



NEWSLETTER

The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

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Prime Minister the Honourable Baldwin Spencer has called the 3rd CARICOM-Spain Summit held in Madrid, Spain a success.

The country's leader said that of importance in the Joint Declaration which he signed, was the commitment made by Spain to collaborate with CARICOM in its efforts to advance its regional integration mechanisms, in particular the full entry into the CARICOM Single Market.

"Spain will give support in exchanging of experiences it garnered during its entry into the European Union and it will also offer collaboration to CARICOM to achieve the establishment of the CARICOM Regional Development Fund which complements the operations of the Common Market," Prime Minister Spencer said.

He also pointed out that both sides expressed pleasure in the recent elections held in Haiti and committed themselves to supporting Haiti's return to full democratic institutional normality, and its complete re-incorporation within CARICOM. "Both parties will jointly explore the possibility of collaborating on projects to achieve that goal. We also underlined the need for the continuing financial and other forms of support from the international community to consolidate the democratic gains made and to ensure the political and economic stabilization of Haiti," he said.

He stated that agreements were reached on the increase in trade and investment exchanges, the expansion of Spain development in tourism in the region and Spain contributing to the Special Development Fund of the Caribbean Development Bank as a first step towards becoming a member of that institution.

Prime Minister Spencer also attended the European Union – Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit which was held in Vienna, Austria.

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On 12th May, the Prime Minister and other members of his delegation participated in Round Table discussions with regional and international leaders lead by Federal Chancellor of Austria Wolfgang Schussel and Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Ursula Plassnik.

Before the Summit ended, Prime Minister Spencer held bilateral meetings with the leaders of Guatemala, Turkey and Venezuela.



Heads at the CARICOM-Spain Summit

A MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY DR CARL ROBERTS, HIGH COMMISSIONER



My Dear Readers,

This is the first of several reports which I hope to make to you on our activities at the High Commission, especially concerning the representation which this mission makes on your behalf.

Recently I was a member of the Prime Minister's delegation attending the fifth UK/Caribbean Forum, which took place from 26 – 28th April 2006 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

This is a biennial event, which alternates between the UK and the Caribbean and is a great opportunity for Britain and the English-speaking Caribbean to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Opening Remarks were made by the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon Owen S. Arthur, by Hon Elvin Nimrod, on behalf of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) and by Lord Triesman, on behalf of the UK.

The Forum was held under the theme "**Partnerships for Promoting and Sustaining Caribbean Development**". It focused on strategies to achieve medium and long-term development for the Caribbean as well as security issues, including those related to preparations for the Cricket World Cup in 2007. In addition to the Open Sessions, Ministers met in Retreat and held frank, cordial discussions on a range of issues.

MEDIUM AND LONG TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For medium and long term economic development it was agreed to undertake concrete action to improve the capacity of the public sector to provide affordable and efficient services to their populations. Tackling public debt and strengthening public financial management systems were priority actions in this regard, acknowledging also that achieving this commitment would not be easy. Ministers acknowledged the important role that the Diaspora

can play in the economic and social development of the Caribbean and noted the efforts of the Caribbean Governments to engage the Diaspora fully towards this end.

INVESTMENT ISSUES

In order to attract greater levels of both domestic and foreign investments there is an urgent need for continued improvements in the investment climate and the emphasis placed on investing in human resources as a key to attracting investment. The British Prime Minister's initiative to hold an investment event in London in November 2006 with the objective of showcasing the Caribbean to potential investors was therefore welcomed.

The work of the OECD's Global Forum on Harmful Tax Practices showed that progress had already been made towards a global level playing field in the areas of transparency and effective exchange of information in tax matters. We now look forward to the publication of the Level Playing Field Report, which would provide a factual assessment of where the OECD and non-OECD jurisdictions are in relation to the OECD standards for transparency and information exchange.

TOURISM

The vital importance of the tourist industry to the further economic development of the Caribbean was recognised. Ministers undertook to carry out a number of specific actions aimed at expanding the tourist industry in the Region, and ensuring that an increasing percentage of earnings from tourism remained in the Region. They welcomed the first steps which had been taken to develop a Regional Tourism Investment Fund (RTIF), and agreed to continue to support this initiative.

CRICKET WORLD CUP 2007

Ministers agreed that Cricket World Cup (CWC 2007) preparations meshed closely with and are contributing to the emerging collective security capability of the Region as is being promoted under the CARICOM/UK Security Cooperation Plan. For an event of this scale regional coordination is essential to ensure that security is in no way compromised by facilitating quick and easy movement of a large volume of persons and goods across the Region. They welcomed the steps already taken including the CARICOM political leadership provided by the establishment of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Sub Committee for Security Issues pertaining to CWC 2007 and the identification of CWC 2007 security coordination as a priority activity for the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)

Among other things, the UK agreed to support CARICOM in the roll-out of its common visa arrangements for the period of the CWC 2007 and to address urgently the question of assisting in the issuance of such visas in countries where CARICOM is not represented. (Excerpts from CARICOM Communiqué)

I trust that you find this report useful and welcome any comments which you might have.

Dr Carl Roberts
High Commissioner

Government, Private Sector and USAID join forces for trade programme

Senior government and private sector officials from Antigua and Barbuda and representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have teamed up to form a special Partners Working Group as part of a broader four-year open trade programme, funded by USAID.

The Caribbean Open Trade Support (COTS) programme, currently operates in Antigua and Barbuda and in Dominica as pilot programmes for the region. It is assisting both islands to transition from traditional trading regimes to open trade, and compete more successfully in the global economy. The programme is also assisting to strengthen Antigua's overall business environment and enhance the working relationship between the private and public sectors.

The establishment of the Partners Working Group is a major part of the success of the COTS Programme. The group brings together in one forum the expertise of top key private and public sector figures to guide the implementation of the programme. Members include Ambassador Dr. Clarence Henry, Development Coordinator, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; Mr. Cordell Weston, Permanent Secretary, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; Mr. Philmore Mullin, Deputy Director, National Office of Disaster Services; Ms. Holly Peters, Executive Director, Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce; and Mr. Lawrence King, President, Antigua and Barbuda Small Business Association.

The Group expressed satisfaction with the activities implemented to date under the COTS

programme. Twenty four tax officials from the Inland Revenue Department (IRD), for example, have been trained on customer service techniques. Additionally, a comprehensive tax guide and manuals have been developed for use by IRD staff. This training prepares IRD staff to provide high quality assistance to the general public during tax season, given this is the first time many Antiguans are filing personal tax returns.

A detailed analysis was undertaken by COTS of the cost to Antigua's consumers and business community to continue to support the inclusion of wheat and meslin flour on the list of protected items under Article 164 of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is using the results of this analysis to negotiate a position to allow flour from some of the More Developed Countries (MDC) of CARICOM to be imported into Antigua and Barbuda. Consumers will benefit from lower prices on flour and flour based products, such as bread.

With the programme's assistance, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has published its second magazine dedicated to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Magazine will be disseminated throughout Antigua and Barbuda and presents the public with information on the CSME and the associated benefits and opportunities.

Working under the following five themes: Governance, Public Private Interface, Doing Business, Resilience to Natural Disasters, and Public Awareness, the COTS programme will continue to strengthen both the public and private sector efforts to make Antigua and Barbuda more competitive in the region and globally. The ultimate and long term vision of the COTS programme is that through these targeted activities the business environment will flourish and the standard of life of Antiguans and Barbudans will be significantly improved.

Chinese team reviews Antigua's electricity generation capacity

The Government of the People's Republic of China has expressed an interest in assisting Antigua and Barbuda in meeting its electricity generation capacity.

A two man team from the Beijing Construction and Engineering Corporation recently held high level talks with Minister of APUA, Wilmoth Daniel, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to China H.E. Sir David Shoul and managers of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA).

General Manager of the Beijing Construction and Engineering Corporation Mr. Yang Qin who was accompanied by his Deputy Mr. Xing Yan, said that their visit to Antigua was as a result of discussions held between Ambassador Shoul and China's Minister of Construction who recently visited the country in December.

He said that they had specific instructions to assess the generation capacity conditions of Antigua and Barbuda and report back to the government of China in order to facilitate medium and long term solutions to the various problems affecting APUA.

As part of their mission, the Chinese team visited the Crabbs Power Station and the Sub-Station at Belmont. Meetings were also held with General Manager Leon Symister, Electricity Manager Lindon Francis, Planning Minister Milton Pringle, Finance Manager Esworth Martin and Transmission and Distribution engineers Reuben Barnard and Ernest George.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of APUA Wilmoth Daniel, Ambassador Shoul and Managers of APUA meet with Chinese team

"The Chinese Government has demonstrated once again that they are true friends of Antigua and Barbuda and we are grateful that they are willing to share their expertise and resources with us. We are indeed proud to have friends like China," Minister Daniel stated.

Minister Daniel said that the meetings with the officials were very fruitful and he is confident that the assistance the Chinese Government is seeking to provide will significantly enhance the overall generation capacity of APUA.

Ambassador Shoul, who arranged the meeting, said that the Chinese, who have a proven track record in electricity generation, were very happy to accept our request for assistance. They are committed to assisting the government in meeting the energy needs of the country.

Tickets for All

Cricket fans will be spoilt for choice when they apply for tickets for ICC CWC 2007. Fans are being offered an opportunity to select from a Single Ticket to Tickets that will take them from the Group Stage to the Final.

"This range caters for all, from the serious cricket fan to the people who just like to be where the action is. In Antigua and Barbuda, our tickets will cost US\$100 for Category One, US\$75 for Category Two, US\$25 for Category Three and US\$90 for Beach 366, the Party Stand. Everyone who want to attend has an equal opportunity when applying for tickets from May 1st on-line or May 2nd at our official Ticket Office on the corner of Long Street and Independence Avenue" says Martin Cave, Cricket Operations Manager World Cup Antigua Inc. ICC CWC 2007 Local Organising Committee.

Cave adds that: "People should not be concerned about the application process. It is just filling in an application form, making payment and getting a receipt. Cricket fans here in Antigua and Barbuda can apply for any game they wish to see, not just here at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium but at the other host venues. This process is the fairest and most equitable way for fans to access tickets. Many of the features being put in place, including the issuing of tickets during Phase Three are to prohibit counterfeiters and scalpers from selling non-valid tickets to unsuspecting fans. It is important to remind our cricket fans that there are only two official locations to apply for tickets, either on line from www.cricketworldcup.com or from our Ticket Office located on the corner of Long Street and Independence Avenue."

For more information contact: Martin Cave, Cricket Operations Manager, World Cup Antigua Inc., ICC CWC 2007 Local Organising Committee, and Tel: 268 562 9224/9227.

The Chinese team is expected back in the country later this year on a follow-up visit.

Mount St. John Medical Centre loan agreement completed

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has completed negotiations with the China Exim Bank for the new loan arrangements to complete construction work on the Mount St. John Medical Centre.

Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the People's Republic of China, who negotiated the new loan arrangements, said that the principals of the China Exim Bank sent a team to Antigua to finalize the loan agreement and this was mostly due to the excellent relationship the government has with the People's Republic of China.

Ambassador Shoul who made preliminary arrangements for the new agreement with the Chinese Ambassador here Madam Ren Xioping, said that the loan agreement was temporarily held up because of outstanding arrears the government had with the Exim Bank for the 69 KV Phase II Upgrade at APUA. Government ceased paying the loan in 2003, accumulating arrears of 12 million RMB.

During the recent negotiations, Ambassador Shoul said that the government rescheduled the loan and secured a reduction in the interest rate from 4% to 2 %. The loan was also cleared.

The \$8 million loan for the Mount St. John Medical Centre was negotiated with a moratorium of 5 years and repayment over twenty years.

The new loan will facilitate the completion of construction of the Mount St. John Medical Centre, before government enters into management arrangements with International health care providers.

The Exim Bank officials also held discussions with the Finance Minister Dr. Errol Cort, Financial Secretary Whitfield Harris, Budget Director David Matthias, Health Minister John Maginley, APUA Management and Finance teams and Ambassador David Shoul.

Germany seeks Antigua and Barbuda's support for UN position

German Ambassador Dr. Helmut Ohlraun visited Antigua and Barbuda to meet with Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer to lobby for Germany's candidacy for the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Ambassador Ohlraun is based in Port-of-Spain Trinidad and is Germany's representative to the Eastern Caribbean countries and to the CARICOM Secretariat.

Both men discussed the regional situation especially the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Ambassador Ohlraun emphasized that Germany saw CARICOM as the leading regional organization which can prepare regional states for trade liberalization. The German Ambassador explained that almost all German development assistance went to CARICOM for regional projects.

PM Spencer called on Germany not to forego the bilateral partnership completely, but to have both the regional and bilateral working side by side.



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and German Ambassador Dr. Helmut Ohlraun during their discussions

Both men also discussed the development of Antigua and Barbuda's Merchant Shipping International Register and the appointment of an Antigua and Barbuda Honorary Consul in Hamburg Germany.

Germany is one of nine European countries seeking a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, and Ambassador Ohlraun asked for Antigua and Barbuda's vote to allow Germany to be on the HRC. He emphasized Germany's human rights record.

PM Spencer explained that it was CARICOM's policy to achieve regional consensus on this and other candidates, and that CARICOM Foreign Ministers would discuss these matters later this month and agree on a slate of candidates that they would support.

Dr. Ohlraun described the new structure of the United Nations Human Rights Council and explained the built-in safeguards. He stated that Germany was satisfied with how the new Council was structured.

PM Spencer explained that it was likely that CARICOM would also have a candidate for the HRC and that, should

CARICOM Foreign Ministers agree, there would be reciprocal support.

The recently concluded EU/LAC summit was also discussed as well as the slate of upcoming regional and international meetings.



UK firm to conduct study of Antigua and Barbuda education sector

Cambridge Education limited, a United Kingdom consultancy firm, has won the tender to undertake a broad based European Union funded education sector study for Antigua and Barbuda.

Making the disclosure Ambassador Dr. Clarence Henry, the National Authorizing Officer, for the European Development Fund (EDF) programme expressed satisfaction

Among the objectives of the study is the preparation of an education sector plan that will provide a road map for the delivery of a coherent, integrated and high quality educational service now and into the future.

"The expectation is that the plan will be suitable for use on a national level as well as for the purpose of accessing external financing and should focus on strengthening institutional capacity, improving access to quality of education at all levels", according to Ambassador Henry.

Of particular importance, he said, will be the production of a work plan for the amalgamation of the three public tertiary education institutions - Antigua State College, Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute and the Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology.

"The consultancy will be required to review existing policies and standards regarding tertiary education, effective delivery of the curriculum, minimum facilities required for the execution of this task, structure of the tertiary education system, the number and locations of new departments required at the tertiary level, and design of a 16 month work programme to culminate in the amalgamation of the three public tertiary institutions", he said.

Other aspects of the study includes recommendations on the organizational structure at all levels, staffing needs and training programmes, Faculty Manual, Draft Legislation to govern the institution, Course Structure and Sales and Marketing Plan.

During the execution of the study, the consultants are expected to organise a series of stakeholder meetings, as well as a workshop at the Draft Final Report stage in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to discuss

major findings arising from the review of the sector.

The framework consultancy is being financed under the Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF). Cambridge Education is also executing the EU project designed to strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Antigua and Barbuda which involves infra-structural expansion, procurement of equipment and capacity building at the Tomlinson campus of the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE) as well as refurbishment of the engineering workshop at the ASC.

Antigua and Barbuda Treasury Bills over-subscribed once again on the Regional Government Securities Market (RGSM)

The Antigua and Barbuda Government continues to yield much success and support as it makes its second showing on the Regional Government Securities Market (RGSM).

On April 19, 2006 the Government returned to the RGSM to issue another EC\$17million in treasury bills.

At the close of the market it was revealed that the issue was once again over subscribed by some \$5.3 million with subscriptions totalling \$23.3 million.

It was reported that investments were received from institutional investors and individuals from Antigua and Barbuda, across the region and North America.

The bids ranged from \$5000 to \$12.6 million with interest rates starting from 4.5% to 6.5%.

An ecstatic Finance and Economy Minister, Dr. Errol Cort, said the

over-subscription was great news for the people of Antigua and Barbuda and this again confirms the confidence the people have in the Baldwin Spencer Administration.

Dr. Cort expressed sincere gratitude to the investors especially the many local investors who continue to demonstrate their trust in the government and the country's economy.

The Finance Minister added that as the government continues with its reform programme as it seeks to transform the economy, he is anticipating that the people's momentum will persist.

The government has already started using the resources gained from the first tranche of treasury bills to pay out high interest debts which as a result, has produced some 400 thousand dollars per month in savings. Hence, the funds from this second tranche will be used to continue this process. Additionally, the monies from the treasury bills will also be used to pay the voluntary separation and retirement packages to public sector workers, while, funds will also be allocated to facilitate various infrastructural programmes to be undertaken by the government.

Dr. Cort concluded his remarks by commending the staff of the ABI Group and the Ministry of Finance for their hard work and dedication "since the success of the government with the second tranche is ultimately the success of all Antiguans and Barbudans".

Manager of the Investment Department of the ABI Bank Ltd. Mr. Casroy James said his company will continue to lend its support to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda as it seeks to enhance the economy

and the ABI Group will continue to inform the public as the need arises.

Any investor who buys treasury bills will after 91 days be repaid the investment plus the interest on that investment and then it is up to that investor if they want to go back into the market and re-invest in the securities of the government of Antigua and Barbuda.

For further information on the issuance of Government of Antigua and Barbuda securities, please contact the Ministry of Finance and the Economy at telephone (268) 562-5261 or email Antigua.tbills@gmail.com or the Investment Department of the ABI Bank Ltd. at 480-2822 or visit their website at www.abifinancial.com.

Antigua and Barbuda offers facility for PetroCaribe initiative

Antigua and Barbuda has offered its facilities at the West Indies Oil Company to be the storage and transshipment point for fuel to the OECS territories under the PetroCaribe initiative.

The offer was made by the Antigua and Barbuda delegation at the 3rd Meeting of the OECS Energy Task Force which was held in St. John's.

"We have an agreement in principle from all of the countries to capitalize on Antigua and Barbuda's strategic positioning in the region in order to utilize our facilities as a storage and transshipment point. The plan at this point is to have the PetroCaribe fuel destined for the OECS territories shipped to Antigua and Barbuda and from here, the fuel will then be sent to the other participating territories," Ambassador to Latin America Joan Underwood announced.

She said that Antigua and Barbuda is prepared to work along with the member territories of the OECS to ensure that the arrangement is successful. "We have a number of logistical issues that need to be addressed but Antigua and Barbuda is very pleased that our neighbours have decided to put their trust and confidence in us by giving us the responsibility in terms of the coordinating role we will be required to play in order to make it successful."

During the Task Force Meeting, Prime Minister Spencer said that the PetroCaribe's arrangement presents the region with the opportunity to devise methods for the introduction of alternative



PM Spencer addressing the Task Force Meeting
To his left is Ambassador Joan Underwood

approaches to market access and correction of the various pricing imbalances that exist in most markets. "Our Energy policy must therefore address issues of partnerships with the private sector, pricing, trade in services, external trade negotiations and environment and energy conservation," he said.

Addressing the issue of the OECS formulating an Energy Policy, the Antiguan leader also said that "The PetroCaribe agreement already highlights important aspects of an Energy Policy for our sub-region. It provides the avenue for coordination and harmonization of energy policies where they do exist, including oil and oil derivatives, gas, electricity and the efficient use of these resources, technological cooperation, training, development of energy infrastructure and the harnessing of alternative sources of energy such as wind, solar and other kinds of energy."

Prime Minister Spencer also outlined that the PetroCaribe agreement should also be the launching pad for the regional integration of energy production and use, to provide benefits to the people of the region, in the form of greater efficiency along with adding stability to the energy market.

Prominent Member of the Diaspora passes

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of **Mr Gilbert (Desmond) Barthley**. He was taken from us on Sunday 14th May, 2006.

Mr Barthley was the longest serving Public Relations Officer in the Antigua and Barbuda National Association in London. He had a long career at the Post Office and was always on hand to help the youngsters in the community stay out of trouble with the police. He also worked at Lord's Cricket Grounds.

Mr Barthley was instrumental in helping to build this High Commission's database by supplying the names and addresses of Antiguans and Barbudans in the community who showed interest in receiving this newsletter.

He will be missed.

Thanksgiving for his life will take place on Thursday 25th May at St Mary's Church, Stoke Newington Church Street N16

Antigua and Barbuda Internet gaming dispute proceedings with US to move to the next stage

At the first meeting of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) since the passing of the April 3 deadline for its compliance with that body's recommendations and rulings on the Internet gaming dispute with Antigua and Barbuda, the US Ambassador to the WTO, Peter Allgeier, told the DSB that US ... "is now able to show that relevant US laws do not discriminate against foreign suppliers of remote gambling on horse racing [and] US laws do not discriminate and we can show this."

"We are aware from public statements that Antigua and Barbuda has a different understanding of the findings and conclusions of the DSB in this dispute. That understanding is incorrect. Unfortunately, Antigua and Barbuda's misreading of the results of this dispute has fostered misperceptions concerning their implications," said Ambassador Allgeier.

In his detailed response to the US' statement and the contents of its "Status Report" on its so-called "compliance" with the DSB findings, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the WTO, Dr. John W. Ashe, observed that... "the United States believes that the panel and the Appellate Body in our dispute simply got the matter wrong by concluding that the United States had not met its burden of proof with respect to the [relevant articles of the GATS]...[and] the position of the United States Department of Justice and the USTR [is using] to assert US' "compliance" is in fact no different than the position which was raised during the course of the proceedings and found unpersuasive by both the panel and the Appellate Body."

Ambassador Ashe, in seeking to underscore the apparent paradox in the US' position, told the DSB that the US was in fact taking a position that was already adjudicated in the dispute and simply asserting "...that exact position as a basis for coming into compliance with the recommendations and rulings of the DSB..."

Since the two sides disagree then the next step in the process would be invoking an "Article 21.5 compliance panel."

"This is a procedure used when a WTO member has been told to bring its laws into compliance with a WTO ruling, has taken some steps to comply, and the parties to the original dispute disagree as to the efficacy of the compliance efforts," said Mark Mendel, the legal adviser to Antigua and Barbuda.

"Under Article 21.5, the offending member's laws, as affected by the compliance efforts, are reevaluated for WTO consistency by a three-member panel, which is preferably comprised of the same three persons that made up the original panel. In some ways this is much like the original proceeding, providing for a full review by the panel, the issuance of an interim then final report and a right to appeal to the Appellate Body. This process, which has been invoked in various WTO disputes, can be initiated by Antigua and Barbuda at any time and could take well over a year to resolve," he said.

money remittance and transfer business in Antigua and Barbuda.

In January this year, Western Union suspended its services in Antigua and Barbuda under its agent the British American Insurance (BAI), in order to carry out an internal review of its operations.

Minister of Finance and the Economy Dr. Errol Cort during a Press Conference welcoming the team to Antigua, said "we are looking to Grace Kennedy for greater things to come, not just Western Union, but we know that you are a financial giant within the region and we are hoping that we will be able to partner with you in further developing the financial services in Antigua and Barbuda".

Regional Vice President of Western Union (Caribbean) Mr. Tarcisio Bortoletto said now that Western Union has returned to the market with a new agent and they now have a better working relationship with the government they are resuming operations on a better footing.

Also present was Mr. Noel Greenland, International Marketing Manager of Grace Kennedy Information Services. Greenland said his company is overjoyed to be operating in Antigua. He also added that the Antiguan public can expect only the best service from Western Union since its aim is to serve and please its customers.

Western Union resumes operations

On the 24th April Minister of Finance and the Economy Dr. Errol Cort officially presented to the Jamaican-based company Grace Kennedy, the new agent for Western Union, a permit to operate a





Minister Colin Derrick during the sessions

Senator Colin Derrick attends Justice Ministers of the Américas meeting in Santo Domingo

Minister of Justice Senator Colin Derrick represented Antigua and Barbuda at the 6th Meeting of Ministers of Justice and General Prosecutors of the Américas (VI REMJA) from April 24 to 26, in Santo Domingo with the topic of the prisons and the international cooperation in the area forensics.

The meeting addressed, among other things, the reform of the justice system, the reorganization of Police, Judicial and Penitentiary systems; all designed to protect the fundamental rights of persons against any form of abuse or violence and to guarantee just treatment to those involved in penal processes and their reintegration into society.

This event also concentrated its interest on corrections, taking into account that the situation of the prison population and its deteriorating conditions has worsened in the region for the last few years.

Antigua and Barbuda injects US\$6 Million into LIAT – Shareholdings to increase

The Government has invested the sum of US\$6 million into LIAT (1974) Ltd. The investment is provided within

the context of LIAT's ongoing restructuring programme aimed at restoring financial viability to the regionally owned carrier. The investment takes the form of an immediate infusion of US\$5 million to be followed by a further US\$1 million at a date to be agreed with LIAT management.

In announcing the investment, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Harold Lovell of Antigua and Barbuda, noted the critical role that LIAT played within the Antigua and Barbuda economy and the need for the airline's owners to provide financing for the airline during its transition to a more low cost operation. The Minister noted that the Government of Antigua and Barbuda had confidence in the new Business Plan being pursued by LIAT which was aimed at improving performance and productivity through a number of measures including the use of new technologies, strengthening the airlines marketing capabilities, and introduction of more direct services and new routes.

The Minister noted that while LIAT had recently been successful in relation to a number of important achievements including introduction of ticket-less travel, a new low-cost ticketing system for advance purchases, and commercial arrangements with BWIA, that continuing high fuel prices and an extremely competitive airline industry had adversely affected LIAT's performance during the first quarter of 2006.

Minister Lovell noted that as was the case with other regional airlines, LIAT's owners had therefore seen it necessary to invest finances into the upgrading and operation of the carrier during this period. He noted that the investment by the Government of Antigua and

Barbuda followed an earlier investment of US\$10M by the Government of Barbados, and that discussions were planned with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for financing of various elements of the airlines medium term to long term development plans.

The decision by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to provide additional investment into the company is expected to increase the shareholding of Antigua and Barbuda within the company to over 30%, and allowing for the appointment of three Antigua and Barbuda Directors to the LIAT Board of Directors. Other principal shareholders in LIAT are the governments of Barbados and St Vincent and The Grenadines and BWIA. Additionally a number of OECS owned banks, private corporations, credit unions, and other investors also have shareholding in the regionally owned company including airline staff.

LIAT will celebrate fifty years of service to the Caribbean in October 2006. In addition to its role as a leading Caribbean carrier the airline is also seen as a key instrument of regional integration including efforts for establishment of a Caribbean Single Market. The airline presently serves destinations throughout the eastern Caribbean from The Dominican Republic in the north to Guyana in the south.



Mill Reef Club makes donation to Holberton Hospital

The Mill Reef Club has made another substantial donation to the Holberton Hospital in the form of four Metalysse medication from the Mill Reef Club to assist patients who have had a heart attack.

In presenting the medication to the Hospital Administrator Gary Thomas, Dr Madeline Fraser, a member of the Mill Reef Club said that the medication will improve the blood supply to the heart muscle and break down clots activating a natural enzyme in the blood.

The cost of the Metalysse medication is \$3,260.00 each

Dr Fraser also noted that this is the fourteenth time in 3 years that the Mill Reef Club has donated the Metalysse medication to the Holberton Hospital.

In accepting the donation, Mr. Thomas said that he was grateful for the contribution and he hopes that the Mill Reef Club will continue to make similar donations to the health institution.

Over the years, according to Mr. Thomas, the Mill Reef Club has donated over US\$6 million towards the country while \$60,000 was given to the Holberton Hospital to upgrade the facility.

The Club has already donated a golf cart for the laundry room, two industrial size machines and a hot water system, linens, chairs, curtains, patients call systems, bed side tables, and refurbishing the semi private rooms on Edward Ward.

The Mill Reef Club was formed in 1948 and started making contributions to Antigua and Barbuda in the early 1950s.



Minister of Labour, Dr Jacqui Quinn-Leandro (centre) presenting cheque to Shelly Clarke (left) and Maurice Christian (right) of the TUC

Government presents \$50,000 subvention to Trade Union Congress

Minister of Labour Public Administration and Empowerment Dr. Jacqui Quinn Leandro handed over a cheque in the amount of \$EC50,000.00 to the Antigua and Barbuda Trade Union Congress (ABTUC). This grant was an election promise made by the United Progressive Party to the TUC and is now being honoured by the government of Antigua and Barbuda.

While making the presentation of the first annual subvention to the TUC, the Minister of Labour noted that it was the very first time that a government was partnering with the Unions in this country. "I would like to call it a red letter day," she said. "Today through this subvention, my government is assisting in improving your viability as an organization."

The Minister had high praises for the TUC and in her remarks stated, "I want to say to you that the TUC is an admirable effort, a bold and laudable step taken by all the Unions of this country to unite in peace and harmony; to set aside political,

ideological and philosophical differences to work for a common cause in the best interest of Labour and specifically for workers in this country."

President of the TUC, Maurice Christian thanked the government for sharing the workers taxes with the workers representation. "I am pleased that the government lived up to its word," he said. Christian shared that the TUC at present has annual revenue of less than \$5000.00.

Christian stated that the funds would go toward training Trade Union educators to enlighten workers about the labour code and workers rights and some of it will help to provide education about AIDS in the workplace.

Shelly Clarke, Treasurer of the TUC, thanked the Labour Minister for the tangible support and tangible proof of the pledge made by the UPP during the 2004 campaign. Clarke made it clear to those who would think otherwise that the TUC is not for sale and pointed out that it is not unusual for governments to

Support trade union congresses.

Present at the handing over ceremony was Ambassador Keithlyn Smith, Antigua's Ambassador to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Ambassador Richie Richardson participates in photo exhibition and panel discussion in Toronto Canada

CEO of the Antigua and Barbuda Sports Tourism Alliance (ABSTA), Ambassador Richie Richardson represented the Cricket Diaspora and his nation, at "Cricket: reality, respect, reward" – photo exhibition and panel discussion in Toronto Canada.

According to organizers of this event, the West Indies preparation for the hosting of the ICC World Cup Cricket 2007 is stimulating the interest of Canada's cricket community, especially given the aspiration of the Canadian National Cricket Team, which will compete in the quadrennial event.

With the kind endorsement of Toronto City Councillor Michael Thompson, and of the Consulate of Antigua and Barbuda in Toronto, photographer Michael Phang presented the photo exhibition 'conjuring cricket': images of a culture, at Metro Hall from April 24 – 30.

The exhibition comprised images created during a recent visit to Antigua, the country that will host the ICC Cricket World Cup quarter final matches. "These images explore a nation on the verge of welcoming the world, a nation in which cricket is more passion than a simple pastime," reflected Phang.

On the evening of April 26th, Antigua and Barbuda's Consul General Mme. Madeline Blackman hosted a public reception followed by a panel discussion. The Panel Discussion focussed on the theme; "Cricket: reality, respect, reward", in which Ambassador Richardson played a major part.

With ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 fast approaching and the excitement and enthusiasm beginning to pervade the Caribbean, Richardson said he was very excited to have participated in "Cricket: Reality, Respect, Reward" a Photo Exhibition and Panel Discussion in Toronto on April 26th.

"This event featured grass root cricket in Antigua and Barbuda and our plans and preparation for World Cup 2007, which will no doubt give Antigua and Barbuda priceless exposure in Canada and indeed North America as a whole," remarked Ambassador Richardson.

Errol Townsend, President of the Ontario Cricket Association and one of five selectors to Canada's Senior Team, moderated the proceedings. The panel also featured Ben Sennik, President of the Canadian Cricket Association, Andy Pick, Team Coach of the Canadian National Cricket Team, Film-maker Sanjay Talreja, and Manu Sharma, President of the Ryerson Student Cricket Association.

Antigua and Barbuda receives CARICOM support on Internet Gaming dispute with the US

CARICOM has agreed it is imperative for the region to bring to bear the maximum levels of diplomatic support to Antigua and Barbuda on the WTO Internet Gaming matter with the United States.

This was one of the agreements reached at the recently concluded 9th

Meeting of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations COFCOR in Grenada.

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, who attended the two-day meeting, said that CARICOM agreed that the US non-compliance with the WTO Ruling had far-reaching implication that extended beyond Internet gaming to the entire sector of services.

He said that the grouping agreed that CARICOM Member States should provide political and diplomatic support to Antigua and Barbuda in its efforts to have the US comply with the WTO ruling. "To assist the process, Antigua and Barbuda will be required to prepare and forward to the CARICOM Secretariat a dossier on the issue outlining the background, the initial and appellate rulings of the WTO and actions required of the US in respect of compliance with the rulings," PM Spencer stated.

The Prime Minister stated that he has already instructed Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the WTO, Dr. John Ashe, to prepare the dossier, as the CARICOM Secretariat along with the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery CRNM would consider the best way forward to provide the support Antigua and Barbuda needs at this time.

The dispute between Antigua and Barbuda and the USA over the Internet Gaming matter has moved to the stage of invoking Article 21.5 compliance panel since both sides cannot agree on the way forward.

This is a procedure used when a WTO member has been told to bring its laws into compliance with a WTO ruling, has taken some steps

to comply, and the parties to the original dispute disagree as to the efficacy of the compliance efforts.

Under Article 21.5, the offending member's laws, as affected by the compliance efforts, are reevaluated for WTO consistency by a three-member panel, which is preferably comprised of the same three persons that made up the original panel. In some ways this is much like the original proceeding, providing for a full review by the panel, the issuance of an interim then final report and a right to appeal to the Appellate Body.



International Social Services (ISS) Fair

International Social Services (ISS) Fair was held at the Kensington Town Hall on Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th May. Antigua and Barbuda's Stall was well received, thanks to the tireless efforts of Mrs Roberts and her helpers.

Princess Alexandra visited Antigua and Barbuda's stall where she purchased some items (see photograph top right).

The Fair had the honour of listening to the melodious sounds of Harry Hughes and his steel-band. The organisers of the Fair were extremely thankful for the entertainment they provided to the many shoppers as they entered the hall. Their music was commented upon and enjoyed by all.

The feature item for the Antigua and Barbuda stall was, of course, Cavalier Rum. We are always grateful to Mrs Manners and Mrs Molly Richards who we can always depend on to make our coconut sugar cakes, peanut sugar

cakes and coconut fudge (Antiguan style).

To those of you who were able to support us at the Fair, some for the first time, Thank You.



(above) Just a few photographs of the Antigua and Barbuda Stall at the ISS Fair and Harry Hughes and his steel-band



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