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The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission Official Newsletter

A newsletter produced by the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission
London for nationals and friends of Antigua and Barbuda

Issue 146



**“Each
Endeavour-
ing all
Achieving”**



**National Heroes
Day
9th December**

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**Prime Minister
Dr. The Hon. W. Baldwin
Spencer
Christmas Message**

My fellow Antiguan and Barbudans, residents and friends, once again it is the season of peace, joy and goodwill. It is a season of celebration. At this time we celebrate the entry into the world of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose simple birth is a lesson in humility to all of us. The story of Jesus changed the world and that is why we celebrate his birth every year around this time.

It is a story that has transformed most of our lives, filling our hearts with joy and inspiring us to do good. This Christmas story has propelled us to love each other more, serve others and to help the less fortunate in our society. It is that time when we are called upon to be closer with our families and to give thanks for His blessings.

The story of Jesus’ birth also reminds us to have faith in humanity – believing that we all have some good within us.

Most importantly, the Christmas story admonishes us to be of service to others – be compassionate to all and to treat others, as we would desire to be treated.

Christmas is a time for family. I welcome all Antiguan and Barbudans who have returned home to celebrate the season and to visit relatives and friends. There are also many visitors to our shores, who might be experiencing their first Antiguan and Barbudan Christmas. I wish them peace and happiness that this season brings. I extend special Christmas greetings to those individuals who provide services to our nation at this time, while we enjoy the company of family and friends.

Special tribute is paid to our law enforcement officers and members of the military and security forces. Special commendation and wishes of peace and great joy are also extended to our doctors, nurses, emergency medical personnel, fire officers and those who care for the elderly, the less fortunate and our special young ones. It is my hope that the joys and good cheer that the celebration of Christ’s birth brings will be yours this Christmas.

Even as we partake in the festivities, food and fellowship, this is also a time for quiet sober reflection. As we approach the end of the year, I think we can all agree that

2011 was a year of challenges. As a country we continue to deal with the fallout from the global economic crisis and other incidents that have impacted our economy negatively.

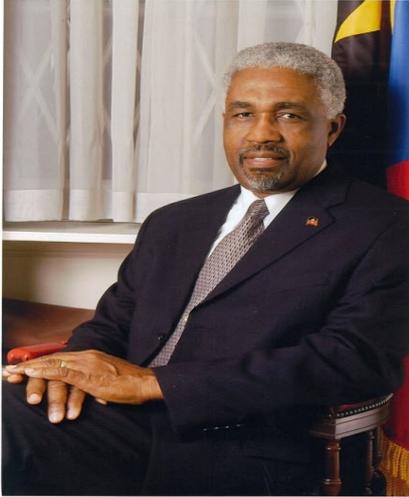
The Government, working hand in hand with the people, will continue to respond boldly to the many economic challenges that confront our nation. We will continue to count on the support of you the people of this country as we look forward to the work ahead in the coming New Year.

It is my hope, that during this period of peace and goodwill, that we will all commit ourselves to developing a culture of service to others. May we think first of the needs of those who are less fortunate than we are. In that way, we will truly be reflecting the spirit of Christmas.

My wife Jackie; daughter J’nai, son Juno and my entire family, join me in sending good wishes to you the citizens, residents and friends of Antigua and Barbuda.

Let us all thank God for his love, protection and guidance throughout 2011 and for giving us His Son; who is the Saviour of the World. I wish God’s richest blessing on each and every one of you during this Holy and Happy Season. A Merry Christmas to one and all.

High Commissioner's Christmas and New Year Message



His Excellency Dr Carl B Roberts
High Commissioner to the Court of St James's
October 2004 -

Last Christmas, I took the opportunity to speak to you about the importance of remembering the elderly, the poor, and the less fortunate, especially in light of the adverse weather we all faced during the festive season. This year, I would like to move away from focusing only on Christmas/New Year's and the parties and celebrations many of us will participate in, and focus on the reason for the holidays, something which many often forget to consider.

Although Christmas now seems to be more associated with Santa Claus and turkey dinners, let us not forget the true reason for the celebrations - the birth of our Lord and Saviour. Similarly, the New Year has become more associated with drinking than on reflection of the year past – the blessings we have received - and preparation for the year to come.

There are many other such disassociations in the holidays of our Nation. The 1st of May was once celebrated as a day recognising the achievements of the labour movement. It has moved to the first Monday in May in some countries while in others it is celebrated on a day later in the year. For example, in the USA, in 1884 the American Federation of Organized Trade and Labor Unions demanded an eight-hour workday to come into effect as of May 1, 1886. This resulted in the general strike and the Haymarket Riot of 1886, but eventually also in the official sanction of the eight-hour workday so many of us experience today.

Unfortunately many other activities have crept into the commemoration of this date. Some of these are exemplary as is the case in Jamaica where, following the clash of Trade Unions in 1972, Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley promoted Labour Day as a showcase for the importance of labour to the development of Jamaica, and a day of voluntary community participation to beneficial projects. Since then, Labour Day has been not only a public holiday but also a day of mass community involvement around the country. In other locations other activities have become so divisive as to detract from the celebration of the labour movement and the unity of the fight for the benefit of the working person.

The 1st of August is now known more as a time to dance through the streets in little clothing, than a time to celebrate our emancipation from slavery. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 ended slavery in the British Empire on the 1st August 1834. This day became the date when all former slaves were emancipated and has since been commemorated in many countries with much pride. While we celebrate our Carnival in Antigua and Barbuda, let us also include something to remind us of the origins of the event. The freeing of our ancestors from the chains of ownership of the slave masters, along with the recognition of those who fought to begin the process towards freedom or rebel against those who opposed their freedom should be uppermost in our minds. Let us remember those like King Court, at this time with programmes on the radio and television. The theme should always be – “Lest we forget”. Slavery comes in many forms and may not always appear in its physical form.

The first of November is the day we celebrate the independence of our nation. It means we have become of age and are on our own. Yet the focus of the Food Fair and the Youth Rally seem to take prominence over the prize of the day; that is being masters of our own destiny. Let there be in our hearts a sense of national pride and a willingness to do our utmost to make our countrymen and countrywomen stand with pride. **“Raise the standard and raise it boldly, answer now to duty's call, to the service of your country, sparing nothing, giving all. Gird your loins and join the battle against fear, hate and poverty, each endeavouring, all achieving, live in peace where man is free”**. At this time of year, I ask you not to forget the reason for the season, or for any of our holidays. I trust that your Christmas was happy and I take this opportunity to wish a Blessed and Prosperous New Year to one and all.

Address by His Excellency Dr Carl B W Roberts, Am- bassador at the 100th Ses- sion of the Council of In- ternational Organization for Migration

United Nations, Palace des Na-
tions, Geneva—5th December 2011,

“Director General Ambassador Lacy, members and delegates of the Council, it is an honour for me to stand before this meeting of the 100th Session of the Council of this august body. It is also important for a number of reasons especially as it gives me, as the representative of my beloved country, the opportunity to be present on the occasion when the Small Developing Island State of Antigua and Barbuda becomes one of the newest members of the International Organisation for Migration.

It is also significant for us to have our request for membership approved during the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of this organisation. Antigua and Barbuda is situated in the Caribbean and became a fully-fledged sovereign state on the 1st November 1981. It is a country of 365 white sandy beaches and idyllic climate. Its

population of 110 thousand citizens of many racial and religious origins living peacefully together makes it the ideal place to experience the warmth of the Caribbean. This year we too celebrated a significant milestone with 30 years of



Seen above from left to right: H E Mr Strohal, Chairman of the 100th Session of IOM, H E Dr Carl B W, Roberts, Ambassador Mr William Lacy Swing , Director General of IOM

Independence and by that you will immediately acknowledge that we are a young progressive country.

The composition of the population has clearly demonstrated the openness of our society and it is to be noted that the country has become home, temporarily or permanently, to migrants from many countries. In fact apart from many the customary influx of citizens of our neighbouring Caribbean countries,

Antigua and Barbuda has received immigrants from much further afield.

Membership allows Antigua and Barbuda, with the assistance of the various offices within the IOM, to build up its capacity to handle movement of migrants into and out of the country, to draw upon the research conducted by the IOM in tackling several of the developmental issues we face. This is needed in the prevailing financial crisis and downturn in national economies around the world.

High on the list, and in keeping with the strategic focus of the organisation, Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to further enhancing its developmental policy particularly in advance of the free movement of Caribbean Nationals with the sub-group of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (Caricom).

On behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I thank you for your kind consideration in admitting us into membership of the IOM and assure you of our highest regard”.

* * * * *

Hornsey Moravian Choir goes to Leicester

**Message from
Mr Brillheart James,
President, Barbuda
Association Leicester**



Hornsey Moravian Choir Shown above

My colleagues and I would like to thank His Excellency Dr Carl Roberts and the Hornsey Moravian Choir for the excellent performance at our concert on Sunday 20th November 2011. You did an excellent job. Please convey our

appreciation to all the choir members as well as to their families who accompanied them. Feedback from those attended has been very positive and from their ac-

count they would like to see another one organised in time to come.

Once again thank you very much for finding time, in spite of your busy schedule, to participate in such an event. Regards to your lovely wife from Leontine and myself.

20th November 2011

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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA JOINS THE IOM

Antigua and Barbuda's HE Dr Carl Roberts represented the State of Antigua and Barbuda at the 100th Session of the Council of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), where the country was formally admitted as a member. The ceremony took place earlier this month at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland where Antigua and Barbuda was among ten other countries admitted thus increasing the membership of the organisation to 146.

The IOM was established in 1951 and is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. IOM also works to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide

humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, be they refugees, displaced persons or other uprooted peoples.



HE Dr Carl B W Roberts above at the IOM Meeting Geneva

The IOM works in four broad areas of migration management: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and addressing forced migration.

In response to the Chairman's welcome, HE Dr Roberts remarked: "Membership allows Antigua and Barbuda, with the assistance of the

various offices within the IOM, to build up its capacity to handle movement of migrants into and out of the country, to draw upon the research conducted by the IOM in tackling several of the developmental issues we face. This is needed in the prevailing financial crisis and downturn in national economies around the world.

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For further information on the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission contact +44(0)2072580070 or visit www.antigua-barbuda.com

Ministry of Agriculture, IICA Collaborate To Increase Small Ruminant Production

Posted On: November 21, 2011



Two representatives from the Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA) visited Antigua to conduct an assessment as part of an agreement to assist the Ministry of Agriculture in improving the genetics of small ruminants.

Dr Manuel David Sanchez Hermosillo, representative for Dominican Republic and Una May Gordon, representative for Eastern Caribbean, conducted an assessment to derive ways in which Antigua and Barbuda could develop specific proposals to increase the production of sheep and goats.

This assessment stemmed from an agreement reached earlier this year between the Director General of

IICA Dr Victor Villalobos and Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & the Environment Hilson Baptiste, who pledged his commitment to support the development of the sector in five critical areas.

Among the areas listed were building technical capacity at the Master & PhD levels through scholarships; access to germplasm for roots and tubers, sweet potato and cassava and white potato; genetic improvement of small ruminants; enhancement of communication between IICA and the ministry; and development proposals for improvement of technology to enhance communication exchanges.

The IICA officials met with Chief Veterinary and Livestock Officer Dr Oona Edwards, Deputy Director Astley Joseph and other technical officers to hammer out areas of focus under the programme for genetic improvements of small ruminants.

At the meeting at the Ministry of

Agriculture participants agreed that emphasis should be placed on production of forage, housing and management of flocks.

As part of the assessment process, several farms were examined. A visit was also made to the Titan Group of Companies where IICA is currently conducting a Biodigester Pilot Project. Gordon explained that when the system would have been fully installed it would be used as a training tool for other farmers. Gordon explained that "Biodigesters can play a pivotal role in integrated farming systems by reducing health risks, facilitating control of pollution and at the same time adding value to livestock excreta through production of biogas and improved nutrient status of the effluent as fertilizer for ponds and crop land."

The team is expected to present a report on the findings and the way forward at the end of the assessment.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA AT THE 8TH WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The eight Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was held in Geneva, Switzerland from the 15th to 17th December 2011. Antigua and Barbuda was represented by a three-member delegation comprising HE Mr Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary, Division of Trade, Industry and Commerce Antigua and Barbuda, HE Dr Carl B Roberts, High Commissioner to the Court of St. James's and Deputy Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the WTO, and Ms Sharon James, Trade Commissioner, Division of Trade, Industry and Commerce Antigua and Barbuda.

HE Mr Colin Murdoch, as Head of Delegation, addressed the Ministerial Conference on the 17th December on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda and highlighted the plight of Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVE) and



H E Dr Carl B W Roberts and H E Mr Colin Murdoch representing Antigua and Barbuda at the WTO Ministerial Meeting Geneva

Small Island States (SIDS) under which classifications Antigua and Barbuda falls. Ambassador Murdoch also reminded the confer-

ence of the unresolved issue which exists between Antigua and Barbuda and the USA and called upon the WTO Secretariat to be more proactive in addressing imbalance in the Dispute Resolution system particularly when small member states come up against larger members in trade disputes.

The Conference took up the accession of Russia, Samoa and Montenegro and adopted a number of resolutions in the final session. A number of OECs Member States were also present at the Conference and met before, as well as during, the Conference to coordinate their presentations.

Antigua and Barbuda Pensioners' Social Security Life Certificates

Kindly note that Pensioners' Life Certificates can be witnessed and signed at the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission, 2nd Floor, 45 Crawford Place, London W1H 4LP
For more information or to make an appointment please Telephone 020 7258 0070



REMINDER NOTICE

NON-MACHINE READABLE PASSPORTS WILL BE OUT-OF-DATE BY THE END OF 2011...PLEASE APPLY TO RENEW YOUR PASSPORTS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE

New Style Caribbean Community Antigua and Barbuda Passport

Sir James "Bags" Thomas



The official funeral of the late Sir James "Bags" Thomas was held on Friday 2nd December 2011 at the Spring Gardens Moravian Church. Among those giving tributes were

Prime Minister (Ag) Hon. Harold Lovell; Hon. Gaston Browne; the Community Players; the children and grandchildren of Sir James and the Greenbay Moravian Choir and Men's Fellowship. The eulogy was read by Dr. Patrick Lewis and the sermon preached by Reverend Joseph Nicholas.

The last remains of Sir James was available for public viewing at Straffie's Funeral Home from on the morning of the funeral after which the cortege proceeded to Spring Gardens Moravian Church. The Service of Thanksgiving began at 12:00 noon.

Flags were flown at half mast throughout the State and at overseas Missions on the day of the funeral. Sir James "Bags" Thomas was

given a three (3) volley gun salute and his last remains were interred in the Greenbay Moravian Churchyard Cemetery.

Sir James was High Commissioner to the Court of St James's in the UK and also served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Antigua and Barbuda to the People's Republic of China, Venezuela, Russian Federation, OECs, ACS, UNESCO and CARICOM.

He became Dean of the Caribbean Diplomatic Corps in London from 1987 to 1995.

To the Family and Friends of the late Sir James "Bags" Thomas we extend our deep condolences for your loss.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA MAKING WAVES ON THE WORLD STAGE

Antigua and Barbuda's HE Dr. Carl Roberts was recently elected as the President of the Administration and Budget Committee, one of the four committees for the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE) on the 150th session of the General Assembly held in Paris.

The BIE was created by an international Convention in Paris, France in 1928, which established the rights and responsibilities of Expo organisers

and participants. The role of the BIE is to supervise and ensure the application of this Convention. The Administration and Budget Committee oversees the budget of the BIE and is responsible for the financial activities of the organisation.

The first Expo took place in London in 1852, from that the BIE was founded in 1928 in Paris and since then this intergovernmental organisation has been representing the international community in the domain of Universal Exhibitions. The World Expos strive to offer States,

experts and civil society a unique dialogue platform, as well as offering a venue to respond to pressing global issues whilst also strengthening the relationship between regions.

The BIE next expos are due to take place in Yeosu in 2012 and Milan in 2015.

For further information on the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission contact +44(0)20 7258 0070 or visit www.antigua-barbuda.com

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA RECEIVE ACCOLADES

The recent Third Ben TV Diplomatic Awards 2011 saw the Antigua and Barbuda High Commission, Dr. Carl Roberts, receive two awards in the category of 'Most Positive Projection of a Country's Image Abroad' and for 'Economic and Cultural Diplomacy'.

Antigua and Barbuda's High Commission won these sought after awards by impressing the judging

panel after several unannounced visits to the twin island destination on customer service, display of promotional materials, easy access to the mission's services, easy accessibility and navigation on their website, cultural and economic diplomacy, how easy is it to get a visa and passport and how easy is it to establish a business in their country.

The panel was also impressed with the destination's stand at this year's World Travel Market.

The Ben TV Diplomatic Award's recognises and celebrates the diplomatic achievements made within the African, Caribbean, Asia and Pacific missions in the UK.

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Nation celebrates its heroes

As the nation celebrated the life and accomplishments of the men and women who made sterling contributions to the twin island state for yet another year, Antiguans and Barbudans were called upon to use National Heroes Day as an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices and contributions made by the national heroes.

The annual commemoration began with a church service at the Ebenezer Methodist Church at 8 am. Citations were read to the accomplishments and distinctions of the country's four deceased national heroes as well as the only

surviving one, Sir Vivian Richards.

Former Ambassador Lionel Max Hurst spoke on the accomplishments of the former premier and father of the nation Sir Vere Cornwall Bird Sr. Senator David Massiah made a presentation on the life of Sir George Walter. Junior Prosper spoke about King Court. TOR Memorial School Principal Hyacinth Matthew did a presentation on Dame Nellie Robinson while Fitzroy Brann gave remarks on Sir Vivian.

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer brought the curtains down with closing remarks. Spencer re-iterated his commitment to

expunging the criminal convictions of slave rebellion leader King Court, also known as Prince Klass, and others with him who were executed for the uprising 275 years ago.

Spencer said he wanted to do the same for the 13 Antiguans involved in a far more recent struggle.

Following the service there were wreath-laying ceremonies at the Public Cemetery for Dame Nellie Robinson, the Prince Klass Monument, the Sir VC Bird Bust and Heroes Park.



ARTHUR TORRINGTON CBE

In January 2011 in the Queen's New Year's honour's list Arthur Torrington received a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) medal from Her Royal Highness for outstanding service to the community, especially for his work in conserving the memory and writings of Olaudah Equiano.

Equiano was a former enslaved African, able seaman, war-veteran (Royal Navy), businessman, explorer, writer, and an abolitionist who lived in 18-century England. He published an autobiography titled *The Interesting Narrative* in March 1789; it was a best seller, and went into nine editions to 1794. He worked alongside other abolitionists including Granville Sharpe, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce.

From being relatively unknown to many millions of people in the UK, Arthur took the leading role in working to make Olaudah Equiano become a household figure. He and Sam King MBE (the first black Mayor of the London Borough of Southwark) founded The Equiano Society in 1996, and by 9 February 2009, the name of Equiano (also known as Gustavus Vassa, for most of his life) was enshrined on a plaque in St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, where he was baptised two hundred and fifty years before.

Equiano, a seaman at the time, often visited Antigua in the 1760s, but he was enslaved to Robert King, a plantation owner who lived in Montserrat. Equiano bought his freedom in 1766 for £40.

Arthur's great-grandmother Mary Peters migrated to Antigua from St Kitts in the 1920s with her daughter Florence and her husband, Mr Le Blanc, a policeman from Dominica. But, Mary had first migrated to British Guiana at the age of 21 in the late 1800s where Florence and her older sister Celestina were born. The latter remained in British Guiana when Mary decided to re-

turn to her place of birth St Kitts after 1918. The Le Blancs are a family who make an important contribution to Antigua.

Arthur is now working on a new project, *EQUIANO in EUROPE*, which will see Equiano featured as a key figure in Britain, The Netherlands, Germany and Russia, highlighting *The Interesting Narrative* which was published in English, Dutch (1790), Germany (1792), and Russian (1794).

The Equiano Society also publicises the life and times of Ignatius Sancho and Ottobah Cugoano (Black Britons) who made significant contributions to African literary and cultural heritage.

Arthur received an OBE in 2002 for his service community relations and to Windrush Foundation, a charity that publicises the history and heritage of African Caribbean men and women who settled in the UK after WWII, and who laid the foundation here for other migrants. Windrush Foundation also promotes good race and community relations.

Royal Visit to Antigua

Antigua and Barbuda is set to receive a visit from a member of the Royal family as part of a global tour celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Senior royals will visit the Queen's 15 realms - nations where the sovereign is head of state - major Commonwealth countries, and other destinations with close links to the UK next year.

Prince Edward, The Earl and

his wife Sophie, Countess of Wessex will tour the Caribbean, visiting Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago.

According to a Buckingham Palace spokesperson, the details and timings of the visits are still under discussion with the host governments.

The tour is scheduled for the first half of 2012.

The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II is the forthcoming international celebration in 2012 marking the 60th anniversary of her accession to the thrones of seven countries, on the death of her father, King George VI, on 6 February 1952.

Queen Victoria in 1897 is so far the only other monarch in British history to have celebrated a Diamond Jubilee.

15th December 2011

Valuation on Half Moon Bay nearly doubled by court ruling

Government now has to pay almost double what an earlier valuation board had recommended as fair compensation for the Half Moon Bay (HMB) property.

The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court ruled that reimbursement should be US \$45.5 million and not US \$23 million as put forward in 2007 by a government-appointed Valuations Board.

HMB Holdings, which owned the property, has been locked in a legal battle with government since 1998 after the state seized the resort. It has been lying derelict since it

was damaged by Hurricane Luis in 1995.

Attorney General Justin Simon said he is surprised and very disappointed at the Supreme Court's decision.

"I am not able to say what the rationale of the court was because I have not yet received a copy of the decision," Simon said. "In fact, my information from counsel who held papers for me was that the written decision was not ready and we would be getting it in a few days. So when I get the decision I will then assess what the government's next step would be in that matter."

Managing Director of HMB Holdings Natalia Querard said board

and shareholders will have to review the ruling of the Appeals Court.

"Given the interest that has accrued on the US \$45.5 million, it has taken us over the US \$60 million (mark). Actually it is at US \$65.7 million at this point. So yes, the wait is painful and wasteful but the figures are going to grow and continue to grow. So it is likely we will accept this decision without taking it further but I am not guaranteeing anything at this point," Querard said.

Querard has in the past accused the government of using delaying tactics to avoid paying the sums owed and she said it is now up to government to take action.

Renovated Building To Be Handed Over To IRD Shortly



The Inland Revenue Department (IRD) will have a new home in just a few weeks. Minister of Works, the Hon. Trevor Walker announced dur-

ing the Budget Debate, that the newly renovated building will be officially turned over to the government in shortly. "By the end of January 2012, the Inland Revenue Department will be occupying that building" Walker added.

The Minister said the building was furnished and retrofitted during the renovations. "I am particularly happy because it has been a long road and the Inland Revenue Department is a very important institution." the minister said. Walker adds that he is proud that the government had the

vision to insure that the department had adequate facilities. "One of the major advantages of relocating the Inland Revenue building and having a basically new infrastructure there, is that the government was able to install and upgrade the infrastructure in such a way that we are going have the latest technology" Walker said.

The renovated building that will house the Inland Revenue Department is located at Woods Mall.

12th December 2011

Major Road Works Programme Slated For 2012



Public demand for better roads has been favourably addressed in the 2012 national budget.

Approximately \$20 million will be spent on the national road works programme. Major maintenance is slated for a number of main roads and arteries leading into St.

John's city, and some village access roads.

The works will improve the safety, strength and general condition of the road network, and addresses the control and disposal of runoff water. In addition, approximately two miles of road will be paved in several locations, including McKinnon's and Cooks Estate by the end of 2012.

The Ministry will also complete infrastructural drainage works on two major roads, the Sir George Walter Highway and Friars Hill Road, to alleviate longstanding flooding problems.

In keeping with the Government's 'war on waste' objective, the Ministry of Works will engage skilled contractors and set up monitoring mechanisms to obtain value for money.

To ensure the success of this move, the Ministry has placed at the top of its list of priorities the development of a Three-Year Strategic Plan which focuses on training and acquiring skilled personnel.

Under the Plan, at least 100 persons will benefit from short term job-specific training in the coming year.

11th December 2011

Sen. Beazer Defends Fisheries Complex



Amidst criticism of the location of the Barbuda Fisheries complex, Senator the Hon. Randolph Beazer is defending the site.

Beazer said that a lot of planning and discussion went into the choice of location. "As far as I'm concerned the complex is in the best place possible. The stakeholders involved, studied long and hard. We took the professional view, we took the layman's view, and we took local knowledge of Barbuda and finally came up with that particular location. It is serving the people of Barbuda well." Beazer said.

The senator added that the complex was made to assist Barbuda fishermen and not larger entities. "This

project was intended... the artisanal fisheries project...by the Japanese, to ensure that there is sustainable development in the way Barbuda people fish." Massiah said. He said the complex was not designed to encourage capital expenses on mega and mini trawlers and big fishing boats. He added that the complex caters to the unique nature of the fishing sector in Barbuda.

The Artisanal Fisheries Complex was officially opened on August 10th 2011.

Barbuda hotels: K-Club to be sold, Beach House to be re-marketed

The owners of the K-Club resorts on the sister isle Barbuda have decided to sell the property after eight years of closure. Through a recent meeting with owners of both the Beach House and K-Club hotels, the Barbuda Council has been seeking to determine the prospects of the properties as revenue generators for the sister island.

Chairman of the Council Kelvin Punter told the Daily OBSERVER that Mariuccia Mandelli, owner of the K-Club hotel, through her lawyer indi-

cated that the property will be sold to a potential investor and they have already received interest from a number of persons.

"In the past the owner of the property had indicated interest in re-opening the property, but over the years she has gotten older and not being able to travel back and forth so it was decided so sell the property as a last resort," Punter said. The council is expected to hear more on this development in the coming year.

The Council has also received favorable response from Laurus Master Fund, current owner of the Beach House hotel. Punter said as of January 2011, the company will employ

the services of a local marketing firm to market the property as a viable investment. "Hopefully this will stimulate enough interest in the property," the chairman added.

As it relates to prospects for the New Year, the council chairman hopes that a drawdown from the 2011 budgetary allocation for the council will improve its financial woes. The council employs close to 75 per cent of the Barbudan population, and Punter said they council will be seeking alternative measures to provide for these employees. "You have to give people an option, and new found investment has to be the way to improve the situation," he said.

Dr. Cort Calls For Efficiency in Public Sector



Debate on the 2012 budget commenced in the Upper House of Parliament on Monday, 19th December 2011.

Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Dr. the Hon. Errol Cort, in his opening statement, said he supported the proposals outlined in the budget presentation.

Cort said that the bulk of collections coming from indirect taxes should be examined in some areas. He added that government must also look at how some officials perform various tasks in the public sector. "We need to really examine those areas, and then make a determination ultimately. If we have a cadre of highly trained competent individuals to do the job, do we need to have the numbers that we currently have? All of these are rhetorical questions, but questions that would need proper answers." Cort said.

The Leader of Government Business in the Senate adds that if downsizing is considered, the re-training of these public officials will be necessary so that they can be employable in the private sector or elsewhere. "If we were ever to contemplate any downsizing...before any such thing is done, one would have to make ensure that all persons who would be subject to that are properly and adequately retrained to be able to take jobs in the private sector." Cort added.

He called on locals to make investments in the country to further generate revenue in the economy.

20th December 2011

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Government Implements Public Sector Transformation Strategy

Public sector transformation has been identified as a core component of the NEST Plan and remains a priority for the Government to achieve its strategic objectives of institutional strengthening and enhanced service delivery.

In this regard a number of key initiatives within the public sector transformation action plan have been completed, while others are currently being implemented.

"We have inherited a public service architecture that is not well suited for the fast paced environment in which business is conducted. It is a structure which must be remodelled." Minister of Finance, Economy, and Public Administration Hon. Harold Lovell said.

"To achieve the overall goal of a transformed and modernised public sector, there are a number of activities we must complete. Already we have made significant strides in improving operational efficiency

within the public sector. Every ministry has either reengineered multiple business processes or is reviewing current procedures." He added.

The Public Sector Transformation Strategy will address succession planning for public sector leaders. This will help to develop public sector leaders who are qualified and equipped to navigate the difficult and often turbulent waters of economic change. Earlier this year, with assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat, Permanent Secretaries and selected senior public sector officers participated in a Leadership Development workshop.

Transformation will include job re-classification reform, in which regard an exercise is underway to update and properly document job descriptions in the service.

A census of employees is currently being conducted to obtain critical data that can inform policy and management decisions. And with the assistance of the Organisation of American States (OAS), a review of the legislative framework governing the public service has

been conducted and concrete recommendations made.

A Public Service Bill and Regulations have been drafted and are being reviewed with a view to having wider stakeholder discussions in the first quarter of 2012. Additionally Draft Public Service Commission Regulations are being prepared and will be brought before Parliament during 2012.

Functional and efficiency reviews have been conducted in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and Works and Transport. The recommendations from these reviews have been accepted by Government and are being implemented in the respective ministries.

This year, Antigua and Barbuda also participated in a region-wide collaborative effort with the Canada School of Public Service, aimed at designing Caribbean leadership development programmes for middle and senior level public sector managers. It is expected that the first group of Antiguan and Barbudan public sector leaders will begin training in 2012

Annual Zone III Spellbound December 14, 2011



This highly contested activity was

held over two encounters in November. Ten schools participated in this annual activity which was again sponsored by Chefs 2 U Events Ltd, the second year in a row.

In Encounter I, all schools participated in spelling selected words. In the end, three schools with the highest scores advanced to the finals which were held on 23rd November.

This year, Freemansville, Cobbs Cross, and St. John's Lutheran qualified in the final round. They will go on to represent the Zone in the national championships early next year along with defending champions J.T

Ambrose. The best speller in the series was Lemuel Richards of Cobbs Cross School. After a very fierce competition between the two persons left standing, Lemuel edged out Caryl Schouten of Bendals School.

Chefs 2U representative Charmaine Goveia was on hand to give remarks and to present winning trophies to the teams. The Ministry of Education is pleased to be in partnership with this company and salutes its effort to further education in Antigua and Barbuda.

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Christmas Donation Projects December 22, 2011

The Kiwanis Club of St. John's Antigua visited and made donations to



both the Mount St. John's Medical Centre (Paediatric Unit) and the Holberton Hospital Care Project on

Thursday 15th December 2011, on a mission to bring Christmas cheer to the children currently housed at the institutions.

The Pediatric Unit at the MSJMC was presented with a food package, Christmas gifts for the children and a fan. Ward Manager, Sis Downer, expressed her gratitude on behalf of the Unit, stating that the children will definitely enjoy their gifts. Similarly, Mrs. Charles on behalf of the Holberton Hospital Care Project thanked the Club for their package also consisting of food items and gifts for the Children, and wished God's blessings on the Club.

President of the Kiwanis Club of St. John's, Noel Browne, emphasized that the Club was grateful for the opportunity to do its part in spreading joy at this time of the year.

The Kiwanis Club of St. John's Antigua has a membership of over 30 committed individuals, who believe that they can make a difference by fulfilling their motto of "Serving the Children of the World". Individuals desirous of giving back to the community through such an organization are encouraged to contact any member of the Kiwanis Club of St. John's Antigua

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Salvation Army Makes Donation December 21, 2011

The Salvation Army on Tuesday presented approximately 800 food packages to the Elderly and less fortunate during a program at the Headquarters.

According to Major Rosemarie Brown, the annual gesture began in San Francisco in the 1800's and is the organization's way of bringing Christmas cheer to those who may not be able to be merry during the season.



Advisory Board Chair, Shawn Nicholas, says the Salvation Army is committed to giving back to the community. "As an army we are hoping to raise this Christmas 150,000 dollars. A lot of people might think that that is a lot of money, but we didn't pick a number out of that hat, we came

up with a figure because we said this is how much it will cost if the army is to do all the work that it has planned, not just for Christmas but for 2012."Nichols said. She added that presently the Army is well below its target and encourages persons to continue making donations.

Also present at the program was Governor General Dame Louise Lake Tack. She assisted with the distribution of the packages to the elderly and the less fortunate.

* * * * *

Land Use Policy To Assist Home Owners

December 15, 2011



Hon Hilson Baptiste, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment

Minister of Agriculture the Hon. Hilson Baptiste has underscored the need for a land use policy in Antigua and Barbuda.

In his contribution to the 2012 Budget debate Baptiste said the Baldwin Spencer administration has deliberately held off on selling government owned land until a land use policy was created.

He noted that in the past, politicians distributed land without doing the necessary planning which resulted in significant disruptions for home owners.

ers.

“You have to get the typography of the area you’re going to develop and design the area properly, taking into consideration the land terrain, wet areas, the ponds, dams...design your roads first, before you allocate the lands to people” Baptiste said.

Baptiste outlines some of the difficulties home owners have experienced due to a lack of planning in distributing lands.

15th December 2011

New Land Allocations To Boost Construct Antigua/ Barbuda Initiative



An additional 127 acres of govern-

ment land is being made available to complement the Construct Antigua and Barbuda Initiative.

Speaking on the Good Morning Antigua/Barbuda, Minister of Finance the Hon. Harold Lovell said approximately 600 parcels of land will be made available to help boost the economy through an increase in residential construction.

Lovell said persons who could not take advantage of the Construct An-

tigua Barbuda Initiative will have an opportunity to do so. The initiative is expected to reduce the cost of residential construction by as much as 20 per cent.

The initiative, a collaboration between the government and key players in the private sector, aims to reduce home ownership costs by 15 to 20 per cent, stimulate economic activity and create employment.

13th December 2011

World Bank team visits Antigua

A World Bank team arrived in Antigua to continue preparatory work on a project that will assist the government with public sector transformation, labour market policies and social protection. The project will be implemented over a three-year period at an estimated cost of US\$20 million. The delegation will be meeting with a cross-section of government officials to finalise the project document. The mission ends December 16.

Several weeks ago, govern-

ment received a US\$3 million European Union grant to strengthen its revenue administration and public financial management. That programme, to be managed by the Fiscal Affairs Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will be available from January to be used over a thirty-month period. It stipulates a mid-year budget review process as part of efforts to have more accurate estimates.

“The goal of the project is to strengthen and modernize fiscal institutions so that the government can successfully implement a reform programme with the aim of restoring fiscal sustainability,” a govern-

ment statement explained.

Government was receiving financial assistance from an IMF Standby Arrangement, but this was put a hold following a bank bailout in July. Finance and Economy Minister Harold Lovell said the fund wants proof that government can repay the IMF loan and meet its commitment to ABI Bank, which received assistance in July this year. Government has received more than half of the EC\$300 million (US\$111 million) from the IMF since the arrangement took effect last year.

The Codrington Airstrip in Barbuda has been re-authorized for night landings, according to Minister Edmond Mansoor, thanks to a \$1.8 M injection of capital.

In his contribution to the 2012 Budget Debate in the Senate, Dr Mansoor said the money had funded the overlaying, widening, and lengthening of the runway.

He said it had also paid for remarking and lighting the strip. But Barbuda ALP Senator Arthur Nibbs rejected the two latter announcements, only confirming the installation of lights.

“The strip is still the same,” he said. Minister Mansoor had said, “Our information from Mr Edward Gilkes from the Airport Authority has advised us that 97 percent of the work has been completed. The runway lights are serviceable and night operations are now permissible. And we understand it is just some minor painting to be done.”

Minister Mansoor noted that the notion presented by Senator Arthur Nibbs of goats, sheep, and dogs roaming the runway is a thing of the past, with no need for young men to chase the animals away before a plane lands.

Speaking directly to Senator

Nibbs – the opposition ALP representative for Barbuda Minister Man-



Seen above Minister Mansoor and Senator Arthur Nibbs

soor said it was his urgent call for the works that has hastened the progress.

“I hope from this day on no more stray dogs, sheep or goats, cattle or anything is there,” the minister said.

Senator Nibbs told Caribarena.com on Tuesday that to the administration's credit, the lighting on the runway has been completed. But he could not speak to its actual commissioning.

Nibbs noted that the lights that were installed are frequency lights that have to be activated from inside the approaching aircraft. This means that the frequency to operate the lights must be transmitted to the approaching craft by workers on the

ground. “I cannot say if it is in operation, but it has been installed and tested,” Nibbs said.

As for the stray animals, the ALP senator said although he received such a “tongue lashing” in the Upper House about the subject, as recently, after the senate debate, there were three dogs on the runway when he returned to Barbuda.

“The pilot had to do a lot of braking and maneuvering to avoid hitting them,” Nibbs said, suggesting that there could be another break in the fencing that allowed the animals to get in. He went on to contradict the minister’s announcement about the lengthening and widening of the airstrip.

“There has been no increase in terms of length or width to the strip,” Nibbs said.

In fact, he pointed out that the work had actually levelled the overshoots on both ends of the runway, which does not constitute lengthening. He said according to the report, to facilitate the landing of Dash 8 aircrafts, the strip would have had to be extended beyond the existing mangroves on one end and a road on the other.

Government auctions \$20 Million



The Government of Antigua and Barbuda is set to auction \$20 million

through the Regional Government Securities Market, in a 180-day Treasury Bill issue.

The issue will be a competitive uniform price auction at a maximum interest rate of 6.5 per cent.

It will open for bidding on December 15 at 9:00 a.m. and close at 12:00 noon. Settlement for successful bids will take place the following day.

After issue, the T-bill will be available for trading on the secondary market of the Eastern Caribbean Securities

Exchange.

The minimum bid amount should be \$5,000. Investors may participate in the auction through the services of a broker dealer. The brokers in Antigua and Barbuda are ABI Bank and Antigua Commercial Bank.

Additional information is available in the prospectus, which can be viewed or downloaded at www.antigua.gov.ag, or www.ecseonline.com.

12th December 2011

Government Paid Utilities Services Revamped

December 7, 2011



Government will implement a revamped utilities policy in the upcoming year. This policy limits the value and volume of Government-paid utility services to eligible individuals and is a part of Governments ongoing efforts to transform expenditure management.

Over the past year, the Ministry of Finance has worked with the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA) to review and rationalise the list of accounts that receive Government-paid utilities.

The utilities policy takes effect this month and will apply to civil servants, public officials, and senior citizens. Among the senior civil servants and public officials eligible for one or more Government-paid utility services are school principals and deputy principals, air traffic controllers, consultant physicians, district nurses and midwives, and senior police officers.

Minister of Finance, Economy, and Public Administration Hon. Harold Lovell said the process has revealed a number of anomalies and instances of abuse.

“These are being addressed, and with the tighter controls that form part of this policy, we are confident that any opportunity for abuse will be significantly reduced.” Lovell said.

An estimated 500 senior citizens over the age of 80 years are also eligible for Government-paid electricity and water services.

The caps that will apply to the services received by public servants and senior citizens are as follows:

- \$250.00 per month for electricity services;
- \$50.00 per month for telephone services (this applies to the number of units used and excludes the line rental charge); and
- Three thousand (3,000) gallons per month for water services.

Government has also established a set of caps for applying Government-paid utility services to past and present Parliamentarians and to certain categories of public officials that will take effect from 1st January 2012.

The first category of public officials will be eligible for fully paid electricity, water and telephone services. This would apply to:

- The Governor General
- Persons appointed to the Most Exalted Order of National Hero Judges of the High Court

The second category will be eligible for Government-paid electricity up to \$1,500, three thousand gallons of water per month and fully paid local telephone service. This would apply to:

- Ministers
- Ministers of State Parliamentary Secretaries

The third category will be eligible for Government-paid electricity up to \$1,000, three thousand gallons of water per month, and fully paid local telephone service. This would apply to:

- Other Current Parliamentarians and those who have served previously for at least two (2) full terms in the House of Representatives and the Senate
- Magistrates
- Director of Public Prosecutions
- The Ombudsman

- Non-Resident Ambassadors Persons appointed to the Most Distinguished Order of the Nation

The overall impact of introducing the caps on Government-paid utility benefits for civil servants, public officials, and senior citizens will be to reduce the financial impact on APUA.

At present more than 700 civil servants, senior citizens and public officials receive Government-paid utilities. The estimated annual cost of these services (water and electricity) without the caps is \$5.2 million. Of this, \$1.1 million represents the estimated annual cost of water and electricity services consumed by parliamentarians and other public officials. The remaining \$4.1 million represents the cost of water and electricity services consumed by public servants and senior citizens.

With the caps in place there would be an approximate 45 percent reduction or annual savings of about \$2.4 million on electricity and water consumed by parliamentarians, other public officials, civil servants and senior citizens.

“The cost of Government-paid utility services to taxpayers has been a matter of discussion at several of our consultations and meetings with the public and various private sector, civil society and labour unions. Having considered their arguments and suggestions, we resolved to change the manner in which this benefit is administered. While there has been some delay in completing this exercise, the Government remained determined to deliver on its commitment to develop and implement a utilities policy.” The Finance Minister said.

Any account that does not reconcile with the Ministry’s records will be removed from the Government listing and may be subject to disconnection by the APUA.

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Pre-Arrival Notification System To Launch In Antigua



E-SeaClear, the Caribbean Pre-Arrival Notification System, is expected to be officially launched in Antigua in early 2012.

Representatives of E-SeaClear have

been in Antigua since early December and have been busy training Customs, Immigration and Port Authority officials to be ready to facilitate clearance by E-SeaClear.

E-SeaClear is an advanced online web service that makes it faster and easier to clear in and out of ports in participating locations throughout the Caribbean.

Vessel operators can store and submit declaration information electronically, eliminating the need to fill in declaration forms by hand at each arrival port.

Vessel operators will have the ability to notify a country of a pending arrival,

store vessel characteristics and crew lists, easily add or update crew and passenger information and edit or cancel notifications if travel plans change.

It will also allow the operators to view historical notifications, utilize stored information to easily create new notifications and avoid writing out declaration documents by hand. E-SeaClear will initially be available in three ports: English Harbour, Jolly Harbour and Deep Water Harbour.

12th December 2011

Plans Progressing For Antigua Sailing Week 2012



The 45th Antigua Sailing Week takes place at the end of April 2012 and plans are well under way to make the longest running Caribbean regatta an event not to be missed. The notice of race has been published.

The Regatta Organising Committee has been hard at work planning next year's regatta and following an overwhelmingly positive response from competitors regarding the new courses and classes, Antigua Sailing Week 2012 will once again strive to deliver challenging and exciting racing.

Antigua Sailing Week has always been popular with visitors from overseas and Gold Sponsor Sunsail, has reported high levels of demand for chartered bareboats. During the

month of December, 220 yachts will have arrived in the Caribbean via the 2012 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC). Strong participation in Antigua Sailing Week is expected from the ARC fleet with some yachts already entered. They include a past winner, Spanish Swan 57 Charisma, skippered by three-time Olympian and Soling World Champion, Manuel Doreste Blanco.

A number of other ARC boats have already entered including Diamonds are Forever (Girls for Sale), Great Escape of Southampton and Lancelot. There are many others on the ARC entry list who have participated in Antigua Sailing Week in previous years and so the organisers are hopeful they will be back again in 2012. With the ARC now behind them, boats such as Coyote 2, EH01 and Northern Child, for example, will begin to look forward to their Caribbean events calendar so it is anticipated that more entries will soon be received.

Antigua Sailing Week attracts a huge variety of yachts and people from the four corners of the world. One of the largest is Billy Budd. At 112-feet, this magnificent yacht is

owned by Mariacristina Rapisardi who has been on an epic adventure with her Oyster 72 by the same name. Over the past six years, Mariacristina and her partner Giovanni Cristofori have explored the Arctic and Antarctic, sailing thousands of miles between the two Polar Regions.

Tanner Jones and his Antiguan crew on J/30 Blue Peter will be back and looking to go one better than last year when they came a close second in Class 7. Blue Peter is one of the smallest entries in the regatta.

For 2012, there will be a fantastic spectacle prior to the regatta. Antigua Sailing Week is delighted to announce the return of the Yachting World Round Antigua Race, which will take place on Saturday, April 28, the day before Antigua Sailing Week officially begins. It will be open to all yachts, whether or not entered in Antigua Sailing Week. The Farr-designed 115 foot, Sojana, which completed the race in 4 hours, 37 minutes and 43 seconds in 2009, holds the existing Round Antigua Race record.

PM Spencer Congratulates National Football Team on FIFA World Cup Qualifier Victory



Prime Minister the Hon. W. Baldwin Spencer has sent a message of congratulations to the National Football team on their victory on Friday night against Haiti in a FIFA World Cup Qualifier at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.

The Antigua and Barbuda team scored the lone goal of the game to advance to the Semi-Finals in Group A where they will meet Jamaica, Guatemala and the USA in June of 2012. Antigua and Barbuda amassed 15 points in Group F having played and won five matches. The other teams in Group F are Haiti, Curacao and the US Virgin Islands.

“Congratulations to Team Antigua Barbuda. You have made every man, woman and child in Antigua

and Barbuda exceedingly proud and I am personally exceptionally elated. There is no stopping now from further creating history,” said Prime Minister Spencer who was on hand with the thousands of nationals and residents at the converted Cricket Stadium named after Antigua and Barbuda National Hero Sir Vivian Richards.

The country’s leader also congratulated the goal scorer striker Kerry “Arab” Skepple noting that his superb delivery into the back of the net propelled Antigua and Barbuda into the History books, the first time the team is advancing to a FIFA Semi-Finals round.

“This historic goal will translate to maximum exposure for Antigua and Barbuda when we meet the teams in Group A in June of next year. This type of exposure for our country is more than any tourism promotion dollar can bring to our nation at a time when our economy is struggling from the effects of a global recession,” said Prime Minister Spencer.

The country’s leader also had words of congratulations and appreciation to the thousands of nationals and residents who heeded the call to come out and support the Antigua and Barbuda team. This he said is a demonstration that Antiguan and Barbudans can rise to the occasion when we are called upon to act in the interest of our nation. “Our support for the team I am sure boosted their confidence and resulted in victory.

“Congratulations must also go to the Management and Coaching staff who worked tirelessly in preparing the team for the Haiti match. Much harder work is ahead of you, but all of Antigua and Barbuda stands ready to give you the moral support needed,” said Prime Minister Spencer.

It is estimated that over ten thousand Antiguan and Barbudans witnessed the game at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium on Friday night. It is said to be the largest crowd at any sporting event in Antigua and Barbuda in recent history.

12th November 2011

Another big win for Windies, qualify for World Cup



West Indies made it four wins out of four to seal a spot in the International Cricket Council’s Women’s World Cup 2013. Speaking after the victory, over Bangladesh in the final qualifying match, captain Merissa Aguiliera said the players were thrilled with their achievement, which will now see them play in the marquee event in India.

They easily took care of business against the home side at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. Windies made 217-8 off 50 overs and then dismissed the hosts for

137. Aguiliera said the job is now to win the tournament. “We feel great to qualify for the World Cup. We wanted to achieve that goal and it feels really good to make it. The mission is not accomplished. We performed well as a team, we stuck to the basics and I’m happy with the direction this side is moving in,” she said.

“We came to this event to play six matches, to qualify for the ICC Women’s World Cup final. We’ve accomplished the qualification as part of our target, which feels fantastic and now it’s about the next two games and winning the event.”

On the field, opener Stafanie Taylor (62) and left-hander Shanel Daley (61) put on 84 runs for the second wicket which helped the West Indies on their way to making a challenging score. Some poor bowling saw Stacy-Ann King (24)

thumping three big sixes as the Windies scored at briskly in the last 10 overs.

In front of a large and vocal home crowd, the Bangladesh side chased down the target, but ultimately fell short with the West Indies showing once again how strong a side they are in the field. The Windies team allowed no ball to go un-chased and restricted the young Bangladesh batters who struggled against the athletic fielding and superior West Indies bowling. Daley was brilliant with her left-arm spin taking 2-17 off her 10 overs to earn the Player-of-the-Match award. The best bowler was 15-year-old leg-spinner Shaquana Qunityne, who took 3-20 off 6.4 overs, her best bowling figures since joining the team in September. Aguiliera was full of praise for Daley’s performance with both bat and ball; and also highlighted the efforts of Qunityne.

Ministry of Tourism says cricket Festival a success



The Ministry of Tourism under the guidance of the Hon. John Maginley, Minister of Tourism, partnered with Richie Rich Sports & Leisure and Indigo Events giving you masters, legends and ambassadors on and off the field. This years 20/20 Masters Cricket Festival was a success!

The fusion of cricket and music brought out locals and tourists alike to enjoy the festivities. The exhibition matches were a great addition to the fest giving the teams a chance to see cricketing legends/greats such as John Emburey, Tino Best, Vasbert Drakes, Kenny Benjamin, Ridley Jacobs and Dave Joseph showcase their talent. The Climax of Saturday night was the legendary Third World performing live on stage playing hits after hits. The players this year were

extremely excited about the new accompaniments to the festival.

On the Cricket side, defending Champions New York Masters, took a hit in the first match, while the Antigua Masters had an easy victory over Barbados Masters. However, on Thursday, the climax of the day was when the Defending Champions bounced back to defeat the Missis-sauga Ramblers by 7 wickets. The Antigua Masters however, were knocked out of the finals in the first semi—finals by New Jersey Masters with 5 wickets. The final game on Sunday, New Jersey Masters versus New York Masters, gave the defending champions the opportunity to retain their title and that was exactly what they did. New York Masters are taking home the championship once again.

In speaking with Austin Hutchinson, Captain of the New York Masters team, after the prize giving on Sunday evening, he expressed his excitement for being victorious once again. "Its great to win back to back championship" stated Hutchinson.

He gave credence to his team and

stated that they have been playing together for over eight years and this contributed to their victory. Hutchinson has been coming to Antigua for the past eight years and is looking forward to participating in the Fest next year.

The night ended with a prize giving ceremony; The Hon. Winston Williams - Minister of Sports, voiced appreciation to the organizers of the event and of course expressed heartiest congratulations to all the teams for a 'job well done'. Kenny Benjamin and Ridley Jacobs shared the podium presenting the trophies to this year's winners and runners up. Tracy Guerrero of Indigo Events, one of the organizers of the Fest gave the final words, expressing her sincerest gratitude for all those who assisted in the behind the scenes planning and organizing.

On behalf of Richie Rich Sports and Leisure and Indigo Events she gave sincere thanks to Minister Maginley and the Ministry of Tourism for coming on board to partner in the event this year, to the sponsors and those who assisted

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Film Festival Begins In Antigua

The Motion Picture Association of Antigua and Barbuda launched the first annual Film Festival with a series of workshops held at Townhouse MegaStore.

The first one, film makeup, was done by Stacy Humphreys of Mingles Salon. The second one, which was packed to capacity, was a camera and lighting workshop facilitated by filmmaker Shabier Kirchner of Wadadli Film Studios and Anderson Andrews, an independent filmmaker in Antigua.

The third workshop, on sound and scoring, was led by Steve Jackson of Pelican Studios, a veteran in the sound and music production business in Antigua. Workshops took place on acting with American-based Antiguan

actor Sashi Balooja, and one in film production by Yao Ramasar of Trinidad and Amber Chevaness of Jamaica on scriptwriting. The festival hosted 150 students from across the country at a Youth Day film production workshop at the Multipurpose Cultural Centre, conducted by the local, regional and international film professionals who came to Antigua for the festival.

According to Bert Kirchner, president of the MPAAB, "Our main objective is to create a platform of excellence for filmmaking in Antigua, and this first film festival is a step toward achieving that goal.

The intention is to develop a cadre of professionals to work in the industry, not only supporting local production but hopefully being able to attract some major international produc-

tions as well." Deluxe Cinema was one of the venues, where Caribbean-content films were screened for the public from 10 am until midnight for an all-inclusive fee of EC \$10 for one day, or \$15 for both days.

The festival was extended by a day, to Monday, November 14, for the express purpose of showing the work of visiting celebrity Bill Dukes, actor/producer/director, who will be showing his film Dark Girls at 6 pm at Deluxe. That film will be followed by Nauta by Italian/Antiguan Carlo Falcone at 7:30 pm. A grand reception was held at the Copper and Lumber Store in English Harbour, where visiting celebrities mingled with local dignitaries, business people and other invited guests.

For more information view: www.antiguafilmfestival.com.

Successful Home, Families and Garden Festival



Winners of the fourth annual Homes, Families and Gardens Festival Competition were recently recognized during a ceremony at the Multi-purpose Cultural Centre.

The competition, launched in May, included two aspects - a garden

competition and a poetry and research segment. The garden competition had three categories – flower garden, fruits and vegetables and landscape.

In the flower garden segment, the first place winners from the four zones were Esther Josiah, Francella Henry, Eunice Andrew and Candace Parker.

For the fruit and vegetable garden, the top positions went to Rodrick Nicholas, Geraldine Bonnie, Morvette George and Foster Thomas.

In the landscaping section, Kenroy Smith and Francella Henry walked away with the top individual prizes while Sea Breeze topped the Groups and Organisations.

In the poetry and research segment, the winners were Terry Benjamin Jr., Terikiah (terry-key-ah) Benjamin and Nitchelle Strawn. For Barbuda, the top winners in the various categories were Cynthia Desuza, Eugenie Desuza and Ivor Webber. Overall, the three winners were Esther Josiah, Francella Henry and Eugene Desuza. Meanwhile, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Transformation, Edson Joseph, who spoke on behalf of Minister Wilmoth Daniel, says participation is vital for the success of the Homes Families and Gardens Festival and for economic development.

19th December 2011

GARD Centre Receives Donation



Antigua and Barbuda, through the Caribbean Youth Empowerment Programme operated by the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Centre (GARD) is due to receive a US \$30,000 injection over the next three years.

The funds will come from CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank as

a result of its US \$340,000 contribution to the Caribbean Association of Youth Business Programmes, which is to be disbursed over a three-year period, a release from the bank said. Country Manager and Head of Corporate Banking at CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank Michael Spencer said the funds

would be used specifically for the training of young entrepreneurs, maintenance of a business mentoring programme micro financing and a Q & A service.

“CIBC FirstCaribbean remains committed to providing support for this programme and programmes like this across the Caribbean,” he said. “We look forward to deepening our relationship with GARD as we work together to further develop this area of economic development that is so important to our country’s success.” Spencer presented the first year’s tranche of US \$10,000 to Executive Director of GARD Roberta Williams, who thanked CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank for its ongoing commitment to the development of young people in Antigua and Barbuda.

24th November 2011

Government Remains Committed to National School Meals and School Uniform Grant Programme



As part of an ongoing effort to support and uplift the youth of our country, government will continue the School Uniform Grant and the National School Meals programme.

The announcement came from Minister of Finance, Economy, and Public Administration Hon. Harold Lovell during his presentation of the 2012 budget statement on December 5th 2011.

“This Administration has spent over \$21 million to provide school meals and uniforms for our school children. There were no such programmes before we took office in 2004. We will continue to support these two programmes

financially and to ensure that they benefit the children of Antigua and Barbuda. In the words of our venerable Leader, “the School Uniform Grants for children in primary and secondary schools as well as the National School Meals programme will never be sacrificed.” Minister Lovell said.

The Finance Minister said both programmes clearly demonstrates the United Progressive Party (UPP) People First Philosophy and has created a multiplier effect with benefits to many.

“We have been working diligently to protect these two programmes from the effects of the economic crunch, and so far both continue to progress, with just one change to the School Uniform Grant Programme. We will continue to review the School Meals Programme to maximise the resources and minimise costs and wastage, and maintain quality.” He said.

Up to August 2011, some \$2 million has been spent on the meals provided to children and it is estimated that by the end of the year over 400,000 meals will be served through the school meals

programme.

However the Finance Minister pointed out the effects of the economic hardships being experienced, has led the Government to downsize the School Uniform Grant Programme for want of adequate financing.

However rather than totally eliminate the School Uniform Grant Programme, a decision was taken to scale back the programme to one uniform per child.

“This, Madame Speaker, was a very hard decision to make. This year, unlike previous years when eligible students were given two regular school uniforms, only one uniform was issued per child.” The Finance Minister said.

Between 2004 and 2010 Government paid out an estimated \$18 million to meet the cost of providing uniforms for primary and secondary school children in Antigua and Barbuda. A total of 36,411 vouchers were issued at a cost of \$3.08 million.

6th December 2011

Christmas Barrel Initiative from 1st December to 31st December 2011



The Christmas Barrel Initiative for the 2011 Yuletide season will begin on December 1st and run till December 31st.

The Initiative is designed to benefit families who require the assistance of relatives and friends overseas with foodstuff, clothes and toiletries.

Barrels will be free of import duty

and will not attract the Antigua and Barbuda Sales Tax (ABST). However they will be subject to the 10 per cent Revenue Recovery Charge on the value of the contents, and an administrative charge of EC\$10.

Items other than food, clothing and toiletries will attract the normal duties and taxes.

UK Tourist Office A-List Incentive Scheme Reports EC \$1Million in Sales



The Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority's UK Office Antigua A-list incentive scheme closed off for 2011, having tracked over £300,000 of reported sales to the destination.

UK Director of Tourism Hilary Modeste said, "We were quite impressed by the sales figures reported." Modeste noted that most of the bookings were group bookings. He said: "Clearly based on its potential to generate huge amounts of revenue the group market would be considered as a key area for focus for the UK office in 2012." The A-list incentive scheme launched in June 2011 recognises agents who make and report bookings to the destination of over £20,000.

Six UK agents successfully made it onto the A-list with bookings to Antigua hotels ranging from £24,286 to over £95,000 during

the period in which the scheme ran. Agent bookings were reported from Devonshire, Newcastle, Essex, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Manchester and Torquay, notable strong areas within the UK.

Modeste said the UK Office expects to continue the scheme in 2012, "further increasing our incentives and marketing campaigns to spur on travel agents to quickly confirm large bookings, close sales and drive business to the destination in the new-year."

The top agents came from, Carrier, Travel Counsellors, British Airways Holidays, Tropic Breeze, First Choice and The Co-operative Personal Travel Advisors.

The A-list agents were awarded with trophies, and prizes ranging from places on Antigua familiarization trips, tickets to concerts and holiday gift vouchers.

Carrier's A-list Agent, Vicki Holding, said: "I never hesitate in recommending the island to my clients as there is something for everyone and it is such a beautiful place. In my opinion some of the best hotels in the Caribbean are on Antigua, in terms of service, attention to detail and facilities.

She said, "It is also great motivation to sell Antigua, as we get such great support and incentives from the Tourist Board. I am so excited about going to see and meet JLS in concert; this great prize has incentivised me to sell even more holidays to Antigua!"

Holdings who recently, visited Antigua on an Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority UK luxury fam trip thanked the tourist office for the opportunity to visit the destination and remarked that, "Antigua has now become an easy sell for me."

The Antigua hotels that benefitted from the major bookings included: Cocobay, Sugar Ridge, Sandals Grande Antigua, Verandah, Galley Bay, Carlisle Bay and Jumby Bay.

28th November 2011

Prestigious magazines laud Barbuda

Barbuda has received recognition from two prestigious publications. *Travel and Leisure Magazine* describes the sister isle as one of the most romantic destinations in the world, while *Metro News* in Vancouver, portrayed it as a celebrity favourite. The country is deemed the "icing shot" of the twin-island package, which features



"remoteness" and "seclusion" as two of its unique selling points.

Often cited as the "seventh least

known destination in the world," Barbuda, a release said, was ranked among the top 10 Romantic island getaways from the Caribbean to the South Pacific. "If your idea of Eden is unpaved roads, truly deserted beaches, and nary a nightclub, this 68-square-mile island in the Eastern Caribbean is for you ... Take a boat trip to the Frigate Bird Sanctuary on a lagoon in the island's northwest and ogle the 5,000 namesake birds that call it home," the magazine article read.