

NEWSLETTER



The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

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Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and Opposition Leader Robin Yearwood at the meeting in St Lucia

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has stated that his government is committed to the full implementation of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in its original and appellate jurisdictions.

The Prime Minister made the comment during the afternoon session of the 1st Meeting of Heads of Government and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition of the Member States of CARICOM which was held in St. Lucia on 2nd July. He noted that his government is of the view that they must accept the reality that the Caribbean must be able to dispense justice among itself and feel confident that the justice is fair.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that his government knows that it will have a difficult task in convincing the people of Antigua and Barbuda to support the CCJ in its appellate jurisdiction, replacing the Privy Council in London. He cited three landmark

Privy Council decisions that will make the task difficult; however he noted that his government will press forward in convincing the people of Antigua and Barbuda that the CCJ is before for the region and the country.

Antigua and Barbuda will have to conduct a referendum and gain a two thirds majority support both publicly and in parliament to make the CCJ in its appellate jurisdiction applicable to the country.

Opposition Leader Robin Yearwood, who was part of the Antigua and Barbuda delegation and accompanied by his advisor Lennox Weston, noted that his party has no difficulty in supporting the government's decision on the full implementation of the CCJ.

The Heads and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition looked extensively at the significance to the region of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy CSME. Prime Minister Spencer during an intervention outlined that OECS countries including Antigua and Barbuda must be given special differential treatment if they are to fully reap the benefits of the CSME.

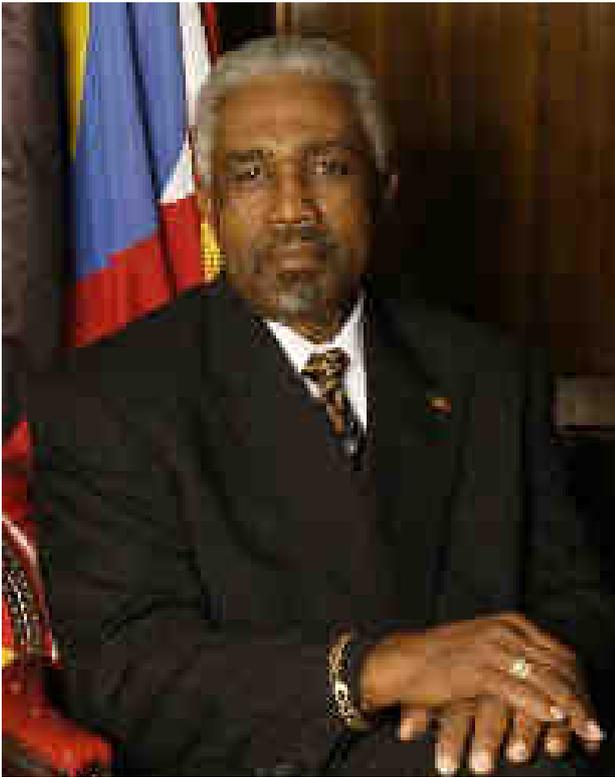
The Heads and Leaders of Parliamentary Opposition agreed that the meeting was an historic one and pledged to dialogue on other issues affecting the region. They also agreed to review the re-institution of the Association of Caribbean Parliamentarians to aid in the process.



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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



London was host to some of the Caribbean's Business Community on 21st June when the Caribbean Britain Business Council held the first UK/Caribbean Business Forum at Lancaster House. The Forum, which was created to facilitate dialogue on business issues affecting UK/Caribbean trade and investment was jointly organised by the Caribbean-Britain Business Council (CBBC) and the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, with support from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

The Right Honourable Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados gave the keynote address in which he spoke at length on the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and the Economy.

During his address the Prime Minister pointed out that "By the end of this year, it is proposed and envisioned that five regimes to permit the free movement of goods, services, capital, skills and to confer new and important rights of establishment of enterprises on Caribbean nationals across the region will be put into effect. This single-Market-creation phase of our economic integration project will essentially involve the removal of the 450 restrictions in accordance with an agreed programme that began in 2002."

In February 2005 our Prime Minister, the Honourable Baldwin Spencer acknowledged that the country was not yet quite ready for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) but that he would pull out all the stops in an effort to get the twin-island state ready for implementation.

He emphasised that Antigua and Barbuda is committed to the CSME, and that there is 'no turning back now, it's a question of letting the people understand and appreciate that the future of the Caribbean is intertwined and we have to move together as one nation'.

He said, "...we certainly have to step-up our public relations and education exercises on the whole question of the CSME".

Subsequently on the 10th March 2005 the CSME Unit in the Ministry of Finance and Economy (Industry & Commerce) held a series of consultations on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. These consultations were executed in collaboration with officials from the CARICOM Secretariat, who met with Members of Cabinet, the Private Sector, youths and many other stakeholders.

Arising from the discussions were many issues relating to the CSME that were challenging, but the Government explained the importance of implementing this regional framework. Discussions included, among other things, the free movement of persons and the Regional Development Fund.

Regarding the issue of the number of CARICOM nationals present in Antigua and Barbuda, it was outlined that the CSME framework only allows five categories of Skilled Persons exemption from work permits (University Graduates, Media Workers, Sports Persons, Artists, and Musicians).

In discussions with the Private Sector, concerns were raised over the issue of unfair business practices and possible redress under the regional laws entrenched in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Dr Carl Roberts
High Commissioner



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer accepting the computers and database from OAS Cicelyn Norris

Antigua and Barbuda now has its own trade reference centres

The Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) of the OAS Office for Trade, Growth and Competitiveness, through the CARICOM Capacity Building Project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has put together a trade information database to meet the needs expressed by Antigua and Barbuda in their National Strategies for Trade Capacity Building for greater and easier access to trade-related information.

On 3rd June Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, accepted the trade information database and the computers from the OAS on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda at a launch and handing over ceremony at the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank (ABIB), Redcliffe Street, St. John's.

Trade is an essential part of Antigua and Barbuda's economy. As Antigua and Barbuda participates simultaneously in negotiations at the multilateral, regional and sub-regional

level in the WTO, the FTAA and the CSME, there is an increasing demand for relevant and up to date information to guide policy makers and civil society. The database is intended not just for use by government agencies, but also for the private sector and civil society.

The **Caribbean Trade Reference Centre (CTRC)** is comprised of thirteen country specific **Trade Information Databases (TID)**. Each database

contains the texts of official trade agreements, related national legislation, studies as well as other analytical tools that may facilitate a better understanding of trade policy issues confronting Caribbean countries. It also includes the Hemispheric Trade and Tariff Database provided with the kind compliments of the Inter-American Development Bank and valuable data from other international organizations.

The Database will provide a simple and user-friendly mechanism to access regional and country-specific information related to trade and trade negotiations that Antigua and Barbuda is currently involved. The database will also assist the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in bringing this information to all spheres of the public and members of civil society. A far more important purpose of the Trade Information System Database is to stimulate much greater public involvement or feedback on trade policy and its many related issues, as well as to supply relevant easily accessible information to government agencies, private sector and civil society at large in Antigua and Barbuda.

In order to further facilitate the civil society's access to this information, a number of **Trade Reference Centres** will

be established in Antigua and Barbuda, and will consist of a computer containing the Trade Information System Database. A specific requirement of the designated Trade Reference Centre is that they are readily and easily accessible to all civil society and governmental users.

Hence, in the case of Antigua and Barbuda, there are three designated locations for the Trade Reference Centres:

- The Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank (ABIB) - 'The Information Bank'
- The University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies
- The International Trade Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At this event there will be a demonstration of the trade information system database by representatives of the Organization of the American States (OAS). The OAS representatives will be handing over the computers and will be also providing a limited number of CD sets which would contain a mini-version of the Caribbean Trade Reference Centre to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

Dr Mansoor concludes COFCOR Meeting in The Bahamas

Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Communications Dr Edmond Mansoor has described the 8th Meeting of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations COFCOR, which concluded on 4th June, as a success.

He said that among the main items addressed was the Region's approach to and

preparations for the 35th Meeting of the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States, being hosted by the USA for the first time in 25 years and scheduled for Fort Lauderdale this weekend.

Dr Mansoor also noted that the reform of the United Nations and what the priority issues are for the Caribbean at the upcoming 60th session of the UN General Assembly, was also prominent on the agenda.

"With regard to the reform of the UN Security Council, the Council of Foreign Ministers agreed that reform should contemplate both the working methods of the Council and its expansion to ensure that it is open, democratic and effective," Dr Mansoor said.

"On expansion, the Council of Ministers agreed that the UN's Security Council should be more broadly representative of the international community as a whole. Expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Council would be justifiable. In this regard, the Council agreed that CARICOM would wish to see increased accessibility for small states," he noted.

The Council of Ministers' agenda also included an extensive discussion on CARICOM's relations with the USA. The Council of Ministers agreed that CARICOM would engage the Caribbean Diaspora, Congressional Groupings and representatives of departments and agencies of the US government and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the effort to re-energise CARICOM-US relations.

CARICOM's relations with Canada, the UK, Cuba, Brazil, and France also came up for discussions.



Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Communications, Dr. Edmund Mansoor

Dr Mansoor was accompanied to the Bahamas by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Colin Murdoch.

Dr Mansoor attends series of meetings in Florida

On the 4th June Information, Broadcasting and Communications Minister Dr Edmond Mansoor represented Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer at a Business Roundtable of the Inter-American Economic Council IAEC in Florida.

Governor of the State of Florida, Jeb Bush inaugurated the Business Roundtable along with the newly installed Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States, His Excellency Jose Miguel Insulza.

Dr Mansoor noted that Antiguan and Barbudan businessman, R. Allen Stanford moderated a session on "*Strengthening the Relationship between the US and the Caribbean Basin.*" He said that speakers during that session included Congressmen Donald Payne and Bob Ney who both visited Antigua and Barbuda

recently and held discussions with the government.

The Information Minister said that other sessions focused on "*Investment and Trade in Latin America*", and "*Is Latin America Taking Advantage of the Digital Divide?*"

On the 5th June, Dr Mansoor attended the inaugural session of the OAS General Assembly, which was preceded by meetings with Permanent Observers of the OAS and Civil Society representatives.

On 6th June, Dr Mansoor joined CARICOM Foreign Ministers for a breakfast Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Pierre Pettigrew. The agenda included discussions on Haiti, the International Policy Statements, and Canada's continued assistance to relief efforts after natural disasters.

The Minister and Antigua and Barbuda's OAS Ambassador Ms. Debra Mae Lovell also joined their CARICOM colleagues in a meeting with US Secretary of State Dr Condeleezza Rice.

Dr Mansoor said that the bilateral meeting with Dr. Rice raised the need for regular structured meetings between CARICOM and the USA.

"A Conference on the Caribbean was advanced by CARICOM as it would help US decision makers to better understand the complexities and concerns of CARICOM States. There were some discussions of the possibility of this occurring around the time of the convening of the UN General Assembly," Dr Mansoor noted.

He said that CARICOM welcomed the Third Border Initiative and advanced the notion of greater collaboration with the US in activities that are vital to the economies of the Caribbean, particularly tourism and security.

Other areas that were discussed included the evolution of the situation in Haiti and the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative which will require all American citizens returning to the USA to enter on a valid US travel document.

Recent studies have confirmed that a large percentage of visitors from the USA to Caribbean holiday destinations do so regularly and may not have a US passport.

Dr Mansoor stated that CARICOM is advancing that this new policy be delayed until a common policy is worked out with all of the USA's neighbours.

Antiguan and Barbudan re-elected President of Human Rights Commission

Attorney at law and former Independent Senator, Clare Roberts, of Antigua and Barbuda was overwhelmingly re-elected to the Presidency of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for another four year.

Mr Clare Roberts received an overwhelming endorsement from the people of the Americas when he secured the largest number of votes cast, thirty-two of thirty-four, during an election for a position on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States (OAS), created to promote the



President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Clare Roberts

observance and protection of human rights in the hemisphere.

The election was held on 7 June, 2005, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida at the Thirty-Fifth Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly. Mr Roberts received the support of thirty two of the thirty four member states of the OAS, defeating the candidates from Uruguay, Bolivia, Dominican Republic and Colombia.

PM Spencer inaugurates UK Security Advisory Team UKSAT for the Caribbean

On 9th June, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer inaugurated the United Kingdom Security Advisory Team (UKSAT) for the Caribbean during a ceremony at Camp Blizzard.

UKSAT which will focus on training, advice and mentoring of law enforcement agencies and security forces in the Caribbean to combat drug trafficking, other serious crime and the threat of terrorism in the region; will work in partnership with the Regional Security System RSS and the UK Caribbean Overseas Territories COTs, supporting their security initiatives to reduce the flow of drugs, weapons and illegal migrants through the region.

The Maritime Training Unit MTU located at the Defence Force Headquarters at Camp Blizzard, formerly the British Military Advisory Training Team, BMATT, will be incorporated into UKSAT, and in conjunction with the RSS Training Unit will continue to provide training and advice in support of a range of maritime law enforcement activities to the region.

During his address, Prime Minister Spencer spoke on the issue of receiving funding from the United Kingdom and the USA to fight crime within the region. He also addressed the problems faced by countries within the region as a result of the high incidences of deportee criminals.

The inauguration ceremony was also addressed by the British High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean His Excellency Mr. John White. Governor General Sir James Carlisle was also in attendance.

Antigua and Barbuda calls for unanimity in application of tariffs

Antigua and Barbuda's delegation at the 41st Meeting of the Authority of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States OECS, has called for the unanimity in the application of tariffs instead of Quantitative Restrictions in the administration of the regime.

Making an intervention on Article 56 and 164 of the Revised CARICOM Treaty which is up for renewal after it expires on December 31, Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and Ambassador Dr Clarence Henry told Heads that it is the government's

intention to request authorization to pursue this course of action at the next Council of Trade and Economic Development COTED meeting.

It was pointed out that Antigua and Barbuda supports the efforts of Grenada which presented a paper on the matter in Guyana recently on behalf of the Lesser Developed Countries LDC's.

Antigua and Barbuda however believes that the arguments supporting its request for renewal of the provision, would be strengthened by an empirical study, and has therefore called on the OECS Secretariat for support. It is believed that the MDC's will oppose the renewal of the provision.

Antigua and Barbuda says that it believes that a study may show the need to extend the current list of protected industries especially the identification of industries and products in the Leeward Islands such as water, UPVC window and doors, and stain glass. Flour, water and natural gas are among those items currently protected.

The Antigua and Barbuda delegation pointed out that there could be other industries and products, but the hiring of a consultant to collate the data, could then benefit from further reflections by Member States in time for the next COTED in October.

Tourism Minister elected as the Chairman of the CTO Board of Directors Air Transportation sub-committee.

Minister of Tourism Harold Lovell has been elected to serve as Chairman of a new sub-committee established to look at the current difficulties being faced regarding the establishment of a regional airline.



Minister of Tourism Harold Lovell

Other Ministerial colleagues comprising this board include the Minister of Tourism in Grenada, Brenda Hood, the Minister of Tourism in Barbados, Noel Lynch and Mr. McHale Andrew, Research and Development Consultant with the Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme.

This development surfaced out of the recently concluded 43rd meeting of the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Tourism Organization held at the New York Hilton on June 2nd.

Minister Lovell, who is also the 2nd Vice Chairman of the CTO Board of Directors and Director for Governments, says that he welcomes the opportunity to represent Antigua and Barbuda once again in such an esteemed capacity.

Antigua and Barbuda will once again play a major role among the region's policy makers and this time it is in the field of aviation, for which I am also responsible on the national scale," Minister Lovell outlined. "I am honoured to have been issued the mandate to lead a team comprising of my regional colleagues to develop policies that will steer one of the

critical components of the tourism industry," he noted.

Also arising out of this meeting was the selection of Mr. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace of the Bahamas as the new Secretary General of the Organization. Vanderpool-Wallace takes over from the Acting Secretary General Karen Ford Warner.

During this forum the Ministers and other tourism officials were given an update on the implementation of the Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme of the 8th European Development Fund, as well as a report by CHL Consulting LTD on institutional strengthening of the CTO and the move towards a new strategic direction.

The Caribbean Regional Sustainable Tourism Development Programme, is an EU funded 36 month program of assistance to the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Hotel Association, and the Dominican Republic's Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM). The programme's objective is to contribute towards the tourism sector's enhanced competitiveness and increased sustainability, while contributing significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction in the Caribbean.

The CTO Board of Directors Meeting occurred during the annual Caribbean Week festivities which also facilitated a series of CTO Ministers and Commissioners of Tourism meetings.

Caribbean Week in New York, is created by the CTO as a celebration of sights, sounds, colours, cultural delights, and vibrancy of the Caribbean.



Minister of Finance and the Economy, Dr Errol Cort

Minister Cort holds bilateral discussions with counterparts at UN Ministerial Forum

Minister of Finance and the Economy, Dr. Errol Cort recently held a series of bilateral discussions with his counterpart Ministers on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which is a major gathering for Ministers of Finance and of Development Co-operation.

"I was able to accomplish a lot in the relatively short period I spent at the United Nations," said Minister Cort, who in addition to addressing the General Assembly as the head of the Antigua and Barbuda delegation, undertook a number bilateral consultations with his counterparts on matters related to UN reform and on economic development.

"I welcome in particular the chance to discuss and explore

opportunities for economic development in Antigua and Barbuda, particularly in the area of infrastructure development, with my counterparts from both developed and developing countries," said the Minister, who met with Ministers or senior representatives from Brazil, India, Japan, Germany and Italy.

Minister Cort also co-chaired a Ministerial roundtable on external debt.

New members appointed to Public Service Commission

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has appointed six new persons to fill the vacant positions on the Public Service Commission.

Retired Permanent Secretary, Mrs Victorine George Alexander has been named as the Chairperson, while Nurse Ineta Wallace, former pilot Alec Tomlinson, Attorney Alfred James, former civil servant Myrna Richardson Smith and businessman

Phillip George-John has been named as members.

The six join Mrs. Pauline Daniel to make up the seven-member Commission.

The new appointments arose from the resignation of six members of the Commission, some of whom have served for over twenty years under the Opposition Antigua Labour Party administration.

Prime Minister Spencer made the announcement after consulting with the Leader of the Opposition, Robin Yearwood.



Antigua and Barbuda ready for hurricane season

Antigua and Barbuda is fully prepared for the 2005 Hurricane Season, which began on Wednesday 1st June and runs until November 30th.

Minister of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Hilson Baptiste, under whose portfolio the National Office of Disaster Services falls made the above statement.

Speaking at a press conference in observance of Media Awareness Week under the theme, "Be Aware and Be Prepared" Minister Baptiste said he's pleased with the work of Director of NODS, Mrs. Patricia Julian and her team. In addition, the Minister said that notwithstanding the fact that the finalized list of shelters are yet to be published, the entire country's response unit has been strengthened through various training programmes over the past few months.



(left to right) Director of NODS Mrs Patricia Julian, Minister Hilson Baptiste and Deputy Director Philmore Mullin

Antigua and Barbuda and Guadeloupe to forge cultural relationship

Antigua and Barbuda is seeking to forge a closer relationship with Guadeloupe.

The initiation was made in early June when Cultural Attaché in the French Embassy of the OECS, Mr. Philippe Girerd, paid a courtesy call on Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Eleston Adams and Minister of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation, Hilson Baptiste.

Mr. Girerd, said that his Government is seeking to establish training opportunities for Antiguan and Barbudan dancers, in a bid to pull together dancers from across the region to perform on one stage, all at the same time.

The Ministers were also informed of plans to divide the Caribbean into zones where they will focus on music, drama, theatre and cinema. Both ministers were invited to the special launch to be held in Santo Domingo in January of 2006.

The Ministers expressed their optimism with the projects and



Cultural Attache in the French Embassy of the OECS, Philippe Girerd (right). At left is Cultural Attache Gilbert Laudat

welcomed the initiative by the Government of Guadeloupe.

The relations with Guadeloupe began with the establishment of the Cultural Internet Café that was launched earlier this year at the Cultural Department.

Planning for 2005 Independence celebrations underway

The National Independence Steering Committee has commenced plans for celebration of the country's 24th Anniversary of political independence.

In his opening remarks at the first meeting on June 2nd, Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing, Culture and Social Transformation and Steering Committee Chairman, Eleston Adams, urged members to participate fully and creatively to ensure this year's celebrations surpass the standards set during 2004.

During the meeting, several ideas were discussed for the week-long Independence programme, and recommendations sought for ways of improving the celebrations in anticipation of next year's 25th anniversary.

The Independence Homecoming theme which was introduced in 2004: **"Antigua and Barbuda – One Family"** will remain the constant slogan for the next few years, with a new sub-theme added each year. Consequently, members of the public are invited to submit ideas for the 2005 sub-theme.

The phrase must be around ten words, must be catchy and easily remembered, and must reflect some aspect of positive national development.

Meantime, Mrs Julian asked for the support of the media and said that her department looks forward to working with them during what is promised to be an active hurricane season.

Deputy Director, Philmore Mullin, said that once the public focuses on early preparedness it could severely reduce the overall impact on lives and property.

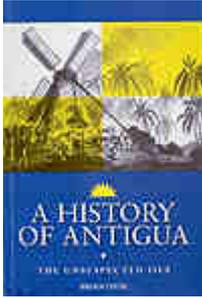
"We are forever asking the general public to focus on proper preparedness and mitigation...I believe that if we pay more attention to mitigation I believe we will see a reduction in the level of impact of natural disasters."

During the press conference Minister Baptiste told the media that his government is seeking to construct several community centres, which can be used as hurricane shelters.

He said, "one of the things we are focusing on is community centres, which can also be used as hurricane shelters; and we hope that these shelters will become available for next year's hurricane season."



NATIONALS' CORNER



A HISTORY OF ANTIGUA: THE UNSUSPECTED ISLE.

This book, written by Brian Dyde and published by Macmillan Education in 2000, not only covers the history of Antigua from pre-Columbian days until the achievement of Independence in 1981 but also deals with events over the same period in both Barbuda and Redonda.

The author is an Englishman who, having known the island for over 40 years and being married to an Antiguan, has taken great care to treat what could be thought of as potentially dry historical material from a balanced cultural perspective and to write for the widest possible readership.

His 360-page book covers the pre-Columbian migrations, colonialism, slavery and the plantation economy, the rise of the trade union movement, Associated Statehood, Independence, and the transition from an agricultural to a tourist economy in an interesting and highly-readable manner. As well as being illustrated with maps, reproductions of paintings and prints, and many photographs, the text also contains numerous apt contemporary quotations from each significant period of Antigua's history. It is a book which will appeal to anyone with any connection with Antigua, or with an interest in West Indian history.

The author has also written the definitive visitor's guide to Antigua (now in its third edition) as well as a history of the West India Regiments.

His book, ISBN number 0 333 75169 8, is available from any good bookshop, priced at £17.95

CALYPSO TENT EXCELS

It's virtually impossible to conceive of a UK calypso event more authentic than the one the Yaa Asantewaa produces each year.

Since the ABC (Association of British Calypsonians) created the London Calypso tent thirteen years ago, the shows have never been more sought after. It has developed into the eagerly anticipated precursor to the Notting Hill Carnival show, attracting around 300 people per night and serves as a flagship to Caribbean culture and sound.

The show promises to not only excite but also inspire since its format is exactly as one would expect from a calypso tent in the Caribbean. With the sultry, message based lyrics of social commentary to the faced paced rhythm of soca songs everyone is guaranteed a memorable time.

Whilst savouring traditional West Indian food and drink, viewers can expect to see artistes representing most of the Caribbean islands including Barbados, St Vincent and Jamaica to name a few. Everyone will even be treated to the likes of Explainer, a renowned calypsonian hailing from Trinidad whose music has been entertaining for over 30 decades. Parents need not worry about restless children as the Junior Calypso monarch from Trinidad also appears. Her talent is undeniable as at the tender age of eight she has already won several awards such as the Best Primary School performer and TUCO Junior Calypso Monarch.

The Tent takes place for six weeks during the months of July and August and is held at the Yaa Asantewaa Arts & Community Centre, 1 Chippenham Mews, Chippenham Road, London W9.2AN.

Dates: 29th July, 5th August,
12th August, 19th August,
25th August, 26th August.

For more info and a chance to win tickets visit www.londoncalypsotent.co.uk.

This is a must see event. To avoid disappointment tickets should be booked early.

Antigua and Barbuda makes case for community whaling

Antigua and Barbuda made its voice heard at the 57th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission which concluded in Ulsan South Korea on Friday 24 June.

During the meeting Ambassador Anthony Liverpool, Antigua and Barbuda's Whaling Commissioner urged members of the Commission to respect the tradition of whale consumption among communities whose heritage and cultural habits are dependent on whaling.

"The people of Taiji in Japan who have a long tradition of over four hundred years of whaling, are very much distressed that the IWC for the past ten years have denied them the right to continue their cultural tradition and to utilize whales for both economic and subsistence purposes," the Ambassador said.

He argued that some members of the Commission lack the respect for cultural traditions and fail to accept the position of coastal communities and small island states to utilize whales for food. "It is no secret that communities in countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Japan, have been hunting and eating whales for generations. This failure on the part of some developing countries to support the proposal by Japan for small type coastal whaling is about 'big countries' trying to direct, dictate and determine how people in smaller countries should live."



Antigua and Barbuda's delegation to the IWC meeting in South Korea. (l to r) Tricia Lovell, Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Minister Joanne Massiah and Ambassador Liverpool

The IWC which has a membership of approximately 66 countries, is deeply divided between pro and anti whaling countries with strong positions on issues relating to the establishment of a Revised Management Scheme designed to monitor the proper utilization of whale stocks, the establishment of sanctuaries, without any reliable scientific support, the issuing of scientific permits, for research, introduction of simultaneous translation and the reduction in the contribution fees to IWC for countries like Antigua and Barbuda.

Minister Massiah who attended the Meeting along with Ambassador to the IWC Anthony Liverpool, Ambassador Colin Murdoch and Fisheries Officer Tricia Lovell, said that the Commissioners further highlighted that the establishment of an open equitable and functioning Revised Management Scheme (RMS) will help to pull the organisation back from the brink of irrelevance and place it firmly on the path to effective management of an important resource.

"There is no longer significant disagreement in scientific opinion that the population of some species of whales have rebounded sufficiently to allow for sustainable harvesting. The RMS can establish such a regime, one that is equitable, transparent and based on the precautionary principle," she said

More work on liberalization

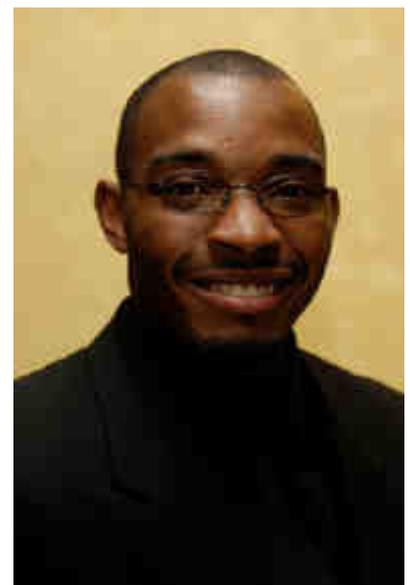
Efforts on ways to reduce tariffs continued as CARICOM trade officials met in Trinidad, June 15-17 to discuss formulas and market access opportunities ahead of the General Council slated for the end of July.

Developing countries, including all of CARICOM, want to ensure that there is clear language that "less than full reciprocity" and their flexibility are not traded off against each other and should remain as separate entities. This would preserve the policy space created for small economies to further assist in the economic development of each developing nation.

Small economies, including Antigua and Barbuda, cannot afford to

reduce their tariffs to accommodate the liberalization approach without due compensation. Tariffs are vital to the development and growth of this twin island state, whereby the revenues collected are utilized for infrastructure, health and educational means. With any reduction, developing nations must adopt measures to lessen the burden, or compensate for the foreseen losses.

Trade Affairs Officer, Michael Freeland, made claims that the Caribbean countries were more lenient to the Argentina, Brazil, India formula, otherwise known as the ABI formula. "This is not as severe as the US or EC proposals which seek to cut high tariffs by more than 50% and low tariffs by 10% or less. Developing countries, like CARICOM, have average tariffs bound at 56 %, while developed and larger developing countries binds at an average of 8%. If smaller countries opt for another formula other than the ABI, it would mean giving up vast amounts of revenue and significant policy space for future rounds of negotiations."



*Trade Affairs Officer,
Michael Freeland*

"However, what the conference was not aware of was a draft proposal, ultimately aimed at being the CARICOM-Botswana formula for tariff reduction. This formula encapsulates all the sensitivities of preferences, vulnerabilities from tariff revenue loss, debt problems and the need to maintain tariffs for that purpose, and openness." "It goes a step further than the ABI formula supporting a non-linear formula which has credits and uses average tariffs," he said.

As this debate rages on, OECS member states must ensure that any formula brought into play must address their relative concerns. These countries will have an opportunity to further discuss the proposals, and agree in principle to a formula that will adequately suit their needs when they meet in St. Lucia at the end of the week.

A Special Meeting of OECS Ministers of Trade and Trade Officials of the Trade Negotiation Group (TNG) has been summoned for the purpose of considering and advising the OECS Heads of Government ahead of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM in St. Lucia in early July.

Consultation on CARICOM Financial Services and Investment Agreements and CARICOM Investment Code held in Antigua

On the 27th June the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Industry & Commerce) in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat hosted a consultation on the CARICOM Financial Services Agreement, the CARICOM Investment Agreement and the CARICOM Investment Code at the Multipurpose Cultural Centre.

The CARICOM Secretariat has prepared these three draft

intergovernmental instruments to address the provision of financial services and to govern the treatment and promotion of investment by nationals of the Community as well as investors from third states. Additionally, these agreements give effect to the broad policies elaborated in Chapter Three of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

The Draft CARICOM Financial Services Agreement is designed to facilitate intra-regional operations and delivery of banking, insurance and securities services.

On the other hand, the Draft CARICOM Agreement on Investment is a comprehensive legal instrument that is intended to operationalise the broad investment policy framework that is contained in Chapter Three of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

The purpose of the consultation was to involve the relevant stakeholders at the policy-making, regulatory, promotional, industrial and non-governmental levels. Essentially, this session ensured that the views of the national stakeholders were reflected in Antigua and Barbuda's comments on the agreements, which will be inputted in the final draft of these agreements.

Antigua and Barbuda signs PETROCARIBE Energy Co-operation

After years of failing to capitalize on the opportunity to participate in preferential trade agreements designed to reduce the price of fuel for consumers, Antigua and



Deputy Prime Minister Wilmoth Daniel signs the PETROCARIBE Energy Co-operation Agreement

Barbuda is now poised to benefit from the region's newest energy cooperation agreement. On June 29th Deputy Prime Minister Wilmoth Daniel joined Venezuela and twelve other Caribbean Countries in signing the PETROCARIBE Energy Cooperation Agreement.

Under the terms of this Agreement the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Caribbean territories which are signatories to the Agreement will establish a Ministerial Council formed by the Ministers of Energy or their equivalents. This Council will constitute the institutional platform while the operating aspects of the Agreement will be handled by PDV Caribbean, an affiliate of Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA).

PDV Caribbean will be vested with adequate cargo capacity to enable it to deliver fuel supplies to the signatories to the Agreement. The signatories will benefit from savings since the freight expenses will be charged at cost price, and all intermediaries in the supply process will be eliminated. Further, the Agreement provides an opportunity to access both

short-term and long-term financing for the purchase of fuel from Venezuela. The interest rate for such financing is set at 1% with a 2 year grace period and an overall repayment period of 17 to 25 years.

The percentage of the price that can be financed varies with the price per barrel of fuel and begins at a low of 5% and may reach a high of 50% if the price per barrel exceeds \$100. At the current price, 40% financing would apply.

The PETROCARIBE Agreement also makes provision for the establishment of a fund dedicated to the social and economic development of beneficiary countries. The ALBA-Caribe Fund has been activated with an initial deposit of US\$50 million from Venezuela.

While in Venezuela, the Antiguan Delegation which included Ambassador Joan Underwood and Technical Advisors Dr. George Daniel and Dr. Percival Perry, also engaged in bilateral negotiations with their Venezuelan counterparts. As a result of these negotiations, Venezuela has pledged to provide technical assistance in a number of areas including measures designed to improve the efficiency of the country's electrical supply.

Antigua and Barbuda World Cup Cricket Stadium drawings ready for September construction start

On the 25th June the architectural drawings for the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium were formally agreed to in the city of Changsha, Hunan Province, China.

The China Hunan Architectural Design Institute (CHADI), one of the top architectural design enterprises in China was contracted by the Government of



Ambassador David Shoul

the Peoples' Republic of China to design the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium. The final drawings are a product of intensive discussions and interactions over the past 6 months between the staffs of CHADI and World Cup Antigua (WCA) Inc. along with technicians from the Ministry of Public Works and the Antigua Public Utilities Authority.

Ambassador David Shoul, Non-Resident Ambassador to the Peoples' Republic of China, formally signed the agreement signifying acceptance of the architectural drawings by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in a ceremony marking the end of a week of hectic activity which had technicians from Antigua and Barbuda and China working virtually non-stop to ensure that the drawings were completed on schedule.

During the ceremony praise was lavished on the technicians from both countries for their dedication and professionalism in ensuring that the final product was of the highest standard and consistent with the stipulated guidelines

laid down by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the venues that will host matches during ICC Cricket World Cup 2007.

The acceptance of the architectural drawings now clears the way for the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China to contract the construction company which will build the stadium. Actual construction of the stadium will commence with an official ground-breaking and turning-of-the-sod ceremony scheduled for the second week of September 2005. Officials from the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China and CHADI will participate in this ceremony.

Ambassador Shoul headed the delegation which comprised George Goodwin Jr. and Sheon Samuel, Managing Director and the Venue Development Co-ordinator respectively of World Cup Antigua; Wesley James, an architect attached to the Ministry of Public Works; and Victor Meade, an engineer with the Antigua Public Utilities Authority.