will help us overcome the Omicron wave that is spreading around the world."

Although the decision is pending formal approval by senior health officials, Bennett urged Israelis to get the dose as soon as possible, saying: "My message is - don't waste time, go get vaccinated."

The decision follows the first known death in Israel of a patient with the Omicron variant. An Israeli hospital on Tuesday confirmed the death but said he had suffered from a number of serious pre-existing conditions.

The Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba said the

man, in his 60s, died on Monday, two weeks after he was admitted to the coronavirus ward. A hospital statement said the patient suffered from a variety of serious illnesses. "His morbidity stemmed mainly from pre-existing sicknesses and not from respiratory infection arising from the coronavirus," it said.

On Tuesday, the Health Ministry said there were at least 340 known cases of Omicron in Israel.

Israel has already this week expanded a travel ban to countries including the United States, Germany, Italy, Turkey and Canada to try to curb the spread of the virus.

Bennett's office said it had also approved reducing office attendance by 50% for public sector employees to encourage more remote work. And Defence Minister Benny Gantz ordered the military's Homefront Command to prepare for the eventuality of 5,000 new cases per day, his office said.

# Brazil shuts illegal timber schemes, sheds light on Amazon logging

BRASILIA--Brazilian environmental agents this week shut down schemes involving hundreds of companies the agents said were covering up illegal logging in the Amazon rainforest, according to government documents reviewed by Reuters.

The operation conducted by the main federal environmental enforcement agency Ibama provides a rare glimpse into how illegally cut Amazon wood is inserted into legal timber supply chains, using shell companies and faking shipments.

The enforcement operation is one of the most complete ever conducted by the environmental agency, because it caught so many of the people hiding behind or doing business with the shell companies, one Ibama agent told Reuters. Ibama identified more than 220 companies and 21 logging concessions involved in various schemes disguising the origin of illegal wood, according to the documents seen by Reuters.

The environmental agency will place embargoes on

the companies this week to prevent them from selling wood and will hand out more than 50 million reais (\$8.76 million) in fines, the documents said.

Ibama has also passed on the findings to public prosecutors and police for further criminal investigation, the documents said. Ibama did not respond to a request for comment.

The agency can issue administrative penalties like fines and embargoes but cannot make arrests or issue criminal charges. The companies and people involved can appeal the decisions with Ibama.

Under President Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's Amazon deforestation in 2021 surged to the highest level in 15 years, according to official government statistics. Bolsonaro has rolled back environmental protections and sought to introduce more mining and farming to the Amazon, saying it is needed to alleviate poverty.

Brazil permits legal logging, handing out a limited number of concessions that allow only a proportion of trees to be cut in a



A tractor is used to lift logs that were cut illegally from virgin Amazon rain forest and load them onto a barge after they were seized by federal police and government inspectors as part of the Arch of Fire operation to stop illegal logging, near Tailandia, 180 km (112 miles) south of Belem, at the mouth of the Amazon River, in this file photo.

specific area, and sets quotas capping the harvest. Those quotas are given out as credits that then accompany the wood as it is sold and resold, certifying its legal origins until it is made into a "finished product" like furniture or flooring.

But under the schemes, companies were selling the credits without the wood,

the documents said. Buyers would then attach the woodless credits to illegally sourced wood with origins such as protected nature reserves or tribal lands.

In some cases, the companies involved were shell companies that only existed on paper in order to funnel the credits, which could change hands many

times before being used, the documents said.

The scheme involved more than 102,000 cubic meters of illegally cut wood from Para, Rondonia and Mato Grosso states. That amount represents the harvest of about 97 square kilometers of forest, an area larger than Manhattan, which still pales in comparison to more than

13,000 square kilometers of deforestation officially recorded in the 12 months through July.

"That's a drop in the ocean," said Raoni Rajao, a land use expert at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, when asked about the discovery.

The Ibama operation provides an example of the most common way which illegal loggers sell their wood into the legal system, according to Rajao. "It's certainly very widespread," he said.

Most of the illegally harvested wood was sold into Brazil's domestic market for a variety of uses, said the Ibama agent, on condition of anonymity.

The final manufacturer or consumer generally has no way of knowing the wood is illegal as the timber appears to be legitimate in the government system, the agent said. Therefore, they cannot be held liable, the person said.

Selective logging to extract valuable timber is often the first step in deforestation, with the remaining forest then burned to clear land for agriculture.

## Libyan candidates talk while militias mobilise

TRIPOLI--Libya's political crisis deepened on Tuesday as some presidential candidates met in Benghazi to discuss how to tackle a collapsing electoral process that was meant to help end a decade of violence and chaos.

The meeting is the most prominent of several rounds of backroom talks over recent days between candidates, factions and foreign powers about delaying the vote and whether an interim government can meanwhile continue in power. Rival armed groups mobilised in Tripoli early on Tuesday, closing roads in the south of the capital, with schools phoning parents to pick up their children.

The presidential election was meant to take place this Friday, but without any clear agreement on rules, and with bitter disputes over the eligibility of ma-

major candidates, the process has stalled and cannot go ahead.

Hadi al-Sagheer, head of parliament's election committee, said by phone the vote would have to be delayed because there was no longer time to carry out preparatory steps, though no postponement has yet been formally announced. Candidates, factions and foreign powers involved in Libya are discussing the length of a delay, whether basic changes need to be made to rules and the vote's legal basis, and whether to replace the interim government or form a breakaway administration.

The group meeting in Benghazi, including eastern commander Khalifa Haftar and the former interior minister Fathi Bashagha from Misrata, are aligned against the interim prime minister, Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah, who is a rival can-

didate.

The interim government and the election process were created last year under a U.N.-backed roadmap to end the turmoil that followed the NATO-backed uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi. Dbeibah had promised when he was appointed not to run for office. His opponents say he should not run in the election because he has been able to use state spending to attract votes.

Haftar's candidacy is controversial in western areas after his 14-month assault on Tripoli from 2019-20, which destroyed much of the city. Another prominent candidate, Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, is also unacceptable to many Libyans.

Security tensions in Tripoli, where armed groups have surrounded major state buildings since last week, show the risks of the



An employee of the High National Election Commission sits inside his office at the headquarters of the Commission in Benghazi, Libya December 16, 2021.

political crisis aggravating existing disputes among rival military forces. While the rows are primarily local at present, major groups with footholds in various cities of western Libya are taking sides in the crisis, meaning any clashes could rapidly spread.

"At this stage it's more of a local dynamic about dis-

lodging enemies and capturing land," said Emadeddin Badi, a Libya analyst with the Atlantic Council. "But it could evolve into something a lot bigger," he said, after alliances and rivalries among factions had crystallised over recent months.

"I left my home this morning and found myself

among dozens of military vehicles," said Mohammed Ali, a 40-year old state employee in the Ain Zara district of Tripoli.

"My sister phoned me to ask her to pick her up from school because the principal told all parents to collect their children," he said. "If there are no elections, there will be a war."

## EU court: Airline passengers can claim if flight brought forward

BRUSSELS--Passengers in Europe are entitled to compensation not only if their flights are delayed but also if they are brought forward by more than an hour, the European Union's top court ruled on Tuesday.

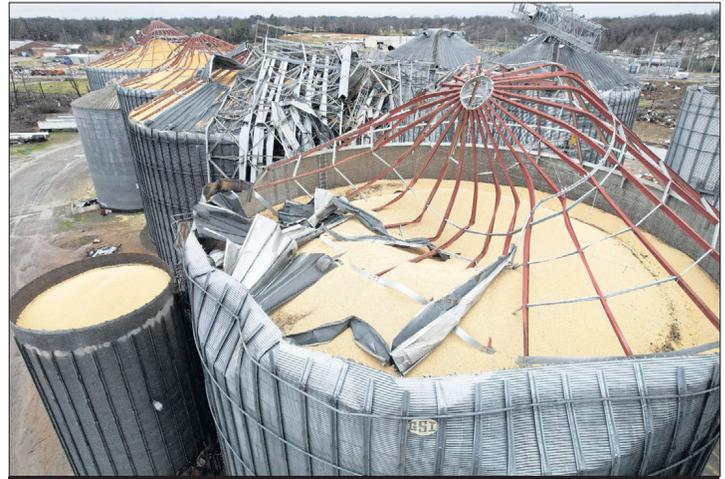
Under EU rules, passengers can claim damages if their flights are cancelled less than 14 days before departure or arrive more than three hours late or if they are denied boarding because of overbooking. Compensation, ranging from 250 to 600 euros (\$282.38-\$677.70), depends on the distance of the flight, with a possible 50% reduction if the airline offers in advance to re-route the passenger so they arrive only a few hours late.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) determined that a flight should be regarded as cancelled if it was brought forward by more than an hour. Judges reasoned that passengers could suffer the same degree of inconvenience as in the case of a delay, having to adapt their plans and even potentially missing the flight.

The compensation should also be the same as that due

for a cancellation or delay, with no right to reduce the amount by 50% on the grounds that it has offered to re-reroute a passenger so that they arrive without delay at the final destination. Airlines can still offer to re-route passengers if they do so sufficiently in advance.

The court also found that a passenger has a "confirmed reservation" not only if they have a ticket but also if a tour operator, through which the passenger has booked, has provided assurances of transport on particular flights.



Aerial view of damaged grain silos after a devastating outbreak of tornadoes ripped through several U.S. states in Mayfield, Kentucky, U.S. December 18, 2021.

## US tornadoes push insurers 2021 bill over \$105 billion

NEW YORK--Devastation from tornadoes that slammed parts of the United States this month will push the insurance industry's 2021 bill for weather-related claims well above the predicted \$105 billion, industry experts said, and premiums should rise on worries that climate change will drive more severe weather.

Tornadoes tore a 200-mile path through six states in the Midwest and South, demolishing homes and leveling businesses, causing \$5 billion in insured losses, according to preliminary estimates.

Climate change has been driving more so-called "secondary peril" weather events that are smaller than hurricanes, for instance, but less predictable. Other secondary perils include small to mid-size localized events like wildfires, winter storms and hail storms.

These events create risk management challenges for insurers and ultimately inflate premiums, said some insurance experts. "We've got a year of over \$100 billion of catastrophe events without having a big named event, whether that's an earthquake or a hurricane," Barnaby Rugge-Price, Chairman of Howden Broking Group, told Reuters. "Clearly underlying that, something else is going on, of which the most obvious thing is climate change."

On average, there are 1,500 tornadoes per year in the United States, with only 25 occurring in December, according to reinsurance broker Guy Carpenter. This month's cluster of tornadoes was exceptionally rare in terms of the season, the intensity and the length of the storm paths, the company said.

Studies suggest warming Gulf of Mexico surface tem-

peratures are linked to intense thunderstorm updrafts that can generate tornadoes in the U.S. Southeast's Dixie Alley, said catastrophe modelling firm Karen Clark & Company (KCC). Warmer air in late autumn and early winter create favorable conditions for producing tornadoes, which could elongate the severe weather season over North America, said the reinsurer Guy Carpenter & Co LLC.

Unlike primary perils like hurricanes, which have the highest potential for losses and are therefore closely monitored and modelled, secondary perils are unpre-

dictable. They are harder to model due to insufficient data, Rugge-Price said, making it in turn more difficult for the industry to assess the risks.

"Hurricanes have been recorded, and we know the path and we know the damage, whereas tornadoes, they just...pop up," he added.

Some experts said it is not easy to draw a clear connection between climate change and the rising severity of tornadoes. KCC said tornadoes form in specific atmospheric conditions and it could be "challenging to attribute specific trends in severe weather to climate change."

## Rosneft approves new zero emissions strategy

MOSCOW--Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft said on Tuesday that its board has approved new strategy through to 2030 with the aim of achieving net zero emissions by 2050, earlier than President Vladimir Putin's deadline.

Climate scientists have said the balance between the greenhouse gases we emit and those removed from the atmosphere must be zero by 2050 to prevent catastrophic levels of global warming. Russia, the world's no. 4 greenhouse gas emitter, however, has said it targets carbon neutrality by no earlier than 2060.

Rosneft, in which BP holds an almost 20% stake, said the company will reach its emission targets "through a number of actions," including low-carbon power generation, eliminating routine flaring of gas and energy-saving and carbon capture

and storage technologies. As part of efforts to reach that goal, the share of natural gas in total hydrocarbon production will grow to 25% by 2025.

Achieving a set of strategic targets is expected to contribute to a more than doubling of the company's free cash flow by 2030, said Rosneft, which is managed by Igor Sechin, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin.

The "Rosneft-2030" strategy also targets hydrocarbon production of 330 million tonnes of oil equivalent per year, it said. Output growth will be driven mainly by the flagship Vostok Oil project, large new projects (including Russkoye, Yurubcheno-Tokhomskoye, Severo-Danilovskoye and Severo-Komsomolskoye fields), and gas projects (Rosspan, Kharampur and others).



People wait outside of a food distribution centre, in Havana, Cuba on Tuesday.

## Cuba says taming inflation a priority as recovery begins

HAVANA--Communist-run Cuba will move to control soaring prices and ease shortages as recovery from a pandemic-driven recession takes root, Economy Minister Alejandro Gil told a year-end session of the National Assembly on Tuesday.

Cuba's ailing, inefficient state-run economy shrank 10.9% in 2020 as the pandemic shuttered tourism, coupled with harsh new sanctions imposed by the Trump administration that withered foreign exchange. Officials expect it to recoup just 2% in 2021.

One key issue, said Gil, was inflation, which Cuba's government pegs at 70% but experts say is much higher. Gil said "restoring the peso's value and role in the economy" would be vital to hitting a targeted 4% expansion of the economy

next year.

"In 2022, we will gradually advance in eliminating inflation. It won't be easy, but it's not impossible either," he said earlier this week.

The U.S. dollar has soared on Cuba's black market to around 75 pesos, more than triple the official exchange rate of 24 pesos. The peso collapsed this year after Cuba dumped a dual-currency system that maintained one currency on par with the dollar and another weaker currency for domestic use.

Gil said hiking salaries would only increase the inflationary spiral and Cuba could not import cheap goods to buy its way out of the crisis because it does not have the hard currency to do so. Instead, he said, measures adopted this year that would boost growth and increase domestic pro-

duction, such as granting greater autonomy to state businesses and legalization of small and medium-sized private ones, would help keep prices down for Cubans already suffering shortages.

Orlando, the owner of a hamburger joint in Havana, told Reuters soaring costs for raw materials had pushed his prices through the roof. "I sold a pork burger for 25 pesos last year, now it is 85," he said, asking to be identified only by his first name.

Pavel Vidal, a former economist at Cuba's central bank, said the government was using an outdated model to calculate its consumer price index that didn't properly account for the growing private sector and informal markets.

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# Washington could hit Russia smartphone, aircraft part imports if it invades Ukraine

WASHINGTON--U.S. officials are considering tough export control measures to disrupt Russia's economy should Russian President Vladimir Putin invade Ukraine, a Biden administration official told Reuters.

The measures, to be discussed in a meeting of senior officials on Tuesday, would be in addition to economic sanctions the Biden administration is contemplating should Russia invade, after massing tens of thousands of troops along the Ukrainian border.

U.S. President Joe Biden has threatened devastating actions against Russia, to try to warn Putin off any possible military incursion. Putin has denied that Russia plans an invasion.

Measures to be discussed at the White House meeting include "extraordinary" export control measures that could choke off broad swaths of industrial and consumer technologies to Russia, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The measures being discussed could halt Russia's ability to import smartphones, key aircraft and automobile components, and materials from many other sectors. They could have a major impact on Russian consumers, industrial operations, and employment, the official said.

The official said the potential measures would

be unprecedented for Russia. They would employ tools used by former President Donald Trump's administration, and carried forward by the Biden administration, to block Chinese telecommunications company Huawei from accessing advanced semiconductors.

The basis of such an action is the fact that semi-

conductors that go into Huawei phones include parts that were designed in the United States, the official said. This can touch chips all around the world based on the fact that key U.S. input went into them, the official said.

U.S. officials plan to consult closely with key partners in Europe and Asia that could be impli-

cated by these measures and to encourage coordinated efforts where appropriate, the official said.

Russia's cellphone market is dominated by foreign companies like Apple, Samsung and Huawei, which became subject to a new Russia law this year requiring them to install Russian software.



Vehicles are seen in a traffic jam in front of government buildings next to skyscrapers in Doha, Qatar on Tuesday.

## Qatar targets \$10 billion of investments in US ports

LONDON/DUBAI--Qatar plans to invest at least \$10 billion in U.S. ports and has approached international banks for financing help, three finance sources say, in an infrastructure spree that reflects the Gulf coun-

try's deepening ties with Washington.

The Middle East and Western sources familiar with the matter said Doha was targeting investments in ports around the U.S. East Coast which were expected to be developed in phases, adding that the plan was at a preliminary stage. The country's sovereign wealth fund Qatar Investment Authority and the Qatar Government Communication Office both declined to comment.

"The Qataris have been preparing for almost a year to test the waters with U.S. port investments," said Michael Frodl, a U.S.-based adviser on projects including maritime security, commerce and infrastructure, who is familiar with Qatar's strategy.

"We think that a shrewd investor with the \$10 billion the Qataris desire to put into American port infra-

structure would likely look at the underserved East Coast first and foremost. The West Coast is getting all the U.S. government and private investment attention, while the East Coast is long overdue for improvements."

Frodl said ports with easy access to highways and rail lines would be a priority. "We'd be looking at aging medium-sized ports south of Boston and north of Jacksonville," he added.

A Middle East-based source said the investments would be backed by debt, which would be linked to the port assets, adding that Qatar was in early discussions with banks to look for a structuring adviser. The banks being approached included Morgan Stanley, HSBC and Credit Suisse, two of the sources said. Morgan Stanley, HSBC and Credit Suisse declined to comment.

## PUTIN

Continued from page 23.

materials to the Ukrainians above and beyond that which we are already in the process of providing," she said.

Washington is considering tough export control measures to disrupt Russia's economy if Putin invades Ukraine, a Biden administration official told Reuters, and the measures would be discussed in a meeting of senior officials on Tuesday.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance would seek meaningful discussions with Moscow early next year.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu alleged that more than 120 U.S. private military contractors were active in eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian troops have been fighting Russian-backed separatists since 2014, and said they were preparing a "provocation" involving chemical substances. He offered no evidence in support of the claim, which Pentagon spokesman John Kirby described as "completely false".

# US cities try new way to help the poor: give them money

WASHINGTON--Spurred by the coronavirus pandemic, dozens of U.S. cities are deploying a new tool in their war on poverty: cash.

At least 16 cities and counties are handing out no-strings-attached payments to some low-income residents, a Reuters tally found. At least 31 other local governments plan to do so in the months ahead.

That's a departure from most U.S. anti-poverty programmes, which provide benefits for specific needs like groceries or rent and require recipients to hold a job or look for work. Advocates say the people receiving the aid, not bureaucrats, know best how to spend their money.

"It's a complete rejection of the notion that we need to Big Brother people to a way out of poverty," said Michael Tubbs, who set up the nation's first "basic income" programme in 2019 while he was mayor of Stockton, California.

Jonathan Pedro, 37, said he has been able to pay down debt and buy hockey equipment for his 11-year-old son thanks to the \$500 monthly checks he gets through a Cambridge, Massachusetts program aimed at single parents. "I've been trying really hard to bounce back and this check makes it so much easier," he said.

Cash payments were a pillar of the U.S. safety net for much of the 20th century



Building services manger Jonathan Pedro, a single parent who is getting \$500 monthly payments as part of a city-run antipoverty programme that aims to give low-income residents more flexibility to meet their needs, poses for a portrait in his hometown Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S., December 17, 2021.

but fell out of favour amid criticism that they discouraged people from working. Democratic President Bill Clinton scaled them back, made them temporary and added a work requirement in 1996. Fewer than one in four poor families now get those benefits.

In recent years, the notion of a universal basic income has gained currency in the face of worries that automation will lead to widespread layoffs, and a belief among racial-justice advocates that the current system is inadequate and demeaning. Andrew Yang made it the centerpiece of his long-shot

bid for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

The federal government provided a proof of concept over the past two years, sending more than \$800 billion to households in three COVID-19 aid packages. Washington delivered another \$93 billion to 36 million families this year through an expanded child tax credit.

Those relief packages included \$500 billion to state and local governments, and at least 16 local governments are using the money to set up Stockton-style basic income programmes for low-income residents, records show. Others are drawing on funds pro-

vided by Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, an advocacy group formed by Tubbs, or private philanthropy.

"We're 60 years into the war on poverty, and the notion of giving money to poor people still feels profoundly new. Maybe that's the problem," said Melvin Carter, the mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota, which launched a basic income program last year.

Unlike Yang's proposal, which would have covered everybody, the new city-based programmes are small in scale, typically serving several hundred families, and are aimed only at low-income people. Some cities

invite people to apply and then do a random drawing. Others focus on specific populations: St. Paul targets families with newborn children, while Pittsburgh says half of its 200 participants will be Black women.

Durham, North Carolina, will provide checks to people getting out of prison. A programme in Jackson, Mississippi, focuses on Black mothers in public housing.

Advocates hope these efforts will ultimately convince Washington to set up a national basic income programme. They point to a sheaf of studies that show positive results. Participants in Stockton's programme were more likely to be working full-time, while participants in Jackson were more likely to pay their bills on time. One survey found that recipients spent less on alcohol and tobacco than they did before.

With many U.S. businesses struggling to hire workers, some say it would be better to expand existing programmes. "If the goal is more work, then we have alternative options," said Kevin Corinth, who served as a top White House economist in the Trump administration and is now at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy.

A national programme also would be expensive. One proposal to keep every American above the poverty line, set at \$26,500 for a fam-

ily of four in 2021, would cost \$876 billion, more than doubling U.S. anti-poverty spending. Another would cost more than twice that amount.

## Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest drop CES plans over COVID-19 concerns

LAS VEGAS--Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc, Twitter Inc and Pinterest Inc separately said on Tuesday they will not send teams to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas next month as concerns grow about the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. The companies had not planned large in-person gatherings at the show.

"Out of an abundance of caution and care for our employees, we won't be attending CES in-person due to the evolving public health concerns related to COVID-19," Meta said.

Twitter had planned to have some employees attend to participate on panels, but said it has cancelled its in-person presence and is exploring what virtual opportunities are possible.

Pinterest, which had already been planning a scaled-down meeting area for its sales and partner teams from years past, said it had made a final decision to cancel.

CES in the past has attracted over 180,000 people from around the world to a sprawling set of casinos and convention spaces in Las Vegas, serving as an annual showcase of new trends and gadgets in the technology industry. The Consumer Technology Association, which runs CES, said on Tuesday that the show is going forward from Jan. 5 through Jan. 8. Health precautions will include vaccination requirements, masking and the availability of COVID-19 tests, the association said.

Many companies including Qualcomm Inc, Sony Electronics and Alphabet Inc's Google and self-driving vehicle unit Waymo have said they are moving forward for now with plans to attend and show off new hardware or host meetings. General Motors Co said on Tuesday that Chief Executive Mary Barra is still scheduled to introduce the U.S. automaker's electric Silverado pickup truck and discuss company strategy in person at the conference on Jan. 5.

## Grinch hits candy cane makers with sugar shortage, twisted supply chain

CHICAGO--Orders have been pouring into Andrew Schuman's candy cane business this year, but business has been anything but sweet.

"We're not taking new orders from new customers," said Schuman, chief executive officer of Hammond's, based in Denver, Colorado. "We can't keep up with demand."

Candy makers, like retailers and farmers, have been slammed during the pandemic with high commodity prices, labour shortages, and transportation and supply chain snarls, preventing them from fully cashing in on the holiday season.

For more than a century, Hammond's Candies has twisted and packed up the classic Christmas treat for tiny gift shops and massive grocers alike. It is the

largest wholesale supplier of U.S. handmade candy canes.

This year, Hammond's labour costs have increased 30%, yet staffing remains a problem: The company's 250-person crew is down nearly 100 people.

Hammond's is not alone. When Sam's Club, a Walmart unit, placed an order for Doscher's Candy Co.'s gourmet candy canes, co-owner Greg Clark was thrilled. Still, he said, Doscher's had staff and supplies to produce about 70% of the hand-crafted candies Sam's Club wanted.

"More and more Sam's Club members are shopping for seasonal candy, including candy canes," a company spokeswoman said. "In an effort to meet the anticipated demand, we increased buys from other



Dozens of flavours of candy canes are seen in the shop, at Hammond's Candies, the largest U.S. wholesale supplier of candy canes, in Denver, Colorado, U.S., December 16, 2021.

suppliers and pulled inventory and production forward where possible."

Total seasonal confectionery sales are up 20% over last year, for the five-week period ending Dec. 5, according to the National Confectioners Association and IRI market data. Winter holiday non-chocolate

sales - including candy canes - are up more than 34% from 2020. Retailers have increased holiday candy items per store by more than 9%; and the total amount of non-chocolate products in stores is up nearly 23%, according to the data.

Many consumers are

scrambling to stock up for the holidays after missing family gatherings last year. "This is the fourth grocery store I've hit today, trying to find enough candy canes for our tree and stockings," grumbled Terri Andresson, 51, browsing at Mariano's grocery store in Chicago.

# In South Carolina, Biden showed new resolve on voting rights

By Eugene Robinson

ORANGEBURG, S. C. -- President Biden has often drawn strength, comfort and joy from the state of South Carolina. He went to that well again on Friday, traveling here to my hometown for reasons both personal and political, and I believe he was not disappointed.

In February 2020, after Biden had finished poorly in both the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, all hope of his ever becoming president seemed lost. But then South Carolina's most powerful Democrat, House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn, gave Biden a rousing last-minute endorsement. Biden ended up demolishing his rivals in the state's primary and rode that momentum -- fueled by massive support from African American voters -- to win the nomination and defeat President Donald Trump. In his first visit to South Carolina since that primary, he arrived not on a commercial airliner or a campaign charter but as the principal passenger on Air Force One.

Biden came to return Clyburn's favor by headlining the fall graduation ceremony at South Carolina State University, the historically Black college from which Clyburn graduated six decades ago, and presenting the congressman with the diploma he originally had to receive by mail.

Speaking to an overwhelmingly Black audience, Biden found his voice -- and his passion -- when he turned to Republican attempts to curtail the voting rights of African Americans, Hispanics and other people of color. "I've never seen anything like the unrelenting assault on the right to vote," Biden thundered. "Never. I don't think any of you have, on this stage, ever seen it."

He was wrong on that point. Some of us in the building had indeed seen it before.

When I was growing up in Orangeburg and going to elementary school on the SCSU campus, African Americans across the South were marching, petitioning, clamoring -- and, tragically, dying -- to dismantle Jim Crow oppression and secure the right to vote, which was systematically and brutally denied to us.

The auditorium where Biden spoke is named after three students -- Henry Smith, Samuel Hammond Jr. and Delano Middleton -- who were shot dead by White state troopers during a 1968 demonstration, in what came to be known as the Orangeburg Massacre. The protest began as a demand to integrate the town's one bowling alley, which admitted only Whites, but grew into a much larger and louder complaint about South Carolina's continued defiance of the 1964 Civil

Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Legally, Jim Crow had already been abolished; as a practical matter, though, it was still very much alive.

Smith and Hammond were SCSU students. Middleton, a bit younger, was a student at Wilkinson High School, which had been the separate-but-unequal Black high school in Orangeburg. Biden's motorcade passed the building that once housed Wilkinson High on the way into town.

"It's not just about who gets to vote or making it easier, as we used to try to do, to make people eligible to be able to vote," Biden told the assembled graduates and their proud family members. "It's about who gets to count the vote or whether your vote counts at all."

"This new sinister combination of voter suppression and election subversion -- it's un-American, it's undemocratic," he added.

Historically speaking, sadly, the denial of voting rights to those who are not White is all too American. But Biden tells audiences that it was the civil rights struggle that drew him into politics in the first place. And after months of talking mostly about COVID-19, the economy and the Build Back Better package that he is still trying to get through Congress, Biden appears to have found new energy and purpose in calling for fed-

eral legislation to protect voting rights nationwide.

He was even more insistent about the need to confront hatred and racism.

"I thought when we had some of those major victories, we'd finally crossed a threshold," Biden said. "But what I didn't realize is you can't defeat hate, but you can't eliminate it. It just slides back under a rock. And when given oxygen by political leaders, it comes out [as] ugly and mean as it was before. We can't give it any oxygen. We have to step on it. We have to respond to it."

That is easier said than done, given a galling confluence of circumstances: the 50-50 makeup of the

Senate; the refusal of today's Republicans to debate voting-rights protections that even segregationist Strom Thurmond eventually came to support; and the tyranny of the filibuster rule. The House keeps passing measures to counteract the anti-democratic laws being passed by GOP-controlled state legislatures, and the Senate refuses to let them come up for a vote.

It is not clear there is anything Biden can do to change these dynamics. But he has been giving much more emphasis to the issue of voting rights -- and the shift does not sound, to me, like just a way to avoid talking about vaccine

mandates or his latest frustrating conversations with Senator Joe Manchin III (Democrat-West Virginia). "This battle is not over," Biden said. "We must pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. We must. We're going to keep up the fight until we get it done."

In Orangeburg, I had to wonder whether visiting the site of old civil rights battles was giving Biden new resolve to fight the civil rights battle of today -- new appreciation that the right to vote and the right to have our votes counted fairly are far more important than any anachronistic Senate rule.

I thought so. I certainly hope so.

## Junior Education Minister

Dear Editor,

The education system needs a complete overhaul. In the near future we should consider two ministers for education -- a Senior Minister and a Junior Minister. It is a huge responsibility for only one

minister to handle. Also, other Ministries such as VSA [Public Health, Social Development and Labor -- Ed.], VROMI [Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure] and Tourism, Economic Affairs, Trans-

port and Telecommunication] TEATT need the same assistance as well. It will cost more but a lot will be accomplished.

Thank you!

Mavis Arrindell

## A job well done, Minister of Justice Anna Richardson

Dear Editor,

The Board of the National Alliance and all its members alike would like to disseminate a heart-felt congratulations to our Honorable Minister of Justice, Ms. Anna Richardson, in achieving this great feat on behalf of country Sint. Maarten. The Ministry of Justice function book has been an unclear matter since 10-10-10, but since taking office, in a very short time you have made strides to cover a wound to allow for it to heal properly. The start was rough but you remained focused and stood your ground.

Today, as a first-time Minister, you have set precedents and a standard for many to come. Now more than ever, we are convinced that as individuals, anything you set your mind to do and put your mind to do is possible. Our dedicated and hardworking Minister of Justice, Ms. Anna Richardson, has shown us this time and time again.

We would also like to express gratitude to those who were involved and worked tirelessly to make this goal a reality. As the National Alliance family, we know that this was not

an easy task. However, you continued to push and you have now persevered that this is what shapes the trajectory for the justice department. As such, the function book you've now recognized within the status of law of St. Maarten.

Once again, we wish you our continued support, love and appreciation throughout the journey and the foundation that you have set for persons within the Ministry of Justice to come.

Board of the National Alliance

## We give thanks at this precession

Dear Editor,

At this precession of the Equinoxes -- a 26,000-year cycle -- on December 21, 2021, one can conclude in this timeline that the greatest threat to the evolution of our species' non-dualistic essence is Baal Matrix Force on Earth.

Within the open heart of Christ Messiah Yahuah intuitively inspired and guided through the Holy Spirit within the sacred blue flame covenant of infinite awareness in our spiritual light being transformational journey within the fifth dimensional Age of Aquarius.

We give thanks to Yahuah evolutionary creation of our vibrational universe with Mother Earth and all her nature species in living one vibrational energy, love.

Yahuah is within we, we are within Yahuah. We are one.

Theophilus Priest

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# End-of-year evaluation and prospects for St. Maarten

Dear Editor,

In the spirit of annual New Year reflections I have tried to create a thumbnail picture of how I find the position St. Maarten is in at the end of 2021 and what the future looks like for the country in the coming years.

First and foremost are the studies that show that there is little or no chance of the economy reverting to growth numbers that were seen in the '80s and '90s. At that time of fast tourism development, low labour costs through immigration existed, limited government meant limited regulation and low public expenses. Now with the same non-

expandable single pillar economy, such growth is extremely unlikely. Without growth in the economy, the size of the population and the cost of the public sector point to longer-term deficits.

The political situation is such that only a party with strong commitment to the entitlements of the public sector is likely to obtain a majority.

The public debt and the immediate liquidity shortages exclude any possibility of investments that might lead to the development of industry diversification and if the capital were to be available it is doubtful whether the dominating political entities would

support opportunities in respect of legislation and budgeting. Foreign direct investment in economy expanding and public sector revenue creating activities is unlikely.

Most of the good possibilities of increasing public sector revenue via indirect taxation are limited due to the open border with the French side and harmonization seems not to be realizable. Whilst some revenue increases may be possible through the targeting of specific sectors only a massive change in the taxation circumstances would create a breakthrough.

Whilst the Dutch have a vision of how the situation

could be rescued via the COHO [Caribbean Body for Reform and Development - Ed.], it would appear that solutions by the Dutch are not going to receive a hearty welcome nor likely to enjoy strong execution support.

The majority in the St. Maarten Parliament does not have a vision of how the country could break out of its obviously deep economic hole other than all public debt being forgiven by the Netherlands. Even if that were to happen, then unless conditions were to change a new significant debt would quickly be recreated.

The Netherlands wants to restructure various parts of the economy so that they are more sustainable but a record of poor cooperation has led to an approach where coercive financial force is being used which in turn is probably creating more resistance to coopera-

tion, regardless of the sense and value of the proposals.

The population is confused. They resort to parties and politicians who were connected with the growth of the '80s and '90s but those parties and politicians do not have the courage and or knowledge to deal with the deeply rooted

problems that have now become clear post [Hurricane] Irma and under pandemic. Simply claiming "resilience" does not seem to be turning things around.

Does this paint an accurate picture of Sint Maarten?

*Robbie Ferron*

## With Manchin's 'no,' Biden and Schumer have no one to blame but themselves

By Marc A. Thiessen

WASHINGTON -- Democrats are in shock after Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat-West Virginia, announced on "Fox News Sunday" that he is a "no" vote on President Biden's massive multitrillion-dollar reconciliation plan - killing the bill.

They should not have been surprised. Manchin laid out his demands in a document that was signed by Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (New York) and later released to his colleagues and the public. In a 50-50 Senate he wasn't just one of 50 Democrats whose views needed to be taken into account in crafting a deal. He had a veto. If they didn't get his vote, they got nothing. And Manchin said over and over again that he was comfortable with nothing. They didn't believe him.

Democrats tried to twist Manchin's arm but had no leverage. A December poll showed West Virginia voters shared Manchin's worries about Biden's plan: 59 per cent opposed the bill; 73 per cent said inflation had hurt their family's finances; and 64 per cent said Build Back Better would make inflation worse.

Manchin agreed to support \$1.5 trillion - which he later raised to \$1.75 trillion. That's a lot of money. But instead of eliminating programs to scale down their bill, Democrats tried to jam him with budget gimmicks - using expiration dates to fund all their programs for a shorter period of time,

making the cost of the bill seem smaller than it really was.

Manchin is not stupid. He saw what they are doing. He knew the nonpartisan Penn Wharton Budget Model estimated in October that the bill could cost \$3.9 trillion over the next decade without the "sunsets" - and that the Congressional Budget Office scored the cost of the bill at \$3.47 trillion if the programs were funded over 10 years. And as he made clear, he was not going to support a bill that cost that much.

On Sunday, Manchin explained the reason he decided to oppose the bill is that "it hasn't shrunk." Instead of cutting the number of programs, he said, Democrats kept "the same amount of things that they are trying to accomplish" but just changed "the amount of time ... that we can depend on them." If you're going to do something, Manchin said, "pick what your priorities are - like most people do in their families or their businesses - and you fund them for 10 years."

So what was Manchin willing to support? He said this past week that he supported expanding the child tax credit, as long as it was funded for 10 years. The CBO scored the 10-year cost of the child credit at \$1.597 trillion. Biden and Schumer could have agreed to that, and then found a way to spend the remaining \$150 billion. If they were willing to scale back their ambitions, they could have easily passed a

reconciliation bill with his support.

They had already passed a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill that contained a lot of progressive priorities, including funding to replace lead pipes; expand broadband to underserved communities; electrify the nation's fleet of public buses; create plug-in electric vehicle infrastructure; reduce emissions at airports, ports and waterways; expand clean energy transmission; and make our infrastructure more resilient against the effects of climate change. If they had combined that with a Build Back Better bill Manchin could support, Biden could have claimed credit for almost \$3 trillion in new spending, on top of the \$1.9 trillion in social spending disguised as "coronavirus relief" passed with only Democratic votes earlier this year. That would have been a huge progressive win.

But apparently that wasn't enough if it did not contain everything the party's progressive wing wanted. Instead of declaring victory, Democrats refused to accept the reality of their situation and compromise with Manchin. They assumed eventually he'd fall in line. They were wrong.

Now Democrats are lashing out at Manchin, blaming him for delivering the president a major defeat. But the truth is, they are the authors of their own defeat. Biden and Schumer miscalculated badly and lost - they have no one to blame but themselves.

### UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

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

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

Previous puzzle solution

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

12/22 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆  
© 2021 by Andrews McMeel Syndication 12/21

- ACROSS**
- 1 Womanizer
  - 4 European nation
  - 9 Like overworked muscles
  - 13 Couldn't ...; came unhinged
  - 14 Low-cost transport
  - 15 Biting bug
  - 16 Bunny movements
  - 17 Not at all extremist
  - 19 Unwell
  - 20 Guys, slangily
  - 21 Rapids transports
  - 22 Golf clubs with flat faces
  - 24 Luau souvenir
  - 25 Find
  - 27 Benumb
  - 30 Proverb
  - 31 \_\_\_ with; implore
  - 33 Word with weight or worth
  - 35 Had \_\_\_ on; claimed in advance
  - 36 Released
  - 37 Alphabet quartet
  - 38 "The King and I" star
  - 39 Courted
  - 40 Prepare to violate a peace treaty
  - 41 Olympics awards
  - 43 \_\_\_ in cheek; jokingly
  - 44 \_\_\_ of; free from
  - 45 Vulgar
  - 46 North Pole toymakers
  - 49 Rose Bowl
  - 51 "\_\_\_ Brown, You've Got a Lovely Daughter"
  - 54 Rowdy
  - 56 Lunch or dinner
  - 57 Head honcho
  - 58 Place for a padlock
  - 59 Jealousy
  - 60 Here to \_\_\_; permanent
  - 61 Overly sentimental
  - 62 Broke a fast
- DOWN**
- 1 Weather forecast
  - 2 Not \_\_\_; N/A
  - 3 \_\_\_ Moines

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13											
16											
19											
22	23										
25	26										
30											
35											
38											
41											
46	47	48									
54											
57											
60											

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/22/21

**Tuesday's Puzzle Solved**

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

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37 ___ off; repel	48 Popular credit card
39 Midsection	49 Sauerbraten
40 Overwhelming defeat	preparer, often
42 Unlike casual clothes	50 More than enough
43 Sleazy	52 Talk wildly
45 Piece of furniture	53 ___ as a fox
46 Recedes	55 "A Nightmare on ___ Street"; Depp
47 Money, slangily	56 ___ culpa



By Nancy Black

**Today's Birthday (December 22)** – Rake in a lucrative harvest this year. Steady coordination maximizes profits. Insights and epiphanies illuminate this winter, leading you straight into a delightful spring romance. Adapt to social challenges next summer, before your team scores an autumn prize. Reap what you've sown.

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 a 7 – Let fun rule the day. Adapt to breakdowns or delays. Handle practical matters first. Avoid controversy or hassle. Enjoy simple pleasures. Laughter is good medicine.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)** – Today is an 8 – Expand operations from your comfortable home base. Practical demands control the outcome. Share family support. Tend your garden with love. Nurture your roots and shoots.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)** – Today is an 8 – Listen and learn. Find solutions to a challenging puzzle by observing and noticing the details. Gather information and sift through it. Find buried treasure.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)** – Today is a 9 – Collaborate to increase profits. Adapt to unexpected financial circumstances. Prioritize practicalities. Reduce expenses. Confirm intuition with data. Keep profitable wheels in motion.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)** – Today is a 9 – Take time for yourself. Balance a busy month with moments of peace and personal pursuits. Self-discipline pays. Adapt plans around unexpected conditions. Recharge.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)** – Today is a 6 – Look back for insight on the road ahead. You can see what wasn't working. Pitfalls and obstacles get revealed. Shift plans in peaceful privacy.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)** – Today is a 7 – Coordinate and strategize to advance team efforts around an unexpected challenge. Investigate options and report on your discoveries. Distractions and obstacles abound. Take it slowly.

**Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)** – Today is an 8 – Polish your marketing materials. Adapt business communications to shifting conditions. A professional test or challenge has your attention. Edit and revise. Solve a puzzle.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)** – Today is a 7 – Business travel or conferences could tempt. Can you mix work and fun? Anticipate changes and adapt schedules and itineraries. Study and compare options.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)** – Today is an 8 – Collaborate to navigate financial changes or obstacles. Find clever ways to reduce waste and conserve resources together. Prioritize basics. Postpone extras. Listen for the gold.

**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)** – Today is an 8 – Consider recent changes. Anticipate resistance. Work with your partner to adapt. Share ideas and potential solutions to come up with a workable plan.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)** – Today is a 9 – Balance work, health and social life. Practice moderation. Your attention is in demand. Maintain healthy practices despite distractions or complications. Prioritize rest and good food.





**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'm all grown up and married and living with my husband in our own home, but whenever my mother comes to see us she goes through my things (including things like a desk I share with my husband) like she did when I was a child living with her.

We have asked her not to do this but she won't stop. She says it's her right because she's my mother.

Queenie, don't we have a right to some privacy?—**Angry daughter**

**Dear Daughter,**

Of course you have a right to privacy, even from your mother.

Put some locks on the places you do not want your mother getting into – and keep the keys someplace where she cannot get hold of them. If she complains, just tell her it is your right because you are an adult.

**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**

Cobravard Toastmasters Club meets virtually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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 sxmnb@gmail.com for more information.

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+590 690 803788 (Whatsapp also)  
Email: alyabdoulwahab@gmail.com  
Web: www.abdoulwahabvoyant.com**

**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 allbecauseofgrace@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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The Daily Herald



Jeffrey Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell sits in the courtroom to hear a note from the jury in a courtroom sketch in New York City, U.S., on Tuesday.

## Ghislaine Maxwell jury ends first full day of deliberations without verdict

NEW YORK--Jury deliberations in British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell's sex abuse trial came to a close without a verdict on Tuesday, as jurors reviewed testimony of women who said she set them up for abuse by financier Jeffrey Epstein when they were teenagers.

Maxwell, 59, is accused of recruiting and grooming four teenage girls for Epstein to abuse between 1994 and 2004. She has pleaded not guilty to six counts of sex trafficking and other crimes.

The jury in federal court in Manhattan began delib-

erations late Monday afternoon after three weeks of emotional testimony from the four accusers. Deliberations will resume on Wednesday.

Maxwell's attorneys have argued that she is being scapegoated for Epstein's crimes because the globe-trotting investor - Maxwell's former boyfriend and employer - killed himself in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019 at the age of 66 while awaiting trial on sex abuse charges. Along with the trials of movie producer Harvey Weinstein and singer R. Kelly, Maxwell's case is

among the highest-profile trials to take place in the wake of the #MeToo movement, which encouraged women to speak out about sexual abuse by famous and powerful people.

In a note sent to U.S. District Judge Alison Nathan on Tuesday, the jury asked to review a 2007 FBI deposition referenced during the testimony of Carolyn, the first name of a woman who said Maxwell set her up for abuse by Epstein when she was 14 years old. Carolyn's case underlies the sex trafficking charge against Maxwell, since she said Maxwell sometimes handed her cash after she gave Epstein erotic massages and sent her gifts from out of state. The sex trafficking charge carries a maximum prison sentence of 40 years, the heaviest of the six counts.

Federal law bars recruiting or transporting anyone under 18 to participate in

*Continued on page 35*

## Dubai princess wins 554 million pounds from sheikh in settlement

LONDON--Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, has been ordered by the High Court in London to provide a British record of more than 554 million pounds (\$733 million) to settle a custody battle with his ex-wife over their two children.

The bulk of the massive award to Princess Haya bint al-Hussein, half-sister of Jordan's King Abdullah, and the couple's two children, is to ensure their lifetime security, not least to address the "grave risk" posed to them by the sheikh himself, said the judge, Philip Moor.

The judge said: "She is not asking for an award for herself other than for security" and to compensate her for the possessions she lost as a result of the marital breakdown. He directed Mohammed to make a one-off payment of 251.5 million pounds within three months to Haya for the upkeep of her British mansions, to cover the money she said she was owed for jewellery and racehorses, and for her future security costs.

The sheikh, who is vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, was also told to provide 3 million pounds towards the education of Jaliya, 14, and Zayed, 9, and 9.6 million pounds in arrears. He was also asked to pay 11.2 million pounds a year for the children's maintenance, and for their security when they become adults.

These payments will be guaranteed via a 290 million pound security held by HSBC bank. The final sum, despite being believed by some London lawyers to be the largest public award ever ordered by an English family court, is less than half of the 1.4 billion pounds that Haya had originally sought.

During almost seven hours

said a large one-off payment would allow for a clean break and remove the sheikh's hold over her and their children. "I really want to be free and I want them to be free," she told the court.

Following the ruling, a spokesperson for the sheikh said he "has always ensured that his children are provided for" and asked for the media to respect their privacy. A lawyer for Haya did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The settlement is the latest development in a legal saga that began when the princess fled to Britain in April 2019, fearing for her safety after she began an affair with one of her bodyguards, and a month after she had asked the sheikh for a divorce. Later that year, the London court ruled Mohammed had carried out a campaign of threats and intimidation that made her fear for her life, and that he had also previously abducted and mistreated two of his daughters by another marriage.

Earlier this year, the President of the Family Division in England and Wales, a

senior judge, also determined that Mohammed had ordered the phones of Haya and her lawyers, one of whom is a parliamentary lawmaker, to be hacked using the sophisticated "Pegasus" state security software.

Haya had not asked for any divorce settlement. She did not offer an explanation, but her lawyers said she would have been entitled to seek billions as the ex-wife of one of the world's richest men.

"The mother's financial claims, and the size of the relief that's being sought, are quite unprecedented," the sheikh's lawyer, Nigel Dyer, told the court during hearings which could not be reported until Tuesday.

He said her demands were excessive and she was really claiming for herself under the guise of her children. He also accused the princess of misusing the children's funds, saying that she had paid out 6.7 million pounds to blackmailers, who were part of her security team, to keep an affair quiet.

The court did not hear from the alleged blackmailers. Haya said she used money from the children's accounts because she was frightened.



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

### Wednesday, December 22

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 smaak van Joël
1:00pm	NOS Journaal
1:10pm	Typisch Eijsden
1:40pm	Noord-Zuid-Oost-West
2:00pm	NOS Journaal
2:15pm	De rijdende rechter
2:50pm	Familie Drop
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
5:25pm	BinnensteBuiten
5:50pm	Een Vandaag
6:15pm	Een huis vol
7:00pm	NOS Journaal
7:25pm	Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
7:30pm	NOS: NOC*NSF Sportgala
9:00pm	De slimste mens
9:40pm	Nieuwsuur
10:10pm	Weerbericht Amerika/Caribiën
10:15pm	Studio Sport Eredivisie



**TV 15 (local)**  
Channel 115 SXM Cable

### Wednesday, December 22

8:00am	SXM Daily News
8:30am	DComm Program
9:00am	Oral Gibbs Live
10:00am	Caribbean Newslines
10:30am	Our News French St. Martin
11:00am	Special Program
4:00pm	Parliament Replay
7:00pm	DComm Program
7:30pm	SXM Daily News
8:00pm	Speaking of Everything
8:30pm	Prime Time with Beverly Hyman
9:00pm	Special Program
10:00pm	Late Night
11:00pm	SXM Daily News
11:30pm	Caribbean Newslines



**TV-CARIB (local)**  
Channel 010 WTN

### Wednesday, December 22

8:00am	Good Morning Beautiful
9:00am	Morning Show (Pearl FM)
12:05pm	Viewpoint (PID2/3)
5:00pm	Animated Kids Program
6:30pm	Viewpoint Encore
7:00pm	Grandiosas
7:30pm	TV Carib Informer
8:00pm	All Access
10:00pm	Noticias en Español
10:20pm	Late Night



**TeleCuraçao**  
Channel 130 SXM Cable  
Channel 202 WTN

### Wednesday, December 22

4:00am	Na Kaminda pa Misa di Ourora
5:00am	Misa di Ourora na Coromoto
6:00am	Serada Misa di Aurora
6:30am	Mòru Bon Dia
9:30am	Ban Hals a Standarte
10:00am	Gostoso ku Maristella
11:00am	Dun'e un Chèn
12:00pm	TeleNotisia Mérdia/Extra Journaal
1:00pm	Tra'i Mérdia 3.0
3:30pm	Punto Final (r)
4:30pm	Ban Hasla e Standarte (r)
5:00pm	Overdrive ku Nahason
6:00pm	Bonochi Kòrsou
7:00pm	De Frente ku Lupe
8:00pm	TeleNotisia
9:00pm	Wega di Number Kòrsou
9:10pm	Participashon di Morto
9:15pm	Pagina Sosial
9:30pm	Punto Final
11:00pm	TeleNotisia (r)

# Bidens welcome new puppy to White House, cat on way

WASHINGTON--U.S. President Joe Biden, facing roadblocks to his domestic agenda and a renewed fight against COVID-19, will start the new year surrounded by a new friend in Washington: a nearly 4-month old German Shepherd named Commander.

Biden showcased the new arrival in a video posted online on Monday featuring the puppy on White House grounds alongside first lady Jill Biden, about six months after their previous pet, German Shepherd Champ, died.

The Bidens' other dog, a young German Shepherd named Major, initially joined the couple at White House after Biden's inauguration in January, but

his tenure suffered from reported bite incidents with staff at the grounds. Major is now living offsite with family friends, Jill Biden's spokesperson Michael LaRosa said in a statement, adding the move was "not in reaction to any new or specific incident."

The president's canine companions marked the return of pets to the White House after a four-year hiatus under former President Donald Trump, who was the first president since Andrew Johnson in the 1860s not to have a dog or a cat.

A common American adage that if you need a friend in Washington, you get a dog reflects the hardscrabble reality of politics in the nation's capitol. Biden

announced Commander's arrival in an online video posted on Monday, a day after key conservative Democrat Joe Manchin rejected his social and climate policy plan. U.S. health officials on Monday also declared Omicron the dominant type of COVID-19 as Biden prepared to unveil new efforts to fight the highly-infections variant.

The purebred puppy was gift from Biden's brother and sister-in-law for the president's recent 79th birthday in November, LaRosa said.

Meanwhile, the Bidens had long been expected to bring a cat on board. A female cat will join them in January, LaRosa added.



Aguttes auction house head of development Maximilien Aguttes holds a non-fungible token (NFT), replica of the original communication protocol that transmitted the first SMS text message ever sent, before its auction by Britain's Vodafone, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near Paris, France, December 20, 2021.

## "Merry Christmas" - First SMS sells for over 100,000 euros in Paris auction

PARIS--The first text message ever sent, reading "Merry Christmas," was sold on Tuesday for 107,000 euros (\$121,000) as a 'Non-Fungible Token' at a Paris auction house.

The text, which was sent on Dec. 3, 1992, was put up for auction by the British telecoms company Vodafone.

Vodafone engineer Neil Papworth sent the SMS

### MAXWELL

Continued from page 34.

a "commercial sex act." The trafficking charge does not require the child to be transported across state lines.

Maxwell defense attorney Jeffrey Pagliuca questioned Carolyn about the deposition on cross-examination, asking why her testimony in some instances differed from what she had earlier told law enforcement. The deposition itself was never entered into evidence as part of the trial, so Nathan said she could not provide them with it. She said they can review the transcript of Carolyn's testimony about the deposition.

Maxwell's attorneys have focused their defense largely on undermining the credibility of the accusers, arguing that their memories have faded over time and they are motivated by money to cooperate with prosecutors. All four women received million-dollar payouts from a victims' compensation fund run by Epstein's estate.

from his computer to a manager in the United Kingdom, who received it on his 2-kg (4 lb) "Orbitel" telephone - similar to a desk phone but cordless and with a handle.

"They were in the middle of end-of-year events so he sent him the message 'Merry Christmas'," said Maximilien Aguttes, head of development for the Aguttes Auction House.

Non-Fungible Tokens, or NFTs, are a type of digital asset that has surged in popularity this year, with NFT artworks selling for millions of dollars. Traded since around 2017, these digital objects, which en-

compass images, video, music and text, exist on blockchain, a record of transactions kept on networked computers. Each NFT has a unique digital signature.

The selling of intangible goods is not legal in France and so the auction house has packaged the text message in a digital frame, displaying the code and communication protocol, Aguttes said.

The buyer will receive the replica of the original communication protocol that transmitted the SMS and proceeds will go to the United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR.



Michael B. Jordan and Denzel Washington pose during the red carpet premiere of "A Journal for Jordan" in New York City, U.S. December 9, 2021.

# A Journal for Jordan brings a father's life lessons to screen

NEW YORK--Oscar winning actor Denzel Washington returns to the director's chair for drama "A Journal for Jordan", a story about love and life lessons based on a memoir by Pulitzer Prize winner Dana Canedy.

Starring "Black Panther" actor Michael B. Jordan and "Monsters and Men" actress Chante Adams, the movie tells the story of how after Canedy's fiancé U.S. Army First Sergeant Charles King was killed during the Iraq war, she turned a journal he left

for their son into an essay and later a book. The film depicts the teachings King wrote to the then infant Jordan and the couple's love story.

"I read (the script) and I went 'Whoa ... Oh, we got something here, I'll direct this!'," Washington told Reuters in an interview.

Jordan, also a producer on the film, said its message was simple: "I want people to take away from this movie that ... through love anything's possible."

King began writing the journal in 2005. Former

journalist Canedy, who was part of a New York Times team that won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for a series on race relations in the United States, published her memoir in 2008. She said King would be moved by the film.

"He would be humbled. He would be bashful about it and he would be incredibly proud," said Canedy, currently senior vice president and publisher at Simon & Schuster.

"A Journal for Jordan" will be released in U.S. cinemas on Dec. 25.

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# Cavs visit Celtics as both deal with virus outbreaks

BOSTON--After an unexpected three-day break between games, the Cleveland Cavaliers will try to maintain their momentum when they visit the Boston Celtics on Wednesday night.

Cleveland had won a season-high six straight games and 10 of its previous 12 before Sunday's game at Atlanta was postponed due to the league's latest COVID-19 outbreak.

Ahead of their scheduled Sunday evening tip-off, the Cavaliers placed center Jarrett Allen, forwards Lamar Stevens and Dylan Windler and guards Denzel Valentine and RJ Nembhard into the league's COVID health and safety protocols.

Center Evan Mobley and forward Isaac Okoro landed in COVID protocols last week.

On Monday, the Cavs added forward Justin Anderson and center Luke Kornet on 10-day contracts via the NBA's hardship exception ahead of their matchup with the Celtics.

"You just have to navigate it," Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff told the Akron Beacon Journal. "Understanding how you handle

the basketball piece of it, how you try to make sure they still feel like they're a part of it."

In their most recent game last Saturday, the Cavaliers cruised to a 119-90 road win over defending champion Milwaukee. Cedi Osman scored 23 off the bench while Darius Garland had 22 points and six assists.

Garland has scored in double figures in all but one game this season and is averaging a team-best 19.1 points. The third-year guard is also averaging a team-high 7.3 assists.

Boston is coming off a 108-103 home loss to the Philadelphia 76ers on Monday for its fifth loss in seven games as the team navigates its own COVID outbreak.

Jaylen Brown scored a team-high 30 points and Jayson Tatum added 17 points for the Celtics, who were down seven players due to COVID issues.

Boston starting center Al Horford, forwards Grant Williams, Jabari Parker, Juancho Hernangomez and Sam Hauser and guards Josh Richardson and Brodrick Thomas were all sidelined in the protocol. Cel-

tics center Robert Williams III also missed the game for personal reasons.

Boston led by as many as seven late in the fourth quarter before Joel Embiid took control of the game by scoring his team's last nine points in the final 1:22 of play. Embiid finished with a game-high 41 points and 10 rebounds.

"We fell short, but we've got another opportunity on Wednesday," Brown said. "In the middle of kind of everything that's going on, on the court and off the court, everybody's dealing with something. We've got to be able to adjust and still come out on top."

Boston signed 15-year veteran swingman C.J. Miles on a hardship exception before Monday's game after adding forward Justin Jackson on a 10-day deal last week.

The Celtics split their first two meetings against the Cavaliers this season, both of which were played in Cleveland. Garland scored 22 to lead the Cavs in a 91-89 victory on Nov. 13 before Tatum's 23 points powered the Celtics to a 98-92 win two days later.



Williams' Nicholas Latifi in action with Aston Martin's Lance Stroll and Haas' Nikita Mazepin during the Formula One race.

## Latifi speaks out after death threats following F-1 crash

CANADA - Canadian Nicholas Latifi spoke out on Tuesday after receiving death threats and online abuse over a crash at the Dec. 12 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix that led to Red Bull's Max Verstappen winning the Formula One title and Lewis Hamilton missing out.

The Williams driver brought out the safety car late in the race, with a change in procedure giving Verstappen the opportunity to pass Mercedes' Hamilton on the last lap.

Before the crash, Hamilton had been heading for a record eighth title.

Latifi said in a statement on his website that he had decided to address the issue of abuse after staying off social media to let things settle down.

He said he hoped to spark another conversation about the "drastic consequences" of online bullying.

"I've received thousands of messages to my social media accounts...most have been supportive, but there's been a lot of hate and abuse, too," said the 26-year-old.

"As we've seen time and time again, across all different sports, it only takes one incident at the wrong time to have things completely blown out of proportion and bring out the worst in people who are so-called 'fans' of the sport.

"What shocked me was the extreme tone of the hate, abuse, and even the death threats I received."

Latifi said that he had apologised to his team for the crash and that the rest was out of his control. He said that he was no stranger to negative comments about his performances and

that having a thick skin was part of being an athlete.

"But many of the comments I received last week crossed the line into something far more extreme. It concerns me how somebody else might react if this same level of abuse was ever directed at them," he added.

Latifi's situation was similar to that of German Timo Glock in 2008, when

the Toyota driver received death threats after being passed by Hamilton on the last corner of the last lap of the final race in Brazil.

Hamilton won that title, his first, with Ferrari's Felipe Massa losing out.

Verstappen spoke out in Latifi's defence last week, saying accidents were just a part of motor racing and it would be unfair to blame the Canadian.

## South Africa focused on beating India despite off-field woes

JOHANNESBURG - Test captain Dean Elgar says he will not let the allegations of racist conduct that have come to light at Cricket South Africa in recent months become an excuse for failure as his side prepare to host India in a three-match series from Sunday.

Director of cricket Graeme Smith, who denies the claims, and national team coach Mark Boucher were among a number of CSA employees implicated in "tentative findings" made by the Social Justice and Nation Building Ombudsman into alleged past discrimination.

CSA confirmed on Tuesday they would investigate the conduct of everyone implicated in the report, though only once the series with India has concluded.

"What happens off the field for me is irrelevant now," Elgar told reporters on Tuesday. "As a playing unit we have been through such crappy times (amid the COVID-19 pandemic) that we have formulated such a good bond within

our group.

"We must be mindful that if things are bad off the field, we can't use that as a cop-out for us. We are a professional team and professional players."

Elgar appeared to give his backing to Boucher after former test spinner Paul Adams said he had been called a "brown shit" in a South Africa team song during his time in the side, including by former wicket-keeper Boucher, who has since apologised.

"From the player's point of view, we back our coaches and management," Elgar said.

"They put in so much work that goes unnoticed, and it gets watered down by the media. I know what they do behind the scenes. It is not nice to see our coaches get lambasted for things."

South Africa have, meanwhile, revealed they will be without fast bowler Anrich Nortje for the series after he failed to sufficiently recover from injury. They will not be calling up a replacement.

## Silverwood confident of turning around England's Ashes campaign

AUSTRALIA - England head coach Chris Silverwood said he is the right person for the job and is confident of turning around the team's fortunes after they suffered heavy defeats in the first two tests of the Ashes series against Australia.

England lost the opening test in Brisbane by nine wickets and suffered a 275-run defeat in the second test in Adelaide as they slipped 2-0 behind in the five-test series.

Asked if his position was in danger given that England have won just one test from their last 11, Silverwood told British media on Tuesday: "It always is.

"When you take a job like this you accept that. It is what it is. Do I believe I'm the right man? Yes, I do or I wouldn't

have taken the job in the first place. You're under pressure constantly.

"I do believe I can turn it around. We have had those honest chats and I believe I have the right coaching staff around me to make that happen as well."

Silverwood and Root picked spinner Jack Leach on a green surface in Brisbane and then an all-seam attack on a flat pitch in Adelaide. Silverwood took some responsibility for the two defeats but denied that England got their selection wrong.

"No, I don't (accept we got it wrong). We picked the best attack for those conditions and you look at the attack we had out, there's a lot of experience," Silverwood said.

Silverwood said that

England, who have not won an Ashes series in Australia since 2010-11, need to perform better in the remaining three tests, starting with the 'Boxing Day' test in Melbourne on Sunday.

"We had a really good talk in the dressing room which was needed... We have to be better, it's as simple as that," he said.

"It is not just batting and bowling. Look at how many chances we have given up in the field: dropped catches, missed run-outs and everything else.

"Wickets off no-balls are unacceptable. It is a basic error... We have had batting collapses. We have spoken about the two in these games. We have had collapses before and we can't afford to do that."

## Jordan Nwora, Bucks try to dodge third straight loss versus Rockets

MILWAUKEE -- A win by any means is the goal for the Milwaukee Bucks on Wednesday night when they host the Houston Rockets.

The Bucks have lost two in a row, and the roster is decimated by positive COVID-19 cases.

The Bucks suffered a 119-90 loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers on Saturday in the second game of a back-to-back without most of the team's primary scoring.

Jordan Nwora paced his team with 28 points and 11 rebounds on 11-of-21 shooting (52.4 percent). Sandro Mamukelashvili added a career-high 17 points, and DeMarcus Cousins chipped in 12 along with 12 rebounds.

"He's got that unique kind of scorer's mentality, can take and make tough shots, can get just enough separation," Bucks head coach Mike Budenholzer said about Nwora. "He's a very good scorer, so just kind of trying to work on the other parts of the game too and I think he's making progress there, so these are invaluable opportunities for him."

Out for Wednesday are Giannis Antetokounmpo, Donte DiVincenzo, Bobby Portis and Wesley Matthews -- all in health and safety protocols -- plus Khris Middleton, who is out due to a hyperextend-

ed knee. Rodney Hood is listed as day-to-day with an Achilles injury.

Although injuries have plagued the Bucks, they have still managed to eclipse the 110-point mark in four of their past six games. They also had their third-best performance of the season from 3-point range against Indiana on Dec. 15, hitting 14 of 29 shots (48.3 percent) from distance.

Houston is coming off a 133-118 loss to the Bulls on Monday night. The Rockets have dropped five of their past seven games after rattling off seven straight wins, a streak that started at the end of November but was ended by the Bucks in their most recent meeting on Dec. 10.

Houston will not have Kevin Porter Jr. on Wednesday and Jalen Green, sidelined since Nov. 25, is listed as a game-time decision.

Christian Wood led Houston with 23 points and 11 rebounds on 8-of-14 (57.1 percent) shooting at Chicago. Jae'Sean Tate added 16 points, six assists and five rebounds, and Armoni Brooks finished with 15 points. Reserve Kenyon Martin Jr. also tied his career high with 15 points on 6-of-7 (85.7 percent) shooting.

"We just really didn't bring it defensively, especially

that first quarter. We put ourselves in a hole," Wood said. "I tried to be just more aggressive on the offensive side and I was a little late on some coverages defensively, and I think I have to be better at that."

Although Wood and the Rockets as a whole have to perform better defensively, the 6-foot-9 forward has been a bright spot for Houston on the offensive side. Wood has eight double-doubles in his past 12 games and has scored at least 20 points just as many times in the same span.

Defense has held the Rockets back, and it has been particularly bad on the road. Opponents have scored an average of 113.9 points when Houston is away from home, and the Rockets have surrendered at least 124 points in three of their past four road games.

"For our group, we got to do a better job of knowing the importance of these games and not just kind of coming in and hoping and seeing," Rockets head coach Stephen Silas said. "We need to come in with intention, and come in with a focus of being ready."

When Houston and Milwaukee met on Dec. 10, the Bucks notched a 123-114 win and shot 50.6 percent from the field.



Indiana Pacers guard Malcolm Brogdon (7) protects the ball from Miami Heat guard Gabe Vincent (2) during the first half at FTX Arena in Florida. Heat won 125-96. (Sam Navarro-USA TODAY Sports.)

## Heat go long distance to rout Pacers 125-96

TFLORIDA-lyer Herro returned from a three-game injury absence and tied for game-high honors with 26 points, leading the Miami Heat to a 125-96 win over the visiting Indiana Pacers on Tuesday night.

The Heat tied a franchise record with 22 3-pointers, shooting 44.9 percent from distance and 49.5 percent overall.

Duncan Robinson tied his season high with 26 points for the Heat, making 10-of-16 shots from the floor and 6-of-10 from long range.

Miami's Kyle Lowry nearly had a triple-double, finishing with a game-high 12 assists, 11 rebounds and eight points.

Herro, who had been out due to a quad contusion, made 8-of-17 shots, including 5-of-8 from distance.

Heat guard Max Strus, in his

third year in the NBA, made his first career start and finished with 18 points.

Miami reserve Omer Yurtseven had a game-high 13 rebounds, also his career high.

Indiana was led by Caris LeVert and Chris Duarte, each with 17 points.

Point guard Malcolm Brogdon, who missed Indiana's most recent game due to a foot injury, returned but played just eight minutes. He did not return for the second half and finished with one point and two assists. He leads Indiana in both of those categories this season.

Pacers coach Rick Carlisle also returned after missing four straight games due to COVID-19 protocols.

Miami shot 54.5 percent from the floor -- including 7-for-12 on 3-pointers -- and closed out the

first quarter with a 33-21 lead. Indiana shot 6-for-12 to start the first but ended the quarter cold, making just 1-of-9.

The Heat stretched their lead to 68-45 at halftime. Miami shot 52.1 percent from the floor in the first half, including 11-for-24 on 3-pointers (45.8 percent).

Miami, which got 18 first-half points from Robinson, finished the first 24 minutes plus-eight on points in the paint and plus-nine on rebounds.

Indiana shot just 37.5 percent overall and 3-for-14 on 3-pointers (21.4 percent).

Miami led 98-69 by the end of the third quarter and cruised in the fourth.

It was such a rout that the Heat went to seldom-used reserve Udonis Haslem, who made just the sixth 3-pointer of his long NBA career.

## NBA: No reason to pause, vaccines are working

NEW YORK--NBA leadership made the decision that games will go on based on one driving factor: science.

While the NFL shifted testing protocol and the NHL paused games until Monday, commissioner Adam Silver said Tuesday there are no plans to halt the NBA schedule thanks to a 97 percent vaccination rate with almost two-thirds of the league boosted.

"We're comfortable with the protocol we're following right now," Silver said, repeating the data points to the conclusion that "vaccines" work while allowing that "this is an evolving science."

Positive tests are increasing at an alarming rate. More than 100 players tested positive this month after just 12 positive test results from player testing the pre-

vious month.

The NBA is not revisiting a proposal for mandatory vaccination rejected by the players' union, Silver said, but is focusing on encouraging boosters for all eligible players beyond the waiting period.

Several teams have paused their schedule due to a majority of their rosters testing positive. The Toronto Raptors were the latest team Tuesday to be at risk of being shut down before Wednesday's visit to the Chicago Bulls.

"No plans right now to pause the season. We of course looked at all the options," Silver said. "Frankly we're having trouble coming up with what the logic would be pausing right now. We're finding ourselves where we knew we would get to -- that this vi-

rus will not be eradicated and we're going to have to live with it."

As of 2 p.m. ET Tuesday, Silver said 90 percent of the current NBA cases are the omicron variant. He said public health officials and other leagues have been consulted constantly as the league shapes its daily assessment of risk.

"It's not just our doctors but the medical community. They're already realizing you can move away from the 10-day protocol when you have players that are vaccinated. It's not just that they're asymptomatic. More importantly, they're not shedding the virus anymore," Silver said.

Several Bulls' players among the 10 shut down by positive tests this month said they felt fine and were essentially asymptomatic.

Bulls guard DeMar DeRozan said his only symptom after testing positive was "boredom."

Silver said data points to vaccination and booster compliance as the reasons why. "We have a lot of data we look at in terms of players and coaches that have gone through the three-shot protocol - two MRNA shots and then a booster. Only a very small number of those people have been breakthrough cases where they turn positive. And essentially, they've been asymptomatic."

"I would just say to our community, to everyone, at least based on the data the NBA has, the boosters are highly effective. We strongly encourage everyone to get them. Our league is around 97 percent vaccinated. We're up to about 65

percent boosted.

"We do think there's an opportunity to potentially lead here. Maybe we can demonstrate there's a way that people can move forward," Silver said. "Again, recognizing this virus unfortunately isn't going anywhere and is going to be part of our lives for the foreseeable future."

There are contingencies at the ready and activation could come quickly if a rash of positive tests takes out multiple teams ahead of the bell weather date on the NBA regular-season calendar: Christmas Day.

"We'd need to talk for a few hours to talk about the contingencies," Silver said. "Beginning from the day we initially shut down the league in March of 2020, we've done nothing but look at contingencies. So

of course, we always have those. But at least as of now our plan is to move forward with not only the Christmas Day games but there are roughly 23 games scheduled between now and Christmas."

Silver said every day the NBA gets overnight testing results, looks at rosters and considers what the "right and responsible" thing to do taking all factors into consideration is to continue to play. More intense testing will take place starting after Christmas.

"It's only that we're shifting to a different protocol post-Christmas, and that plan had been in place for several weeks. Same with the rest of the country. I've read something that roughly a third of the country travels for the holiday break."

## Jalen Hurts, Eagles run past short-handed Washington

PHILADELPHIA -- Quarterback Jalen Hurts rushed for two touchdowns and threw for another as the host Philadelphia Eagles defeated the Washington Football Team 27-17 on Tuesday.

Hurts, who completed 20 of 26 passes for 296 yards, played for the first time in more than three weeks. He had been recuperating from a sprained ankle.

Miles Sanders gained 131 yards on 18 carries and Dallas Goedert caught seven passes for 135 yards for the Eagles (7-7), who remain in playoff contention fol-

lowing their second straight win.

Garrett Gilbert, signed Friday off the New England Patriots' practice squad, started at quarterback for the Washington Football Team. It was just the second NFL start for Gilbert, who finished 20 of 31 for 194 yards.

Washington quarterbacks Taylor Heinicke and Kyle Allen stayed on the COVID list, along with numerous teammates.

Antonio Gibson and Jaret Patterson each rushed for a touchdown for Washington (6-8), which saw its playoff

chances take a hit with the loss.

Washington took advantage of two first-quarter turnovers by the Eagles and went ahead 10-0. Gibson plunged in from the 1-yard line, and Brian Johnson soon added a 22-yard field goal.

Jake Elliott connected on a 20-yard field goal to close the Eagles within 10-3 midway through the second quarter.

Philadelphia tied the game at 10 when Hurts scored from the 1 with 1:29 remaining before halftime.

The Eagles drove 75 yards in six plays on the first possession of the third quarter, and Hurts' second 1-yard rushing touchdown produced a 17-10 lead.

Washington's depleted depth on defense was evident as the Eagles began to take control throughout the third. However, a key sack by Jonathan Allen forced the Eagles to settle for Elliott's 37-yard field goal and a 20-10 advantage.

Washington responded with a seven-play, 69-yard drive as Patterson scored from the 1 to close within 20-17 with 11:44 to go.

The Eagles came back on their ensuing drive and moved ahead 27-17 when Hurts tossed a 19-yard touchdown pass to Greg Ward. The score capped an eight-play, 80-yard drive.



Juventus' Federico Bernardeschi in action with Cagliari's Charalampos Lykogiannis during their Serie A match at Allianz Stadium in Italy. Juventus won 2-0.

## Bernardeschi finally scores as Juventus cruise past Cagliari

TURIN - Juventus winger Federico Bernardeschi ended a 43-match goal drought in Serie A to cap a routine 2-0 win over struggling Cagliari on Tuesday that lifted the Turin club to fifth place.

The Italy winger drilled a shot into the far corner in the 83rd minute to celebrate his first league goal since July 26 2020, a run of 513 days.

It came after Moise Kean headed home the opener in the first half to set Juve on course for a victory that extends second-bottom Cagliari's winless league run to 11 matches.

The Old Lady climbed into fifth place on 34 points, registering their fourth clean sheet in the last five league outings in the process.

Massimiliano Allegri's side can now enjoy a two-week winter break but when they return in 2022, Juve face league clashes with Napoli, AS Roma and AC Milan in January, before facing Atalanta on Feb. 12.

"It is fun when you get to these moments in the season. We have done well in the last few games but January is an important month," Allegri told DAZN.

"I would be happy to get to the end of February with this distance from the teams at the top, because between now and then we have to play all the top teams. Then they will face each other and we will have a better fixture schedule."

Kean started in the absence of injured top scorer Paulo Dybala and provided Juve's greatest threat in the first half, thumping a header off the post from a Juan Cuadrado cross after

10 minutes.

The 21-year-old made the breakthrough when a Bernardeschi shot was deflected into his path and he reacted quickly to head the ball back across goal and beyond goalkeeper Alessio Cragno.

Cagliari threatened after the break and saw two big chances go begging, as Dalbert skewed a finish wide from six yards before Joao Pedro's powerful header was palmed over by Wojciech Szczesny.

The visitors were made

to pay for their profligacy when Bernardeschi fired home in the 83rd minute.

Elsewhere, Genoa coach Andriy Shevchenko claimed the second league point of his tenure in his seventh game as the 18th-placed side surprisingly held Atalanta to a 0-0 draw.

The Bergamo side, who are fourth, mustered 17 shots to Genoa's one, but could not find a way past goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu and saw their lead over Juve cut to four points.

## PSG must alter tactics with Mbappe and Neymar unavailable - Pochettino

FRANCE - Paris St Germain will look to end the year on a high when they take on Lorient in the final game of the year but must alter their tactics with Neymar still injured and Kylian Mbappe suspended, manager Mauricio Pochettino said on Tuesday.

PSG are top of the standings with 45 points while relegation-threatened Lorient are 19th ahead of the final match before a short winter break.

Mbappe, who turned 23 on Monday, is suspended for one game after picking up a third booking in 10 Ligue 1 games, while PSG said Neymar is not expected to return from an ankle injury for another "four to five weeks".

"We have to build and move forward in a different way on the pitch. With Neymar or Kylian on the pitch, we are quickly looking for verticality," Pochettino told a news conference ahead of Wednesday's match.

"Without Mbappe we have to build differently and we

will perhaps play at a different pace. It will be a challenge to see how the team plays in this situation.

"We are not talking about replacing him but finding the balance to win. We often have things like that because of injuries and suspensions during the year. We have a good squad to find the balance that will lead us to victory."

The onus could fall on Lionel Messi, who has one league goal and four assists since joining the French side this season. But Pochettino said PSG's youngsters could play a part too.

"I think it's important for young players to play in an official match. It's good to be able to mix our team. We have lots of good talent at the training centre," he added.

"We need them to be in the locker room with the professional group. They need experience and over time they will have more. When you feel they are ready, they will play."

## Salernitana to be expelled from Serie A if no new owner found

ROME - Salernitana will be kicked out of Serie A if they do not find a new owner by Dec. 31, Italian Football Federation (FIGC) President Gabriele Gravina said on Tuesday.

The team from Salerno were promoted from Serie B for the first time in 23 years last season but their owner, Claudio Lotito, already owned another Serie A team, Lazio.

Ownership of multiple teams in the same division is against league rules and control of the club was handed to a trust to find a new buyer. However, they have yet to succeed with 10 days to go until the agreed deadline.

"There won't be any let-offs when it comes to the Dec.31 deadline for the sale of Salernitana," Gravina said after a meeting of the FIGC council.

"If there is not any new developments by Dec.31,

Salernitana are out".

Serie A made a request to the FIGC last week to keep Salernitana in the division until the end of the season while they try to find a buyer after they failed to receive suitable offers.

Salernitana are bottom of the league with eight points from 18 games, and did not travel for their game against Udinese on Tuesday after the local health authority banned them from travelling due to positive COVID-19 cases in the squad.

## Knicks hold off Pistons' 105-91 comeback bid

NEW YORK--Evan Fournier scored a game-high 22 points. Julius Randle and Mitchell Robinson each posted double-doubles Tuesday night as the New York Knicks fended off a second-

half rally by the visiting Detroit Pistons to earn a 105-91 win.

Randle had 21 points and 11 rebounds while Robinson came off the bench to collect 17 points and 14 rebounds for the Knicks, who won for just the third time in 11 games.

Kemba Walker, who was a healthy scratch for 10 straight games before returning to the lineup Saturday after New York was decimated by injuries and COVID-19, had 21 points, eight rebounds and five assists.

The Pistons, who lost for the 15th time in 16 games, cut a 22-point gap to five thanks largely to Saben Lee, who came off the bench to score 12 of his 16 points in the second half. Fellow reserve Trey Lyles scored all 13 of his points after halftime.

# NFL

Continued from page 40.

ception. Teammate Carlos Dunlap had three sacks.

The Seahawks took the lead on their opening drive of the second half, with DeeJay Dallas scoring on a 4-yard run to make it 10-3.

The Rams responded with a touchdown drive of their own, with Stafford hitting Kupp with a 6-yard scoring strike to tie it at 10-all.

The score was tied 3-3 at halftime after Seattle's Jason Myers kicked a 39-yard field goal with 10 seconds left.

The Rams held the ball for 21 minutes in the first half and had a 153-79 edge in total offense, but their offense stalled every time they crossed midfield -- which they did on their first four drives.

Their only points came on Gay's 55-yard field goal on their first drive, which was extended by a play after Seattle's Alton Robinson was flagged for running into Rams punter Johnny Hekker, moving the ball close enough for Gay's attempt.



Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah scores their third goal against Sunderland during their Carabao Cup Quarter Final match at Emirates Stadium, London.

## Nketiah hat-trick fires Arsenal into League Cup semi-finals

LONDON- - Eddie Nketiah struck a hat-trick as Arsenal beat League One club Sunderland 5-1 at the Emirates on Tuesday to book a place in the semi-finals of the League Cup.

Mikel Arteta rotated his side but still fielded a strong enough line-up to ensure his team comfortably progressed to the last four.

The 22-year-old Nketiah, who has not started

in the Premier League this season, put the Gunners ahead, against the third-tier club, pouncing from close range after Rob Holding's header from a corner was parried out by Sunderland keeper Lee Burge.

Nicolas Pepe doubled the lead with a deflected shot after good work from Cedric Soares but Sunderland pulled a goal back with a nice finish from Nathan

Broadhead, who lifted the ball over the advancing Bernd Leno.

Nketiah restored the two goal advantage, clipping in a low ball from Nuno Tavares in the 49th minute and then produced a cheeky backheel finish to make it 4-1 after Pepe nutmegged Dener Hume and delivered a low cross.

The forward, whose contract at Arsenal runs out in June, has scored 10 goals in nine career appearances in the League Cup.

"This competition is the place I've been getting starts. I'll do my best whenever I'm asked to play," said Nketiah.

"I'm desperate to play football. All I can do is keep working hard. It'll sort itself out. As long as I play for Arsenal I'll give my all," said Nketiah, who has yet to agree any contract extension.

A positive evening for Arteta's side was completed when 18-year-old substitute Charlie Patino, making his senior debut, converted another low cross from Pepe.

Sunderland, who were relegated from the Premier League in 2017, were cheered on by 5,000 supporters from the North East and manager Lee Johnson said that he was pleased they had spells of good play in the game.

"The bigger picture for us is the learning experience. Now they know the standard. When you feel the quality of the opposition you learn so much more. Arsenal were fantastic," he said.

In the other three quarter-finals on Wednesday, Tottenham face West Ham United, Liverpool host Leicester City while Chelsea are at Brentford.

## Chelsea disappointed with depleted squad but ready for challenge - Tuchel

ENGLAND-- Chelsea must "find solutions" on the pitch despite not having a full-strength squad, manager Thomas Tuchel said on Tuesday, as the London side face the busy year-end fixture period short of several players due to injury or COVID-19.

Chelsea had only four outfield players on the bench for the goalless draw with Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Sunday after seven members of their squad tested positive for coronavirus.

Premier League clubs agreed on Monday to continue playing games scheduled over the festive period despite several fixtures having been postponed due to a surge in COVID-19 cases. Tuchel said he was not disappointed by that decision.

"I don't have a solution for the whole league, the schedule," said Tuchel before

Wednesday's League Cup quarter-final at Brentford. "I don't know. Maybe it (a break) would have just delayed the problem.

"But we are just disappointed that we don't have the players to fulfil our goals and play at the highest level of competitive football."

Jorginho is back in training after a negative test for COVID-19, but N'Golo Kante will not play against Brentford as he tries to return to full fitness after a knee injury. Andreas Christensen and Trevoh Choboh are doubtful due to injuries.

"N'Golo Kante played 90 minutes against Wolves which was close to irresponsible," said Tuchel. "Will he be in the squad tomorrow? No."

"We will now give him time to recover and prepare for Aston Villa (in the Premier League this Sunday)."

Tuchel said Under-23 players trained with

the squad as Chelsea prepare to play three matches in eight days during the festive period.

"It is nothing new to play three matches in a week but without nine or 10 players it is challenging, so we struggle a little bit. But we'll find solutions," he added.

Brentford had their Premier League match against Southampton at the weekend postponed due to a rise in COVID-19 cases among players and staff. But manager Thomas Frank said they did not have any cases ahead of Wednesday's game against Chelsea.

"We are in a fine place... We closed our training ground on Thursday last week and that helped us break the circuit of transmission of the virus.

"From having six or seven positive cases last Thursday... we have zero today."

## Spurs may appeal UEFA decision after Europa Conference League exit - Conte

Dec 21 (Reuters) - Tottenham Hotspur may appeal UEFA's decision to eliminate them from the Europa Conference League and are confident of getting the verdict overturned, manager Antonio Conte said on Tuesday.

Spurs were knocked out of the competition on Monday after European soccer's governing body ruled that they must forfeit their final group game against Rennes, which was cancelled due to a COVID-19 outbreak at the London club.

"Honestly for me, the club and our fans, it's incredible the decision UEFA wanted to take. It's unfair for sure. We deserve to play for qualification on the pitch... I'm very disappointed with UEFA's decisions," Conte told reporters ahead of Wednesday's League Cup quarter-final against West Ham United.

"Also, in explanation about this defeat, I have read that Tottenham couldn't play the game for COVID cases. I dispute this. It's not definitive, but there is another step to confirm or not this

incredible decision. We are very confident."

Spurs, who drew 2-2 with Liverpool at the weekend, have had two Premier League games postponed due to COVID-19 this month but Conte added that all players, barring Ryan Sessegnon, were available against West Ham after having recovered from the virus.

"The good news is we have all the players available. A little bad news that Ryan Sessegnon had a (muscle) problem at the end of the game against Liverpool," said the Italian, adding that the left back could be out for up to two weeks.

Opposition boss David Moyes said that he was keen on winning a trophy with West Ham and suggested that the League Cup was a good starting point.

"I'd love to win a trophy with West Ham. They've got a history of trophies in years gone by. Not in modern times so it would be a great achievement. We have to build and grow into it. I'd take any sort of trophy win," he said.

# SPORTS ARENA

## NHL decides against competing in Beijing due to COVID-19 -ESPN

NEW YORK - The National Hockey League will not send its players to compete in the men's ice hockey tournament at the Beijing Winter Olympics due to COVID-19 concerns as the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the coronavirus spreads globally, ESPN reported on Tuesday.

The NHL agreed last September to pause its regular season so the world's top players could compete in Beijing with the caveat it could withdraw if COVID-19 disruptions forced games to be rescheduled during the Olympics window.

That had begun looking increasingly likely in recent days with the NHL being forced to postpone 50 games in Canada and the United States after a growing number of players entered COVID-19 protocols while Omicron tore through professional sports leagues with fully vaccinated players testing positive.

The NHL did not immediately respond to a request for comment. ESPN said a formal announcement on opting out of the Beijing Games was expected within the next 24 hours.

The NHL had until Jan. 10

to withdraw from the Feb. 4-20 Beijing Olympics without financial penalty.

Players had mostly been eager to return to the largest international stage. But concerns that a positive test in China could lead to a 21-day quarantine and delay returning to their families and NHL clubs had dampened that enthusiasm for some.

"Obviously, it's unsettling if that were to be the case when you go over there," Edmonton Oilers star Connor McDavid, who was expected to be a top player for Canada, said last week. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said in early December that the decision on participating in Beijing would ultimately come down to the players, but added that the league's concerns had "only been magnified" by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The NHL, unhappy over the prospect of interrupting a regular season to send their most valuable assets overseas where they could get hurt, ended a run of participation in five consecutive Winter Olympics when it decided not to go to Pyeongchang in 2018.

The presence of NHL players at the Olympics

made the men's ice hockey tournament one of the marquee events of the global sporting showcase.

Countries will now have to quickly put a Plan B in place.

For Canada and the United States, which would have sent teams stocked completely with NHL players, that will mean a top to bottom overhaul cobbling together a roster from other leagues.

Other countries, such as Sweden, Finland, Russia, Germany and Czech Republic, will also have big holes to fill with many of their best players also in the NHL.

USA Hockey, when announcing Bill Guerin as general manager of the men's team last week, said they were preparing for the possibility of an NHL pull-out.

"Plan B is we have to look at what our pool options are," said USA Hockey assistant executive director John Vanbiesbrouck. "Last time through there were some American Hockey League players available, players playing in Europe and the NCAA.

"That would likely be our player pool."



FC Barcelona's Ferran Jutgla in action with Sevilla's Ivan Rakitic during their LaLiga match at Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan in Seville.

## Sevilla held to a 1-1 draw by much-improved Barcelona

SPAIN - Second-placed Sevilla were held to a 1-1 draw by Barcelona on Tuesday, a result that helped Real Madrid to open a five-point lead at the top of LaLiga.

Playing under heavy rain, a much-improved Barcelona desperately tried to score a second goal after Ronald Araujo drew them level with a header in the 45th minute but they were thwarted by an equally determined Sevilla, who were reduced to 10 men after Jules Kounde was shown a straight red card in the 64th.

Sevilla went ahead after Papu Gomez latched on to a Ivan Rakitic corner kick and fired home a low strike.

Barca are seventh in standings with 28 points from 18

games, 15 points behind leaders Real Madrid.

"I honestly think that today we lost two points. We played better and deserved to win. I feel that is evident in our improvement," Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez told reporters.

"We were unlucky. They score in a set piece play but we had many more opportunities. The result, a draw away against a great team like Sevilla, is not bad. But it is a point that is not enough for us as we are trying to move up in contention. We let this win slip away from our hands."

Barcelona dominated the first half, had more ball control and could have scored at least twice in the first 30

minutes.

But Sevilla made the most of the single opportunity that came their way in the first half, with Gomez firing home a powerful strike.

Sevilla improved in the second half but then had to switch to damage-limitation mode after Kounde was sent off for a petulant display following a clash with Jordi Alba in the touchline. After being pushed by the Barca defender, Kounde hurled the ball straight into Alba's face.

"It was a very complicated game and the red card caught us when we were playing our best. Kounde knows that he made a mistake," Sevilla manager Julen Lopetegui told reporters.



Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson (3) throws the ball against the Los Angeles Rams in the first half at SoFi Stadium in California. Rams won 20-10. In the other game Eagles beat Washington 27-17. (Kirby Lee-USA TODAY Sports.)

## Cooper Kupp, Rams get by Seahawks

CALIFORNIA --Matthew Stafford threw two second-half touchdown passes to Cooper Kupp as the Los Angeles Rams defeated the Seattle Seahawks 20-10 Tuesday night in Inglewood, Calif.

The Rams (10-4) won their third game in a row and moved into a tie with Arizona for first place in the NFC West.

The Seahawks (5-9) had a two-game winning streak snapped and their wild-card playoff hopes dimmed even

further. The Seahawks are assured of a losing record for the first time in Russell Wilson's 10 seasons.

The Rams broke a 10-all tie on Kupp's 29-yard touchdown reception with 10:48 remaining, capping an eight-play, 88-yard drive.

It seemed the Seahawks were going to get good field position when the Rams' third-and-12 play from their own 10 came up short, but Seattle cornerback Blessuan Austin was called for holding Kupp

before the pass was thrown. That gave the Rams an automatic first down, and they moved quickly down the field for the go-ahead score.

Matt Gay added a 35-yard field goal with 1:51 left to clinch the victory.

Stafford was 21 of 29 for 244 yards, and Kupp made nine catches for 136 yards. Sony Michel added 92 yards rushing on 18 carries.

Wilson was 17 of 31 for 156 yards and a late inter-

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