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FEATURED Q&A

Will Jamaicans Keep Andrew Holness in Power?



Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness is seeking to remain in power as voters go to the polls next week. // File Photo: Jamaica Information Service.

Q Jamaicans are scheduled to head to the polls on Sept. 3 for the country's general election. Prime Minister Andrew Holness hopes to remain in office for a second consecutive term, fending off the opposition People's National Party. How much of a chance do Holness and his Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) have at remaining in power? What are the main factors that will decide the election? What is at stake in the race for Jamaicans, as well as for the country's economy and businesses?

A Daniel Erikson, managing director at Blue Star Strategies: "Prime Minister Andrew Holness' decision to call early elections is intended to capitalize on his existing political capital and high levels of civic approval before the long-term consequences of the Covid-19 crisis become clear. During his first term, poverty levels in Jamaica fell to a 20-year-low, and Holness was credited with creating new jobs in the tourism, construction and business processing sectors. Since the arrival of Covid-19, though, thousands of Jamaicans have lost their jobs or are living on reduced incomes. Peter Phillips has trailed Holness in every opinion poll since Phillips was elected head of the PNP in 2017. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Holness and the JLP have maintained double-digit leads in multiple opinion polls, and Holness' management of the crisis has been viewed very positively. Holness is likely hoping to win another term before a new spike in cases can occur and his management of the disease begins to be viewed less favorably. The winner of the election will face a difficult

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

At Least 11 Killed as Tropical Storm Hits Hispaniola

At least 11 people were killed as Tropical Storm Laura hit the island of Hispaniola. Another storm, Tropical Storm Marco, is heading toward the U.S. Gulf Coast.

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BUSINESS

Prosecutors Accuse Two in Petrobras-Maersk Case

Brazilian prosecutors pressed charges against two people allegedly involved in a scheme to obtain confidential information from Petrobras for the benefit of shipping firm Maersk.

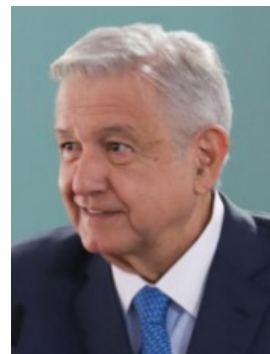
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POLITICAL

López Obrador Denies Graft After Release of Videos

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador denied involvement in corruption after videos emerged of his brother accepting an envelope and brown bag stuffed with cash in 2015.

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López Obrador // File Photo: Mexican Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

At Least 11 Killed as Tropical Storm Laura Slams Hispaniola

At least 11 people were killed in the Dominican Republic and Haiti as Tropical Storm Laura slammed the island of Hispaniola as it tore through the Caribbean, the Associated Press reported today. Laura, one of two active tropical storms in the area, also caused power outages and flooding in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Laura is expected to move along Cuba's southern coast today before entering the Gulf of Mexico and taking aim at the U.S. Gulf Coast. As of 8 a.m. Eastern Time today, U.S. reconnaissance aircraft found Laura moving west-northwest just south of the central coast of Cuba, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center. The storm was located about 125 miles east-southeast of the Cuban island of Cayo Largo, moving west-northwest at 21 miles an hour, with maximum sustained winds of 65 miles an hour, according to the National Hurricane Center. Meantime, the other storm in the area, Tropical Storm Marco, took aim at the U.S. state of Louisiana, where it is expected to hit land at midday today. As of 7 a.m. Central Time today, Marco was located about 85 miles

south-southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River, moving northwest at 10 miles an hour, with maximum sustained winds of 50 miles an hour, according to the National Hurricane Center. Marco had strengthened to a hurricane early Sunday, but it weakened by Sunday night and was downgraded to a tropical storm. Marco could fizzle out while moving parallel to the U.S. Gulf Coast, according to CNN meteorologist Robert Shackelford.

López Obrador Denies Graft After Release of Videos

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has made fighting graft a cornerstone of his administration, on Friday denied involvement in corruption after two videos emerged of his younger brother accepting an envelope and a brown paper bag stuffed with cash in 2015 for López Obrador's political movement, The Wall Street Journal reported. The videos surfaced just a day after graft allegations against three former presidents were made public. In written testimony that was leaked last week, a former chief executive of state oil company Pemex, Emilio Lozoya, who himself faces corruption charges, outlined with extensive details accusations on alleged bribes and corruption

NEWS BRIEFS

Thirteen Killed in Stampede at Peru Disco Flouting Health Orders

Thirteen people were killed in a stampede at a night club in Lima after police raided the venue to enforce the country's lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, officials said Sunday, the Associated Press reported. About 120 people had gathered at the Thomas Restobar Club for a party on Saturday night, and people attempted to escape through the only door at the site, trampling one another, the Interior Ministry said. About 23 people were arrested, and 15 of those tested positive for Covid-19, a health ministry official said.

Colombia's Supreme Court Calls on Uribe to Testify on Massacres

Colombia's Supreme Court has called on former President Álvaro Uribe to testify in a case involving three massacres that happened in the department of Antioquia and the death of a human rights activist during Uribe's time as governor of the department, the Associated Press reported Sunday. The mass killings happened in the late 1990s. The case would examine Uribe's alleged ties to violent paramilitary groups, which Uribe has strongly denied. In the Supreme Court decision, Magistrate César Reyes has asked Uribe and several ex-paramilitaries to appear in court next month.

Panama Extends Ban on Int'l Flights for Additional Month

Panama will continue to ban international flights for one more month due to the coronavirus pandemic, the country's civil aviation authorities said Friday, Reuters reported. "The decision has been made to extend for another 30 days the suspension of arrivals and departures of all international flights," the Civil Aeronautical Authority said in a statement.

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path to achieving economic recovery. In the United States, Jamaica's decision to support Trump's candidate to run the Inter-American Development Bank will sour initial relations with an increasingly likely Biden administration. Jamaica's economic recovery will rely heavily on a rebound in tourism—an industry likely to experience a delayed recovery and which carries risks of new Covid-19 cases. Jamaica's GDP, expected to grow 1.2 percent before the pandemic, is now predicted by the IMF to contract by 5.6 percent this year. Holness has a clear advantage leading up to the election, but the road beyond will be the real challenge."



Carlene J. Edie, professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst: "A Jamaica Labor

Party (JLP) victory against the opposition People's National Party (PNP) in the Sept. 3 general election would be the first time an incumbent government won re-election since 2002. Recent polling suggests that Prime Minister Andrew Holness and the JLP could remain in power but continue the trend begun in 2007 of a narrow seat and popular vote margin of victory. In its campaigns, the JLP touts a record of economic stability and excellent management of the coronavirus

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schemes purportedly directed by former President Enrique Peña Nieto and members of his administration. Peña Nieto has previously denied wrongdoing. Lozoya also mentioned former Presidents Felipe Calderón, who denied the accusations, and Carlos Salinas. On Friday, López Obrador said the release of the videos and an audio recording were a response from his political rivals to the leak of Lozoya's complaint to local media. He said the money his brother received were "contributions" of about \$90,000 to help pay for his political movement's operating expenses. The president added that the videos should be handed over to federal prosecutors for investigation, CNN en Español reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

Prosecutors Accuse Two in Petrobras-Maersk Graft Case

Brazilian prosecutors on Friday pressed charges against two people allegedly involved in a scheme to obtain confidential market information from state oil company Petrobras to benefit Denmark's Maersk, the world's largest shipping firm, Reuters reported. The case is part of the massive Car Wash investigation, which has uncovered corruption throughout multiple countries in more than 70 police operations. Prosecutors allege former Maersk executive Viggo Andersen inflated contract prices with Petrobras and transferred a percentage to then-Maersk commercial representative Wanderley Gandra, who would then act as the alleged scheme's financial operator. Prosecutors allege Gandra sent money to Paulo Roberto Costa, a former Petrobras executive, who in exchange purportedly provided confidential information on Petrobras' shipping needs back to Maersk, Noticias ao Minuto reported. Prosecutors said the scheme led to \$31.7 million in losses for Petrobras. Andersen's lawyer, Paulo Freitas, in a written response said Andersen denied the accusations and that his innocence will be proven. Reuters could not immediately reach Gandra's lawyer. In a statement, Maersk

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

Would Joe Biden Change U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela?

Q **The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has increased sanctions on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government in recent years in an effort to pressure Maduro to step down. Former Vice President Joe Biden, who is seeking to unseat Trump in the November presidential election, has also voiced support for tougher Venezuela-related sanctions and, like the Trump administration, has expressed support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó, whom the United States recognizes as Venezuela's legitimate interim president. But, unlike Trump, Biden has said he will extend Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, to Venezuelans. If Biden is elected president, how would he change U.S. policy on Venezuela? How would Biden's actions on Venezuela affect the South American country and Maduro's hold on it? What influence would Kamala Harris, Biden's running mate, have on U.S. policy toward Venezuela as vice president?**

A **Ryan C. Berg, research fellow in Latin America Studies at the American Enterprise Institute:** "Early in his administration, President Donald Trump elected to pursue an aggressive campaign of sanctions against Nicolás Maduro's government in Venezuela. The country's authoritarian regime and its humanitarian crisis graced his agenda from the earliest days of his presidency, spurred by Oval Office meetings with Venezuelan opposition leaders and their spouses. Joe

said it takes the "allegations very seriously and remains committed to cooperating with the authorities," Reuters reported. Petrobras said it has been cooperating with authorities since 2014, when authorities launched Operation Car Wash, and said it will continue doing so. Costa

Biden, too, has signaled his support for the Venezuelan opposition, particularly interim President Juan Guaidó, and the continuation of a sanctions campaign against Venezuela's criminal regime. Kamala Harris has expressed similar positions on Venezuela and may handle the Latin America profile in a Biden administration, as Biden himself did in the Obama administration. Regardless of who wins in November, U.S. policy on Venezuela must undergo a serious rethink and reboot—not because sanctions have failed to rein in the Maduro regime or curtail the regime's sources of illicit financing, but rather because rigged elections make Maduro's takeover of the National Assembly a near fait accompli. With the opposition boycotting the December elections, Guaidó will likely lose his position of significant international visibility. How will the United States continue to support the Venezuelan opposition if many of them lose their seats in Maduro's phony elections? Will the United States pursue secondary sanctions to continue ratcheting up the pressure on those countries that have assisted Maduro? And how will the United States deal with the flow of migrants from the country and a growing humanitarian crisis in the region writ-large? These challenges and more will confront whoever wins in November."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in Friday's issue of the Advisor.

was arrested in 2014 and was the first of more than 100 people who entered a plea deal with prosecutors, the wire service reported. A judge must now decide whether to open a criminal case against Andersen and Gandra or drop the charges.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 2

pandemic, while the PNP counters that the JLP does not deserve a second term as it is corrupt, scandal-ridden, unable to curb crime and is presiding over a weak economy that continues to inflict heavy burdens on the majority classes. Despite flagrant government corruption, there is a tacit acceptance within the electorate that politicians are not to be trusted. Jamaican 'change' elections are typically decided by swing voters, disaffected by the economic conditions in the country. The upcoming election does not seem to be a high-stakes election for the Jamaican people. The reason may be that both JLP and PNP supporters believe the government is managing the coronavirus crisis well, although many of the country's businesses have closed and employees have been displaced, and the tourism-dependent Jamaican economy has been seriously affected. The population understands that the election may change the government, but it will not solve the problems of crime, corruption or of an economy dependent on North American capitalist economies that are in a coronavirus-induced recession."

A **Richard Bernal, professor of practice at the University of the West Indies:** "Recent polls by a usually reliable pollster indicate that the Andrew Holness-led Jamaica Labor Party has a substantial lead over the Peter Phillips-led People's National Party and is likely to win the majority of seats in the general election. Some have questioned the wisdom of holding an election during the prevailing pandemic, although the date was selected to precede the reopening of schools. The JLP has the advantage of incumbency, thereby automatically getting

media coverage, and it is viewed as having credibly handled the Covid-19 pandemic. The government has experienced several scandals involving serious financial fraud and instances of unethical conduct, but this has not weakened its support because the

“ The public regards corruption as endemic to both political parties.”

— Richard Bernal

public regards corruption as endemic to both political parties. Violence and crime remain serious problems that neither political party is regarded as more effective in controlling. There is no major philosophical difference between the parties that will affect future policy. The major issues ahead are preventing a worsening of the pandemic, which is expected to surge as a result of the social interaction of political campaigning and voting, and inducing and managing a recovery of the economy, which heavily depends on tourism. The challenge is the design and implementation of a continuous careful calibration of the public health requirements of controlling the pandemic with the resumption of normalcy in economic activities. Of particular concern is the revival of tourism, which largely depends on visitors from the United States, where the pandemic continues unabated."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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