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COSBY STRIKES BACK P. 39

**Obama
 May Go
 To Cuba
 In 2016
 Page 26**



VOL 25 NO.177

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

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No Christmas event is complete without a family photo: the audience of the annual Christmas Gala of Unified St. Maarten Connection (USC) in the hall of the Hilton Hotel in The Hague on Saturday. (Suzanne Koelega photo)

USC spreads its wings to prepare newcomers

~ Annual Christmas Gala in The Hague a big success ~

THE HAGUE--The annual Christmas Gala in The Hague on Saturday, organised by the Unified St. Maarten Connection (USC), was again well attended by students and young profes-

sionals from St. Maarten. The message was one of unity in the Christmas spirit, but there was also news: USC will be extending to St. Maarten next year to help prepare newcomers.

USC President Melissa Gumbs announced in the festive atmosphere at the Hilton Hotel among some 200 persons from St. Maarten and friends of the island that the USC would be establishing a St. Maarten chapter in 2016 with the main objective of preparing future students for their move to the Netherlands.

USC's St. Maarten chapter will assist in arming the new St.

Maarten students with actual facts and valuable knowledge about their academic journeys in the Netherlands. "We believe in giving them a strong start to try and secure an even stronger finish, and it's time that this begins at home, before they actually board the KLM or Air France," said Gumbs.

Gumbs called on everyone present to join what she called "this

Continued on page 8

Snap elections now on Sept. 26, 2016

HARBOUR VIEW--Snap elections now will be held on September 26, 2016, not February 9, 2016, as the Marcel Gumbs Cabinet had wanted. That national decree was amended on Monday when Governor Eugene Holiday affixed his signature to the William Marlin Cabinet's decree that contains new dates for elections and the dissolution of Parliament.

The Marlin Cabinet decree was sent to the Governor on Monday,

December 14. The decree entered into force immediately.

"As a result there can be no further discussion as to whether early elections will be held on September 26, 2016," according to the Governor's Cabinet. The Governor hopes "this offers a balanced and sustainable resolution to the current differences of opinion, and appeals to the members of Parliament, Gov-

Continued on page 7

St. Maartener held in deadly shooting

ROTTERDAM--A 23-year-old man from St. Maarten has been arrested in Rotterdam in connection with the shooting that claimed the life of Rene Paul last Thursday evening.

The Rotterdam police confirmed the man's arrest on Monday. The man, whose initials have not been released, was arrested despite the fact that the shooting left him severely wounded. He is still in a Rotterdam hospital. Police provided no information about his condition.

The arrested man was found on the street, outside the house on Burge-meester Meineszlaan in Rotterdam-West. The 39-year-old victim was found inside the house. According to police, he originated from Dominica. His name was not mentioned in the brief police press release, but



Shooting victim Rene Paul

The Daily Herald learned over the weekend that his name was Rene Paul and that he lived in French St. Martin.

A team of 20 detectives is investigating the circumstances of the shooting. Eyewitnesses and other persons involved in the shooting are being interviewed. No other details were released due to the status of the investigation.

IN BRIEF

- **Philipsburg VEHICLES MUST BE REMOVED**
 The ring road will be closed to all vehicular traffic on Wednesday from 7:00am to noon. All vehicles must be removed from the road by 9:00pm Tuesday, by order of the VROMI Ministry. **Page 3.**
- **Philipsburg VITAL ROLE FOR GEBE**
 Independent MP Maurice Lake wants utilities company GEBE to play a more "vital role" in the move to renewable energy. **Page 3.**
- **Marigot CONTRACT SIGNED**
 The Contrat de Ville 2015-2020 was signed Monday at a ceremony in Hotel de La Collectivité between the State, the Collectivité and some 12 representatives of participating institutions. **Page 4.**

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WEATHER

Today: Partly cloudy, with a passing shower possible.

Winds: Easterly, 6-15mph.

Sea conditions: Moderate.

Seas: 5-7 feet.

Forecast high: 29°C 84°F

Forecast low: 24°C 75°F

SYNOPSIS: The atmosphere across the local area continues to be relatively dry and stable. Nevertheless, pockets of moisture embedded in the trade winds may cause some isolated showers. Seas are forecast to be moderate for the next few days.

SPECIAL FEATURES: None.

Outlook through Wednesday evening: Fair to partly cloudy, with a passing shower possible.

Sunrise: 6:36am.

Sunset: 5:39pm.

SMART PLAY	SXM DAILY NUMBERS	CURACAO
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Dec. 15	Grandeur of the Seas	Pier	7:00	17:00	Maduro
Dec. 15	Carnival Conquest	Pier	9:15	19:00	Maduro

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COLE BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL: meeting 1st. Thursday of month at Sun Flower Kinder Garten School, Union Rd. Cole Bay at 7:30pm
SERVICE CLUBS
ROTARY meeting at Toppers Restaurant, every Wednesday at 12:15 p.m. 113 Welfare rd. Simpson Bay. Rotary Mid Isle meets every Tuesday 7 pm, at Mary's Boon, Simpson Bay. Rotary Sunrise meets every Tuesday at 7am at Barefoot Terrace Restaurant, Philipsburg Boardwalk. Rotary club St. Martin Nord meet at the Grand Case Beach Club Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Rotarac Club of St. Maarten Sunrise meets every 1st and 4th Saturday at 7am at Blair Beach Hotel.
LIONS meeting at the Upper Princess Quarter Community Centre Lions Den in Sucker Garden every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.
ST. MAARTEN LEO CLUB meeting at the Lions Den every 1st, 3rd Saturday every month at 11:00 am
KIWANIS meets at Wifol Building on Thursday each month at 7:30pm.
Kiwanis Key Club of the St. Maarten Academy meeting at the St. Maarten Academy every Friday at 1:30 p.m.
KIWANIS SLOUGHA 1st & 3rd Monday 7:00pm Holland House

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ST. MAARTEN ZOO
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Agenda St. Maarten / St. Martin

JCI St. Maarten (JAYCEES) meeting at the Philipsburg Jubilee Library every last Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Business attire required.
PHILIPSBURG TOASTMASTERS CLUB bi-monthly sessions every first and third Thursday of every month at the Library conference room at 8:00 p.m.
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ST. MAARTEN CHAPTER OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN holds their general monthly meetings every third Monday at the Delta Hotel at 7:00 pm.
DIABETES FOUNDATION OF ST. MAARTEN, Free blood-glucose testing every Thursday from 5:00 - 8:30 p.m. at the Philipsburg Pharmacy Voges street, Philipsburg (opposite library). Tel.: 542-3001
USO St. Maarten/St. Martin (USA military), contact Janet Lambert 5577616 or 00590 590 294406.
SKALCLUB ST. MAARTEN/ST. MARTIN meets 1st Tuesday of the month. For location call: 5424432 (Jennifer).

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SERVICE CLUBS
ROTARY CLUB Sunset restaurant, Grand Case Beach Club every Thursday at 7:45pm.
LIONS First and third Tuesday at Nadailac, Marigot at 7:30 p.m.
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located Ficht Street nr 7 (behind the Catholic Church) Open from 9am to 1pm, and from 3pm to 5pm tel. (00590)590 56.78.92.

Lake wants GEBE to perform vital role in renewable energy

PHILIPSBURG--Independent Member of Parliament (MP) Maurice Lake wants utilities company GEBE to play a more "vital role" in the move to renewable energy.

Lake said in a press statement that he called for the move to renewable energy to be placed prominently on the agenda of today's meeting of the Council of Ministers and the GEBE board. He urged Minister of Energy Affairs Angel Meyers to pursue a renewable energy plan in the meeting.

"We need to work towards the future by investing into renewable energy and alternative energy through LPG/LNG and by promoting solar energy to the community," said Lake.

He commended residents and businesses that had invested in solar energy production.

"GEBE needs to adjust their meters to accommodate the solar energy to the

homes. We need to promote more private-public partnership in our community," he said.

It is "high time" the GEBE board, management and investment committee start executing the investment plan of action to reduce the cost of living for the people, he said. "St. Maarten should be the front runner, ahead of Aruba and Curaçao when it comes to renewable energy," Lake continued.

He added that there were many "quick win" projects possible for a year under the GEBE budget, such as finalising the water tanks projects, especially in Weymouth Hill, Guavaberry Hill in St. Peters/Marigot Hill, and Cole Bay.

Purchasing of land to build more transformer houses in strategic areas, and a branch office in St. Johns for the residents of Cul de Sac should be "high priority," as is the contin-

ued upgrade of services for seniors by changing their lights to LED bulbs. "This needs to be turned into a pilot project for the senior citizens. GEBE needs to work closely with Government to provide them with how many registered senior citizens we have on the island and update addresses to make this pilot project a success," he said.

"Upgrading of streetlights in the different districts by making the community much safer is a necessity, especially in Fort Willem, to prevent crimes. GEBE also has to start providing fibre optic cables to residents. This will provide work for small contractors. Trim the branches from GEBE lines of overgrown bush ... create much-needed work for the people," he said.

Lake commended the Seniors Relief Programme and supports making it permanent as has been suggested by Prime Minister William Marlin.

"The Coalition of Eight will move ahead with the waste-to-energy plant discussions and review the latest draft agreement to move closer to a solution," said Lake.

In addition, Lake noted that a recycling awareness campaign for residents was needed, as well as a move to make the older GEBE generators at the Cay Bay power plant more environmentally-friendly to limit impact on the community.



The Fire Department was called out when smoke started to come out of the Belair Fitness Centre on Monday morning close to midday. According to the fire-fighters, the smoke was a result of a mechanical failure coming from the pool area. The gym was not evacuated by the management because of the minor incident.



Late on Sunday the Fire Department had to respond to reports of a fire at Italian restaurant Sale & Pepe located in the Le Shore nightclub building (former Sunset Theatres) in Simpson Bay. An air-conditioning unit overheated and smoked out the restaurant, but owners managed to put out the fire before the Fire Department arrived. No injuries were reported during the incident, according to authorities.

Vehicles must be removed from ring road by tonight

PHILIPSBURG--The ring road will be closed to all vehicular traffic on Wednesday from 7:00am to noon. All vehicles must be removed from the road by 9:00pm today, Tuesday, by order of the Ministry of Public Housing, Environment, Spatial Development and Infrastructure VROMI.

The closure will facilitate repairs to a sunken area by the

Ministry. Milled asphalt will be used to patch the area.

Any vehicle not removed by the appointed time will be towed at the owner's expense, according to the Ministry.

All motorists are urged to heed the road closure, remove their vehicles and to respect the allotted work frame to ensure prompt reopening, said the Ministry.

Guyana consul general provides consular services December 17

PHILIPSBURG--The non-resident Consul General of the Republic of Guyana Michael Brotherson will be visiting St. Maarten to provide consular services to St. Maarten-based Guyanese nationals on Thursday, December 17, from 9:30am to 6:00pm.

Brotherson will be available to meet Guyanese nation-

als in the Rainbow Meeting Room of the Sonesta Maho Beach Resort and Casino at Rhine Road, Maho Bay.

The services provided include registrations of births to Guyanese nationals and passport applications, amongst other things.

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STOP
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Virgin Islands' poetry wanted for new book

PHILIPSBURG--House of Nehesi Publishers (HNP) is calling upon all poets and spoken word artists from the British Virgin Islands Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke, including those studying or living abroad, to submit up to five poems for a new poetry book to be published here.

"Where I See The Sun - Contemporary Poetry in the Virgin Islands" is the working title for the book. Various subjects and writings styles are encouraged, said HNP President Jacqueline Sample.

The deadline for submission is February 19, 2016, and the publishing guidelines for the new anthology are found at HNP's Facebook page or can be requested at email houseofnehesipublish@gmail.com.

"HNP is working with Dr. Patricia Turnbull, author and senior lecturer at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College in Tortola, to widen the outreach about the planned book throughout Tortola, Virgin Gorda,

Anegada, and Jost Van Dyke," said Sample.

Turnbull's expertise is key to the book project's coordination in the Virgin Islands and how the best poems will be selected, said Sample. According to the "Call for Poetry" guidelines, "Judging is anonymous, all poems submitted will be forwarded to the editorial board or committee without names for critical review and selection."

"The idea is to realize a literary volume of critical import, hopefully to add useful content alongside works that are representative of the Virgin Islands' people," said HNP's Projects Director Lasana M. Sekou.

"We are confident that the collected poems will be representative of the nation's literary activities that are alive and have long been determined to grow original pathways, whether institutionally acknowledged as such, or widely known, or not," said Sekou.

"The Virgin Islands' literary landscape includes the late great poet Alphaeus Osario Norman (1885-

1942), senior educator and short-story author Jennie Wheatley, and bibliographer and author Verna Penn Moll. The poet April Glasgow and literary critic Dr. Richard Georges are among important modern voices. The new generation public recitals such as Microphone Messenjahs and BVI Poetry Slam are definitely stirring up the poetry field in unique and sometimes challenging ways," said Sekou.

HNP is hoping that young and senior poets, spoken word artists, including rappers, those published and unpublished, will see the new book project as an exciting opportunity for publication.

Among well-known poets published by HNP are Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados), Amiri Baraka (USA), Marion Bethel (The Bahamas), Nidaa Khoury (Israel/Palestine), Charles Matz (USA), Drisana Deborah Jack (St. Maarten), Chiqui Vicioso (Dominican Republic) and Tishani Doshi (India).



President Aline Hanson and Préfète Anne Laubies sign the Contrat de Ville as Guadeloupe Prosecutor Samuel Finielz looks on.

Contrat de Ville 2015-2020 signed between the Collectivité and State

MARIGOT--The Contrat de Ville 2015-2020 was signed Monday at a ceremony in Hotel de La Collectivité between the State, the Collectivité, and some twelve representatives of participating institutions.

The signing effectively puts into motion the "contrat cadre" signed July 28, under the scope of Politique de la Ville 2015-2020. That contract laid the framework for the Contrat de Ville for St. Martin.

The decree of December 30, 2014, redefined geographical areas to focus on poorer districts and established a priority list in the overseas territories, in which Sandy Ground and French Quarter in St. Martin were included. Both districts combined have a population of around 10,000 inhabitants.

In St. Martin's case, the inclusion was based on factors such as the number of unemployed persons between 15 and 64 years in the districts, the number of inactive youths ages 18 to 25 not in school, the number of young people older than 15 years without any diplomas, the number of unsanitary lodgings, and the number of overcrowded homes.

The contributions are 250,000 euros from the State, and increase of 9,000 euros from the previous year, and an additional 150,000 euros from the Collectivité. The amount granted is not necessarily the same each year but has to be negotiated.

Préfète Anne Laubies indicated the fundamental objective of Politique de la Ville is access to employment. Other objectives in



District one and district six representatives, Stephen Patrick and Georges Richardson sign the agreement.

the programme include social cohesion, educational success, parental assistance, access to rights, access to culture, sports, health, activities, beautification of districts, security, economic development, and social and professional insertion.

The services of the Collectivité and the Préfecture worked on a plan of action in collaboration with consulting firm Urbis to evaluate both districts. In May, technicians from the Collectivité and Préfecture identified problems based on five themes; education, lodgings, delinquency prevention, social services and health.

In June and July both districts were asked to submit projects on the subjects of youth, equality of men and women, and prevention of all forms of discrimination. Other themes can include fighting illiteracy, or projects for sports and culture, social harmony.

Co-signatories to the multi-partnership agreement included representatives from Social Security, Caisse d'Allocation Familiale (CAF), Recteur of

Guadeloupe Camille Galap, Regional Director of Pôle Emploi Jean-Jacques Gustave, Guadeloupe Prosecutor Samuel Finielz, President of the Chamber of Commerce Jean Arnell, and the representatives of District One and Six, Stephen Patrick and Georges Richardson respectively.

Each partner will be financing a project relative to their domain in the two districts of French Quarter and Sandy Ground. The policy is to get partners to put their focus and money in areas that have been targeted as in need.

"The purpose is to give more attention to Sandy Ground and French Quarter, explained First Vice-President Guillaume Arnell. "There's always been a feeling that those two districts are not close enough to the centre of decision-making. With this agreement, actions and projects will be implemented on behalf of the young people in terms of programmes to reinstate them to a point where they can be eligible for the job market. The projects will have to be validated by the Territorial Council."

BERMON

LAW OFFICE & LEGISLATIVE SERVICES NOTICE

In order for Mr. Claudius Creswell Milton to establish the ownership by prescriptive right of the properties with number SXM LPQ 256/1998 located in Lowers Princes Quarter, the heirs of Mr. Philip Union are hereby friendly requested to come forward not later than December 24th, 2015, with reliable and official evidence to prove that they are heirs and entitled to inheritance.

For further information, please contact:

Mr. L.M.G. Dundas,
Bermion Lawoffice and Legislative Services,
Frontstreet # 6, suite 3, Philipsburg,
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BTP discusses regulatory issues with French Frequency Admin.



Representatives of BTP and ANFR.

PHILIPSBURG--Regulatory matters and coordinating the use of Long Term Evolution (LTE) Spectrum and future spectrum needs in St. Martin/St. Maarten were discussed when representatives of the St. Maarten Bureau Telecommunication and Post (BTP) and the French Frequency Administrator ANFR met recently.

LTE is a standard for wireless communication that allows for high speed internet service on mobile

devices. Once implemented and managed properly, LTE can be very beneficial for the end-users, BTP said in a press release on Monday.

“With much higher upload- and download speeds, users will be able to make use of a much larger variety of mobile applications and internet services.

“To ensure a seamless migration to this new technology, BTP and ANFR are working diligently to allocate available frequen-

cies to the Mobile Operators and coordinate the usage of LTE spectrum. This is needed for a successful deployment of LTE networks in St. Martin/St. Maarten.”

BTP Director Anthony Carty said the migration to LTE standards is a major step in increasing the user experience of consumers.

“On this new platform more mobile users will be able to access high speed internet. Services such as video surveillance, banking, conferencing, e-learning and e-health will all be seamlessly working together on their mobile devices,” Carty said. “We applaud those who already adopted the new LTE standards and we will be working close together with other mobile operators to assist them in the possible future deployment of their 4G LTE networks.”

Representing BTP at the meeting were Carty and Chief Operating Officer Giovanni King and representing ANFR were Cedric Perros and Lana Rako-tondradalo.



From left: HBN Law attorneys Jojanneke Deelstra, Hendrich Seferina, Eline Ketelaars and Melissa Vasquez in front of the Courthouse on Friday.

Attorney Eline Ketelaars of HBN Law sworn in

PHILIPSBURG--Eline Ketelaars has been sworn in as an attorney-at-law on Friday, December 11, by the Joint Court of Justice.

Ketelaars joined HBN Law's St. Maarten office as an associate on August 1. She has four years of experience working as an attorney in the Rotterdam office of Eversheds, one of the world's largest international law firms, advising and litigating for national

and international clients on a number of areas mainly focusing on commercial contracting, commercial litigation and corporate law.

Ketelaars obtained her Master's degree in Dutch corporate law at Erasmus University Rotterdam and graduated cum laude from several courses at Carleton University, Ottawa.

The Erasmus School of Law has awarded her with a Certificate of Merit, by

which it demonstrates its appreciation of the students' dedication and commitment.

Established in 1938, HBN Law is the oldest and one of the largest law firms in the Dutch Caribbean, with over 30 attorneys in its Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten and Bonaire offices, in addition to its newly opened Dutch Caribbean Desk located at Amsterdam's World Trade Center.



THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS INVITED TO THE LAUNCH OF HOPE

DATE: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15TH 2015

TIME: 7:30PM

PLACE: BELAIR COMMUNITY CENTER

GERNERAL INFORMATION SESSION



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<p>WFG320MOBW</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$649.00 Gift Certificate- \$50.00 Sale \$599.00</p>	<p>WFE540H0ES</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$1449.00 Gift Certificate- \$125.00 Sale \$1324.00</p>	<p>WOS92EC7AS</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$1279.00 Gift Certificate- \$125.00 Sale \$1154.00</p>	<p>AEP222VAW</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$439.00 Gift Certificate- \$25.00 Sale \$414.00</p>	<p>WFG710HQAS</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$1675.00 Gift Certificate- \$150.00 Sale \$1525.00</p>
<p>WRF535SMBW</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$1899.00 Gift Certificate- \$175.00 Sale \$1724.00</p>	<p>WDF320PADW</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$499.00 Gift Certificate- \$50.00 Sale \$449.00</p>	<p>WRT111SFDW</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$659.00 Gift Certificate- \$50.00 Sale \$609.00</p>	<p>WRB119WFBM</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$1499.00 Gift Certificate- \$150.00 Sale \$1349.00</p>	<p>WRF736SDAM</p>  <p>Reg. Price \$2950.00 Gift Certificate- \$275.00 Sale \$2675.00</p>

*** Valid from 15th until the 24th December 2015



A scene at the Scotiabank auto fair on December 5.

Scotiabank says car fair success

PHILIPSBURG--A number of persons took advantage of the opportunity to enquire about buying a new vehicle at the Scotiabank's auto fair held at the bank's parking lot in Philipsburg on Saturday, December 5.

"The Auto Fair was a huge success," the bank said. Four dealers participated in the car show, namely, F.W. Vlaun and Son, Caribbean Auto Sales, Motorworld and Audi St Maarten.

Scotiabank's parking lot was transformed with colourful decorations of Scotiabank memorabilia and the ones from the three dealers for the event. The atmosphere was a festive one. "It was a hive of activity with the car dealers, potential buyers and Scotiabank staff."

Scotiabank staff wore red T-shirts, which had "Ask me How" printed on the chest and "Ask me Now" printed on the back.

Insurance personnel from Insurance Company of the West Indies (ICWI) dropped by and were also mingling with the crowd.

"We are in the season of giving. Persons are looking to purchase that new car as a gift for the family or loved ones or even to themselves. They are in town doing their Christmas-shopping so it is so timely and convenient for them to drop by, see the motor vehicles on display, speak with the salesperson, and at the same time, meet with a personal banking officer to provide the best solution for their financial needs - with a really attractive rate loan," said Personal Banking Manager Selma Baker.

Customers who completed an application were eligible for a draw prize of payment of 2016 motor vehicle license plate, shopping at their favourite Supermarket or payment of motor vehicle insurance - once the loan is approved.

For those persons not interested in a motor vehicle, Scotiabank continues to run its Christmas campaign on personal loans with its low interest rate offerings, Baker said.

"Visit any Scotiabank Branch during the holiday season and let us make all your holiday dreams come true," added Manager of the Simpson Bay Branch Florencia William-Bachelor.

Re-socialising of prisoners funded

BONARIE-The "Krusada" (Crossroads) Foundation on Bonaire has received subsidy from the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice to finance eight placements for support to and reintegration of former prisoners.

The subsidy is for a period of one and a half years, enabling Krusada to set up the project while in the meantime structural financing should be found. Krusada expects that it will be able to start providing support

as soon as the first quarter of 2016.

There is great need for such support placement among the criminal justice agencies on Bonaire because there are prisoners who need a place to live and guidance after serving their prison sentence in order to be able to return to society in a good way. Since this support is not available at the moment many former prisoners soon fall back into crime.

There already are some suitable residential units on the grounds of Krusada. Thanks to the subsidy of the ministry it is now possible to recruit personnel for the guidance.

Future residents will not only receive guidance and training but they will also need to spend at least 32

hours a week on work or education. This way they will be prepared properly for a life in the free society.

The project will be called "Bario di Adelanto" (Neighbourhood of Progress). The aim is to help former inmates "get ahead" again in life.

National Representative Gilbert Isabella is happy: "I think it is important that people get a second chance and are allowed to participate in the Bonaire society again. This project is really going to help with this and furthermore it will prevent relapse to old behaviour."

Krusada has assisted people on Bonaire who are unable to cope in society since 1999. The foundation makes personal and social-economic recovery possible.

Kingdom Affairs session cancelled

PHILIPSBURG--The meeting of Parliament's Permanent Committee for Kingdom Affairs and Inter-Parliamentary Relations was cancelled shortly before it was scheduled to start on Monday afternoon. The reason for the cancellation was given as the unavailability of Prime Minister/General Affairs Minister William Marlin.

Parliament Chairwoman Sarah Wescot-Williams stated in a letter to Members of Parliament (MPs) that Marlin was unable to attend "due to unforeseen circumstances."

Information on the meeting's agenda points will be sent to MPs by the Prime Minister by the end of the week, according to Wescot-Williams.

MPs require the information to prepare for the Inter-Parliamentary Kingdom Consultation IPKO to be held here next month. Topics include Small Island Developing States (SIDS), nationality issues due to administrative errors and a motion adopted by Parliament concerning travelling with ID/Sedula/Cedula among the Caribbean Dutch islands.

VACANCY

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Job Position: Mechanic

Summary of Position: To detect and resolve any car and wheel failures.

Compensation: Naf. 2,000.-

Duties & Responsibilities:

- Must be able to trouble shoot machinery
- Must be able to meet deadline dates
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- Must be able to perform wheel alignment

Qualifications:

- Certified mechanic
- Mechanical experience (0-5 years)
- English, Spanish and French are assets
- Knowledge of a tire shop

Please send all application letters and resume to: Tel: 542-1288 and a copy to the Labour Department.

SNAP ELECTIONS...

Continued from page 1.

ernment and public to join forces and work to address the challenges our country faces aimed at serving the interest of the people of St. Maarten."

The Governor's announcement last evening about the signing of the new decree ended more than a month of speculation about whether the Gumbs Cabinet's decree would be left to stand by the new Coalition and the Governor.

The Governor said in his statement that after evaluation of the draft national decree he had signed it, thus making Nomination Day August 8, 2016, and the dissolution of Parliament on Monday, October 31, 2016.

The William Marlin Cabinet, supported by the Coa-

lition of Eight, was not in favour of snap elections on February 9, 2016. The Coalition, created on September 30, had passed a motion of no confidence against the Marcel Gumbs Cabinet that same day.

The Marcel Gumbs Cabinet had retaliated just hours later by submitting its decree to call snap elections and dissolve Parliament. After some adjustments, the Governor had signed that desire for elections into force on October 30. That decree now has been adjusted with the new date for elections.

	Pick 2	Pick 3	Pick 4	SECOND PRIZE
	1st 44	1st 644	1st 0644	
	2nd 14	2nd 914	2nd 0914	THIRD PRIZE
3rd 37	3rd 537	3rd 6537		
Date: 14-12-2015	win \$40	win \$500	win \$4000	

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USC SPREADS ITS WINGS TO PREPARE NEWCOMERS...

Continued from page 1.

next step of USC's evolution." She urged the audience, many of whom attended the Christmas Gala for the first time, to be part of the new class, the new way of working.

"The most dangerous thing we can continue to say, on St. Maarten and within this Kingdom, is that 'we've always done it this way.' We only move forward together and we only move forward with positive change," said Gumbs.

The new class of which Gumbs spoke about, in her opinion, comprised people, whether individuals or organisations, redefining the way of working together in order to foster stronger ties and to build a stronger country, a stronger Kingdom.

"How do we build a country? We build our people. How do we build a people? We stop talking about raising the bar and we actually raise it. How do we raise the bar? We make smart choices about everything we control. We share

knowledge with our countrymen and women because if they succeed, we succeed. Because if we excel as a people, if we actively work together to improve our lives, our profiles and our country, it will be difficult for anyone to say that St. Maarten is not better off," said Gumbs, who received a very loud applause.

Recently resigned Prime Minister Marcel Gumbs, and father of Melissa Gumbs, also addressed the gathering. He praised USC, which he called a "fantastic organisation," for its enthusiasm and dedication in carrying out its work on behalf of young St. Maarteners in the Netherlands. He said it gave him a good feeling to see everyone get together, and urged the young people to work hard and come back to St. Maarten to help build the country.

Special guest speaker Andy Samuel shared a message of perseverance. He called on the audience not to allow anyone to put them down, but to keep striving

to make dreams come true. Samuel, a very active member of the Toastmasters Club in Amsterdam and a participant in several public speaking competitions, said that he felt very proud to stand before friends and peers.

Asking everyone to stand, he said that it was important to hold on to oneself and to keep the bigger picture in mind. "We have faced hardships by coming to the Netherlands, but we are still standing. If we don't hold fast, we will quickly fall."

This year's Christmas Gala drew a crowd of 180 persons, which was more than the 150 of last year. Also this year, USC was able to attract a corporate sponsor, the law offices Van Eps, Kunneman and VanDoorne. The corporate sponsor was profusely thanked.

USC Board Member Cyriel Pfenning said the intention was to hold the Christmas Gala every year. "We want to continue this on an annual basis. It offers our people an opportunity to see each other during the holiday season, and it gives them a homey feeling, of togetherness which is especially important for those that cannot go to St. Maarten for the holidays," he said.

MC Donellis Browne correctly pointed out that this year's event was held in a historic location, in the same conference room of the first Kingdom Confer-

ence in 2011. "Next year the Kingdom Conference will be held in St. Maarten. We have come full circle." Last year the Christmas Gala was also held at the Hilton Double Tree Hotel in Amsterdam. USC hopes to organise next year's Christmas Gala at the Hilton Hotel in Rotterdam.

Instead of numbering the tables at Saturday's event USC opted to give each table the name of a cultural icon, district or monumental/instrumental building to show how St. Maarten has developed over several decades, to show the old and the new.

Some of the names on the table included the Court House, Princess Juliana International Airport SXM, the causeway, the boardwalk, the Flamboyant tree, Front Street, Emilio Wilson Estate, the St. Maarten flag, yellow sage, Ruby Bute, and Tanny and the Boys.

The event started off with the singing of the national anthems of the Netherlands and St. Maarten by Aldiner Laurent. Patrick Grayham performed two of his songs at the start of the dancing part of the evening. DJ SPY was in charge of the music.

Guest speakers Governor Eugene Holiday and Minister Plenipotentiary Henrietta Doran-York were unable to attend due to urgent government business. A video of the event will be posted on the website www.uscfoundation.com and on the organisation's Facebook page.



Happy to catch up while seated at the table where later on a festive, delightful dinner was served.



The Christmas Gala provided young St. Maarteners the opportunity to get together in the holiday season, dressed up in gala attire.



Posing for a photo in front of the large Christmas tree at the Hilton Hotel.



Some of the invited guests, which included former Prime Minister Marcel Gumbs (standing right) and former Vice-president of the Council of State Herman Tjeenk Willink (seated second from right).

VACANCY



is looking for a:

WEB Sales & Marketing Analyst

- Must have minimum 3 years working experience in the same capacity.
- Must possess Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Engineering, Statistics/Mathematics or equivalent.
- Must be reliable, independent, hard-working and honest.
- Must be able to display professionalism and enthusiasm with all assigned tasks.
- Must be able to work as part of a team.
- Must be able to work under high pressure situations.
- Must have detailed experience in Marketing with focus on database marketing.
- Must have minimum 2 years experience in casino gaming entertainment and communications.
- Must have proven sales administration background.

Applications must be submitted before December 15th, 2015.

Applicants should be of Dutch Nationality or in possession of valid working papers.

Interested and qualified applicants can send or bring their resume to the office located at: Yogesh Commercial Complex Unit L2, A.J.C. Brouwers Road, Cul-de-Sac or e-mail: info@labourxperts.com.

Please forward a copy of your application to the Labour Office (with all certificates and references). For more info please call: 1 (721) 542 3178 / 1 (721) 542 3179 or fax: 1 (721) 542 3176.

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Suitable candidates must possess valid work and residence permits, permanent residency or be a Dutch national.

Persons with experience will be given first preference. Interested persons should email resume to: ezeconstruction-sxm@gmail.com or call 721-580-6129. A copy of resume should also be submitted to the Labour Department.

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Power outages affect Cable TV, Cablenet

MADAME ESTATE--St. Maarten Cable TV said its Cable TV and CableNet customers may experience service interruptions due to intermittent electrical power failures. The outages began during the week of November 30.

Managing Director Beulah Jonis said Cable TV subscribers should note that as long as there is a load-shedding schedule and intermittent blackouts

by GEBE, Cable TV and data services may be affected in the coming days. "In the event of damage to St. Maarten Cable TV's network infrastructure caused by power surges, the St. Maarten Cable TV technical team is prepared to reset or replace equipment on the network once the power is restored," Jonis said.

St. Maarten Cable TV and CableNet apologise

to its clients for the inconvenience the outage may cause. For cable inquiries, billing assistance and service calls, customers may call tel. 542-4361 or e-mail customercare@innovativex.net.

St. Maarten Cable TV and CableNet Customers are encouraged to visit the company website <http://www.sxm-cable.com/> for additional information.



A section of the audience at the seminar.

80 attend seventh Payroll Pro seminar

PHILIPSBURG--Almost 80 persons attended Antek IT Solutions St. Maarten and Gamma IT Solutions of Aruba's seventh Payroll Pro seminar at Divi Little Bay Beach Resort recently.

Speakers included representatives from the Tax Department, Social and Health Care Insurances SZV and PriceWaterHouse Coopers PwC. Antek IT Solutions Director Klaas van Sloten, Distributor of Payroll Pro in St. Maarten, began the seminar with an opening speech and welcomed attendees as well as members of the panel.

Payroll Pro is a payroll administration software application that is being used by companies to pay more than 80 per cent of labourers in St. Maarten. A new and completely revamped version of the software application was recently launched in St. Maarten: Payroll Pro Ultra with an

optional integrated HRM module.

Inspector of Taxes Maria Bass, SZV official Reginald Willemsberg, PwC representative Paul van Vliet, Antek IT Solutions representative Louis Bute and Gamma IT Solutions representatives Koos Veel and Frank Baks spoke at the seminar and also fielded questions from attendees.

Veel expounded on the history of Payroll Pro and introduced the new payroll administration application. Bass spoke about compliance and the importance of correct information being submitted to the Inspectorate of Taxes. Willemsberg gave a detailed explanation about the sickness and accident insurance. He spoke about some changes SZV is working on, including its employee online mutation system.

Van Sloten demonstrated the new functions, options

and possibilities of Payroll Pro Ultra and HRM.

"The audience reacted extremely excited to all the new features. At the end of his demonstration he announced that even more functionalities and modules are being added by the developers of the software, Gamma IT Solutions," it was stated in a press release. The additions include online employee- and employer portals.

Van Vliet touched on the consequences of the pending increase in the pension age, which led to "interesting reactions" and discussions in the question and answer session with the almost 80 attendees who participated in the seminar.

Additional information about the Payroll Pro Ultra/HRM system may be obtained by contacting Antek at tel. 543-2112 or email payrollpro@antek.sx.

Curaçao starts budget debate

WILLEMSTAD--During the first debate on the 2016 budget of the Government of Curaçao, opposition members called it strange that austerity measures are being implemented while there is a surplus.

Independent parliamentarians Omayra Leefflang and Marilyn Moses as well as MAN-fraction member Charles Cooper asked the Minister of Finance about this apparent disconnect. Leefflang also wondered

how government received less tax revenue, was spending more and still had money left.

According to Cooper, the minister does not think about the people in need. "He could easily be the head of the agriculture department; 'E ta traha dam, warda awa' (He builds reservoirs to catch rainwater; a popular local way to say saving for the future-Ed).

"The 2015 budget will end with a surplus. I think it is also expected that the 2016 budget will close with a surplus. The implementation of cost-cutting measures is therefore contradictory," added Cooper.

VACANCY



is looking for a:

Guest Service Coordinator

- Must have minimum 3 years working experience at the same capacity.
- Must have minimum MBO in Hospitality Management.
- Must be reliable, independent, hardworking and honest.
- Must be flexible to work rotating and split shifts.
- Must be explicitly service oriented.
- Must be able to display professionalism and enthusiasm with all assigned tasks.
- Must be able to stand for long periods of time.
- Must be able to work as part of a team.
- Must be able to work under high pressure situations.
- Must possess strong oral communication skills.
- Must possess the ability to integrate with clientele.
- Must have strong interpersonal skills.

Applications must be submitted before December 22nd, 2015.

Applicants should be of Dutch Nationality or in possession of valid working papers.

Interested and qualified applicants can send or bring their resume to the office located at: Yogesh Commercial Complex Unit L2, A.J.C. Brouwers Cul-de-Sac or e-mail: info@labourxperts.com

Please forward a copy of your application to the Labour Office. (with all certificates and references) For more info please

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Monday
December 14th, 2015

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DAILY GAMES

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Winning Numbers:
For Draw # 655
Monday December 14th, 2015

12 15 18 22 23

x3

\$36,500

	PICK 3	PICK 4
MORNING DRAW # 15055	DRAW # 14926	
PRIZE:1 5-5-5	0-4-2-5	
2 2-8-5	2-3-9-6	
3 1-9-3	9-5-1-0	
MIDDAY DRAW # 15056	DRAW # 14927	
PRIZE:1 1-5-1	8-7-5-8	
2 7-9-6	5-6-0-3	
3 9-9-9	3-8-8-1	
SUNSET DRAW # 15057	DRAW # 14928	
PRIZE:1 2-4-7	2-2-2-1	
2 6-5-2	3-3-3-9	
3 9-5-8	0-1-2-4	
EVENING DRAW # 15058	DRAW # 14929	
PRIZE:1 9-9-1	0-7-9-0	
2 6-6-6	5-2-0-1	
3 8-6-0	2-8-3-7	

NOTES

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www.thecaribbeanlottery.com Must be 18 or older to buy or redeem Lottery tickets

'Free water and power for poor'

WILLEMSTAD -- PNP-leader and Curaçao Member of Parliament (MP) Humphrey Davelaar advocates free water and electricity for the less fortunate on the island especially for the months of December, January and February.

of the fare; that would definitely give those in need a break."

Whether Jardim is able and/or willing to comply with this request is not yet known.

The coalition partner submitted this request in a letter to Minister of Finance José Jardim as the one who is responsible for government-owned utility company Aqualectra.

According to Davelaar, the people are struggling because of the economic crisis. "It is hard for them to get a job and to generate income. As government, we have to help them in any way we can."

He also mentioned the possibility of subsidising the cost of public transport. "Maybe government can pay 40 or 50 per cent



The court in Curaçao ordered former Taams Clinic director Ninette van den Berg to pay the institute NAF. 899,000 in damages. She and her company Navigo were held responsible for unjustly overcharging that amount as what was called a management fee. The ruling would seem to open the door for criminal prosecution based on an embezzlement complaint filed with local authorities.



St. Maarten's new Minister Plenipotentiary Henrietta Doran-York on Monday paid an official visit to her colleague of Aruba Alfonso Boekhoudt at the Aruba House. Doran-York has served in different capacities at St. Maarten's Pointe Blanche Prison. She was also Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague between May 2012 and June 2013. Before coming to the Netherlands to assume her new position, she worked as an advisor at the St. Maarten Ministry of Justice. Minister Plenipotentiary Boekhoudt presented a copy of the book Aruba Ariba to Doran-York as a token of appreciation in welcoming his new colleague. (Photo courtesy of the Aruba House)



More and more stores are opening outlets in Curaçao's Sambil megamall at Veeris that opened earlier this year. One of the latest additions was US Polo. The indoor shopping centre is also organising various activities, including an exhibition of paintings by local artists.



A woman was killed in Curaçao at Gato on Sunday night. Police were called to a house near the entrance to the Malpais landfill, where they found the lifeless body of 30-year-old Luz Elana Rodriguez Rivas laying on the ground in a pool of blood with stab wounds to the face, chest and shoulder, and the bloody knife next to her. The male resident G.R.T. (52) was arrested. Both are from Colombia, but the victim did not live there.



Board members of Curaçao opposition party MAN Melvin Daal and Giovanni Atalita were in Venezuela as international observers invited by government during the recent parliamentary elections. They said almost 30 million people went to the polls peacefully and without major incident to choose between 22 political organisations vying for the 167 seats of in the General Assembly. Also 18 others countries had representatives in the South American country for the vote.



Two requests by local companies to declare Curaçao's technology exchange C-TEX bankrupt were rejected by a judge Pieter de Kort. In the meantime the data centre in which United Telecommunication Services (UTS) has a majority stake requested a suspension of payments, which the court granted. On March 16 there will be a meeting of creditors to verify the claims. The specialised high-security and earthquake- as well as hurricane resistant building at Mahuma alone cost US \$13.6 million. C-TEX owes the local banks a total of NAF. 55 million but they have accepted an offer from government-owned UTS, in which St. Maarten also has a minority share, to buy up this debt and the accompanying collateral at 60 per cent.



Ministry of Public Housing, Environment, Spatial Development and Infrastructure VROMI urges the owner of the converted trailer who left behind the temporary roof to remove it immediately from the ring road. The roof was put on the trailer for weather protection, but has now been left strewn on the sand road.



St. Maarten Housing Development Foundation (SMHDF) recently hosted an appreciation evening for its tenants who have maintained a steady zero balance on their rent. Managing Director/ Housing Services Manager Helen G. Salomons-Brown told zero balance tenants: "Your timely commitment towards the SMHDF allows us to manage an organization responsibly, and in turn allows us to continue with timely repairs and maintenance ... You are the foundation upon which we stand, the reason why we have come this far and this event is just a small way of showing our appreciation to you for maintaining a zero balance throughout the year." The foundation will mark its 20th anniversary on June 6, 2016. Of that, Salomons-Brown said, "We can attest that at times our unhappy customers were also our greatest source of learning, and we thank you for that." In photo: Salomons-Brown and fellow Managing Director Errol Neuman with tenants.

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9am-7pm

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Police Station 182333
Emergency 111
Hot Line 108
Fire Department 120
Hospital 182211/182371
Landradio 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.

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Fire 911
Ambulance 911
Police Station 497 2333
Hospital 497 2551
Dental clinic 497 2343
Radio Anguilla 497 2218
Tourism Department 497 2759
Crimestoppers 0800 777777
AIRLINES
American Eagle 497 3501
Winair 497 2748
Liat 497 5000
Air Anguilla 497 2643
Trans Anguilla 497 8690
COURIER SERVICE
DHL 497 3400
Federal Express 497 2719
UPS 497 2239
SERVICE CLUBS
Rotary Club of Anguilla
Meets at Da Vida every Thursday at 6:00 p.m.
Soroptimist International
Day Care Centre
4.30 p.m. 2nd Tuesday in each month Tel: 497 3509
Lions Club
Meets every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 5.30 p.m. at the Arts and Crafts Centre Tel: 497 6259
Interact Club of Anguilla
Meets every Friday at 3.15 p.m. at the Albena Lake Hodge Comprehensive School
Toasmaster club
meets every 2nd and 4th Saturday at 6.45 p.m. at La Vue, South Hill



A dog on Saba.

Mysterious illness strikes Saba dogs

SABA--A mysterious canine illness has quickly hit Saba. Seven dogs have been showing similar symptoms in the past four days.

"At this time the only common factor is that all of the dogs have been swimming at Cove Bay and or Fort Bay," Saba's Veterinary Technician Cassandra "Casey" Holm said.

Fort Bay was recently dredged. Jelle van der Velde of Saba Conservation Foundation (SCF) said there is a chance bacteria or foreign bodies under the sand could have been stirred up with the dredging and possibly made the dogs ill if they had swum before everything settled.

Fort Bay is considered a popular and safe recreational site and is regularly frequented by swimmers and snorkelers.

Holm advised that if a dog shows symptoms of vomiting, diarrhoea or both to start by withholding food and water for 24 hours. After this time, one can start by giving them ice cubes for hydration and small meals, such as boiled chicken or drained ground beef with white rice.

If they still have diarrhoea after these measures, dog owners are urged to call Holm at tel. 721-522-2637.

If pets have any of the abovementioned symptoms, owners are urged not to take them to public places or take them out swimming. "If it's a must to take the pets for walks, please pick up the faeces and dis-

pose of them properly until it clears up to avoid other pets getting it," Holm cautioned.



The recent visit of boutique cruise ship "La Serenissima" to St. Eustatius was considered a great success. The passengers commented that they very much enjoyed what St. Eustatius has to offer and that everything went smoothly. Some went on a hike to the Quill, while the largest group took a historical walking tour through Oranjestad. They were guided by Roland Lopes, Board members of St. Eustatius Historical Foundation Walter Hellebrand and Althea Merkman and certified tour guide Suzette Hassell. The crew commented that they cannot wait for their next visit, which is scheduled for March 2016.

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CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

Sint Eustatius, December 10th 2015

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Island Government is hereby requesting the general public and businesses in particular, to please submit all invoices for the fiscal year 2015 for payment. Invoices must be submitted to the finance department at Statia Mall, no later than January 15th 2016. Failing to do so may result in your invoices not being processed.

We thank you in advance for your fullest cooperation.

From,
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Gratuity and pension to first PM withheld for over 2 years by SKNLP Administration



First Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis Dr. Sir Kennedy Simmonds.

ST. KITTS--The Federation's first Prime Minister, now national hero, Dr. Sir Kennedy Simmonds was forced to wait some two years and 2½ months before he was paid his gratuity after leaving office in 1995. The former Prime Minister, in a press release dated September 30, 1997, revealed that he did not receive any payment until September 26, 1997.

"On September 26, 1997, 2 years and 2½ months after leaving office, I finally received my pension benefits from the Administration of Dr. Denzil Douglas, consisting of my gratuity, pension for the current month and 26 months arrears of pension," Sir Kennedy said, adding that he had written "to the clerk of the National Assembly in July 1995" for his benefits.

"I was reliably informed that my benefits had been calculated by the Accountant General, [and - Ed.] sent on file to the Auditor-General who certified them as correct and returned the file to the Accountant General," he said.

According to Sir Kennedy, then Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas "sent for the file and kept that file in his office with expressed intention of withholding my benefits for over two years."

The Federation's first Prime Minister, who served in that post from 1983 to 1995, in recounting the humility he suffered, said, "While the support of friends and well-wishers was a welcome lifeline, I should not have had to suffer this embarrassment and indignity of depending on that support, of having bank managers writing to me, of having to put my family home up for sale. It is clear that this was targeted malice against me by Dr. Douglas and his Government."

According to Sir Kennedy, "this blatant act of malice and victimisation by Dr. Douglas and his administration should not simply be swept under the carpet."

This press release of Dr. Simmonds was brought to light by Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Dr. Timothy Harris in Parliament on December 11, in the wake of a legal claim made by former St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP) Senator Richard Skerritt against the Prime Minister and Attorney General Vincent Byron Jr., for withholding payments of his outstanding gratuity and pension, although they say

he has not answered a letter sent to him asking him to clear up perceived irregularities in relation to subsistence before such monies can be settled.

"Even as they released my benefits, Dr. Douglas and his Government sought to injure me further. They made sure they deducted land and house taxes for 1996 which I was unable to

pay because they were withholding my money, but they went further and deducted interest at 11 per cent, while refusing to pay me interest on my long overdue pensions benefits," Sir Kennedy said.

Sir Kennedy further reiterated that he had to seek the intervention of the Caribbean Community Caricom Heads of Government and

former Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Eme-ka Anyaoku, to persuade Dr. Douglas to pay this gratuity and pension.

The Team Unity Administration has vowed not to allow such a repeat of disregard for justice and many former parliamentarians under the defeated Douglas Administration have already received their entitlements.

Premier's Ministry reminder for work, residence permits

NEVIS--The Premier's Ministry wishes to advise all employers of non-nationals, who are currently outstanding on their 2015 work permits, and also residence permit holders to kindly settle arrears at the Premier's Ministry, Bath Hotel, on or before Thursday, December 31, 2015.

Applications for the renewal of all 2016 work permits and all residence permits are to be received by the Ministry no later than Thursday, December 31, 2015.

All persons who have not previously sought to have themselves regularised are asked to make application to the Ministry for the necessary correction of their status.

The support of all stakeholders is solicited as the Premier's Ministry embarks on its drive to ensure that all non-nationals are regularised.

The Ministry will appreciate the cooperation of all concerned.

PS elects a new leader

WILLEMSTAD--It is now official. Curaçao Member of Parliament (MP) Jaime Cordoba is the new political leader of coalition party "Pueblo Soberano" (PS), the party of the assassinated politician Helmin Wiels.

The members elected Cordoba, who was the only candidate for the vacant post, during its weekly gathering last Saturday. It is the first time since the murder of the founder of the party in May 2013 that PS again has a political leader.

Many had thought that former Prime Minister Ivar Asjes would become the leader. However, relations between Asjes and the MPs representing PS went sour for unknown reasons, as both sides do not want to state exactly what led to the dismissal of Asjes by his own party.

Cordoba has announced that he will continue the legacy of Wiels, even though he is not Wiels. He also wants to eventually make Curaçao a fully independent country.

Elections are scheduled for the second half of 2016.



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Government of National Unity set to deliver historic Budget today

ST. KITTS—The Government of National Unity is set to deliver its first Budget since taking office on February 16, 2015.

Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Dr. Timothy Harris will read the Appropriation (2016) Bill, 2015, and lead the debate

at a sitting of Parliament at Government Headquarters today, Tuesday, December 15, at 10:00am.

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the services of St. Kitts and Nevis for the financial year commencing January 1, 2016, and ending December 31, 2016.

The Bill will provide for over a half billion EC dollars in expenditure to be charged on the consolidated fund.

“This is our first Budget. It is the first Budget to be delivered by a Team Unity Administration since the elections of February 16,

2015. That in itself makes it a very special Budget. It affords us the opportunity by way of legislative provisions to ensure that a number of policy initiatives which we want to pursue can be adequately re-sourced,” Prime Minister Harris said.

He said that the Government will expand both its economic and social agendas. Some of the areas of expansion noted by the Prime Minister are the reformation of the Citizen-by-Investment Programme, renewable energy, education and labour issues, including health and safety in the workplace and illegal workers.

Prime Minister Harris has promised that the 2016 Budget will be based on two premises. One, that there would be no new taxes and secondly, that it will not be a deficit Budget. The Budget will demonstrate fiscal responsibility and fiscal



Prime Minister Dr. Timothy Harris

discipline as the two main guiding factors, he says.

This is a “significant moment for us as far as the implementation in furthering our agenda and mandate to the people,” said Prime Minister Harris.

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Police arrest 40-year-old man for cocaine possession

ANGUILLA—The Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) arrested a 40-year-old male on Saturday, December 12, for possession of 3.9 grams of cocaine and 1.5 grams of ecstasy in four pills.

The alleged offender resides in West End and was driving in the Cauls Bottom area around 11:45am when he was stopped and searched by the police. On Sunday he was charged with possession of cocaine and ecstasy and on Monday, December 14, he was taken before the Magistrate where he was granted bail.

The sum of EC \$20,000 cash bond was demanded and the man had to surrender all his travel documents and he has to report to The Valley Police Station every Monday. He is to appear back in court on January 19, 2016.

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Urban Development Minister says Govt. looking to revitalise Basseterre

ST. KITTS--Minister of Public Infrastructure and Urban Development Ian "Patches" Liburd, has disclosed that plans are in the works for the revitalisation of Basseterre.

"Under Urban Development we have looked at what we call urban renewal that looks at the revitalisation of Basseterre and that would include as well... the Basseterre Valley National Park in terms of upgrading that; the ferry terminal

downtown -- we believe that ought to be more passenger friendly and there is actually a proposal before us to deal with an expansion of the [Urban Development Corporation - Ed.] UDC area in terms of a new marina there as well," Minister Liburd said during a broadcast of the radio programme "Working for You."

Already, work has begun some weeks ago to resurface the roadways at the

Basseterre Ferry Terminal for smoother movement of the buses and other vehicles that use it.

The Minister also revealed plans for the construction of a car park and bus terminal on Wellington Road. He did not divulge further details on the revitalisation efforts, except to say that this project would cost a great deal of money.

A proposed plan for the National Park that Minister Liburd referred to was detailed in a National Park Management Plan developed in 2009 for St. Kitts and Nevis. The Team Unity Government is looking into implementing this

plan with modifications. There is no green space in Basseterre and the Government is planning on devel-

oping in the vicinity of 800 acres of real estate in the designated protected area so that people can ben-

efit from activities such as family outings, jogging and walking.



Trafalgar Square, Basseterre, St. Kitts.



Audience attending the ground-breaking ceremony for the Solar Farm.

Anguilla to have 1MW Solar Farm Project

ANGUILLA--The ground-breaking ceremony by the Anguilla Electricity Company (ANGLEC) for a one-megawatt (1MW) Solar Farm Project took place on Monday, December 14. It is located west of the ANGLEC power station and will take up four to five acres of land.

ANGLEC CEO David Gumbs said the project had been under discussion for some time and the company was excited that it was now starting. He said 20 companies had been in the bidding process and Uriel Renewables was the company that would be constructing the Farm. He said there would be significant impact on the economy and the environment, and the Farm would supply about 10 per cent of the households in Anguilla. The estimated opening of the project is mid-2016.

Minister of Infrastructure Curtis Richardson commended the past and present boards of ANGLEC as well as the management team for taking "this bold step." He said he hoped it was just the beginning and would lead to greater achievements. He said ANGLEC was demonstrating a way to bring down the cost of living. He thanked Uriel Renewables and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for partnering with Anguilla for the project.

Petro Sanchez of Uriel Renewables said his company had been in the business of renewable energy since the mid-1990s, but technology had advanced much since then. He said the Farm would supply some 600 homes in Anguilla. He noted the challenges, including hurricanes, but said the Farm would withstand winds of 120 miles per hour.

Another challenge is corrosion, so careful consideration will be given to construction materials. Sanchez said there had been excellent cooperation with the Anguilla team and he was honoured that his company had been selected amidst much competition.

Andrew Dupigny of the CDB said the financial lender had provided grants and loans for Anguilla for many years and was glad to continue the cooperation. He said the Solar Farm would cost approximately US \$3.3 million with some \$1.6 million provided by the European Union (EU). He said the Farm would save 384,000 litres of fuel annually. Dupigny said CDB was willing to support Anguilla going forward.

ANGLEC Systems Control Engineer Sylvan Brooks said solar energy was the way to go, as it was "inexhaustible, reduces pollution and reduces cost." He noted that the company had several challenges, including storage systems and batteries, and researching non-corrosive materials. He said electricity produced at the Solar Farm would be connected directly to the grid.

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Rutte gets in firing line after Van Miltenburg steps down

THE HAGUE--Members of the political issue. The most important aspect is that for years Parliament was inadequately, and possibly wrongly informed by the cabinet under pressure over a 2.13 million euros deal between the Prosecutor's Office and a drugs baron which led to the resignation of Parliamentary chairwoman Anouchka van Miltenburg during the weekend.

Van Miltenburg stepped down Saturday, one day after agreeing to face questions from her colleagues about an anonymous letter giving details of the deal which was shredded by her colleagues.

She is the third member of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's conservative VVD party to quit their jobs over the scandal. In March, Minister of Security and Justice Ivo Opstelten and his deputy, State Secretary Fred Teeven resigned when a receipt confirming the full amount of the payment came to light. Teeven brokered the deal with drugs lord Cees H. in 2000, when he was a prosecutor.

Rutte, Justice Minister Ad van der Steur and State Secretary Klaas Dijkhoff are expected to come under fire on Wednesday when parliament is to debate the issue.

A poll by Maurice de Hond over the weekend found that 70 per cent of voters questioned believe Rutte misled Parliament over the issue and just over half (51 per cent) thought the Prime Minister should resign.

Leader of Christian-Democrat CDA Sybrand van Haersma Buma said he respected Van Miltenburg's "personal decision" but added: "The chairwoman played only a marginal role in a larger

political issue. The most important aspect is that for years Parliament was inadequately, and possibly wrongly informed by the cabinet under pressure over a 2.13 million euros deal between the Prosecutor's Office and a drugs baron which led to the resignation of Parliamentary chairwoman Anouchka van Miltenburg during the weekend.

Centre-democrat D66 leader Alexander Pechtold added: "The main responsibility in accounting for the circumstances surrounding the deal with drugs criminal Cees H. lies with the cabinet, not the chairman of Parliament."

Rutte was criticised last week for suggesting that there may have been obligations on H. under the terms of the agreement. The drugs baron's lawyer said any quid pro quo deal could compromise his client's personal safety.

Van Miltenburg's resignation came after an independent inquiry sharply criticised the way the deal was constructed by Teeven and handled by ministers. Neither Teeven's superiors nor the Dutch tax authority were fully informed of the deal.

Parliament was initially told the deal was for a sum of two million guilders. The sum of 4.7 million



UNIFIL-battalion marching on Veteran's Day in the Netherlands. (Defence Ministry photo)

Defence Ministry failed its veterans in Lebanon

THE HAGUE--The Ministry of Defence failed its Lebanon veterans in providing information about and offering treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the Central Appeals Court ruled on Monday.

The ruling was made in a lawsuit filed by one of the veterans. The veteran in question was deployed to Lebanon to fight in the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) battalion in 1980 and 1990. He suffered from PTSD upon his return.

The Court found that there was a "combination of lack of care before, dur-

ing and especially after the deployment," it said in a statement.

According to the Court, the soldier was not properly informed about possible psychological problems that may be caused by his deployment. The military leaders also did not refer the soldier to psychological aid or called in aid themselves when he started displaying serious behavioural problems.

Finally, the Minister of Defence also did not provide adequate care after the soldier's return. The Central Appeals Court concluded that the Minister breached her duty of care

and is liable for the stated damages.

The Court also referred to the 1987 Report After care ex-UNIFIL soldiers. The report shows that many of the soldiers deployed to Lebanon did not receive letters about care options and that many of them developed psychological problems. There is also no evidence that aftercare was offered after the report was published.

In 1998 the Defence Minister acknowledged in a letter to the Dutch Parliament's Second Chamber that an active aftercare policy was vitally important. But even after that the Minister could not provide any evidence that the soldier in question had received any aftercare. Only in 2007 were all Lebanon veterans approached about the available aftercare.

The Central Court of Appeals is the highest Court in the Netherlands for social administrative law, civil law and parts of the pension law. In this case the Court's verdict is final with no possibility for appeal.

Number of asylum claims to hit new record in 2015

THE HAGUE--The number of asylum claims in the Netherlands is expected to reach a new record level in 2015, the Ministry of Security and Justice said on Monday.

So far this year 40,000 asylum seekers have arrived in the country, while another 14,000 renewed claims or appeals for family reunification have been made.

That is the same number as during the previous peak year of 1994 when 54,000 persons applied for asylum in the Netherlands, at the height of the Balkan wars.

Last week between 1,000 and 1,100 new claims were made, according to the Justice Ministry's figures, which represented a drop from the previous week's figure of 1,300.

Ministry of Tourism to host Arts & Craft Expo

NEVIS--The Ministry of Tourism on Nevis will be hosting an Arts and Craft Expo and Open Day at its new Artisan Village location (at the grounds of the Nevis Craft House) on Thursday, December 17, from 9:30am-2:30pm.

All persons interested in displaying and selling handicraft items, local food, drinks, delicacies and other items are hereby asked to call the Ministry of Tourism to register. The deadline to register for a table is today, Tuesday, December 15.

For further information please contact: Ministry of Tourism Research and Development Unit, Bath Hotel at tel: 469 5521 ext. 2147 or e-mail: mintour@niagov.

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Public Announcement Price Change Petroleum Products

The Government of St. Maarten regulates the prices of petroleum products by imposing a maximum price at which wholesalers and retailers can sell these products on St. Maarten. Due to the ongoing developments on the international level, the prices of crude oil have experienced adjustments. Given the aforementioned, the general public is hereby informed that as of **Sunday 13th December 2015, 6:00am** the **maximum consumer prices** of ULG and Diesel (gasoil) are adjusted as follows:

	Current Price	New Price
UGL	1.795 Naf/liter	1.674 Naf/liter
Diesel	1.368 Naf/liter	1.237 Naf/liter

Below is the complete price buildup showing all components that result in the new prices. All numbers are rounded to three decimal places.

Price buildup

Components	13-Dec-15	13-Dec-15
	ULG	Gasoil
Effective date	13-Dec-15	13-Dec-15
Petrotrin Posted Price	151	133
US\$/AG		
Petrotrin Posted Price	0.718	0.629
Freight	0.063	0.063
Insurance	0.000	0.000
Import Duty	0.290	
Liquid throughput fee (THRX)	0.080	0.080
Wholesaler margin	0.230	0.230
Max. wholesale price	1.381	1.002
Turnovertax (5%)	0.069	0.050
Max. wholesale price incl. tax	1.450	1.052
Retailer margin	0.145	0.126
Consumer price	1.594	1.178
Turnovertax (5%)	0.080	0.059
Max. Consumer price incl. tax	1.674	1.237
	ULG	Gasoil

Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic and Telecommunication

Bestuurskantoor, Clem Labega Square, Sint Maarten
Phone: (599) 542 2233, Fax: (599) 542 4884



Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening, Milieu en Infrastructuur (VROMI)

Het Ministerie van VROMI is verantwoordelijk voor een integrale inrichting en beheer van het openbaar gebied door middel van het opstellen van beleid en de uitvoering hiervan. De werkzaamheden bij Domeinbeheer bestaan momenteel grotendeels uit de verwerking van nieuwe aanvragen voor land uitgifte en verzoeken om wijziging van het gebruik van overheidspercelen.

Domeinbeheer is op korte termijn op zoek naar een geschikte teamspeler voor de functie van:

Hoofdmedewerker Domeinbeheer (HBO)

Kerntaken/verantwoordelijkheden:

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- Het verrichten van (statistische) onderzoeken inzake relevante ontwikkelingen, landelijke regelgeving en draagt bij aan het ontwikkelen van modellen, adviezen, rapportages en beleidsbijstellingen;
- stelt onafhankelijk adviezen besluiten, vergunningen, subsidietoekenningen, en verordeningen in concept;
- beoordeelt de complexiteit van de aanvragen en stuurt deze door;
- levert een bijdrage aan structuurplannen, ontwikkelingsplannen, bestemmingsplannen en aan- en verkoop van grond.

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- voltooide opleiding HBO rechten of een gevorderde WO studie rechten;
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- kennis van en inzicht in beleidsterreinen en de daaraan gerelateerde wet- en regelgeving;
- vaardigheid in het analyseren van (beleids)ontwikkelingen en het opstellen van beleidsadviezen, notities, rapporten, e.d.;
- vaardigheid in het beoordelen van (bouw)plannen/aanvragen.

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U kunt uw sollicitatiebrief en curriculum vitae digitaal sturen via careers@sintmaartengov.org.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure (VROMI)

Who are we?

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Our Mission!

The mission of the Ministry of VROMI is to realize an optimal living, working and recreational environment for the citizens and visitors of Country Sint Maarten, by rendering an effective as possible service for the benefit of the community of Sint Maarten, with a focus in the policy areas of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure.

The Ministry of VROMI is looking for enthusiastic, dynamic, experienced and educated professionals to fill the following team functions:

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- Coordination of the preparation of the annual budget of VROMI
- Gatekeeper for the financial management and accounting
- Periodical analyses and assessments of the budget of VROMI;
- Conduct investigations and audits, assess the legality, efficiency and effectiveness of (proposed) (policy) products and identifies and analyzes (financial) risks;
- examines and advises on the multi-annual year budget from the County budget.

For detailed job descriptions, please visit <http://pnosxm.sharepoint.com>.

If you are the right candidate for any of the positions above and would like to apply, kindly send your application letter and resume to careers@sintmaartengov.org. For more information please contact Ms. Rowenna Godfried, Personnel Advisor at Rowenna.Godfried@sintmaartengov.org or Louis Brown Secretary General of VROMI at louis.brown@sintmaartengov.org.

New email account MOT Sint Maarten

To all Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBP), all financial institutions and government agencies.

The Financial Intelligence Unit Sint Maarten (MOT) announces that as of Friday December 18th, 2015, its email domain will be **fiu.gov.sx**.

All emails sent to the current email domain (justicesxm.com) will be redirected to the new email domain until December 31st, 2015.

The new email accounts of the supervisors will be sent directly to the DNFBP via email.

If you have any further questions, please contact the MOT on telephone no. 1(721) 542-3025 or 1(721) 543-0826.



"We are now embarking on an unprecedented project to build a low-carbon global economy," said Unilever chairman Paul Polman after the Paris climate accord was closed.

Paris climate deal means more solar panels, wind farms and electric cars

THE HAGUE--The Netherlands will need to begin making dramatic changes in the next 18 months to meet the ambitious climate change targets set at the Paris summit, environmental scientists told national broadcaster NOS.

The target of limiting the impact of global warming to 1.5 degrees by the end of the century will demand a much faster switch to green energy sources than currently planned. Marjan Minnesma, Director of the Urgenda organisation which won a court case against the Dutch government's climate change policy this year, described the deal as a "boost" for the court case.

"Putting the figure of 1.5 degrees in the agreement means that we will need to stop using fossil fuels within 20 years. The gas reserves in Groningen will be finished in 20 years, so it can only be a good thing to start now."

Minnesma predicted that electric cars and wind farms would become far more prevalent as a result of the deal. "If you're still driving now, your next car will be electric," she said.

Director of nature environmental organisation Natuur en Milieu Tjerk Wagenaar said the deal vindicated the plan to close the Netherlands' remaining coal-fired power plants, which was steered through parliament last month by a coalition of the governing Labour party PvdA and opposition centre-democrat D66 party.

"Europe has plans to close the majority of its 280 coal-powered plants within five years. That has consequences for the Netherlands," Wagenaar said.

He added that solar panels would become a standard feature on Dutch roofs in the coming years. "The price is falling very fast now. We would expect that within 10 years solar panels will be installed as standard in renovations and new buildings."

But there was criticism from some quarters for leaving avia-

tion and shipping, two of the heaviest industrial polluters, out of the text and not making specific references to fossil fuels.

Shell's Chief Executive Officer Ben van Beurden said earlier this year that fossil fuels still accounted for 80 per cent of the world's energy consumption. "The scale of the sector is simply too large to change at a stroke."

Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Angel Gurría described the deal as "only the

start of the journey to a low-carbon future.

Chairman of Unilever Paul Polman said the decision would release billions of dollars to invest in "the immense creativity and innovation in the private sector" for renewable energy.

"The consequences of this agreement will be felt in banks, stock exchanges, boardrooms and research centres. The whole world is aware that we are now embarking on an unprecedented project to build a low-carbon global economy," said Polman.

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Islands/Dutch Kingdom

Too few police in Netherlands for EU presidency, mayors say

AMSTERDAM--Mayors in the Netherlands are worried about a police shortage during the Dutch presidency of the European Union (EU) in the first half of next year, mayor of Haarlem and chairman of the Association of Dutch Mayors Bernt Schneiders, said to BNR on Monday.

In the first half of next year extra security will be needed for more than 20 European meetings in Amsterdam. The mayors are concerned that this extra security will tax the police capacity so much that there will be no police officers available to deploy to other "important issues," Schneiders said.

According to him, the same thing happened during the nuclear security summit in the Netherlands last year.

"We are a little worried that this is going to happen again. You will find that at some point the municipalities are informed

that the summit costs so much capacity that no more people are available, which means for example, that no other events can be organized, which are often also very important for the municipalities," the Haarlem mayor told BNR.

The mayors are therefore calling on Minister of Security and Justice Ard van der Steur

to pay deployed officers extra money instead of extra time off.

"If you pay officers in free time it is actually like a double attack on the police capacity. And that is the usual state of affairs. So my plea is to pay them money so they can simply remain available for all other tasks in all other municipalities."

Man arrested after mother, and daughter found dead

LELYSTAD--A man has been arrested following the discovery of the bodies of a 16-year-old girl and her mother under the floor of a house in Lelystad.

The man is said to be the girl's stepfather Alex L. The girl, identified by the *Telegraaf* newspaper as Fleur, and her mother were reported missing by her brother during the weekend because he could not make contact with them.

Police first failed to find the women but made the gruesome discovery during a second search of the house on Sunday evening. Neighbours told the newspaper they had no reason to suspect anything was wrong and the family appeared completely normal.



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Fax: +1 721 545-4229
Email: humanresources@fly-winair.com



Bull shark.

Bahamas shark attack victim rescued by US Coast Guard

NASSAU, Bahamas—A 26-year-old Bahamian man received serious injuries when he was attacked by a shark while fishing in the Bahamas on Friday, according to the US Coast Guard.

Richard Pinder of Spanish Wells, Eleuthera, was reportedly diving for lobster when he was attacked by what is believed to have been a bull shark and bitten on his hands, stomach and thigh.

Pinder's father, who was aboard *Water Spout*, a 76-foot (23-metre) trawler nearby, called the Coast Guard

Seventh District Command Centre in Miami, Florida, for help, according to Chief Petty Officer Ryan Doss.

The attack occurred more than 70 miles (113 kilometres) southwest of Andros, the largest island in the Bahamas located just west of the capital of Nassau.

According to a statement from the Coast Guard, who responded to the distress call, the injured man was airlifted to New Providence for medical attention.

While details are unavailable, the victim was reportedly in stable condition,

although his injuries were said to be serious.

A number of shark attacks have been reported in recent years across the Bahamas, which is known to be home to bull and tiger sharks.

This is the third reported attack of 2015 in the Bahamas and the first involving a male victim.

In January, Lacey Webb Martin received life-threatening injuries when bitten while snorkelling, and on July 4, Katie Hester was attacked while spearfishing.

~ Caribbean360 ~



Kabinet van de Gouverneur van Sint Maarten

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Cabinet of the Governor of Sint Maarten hereby makes the following announcement:

For the Holiday Season, the Office and the Consular Department of the Cabinet of the Governor of Sint Maarten will be closed on the following dates:

- Tuesday, December 15th, 2015 –
*only the Consular Dept.
- Thursday, December 24th, 2015: 12 pm– 5 pm
- Friday, December 25th, 2015
- Thursday, December 31st, 2015: 12 pm– 5 pm
- Friday, January 1st, 2015

We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

The following business day, regular business hours will resume. The office hours are from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. The Consular Department's walk-in hours are from 9:00 am – 11:00 am.

Moody's gives thumbs up to Cuba's economic outlook

NEW YORK, United States—International ratings agency Moody's Investors Service has moved Cuba's economic rating from stable to positive, citing its lessening dependence on Venezuela and the possibility of more improved relations with the United States.

It said the positive outlook reflects its expectation that measures to diversify trade and financial links will contribute to favourable macroeconomic trends and will coincide with continued easing of economic sanctions by the US.

"The positive outlook also anticipates that the Cuban authorities will maintain the current reform momentum following the Communist Party Congress in April 2016, while managing challenges stemming from weaker external finances," it said in a statement issued on December 10.

Moody's said the key drivers of the rating action were that Cuba's dependence on Venezuela has lessened since 2014, and despite pressure on Cuba's external finances from lower economic and financial support from its main trade partner, risks remain manageable; and that continued reform momentum and increased rapprochement with the US have supported favourable macroeconomic performance and raise the likelihood that US economic sanctions might be eased further.

On the Venezuela issue, it noted that in 2014, Caracas greatly reduced trade and investment flows to Cuba as economic stress stemming from lower oil prices and social tensions led to increased liquidity pressures for the oil-exporting nation. As a result of reduced support from its main trade partner and top provider of financial assistance, Cuba's economic growth slowed significantly to one per cent, from 2.7 per cent in 2013.

"However, measures to diversify trade and financial links seem to have been successful and have coincided with a gradual easing of economic sanctions by the US. Although they have not fully offset the loss of Venezuelan support, the outlook for stronger inflows remains favourable over the medium term," it said.



Cuba money

Increased tourism activity has also improved the economic outlook for the country, Moody's said, but tourism earnings have not fully offset the decrease in Venezuelan financial inflows, which has hurt the balance of payments.

"Despite these challenges, Moody's believes that external liquidity pressures remain manageable as the authorities have adopted measures to ensure balance of payments sustainability since the 2008-09 liquidity crunch and the crisis that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The country's dependence on Venezuela will diminish further as Cuba diversifies its trade and financial relations over the next two to three years," the ratings agency said.

As barriers to investment and financing constraints continue to ease, supported by continued US rapprochement, the authorities will have much greater scope to access finance and ease the

current tight external liquidity conditions. Moody's expects an increase in capital inflows is forthcoming. Both government policy and the changing relationship with the US will encourage more inward foreign direct investment (FDI), as well as official lending, following the restructuring of commercial and bilateral debt in recent years.

As for the second driver of the outlook change, Moody's said it expects that cautious reform momentum will be maintained as the US is likely to continue easing sanctions.

It said Cuba's outlook would improve further if there is a further easing of US economic sanctions that has a material impact on the island's economic prospects and reform momentum is maintained. However, if there is no further progress in this area and reform momentum is lost, Moody's said the outlook would slip back to stable. ~ Caribbean360 ~



Former President Bharrat Jagdeo arriving at Whim Magistrate Court during his last appearance.

Criminal charge against former President Jagdeo dismissed

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—High Court Judge, Justice Navindra Singh has dismissed a private criminal charge against former President and now Opposition Leader, Bharrat Jagdeo.

Jagdeo was accused of uttering racially divisive remarks by Chartered Accountant, Christopher Ram. The ruling revealed that Magistrate Charlyn Artiga has no jurisdiction to hear the case.

The charge against Jagdeo stemmed from remarks he made at Babu John, Port Mourant in March 2015 at the commemorative event for late Presidents Cheddi and Janet Jagan.

The former President had said, "The opposition consistently shout about the racism of the PPP but they practise racism. The opposition beat drums at six in the morning and say let us throw out those coolie people."



Containers on a cargo ship in the Caribbean.

IDB urges region to step up trade as exports decline

WASHINGTON, United States--Exports from Latin America and the Caribbean will drop about 14 per cent in 2015 due to a steep decline in prices and weak demand for the region's main exports from key trading partners, according to a new report from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The IDB's "Latin American and Caribbean Trade Trend Estimates 2016" annual report notes that exports dropped for the third year in a row, with the decline intensifying and spreading to virtually all nations in the region. Only two countries posted positive, albeit moderate growth, while in most of the economies the drop in overseas shipments exceeded that of the rest of the world.

"This trade contraction, which is the worst since the 2009 collapse, is a wake-up call on the need to implement export diversification policies," said Paolo Giordano, Principal Economist of the Bank's Integration and Trade Sector and co-ordinator of the report.

Oil-exporting countries were affected the most by the sharp drop in petroleum prices. Venezuela and Colombia posted the biggest contraction rates, followed by Bolivia, Ecuador, and Trinidad and Tobago. El Salvador and Guatemala were the only two countries where exports rose, due to a strong increase in their sugar shipments to China.

The report includes detailed data from 24 countries in the region. For the first time, it includes data from six Caribbean nations: Barbados, Belize,

Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The region's trade performance reflects a sharp drop in the prices of major commodities. Prices of basic products such as soybeans, sugar and coffee declined between 20 and 25 per cent in 2015. Prices of energy goods such as oil, and minerals and metals, including iron ore, fell by about 50 per cent.

The trade decline also stems from a weakening in demand from the region's main trading partners. For the region as a whole, the worst declines occurred in trade with Asia (excluding China), which fell 19 per cent, with the European Union (-18 per cent), and in intraregional flows (-19 per cent).

Exports to China plunged 14 per cent, while expectations of a rebound of exports to the US were neutralised mostly by a drop in the value of oil, which resulted in sales to that country shrinking by seven per cent.

The report notes that economies of the Caribbean and South America were the most affected over the course of the year, with declines in exports to virtually all their main destinations, while Mexico and Central America were mostly hit from a drop in sales to the US market.

The growth perspectives of regional exports in 2016 feature some risks: there are no signs of change in price trends for commodities markets, and a slow-down in economic activity is expected to continue in China and in Latin America. Stronger demand from the US, however, could

lend dynamism to exports, particularly those of Mexico and Central America. ~ *Caribbean360* ~

Phone sex video caused woman to lie to police

ST. JOHN'S Antigua-- A young woman found herself on the wrong side of the law after she reportedly went to the police and told them that she was robbed of her phone in an attempt to get back her boyfriend's phone which she claimed had sexual videos of her.

The phone in question was handed over to the police in the aftermath of an attempted robbery.

The 21-year-old accused, Chevelle Hall, is charged with creating public mischief and is scheduled to re-

turn to court on January 17, after her bail was extended.

According to the police report, on October 28 Hall went to the Constant Spring Police Station and reported that she was walking along Constant Spring Road when a motorcycle with two men aboard rode up and the pillion rider grabbed her phone.

On that same day, a case of assault was reported and the phone was handed over by the complainant after her attacked left it behind.

In that case the culprit, who was on a motorcycle

places and elsewhere and to bring legislation to decriminalize smoking of another substance," said the President.

He compounded his claim by pointing out that smoking is a leading cause of death worldwide but failed to specifically state tobacco. Marijuana is not known to be a contributory factor to death.

In fact many have argued that it has medicinal purposes and some countries have approved the usage of medicinal marijuana.

"As far as I can see, it is contradictory to work towards banning smoking which is known to be a leading cause of death worldwide and decriminalize smoking at the same time," said Granger.

APNU+AFC parliamentarian Michael Carrington is scheduled to take a Bill to the National Assembly that would seek to amend the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act.

The Bills seeks to strike out the provisions of the Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Control Act 1988 which mandate Magistrates to imprison any citizen of Guyana who confesses to or has been found guilty of possession of 15 grams or more of marijuana.

Reacting to the President's statement, AFC Chairman Nigel Hughes implored the government to properly consider what some sections of civil society are asking - which is not the legalization of marijuana.

"There is a huge difference between imprisoning citizens for possession of 15 grams for three to five years and decriminalizing ganja. So the official position is we will continue to jail our citizens for 15 grams of cannabis while we conduct a survey on whether smoking should be allowed in public," said Hughes.

He maintained that the current issue is one of excessive and cruel punishment for possession of 15 grams of cannabis and "if the Government feels that strongly why not allow their MPs (Members of Parliament) a conscience vote."

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Obama may visit Cuba in 2016 if citizens enjoy more freedoms

WASHINGTON--U.S. President Barack Obama is open to visiting to Cuba in 2016 but first wants to see ordinary citizens there enjoy more personal freedoms, he said in an interview released on Monday.

In an interview with Yahoo! News, Obama said he has told Havana that without such progress, he is unlikely to visit the Communist island nation before he leaves office, despite the historic re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries earlier this year.

"I am very much interested in going to Cuba, but I think the conditions have to be right," Obama said. "And what I've said to the Cuban government is 'If, in fact I with confidence can say that we're seeing some progress in the liberty and

freedom and possibilities of ordinary Cubans, I'd love to use a visit as a way of highlighting that progress.'"

"If I go on a visit, then part of the deal is that I get to talk to everybody," Obama said. "I've made very clear in my conversations directly with President Castro that we would continue to reach out to those who want to broaden the scope for, you know, free expression inside of Cuba."

In the interview, which coincided with the anniversary of the announcement that Havana and Washington would restore relations, Obama also defended his aim to close the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but acknowledged that it was unlikely to be handed back to Havana any time soon. Asked if he would return the facil-

ity to Cuba if it does close, Obama said that decision would likely be made by a future president.

Despite a campaign pledge to close the prison established to hold terrorism suspects after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Obama has faced resistance in Congress to transferring the inmates, especially to U.S. prisons. There are 107 inmates left at Guantanamo, which once held more than 600.

Obama has said he can still close Guantanamo before he leaves office in January 2017, but he has not sent Congress a promised plan on how the facility would be closed. Some 2016 Republican presidential candidates have said they would keep the prison open.



Activists hold a protest and vigil against gun violence on the third anniversary of the Sandy Hook mass shooting, outside the National Rifle Association (NRA) headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia on Monday.

On Sandy Hook anniversary, US activists call for gun restrictions

WASHINGTON--U.S. gun control activists called for expanded background checks for firearms purchasers and for a ban on sales to people on federal watch lists on Monday, in a protest marking the third anniversary of the massacre at a Connecticut elementary school.

Speakers including U.S. Representative Gerry Connolly, a Virginia Democrat, and survivors of recent U.S. mass shootings made their call outside the Fairfax, Virginia, headquarters of the National Rifle Association lobbying group. About 100 people attended the protest in the Washington suburb.

On Dec. 14, 2012, 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 first-graders and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, an attack that stands as one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history. He began his attack by killing his mother at their home and ended it by turning his gun on himself.

"It was a scene that has been repeated too often in the United States, and just as often, the response to these senseless killings has been inaction on the issue of gun control," said Connolly.

The congressman added that he also wanted Congress to overturn a long-standing ban on providing federal funding for research on gun violence.

The U.S. Constitution's Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms. Gun-rights groups, including the NRA, argue that restrictions on gun purchases would not improve public

safety, reasoning that criminals do not obey laws.

Connolly was joined by the parents of Alison Parker, one of two Roanoke, Virginia, television journalists shot dead by a former station employee during a live broadcast in August, and two survivors of a 2011 shooting in Tucson, Arizona, that badly wounded then-U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords and killed six others.

Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy last week said his state planned to ban sales of firearms to people designated on U.S.

lists as having suspected ties to terrorism or who are banned from flying on commercial aircraft. That move came days after President Barack Obama called on Congress to impose a similar prohibition nationwide following the fatal shooting of 14 people in California by a married couple inspired by Islamic State militants.

The proposal has failed to gain traction in Congress, with opponents arguing that many people on the watch lists are there by mistake and should thus not be denied access to firearms.

US soldier could face life sentence in court-martial

AUSTIN, Texas--U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, who walked away from his post in Afghanistan and became a Taliban prisoner for five years, will face court-martial with a potential life sentence, the Army said on Monday.

Bergdahl, 29, was charged earlier this year with desertion and endangering U.S. troops and could face the life sentence if convicted of the latter, more serious offense.

In ordering the court martial on Monday, Army General Robert Abrams did not follow the recommendation of a preliminary hearing which, according to Bergdahl's lawyer, called for Bergdahl to face a proceeding that could impose a potential maximum penalty of a year in confinement.

Bergdahl's lawyer, Eugene Fidell, said the defense team "had hoped the case would not go in this direction." He also urged Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, who has called Bergdahl a "dirty, rotten traitor," to "cease his prejudicial months-long campaign of defamation against our client."

Bergdahl disappeared on foot on June 30, 2009, from Combat Outpost Mest-Malak in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, and was subsequently captured by the Taliban. He left his post to draw attention to "leadership failure" in his unit, Bergdahl said last week on the popular podcast Serial, which is focusing a season on his case.

The Idaho native suffered torture, abuse and neglect at the hands of Taliban forces, including months of beatings and being confined for 3-1/2 years to a metal cage barely big enough to stand in, a military expert testified previously. The head of the Army team that investigated Bergdahl has said he does not believe he should face jail time.



Convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard departs U.S. District court after a hearing with his wife Elaine Zeitz in the Manhattan borough of New York on Monday.

Israeli spy Pollard wins further review of US parole conditions

NEW YORK--A U.S. judge on Monday ordered a federal commission to provide further justification for subjecting former Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard to restrictive probation conditions following his release last month from prison after 30 years.

U.S. District Judge Katherine Forrest in Manhattan said the U.S. Parole Commission had provided little basis to justify why Pollard must wear an electronic bracelet and submit to monitoring of his work computer. She ordered the Parole Commission to in particular assess whether it believed that Pollard, a former civilian intelligence

analyst for the U.S. Navy convicted of passing classified information to Israel, still possessed confidential information.

"If there is secret information Jonathan Pollard could disclose, then restrictive conditions could be necessary," Forrest said.

But if he does not, Forrest said, his conditions may need to be modified. Forrest called her decision to send Pollard's case back to the commission for further review "the first step, and I think this is the right step."

Lawyers for Pollard have called the electronic bracelet's use unjustified, and said the computer conditions would prevent him

from taking an investment firm job. Eliot Lauer, Pollard's lawyer, in court also said no one had ever suggested any information his client had remained sensitive three decades later.

But the U.S. Justice Department argued the strict conditions were "reasonably related" to the circumstances underlying Pollard's crime to ensure among other things that he does not disseminate classified information. Rebecca Tinio, a Justice Department lawyer, said the "majority of the information Mr. Pollard had 30 years ago remains classified."

Germany launches plan to protect migrant women, kids from attacks

BERLIN -- Germany launched a programme on Monday to improve the safety of asylum-seeking women and the roughly 300,000 refugee children who have arrived here this year, saying these vulnerable groups were not being given sufficient protection in refugee homes.

Almost a million refugees fleeing war, violence and poverty in countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan flocked to Germany in the first 11 months of this year and the authorities have had difficulty finding sufficient accommodation for them all. Some have ended up sleeping in sports hall

Italian police seize 3,500 fake parchments with papal blessings

ROME--Italian police have confiscated about 3,500 counterfeit parchments bearing blessings by Pope Francis and being sold to pilgrims in Rome, authorities said on Monday.

The bogus parchments, with elaborate lettering and pictures of the pope, were found in the printing shop of a souvenir store near the Vatican, and the proprietor was charged with producing counterfeit goods, a police statement said. It said the parchments were printed in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and English and had an overall value of about 70,000 euros (\$77,168).

The Vatican's Apostolic Almonry, or distributor of papal charities, sells authentic parchments bearing words of blessing from the pope. The proceeds go to help the poor and needy of Rome.

They are adorned with elaborate gothic calligraphy and usually contain words of good wishes and a papal blessing for occasions such as births, weddings and anniversaries. Many are hand-made.

Last year, the Vatican stopped outsourcing the production of the parchments and returned to the ancient practice of making them all in-house. The Vatican said at the time that this was so all the proceeds would go directly to charities.

and empty office blocks.

In assessing the situation, the German government and United Nations children's agency (UNICEF) agreed that children living in refugee shelters were at risk of becoming victims of violence, misuse and exploitation, especially in temporary accommodation and reception centres. "After their long and often dangerous flight, refugee children in Germany are in a relatively safe place," said Christian Schneider, executive director of UNICEF Germany.

"Countless staff and volunteers are doing a fantastic job. However, there are no binding standards for the protection of children,"

he said in a statement.

German Family Minister Manuela Schwesig told journalists that there were some cases of staff and volunteers at refugee accommodation assaulting children. She said a recent UNICEF report showed that there were some documented incidents of violence, rape and sexual attacks in centres for new arrivals as well as suspected cases of sexual exploitation of women and girls.

She said there were no statistics on how often women and children were becoming victims of such attacks, with very few reporting such incidents due to concerns that this could affect their asylum application or



Children receive toys at a refugee shelter run by German charity organisation Arbeiter Samariter Bund ASB in Berlin, Germany, on Saturday.

that they might be blamed.

Refugee homes need to be fitted with protected rooms for children and separate sanitary facilities for men and women, Schwesig said in presenting a three-

pronged plan to improve the safety of refugee women and children.

One of the measures is a plan for the family ministry and the KfW state development bank to provide up to 200 million euros (\$220.40 million) in investment loans to build new refugee accommodation and modify existing shelters so that women and children can be better protected.

A second measure will see the ministry work with UNICEF to train people who work at refugee homes in child protection and how to spot incidents of sexual violence.

Thirdly, the ministry said it would provide centres for torture victims with 4 million euros to ensure that refugee women who have experienced violence are well looked after.



French police and journalists stand in front of the nursery school where a hooded man claiming to be acting for Islamic State attacked a teacher with a knife in Aubervilliers, near Paris, France, on Monday.

French teacher "invented" story about Islamist attack

PARIS--A report from a French schoolteacher that he had been assaulted by a self-styled Islamist militant on Monday, causing classes to be cancelled and an anti-terrorism investigation, turned out to be "invented", investigators said.

The incident occurred with the nation still on edge a month after gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people in Paris in an attack claimed by Islamic State, the jihadist group that has seized large areas of Syria and Iraq and is now the target of air strikes by a U.S.-led coalition including France. "(The

teacher) is being interviewed with a view to establishing the reasons for this invented story," said an official from the Paris prosecutor's office.

Earlier on Monday, other French officials told how the teacher had reported that a hooded man claiming a link to Islamic State had assaulted him with a knife-like weapon as he prepared for classes in a school in Saint-Denis, on the northern fringes of Paris. In recounting the teacher's story earlier, district Prefect Philippe Galli told reporters it was too early to draw conclusions about the

character of the attack, noting that the assailant, wearing a balaclava, had apparently found a boxcutter and a pair of scissors on the school premises.

The teacher was taken to hospital after the alleged attack, which triggered an investigation by anti-terrorism officials.

In a recent French-language publication, Islamic State denounced France's state school system and urged readers to kill its teachers because they promoted what it called the evils of secular learning, music and drawing.

Teargassed Kosovo MPs adopt budget

PRISTINA--Protesting opposition lawmakers released tear gas in Kosovo's parliament on Monday in an effort to foil a vote on the government's 2016 budget, forcing MPs into a sideroom where the measure was adopted.

There have been several tear gas protests in parliament by opposition MPs in what has become Kosovo's worst political crisis since the troubled young Balkan state declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

The 1.67 billion euro (\$1.8 billion) budget was approved with 78 votes in favour after opposition lawmakers were barred from entering the sideroom after having unleashed tear gas in the assembly to disrupt proceedings. Opposition MPs have been rallying supporters in often violent protests against an accord brokered by the European Union to help regulate relations between Kosovo and former master Serbia. They particularly oppose a deal to grant ethnic Serbs in the majority-Albanian country greater local powers and the possibility of funding from Serbia, and are also against a border demarcation deal with Montenegro.

In the streets on Monday, a few hundred opposition supporters threw bottles filled with red paint at the parliament building in the capital Pristina. They lobbed stones and petrol bombs at police, who responded with tear gas.

The U.S. ambassador, who was in parliament, condemned the disorder, which followed a visit this month by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry during which he condemned such violence. "I was very disappointed to see some members of the parliament release tear gas in the assembly again," said Ambassador Greg Delawie. "(Kerry)... encouraged trying to keep the violence out of the assembly and it is very disappointing that people aren't listening to him."

Kosovo seceded from Serbia in 1999 when NATO carried out 11 weeks of air strikes to halt the killing and expulsion of ethnic Albanians by Serbian forces trying to crush a guerrilla insurgency. It declared independence in 2008 and has been recognized by more than 100 countries, including the major Western powers.

Study shows sea lion brain damage due to algae's toxin

WASHINGTON--A toxin produced by marine algae is inflicting brain damage on sea lions along California's coast, causing neurological and behavioral changes that can impair their ability to navigate in the sea and survive in the wild, scientists said on Monday.

Brain scans on 30 California sea lions detected damage in the hippocampus, a brain structure associated with memory and spatial navigation, in animals naturally exposed to the toxin known as domoic acid, the researchers said.

Domoic acid mimics glutamate, a chemical that transmits nerve impulses in the brain, and leads to over-activation of hippocampus nerve cells and chronic epilepsy, according to Emory University cognitive psychologist Peter Cook, who worked on the study while at the University of California-Santa Cruz.

"The behavioral deficits accompanying brain damage with domoic acid are severe, and may negatively impact foraging and navigation in sea lions, driving strandings and mortality,"

Cook said.

Hundreds of sea lions annually are found stranded on California beaches with signs of domoic acid poisoning such as disorientation and seizures. Thousands are thought to be exposed to the toxin.

The microscopic algae, called *Pseudo-nitzschia*, responsible for the toxin occur naturally in coastal waters. Their blooms have become more frequent and severe in recent years. This year's bloom was the largest on record, reaching from Santa Barbara, California to Alaska.

Ocean pollution from chemicals like fertilizers and warming ocean temperatures associated with global climate change are believed to contribute to bloom size and frequency. The toxin accumulates in shellfish and small fish that consume algae. Sea lions, other marine mammals and seabirds are exposed to it after eating those shellfish and fish.

"Domoic acid-producing blooms have been in the environment for a very long time, but the current



California sea lion Nikkimaddie, that was released in August 2015 at Point Reyes National Seashore after being treated for domoic acid toxicity at the Marine Mammal Center, is shown in this undated handout in Sausalito, California released to Reuters on Monday courtesy of The Marine Mammal Center.

pattern of much larger and more frequent blooms causing more visible damage to marine animals has been going on since the 1980s," Cook said.

Sea lions exposed to the toxin had greatly reduced

connectivity between the hippocampus and the thalamus, a brain structure associated with sensory perception and regulation of motor functions. Those with hippocampus damage also performed worse on memory tasks such as one involving finding a food reward.

"Hundreds of sea lions end up in stranding facilities each year. A great many of them do die although some can be rehabilitated and survive for some time in the wild," Cook said.

The research was published in the journal *Science*.

Kerry to explore Assad's future, peace process in Kremlin talks

PARIS--U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will use talks in Moscow on Tuesday to try and narrow differences with Russian leader Vladimir Putin over the role of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in any political transition, a senior State Department official said on Monday.

Kerry will seek to prepare the ground for a third round of talks of world powers on Syria amid doubts over whether a meeting pencilled in for Friday in New York will go ahead.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said late on Monday that Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed in a phone call on the need for specific preconditions to be met before any new meeting, throwing the timing into doubt. However, in Washington U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters that Kerry was going to Moscow "with the expectation that there are no preconditions to having this meeting."

Russia is one of Assad's staunchest allies and launched a campaign of air strikes to support his forces against insurgents on Sept. 30. It says only the Syrian people and not external powers should decide Assad's political fate. Speaking in Paris before Kerry visits Moscow on Tuesday, the State Department official said Kerry would raise concerns about Russia's continued bombing of Syrian opposition forces instead of Islamic State militants, an approach likely to anger Moscow.

Ahead of the talks, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement criticising U.S. policy on Syria, complaining that Washington was not

ready to fully cooperate in the struggle against Islamic State militants and needed to rethink its policy of "dividing terrorists into good and bad ones."

Kerry's meeting with Putin follows a meeting last week in Riyadh which agreed to unite a number of opposition groups excluding Islamic State to negotiate with Damascus in Syrian peace talks. While Kerry said there were still "kinks" that needed to be worked out on the plan to unite the opposition groups, the Kremlin rejected the outcome of the Riyadh meeting, saying it had no right to speak on behalf of the entire Syrian opposition.

Assad himself appeared to cast doubt on the very idea of peace talks last Friday, saying he would not negotiate with armed groups that he said were backed by the United States and Saudi Arabia. The opposition groups said Assad should leave power at the start of a transitional period.

"We don't have a full meeting of the minds yet (on Assad), we will talk about some of the details of a transition... in the hopes of narrowing the differences between us," a senior State Department official told reporters.

While in Paris on Monday, Kerry met with counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan as he prepared for the Moscow talks. His talks with Putin, and a lengthier meeting in the morning with Lavrov, will delve deeper into details of a planned Jan. 1 ceasefire in Syria, as well as recent statements by Russia on supporting the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which has been fighting Russian- and Iranian-backed government forces.



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We would also like to thank the General Public especially our Loyal Fans who came out and supported us once again. See you next December 3rd 2016 God Willing!!!

Obama says faster progress needed against Islamic State

WASHINGTON--U.S. President Barack Obama said on Monday progress needs to speed up against Islamic State militants, calling on allies to increase their military contributions to coalition efforts to destroy the group in Iraq and Syria.

Speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, Obama said he was sending Defense Secretary Ash Carter to the Middle East to secure more military help from partner nations in the fight against the group.

"This continues to be a difficult fight," Obama said. "We recognize that pro-

gress needs to keep coming faster."

The president ticked off a list of accomplishments by the United States and its allies against the group: Islamic State had lost significant swaths of territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria, and leaders were being targeted one by one. "ISIL leaders cannot hide and our next message to them is simple: 'you are next,'" he said, using an acronym for the group.

The coalition was also targeting Islamic State's oil tanker trucks, wells and refineries. "We are hitting ISIL harder than ever," he

said.

Obama, a Democrat, has come under criticism by Republicans for not doing enough to counter Islamic State, in particular since the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and were claimed by Islamic State, and the Dec. 2 shooting in San Bernardino, California. Authorities believe the couple who killed 14 people in that attack were inspired by Islamist militants.

The White House has sought to counter those critics by outlining progress made since Islamic State's rapid rise in Iraq and Syria more than a year ago.

Colombia, rebels to sign pact on reparations for war victims

HAVANA—The Colombian government and leftist FARC rebels have reached a deal on reparations for war victims and could be near a pact on the terms of confinement for ex-combatants who would be tried in special tribunals once a definitive peace agreement is reached.

Any partial accords would help put peace talks back on track toward reaching a March 23 deadline for a comprehensive plan to end Latin America's longest war, which has killed 220,000 people and displaced millions since 1964.

Representatives of both sides said on Monday they would hold a signing ceremony for victims on Tuesday, while the rebels said they would release long-

awaited details of how to punish former combatants who lay down their arms. "We are very pleased with this agreement (on victims) which no doubt is transcendental for what we are doing in this process," government spokeswoman Marcela Duran told reporters in Havana, site of the peace talks for three years.

FARC representative Marco Leon said the rebels would make public details on the justice talks, but it was unclear whether the two sides had a final agreement on the terms of punishment. "With this important step, it is nearly certain that this is irreversible," Leon said of the peace process.

In September, the Colombian government and guer-

rillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, reached a breakthrough agreement to establish special courts to try former combatants, including guerrillas, government soldiers and members of right-wing paramilitary groups. While attempting to offer as much amnesty as possible, the courts would reduce sentences for those who admit guilt and exclude from amnesty those responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity.

The agreement has caused consternation in Colombia, where critics complain FARC members might escape punishment or extradition to the United States, where some are wanted on drug-trafficking charges.



Lilian Tintori, wife of jailed Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, looks through the bars of a mock prison cell during a news conference in Caracas, on Monday. The sign reads "Liberty before Christmas".

With change of tone, EU warms to Turkey, Serbia membership bids

BRUSSELS—The European Union revived Turkey's membership bid on Monday and opened accession talks with Serbia, showing how a migration crisis and Russia's presence in the Balkans has prompted the EU to rethink plans to stop expanding.

More than a year after EU chief executive Jean-Claude Juncker said Brussels needed a pause in its policy of admitting new members, events have driven officials to revive membership talks to seek influence and stability abroad. While neither Turkey nor Serbia are likely to join the world's largest trading bloc in the near future, the EU hopes that formal negotiations on different areas of its "chapters" or rules, will help tackle multiple crises on its borders.

"The refugee crisis and terrorism shows us that we are on the same continent, we are facing the same challenges and the more we develop common policies, the better off we will be," EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini told a news conference.

In July 2014, facing a popular backlash over the millions of people from formerly communist eastern EU nations streaming into western EU economies to get better-paid work, Juncker promised "no new enlargement in the next five years". But failing states, war, Islamist militancy and a refugee crisis in the EU's neighbourhood have shown the value of trying to engage and push countries towards becoming market economies.

Underlying that change in mood is Turkey's promise to help stem the flow of migrants from its territory to Europe in return for cash, visas and renewed talks on joining the EU, with which

Ankara formally started its membership talks a decade ago. "The sense of direction is this: rather than having an ideological debate about enlargement tomorrow or no enlargement, take the concrete steps to bring us closer," Mogherini said.

That was echoed by other EU officials as they opened the first enlargement chapter with Turkey since 2013 - on economic and monetary affairs - just two weeks after the first EU-Turkey summit in many years and where EU leaders called for membership talks to be "re-energised". Still, big obstacles remain for Turkey, a populous Muslim nation that some EU members say will never join the bloc. While Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek promised swift progress on the economic

chapter, dealing with human rights and rule-of-law issues will be much more problematic.

In its latest report on Turkey last month, the European Commission urged Ankara to lift restrictions on media freedom, respect human rights and stop interfering in the judiciary. Of concern to the Commission, which helps EU governments decide who to let into the bloc, is the growing power of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who many regard as authoritarian.

In total, 15 out of the EU's 35 chapters have now been opened with Turkey and one has been provisionally closed, but membership still faces resistance from France, Germany and particularly divided Cyprus, where Turkey controls the north.

Egypt says no evidence of terrorism in plane crash

CAIRO—Egypt said on Monday it had found no evidence so far of terrorism or other illegal action linked to the crash of a Russian passenger plane in Sinai that killed all 224 people on board on Oct. 31.

Russia and Western governments have said the Airbus A321 operated by Metrojet was likely brought down by a bomb, and the Islamic State militant group said it had smuggled an explosive on board. But Egypt's civil aviation ministry said it had completed a preliminary report on the crash and said it had so far found no evidence of a criminal act.

"The technical investigation committee has so far

not found anything indicating any illegal intervention or terrorist action," the ministry said in a statement.

The crash hit Egypt's tourism industry, a cornerstone of the economy. The plane took off from Sharm al-Sheikh, a Red Sea resort popular with Russian and British holiday makers. It raised serious questions about airport security with Russia and Britain both suspending flights into Sharm al-Sheikh.

Egypt is facing a two-year Islamist insurgency in the Sinai that killed hundreds of soldiers and police. Islamic State said the bombing was in response to Russian air strikes in Syria.



Aerial view of the overturned bus which crashed in Argentina's northern province of Salta, on Monday.

Argentina bus crash leaves 43 border patrol officers dead

BUENOS AIRES—A bus carrying Argentine border patrol officers blew a tire and tumbled from a bridge into a dry river bed in the northern province of Salta on Monday, killing 43 and injuring eight, authorities said.

The vehicle was part of a three-bus convoy carrying officers of Argentina's gendarmerie, which patrols the country's borders. Salta borders Bolivia, Chile and Paraguay.

Border security has become a hot issue in Argentina as the country has emerged as part of a route used for smuggling Andean cocaine to Europe and for

human traffickers sending Syrian refugees through the Western Hemisphere.

"Forty three gendarmes lost their lives here today. Eight more were injured, one critically," Salta Governor Juan Manuel Urtubey told reporters at the scene. "We are still working to recover bodies from inside the bus."

Passengers on the other two buses in the convoy were the first to venture into the ravine to try to save those trapped in the wreckage. TV images showed the bus completely upside down at the bottom of a steep slope covered in lush green vegetation.

"It appears that one of the tires of the bus blew out, unfortunately just a few meters ahead of the bridge. It went over the guardrail," Argentine security chief Patricia Bullrich told reporters.

President Mauricio Macri, elected last month on a platform that included improving Argentina's rural roads, sent his condolences to families of the victims of the crash and declared a national day of mourning. "We need to improve our highways so these things don't keep happening," he told reporters on the sidelines of a news conference in Buenos Aires province.

Obama expected to move on Taiwan arms sales soon

WASHINGTON--The Obama administration is expected as soon as this week to authorize the sale of two guided missile frigates to Taiwan, U.S. congressional sources said on Monday, in spite of China's opposition to the deal.

"We're expecting an announcement as early as this week," a Republican congressional aide said. Another congressional aide said the notification from the administration was expected "any time now."

The sale would mark the first time in four years that the United States has shipped arms to Taiwan, the longest gap in such arms sales in nearly four decades. It comes a year after Congress passed the Naval Transfer Act authorizing the sale of up to four Perry-class frigates to Taiwan in December 2014.

Taiwan has said it expects to pay about \$176 million for the two vessels and that it would review its needs before making a decision on two more. President Barack Obama signed the transfer act into law, but his administration still has to tell Congress its plans to move ahead with the sale, part of Washington's commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to ensure Taipei can maintain a credible defense.

The White House declined comment about the sale, which would come after increasingly intense pressure from Congress, including a unanimous vote last week by the House Foreign Affairs Committee on legislation calling on Obama to provide a timeline on when it would move forward. Past U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan have attracted strong condemnation in China, which considers Taiwan a renegade province.

Analysts and congressional sources believe the process has been held up by the administration's desire to maintain stable working relations with China, an increasingly powerful strategic rival but also a vital economic partner as the world's second-largest economy. Most recently the Obama administration has been working with Beijing to forge a landmark global climate agreement that was sealed on Saturday after two weeks of intense negotiations, setting the course for a historic transformation of the world's fossil fuel-driven economy within decades.

Congressional sources said the White House was pushing to move ahead with the Taiwan deal before the end of 2015 - an important deadline because of Taipei's budget cycle. The frigates will come out of existing U.S. inventory and will not require new ships to be built.

A spokesman for the Chinese Embassy said on Friday that China "firmly opposes any arms sales from the United States to Taiwan."

"We urge the U.S. government to stop selling arms to Taiwan to avoid hurting China-U.S. relations and disturbing peaceful development of cross-strait relations."

Beijing expressed anger at last year's bill, although arms sales to date to Taiwan have not caused lasting damage to Beijing's relations with either Washington or Taipei. The new sales would come at a period of heightened tensions between the United States and China over the South China Sea, where Washington has been critical of China's building of man-made islands to assert expansive territorial claims. China was angered when the United States sent a guided-missile destroyer close to one of the islands in October and B-52 bombers nearby last month.

While Taiwan has been overshadowed recently as a U.S.-China issue by the South China Sea, it has the potential to flare up again, especially with Taiwanese elections coming up next month and a party which traditionally favours independence from China expected to win.

China recommends life term for wife of disgraced official Bo Xilai

BEIJING--A Beijing court has recommended a suspended death sentence for the wife of disgraced Politburo member Bo Xilai be commuted to life in prison, after she showed repentance and committed no further crime, Chinese media said on Monday.

Gu Kailai was sentenced in 2012 for murdering British businessman Neil Heywood the previous year, kicking off China's most sensational political scandal in years.

A suspended death sen-



Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (C) walks as she collects garbage in her constituency Kawhmu township December 13, 2015.

From persecuted icon to politician: As Myanmar changes, so does Suu Kyi

NAYPYITAW--When Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi spoke warmly on a recent radio show about a critical meeting that followed her landslide election victory, she was referring to talks with the very man who had detained her for 15 years.

Listeners might have been surprised by the Nobel peace laureate's gentle tone towards Than Shwe, former head of the junta that ruled Myanmar for nearly half a century. But it was just one of several conciliatory gestures Suu Kyi has made towards her one-time enemies since the Nov. 8 poll, underlining her transformation from persecuted democracy icon to pragmatic politician.

Her readiness to forge alliances with even those she once reviled could augur well for Myanmar, no longer a global pariah but still a country fraught with political risk as Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) and the military pre-

pare to share power. "We should think of working for the emergence of a brighter future based on the present situation, instead of thinking why we didn't do it in the past," Suu Kyi said after meeting Than Shwe, whose regime kept her locked up in her lakeside Yangon home and prevented her dying British husband from visiting Myanmar.

In the month since her election triumph, the 70-year-old Suu Kyi has also held talks - cordial, according to media reports - with President Thein Sein, a former military commander, and armed forces chief Min Aung Hlaing. In other mollifying moves, she has called on her supporters to restrain their victory celebrations and warned NLD lawmakers not to call themselves "winners" in media interviews.

"It's about smoothening the way," said analyst Richard Horsey, a former senior

United Nations official in Myanmar. "It's about building relationships and political positioning, which is very important."

The events suggest that Suu Kyi, who often comes across as stern and uncompromising, is settling into realpolitik. The army's powers have not substantially diminished since a shift to semi-civilian rule in 2011. Under the constitution, it is guaranteed 25 percent of the seats in parliament, and controls three big-budget and powerful ministries.

Than Shwe resigned as head of state and army chief in 2011 and stepped away from active politics, but diplomats and observers say he retains enough clout to make the closed-door appointment with Suu Kyi a major step in easing her party's formation of government. "It is the truth that she will become the future leader of the country. I will support her with all of my efforts," the former dictator was quoted as saying by his grandson Nay Shwe Thway Aung after the meeting.

Suu Kyi's journey from the barricades to the corridors of power began over three years ago when she won a parliament seat. She cultivated ties with assembly speaker Shwe Mann, another former general who had been part of Than Shwe's inner circle.

Shwe Mann was sacked from the leadership of the then-ruling party by President Thein Sein in August, partly because of his closeness to Suu Kyi. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party was trounced in last month's election.

Trial of China rights lawyer lasts three hours, police block court

BEIJING--The trial of one of China's most high profile human rights lawyers on charges of inciting ethnic hatred and provoking trouble lasted just three hours on Monday, with police blocking diplomats, foreign reporters and protesters from the court.

Pu Zhiqiang, who has spent nearly 19 months in detention, faces up to eight years in prison if convicted, according to one of his lawyers, Shang Baojun.

As many as 11 diplomats from countries including the United States, Germany and France congregated near the Beijing courthouse seeking to observe the trial. They were refused admittance by the police.

Dan Biers, deputy political counsellor of the U.S. embassy in Beijing, called for Pu's release and criticised the "vague charges" that have been handed down against Pu. Police tried to prevent Biers from reading out a statement near the courthouse, pushing him and foreign reporters out of the way. Dozens of police and plain clothes security surrounded the Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court, where they blocked foreign journalists attempting to report on the trial.

Neither the court nor public security authorities could immediately be reached for comment. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said "law enforcement authorities carried out order management at the scene in accordance with the law."

"The relevant people should cooperate," Hong said at a daily news briefing, urging all foreign countries to "respect China's judicial sovereignty."

U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said the United States was "dismayed with the physical harassment of Chinese and international observers, including journalists and diplomatic personnel outside the court house." China has charged many rights activists with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble", saying it is a country with rule of law and dismissing any international criticism on its rights record.

tence is normally commuted to life in jail. The Beijing High Court is now making a formal recommendation for that, said state radio, which carried the court statement on its website.

"The aforementioned criminal has recently certainly shown repentance," the court said, adding that Gu has not committed any crime since. Reuters was not able to immediately reach the court or family members for comment.

Bo was ousted as Communist Party boss of the

southwestern metropolis of Chongqing and from the party's decision-making Politburo in 2012. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2013 for corruption and abuse of power.

In a separate statement, the Beijing High Court recommended the suspended death sentence of Liu Zhijun, the disgraced former railways minister, be commuted to life in prison. Liu was prosecuted for corruption and abuse of power in 2013.

On eve of global trade talks, African leaders seek fair terms

NAIROBI—The World Trade Organization must do more to support large-scale agriculture in Africa and develop a new, global approach to domestic farm subsidies, African leaders said on Monday, the day before the world body's meets in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

At the first ministerial meeting of the trade body in sub-Saharan Africa, African leaders say, they hope

to find ways to level the playing field as they seek a bigger role in global trade and increase profits from the raw materials they produce.

The Geneva-based WTO has been trying and largely failing to agree on a worldwide package of trade reforms since a meeting in Doha in 2001 hatched an ambitious plan for knocking down trade barriers. Its 162 members meet from

Tuesday to Friday in Nairobi.

"Many of the developing countries, including Liberia, have been making the point that it is time to support agriculture," Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told Reuters in an interview, saying Liberia needed technology and investment.

One of the world's poorest countries, Liberia spent much of the last two years

battling the Ebola crisis that killed 4,800 people. Sirleaf also said African countries must continue to push for reducing subsidies by wealthy countries for cotton production and other areas of farming. Such support made it impossible for developing nations to compete, she said.

Observers say it would be politically impossible for most Western countries to make those concessions, which are hugely popular in the nations that have them. "We hope - I'm not sure that I can say with confidence it will happen - that the reduction in subsidies for farmers in developed countries will take place," she said.

Although talks will be held in Africa, the topics will cover global trade issues that include pledges of trade assistance for poor nations. Liberia and Afghanistan will also be formally welcomed to the group.

The biggest winners from a global trade deal would be the world's least-developed countries, most of whom are excluded from regional trade talks going on elsewhere, such as the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said in a speech on Monday that African countries had to do more to industrialise their economies but should not be put at a disadvantage by high tariffs or other controls imposed by wealthier nations.

"African economies producing competitively should not be halted with defensive trade remedies," Kenyatta said. "Standards should not be the next frontier of protectionism."



Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf attends a Reuters interview ahead of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Summit in the capital Nairobi, Kenya on Monday.



Smoke billows out from the cooling towers of a coal-fired power plant in Ahmedabad, India, November 20, 2015.

No impact of global climate agreement on India coal plans

NEW DELHI—India still plans to double coal output by 2020 and rely on the resource for decades afterwards, a senior official said on Monday, days after rich and poor countries agreed in Paris to curb carbon emissions blamed for global warming.

India, the world's third-largest carbon emitter, is dependent on coal for about two-thirds of its energy needs and has pledged to mine more of the fuel to power its resource-hungry economy while also promising to increase clean energy generation.

"The environment is non-negotiable and we are extremely careful about it," Anil Swarup, the top bureaucrat in the coal ministry, told Reuters. "(But) our dependence on coal will continue. There are no other alternatives available."

While India has plans to add 30 times more solar-powered generation capacity by 2022, there were limi-

tations to clean energy and coal would remain the most efficient energy source for decades, he said.

Minister for Power, Coal and Renewable Energy, Piyush Goyal, said India's contribution to global greenhouse gases emissions was just 2.5 percent with 17 percent of the world's population, while developed countries contributed a fifth of emissions with just 5 percent of the world's population. "While contributing to (the) growth of renewable energy, energy conservation & efficiency, we'll make sure our development process (does) not get hampered," Goyal said in a post on Twitter.

Even though many international lenders are turning their backs on financing new coal projects in favour of gas and renewable energy, India should have few difficulties in financing dozens more new mines. State-owned producer Coal India, for example, has enough internal cash resources to drive more production, Swarup said.

At the global climate summit in Paris, nations forged a landmark agreement on Saturday to set the course for an historic transformation of the world's fossil fuel-driven economy within decades, including eliminating net man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

Valls eyes new plan to tackle unemployment

PARIS—The French government will announce new measures aimed at fighting unemployment next month, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said on Monday.

Valls, speaking on national television a day after a second round of regional elections, did not spell out specific details but said Labour Minister Myriam El Khomri was preparing a "massive plan" to boost professional education.

"We must act quickly.

These measures will be ready in January," he told France 2 television.

France's unemployment rate rose to 10.6 percent in the third quarter, its highest quarterly rate since 1997. The regional election runoff, in which the conservatives won seven constituencies and the Socialists five, was no real victory for the two mainstream parties, who have been shaken by the far-right's growing appeal to disillusioned voters.

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Sinopec building filling station in disputed South China Sea

BEIJING--Chinese oil major Sinopec is building a filling station on an island in the South China Sea, as China continues to expand its civilian infrastructure in the disputed waterway, entrenching its reach in the maritime heart of Southeast Asia.

The filling station and accompanying storage tank on Woody Island in the Paracels will take a year to complete, the

company, whose listed flagship is Sinopec Corp, said on its microblog on Monday.

Woody Island has a population of roughly 1,000 and Chinese travel agents began offering five-day cruises to the Paracels, a cluster of close to 40 islets, outcrops and reefs in 2013. The filling station and storage tank will satisfy fuel needs in Chinese-controlled islands and

reefs in the South China Sea over the next few years, the post said.

"Nouveaux riches, go fishing in Sansha city, and remember to bring your filling card," it quipped, referring to an outpost in the South China Sea centred around Woody Island.

China took full control of the Paracels in 1974 after a naval showdown with the South Vietnamese, and there have been incidents ever since. Taiwan also claims the Paracels.

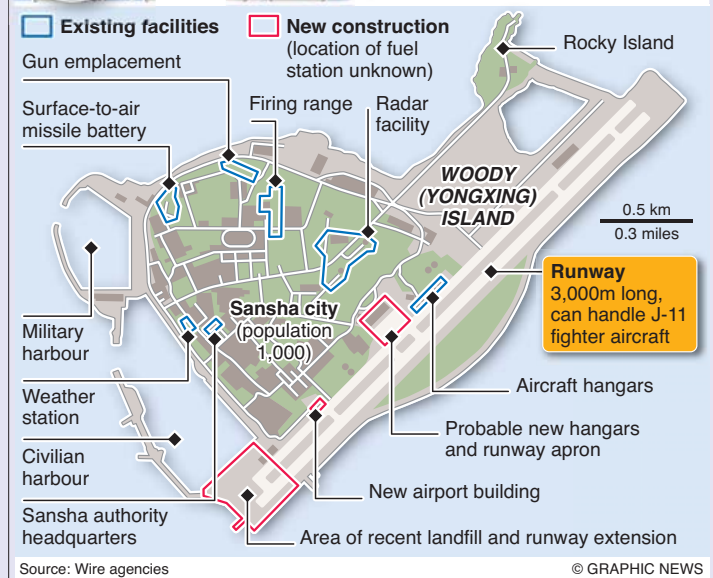
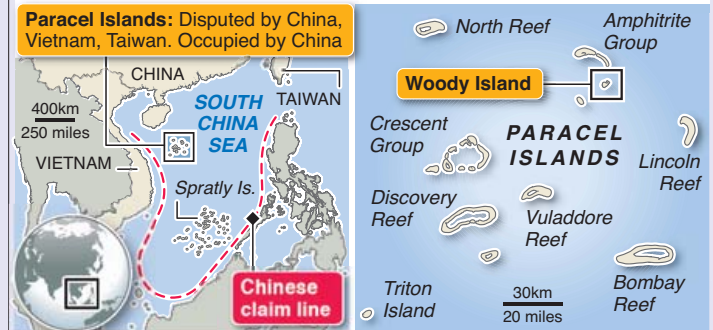
China claims almost all of the energy-rich waters of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of maritime trade passes each year. The Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan have overlapping claims.

The United States has criticized Beijing's building of artificial islands in the disputed Spratly archipelago, south of the Paracels, and has conducted sea and air patrols near them.

China's navy has in recent days carried out more exercises in the disputed waterway, the country's defence ministry said on Sunday, calling them routine drills.

Sinopec building fuel station in S. China Sea

Chinese oil company Sinopec is building a filling station and storage tank on Woody Island in the South China Sea, as China continues to expand its civilian infrastructure in the disputed waterway



Shell sees more job cuts in BG takeover

LONDON--Royal Dutch Shell expects to slash thousands more jobs to save costs if its takeover of BG Group goes through as planned early next year following a final green light from China.

The acquisition, which was announced on April 8 and is biggest in the sector in a decade, has been cleared by China's Ministry of Commerce, Shell said on Monday, after earlier approvals from Australia, Brazil and the European Union.

Shell and BG will now send a merger prospectus to their shareholders and hold special general meetings for votes on the deal. If approved, it will face a court hearing 10 days later and could be completed by early February.

Some shareholders, however, have voiced concern over the merits of the acquisition following the sharp slide in oil prices. The fall in Shell's share price since April means the value of the deal has fallen to \$53 billion from \$70 billion.

Shortly after announcing the green light from China, Shell issued a statement saying it expected to cut about 2,800 roles globally from the combined group. That would be nearly 3 percent of the group's combined workforce of about 100,000, or equivalent to more than half BG's roughly 5,000 employees.

The Anglo-Dutch oil and gas company had already outlined steps to protect dividend payouts and cashflow following the merger, which include cost savings of \$3.5 billion and \$30 billion in asset disposals. The new job cuts are also in addition to previously announced plans to reduce Shell's headcount and contractor positions by 7,500 worldwide.

A BG spokesman said the company would remain focused on its business plan until the deal is completed.

The combination will transform Shell into the world's top liquefied natural gas (LNG) trader and a major offshore oil producer focused on Brazil's rapidly-developing sub-salt oil basin that would rival Exxon Mobil's position as the world's biggest international oil company. Shell has nevertheless had to battle a sharp slide in oil prices, which have fallen from \$55 a barrel in April to below \$40 a barrel, which some investors said undermined the deal.

"The deal doesn't make financial sense at the current oil price. You have got to be pretty bullish on the current oil price to make this deal work," David Cumming, Head of Equities at Standard Life Investments, told BBC Radio on Monday.

Analysts at Credit Suisse, however, said the deal still made strategic sense. "Yes, it is tough when one looks at spot oil prices ... We are in the camp of 'Yes', not just because of the strategic rationale longer term, but also because of Shell's CEO and Chairman, who we think are the right people at the helm in this environment," the bank said.

EU parliament panel rejects car pollution rules as too lax

STRASBOURG, France--The European parliament's environmental committee voted on Monday against new car pollution rules they say are too lenient in the light of the Volkswagen scandal which exposed loopholes in existing emissions tests.

The new rules agreed in a closed-door committee in October would allow vehicles to carry on spewing out more than twice official pollution limits, after many of the 28 member states demanded leeway to protect their car industries.

The committee's vote of 40 to 9 against them sets the stage for a plenary ballot next month that could send the legislation back to the drawing board, but

where cross-party support would be more difficult to achieve. Thirteen members of the committee abstained from Monday's vote - mostly from the European People's Party, the largest bloc in the EU parliament, their spokesman said.

"In the wake of the Volkswagen scandal, it's clear we need to urgently revise road emission tests, but the proposed exemptions agreed by EU governments are a disgrace," a Dutch liberal member of parliament, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, said. "Harmful levels of air pollution would continue, despite the fact that emissions control technologies are available and affordable today."

If the January vote con-

firms the environment committee's opposition to the EU's emissions testing deal, it could mean a delay of up to two years while the European Commission drafts a new proposal. Some politicians voiced concerns over the potential delay a veto could mean for bridging the gap between real driving conditions and tests conducted under artificial conditions that have allowed real-world nitrogen oxide emissions to surge to more than seven times their European limits.

"We could be delayed for months and months ... Why would we do that?" said Julie Girling, a British member of the European Conservatives and Reformists group. "Politics is the

art of the possible of making things happen."

In defence of the October deal, a representative from the Commission, the EU executive, stressed the text was what members states were prepared to accept. "This text is a compromise, you are right," Joanna Szychowska told parliamentarians. "We started with far more ambitious levels and the member states indicated that this is not what they could agree upon."

While another delay could give the carmakers more latitude, the auto industry's Brussels lobby said it would still prefer the current proposal to be passed by parliament.

Would Cruz be any better than Trump?

By Eugene Robinson

WASHINGTON -- If Ted Cruz is the Republican Party's cure for Donald Trump, the antidote may be worse than the poison.

With polls showing the Texas senator rising to challenge the bombastic billionaire nationwide --

and zooming past him in first-in-the-nation Iowa -- the months-long bromance between the two men seems at an end. Trump raised questions Sunday about Cruz's temperament and judgment, saying he had been "frankly like a little bit of a maniac" in the Senate.

Laugh out loud, if you will, at the idea of Trump calling anyone maniacal. But the front-running tycoon has a point.

It was Cruz, after all, who repeatedly crossed to the other side of the Capitol and led the House Republicans toward fiscal cliff after fiscal cliff. It was Cruz who shockingly called Majority Leader Mitch McConnell a liar on the Senate floor. It was Cruz whom veteran Senator John McCain, Republican-Arizona, dismissed as a "wacko bird."

Cruz, in fact, has spent his brief Senate career going out of his way to alienate the GOP establishment. To say the least, that's an unorthodox way to court the party's presidential nomination. But even his harshest critics agree that Cruz is whip-smart -- and that he has run, thus far, an impressive campaign.

The Real Clear Politics poll average has Cruz second nationally among Republican voters at 16.3 percent. That puts him well behind Trump, who towers over the field with 31.4 percent support, but means he has overtaken Senator Marco Rubio (Republican-Florida), the darling of the Republican establishment, who now lags with 13.3 percent.

And in Iowa, the *Des Moines Register* poll -- considered the gold standard for handicapping that state's caucuses -- has Cruz leading all comers with 31 percent, followed by Trump with 21 percent.

Winning in Iowa is far from a guarantee of securing the nomination; just ask Mike Huckabee, who won the state in 2008, or Rick Santorum, who won it in 2012. Both found that while give-no-quarter social conservatism played well in the Hawkeye State, it had much less resonance in New Hampshire and beyond.

But this is a weird year, to put it mildly. Trump's dominance of the campaign has panicked party elders who fear he would be an electoral disaster as the nominee. Trump's extreme positions -- promising to deport 11 million undocumented im-

migrants and block all foreign Muslims from entering the country, to name just two -- may play well with much of the GOP base. But they appall middle-of-the-road voters and could make this a "wave" election in which the Republican majorities in Congress are threatened.

So it is only natural that the party would look for a savior. If Rubio turns out not to have staying power -- it's hard to imagine which of the early states he is likely to win -- and if Jeb Bush's sparkless candidacy fails to ignite, then maybe Cruz becomes the designated Trump-slayer by default.

The problem is that having Cruz at the top of the ticket could be as disastrous for the Republican Party as rolling the dice with Trump.

Many of Cruz's views are even more extreme -- and more distant from the American mainstream. Begin with his contention that "President Obama is the most radical president this nation's ever seen." The activist GOP base may agree, but it's useful to recall that voters did elect the alleged radical. Twice.

On climate change, Cruz is a full-fledged denier. A one-time clerk for the late William Rehnquist when he was chief justice, Cruz has

characterized recent Supreme Court decisions legalizing same-sex marriage and upholding the Affordable Care Act as the "very definition of tyranny." When Cruz said, "We are facing what I consider to be the epic battle of our generation," he was referring not to jihadist terrorism but to the fact that the government is helping people buy health insurance. He is Cuban-American, but his anti-immigrant rhetoric approximates Trump's.

Cruz is a champion debater whose eloquence often crosses the line into grandiloquence; one pictures him wearing a plumed hat. According to the Real Clear Politics average, only Trump fares worse among leading GOP candidates in a hypothetical matchup against Hillary Clinton.

But Trump, at least, cloaks his unthinkable policies beneath a certain populist appeal. Cruz's self-assured extremism tells whole classes of voters -- independents, minorities, women -- to look elsewhere. He would be like Barry Goldwater without the avuncular charm.

Party leaders want the GOP to be more open and inclusive. Cruz would veer the party sharply in the other direction. Team Clinton must be smiling.

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

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

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

Previous puzzle solution

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

12/15 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆
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- ACROSS**
- Up in __; angry
 - Overcook milk
 - Split __; hair problem
 - Cowboy's shoe
 - Two's follower
 - Webster or Wyle
 - "Take __", casual farewell
 - Gathers leaves
 - Cast a ballot
 - Reeked
 - Expanded
 - Statute
 - Cooking herb
 - Remove the lid from
 - Trigger's rider
 - __ cords; parts of the larynx
 - Hideaway
 - Buddy
 - Elk
 - Rollaway bed
 - Skilled craftsman
 - "Has Anybody Seen My __?"
 - Come forth
 - Actor Diesel
 - Sentry's shout
 - Staircase piece
 - Gent
 - Little misses
 - Postpone; put off
 - Tavern
 - Recognize, as the difference
 - African nation
 - Tiny bit
 - Enthusiastic
 - Drape puller
 - Trade
 - Perfume
 - Head covering
 - Hired vehicles
 - Pays attention to
 - Hostels
- DOWN**
- Basics
 - Wander
 - Extra amount
 - Outstanding

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15					16				
17				18					19				
20				21				22		23			
				24				25					
26	27	28		29				30		31	32	33	
34				35				36					
37				38				39			40		
41				42				43			44		
45				46				47					
				48				49					
51	52	53						54			55	56	57
58				59				60			61		
62				63				64			65		
66				66				67					

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/15/15

Monday's Puzzle Solved

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

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- Scatter
- Actor Everett
- Noah's boat
- Wiggle room
- Arnaz, Sr., and Arnaz, Jr.
- Enwrap
- Midday
- Desert fruit
- Get rid of
- Distance around a track
- Sofa
- Simón __; South American hero
- Stomach woe
- Wynonna's ma
- Refers to
- Long-tailed rodent
- Cuban export
- __ costs; by any means
- Uplifting tunes
- Prefix for view or historic
- Pale
- See eye to eye
- Sermon topic
- Baggage porters
- Small barbecue
- Troublemaker
- Juicy Fruit or Doublemint
- __ as a daisy
- Harbor towns
- Compact __; CD
- Dubuque, __
- Pierce
- Transmit
- Diving bird
- Common metal
- __ up; tallies
- "Wow!"

Front page septic article

Dear Editor,
On behalf of the owners and the tenants of the Royal Village we wanted to let you know that the septic issue reported on your front page is not being generated by the Royal Village, Pineapple Pete or the Rhino Safari or any other occupant of the Village, as some may have misunderstood from your article.
The Royal Village and Palm Plaza are victims of the misuse of the public drainage canal that runs along

an easement of the property. This issue has been going on for months and is making doing business in the area next to impossible. The culprits are ruining our environment without regard for it or the others who suffer from their abuse.
The Royal Village has an independent septic treatment system that is highly rated, for which a hindrance permit has been issued and it is monitored regularly by the technical personnel who maintain it as well as the

authorities to ensure that it continues to meet the strict criteria for operation.
If there are rules and regulations for one individual, these same rules and regulations must apply for all, and we echo the Nature Foundation's call for the Prosecutor to act to protect our environment and to stop this atrocity against our lagoon.

Lorraine Talmi
Magnis NV

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Small states facing a slide to catastrophe

By Sir Ronald Sanders

The success of the current Climate Change conference in Paris for small states will be judged by only two criteria: the limiting of global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and firm and binding commitments by the industrialized nations to provide financing for adaptation and mitigation without which small island developing states are in grave jeopardy.

At the time of writing, the prospects for such success are not encouraging. It would be a travesty if the representatives of small states were to join the expected chorus of governments of industrialized nations that are expected to declare the conference a success even if they fail to deliver on curbing carbon emissions and on financing.

A recent Oxfam report, "Extreme Carbon Inequality," states that 50 per cent of carbon emissions is attributable to richest 10 per cent of the people around the world. The average footprint of the richest one per cent of people globally, but mostly in the rich countries, could be "175 times that of the poorest 10 per cent."

Small countries now have to stand up in their own interest, and the urgency of doing so is now. There is no greater threat to the survival of all small island and developing states and the existence of many. Nothing – no other single issue or collection of issues – is a bigger or nearer dagger to the heart of small islands' lives than climate change.

As I write, developed countries' negotiators continue to hold out against arguments from small and poor countries that any new agreement reached in Paris should commit to compensation for loss and damage caused by the impact of climate change. In other words, despite the evidence that climate change is real and

far-reaching and that it has created more intense hurricanes, drought and flooding, small countries are expected to pay for the cost of damage in addition to implementing adaptation and mitigation measures. The attitude of the developed countries negotiators could not be more unjust.

To be fair to the leaders of the 28-nation European Union (EU), they have persistently committed to making the cutting of emissions legally binding. But they too have been parsimonious on the provision of compensation caused by their own carbon emissions. It should be recalled that the small islands of the Caribbean and Pacific contribute less than 0.1 per cent of carbon emissions but are the greatest victims.

Also to be fair to US President Barack Obama, he has become a champion of efforts to address Climate Change. In Paris, he said: "I've come here personally, as the leader of the world's largest economy and the second-largest emitter, to say that the United States of America not only recognizes our role in creating this problem, we embrace our responsibility to do something about it."

But, the US government stops short of a legally binding agreement because they know well that the US Congress is hostile to idea that climate change even exists. Republican Presidential hopefuls have already stated vociferously that they are strongly opposed to Obama's stand. Donald Trump, the frontrunner so far in the race for the Republican Presidential nomination declared: "While the world is in turmoil and falling apart in so many different ways, especially with ISIS, our President is worried about global warming. What a ridiculous situation."

Mr. Trump misses the point, effectively made by Antigua and Barbuda's

Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, in a submission to the Paris Conference that: "While terrorism is a major threat to our common humanity, so, too is Climate Change. It is arguably the greatest threat that now confronts all mankind. It knows no borders and it respects neither size nor economic and military power; it cannot be turned back by immigration controls. All of our countries are its potential victims."

Global warming has not been reduced to safe levels. The world is currently on track for warming of at least 3 to 4 degrees Celsius by 2100. Even the current Paris parley seems to have conceded a rise to 2 degrees Celsius. The consequent sea level rise will drown several small island states and severely erode their coastal areas that are vital to tourism agricultural land and human habitats. At that level of climate change, the efficacy of adaptation and mitigation would be severely limited.

Already small states have submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to the Paris Conference setting out plans for mitigation and adaptation. But they cannot finance the level of ambition which they have been made to indicate. Struggling to pay debt, and run the operations of their countries, they simply do not have the

money. Unless the international community delivers the funds, small countries will face a progressive and inevitable slide to catastrophe.

While there is tacit agreement to scale climate finance up to \$100 billion a year by 2020, and a mechanism for a portion of such funding has been established in the Green Climate Fund, there is no clarity on how the six-year old commitment by developed countries will be achieved. In any event, the money is not enough and there are no iron clad guarantees that access to the Fund will not be long and onerous.

Speaking at the opening of the Paris Conference on behalf of the G77 countries and China, the South African Ambassador, Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko said: "Nothing under this Convention will be achieved without the provision of means of implementation to enable developing country Parties to address climate change. The outcome regarding finance must provide clarity on the level of financial support that will be provided by developed country Parties to developing country Parties to allow for enhanced implementation of the Convention in the post-2020 period, as well as existing commitment on pre-2020 finance."

Those remarks have stronger meaning for

Small Island developing states whose societies could be rent asunder and disappear. That process has started in the Pacific where people from ancient civilizations in Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall islands are seeking refuge elsewhere.

~The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Sir Ronald Sanders is an Antigua and Barbuda Ambassador and Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London University and Massey College, Toronto University. ~

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want
It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of:



Benigne Augustine Gumbs
Born: March 18th, 1916
Died: December 3rd, 2015

She leaves to mourn her:
Aunt: Mrs. Yvette Fleming Hodge
Uncle: Maurice Gumbs
Nieces: Lucy Smith & family, Carole Arrindell Smith & family, Ingrid Smith & family, Marjorie Booker & family, Arline Gumbs & family, Mercedes Gumbs & family, Helen Robles Gumbs & family, Nina Bell Gumbs & family, Aline Richardson & family and Diane, Rawtani & family.
Nephews: Edward Gumbs & family, and Elvis Gumbs & family.

Many great nieces and nephews, cousins relatives and friends too numerous to mention. Ms. Benigne Gumbs was related to the: Gumbs, Beauperthuy, Richardson, Hanson, Viotty, Smith, Arrindell, Wathey, Mulder, Bertin, Maurice, Nertor, Hubert, Glasgow, Maccow, Brooks, Hyman, Fleming, Gibs, Lake, Jermin, Robles, Busby and LeJuez families. The White & Yellow Cross. Management & Staff of the St. Martin's Home .

If in our time of bereavement we may have forgotten to mention any family members, close relatives or friends, please accept our sincere apologies.

The funeral service of Benigne Gumbs will be held at: St. Joseph Church, French Quarter on Friday, December 18, 2015. Viewing will be from 2:00 pm - 2:45 pm. Service begins at: 3:00 pm. Interment: Old Glory Family Cemetery, French Quarter.

The Management and Staff of La Paix Funeral Home would like to extend our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.

We regret to announce the passing of:



Flander Zenaida de Lain
a.k.a. Flandita, Sandra or Flanders
Sunrise: June 4th, 1952, Dominican Republic
Sunset: December 13th, 2015, St. Maarten Medical Center

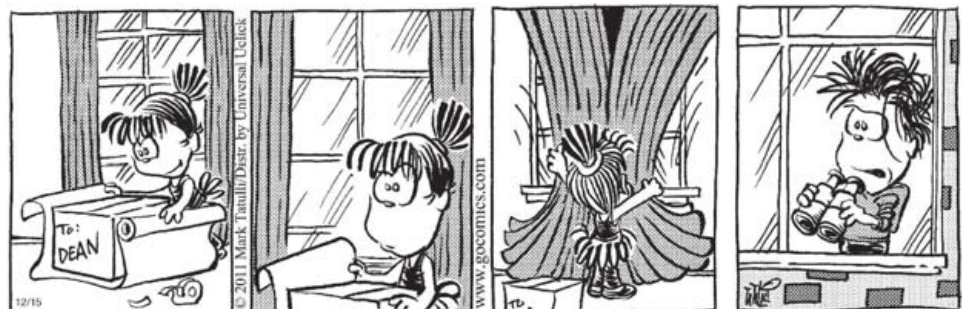
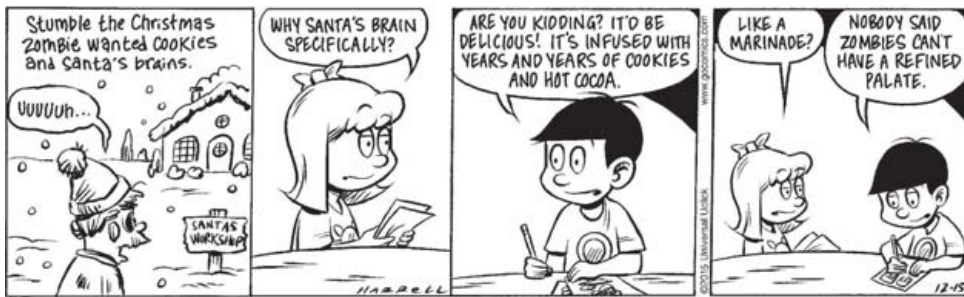
Funeral arrangements will be announced at a later date.

Typically you



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HOROSCOPE

By Nancy Black

Today's Birthday (December 15) – Expand your territory, with Saturn in your sign this year. Renew your domestic space this spring for a social year, especially after Jupiter enters Libra (on 9/9). Creative collaborations thrive. New professional doors open after next autumn, provoking domestic alterations. Take action for what you love.

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 – Action goes farther than words. Slow and steady does it. Harmony requires effort. Confer with a wise elder. Don't show a loved one unfinished work. Get it done first. Your past work shows what you can do.

Taurus (April 20-May 20) – Today is a 6 – Settle into a meditative mood. Clean house, and discover stuff you'd forgotten. Tidy up and enjoy the results. Unexpected expenses or controversy could shake up your daydreams. Listen to your team. Together, you can pull off miracles.

Gemini (May 21-June 20) – Today is a 7 – Remember the rules. Costs are higher than expected. The more you complete, the more you advance. Balance all accounts. Your skills are admired. Make sure you understand what's already expected of you. Then go to committee.

Cancer (June 21-July 22) – Today is a 6 – Be patient, and stand firm. Fix up old before buying new. Don't stir up jealousies. A partner can help you advance. Follow a strong leader. Hold out for the best. Humility is a virtue. Show a skeptic about love.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22) – Today is a 7 – Talk it over with your partner before taking on more work. Figure out what's going on behind the scenes. Travel is possible. Try a new mode of transportation. You're gaining points with someone you admire.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) – Today is an 8 – Share the load, and get family in on the action. A physical job goes faster with extra hands. Parcel out tasks. Don't be too critical. Make an overdue change at home. Feed everyone who shows up.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) – Today is a 7 – Set realistic goals, and schedule steps. Invest in your business. Show up on time. Keep your word and avoid a confrontation. Take another's opinion into account. Being productive pays off. Think about personal decisions. Plan a social event.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) – Today is a 6 – Technology makes your work easier. Connect with someone influential. Share resources. Friends provide motivation. Get together in person and teach each other. Collaborations get farther. Let people know what you're up to and invite participation.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) – Today is a 6 – Invest in fixing up your place. Repair something before it breaks. Replace something volatile with something secure. Guard against overspending or overindulging. Organize supplies. Completion leads to advancement. Enjoy the support of home comforts.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) – Today is an 8 – Make a date for something you don't get to do very often. Don't worry about someone who doesn't understand you. Creativity makes it more interesting. Replenish your reserves by spending time with friends. Laugh and play together.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) – Today is an 8 – Apply finishing touches to creative work at home. Play with color, form and line. Replace something that's broken. New paint works wonders. Use something you've been saving. Purchase one new item. Tap into a secret source.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20) – Today is an 8 – Set aside old fears, and follow your curiosity. Explore the subject of your fascination. Friends teach what they know. Someone finds your obsession charming. Get energized by their enthusiasm. The draw seems magnetic. Discover new terrain together.



Speak your mind
By Queenie

SEND LETTERS TO
P.O. BOX 828
FAX +599 5425913
or e-mail
queenie@thedailyherald.com

Dear Queenie,

There is one man who works at a well-known business on the island who works with girls from other countries and constantly tries to have a relationship with them. Usually he succeeds.

Acting like a serious boyfriend, when the girl falls in love with him and of course she wants to stay with him on the island (because of him, not the island), he always refuses her by saying he can't afford her to stay by him, he doesn't have enough money (he's got upper standard salary though) and that she can't stay on the island even if they marry.

It also happened several times that a girl got pregnant with him and he told her to take it out as he can't support her. He's been doing these things for many years already.

On the other hand, he is trying to be a good son in front of his beloved mother and his family who think he is a great man (he's not married, lives alone, only one child).

When I was on the island I wanted to visit his mother to let her know about him and now when off the island I wanted to write a letter to her but I think she wouldn't get to read it as he can stop the letter as he lives next to her and she doesn't see so well anymore.

Queenie, what is there to be done in this case to stop him?—**Too much**

Dear Too much,

I doubt that sending a letter to his mother, or even talking to her in person, would do much good. She probably would not believe you, or even if she did might try to defend her son.

Warning the women on whom he preys might help, if you can get them to believe you, but "there are none so blind as those who will not see" and those who are wearing "rose-coloured glasses."

However, if he is somehow *forcing* these women to have a relationship with him they may have recourse to the Labour Department, the Women's Desk (tel. 542-7940), the Legal Aid/Law Clinic (tel. 542-2337) or even Safe Haven (office 9277 or 24-hour hotline 9333).

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

NOTICES

General Meeting

Dominica Foundation invites all to their General meeting on Tuesday December 15 at WIFOL Center starting 7:00pm.

Mini Grant

Be the Change Foundation is now accepting applications for the Mini Grant Program for 2016. Any organization that is an active registered entity or community group (NGO, youth club, sports team, school, service club etc.) may apply. Guidelines as well as the application form can be found on our web page at this link. <http://bethechangesxm.com/mini-grant-program/>. The deadline for applying is December 22. For more information, you can contact Melanie Choisy at 580-1437

Tennis Tournament

Sint Maarten Tennis Club (SMTC) is organizing the 1st "Pineapple Pete's Open Doubles Tournament" from December 4 to 19. The night matches will be played at the Raoul Illidge Tennis Courts.

Gentle Yoga

Philipsburg Jubilee Library is offering free "Gentle Yoga" classes for senior citizens (50 plus) on Mondays from 10:00 to 11:00am. For registration and information call 5533020.

Dance Classes

Dance and Arts Dimensions Academy (DADA) is now offering Djembe Drums, guitar, vocals and piano lessons for

students four years and up. Dance classes in liturgical, contemporary, ballet and jazz are also offered for students two years to adults. Registration now open Monday-Thursday, 4:30-6:30pm, and Saturday, 10:30am to 1:00pm. Located at the Yogesh Commercial Complex, second floor, Cul de Sac, across from Le Grand Marché Supermarket. For information call 721-523-4436/522-5801 or e-mail dance.da85@gmail.com

Volunteers Needed

Community Outreach Mentorship and Empowerment Center (COME) is looking for volunteers in the following areas: Adult Literacy Teachers, Cooks (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and an all-round person. For more information call 542-2575 or email: comecenter2012@gmail.com

Gardening Program

Community Development, Family & Humanitarian Affairs (C.D.F.H.A.) is now registering persons/families for their new Backyard Gardening Program. For further information and to register persons can contact the various Community Help Desk's at: Hope Estate 542-2802, Cole Bay 5444302, Dutch Quarter 520-3418, St. Peters: 5484633 or the main office at the Vineyard Building: 542-1122/ 542-9925

Volunteers Needed

Walichi Basketball Association is looking for volunteers, especially high school students in need of volunteer hours. Volunteers in the categories of graphic design, photographers, video editors, kitchen helpers, table scorers and all around volunteers for the Ladies Basketball Championship and upcoming Interscholastic Basketball Championship. For more information call 581-8502 or walichibasketball@gmail.com.

Youth Classes

Youth Development Center Foundation is offering sewing, fashion design and nail technology classes as well as a girls' mentorship programme. Call 580-6796 or 0690 26.93.66 or email Ydc.sxm@gmail.com for more information.

Music School

Andante Music School is registering students of all ages for the new Music school year 2015-2016. For more information call 520-1030 or 542-0727.

Self-Defence Classes

Self-defence and Muay Thai Kickboxing offered for children and adults at Renzo Gracie St Maarten. All classes take place at SXM BJJ 15 Wellington Road, Cole Bay. For more information contact 580 3894 or e-mail info@sxmbjj.com.

Female Soccer Team

FC Soualiga is looking for ladies to join its female soccer team. Practice takes place at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex in Cay Hill every Tuesday and Thursday, 7:00-8:30pm. Contact fcsoualiga@gmail.com, phone number 559-7482, Facebook: FC Soualiga, or visit during practice hours, if interested.

Volunteers Needed

Beyond Kultura is seeking volunteers to organise, write project proposals, just be a hands-on person with lots of creativity to help out in projects. Call for an orientation meeting on 527-1223 or email beyondkultura@gmail.com.

Teachers, Volunteers Needed

I Too Can Learn (ITCL) Foundation is seeking teachers (Special Ed) and volunteers for its centre. For more information call 547-0890 or 524-6067. Your résumé can be sent to: itcl_bdg@outlook.com.

Steel Pan Classes

Adults and children 5 and over are advised to register for steel pan afterschool classes at Dow's Musical Foundation. Registration forms can be collected at A.Th. Illidge Road 48, Lower Princes Quarter, St Maarten (behind Firgos Paper and Oduber agencies). For more information call 542-6971.

Support Group

Women of Destiny Support Group for single mothers meets on the second Monday of every month at Christian

Faith Ministry love hall in Dutch Quarter at 7:30pm (purple church). Tel. 587-6553.

Dance Classes

Dance Theater of St. Maarten will be registering students ages 3+ for classes. For detailed schedule and new tuition rates, visit our website www.dancesxm.com, e-mail us at info@dancesxm.com or call 520-6914.

Free HIV testing

St. Maarten AIDS Foundation is offering free and confidential HIV testing at its office Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am to 12:00pm. Results are available in 15 minutes. If these hours are not convenient call 553-2626 or 588-4636 to make an appointment. The office is on the second floor of the Blue Point building in Cole Bay (across from Tropicana Casino). Parking and entrance at the back of the building.

Volunteers Needed

St Maarten Red Cross is looking for volunteers. Interested persons can visit their building or call 545-2333 or 586-5330 for more information.

Positive Thinking

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

Community Reading Class

Organised by the Salvation Army at Union Road #59, Cole Bay, every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 2:30-4:30pm.

Programme for Alcoholics

Al-Anon is a non-profit 12-step programme in partnership with Alcoholics Anonymous available for persons, family and friends of persons who may have a problem with alcoholism. The support group meets at Red Cross on Airport Boulevard every Monday and Friday, 6:00-7:00pm. For information call 527-1343.

Opening Hours

St. Maarten National Heritage Foundation informs the general public that the museum opening hours are Monday-Friday, 10:00am to 4:00pm.

Foster Parents Needed

Foundation Judiciary Institutes Windward Islands (FJIWI)/ Stichting Justitiële Inrichtingen Bovenwinden (SJB), is looking for foster parents: permanent foster parents, weekend/vacation foster parents and emergency/crisis foster parents. For more information 542-3449. Email inquiries can be sent to sjib@sinmaarten.net.

HOPE Meetings

HIV/AIDS support group HOPE is inviting all HIV positive persons to attend their monthly meetings. For more information contact Dr. Gerard van Osch, tel. 544-5374, during office hours.

Volunteers Needed

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

Volunteers Needed

Les Quatre Pattes/PAWS animal association has several opportunities available for those seeking to help the animals on the island. Volunteers willing to help call 0690-34-04-07 or 552-0407.

Animal Volunteer

Animals R Friends 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 at 556-1191/527-0527/520-7365/526-0113 or e-mail: arf_sxm@yahoo.com.

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Star Wars marketing force reaches for female fans

LOS ANGELES--"Star Wars" actress Daisy Ridley smiles on the cover of Glamour magazine, Stormtrooper necklaces are on sale at Kay Jewelers, and commercials for the new film "The Force Awakens" are running during Kim Kardashian's reality TV show.

Walt Disney Co is reaching out to women and girls to broaden the franchise's male-dominated audience and help recoup the \$4 billion it spent to buy "Star Wars" producer Lucasfilm. Female fans may determine if "Force Awakens" meets projections for record-breaking box office returns after it opens Dec. 18.

The casting of Ridley, 23, as the film's star plus a flood of R2-D2 purses, BB-8 dresses and other merchandise suggest Disney is courting the female young adult audience that



A woman dressed as Princess Leia from Star Wars waits in line to buy food at ComicCon in New York in this October 10, 2013 file photo.

turned movies such as "The Hunger Games" into blockbusters, said Jeff Bock, senior box office analyst at Exhibitor Relations Co.

"The guys are already in," Bock said. "If you can get

that 'Hunger Games' and 'Twilight' fan base to join up, then you are talking about possibly \$700 million domestically, maybe even more."

Only one film, "Avatar," reached that level, selling \$760 million worth of tickets in the United States and Canada after its December 2009 release. Disney has honed its strategy in recent years, though, with superhero and action franchises.

Stars of "The Avengers" visited talk shows such as "The View," and the sequel, "Age of Ultron," had two leading female characters. About 40 percent of opening weekend audiences was female for both films, according to Shawn Robbins, senior analyst at BoxOffice.com.

While it's difficult to quantify the gender breakdown of fans historically, earlier "Star Wars" movies featured just one main female character - always royalty.

In the "Force Awakens," Ridley's character, Rey, was created as a scrappy scavenger and a pilot, not a princess. In movie trailers, Rey battles with a staff-like weapon, not unlike "Hunger Games" warrior Katniss Everdeen and her bow and arrow. Gwendoline Christie plays the first female villain, Captain Phasma. Actress Lupita Nyong'o has a significant role, and Carrie Fisher is back as Princess Leia, now a general.

"We have female stormtroopers and female resistance pilots," director J.J. Abrams told Reuters. "There are female voices and energy throughout." It is important, Abrams said, "that we give people a chance to see themselves in the movie."

Trailers to promote the film highlight Rey's prominence. Disney has placed those previews in commercials for females of all ages, according to a person aware

of the studio's marketing plan. That ranges from TV commercials in shows such as "Keeping Up with the Kardashians," "Jane the Virgin" and the "Real Housewives" series to ads on mobile video games popular with young girls. "Force Awakens" stars appeared in interviews that aired during Disney Channel shows.

Beyond featuring women, the company appears to be tailoring some of its messages to females, said Alvin Lieberman, a marketing professor at New York University's Stern School of Business. In a four-minute comedy sketch on "Jimmy Kimmel Live," Harrison Ford and Chewbacca resolved a purported feud with an endearing, hug-it-out moment.

"That is not what your high-adrenaline, action-oriented male population is looking to see," Lieberman said of the video, which has been viewed more than 1.1 million times on YouTube. "It sells the characters." And while Rey looks tough

in the trailers, the "Star Wars" women show a feminine side in some promotions. In addition to Ridley appearing on the covers of "Glamour" and "Elle," Nyong'o was on "Vogue". None of those magazines put star Natalie Portman on their covers ahead of the last "Star Wars" film, "Revenge of the Sith," in 2005.

For "Star Wars," the message is getting through. A National Retail Federation survey found, for the first time, that "Star Wars" toys ranked among the top 10 that parents would buy for girls this holiday shopping season.

The new movie is also stirring enthusiasm online among female fans eager to see its women in action, said Annette Cardwell, who works in content programming at social network Wikia, which hosts "Star Wars" fan sites.

"Even Princess Leia, who was always pivotal and always central, she was not Luke Skywalker," Cardwell said. "Rey feels like she is the new focal point."

Jeff Koons sued for copyright infringement over gin ad photo

NEW YORK--Jeff Koons, a U.S. pop artist whose works can fetch millions, is facing allegations he used a New York photographer's commercial photo from the 1980s in a painting without permission or compensation, according to a lawsuit filed on Monday.

The photographer, Mitchel Gray, said in the complaint filed in Manhattan federal court that Koons reproduced his photo, which depicts a man sitting beside a woman painting on a beach with an easel, "nearly unchanged and in its entirety."

Gray is also suing New York-based auction house Phillips Auctioneers and an as-yet-unnamed former owner of the Koons print, which sold for \$2.04 million in London in 2008. Neither Koons nor his agent in New York could immediately be reached on Monday.



TV-CARIB (local)
Channel 10 WTN

Tuesday, December 15

6:30am Facing the Day
7:00am TV-Carib Informer (r)
7:40am Noticias en Español (r)
12:05pm Viewpoint PJD2

Program Rotation

5:00pm Playtime
6:30pm Caribbean Sports
7:00pm In Depth with Andrew Bishop
7:30pm Fitness with Bella
8:00pm TV-Carib Informer
8:40pm DCOMM
9:00pm Live Lottery Drawings
10:00pm Noticias en Español



BVN (Dutch/Flemish) TV
Channel 122 SXM Cable
Channel 23 WTN

Tuesday, December 15

12:00pm VRT Journaal
12:30pm De Afspraak
1:15pm 2 voor 12
1:50pm Tijd voor MAX/Hallo Nederland
3:00pm NOS Journaal
3:05pm Sesamstraat
3:25pm Sesamstraat 10 voor...
3:35pm Het Klokhuis
3:50pm NOS Jeugdjournaal
3:55pm Titaantjes
4:20pm Blokken
4:45pm Thuis
5:10pm Dagelijkse kost
5:25pm Een Vandaag
5:55pm NOS Sportjournaal
6:05pm VRT Journaal
6:45pm College Tour
7:35pm NOS Journaal
8:00pm Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
8:05pm NOS Studio Sport
9:35pm Nieuwsuur
10:30pm Weerbericht Amerika/Caribiën
10:35pm Opsporing gezocht internationaal
10:40pm Pauw
11:35pm Iedereen beroemd



TeleCuraçao
Channel 130 SXM Cable
Channel 8 WTN

Tuesday, December 15

6:00am Mi, Bo, Nos Salú
6:30am Mòru Bondia
9:30am Ban Hals a Standarte
10:00am Herensia - Lelia Pieterella 2
11:00am Dun'e un chèns
12:00pm Café CNN
12:30pm Boletín di Mèrdia
1:00pm Bo Tra'i Mèrdia
3:30pm Vroegse Vogels
4:00pm Video Zoo/Overdrive TCFM
5:00pm Solo ta sali pa nos tur
6:00pm Bonochi Kòrsou
7:00pm TeleDeporte
7:30pm FDDK
8:00pm TeleNotisia
9:00pm Wega di Number Kòrsou
9:10pm Partisipashon di Morto
9:15pm Pagina Sosial Mr/Ms Exclusive
9:30pm Ban Papi di Salú
10:30pm Puerto Latino (r)
11:00pm TeleNotisia (r)



TV 15 (local)
Channel 115 SXM Cable

Tuesday, December 15

8:00am SXM Daily News (rr)
8:30am Replay DCOMM
9:00am Caribbean Newslines
9:30am Caribbean Workout
10:00am Caribbean Passport
10:30am Speaking of Everything
11:00am Music Videos
5:00pm Music Videos
5:30pm Caribbean Newslines
6:00pm DCOMM
6:30pm Caribbean Workout
7:00pm Music Videos
7:30pm SXM Daily News
8:00pm Oral Gibbes Live
9:00pm Music Videos
9:30pm Caribbean Medical/Robbie's Lot
10:00pm Music Videos/Caribbean Lottery
11:00pm SXM Daily News (r)
11:30pm Caribbean Newslines

Cosby files countersuit against 7 women in defamation case

BOSTON--Actor and comedian Bill Cosby on Monday sued seven women who had accused him of defaming them, saying they lied when they accused him of sexual assault.

The countersuit, filed in U.S. district court in Springfield, Massachusetts, contends that the women defamed his "honorable legacy and reputation" by accusing him of sexual misconduct. More than 50 women have come forward to accuse the actor, best known for his role in the 1980s television hit "The Cosby Show," of sexually assaulting them after plying them with drugs or alcohol.

Cosby has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and has never been criminally

charged. Many of the alleged incidents occurred decades ago and, so the statute of limitations for prosecuting them has long run out.

"Relying solely on unsubstantiated accusations, counterclaim defendants have engaged in a campaign to assassinate Mr. Cosby's reputation and character by willfully, maliciously, and falsely accusing Mr. Cosby of multi-decade-old purported sexual misconduct," the 78-year-old actor's attorneys wrote in court papers charging the women with defamation, tortious interference and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Cosby's countersuit to the lawsuits - first filed in De-

cember 2014 and charging him with libel, assault and slander - seeks unspecified financial damages. The suits contend that Cosby slandered his alleged victims by calling them liars when they publicly accused him of sexual assault.

"Bill Cosby appears to be going to war against women who have sued him in Massachusetts and who allege that he has victimized them," said attorney Gloria Allred, who represents several women who have sued the comedian, thought not the people involved in the Massachusetts case. "Such a tactic will not deter courageous women from fighting the battle against him."

Cosby testified in 2005 that he had obtained the



Actor Bill Cosby speaks at the National Action Network's 20th annual Keepers of the Dream Awards gala in New York in an April 6, 2011 file photo.

sedative drug Quaaludes, popular in the 1970s, with the intention of giving them

to young women in order to have sex with him, according to court documents un-

sealed in July as part of a separate legal proceeding against him.



Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej is seen attending a ceremony in Bangkok, Thailand December 14, 2015 in this still image taken from Thai TV Pool video.

Thailand's king makes rare public appearance

BANGKOK--Thailand's revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej made a rare public appearance on Monday after failing to show up for nationwide celebrations marking his birthday earlier this month.

Local television showed footage of the monarch, who turned 88 on Dec. 5, swearing in dozens of judges at a reception room in a Bangkok hospital where he has been convalescing. The king was last seen in public on Sept. 1 and did not make an appearance on his birthday - the second year running he missed the celebrations he would usually take part in.

He has spent the past few

months at Siriraj Hospital where he was treated for hydrocephalus, a build-up of cerebrospinal fluid that surrounds the brain. The condition of the king, the world's longest serving monarch, is of huge public interest but cannot be discussed openly in the kingdom because the royal family is shielded by one of the world's toughest lese-majeste laws.

Prosecutions under the military government, which took power following a 2014 coup, of those accused of having defamed the royals have increased dramatically. Article 112 of the country's criminal code carries up to 15 years in jail for

each count of insulting the king, queen, heir or regent.

Last week, thousands of cyclists led by Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn rode through Bangkok to honour the king in an outpouring of loyalty that comes against the backdrop of the unprecedented crackdown on those perceived as critical of the monarchy. Two suspects have died in custody during a police investigation of corruption involving the "Bike For Dad" event and another cycling event aimed at celebrating Queen Sirikit. A number of people were accused of falsely claiming close royal connections to raise funds for the cycling events.

Obama runs wild in Alaska, drinks catkin tea for TV adventure show

NEW YORK--They shared tea made out of catkins, ate wild salmon picked over by a bear, talked about being a dad and discussed climate change - all while snipers kept watch from the mountains and the official food taster looked on warily.

U.S. President Barack Obama's "Running Wild" Alaska episode with wilderness expert Bear Grylls airs on NBC television on Dec. 17, and Grylls said the short trip showed an intimate and fun side of Obama that has rarely been seen.

"He said it was one of the best days of his presidency," Grylls told reporters. "There were times along the route I had to pinch myself and think, actually, this is the president of America'."

The episode was filmed in September on a trek to Alaska's shrinking Exit Glacier that was aimed at drawing world attention to climate change. Last year alone, the Exit Glacier melted and retreated 187 ft (57 m) toward the Harding ice field, which has itself lost 10 percent of its mass since 1950.

Obama is the first sitting president of any nation to take part in "Running Wild with Bear Grylls," following in the footsteps of celebrities like Ben Stiller, Kate Winslet and Zac Efron. Grylls, a British former SAS soldier turned adventurer and survival specialist, said the idea for the TV episode came from the White House.

"They (the White House)

approached us, saying would we consider taking the president on an adventure to Alaska. I almost didn't really believe it. I thought this was a spoof," Grylls said. Grylls said a team of about 50 Secret Service personnel, a food taster, snipers and helicopters accompanied the pair during the day-long trek through a forest and across a glacial outwash.

Obama threw himself into it, shrugging off the food taster, sharing Gryll's water bottle, lighting fires and eating berries. "He didn't have any problems. He wanted the physicality...

he was up for everything," Grylls said.

Along the way, Grylls said the pair talked not only about climate change but about being a father, Obama's fears, Grylls' habit of drinking his own urine, and the challenges of living in a bubble away from ordinary people. "I hope we did something that really put a smile on his face that lasted for a while," Grylls said.

Asked what he had learned from the trip, Grylls quipped, "Whoever you are, everyone puts their trousers on one leg at a time."

Pineapple Pete Open Doubles goes into deciding week

CAY HILL--Some twenty matches were played in the Pineapple Pete Open Doubles Tournament since Tuesday last week.

On Saturday, in the Men's Doubles, group 1 winners Paul van den Hoogen/Albert van der Gugten went down against Ewout van der Heiden and 'Quitto', who convincingly replaces the injured Pierre Farland: 6-2 6-1. It was the winner's almost flawless play which made it impossible for their opponents to ever find their rhythm.

Likewise, group 2 winners Joeri Essed/Roeland Zwanikken came down hard after some good matches; they were presented a clean 'bagle': 6-0 6-0 in their match on Saturday against Djai Essed/Richard Boyd. Even if the result could not change the rankings, already having lost 6-2 6-2 to Hans/Bas, it must have felt good for Djai to beat his father Joeri with the biggest possible margin.

On Friday, in group 3, Laticia and Leshawn Brown had sailed past Ewout and Quitto: 7-6 6-1. Laticia Brown is also participating in the men's draw because of her excellent skills. Ronny/Vincent came close to a win in their match against Peter/Daniel, but eventually went down in the super-tiebreak: 6-1 5-7 and 11-9. The match on Monday Dec. 14th, be-

tween Ronny/Vincent and Laticia and Leshawn should be interesting.

On Thursday, in the Mixed Doubles, Hans and Suzan de Bruyne overcame Frijtof Bouwman and Katja Andeweg 6-4 7-5 in an exciting match. On Tuesday, Hans and Suzan had already won their match against Bas van den Bosch and Erika van der Horst: 6-3 6-4. Joeri Essed and Sylvia Jongbloed came out on top against Roeland and Debbie Zwanikken: 7-6 6-1.

In the same group, Arend-Jan and Carla Speetjens are still alive after a 'walkover' against Sylvia Jongbloed and Joeri Essed on Sunday morning.

On Saturday, in Women's

Doubles, Katja Andeweg and Erika van der Horst beat Ria Koster and Anne-Marie Mazel 6-3 6-3.

On Thursday, Ria and Anne-Marie had won from Michelle van der Werff and Meike Broenink 6-1, 0-6, and 15-9 in the super tie-break. Carla Speetjens and Geraldine won their match against Michelle and Meike 6-3 6-3.

The second and final week of the tournament will bring some exciting matches, especially with the advanced players streaming in.

All finals are scheduled for Friday December 18. The Women's Double at 6:30pm; the Men's and Mixed Doubles Finals at 8:00pm.

Major League Baseball roundup

NEW YORK-- Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred denied Pete Rose's reinstatement bid from his lifetime ban for betting on games, the league announced Monday.

MLB said Manfred contacted Rose on Monday to inform him of the ruling.

"Mr. Rose's public and private comments, including his initial admission in 2004, provide me with little confidence that he has

a mature understanding of his wrongful conduct, that he has accepted full responsibility for it, or that he understands the damage he has caused," Manfred said in his decision.

Giants

Free agent right-hander Johnny Cueto agreed to a six-year deal, \$130 million contract with the San Francisco Giants.

The deal with the 29-year-old is a coup for the Giants, who could pair Cueto with left-hander Madison Bumgarner and right-hander Jeff Samardzija in a revamped starting rotation. The contract is contingent upon Cueto passing a physical.

Mariners

The Seattle Mariners signed right-handed relief pitcher Steve Cishek to a two-year contract.

Cishek, 29, split last season with the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals, combining to go 2-6 with a 3.58 ERA over 55 1/3 innings with 48 strikeouts in 59 relief appearances.

Cubs

The Chicago Cubs signed right-handed reliever Jean Machi to a minor league contract and an invitation to spring training, according to reports.

Machi, 33, struggled in 2015 with a 5.12 ERA in 59 appearances with the Giants and the Red Sox.



French Baseball Federation representatives are Lahcene Benhamida, Stephen Lesfargues and Boris Rothermundt.

French Federation hosts free baseball clinics

PHILIPSBURG-- Three representatives from the French Baseball Federation are on the Friendly island to host a series of free clinics this week.

Tuesday and Thursday the clinics will be at the Little League Ballpark on Pond Island from 3:00 to 6:00pm and Saturday 9:30 to noon.

Wednesday and Friday the clinics for the Pony League will be at John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark from 3:00 to 6:00pm and Sunday at the field in Belvedere from 9:30am to noon.

"We came here last year and did try outs for the national teams," said Boris Rothermundt who serves as vice director of the Federation, manages the 18 and Under National Team and coaches the Senior National Squad. "We

saw a lot of talent but it needs some developing. That's why we are back this year to do clinics."

Conducting the clinics along with Rothermundt will be Lahcene Benham-

ida, manager of the U-12 and in charge of trainings for coaches and Stephen Lesfargues who is the National Technical Director Chief.

ROSE

Continued from page 40

al activities that presented no threat to the integrity of the game, provided the events were approved by him in advance.

In July, Rose was honored prior to the MLB All-Star Game in Cincinnati and received a long standing ovation as he joined Hall of Famers Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan and Barry Larkin in being voted by fans as Cincinnati's 'Franchise Four'.

Rose, whose previous efforts to gain leniency from

MLB commissioners were never considered, had earlier this year sent a formal request to have the ban lifted by Manfred, who took over as MLB Commissioner in January.

Rose, who grew up in Cincinnati and earned the nickname "Charlie Hustle" for his aggressive style of play while with the Reds, played from 1963 to 1986, amassing 4,256 hits, still the major league record.



The St. Maarten Junior National Team (U-19) arrived in Montserrat on Sunday afternoon. The Under 19 selection is competing in the Leeward Islands Basketball Association Championship. In the first game St. Maarten tipped off against British Virgin Islands and lost 99-79. St. Maarten will next face Anguilla.



Members of the St. Maarten Bodybuilding & Fitness Association surprised the Sister Basilia Center with cartons of Breakfast and drinks on December 5. The Association held their 2nd annual Christmas Walkathon and afterward went to the center to deliver the holiday cheer.

IAAF to consider Rio 2016 schedule change for Felix

NEW YORK-- American sprinter Allyson Felix's pursuit of a rare 200-400 metres double at the Rio Olympics gained momentum on Monday when U.S. officials asked the IAAF for a schedule change to make an attempt possible.

"We did receive an official request today from USATF," Paul Hardy, competitions director for the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), told Reuters in an email. "This will be reviewed in the next few days."

Felix, the Olympic 200m gold medallist and world 400m champion, is seeking to become only the third female to complete the double in the Summer Games.

"Allyson is the most decorated female athlete in IAAF history and should have the chance to go for a double, competing in what likely will be her fourth and final Olympic Games," USA Track & Field (USATF) CEO Max

Siegel said in making the request.

"Such an achievement would elevate the sport at the Games, and as a federation we owe it to her and to the sport as a whole to make the request."

The current Rio schedule would make the double a daunting challenge. Felix, winner of 20 Olympic and world championship medals, would need to compete in the first round of the 200m 75 minutes before the 400m final.

"Adjusting the schedule in my opinion does not hurt anybody," coach Bob Kersee told Reuters.

Only twice has a female athlete won both at the Olympics. Kersee-coached Valerie Brisco-Hooks claimed the honour in 1984 and France's Marie-Jose Perec won both in 1996.

The IAAF changed the schedule in 1996 so Perec and American Michael Johnson could attempt their dou-

ble with Johnson breaking the world record in the 200m and winning the 400m.

"All our training is toward her doing both," Kersee said. "We are going to double at our Olympic trials and try and make the team in the 4 and the 2."

Felix, 30, has tried the 200-400m double once on the global scene, finishing second in the 400m and third in the 200m at the 2011 world championships.

She wanted to attempt the double at the 2015 world championships, but decided the schedule would be too difficult.

Felix instead blazed to victory in the 400m with Dutch sprinter Dafne Schippers claiming the 200m in the fourth fastest time ever.

The two, along with Jamaican Olympic silver medallist Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, likely will clash again in one of the highlights of the Rio Olympics.



Milton Peters College dominated the pitch winning both the Male and Female divisions of the High School Soccer Competition Saturday.

Milton Peters College Dominates school soccer

CAYHILL- Milton Peters College teams won both the male and female divisions of the High School Soccer Competition at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex Saturday.

Teams competed for first, second and third place. Three games went into overtime and ended with a penalty shoot-out.

For the female section it was combination team Sundial/Charlotte Brookson who managed to pass one goal by the MAC keeper gaining them a 1-0 advantage and therefore third place. Goal was made by player Dorothy James.

In the final St. Dominic high faced MPC. It was the only game of the evening that ended without need for overtime. The winning goal was netted by Shakirah Gijbertha with an assist from Aishel Peters.

For the male section third place winners were St. Dominic High who tied the game with CIA with goals made by Brandon Potmis with an assist of James Cook (St. Dominic) and an equalizer goal made by Vivel Sabnaoi (CIA). The decisive moment came during the penalty shoot-out in which St. Dominic proved to be the stronger competitor with the winning goal made by Joel Lawrie.

All games were intense and all players played with passion but the most exciting game of the night was the much anticipated game between PSVE Academy and MPC (male).

The two teams were the strongest overall in the competition and it proved to be a challenge for each team to penetrate the defense. The first goal was made by Jeremy Drijvers from MPC but it didn't take too long for it to be equalized by Delano

Hodge. This game ended with sudden-death penalties where MPC broke the tie and took the win.

The evening concluded with the award ceremony with prizes presented by the representative of sponsors Pizza Hut and 104.3, Teddy Sapia.

Also honoured were the Most Valuable players and best keeper. The awards went to MVP male: Delano Hodge (PSVE); MVP female: Shakirah Gijbertha (MPC);

Best keeper male: Najib Baroud (MPC;) and Best keeper female: Whitney Walsh (MAC.)

The Competition was organised by the Oualichi Women's Soccer Association and the Sint Maarten Soccer Association. The competition lasted 6 weeks and was played on half field at the Raoul Illidge Sports Complex.

Next year the organization hopes to grow and provide a full field competition to the participants.



File photo of New Zealand's captain Brendon McCullum stands with team mates Bradley-John Watling and Kane Williamson.

NEW ZEALAND Continued from page 40

and perform the thankless task of tying down an end and exerting scoreboard pressure on the Sri Lankans.

Bracewell, who was arguably the best bowler for New Zealand in Australia, continued his strong form without much return.

"I thought he bowled absolutely brilliantly throughout the test match and all through Australia as well and just hasn't got the rewards at the moment," McCullum said of Bracewell's match return of 1-88 from 40.2 overs.

"The good thing is he didn't get frustrated. He had a good, calm head about him."

Wagner, brought in as the fourth seamer, also put pres-

sure on Sri Lanka's batsmen with a sustained period of hostile short-pitched bowling that kept them on the back foot and will cause coach Mike Hesson selection issues ahead of the second test.

"There's obviously times when there's been a bit of resistance there and we just had to keep plugging away and I thought that's when Neil Wagner really stepped up for us," McCullum said.

"He bowled those 'dead overs' with hostility and when he's in your team you know that you've got those overs when you are going to be able to create some opportunities."

The key for his side, McCul-

lum added, was to keep up that intensity when the second test begins at Hamilton's Seddon Park on Friday.

"Sri Lanka is a pretty tough opposition to get results against. They have some excellent young bowlers and they asked some questions on day one.

"We knew we would get better and it's one thing expecting yourselves to get better but it's another thing actually doing it.

"I thought the way that we played throughout this test match, bat, ball and in the field, was one of our most thorough performances."

Espanyol sack coach Gonzalez and hire Galca

MADRID-- Espanyol have sacked coach Sergio Gonzalez and replaced him with Romanian Constantin Galca after Saturday's 1-0 loss at Celta Vigo left them three points above the La Liga relegation zone.

Gonzalez, 39, a former Espanyol and Deportivo La Coruna player, was in his second season in charge after being promoted from B team manager and led the club to a 10th-place finish in Spain's top flight in his debut campaign.

Former Romania interna-

tional Galca, who also played for the Barcelona-based club, has agreed a contract until the end of the season, Espanyol said on their website (www.rcdespanyol.com).

Galca, 43, played at Espanyol with Gonzalez, as well as for a number of other Spanish clubs, went on to coach Romania's Under-17 side and last season led Steaua Bucharest to the Romanian league and cup double.

Espanyol, who reached the UEFA Cup final in 2007, have been a near-constant presence in La Liga and were last relegated to the second division (Liga Adelante) in 1992-93 before coming straight back up the following season.

Galca will take over immediately and his first game in charge is Tuesday's King's Cup last-32, second leg at home to Levante. The La Liga rivals drew 1-1 in the first leg in Valencia.

Europa League last 32 draw

Valencia	v	Rapid Vienna
Fiorentina	v	Tottenham Hotspur
Borussia Dortmund	v	Porto
Fenerbahce	v	Lokomotiv Moscow
Anderlecht	v	Olympiakos Piraeus
Midtjylland	v	Manchester United
FC Augsburg	v	Liverpool
Sparta Prague	v	FK Krasnodar
Galatasaray	v	Lazio
Sion	v	Braga
Shakhtar Donetsk	v	Schalke 04
Olympique de Marseille	v	Athletic Bilbao
Sevilla	v	Molde
Sporting Lisbon	v	Bayer Leverkusen
Villarreal	v	Napoli
St Etienne	v	FC Basel

(First legs on Feb. 18. Return legs on Feb. 25.)



Leicester's Danny Simpson in action with Chelsea's Pedro in their Barclays Premier League match at King Power Stadium Monday. Leicester City won 2-1.

Leicester return to summit as Chelsea woes continue

LEICESTER, England-- Sublime goals from Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez sent Leicester City back to the Premier League summit after a deserved 2-1 win on Monday over lacklustre Chelsea whose march to the title last season seems a distant memory.

The prolific Vardy, whose record run of 11 consecutive Premier League goals came to an end at Swansea City last weekend, beat goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois with a crisp volley from playmaker Mahrez's delightful cross after 34 minutes.

Algeria international Mahrez curled in a stunning second from the edge of the area three minutes into the second half to put Leicester, continuing a remarkable turnaround after escaping relegation last season, on 35 points, two clear of Arsenal.

Substitute Loic Remy gave the visitors hope with a close-range headed goal 13 minutes from time to set up a tense finish but the hosts held out to leave Chelsea mired in 16th place on 15 points from 16 games -- one point above the relegation zone.

"We played against the champions but we want to make a fantastic match for our fans because they believe, they are dreaming," said Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri, savouring victory against his former side.

"It is good if they (the fans) continue to dream but for us it was important to make a great performance with a fantastic spirit. Also tactically, I am very satisfied. We concentrated for 95 minutes against the champions. That is not easy."

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho agreed. "They deserved to win because they were better than us during a longer period of time," he said. "We were the best team

for 20-25 minutes, maybe a maximum of 30 minutes. They were the best team for an hour."

Victory was extra sweet for Ranieri who was sacked by Chelsea in 2004, a year after Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich took ownership of the London club.

Ranieri had led Chelsea to their highest league placing for 49 years and their first Champions League semi-final, which they lost to AS Monaco, but his reward was the sack.

He was replaced by Jose Mourinho whose second spell in charge of Chelsea has come increasingly under the spotlight.

They have lost nine of their opening 16 top-flight games for the first time since 1978-79, a season in which they were relegated.

Chelsea's woes were compounded by a first-half injury suffered by their Belgium forward Eden Hazard who hobbled off with an apparent hip problem after a challenge from Premier League top scorer Vardy.

England striker Vardy (15

goals) and Mahrez (11) have scored 26 times between them this season and they again lit up the King Power stadium with their intelligent running, pace and trickery.

Leicester, with one league defeat since losing at home to Chelsea in April -- a run of 20 games -- had the swagger of side sky-high on confidence and a dominant start was rewarded with Vardy's opener.

With that sense of anticipation of a striker at the top of his game, he escaped the attentions of John Terry to send a fizzing volley past Courtois from the influential Mahrez's seventh assist of the season.

Chelsea rarely threatened in the first half and when Mahrez beat Courtois with a sumptuous strike, Mourinho's men had it all to do.

They huffed and puffed without any spark until Remy headed in fellow substitute Pedro's cross but they failed to create any meaningful chances to salvage a point and take some of the pressure off their beleaguered manager.

CHAMPIONS

Continued from page 40

on paper.

"Everybody wanted to avoid Barcelona and Bayern so we are not so lucky but Bayern will not be glad they drew Juve," said Juventus ambassador Pavel Nedved.

Manchester City director of football Txiki Begiristain said: "They have a good side (Kiev) and it will be difficult for us. They are growing in the competition and it will be a big challenge but we hope to be ready."

"They are a strong side, but they like to play foot-

ball and it is just 11 v 11. We are improving and gaining experience in the competition so we hope to do well."

PSV Eindhoven will take on Atletico Madrid and Benfica will be against Zenit St Petersburg.

Gent, in their first participation in the competition, will take on Germany's VfL Wolfsburg.

The first legs of the ties are spread over four days in February, with the returns on March 8, 9 and 15, when there are two matches.



Players from FC Midtjylland celebrate after the match against Club Brugge in the UEFA Europa League group D soccer match in Herning, Denmark December 10.

Man United go into unknown in Europa

NYON, Switzerland-- Triple European champions Manchester United and their under-fire coach Louis van Gaal face a tricky task against little-known Midtjylland in the last 32 of the Europa League following Monday's draw.

United, knocked out of the Champions League last week, meet the Danish league winners, an unsung club backed by owner Matthew Benham who eliminated Southampton earlier in the competition.

Midtjylland's pony-tailed chairman Rasmus Ankersen, appointed by former financier and professional gambler Benham, who also owns English second-tier club Brentford, issued a warning after the draw.

"We have already beaten one English team so we are

not afraid," said Ankersen. "We are a small club with a small budget and we know we can't outspend them so we have to out-think them and, so far, this way has worked for us in the Europa League.

"We know we have a chance and we will take up the challenge. If we can beat Southampton we can beat Manchester United and the players will feel that and believe it."

Midtjylland had adopted the use of mathematical modelling and key performance indicators in their management and style of play, factors Van Gaal will need to study after a probable call to fellow Dutchman and Southampton manager Ronald Koeman.

Van Gaal has received a lot of criticism following his

team's Champions League exit and their 2-1 defeat by promoted Bournemouth in the Premier League on Saturday.

In other eye-catching ties Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp returns to Germany to face Augsburg, who are in their maiden European campaign, while Sevilla, bidding for a hat-trick of Europa League titles, meet Norwegian team Molde.

Former Champions League winners Borussia Dortmund and Porto also lock horns while Olympique de Marseille take on Athletic Bilbao, Anderlecht play Olympiakos Piraeus, Shakhtar Donetsk face Schalke 04 and Lazio meet Galatasaray.

The first legs will be played on Feb. 18 and the return matches seven days later.



Olivier Giroud scores the first goal for Arsenal from the penalty spot in this file photo from December 13.

Giroud goals steering Arsenal to the top

LONDON-- Olivier Giroud is proving the sceptics wrong and steering Arsenal, who face holders Barcelona in the last 16 of the Champions League, towards what may be their best season of modern times, according to club manager Arsene Wenger.

The French international joined a magnificent seven of Gunners' strikers by scoring his 50th Premier League goal in their 2-0 win at Aston Villa on Sunday.

His composed strike from a penalty helped to steer them to victory and the top of the league after a week in which they also secured their Champions League passage in dramatic fashion, with Giroud scoring a decisive hat-trick against Olympiakos in Greece.

"He is at the top of his game but is sometimes questioned," said Wenger.

"Finally the numbers get people to realise he is a good player."

He added that Giroud's lack of "electric pace" meant he was often overlooked. "He is more of a player who plays with his back to goal and brings other people in," he explained.

"Maybe he is not spectacular individually but he is very efficient and a very important player for the team. He is also mentally very strong."

On Monday, Arsenal were drawn to meet Barcelona in a tie that, despite the Catalan club's free-scoring forward line, could see them prove their mettle on the European stage.

"Arsenal and Barca have a very similar system of play," said Barcelona director Albert Soler. "I'm convinced the fans will enjoy the football. The way

we understand football is the same. They will be two great games."

Barcelona beat Arsenal in the Champions League final in Paris in 2006 and have won their two meetings since but the London team's current form, and Giroud's goals, have rebuilt their self-belief since their 5-1 thrashing by Bayern Munich on Nov. 4.

At 29, Giroud is only the seventh Arsenal player to reach 50 goals in the Premier League, joining Thierry Henry, Ian Wright, Robin van Persie, Dennis Bergkamp, Robert Pires and Theo Walcott in an illustrious club.

Giroud has struck a total of 72 goals in 121 appearances in all competitions since joining Arsenal from Montpellier in a 12-million-pound (\$18.17-million) move in 2012.

FIFA taps UN official for global human rights review

BOSTON - FIFA on Monday named a United Nations official focused on business and human rights to develop a plan for soccer's global governing body to adopt the UN's guiding principles on human rights.

John Ruggie, the UN Secretary-General's special representative for business and human rights and a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, will produce an independent review of how well FIFA's operations measure up to international human rights standards for workers. It will be the subject of a report released publicly in March, the

school and the sporting organization said on Monday.

Respect for human rights must be a core principal for FIFA and the review is part of the organization's "ongoing reform process," Acting FIFA President Issa Hayatou said in a statement.

Zurich-based FIFA was thrown into turmoil in May when the United States indicted 14 of its top officials for alleged corruption. The organization is in the midst of trying to pick a new president after Sepp Blatter was suspended for 90 days as he faces criminal investigation in Switzerland.

He has denied wrongdo-

ing.

"This has the potential to set the bar for other global sports organizations, and place respect for human rights front and center for a broad range of entities involved in global sporting events," Ruggie said in a statement issued by Harvard, located just outside Boston.

A team from Shift, which Ruggie chairs and specializes in working with companies to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, will also work on the review.



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Barcelona face Arsenal, Chelsea play PSG again

NYON, Switzerland-- Holders and Spanish league leaders Barcelona will play Premier League leaders Arsenal in the last 16 of the Champions League, 10 years after the sides faced each other in the final, following Monday's draw for the first knockout stage.

Spanish league leaders Barcelona, chasing a sixth title, prevailed 2-1 in the 2006 final at the Stade de France in Paris and also triumphed in the knockout phase in 2010 and 2011.

Chelsea, who are enduring a torrid time in the Premier League, will face French league leaders Paris St Germain in the knockout stages for the third year in succession after the French champions triumphed at the same stage last season and the London club had the upper hand in the quarter-finals the previous year.

Another clash between big guns will feature former winners Juventus and Bayern Munich, while 10-time champions Real Madrid were drawn against AS Roma.

It is the game between the pacesetters in Spain and Arsenal which most catches the eye, however.

"We are certain to see a sporting spectacular," said Barcelona director Albert Soler.

"Arsenal and Barcelona have a similar style of play. The fans will enjoy themselves, we're two sides with a similar understanding of the game. They will be two great matches. We must have maximum respect for Arsenal."

"Barcelona are used to playing under pressure in every sense. But we are the reigning champions and that gives you an edge."

Arsenal club secretary David Miles said: "It is not easy and the one to avoid at this stage, but it is up to us and we will give them a game."

"Messi, Neymar, Suarez... you could go on, but we have our own world class players and I am sure they will be fantastic games in London and in Barcelona."

There is also a familiar feel about the Chelsea v PSG tie.

"There is not much we don't know about Paris," said Chelsea general secretary David Barnard.

"You only know if it's a good draw after the tie. We are ambitious, we have two-

and-a-half months to prepare," PSG sports director Olivier Letang said.

Real Madrid and Roma have also seen a lot of each other in the competition, though not since 2008 when the Italians won 201 home and away in the last 16.

"You have to be very much on your guard. If we see ourselves as favourites things won't go well for us," said Real director Emilio Butragueno.

"We know what can happen if you have 10 poor minutes on a European night."

Juventus could come to regret having blown their finale in the group stage, leaving Manchester City, who will take on Dynamo Kiev, with the better draw

Continued on page 42

Champions League Round of 16 draw

1st leg: Feb 16/17, 23/24		Head-to-head	2nd leg: Mar 8/9, 15/16	
	Gent BEL Did not play Debut	<i>First meeting</i> Last season Best finish		Wolfsburg GER Did not play Group stage 2010
	Roma ITA Group stage Final 1984	W3-D1-L4		Real Madrid ESP Semi-final 10-time winner
	Paris St-Germain FRA Quarter-final Semi-final 1995	W1-D3-L2		Chelsea ENG Last 16 Winner 2012
	Arsenal ENG Last 16 Final 2006	W1-D2-L4		Barcelona ESP Winner 5-time winner
	Juventus ITA Final Winner 1985, 1996	W3-D1-L4		Bayern Munich GER Semi-final 5-time winner
	PSV Eindhoven NED Did not play Winner 1988	W0-D0-L2		Atletico Madrid ESP Quarter-final Final 1974, 2014
	Benfica POR Group stage Winner 1961, 1962	W1-D0-L3		Zenit RUS Group stage Last 16, 2012, 2014
	Dynamo Kyiv UKR Did not play Semi-final 1977, 87, 99	W1-D0-L1		Manchester City ENG Last 16 Last 16, 2014, 2015

QUARTER-FINALS Apr 5/6, 12/13 **SEMI-FINALS** Apr 26/27, May 3/4 **CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL** May 28, San Siro, Milan
Sources: UEFA, Infostrada Sports © GRAPHIC NEWS

McCullum urges NZ to keep up momentum against Sri Lanka

AUSTRALIA-- New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum had challenged his side before the first test against Sri Lanka to continue their momentum from their series in Australia and after their 122-run victory has asked them to do it again.

The New Zealanders lost

the three-match series across the Tasman 2-0 but had improved throughout and were considered unlucky not to have snatched a series draw with victory in the deciding day-night test in Adelaide, which the hosts managed to clinch in a tense three-wicket finish.

Against Sri Lanka at University Oval in Dunedin, with more favourable conditions they showed they could sustain their level of good play as they eye a return series against Steve Smith's side next February.

"It was essential we got the win because we played some excellent cricket," McCullum told reporters in Dunedin. "The thing about Australia was I think we got better as the series went on and this test match we stepped it up another notch."

"The challenge for us for the next three matches over the summer is to keep putting that line in the sand further and further away."

"That's the challenge for us."

What must have been pleasing for McCullum was the fact that Martin Guptill managed to put a poor return against Australia behind him to score 202 runs in the

match, while Tom Latham finally converted a start to notch his first century at home.

Bowlers Doug Bracewell

and Neil Wagner also continued to charge in on a pitch that did not deteriorate through the entire five days

Continued on page 41

Rose's lifetime ban from baseball upheld by MLB

NEW YORK-- All-time hits leader Pete Rose's bid to have his lifetime ban from Major League Baseball overturned was denied by Commissioner Rob Manfred on Monday due in part to his admission that he still bets on baseball.

Rose, who has been ineligible for Hall of Fame consideration since being banned in 1989 for allegedly gambling on games while playing for and managing the Cincinnati Reds, met with Manfred in September to make a case for reinstatement.

In a written decision, Manfred said Rose still bets on baseball, even though gambling got him banned from the sport, and that it would be an "unacceptable risk" to let him back in the game.

"Mr Rose's public and private comments, including his initial admission in 2004, provide me with little confi-

dence that he has a mature understanding of his wrongful conduct, that he has accepted full responsibility for it, or that he understands the damage he has caused," said Manfred.

"I am also not convinced that he has avoided the type of conduct and associations that originally led to his placement on the permanently ineligible list."

Rose, 74, had denied for nearly 15 years that he had bet on baseball, the game's cardinal sin since 1919 when members of the Chicago White Sox conspired to throw the World Series.

He finally admitted in his 2004 autobiography to making baseball wagers when he was Cincinnati's manager but said he never bet against his team.

Manfred said Rose could still participate in ceremonial

Continued on page 40



New York Giants linebacker J.T. Thomas (55) is stiff armed by Miami Dolphins running back Lamar Miller (26) as he scores on a first quarter run at Sun Life Stadium in Florida Monday. Giants won 31-24. (Andrew Innerarity-USA TODAY Sports.)