



NEWSLETTER

The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

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Jolly Beach

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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the 97th Issue of the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission Newsletter.

This issue contains two very important features that I am sure is of interest to all Antiguan and Barbudans:

Firstly, I am particularly pleased to have accompanied the Minister of Tourism, Harold Lovell to the ITB 2005 in Berlin, Germany where Antigua and Barbuda was energetically marketed from 11th to 15th March 2005.

There were some 10,000 exhibitors from 180 countries and regions, the full complement of global tourism at all levels of tour operators, booking systems, travel destinations, airlines, hotels and rental cars were well represented.

Minister Lovell focused on closing the Condor Airline deal and was successful in this endeavour. I am happy to say that Condor Airlines will resume a weekly non-stop service on Mondays from Frankfurt, Germany to Antigua with effect from 7th November 2005. The government recently serviced an outstanding debt owed to the airline company during their arrangement with the former administration.

Secondly, every Antiguan and Barbudan can feel a sense of pride that we have taken on the mighty USA and won.

On the 7th April, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Appellate Body upheld a ruling in favour of Antigua and Barbuda in the trade dispute with the US regarding cross-border online gaming.

This is a landmark victory for Antigua and Barbuda as the first and smallest WTO member to defeat the United States, the largest member, in this highly respected international trade court.

Finance and Economy Minister, Dr Errol Cort, stated during a press conference, that after going through the Findings and Conclusions of the 127-page Report, he is happy to announce that Antigua and Barbuda has been successful in the appellate case in respect to all the major points of the appeal.

Dr. Cort said that the report reveals that the US was found to be discriminating against Antigua and Barbuda in particular, in terms of accessing its market and as such, the Appellate Body's report concludes by asking the US to bring its laws into conformity based on the findings.

Minister Cort also said that the next step will be for the report to be adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body at a meeting to be held on 19th April 2005. Following which Antigua and Barbuda will then meet with the United States to work out the necessary modalities to ensure that compliance is met with the ruling as found by the WTO.

The Finance Minister added that once they have worked out the modalities with the United States, Antigua and Barbuda will be able to access the US market which means "we can expect to see a very vibrant and growing Internet Gaming sector, generating employment opportunities for a number of young people in Antigua and Barbuda."

The Minister also said that with the Appellate Body of the WTO ruling in favour of Antigua and Barbuda, it had set legal precedence in a number of areas as it pertains to the future of Internet Gaming worldwide.

Dr Carl W. Roberts
High Commissioner



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer with Special Envoy Professor Dr. Tono Eitel

PM Spencer discusses UN Reform with German Special Envoy

On the 29th March Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer received a special envoy of the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany. Special Envoy Professor Dr. Tono Eitel lobbied on behalf of Germany regarding United Nations reform.

The UN General Assembly will debate the issue of United Nations reform during this year.

Special Envoy Eitel spoke of the power of the G77 group, which, because of their numerical superiority, has great influence on the issue of reform. He also spoke of the difficulty of reaching consensus in New York at the United Nations Headquarters because the positions are so far apart. He pointed out that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan would like to see a decision before September of this year.

During the discussion, Prime Minister Spencer stressed the need for UN reform, as the world has changed significantly since the establishment of the UN and the body needs to reflect modern realities. The Prime Minister pointed out that CARICOM was seeking to achieve consensus on the issue.

Special Envoy Eitel, who was accompanied by Germany's Deputy Head of Division-United Nations Division Dr. Jur Ingo Winkelmann, spoke of the various models for reform proposed by the UN High Level Panel's Report's Report.

Antigua and Barbuda UN Permanent Representative Dr. John Ashe is part of a core group of CARICOM member states and a core group of development countries within the Group of G77 and China which will providing options for the consideration of the larger groupings.

Prime Minister Spencer during the discussion with the German Envoy was praised for his speech delivered to the United Nations General Assembly last September in New York.

House of Representatives passes Income Tax Legislation

On the 24th March the House of Representatives passed the Personal Income Tax Act, 2005, which will see the re-introduction of the tax in Antigua and Barbuda with effect from April 1.

The House also passed the Income Tax Amendment Act, 2005 and the Revenue Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 2005.

The Personal Income Tax legislation makes provision for the imposition of personal income tax on the income of individuals, with effect from April 1, 2005 and for this purpose, to prescribe the rates of tax, relating to employment income, income derived from self-employment and income from other sources.

It also seeks to provide for the method of determining ultimate tax liability, the administration, collection and enforcement of the tax and to create offences and penalties for the contravention of the provisions of the Act as well as to make minor consequential amendments to the Inland Revenue Administration Act.

The Amendments made to the Income Tax Act, among other things, call for the removal of the 2% monthly final tax and lowers the consumption tax paid by incorporated companies from 35% to 30%.

The passage of the Revenue Miscellaneous Provisions Act supports a number of proposals made in the government's Budget Statement of 30th November 2004.

Among the provisions of the Act are the repealing of a 1% levy on foreign currency transactions, the abolition of stamp duty of 3% on loans to non-citizens and the abolition of the 10% duty on entertainment by persons who are citizens of Antigua and Barbuda and CARICOM.

Government to rapidly develop the nation's Human Capital on a platform of excellence

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has devised a strategy for preparing the country for a quantum leap to growth and prosperity and to a secure future.

The Prime Minister revealed his government's plans during a national broadcast marking the first anniversary of his administration in office. He noted that the best strategy for success and survival is the rapid development of the country's human capital on a Platform of Excellence.

"What we lack in size, scale, and numbers, we must replace with the quality of the education and the calibre of the skills with which we must equip the Antiguan and Barbudan people. I propose, therefore, that we mobilise all our resources, all our sectors, in constructing a Platform of Excellence as this country's key strategy to a quantum leap forward," Prime Minister Spencer noted.

He said that the National Economic and Social Council will be a key catalyst in the mission which will rapidly equip the population with the knowledge skills that are critical to success in the 21st Century. It was outlined that from the Platform of Excellence, every child must be imbued with a focus on achievement; every adult with a focus on learning and training and every worker with a focus on productivity.

"From this Platform of Excellence, every person must accept the need for responsibility as an essential obligation of citizenship. From this Platform of Excellence, we must achieve the dramatic enhancement of our human capital that will be fundamental to success in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy," the Prime Minister pointed out.

It was also stated that the enhancement of the country's human capital will be fundamental to succeeding in the Free Trade Area of the Americas and to competing in the global village, which is now a single world economy.

He said that although the challenges are formidable, his government has no option but to set as its primary national objective for development, the swift transformation of Antigua and Barbuda into a knowledge based intelligent Nation.

"It will take a Revolution in Education to transform Antigua and Barbuda into an intelligent Nation, and a knowledge based society. We identified this as a key national objective in "Agenda for Change," the United Progressive Party's election manifesto. I see it as Job Number One for the second year of Government in the Sunshine that we make a quantum leap to a knowledge based society in an intelligent nation," he said.

Prime Minister Spencer said that the job can be done in partnership with civil society similar to the one formed with Antiguan investor R. Allen Stanford which will see the construction of a \$25 million dollar higher education complex in Antigua and Barbuda.

He stated that the partnerships must aim at upgrading, expanding and establishing new education and training systems and facilities which will not only embrace the young people of the nation, but all in the nation, in a cycle of lifelong learning.

"Incidental to the major areas of the revolution in education, an immediate and realistic target is that by the end of this year, every school in Antigua and Barbuda should be connected to the Internet. This is a realistic target. As a component of the revolution in education, we have to bring back the brains that fled Antigua and Barbuda to other lands. We need to attract them to return home to help in the reconstruction of our nation," Prime Minister Spencer concluded.

Antigua and Barbuda discusses Information Technology assistance with India

Information technology and IT management were the key areas of discussion between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Indian High Commissioner His Excellency Avinash C. Gupta when he made an official visit Antigua and Barbuda.

High Commissioner Gupta met Minister responsible for Information, Dr. Edmond Mansoor and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Colin Murdoch and a wide range of areas of cooperation were discussed. The High Commissioner also held extensive discussions with Acting Prime Minister Wilmoth Daniel.

During the discussions it was outlined that India is prepared to offer continued assistance to Antigua and Barbuda in the areas of information technology training.

Four nationals have successfully completed courses of



Indian High Commissioner Avinash C. Gupta holding discussions with then Acting Prime Minister Wilmoth Daniel and Ambassador Colin Murdoch at the Prime Minister's Office

training in various IT areas in India and have already returned to the public service with two remaining in India still undergoing training in IT.

It was agreed that ten additional persons will be sent to India for training this year in varying areas of Information Communication Technology. Talks were also held on

attracting consultants to the country in Information Technology Security, Software Engineering and Database and consultants to formulate policies, legislation and regulation to address telecommunications and broadcasting convergence, the impact of new technologies and e-commerce issues.

Further discussions were also held on training opportunities for media personnel at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is committed to expanding its technology platforms including all aspects of e-government and is actively considering the issue of connectivity to the information highway, which it believes will provide major economic opportunity.



UN Habitat officials visit Antigua and Barbuda

On the 11th March a team of officials from United Nations (UN) Habitat concluded an official visit to Antigua and Barbuda.

The visit was a follow up to an initial conversation by UN Officials and the Finance and Economy Minister, Dr. Errol Cort during the UN Small Island Developing States Conference in Mauritius earlier this year.

UN Habitat programme is geared towards constructing homes for low/middle income earners thereby eliminating slums in certain parts of a country.

The team, which held discussions with a number of Government and private sector officials also visited several areas such as Point, Grays Farm and Clarehall where they conducted brief interviews on housing and finance.

On Thursday 10th March, UN Habitat staff members, David Franklyn and Dinesh Mehta delivered a preliminary report to Director of Community Development, Judy Labadie; Director of the National Office of Disaster Services, Patricia Julian; Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing, Culture & Social Transformation, Vernessa Matthew and Social Development Policy Coordinator, Almira Henry.

Should the Government give its 'blessing' to the project, the UN

Habitat officials will prepare a project proposal and once the grant is given, work will commence immediately.

The report to government outlined a number of ways the project can be set up, suitable housing structures and how cost can be reduced for persons earning a low income who wish to own their home.

In the meantime, a Needs Assessment Study for the country is being planned. The evaluation will, among others, seek to acquire the number of low income housing needed and the type of housing that is preferred.

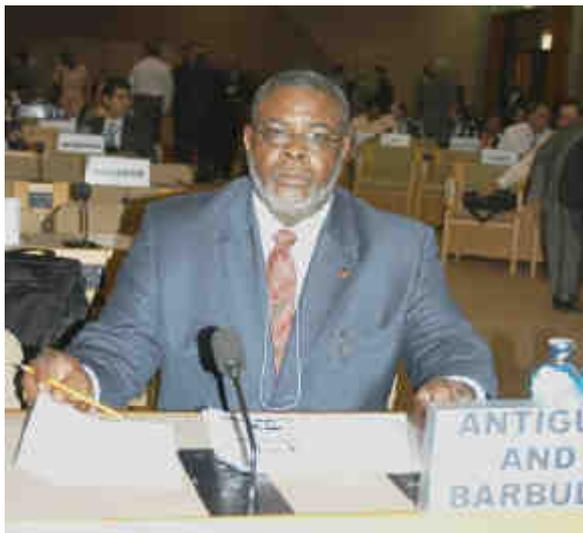
The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is expected to organize the survey and the UN Officials have pledged to provide technical assistance when and where necessary.

Antigua and Barbuda is member of the governing body of the United Nations Human Settlements Organisation (UN-HABITAT)

At its twentieth Session held in Nairobi, Kenya from 4th to 8th April Antigua and Barbuda became a member of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Antigua and Barbuda is represented on the UN-HABITAT Governing Council by the Minister of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Hilson Baptiste, who was installed as the Deputy Chairman for a period of two years.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. "Every two years, UN-HABITAT's work and relationships with its partners are examined in detail by a Governing Council composed of 58 member states. It is a high-level forum of governments represented at the ministerial level during which policy guidelines and the organisation's budget are established for the next two-year period," Minister Baptiste explained.

UN-HABITAT runs two major worldwide campaigns – the *Global Campaign on Urban Governance*, and the *Global Campaign for Secure Tenure*. Through these campaigns and by other means, the agency focuses on a range of issues and special projects which it helps implement. These include a joint UN-HABITAT/World Bank slum upgrading initiative called the *Cities*



Minister of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Hilson Baptiste attending the Conference in Nairobi, Kenya

Alliance, promoting effective housing development policies and strategies.

"By becoming a member of the Governing Council my government hopes to address some of our own developmental issues by tapping into these and other programmes of UN-HABITAT such as its *Safer Cities Programme*, which, among other things, helps fight crime, undertakes research and monitoring of urban economic development, employment, poverty reduction, municipal and housing finance systems, and urban investment. It also helps strengthen rural-urban linkages, and infrastructure development and public service delivery," the Minister clarified.

Among some of the benefits of membership the Minister cited were UN-HABITAT's 154 technical programmes and projects in a number of countries around the world, such as, the fact that the agency's operational activities is intended to help governments create policies and strategies aimed at strengthening a self-reliant management capacity at both national and local levels, its focus on promoting shelter for all, improving urban governance, reducing urban poverty, improving the living environment and managing disaster mitigation and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Committee set up to formulate guidelines for Senior Citizens' Homes

A working committee has been set up to formulate guidelines for persons operating senior citizens homes.

This was the major decision coming out of a meeting with Minister of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Hilson Baptiste and owners and coordinators of senior citizens homes on Wednesday 9th March 2005.

The committee comprises Heather Lopez, Wonda Kendell, Carlstein Quinland, Jeanie Jeffrey, Bernita Simon, Marilyn Simon and Lorna Timothy. guidelines can be taken to Parliament.

During the meeting, a rough draft of a list of requirements for persons operating senior citizens homes was distributed. Minister Baptiste stressed that these guidelines are not written in concrete and the committee can make changes where necessary, as he wants a collective approach to solving the problems.

The Minister thanked those who attended for their dedicated service over the years and said he was impressed with a number of the facilities he had seen.

He said, "You have to be commended for the energies you have put into this over the years. What we are also saying is that you have to come together to carry it a step further and Government will be responsible to help."

Minister Baptiste further outlined that senior citizens cannot be used during an election and then dropped back at their respective homes or centres and not cared for. He said that this practice is wrong and he would not encourage it.

Approximately 30 persons attended the meeting, which was chaired by Minister Baptiste and assisted by Permanent Secretary, Vernessa Matthew and Social Development Policy Coordinator, Almira Henry.

Other matters discussed were the attachment of dieticians and/or nutritionists to the homes to ensure correct meal preparation, adequate bathroom and resting facilities and trained/qualified persons on staff to care for the patients.

Minister Baptiste called the meeting for a number of reasons, including garnering the views of persons involved in the care of the elderly, while at the same time listening to their concerns and sharing his Ministry's plans for the development of these institutions. Baptiste said such meetings were necessary and partly fulfils his Ministry's motto, which is, *"The Social Consciousness of Antigua and Barbuda."*

Antigua and Barbuda urged to strengthen ties with Sweden

Ambassador Designate of Sweden to Antigua and Barbuda has called upon the country to develop stronger relations with Sweden.

Ambassador Sten Ask during a courtesy call on Prime Minister Spencer outlined that Sweden has been ranked as number one in the world for Information Technology and he believes the nation can benefit in this avenue.



(l to r) Senior Ambassador Sir Ramez Hadeed, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, Ambassador Ask and Mrs Ask

Prime Minister Spencer noted that his government is aiming at integrating and adopting state-of-the-art information and communications technologies in all spheres of each individual's life, in education, health, production, commerce, services, governance systems, law enforcement, entertainment and social interactions. He said that Information Technology and telecommunications would be an ideal area for cooperation between Antigua and Barbuda and Sweden.

The Prime Minister explained several aspects of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) to Ambassador Ask, including the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ).

Ambassador Ask spoke on the issue of reform of the United Nations which will take place this year, and he informed Prime Minister Spencer that Sweden will assume the Presidency of the United Nations later this year

European Union to provide Macro Economists to Antigua and Barbuda

The government is in the process of obtaining technical support from the European Union to boost its macro-economic policy formulation capacity within the Ministry of Finance and Economy.

The technical assistance is another tangible EU support to Antigua and Barbuda particularly to strengthen capacity within the Ministry of Finance and Economy as the government adopts new fiscal stabilization strategies.

The consultant will be expected to provide advice on macro-economic issues, particularly in the area of fiscal reform management, while at the same time, facilitating the development of

the capacity of the Economic Policy and Planning Unit of the Ministry to undertake macro-economic analysis, monitoring and evaluation and forecasting.

Provision of the technical assistance follows a formal request to the EU by Minister of Finance and The Economy Dr. Errol Cort for support in the area of macroeconomic policy formulation and debt expertise. "I am delighted that we will soon have the Macro-Economist, to strengthen the technical capacity within the Ministry. We are grateful that the EU is partnering with the government in tackling our fiscal difficulties", Dr. Cort declared.

Antigua and Barbuda to issue machine-readable passports in CARICOM format by mid-year

Antigua and Barbuda will commence issuing new, machine-readable passports utilizing the common CARICOM format by mid-year 2005. The passports will feature the CARICOM insignia, the Antigua and Barbuda Coat of Arms and the country's name.

The passports, which will meet the highest international security standards, will be issued in the colours of

dark-blue for citizens, green for government officials and red for diplomats. This is in keeping with the CARICOM format.

The suppliers of the new Antigua and Barbuda passports are confident that security devices encrypted in the new document will make it virtually impossible to forge them. Machine-readable passports, which consist of two lines of letters, numbers and chevrons printed at the bottom of the personal information page, allow data in the passport to be scanned automatically by a machine.

Victory to Antigua and Barbuda in WTO appeal

Excerpted from the Antigua Sun

Antigua and Barbuda overcame the US to win a favourable ruling from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the cross-border gaming dispute that has been ongoing for well over a year.

This is the second victory over the US, with Antigua and Barbuda succeeding in the WTO Dispute Panel proceedings last year. The US appealed the ruling, but failed to find favour with the WTO Appellate Body.

Speaking at a press conference at the Ministry of Finance, a pleased but restrained Dr. Cort explained that in the end, the US legal team was unable to convince the Appellate Body that the Wire Act, the Illegal Gambling Business Act and the Travel Act did not discriminate against Antigua and Barbuda in the area of Internet gaming.

These US laws, according to the Minister of Finance, were created on moralistic grounds "to protect the US public morals and maintain public order," but "the US was not able to demonstrate that it acted in a manner

which did not discriminate against other persons coming into its market."

Reading an extract from the "Finds and Conclusions" of the 127-page report which was handed to Antiguan officials early on the morning of 7th April, Dr. Cort said, "The Appellate Body recommends that the Dispute Settlement Body request the United States to bring its measures, found in this report and in the panel report as modified by this report, to be inconsistent with the General Agreement on Trade and Services into conformity with its obligations under that agreement. So therefore the Appellate Body is asking the US to bring its laws into conformity based on the findings."

The next step will be the adoption of the report at the dispute settlement body at a meeting slated for 19 April.

"Once the report has been adopted Antigua and Barbuda will then meet with the US to work out the necessary modalities to ensure that compliance is met with the ruling as found by the Appellate Body of the WTO," the Minister said.

Dr. Cort noted that the ruling clearly showed that a small island state

was able to "successfully challenge a giant like the US. "It says to all of us that this rules-based system is working and we commend the WTO in respect of the rules-based system of dispute resolution," he said.

Dr. Cort predicted that the ruling would help to jump-start the industry into a "very vibrant and growing Internet gaming sector." He further indicated that there was "strong interest" received from gaming companies to set up business in this jurisdiction.

"The immediate implication is that all those young persons out there in the community who may wish to be employed will find employment because we anticipate that this sector will be growing in leaps and bounds."

Before the advent of the US laws, the sector employed over 3,000 people, but it has dwindled to about 300. When asked if he had heard a response from the US or the other countries that had participated in the hearing as third parties, Dr. Cort said he had not received official word from them from either group, but reiterated that "we have won and we will continue our friendship (with the US), nevertheless this victory must be adhered to and the US must abide by it."

NATIONALS' CORNER
(News of Antiguans and Barbudans living in the United Kingdom)

Antiguan living in England named Chair of IMB at new prison

Antiguan Cliff Walker has been named Chair of the Board of Independent Monitors (IMB) at the new Prison which opened in March 2005.

The Role of the IMB is to (monitor) take an independent view of the standards of treatment of those who the courts sentence for periods of imprisonment.

Mr Walker is very active in community affairs in the UK, both the general community and the Caribbean group. He is a local Magistrate and also a Deputy to the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire where he lives.

Mr Walker regularly visits Antigua and on one of his visits, in 2003, visited the Prison. He has also been involved with the Boys' Training School and for some years provided them with assistance.

He will be visiting Antigua during the months of April and May, and hopes to be able to once again visit the Prison and the Boys' Training School.

PM Spencer meets FAO regional representative

On the 29th March the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Sub-Regional Representative Ambassador Barbara Graham presented her credentials to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer.

In welcoming Ms. Graham, Prime Minister Spencer noted the long

working relationship between the FAO and Antigua and Barbuda; and the involvement of the FAO in several projects in the agricultural sector.

Ms. Graham thanked Prime Minister Spencer for receiving her and brought special greetings from the FAO Director General Dr. Jacques Diouf. She spoke of several of the projects in which the FAO was involved in Antigua and Barbuda, including greenhouses, water and rural infrastructure. The FAO Regional Representative also indicated that her organization would work more closely with regional bodies such as CARDI, IICA and the CARICOM Secretariat in the development of Agriculture in the region.

During the discussions Prime Minister Spencer referred to the outstanding arrears owed by Antigua and Barbuda to the FAO and indicated that his government would address the issue shortly. He also spoke of making World Food Day on October 16 a grand national affair.

He also briefed her on the proposed School Feeding Programme and on the possible future development of a viable and thriving cotton industry in Antigua and Barbuda.

Health workers attend chronic diseases training programme

The Ministry of Health has embarked upon a Management of Nutrition-related Chronic Diseases training programme for health care workers.

The programme which deals with hypertension, diabetes and obesity seeks



Section of the participants attending health care workshop

to develop ways of prevention and management which should include regular exercise and proper dieting.

Chief Nutrition Officer Juanita James said that chronic diseases in Antigua and Barbuda continue to rise with diabetes being seen in young children 14 to 16 years old due to problems with weight.

One of the facilitators, Dr Pauline Samuda, who is the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute Nutrition Educator outlined that health care workers need to be updated with the scientific information which relates to chronic diseases.

She also advised that health care providers should change their focus from being therapeutic to prevention. Obesity, she pointed out, is costing families and government a substantial amount of money in Medicare.

Dr Samuda encouraged persons to live healthy lifestyles and urge health care workers to be role models for their patients in the management and prevention of chronic diseases.



Newest US Flagged Cruise Ship to call on Antigua

Norwegian Jewel, the newest ship in the Norwegian Cruise Line fleet, will begin calling at Antigua from November 6 this year.



Norwegian Jewel's 7 day Eastern Caribbean itinerary commencing November

This was one of the announcements emerging from discussions during Seatrade with top executive of Norwegian Cruise Lines', Lania Rittenhouse, Vice President who said that the ship will be delivered in August this year and will commence an innovative itinerary including Antigua as a key destination.

Minister of Tourism, Harold Lovell, recognised the importance of partnership with Norwegian Cruise Lines which is one of the most pioneering and dynamic lines in the industry with high spend visitors to the region. "This is the first regular itinerary of a major cruise line that has embraced Antigua rather than St. Maarten as its first port of call and only non-US port. This extends major opportunities in terms of shore excursions, shopping and general visitor spend on the island."

Minister Lovell recognised the historical and pivotal significance of this

development since both Disney and Royal Caribbean Line experimented with such an itinerary but as yet have not instituted regular preferred itineraries including Antigua out of Miami. "We expect that other lines will now follow since the size and speed of the newer ships make such an itinerary feasible and more critically, consumers are now requesting Antigua as a port of call in their Eastern Caribbean cruises."

Minister Lovell continued that feedback from past cruise visitors had been very positive in terms of their overall experience when onshore, "We are delighted that Antigua is recognised as a good place to visit with a wide variety and quality of tours - to the extent that Antigua Seafaris operated by Nick Cheremeteff won accolades as best tour throughout Disney's global Winter deployment in 2004/2005."

Managing Director of Antigua Pier Group, Cameron Fraser, reiterated the thrust in marketing the destination "We have identified a number of ways of targeting the consumer and exposing them to what Antigua and Barbuda has to offer.

In addition we will work with the cruise lines in their efforts to improve the variety of their itineraries, as well as strengthen cruise and land based partnerships that could challenge the way cruise lines conduct business in the Caribbean. We have been experiencing tremendous goodwill towards Antigua and Barbuda and with the commitment and involvement of the Ministry along with the support of the Antigua and Barbuda Cruise Tourism Association, we are poised to turn this goodwill into substantial business for those who directly and indirectly benefit from cruise passengers".

Cruise passengers in Antigua and Barbuda increased by 35% in 2004, reaching a total of 522,705.

Antigua to be the home of transatlantic row boating

The Ministry of Tourism in Cooperation with the Antigua Marine Trades Association and the National Parks Authority are busy making plans for the inaugural Boat Rowing Regatta due to take place in Antigua in November 2005.

Lin Parker of Woodvale Events Ltd and Kenneth Crutchlow of the Ocean Rowing Society have teamed up to organize the event.

Forty 24ft boats are registered to begin crossing the Atlantic and already the first rowboat has begun the voyage from London to Antigua. This is not to be labeled as a "Maiden Voyage" however, as the first rowboat operated by a sailor to complete such a voyage from London to Antigua was done back in 1971. Sidney Genders accomplished this great feat when he made a solo voyage, which landed him in Antigua's very own English Harbour. Ten years later, a couple, Curtis and Kathleen Seville were announced as the first pair to cross the Atlantic from Casablanca to Antigua.

The planned regatta will signal the beginning of rowing events from London to Antigua. Already plans are in place to develop a museum for historical rowing vessels and Sidney Genders' boat will be the first to be housed in the museum.

The overall reception will climax with commemorative plaques being enshrined in the Nelson's Dockyard area in honour of sailors who have made history by completing various transatlantic feats concluding in Antigua and Barbuda.

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

Condor returns to Antigua in November 2005

After months of intensive negotiations with the German airline Condor a contract was signed in Berlin during the ITB tourism trade fair. Condor will resume a weekly non-stop service on Mondays from Frankfurt to Antigua with effect from November 7.

The flight will create renewed interest in Antigua and Barbuda from tour operators in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Tour operators in Europe include TUI, the largest tour operator in Europe; will commence shortly the marketing of the country as "The Heart of the Caribbean."

Immediately after the signing ceremony Minister of Tourism Harold



Minister Lovell and Condor Airline Executive completes new arrangements

Lovell stated "The discontinuation of flights out of Germany in 2001 was a major setback for Antigua and Barbuda. One of my key strategic objectives was the re-introduction of non-stop air lift from this key market. The signing of the contract with Condor is a significant milestone in achieving sustained growth in visitor arrivals. I wish to thank Dr. Werner Giersch of the German Office and Mr. Ted Isaac of

AHTA for their support in this important endeavour."

The Director General of Tourism for Antigua and Barbuda who also attended ITB Berlin as part of the Antigua and Barbuda contingent echoed these positive sentiments.

Ted Isaac, General Manager of Jolly Beach Resort, remarked: "As Chairman of AHTA I endorse and support this initiative. The present hoteliers and incoming agents from Antigua and Barbuda had the chance to negotiate with tour operators who will expand their programmes due to this flight and new interest was generated in our destination."

Responding to the reported trend that Germans book vacations for extended periods, Stanley Francis, General Manager of National Tours and Services, said: "It is an enhancement to have Condor return to Antigua and Barbuda. It will bring well needed traffic from Central Europe to our destination." Mr. Francis indicated that Germans are



Tourism Minister engaged in discussions at ITB Berlin, Germany



Antigua and Barbuda ITB 2005 Berlin Delegation

staying 14 days and beyond and therefore will spend more money.

Much kudos have come in for the Tourism Team who successfully negotiated the terms and conditions for Condor Airlines' return. "It is a return long over-due and I am sure that all parties involved including the Minister and the Director General have worked very hard to re-introduce this very vital air link to one of the most important markets in Europe," stated Franklyn Eaton, General Manager of Sandals Antigua Caribbean Village & Spa.

Condor's return to Antigua's airspace was not the only positive outcome of ITB 2005. Tour reps. for various accommodations were in a position not only to discuss, but also to sign contracts with tour operators and were generally pleased with the result of their participation in this fair.

Meetings were held with cruise ship companies such as Sea Cloud Cruises and Star Clippers which resulted in a strengthening of co-operation. The luxury sailing ships Sea Cloud and Sea

Cloud 2 will commence home porting in St. John's in the winter season.

Interest was sparked in "Antigua and Barbuda: The Heart of the Caribbean" at ITB 2005 and this created much international media attention. Members of Antigua and Barbuda's delegation included Minister of Tourism Harold Lovell who headed the delegation and was accompanied by Shirlene Nibbs, Director General of Tourism, and Dr. Carl Roberts, High Commissioner in London, were repeatedly interviewed by the German and Swiss trade press along with a television interview.

The team of Tourism Officials who took part in ITB also participated in Sea Trade which was held in Miami, Florida. Lorraine Headley, Director of Product Development joined the group there for discussions which centred heavily on increasing the number of cruise-ship visits to Antigua and Barbuda during the summer months.



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