



NEWSLETTER

The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

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Nelson's Dockyard - where preparations for Sailing Week 2005 are well under way

Inside

- *PM's Statement on the proposal for new facilities at V C Bird International Airport (page 1)*
- *First woman to act as Prime Minister in Antigua and Barbuda (page 3)*
- *Attorney General condemns bombing of Mansoor family business (page 5)*
- *IMF Executive Director visits Antigua and Barbuda (page 8)*
- *Sail away in Antigua (page 10)*

Digital Photographs by Maurice F. Merchant

High Commissioner's Message



Greetings!

On 13th and 14th January 2005 I, along with my fellow Ambassadors, attended the Marketing Workshop held under the auspices of the Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Harold Lovell at the Curtain Bluff Hotel in Antigua.

The workshop focused on national branding in the tourism sector. *Marketing Destination Antigua and Barbuda as a place to do business.* Our brand goals are to manage Antigua and Barbuda's reputation, changing minds and reshaping opinions; to explain Antigua and Barbuda in a way that sets us apart and to impart a certain aspirational aura about Antigua and Barbuda that says 'come let us inspire you'.

In his presentation, the Minister gave an overview of tourism in Antigua and Barbuda. He stated that there was a 11.7% increase in stayover visitor arrivals from the UK, USA and the Caribbean. 45% increase in cruise visitor arrivals and continuous

growth is projected in this sector to reach 600,000 visitors per year.

The workshop provided a unique opportunity for our overseas offices to develop an integrated approach to the marketing of Antigua and Barbuda, and to advise on the overall development of the industry by sharing views on the status of tourism in Antigua and Barbuda and recommending appropriate actions.

He identified the many challenges facing the tourist industry, namely:

- Airlift
- Infrastructure
- Multi-Stakeholder Approach
- Investment
- Delivery of quality

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer visited the workshop and encouraged the participants to attack the travel market vigorously, outlining that the workshop was vital to ensuring a common approach in marketing the country by the overseas offices. He said that his government is committed to supporting the execution of the action plan formulated and will be working towards addressing the problems affecting the industry.

According to the Prime Minister, Budget 2005 was the first year that substantial funding had been allocated for tourism development and marketing, however, effective planning and execution is required to ensure success in developing Antigua and Barbuda as the best brand in Caribbean Tourism.

The Workshop ended on a positive note with the Minister of Tourism stating - "A boom in the tourism industry will make the streets of our city and villages livelier. This will improve overall market sentiment, stimulate local consumption, boost growth in related sectors and contribute to the creation of wealth. This is indeed an exciting time for tourism and I look forward to all us taking this wonderful and exciting journey."

Dr Carl B. Roberts
High Commissioner

Statement from the Prime Minister on the proposal for new facilities at V C Bird International Airport

While welcoming public interest and comment on the proposal for new facilities at VC Bird International Airport, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, became concerned about the content and sources of a number of public statements by participants in the process now underway.

Following is the Prime Minister's Statement on the issue:

"The Ministry of Civil Aviation is charged with negotiating a draft agreement for a franchise for new facilities at VC Bird International Airport. When completed, that agreement will be considered by the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda.

"I am concerned at the sources and content of a number of public statements by participants in the process now underway.

"I do, however, credit the ensuing public discussions with bringing to light a number of issues that, on the surface, call for investigation.

"The assertion that the Government has no basis for calculating and does not track the airport's revenue and expenditure streams is without foundation.

"The airport's cash flows are routinely computed and factored into the annual budget, as well as into the Ministry of Finance's monthly disbursements.

"Indeed, while portions of the revenue generated by the airport are committed to specific creditors, those revenues are, from time to time, utilized for meeting the monthly public service wage bills.

"I utterly reject the assertion that the financial markets are not prepared to provide funding to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda against the airport's revenue streams.

"The recent Government bond issue to achieve a significant write off and full settlement of the Devcon loan was fully and immediately subscribed.

"ABI is poised to launch a US\$100 Million bond issue on behalf of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

"It is expected that these funds will be fully subscribed on the local, regional and international financial markets.

"The country's improving standing in the international financial community ought not to be dismissed with the facility which participants in the airport bid are demonstrating.

"It is fallacious to describe the proposed airport franchise as the first major investment project to be actioned during the tenure of the Sunshine Government.

"For example, the La Perla Living project, budgeted at well in excess of \$80 million, was launched last year, and is reported to be progressing satisfactorily.

"It is regrettable that participants in the approvals process for the Antigua Airport Group proposal have opted to engage in public lobbying on a matter that is still to be determined by Cabinet.

"Also regrettable is the facility with which a number of persons are using the media for innuendos and charges patently intended to discredit named individuals and organisations that are peripheral to the AAG bid."



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and Mr and Mrs Sung Hee Rhee

Honorary Consul to South Korea pays courtesy call on Prime Minister Spencer

On the 20th January, Antigua and Barbuda's Honorary Consul to South Korea, Mr. Sung Hee Rhee, held discussions with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baldwin Spencer on the Development of a Plan of Action for 2005.

Prime Minister Spencer outlined that his government's foreign policy includes utilising the country's diplomats, and relations with friendly countries to promote the tourism sector and investment opportunities in Antigua and Barbuda.

To that end, Mr. Sung Hee Rhee met the Director of the Industrial Development Board Ms. Gaye Hechme and the Director General of Tourism Ms. Shirlene Nibbs to work out in detail the way forward.

Mr. Sung Hee Rhee also met Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Captain Jurgen Wendler, the Director of Marine Services and Merchant Shipping.



Minister Cort addressing the gathering

\$10M Government-Stanford Alliance for Empowerment of Entrepreneurs commences

On the 19th January, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Dr Errol Cort and a delegation from his Ministry held a meeting with officials of the Stanford Financial Group and the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank to concretize one of the policies outlined in Budget 2005,

which is, to empower entrepreneurs, specifically micro and small business persons in Antigua and Barbuda.

The Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank will be disbursing the \$10 million fund provided by the Stanford Financial Group.

The Minister said that it is the

intention of the government to empower the small businessmen and women in Antigua and Barbuda. "We recognise that small businesses suffer tremendously from many difficulties including their ability to access funds and not having enough security which makes their proposals to banks for assistance not bankable. As a government, we recognise the need to step in and provide a facility that will recognise these deficiencies but never-the-less allow a fair opportunity for small

business persons to thrive in this country," outlined Minister Cort.

"Small micro businesses form a core in the economic sector of this country and therefore the government wishes to ensure that the sector flourishes. Small business persons will be able to access financing through the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank at concessionary rates and on terms that will be much more generous than a normal bankable proposal," Dr. Cort added.

"We will also use this facility to channel those public servants who are desirous of voluntary separation. As a caring government we wish for them to be able to make a reasonable livelihood and thus we will be providing the necessary funding to make that possible," he said.

The funds will provide financing of up to \$50,000 to support micro and small business ventures owned by Antiguan and Barbudans. The Stanford Financial Group will also provide technical support and counselling for this project, which will operate through the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank.

Police investigates early morning bombing of Minister's family business

On the 1st February, the Police launched an investigation into the early morning bombing of the Hitachi Centre Compound on Market Street which houses the Medical Practice and Clinic of newly appointed Minister responsible for Information, Broadcasting and Communications, Dr. Edmond Mansoor.

At around 2:15 am on the said morning police rushed to the scene of an explosion which rocked nearby buildings and was heard for miles on the outskirts of St. John's.

According to Commissioner of Police, Rolston Pompey, the device used in the bombing is a new phenomenon to Antigua and Barbuda because it was apparently packed with hundreds of 2 ½ inch cement nails which destroyed the steel gate entrance of the premises and pierced

the walls and glass showcases of nearby business places.

Police Commissioner Pompey although refusing to link recent attacks on the Mansoor family in the media by known persons sympathetic to another political party in Antigua and Barbuda to the bombing, said that both incidents are being investigated and are being treated separately.

Minister Mansoor has been the subject of numerous talk shows and call in programmes on the island after he quoted a statement from the United Progressive Party Election Manifesto which made reference, unfavourable to some, to the late Prime Minister of the country V.C. Bird Sr. The attacks in the media on Mansoor, who is Antiguan and Barbudan by birth of Middle Eastern parentage, have ranged

from racial comments to being referred to as "Al-Qaeda looking." Mansoor recently filed official complaints about the comments to the police.

Commissioner Pompey said in a statement that the attack was designed to drive fear into persons and his department is not taking the occurrence lightly and will be deploying additional officers to patrol the streets and investigate the matter.

Dr. Edmond Mansoor, who is a medial practitioner, has worked in politics for a number of years and is credited as one of the architects of the campaign strategy which unseated former Prime Minister Lester Bird in the constituency of St. John's Rural East during the March 2004 general elections.



The Antigua and Barbuda delegation meeting with the Chilean Government officials

Antigua and Barbuda and Chile commence negotiations on Agricultural and Language Training Projects

On the 20th January Antigua and Barbuda received a Chilean delegation lead by Ambassador Alfonso Silva. The delegation also included the Executive Director of the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation, Mr. Marcelo Rozas and Arturo Vergara who is an Executive Member of the Agency.

Antigua and Barbuda was represented by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Minister Joanne Massiah, Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture who has special responsibility for Marine Affairs and Food Production and Ambassador Joan H. Underwood, Non-Resident Ambassador to Venezuela and South America. Also present at the meeting were Messrs Lesroy Grant, the Deputy Director of

Agriculture, Astley Joseph, Livestock Officer in the Veterinary Division and Julius Ross from CARDI.

The one-day visit was designed to advance discussions between the two countries about planned collaboration in the areas of agriculture and language training. Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer initiated the discussion last June while attending the European Union-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit in Mexico. Since then, Antigua and Barbuda has submitted five project proposals for consideration by the Chileans.

Based on the preliminary review of these proposals, both countries are optimistic that a mutually beneficial system of technical cooperation can be implemented within the short-term. To this end, both parties agreed that two technicians from Chile – one specializing in agriculture and the other in fisheries – would travel to Antigua in February to evaluate the specific projects and that Chile would host a technical delegation from Antigua later in the year.

Ambassador Silva also took the opportunity to extend an invitation to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer to visit Santiago in the near future.



Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro appointed Antigua and Barbuda's first woman Acting Prime Minister

Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment Dr. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro has become the first woman to be appointed Acting Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda.

On the 20th January 2005, Dr. Quinn Leandro received her Instruments of Appointment from Governor General Sir James Carlisle appointing her to the position in the absence of the Prime Minister.

The Minister received much commendations from all sectors of the society for achieving the distinction of being the first woman to act as Prime Minister. She was entrusted with the position by Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, who left the country to attend an OECS Heads of Government Meeting with the President of the World Bank.

Commenting on her appointment, Dr. Quinn-Leandro said that while she is humbled by the honour the Prime Minister has conferred upon her she sees it as a tribute to the women, young men and women of this nation. "For this I thank Prime Minister Spencer tremendously," she noted.



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer addressing officers of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force

Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force to be upgraded

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has committed his administration towards the transformation of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force (ABDF) into an institution ready to meet the evolving security challenges of the 21st Century.

Prime Minister Spencer made the announcement during a presentation ceremony while honouring members of the ADBF for their contribution over the years. He noted that the time had come for the ABDF to become a more flexible security force.

"My government has therefore approved the transformation of the Infantry battalion of the ABDF into a Marine Unit that will more efficiently address the security concerns of our nation. The Marine Unit would be better trained and equipped to function independently in a maritime environment and would be better poised to support the ABDF Coast Guard in its counter narcotics, counter terrorism and other security related maritime operations," he said.

The Prime Minister added that the boom in the Cruise Tourism Industry has also brought with it an elevated threat to acts of terrorism and outlined that his Government has seen it necessary to mandate the ABDF to provide escort duties for the cruise vessels and security patrols in and around St. John's Harbour, focusing on the security of vessels docked at Heritage Quay.

He said, "In addition, the blossoming Pleasure Craft Industry in English and Falmouth Harbours requires conformity to International Ship and Port Security code standards; therefore, my government in conjunction with the US Military will embark on the construction of a satellite ABDF Coast Guard Base in the said area within the first half of 2005. My government is further committed to establishing a second satellite base in Barbuda, which would address the security concerns and significantly reduce the Coast Guard's response time to the search and rescue needs of Barbuda's Maritime community."

Prime Minister Spencer also paid tribute to the sacrifices in service made by the officers, men and women of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force through their contributions to national and regional security and stability.

Since the establishment of the force in 1981, it has been deployed to hostile overseas missions in Grenada, Haiti and Trinidad and

Tobago. Elements of the force have recently returned from Grenada in the conduct of security, disaster relief and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan.

The ABDF Officers were praised for their involvement in community development through the adoption of schools, its involvement in charitable construction projects, the assistance in the security of schools, its pivotal role in the recent review of the Boys Training School, its participation in the review for the implementation of a National Youth Service and the beautification of some of our landmarks.

Prime Minister Spencer stated that his government is determined to equip the Force for greater interaction and service within the community.

Over twenty-five officers of the ADBF were honoured for their long and distinguished service in the force, outstanding service during Hurricane Lenny, Exercise Tradewinds 2002 and outstanding service through the National Cadet Corps. Members of the Volunteer Unit and Civilians were also honoured.



Colonel Trevor Thomas - Commander of the ABDF being honoured for 27 years of service



Dr Errol Cort, Minister of Finance and the Economy

Minister Cort addresses Heads of State and Government at UN Conference in Mauritius

In a bold and forceful address to Heads of State and Government attending a crucial United Nations conference on the future of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), on the island of Mauritius, Minister of Finance and the Economy, Dr. Errol Cort, challenged the participants to produce outcomes that are "...practical; measurable, implementable and time bound."

Seizing on what he described as a "...unique opportunity to share the concerns of and seek appropriate assistance from the international community for SIDS," Minister Cort identified the economy; the environment; new and existing infrastructure; education; health care; employment; and good governance, as among the most "urgent concerns" of Antigua and Barbuda.

During his well-received address to the Heads, the Minister identified a number of key issues confronting SIDS in general and Antigua and Barbuda in particular. He also provided the

Conference with a list of the concrete actions Antigua and Barbuda's government had taken to address the challenges of sustainable development at the national level. These include: annual public sector budgets based on realistic revenue projections and involving stakeholder consultations; a National Strategic Development Plan that will detail the Government's economic programmes for the period 2005-2010; the establishment of an Investment Authority that will serve as a one-stop-shop for investors; the establishment of an Integrity Commission; a Prevention of Corruption Act; and the establishment of a National Economic and Social Council to promote the goals of economic growth and development, and participation in economic decision-making and social equity.

In highlighting the important contributions of civil society to the achievement of sustainable development of Antigua and Barbuda, The Minister noted that "...[the] government is making every effort to involve [civil society] in all aspects." As an example, he cited current efforts aimed at "...finalizing a National Environmental Management Strategy, which [would require] the government to collaborate with civil society to develop, implement and promote a programme that will ensure the proper management of [the nation's] natural resources"

The United Nations International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is seen by SIDS as an opportunity to present their case to the international community and to seek partnerships and innovative ways to improve their situation. More than 2,000 participants from the islands, their traditional donor partners and other countries, including a number of Heads of State and Government, participated in the meeting, which took place from 10th to 14th January, 2005.

Minister Cort concluded his speech with an expression of condolence from the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, to the government and people of the countries of South East Asia which were affected by the tsunami of December 2004.

Attorney General condemns bombing of Mansoor family business

In a statement, the Attorney General said that it was an intentional calculated criminal act against the Mansoor family and in particular the recently appointed Minister of Information, Broadcasting, Dr. Edmond Mansoor, who recently has come under serious attacks from supporters loyal to the opposition Antigua Labour Party.

The Minister said that to think otherwise would be naïve. "Since the historic victory of the United Progressive Party Government on March 23, 2004, there has undoubtedly been an unrelenting vilification by certain sections of the electronic media, against Dr. Edmond Mansoor and his family. This much is clear. There has definitely been a progressive incitement to "race hate" and violence even at a time when the world soberly commemorates the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the survivors of the Holocaust with a message of tolerance, peace and love," he outlined.

He continued, "Fellow citizens, we cannot appear to go down the road of the 1970's. It is not without some significance that then as now the Antigua Labour Party was in opposition and that then as now ZDK was in their total and manipulative control," he said.

"We have instructed our national security forces to act decisively, taking into account all relevant and surrounding circumstances. I have every confidence that the Police will seek during their investigation to question all those whose words and actions could be linked to this criminal act," the Attorney General concluded.

PM attends LIAT meeting in Barbados

On the 8th January a meeting of regional leaders and members of the Board of LIAT 1974 was convened in Barbados in a bid to once again address the financial woes of the regional carrier.

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, who attended the meeting with Advisor in the Ministry of Communications on matters relating to LIAT, Mr. Brian Challenger, said that his government remains committed to keeping LIAT flying and will continue to lend its support to the restructuring of the carrier.

Prime Minister Spencer added that his government sees LIAT as playing a vital role in the soon to be established CARICOM Single Market and Economy, moving people within a single economic space and as a government they are prepared to play their part and contribute towards making the airline viable.

In October last year the Government of Prime Minister Spencer, through an act of parliament, agreed to inject 5.7 million dollars into the cash strapped airline through a loan of \$17 million from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines will also benefit from the loan facility.

The government of Antigua and Barbuda owns 20.3 percent shares in LIAT, followed by Barbados with 24.4 percent, St. Vincent and the Grenadines with 17.6 per cent and BWIA with 13 per cent. Private shareholders, local banks, LIAT employees and the private sector control the remaining shares.



Nation moving forward in Education

On 12th January Minister of Education Bertrand Joseph and Minister of Agriculture Charlesworth Samuel met members of the Stanford Financial Group to discuss Investment of \$25M that was pledged to the advancement of education in Antigua and Barbuda.

The groups' vision, according to Minister Joseph, is set towards Secondary education and therefore everyone can look forward to the construction of a state-of-the-art secondary school.

The school will be built on a large portion of land and consideration will be taken into account for an agricultural as well as an athletic component. There will also be language arts as well as computer labs and all other modern facilities.

Although the site has not been finalized the Minister said that the new secondary school will ease the overcrowding situation in other secondary learning institutions. For the first time all the views of stakeholders in education will be used to conceptualize this new secondary school.

Minister Joseph continued that this learning institution will be one of excellence, not in terms of architecture, but what will be offered.

Stanford keeps his word to match funds for new library

On 12th January a cheque totalling EC\$101,970 was presented to the Minister of Education on behalf of R. Allen



(left to right) Keva Margetson of Stanford financial Group, Minister of Education, Bertrand Joseph and Dr Austin Josiah, Vice Chair of National Library Building Committee

Stanford and his Group. The cheque is Stanford's matching contribution to funds raised between the time of his original presentation of \$1M to the library fund and the 15th December 2004.

"Mr. Allen Stanford has kept his word". That was the sentiment of Minister Bertrand Joseph in accepting the cheque.

This latest contribution by Mr. Stanford according to the Minister will go a long way towards making the library become a realization, one that will educate the people of Antigua and Barbuda as well as empower them.

Dr Austin Josiah, Vice Chair of the National Library Building Committee accepted the cheque on its behalf.

Dr. Josiah also noted that the Hadeed's have pledged \$1.3M to complete the payment on furniture for the building.

The steel frame structure of the building is underway and the library is expected to be completed within the next nine months.

Health Care Providers attend HIV/AIDS Nutritional Workshop

From the 24th to 28th January Health Care providers in Antigua and Barbuda attended a Nutrition and HIV/AIDS Workshop at the City View Hotel in St. John's.

The workshop, conducted by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI) in collaboration with the AIDS Secretariat, was aimed at instructing the participants on the use of a nutritional manual in the assessment and care of HIV-infected individuals.

Health Minister John Maginley, who declared the workshop open, said that he hoped the participants would use the opportunity to become aware of their personal views and feelings of stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS as negative attitudes. "Discrimination," he said, "can create one of the greatest barriers to effective management."

Minister Maginley added that the AIDS epidemic continues to present huge challenges for our nation, as it does for the entire world. While efforts to prevent new cases of HIV are being intensified, treatment strategies must keep pace with the most up-to-date scientific information.

CFNI Dietician and Nutritionist, June Holdip said the workshop would assist the health care providers to handle nutritional problems that they may encounter from time to time while dealing with persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

AIDS Programme Manager, Janet Weston said that healthcare workers should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to guide persons living with HIV/AIDS on how to

make the best choices for healthy eating and living.

Healthy eating patterns, she added, can help to boost the immune system and prevent or correct nutrition related problems, thus helping to delay the progression from HIV infection to full-blown AIDS.

During the four-day workshop, participants covered topics such as nutritional implications, inter-disciplinary health care, nutritional care process, anti-retroviral therapy, pregnancy and mother-to-child-transmission, HIV infected children and case studies.

HIV/AIDS patients in Antigua and Barbuda receive free anti-retroviral drugs

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Clinton Foundation have collaborated to provide anti-retroviral drugs to persons who are affected with HIV/AIDS.

Minister of Health John Maginley made the announcement while noting that the new initiative is a major step in the development of the national AIDS programme.

The Health Minister also added that not only will the drugs be available without direct cost to individuals but a comprehensive programme with supervision by Clinical Coordinator Dr Prince Ramsey and collaboration with Nutrition and other healthcare personnel will ensure that the best possible standard of care is provided to persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Already the programme to prevent mother to child transmission has



*Minister of Health, Sports and Youth Affairs
John Maginley*

seen positive results, according to Minister Maginley. He said that so far no babies born to HIV positive mothers, who have been treated appropriately have been diagnosed with HIV.

Minister Maginley also noted that mothers are also provided with infant formula for up to six months by the AIDS Secretariat to help reduce any hardships on the affected families and to enable them to adhere to recommendations for reducing mother to child transmission of the virus by avoiding breastfeeding.

The Minister said that the training of healthcare workers in the areas of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS is also well timed with the establishment of voluntary counseling and testing services at the various centres across the island.

Studies have shown that persons living with HIV/AIDS improve their quality of life tremendously when emphasis is placed on proper nutrition as part of a healthy life style.

Healthcare workers involved in providing voluntary counselling and testing services are in a key position to include in their counselling the importance of good nutrition from the earliest stage of the disease process.

**By Teste Thomas
PRO Ministry of Health**

IMF Executive Director visit Antigua and Barbuda

On the 26th January the International Monetary Fund IMF Executive Director for Antigua and Barbuda, Mr Kevin Lynch, along with his assistant, Richard Campbell, paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Dr Errol Cort, and senior officials in the Ministry.

During the meeting discussions focused on the Government's progress in a number of areas, including institutional strengthening, taxation and debt management.

Mr. Lynch was very positive with regard to the steps that have been taken to date, and the plans which were outlined by the Minister in Budget 2005.

The Executive Director, who incidentally was former Deputy Finance Minister in the government of Canada, further undertook to use his influence to assist the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in securing whatever support is necessary to ensure that the country is successful in its effort to overcome its current economic and fiscal challenges.

Also attending the meeting was Mr. David O. Robinson, team leader of the IMF's last Article IV mission to Antigua and Barbuda in September 2004.

Mr. Robinson expressed satisfaction with plans tabled by the Minister and hailed the Government's policy of openness and transparency in financial matters, as a new paradigm with respect to fiscal reform.



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer presenting trophy to the 2004 winner

National Home and Business Lighting Competition to be renamed

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has announced that the National Home and Business Lighting Competition should be renamed the Festival of Lights.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the awards ceremony for the 2004 Lighting competition which has been held for the past 8 years under the auspices of the Prime Minister.

"Our annual lighting competition and the wider brightening of the night are fitting for a nation with the sun emblazoned on its flag. The sun is also proclaimed on the Licence Plates of the motor vehicles on our roads as one of our country's recognised natural attributes. In this context, I invite the organising committee to consider renaming the annual Lighting competition the **"FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS,"** he said.

"This would be a natural evolution. After all, what happens when we light up for Christmas every year is truly a **"FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS"**. Antigua and Barbuda's **"FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS"** can span our Independence and Homecoming Festivals, through Christmas, into Easter. This would embrace the winter tourist season and enhance the experience visitors enjoy," Prime Minister Spencer outlined.

The Prime Minister also complimented the organizers of the 2004 Lighting Competition for the enlightened change and for their service to the community in organising the competition and for arranging the awards event.



Participants at the Awards Ceremony



"Theirs was a job well done. I thank them. Tonight, the spotlight properly falls on the winners of the National Home and Business Lighting Festival. Tonight's recipients are judged to have been most successful in making our sunshine nation brighter with their creative use of manufactured light," he said

Prime Minister Spencer congratulated the recipients and those who made the extra effort in entering the Lighting Competition. The individuals who conceived and developed the event were also commended.

The 2004 competition was won by Donna Francis from the North Zone who won cash prizes totalling EC\$5000 and a day pass for two at the Jolly Beach Resort. The winner of the Business Lighting Competition was Shouls Toys/Gifts and Housewares.

Prime Minister Spencer leads delegation to First China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum

On 1st February Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer headed Antigua and Barbuda's delegation to the First China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum in Kingston Jamaica.

Included in the delegation to the four day forum which will saw leaders of the region interacting with Vice-President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Mr. Zeng Quinghong were Tourism Minister Harold Lovell, Ambassador to the PRC David Shoul, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Colin Murdoch and Marketing Manager of the Industrial Development Board Gaye Hechme.

The Prime Minister who recently paid a State Visit to the People's Republic of China and held discussions with Vice-President Zeng will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the PRC on the facilitation of Group Travel by Chinese Tourists to Antigua and Barbuda.

Prime Minister Spencer said that the Business Conference of the Forum presented an opportunity for companies in Antigua and Barbuda to market their products to the Chinese officials and develop business links with the various Chinese and Caribbean companies which are expected to improve the manufacturing and service sectors in the region.

"We've had a long and beneficial relationship with the Chinese Government and this Forum has opened avenues for my government to work closer with the PRC Government. The seminars on Trade, Human Resources Agriculture, Fisheries and Technology and Tourism has provided an avenue for us to attract investments from China," outlined Prime Minister Spencer.

During the Inter-governmental exchange which made possible government to government exchanges; Tourism Minister Harold Lovell presented a paper on Human Resource Development in the Caribbean.

The Trade Forum and Fair, in which a number of Antiguan and Barbudan companies participated, greatly enhanced the level of technical and economic cooperation Antigua and Barbuda has already received from the Chinese.

The Antigua and Barbuda Cruise Tourism Association, Town House Furnishings, Antigua Home and Garden Discount Centre, Bike Plus, Little B & J Fabric Store, Sight Sound and Time Gift Shop, Hendersons Limited and Eagle Garment Factory are among the Antiguan and Barbudan companies that participated in the Trade Forum and Fair.

Ministers of Government participate in CARICAD Retreat

On the 29th and 30th January 2005 the CARIBBEAN Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD) facilitated a Retreat for Government Ministers at the Jolly Beach Resort.

The CARICAD team expounded on the roles of Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Chief Establishment Officers, Financial Secretaries and Cabinet Secretaries within the Westminster-Whitehall system of parliamentary democracy practiced in Antigua and Barbuda.

The retreat also assessed the role of the Public Service Commission and the proposed merger of established and non-established workers into one public service. A special committee has been charged with producing a detailed assessment of senior public sector appointments and formulating a policy document to be presented to Cabinet.

The committee comprises Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs Justin Simon, Dr. Edmond Mansoor, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Clarvis Joseph and Celia Roberts.

Minister of Labour and Public Administration, Dr Quinn-Leandro, will chair the committee.

The team will receive technical and research support from CARICAD.

A final retreat bringing together Ministers and Permanent Secretaries will be held in the first quarter of this year.





Sailing Week 2004

BARBUDA

Beautiful Barbuda only a boat ride away from Antigua

Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office is pleased to announce the launch of a new ferry service between the two islands.

Sail away in Antigua

Antigua will soon be preparing for its 38th annual Sailing Week, when the world's fastest and most attractive yachts congregate for racing and a series of social events.

Sailing Week will take place in various stunning locations around the island and is thoroughly enjoyable for both sailors and spectators. With a wide range of activities and events together with Antigua's idyllic climate and some of the best beaches in the world, the international regatta is indeed a very entertaining event.

2005 Sailing Week promises to be the most spectacular with the growth of the international sailing community and even more beautiful luxury sailboats. Antigua Sailing Week is now the largest regatta in the Caribbean and one of the top three regattas in the world.

The festivities begin with the Cavalier Rum Beach Party at Pigeon Point on Thursday 21st April, with the official start of Sailing Week commencing on the Sunday and closing with The Lord Nelson's Ball on 30th April.

Sailing Week 2005 officially begins 24th April and ends 30th April 2005.

Previously the only way for visitors to travel was a short 20-min flight. The new Antigua - Barbuda Ferry takes 1hr 30mins (check-in 1hr prior to departure) and costs EC\$135 (approximately £28) return. It presents an excellent opportunity for visitors to view the spectacular coastlines of the two islands.

Surrounded by crystal clear waters, Antigua's sister island Barbuda, is sparsely populated and less frequently visited than any other island in the region. Barbuda boasts one of the most stunning secluded pink sand beaches in the world, a rich and varied wildlife and beautiful coral reefs. Barbuda is the perfect destination for those yearning for a peaceful, relaxing retreat.

The ferry, which began service in December 2004, departs at 8.30am on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from Heritage Quay, St John's and arrives at River Dock, Barbuda. The return service from Barbuda departs at 3.15pm.

On Tuesdays and Fridays the service departs Antigua at 4.45pm and returns the following day from Barbuda at 6.30am.



English Harbour Rum

Anyone wishing to purchase English Harbour Rum should contact the London Distributors Petal Enterprise at
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