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When America's largest mass transit system was shut down for three consecutive days last month, it was Trinidadian Roger Toussaint who led the strike for more than 37,000 bus and subway employees, **page 2.**



The trial of controversial Jamaican cop Reneto Adams was among the big stories coming out of the Caribbean in 2005, another challenging year for the region as a whole, **page 13.**



Reggae superstar Shaggy will be among the top entertainers scheduled to visit the Caribbean in 2006, a year jam-packed with attractions which should appeal to homesters and prospective visitors to the region, **page 17.**

READY, SET...BOWL!

In just over a year, the Caribbean will host Cricket World Cup 2007, the one-day game's biggest spectacle. West Indies Cricket Board President Ken Gordon (inset) believes the region, despite lingering problems such as the rising crime rate and poor form of the West Indies team, is on track to put on a grand show for all the world to see, **page 11.**



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Caribbean advocates condemn U.S. immigration bill as racist

NELSON A. KING

NEW YORK - A Congressional bill that would tighten border controls and prevent illegal immigrants from getting jobs in the United States has been condemned by Caribbean immigration advocates here as racist, discriminatory and unfair.

Vincentian-born Dr. Kendall Stewart, chair of the New York City Council on Immigration, said Caribbean and other minorities are unfairly singled out in the new push to curb immigration.

"To me, this is ridiculous for them to criminalize people because they overstay their time here," he told CMC. "This bill is not aimed at Russians, immigrants from the former Soviet Union and others from Europe.

"It's ridiculous for them to put blame on immigrants for America's problems," he added. "They're trying to better their way of life."

Stewart, representative for the 45th City Councilmanic

District in Brooklyn, which predominantly comprises Caribbean immigrants, urged the administration of President George W. Bush to take a better look at immigration on the whole, rather than pinning blame on poor immigrants from the region and Latin America, who, he said, are trying desperately to eke out a living.

"And they need to do so in a fair and just manner," he said.

RUSH JOB

Just before the Christmas break, the U.S. House of Representatives rushed through passage of the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. Sponsored by Republican Congressman James Sensenbrenner, of Wisconsin, chair of the House Judiciary Committee, the measure would combat the



Stewart

hiring of illegal workers by providing employers with a reliable method in determining whether employees are legally eligible to work in the country.

The bill is modeled on legislation introduced by California Republican Congressman Ken Calvert that makes mandatory an employment eligibility verification system, which is currently voluntary.

The new House bill increases civil and criminal penalties for knowingly hiring or employing an illegal worker. In addition, the bill incorporates legislation originally passed by the Committee on Homeland Security, requiring mandatory detention for immigrants apprehended at U.S. land borders attempting to cross illegally. That measure comes into effect on Oct. 1, 2006.

The bill essentially makes unlawful presence in America, currently a civil offense, a felony.

The bill next moves to the

Senate, where Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist, of Tennessee, said he will bring up immigration legislation in February that will provide a framework for guest worker ideas.

BUSH'S PLAN

The Bush administration has proposed that undocumented immigrants be allowed to get three-year work visas. Under Bush's plan, illegal immigrants could extend their visas for an additional three years, but must return to their home countries for a year to apply for a new work permit.

Irwin Claire, the Jamaican-born managing director of the Queens-based Caribbean Immigrant Services, said the entire immigration matter is "a political football right now.



Claire

"Bush is pandering to the conservatives," he said, adding, "these are some very dark clouds for Caribbean immigrants. It's going to be some very challenging times for our people."

He said the most sweeping provision of the House bill would be requiring all employers in the country, more than seven million, to submit Social Security numbers and other information to a national database to verify the legal status of workers.

"That's jealousy, avarice and discrimination for those who sponsored and supported this bill," he said, "because you're locking down the country, you're sending people underground."

Claire urged religious leaders, who support the Bush administration, to speak out forcefully against these "draconian measures."

- CMC



Trinidadian leads mass transit strike in New York

NEW YORK, CMC - When America's largest mass transit system was shut down for three consecutive days last month, it was a Trinidadian who led the strike of over 37,000 bus and subway employees.

As president of the Transport Workers Union (TWU), Roger Toussaint, who left his native country at the age of 17, gave the final signal to strike and to stop striking. In so doing, he had the entire New York City in the palm of his hands. The city was thrown into utter chaos.

Seven million bus and subway riders were left miserable - finding grave difficulty getting to and from work, or conducting other businesses in bone-chilling weather.

The massive strike, which started on Dec. 20, left a \$1 billion dent in the local economy.

After acrimonious spats with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and behind-the-scenes maneuvers with state mediators, Toussaint - who participated in, and was influenced by, the protest movement in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1960s - ordered 33,700 employees to return to work

on Dec. 22. Subway trains immediately began to roll by midnight Dec. 22, and, by rush-hour Dec. 23, officials said all 139 were fully operational.

Schools were back on pre-strike schedules, and the driving restrictions into

after three workdays of walking over bridges, sharing cars with strangers, jamming commuter hubs, paying hiked



Toussaint

whose missions and consulates in mid-Manhattan were closed, partially closed or operated with very limited staff - joined in the elation. Aubrey Campbell, who heads the Jamaica Information Services (JIS) here, housed in the Jamaica Consulate



Toussaint, left front, gave the order for New York's transit workers to go on strike.

Manhattan were lifted.

REJOICING

New Yorkers - fed up

taxi fares and braving the bitter cold on bicycles - rejoiced.

Caribbean diplomatic representatives and staffers -

General, said he was happy the agonizing strike was over.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Jamaican ordered extradited to U.S. on drug charges

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC - A 41-year-old man was late last month ordered extradited to the United States following reports of his involvement in a conspiracy to smuggle more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana to Florida.

Presley Bingham, who is also known as "Butcherman" or "Pressa" from the western parish of St. James, was ordered extradited when he appeared in a Corporate Area court. Bingham, who was captured in May last year, was indicted by a U.S. Grand Jury on Mar. 30, 2004, along with Norris "Deedo" Nembhard, Clasford Morris, Robroy Williams and five others who are now facing extradition.

Bingham eluded the authorities for more than a year before he was eventually captured by members of the Fugitive Apprehension Team during a crackdown on the top drug dealers based in Montego Bay.

The U.S. government has submitted to the local police the names of a number of so-called drug kingpins wanted to stand trial on drug trafficking charges. Last year, 16 fugitives were captured by members of the Fugitive Apprehension Team.





Air Jamaica
Jazz Festival



Jailed N.Y. cop seeks leniency in brutal Haitian torture case

NEW YORK, CMC - Prosecutors in Brooklyn have asked a federal judge to reconsider the five-year prison sentence imposed in 2002 on a police officer convicted of per-

station house in Brooklyn to the bathroom, where he was savagely assaulted in 1997.

FIRESTORM

In the case that triggered



Haitian-born Abner Louima hospitalized after being tortured by New York City police.

jury in connection with the brutal police station house torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima.

In recently-filed papers, federal prosecutors agreed with defense lawyers for the former officer, Charles Schwarz, 40, who argued last month that the United States Bureau of Prisons erred in refusing to consider a 13-month sentence reduction for Schwarz under a statute that allows such reductions in extraordinary circumstances. The prosecutors said in a 2001 agreement with Schwarz's lawyers that they would not oppose such a reduction.

The agreement was reached after a jury in 2001 convicted Schwarz of perjury for falsely testifying in an earlier trial that he had not escorted Louima from the front desk of the 70th Precinct (police)

a firestorm of protests, primarily by Haitian and other



Schwarz, seeking a reduction of prison time.

Caribbean immigrants in the U.S., another police officer, Justin Volpe, was convicted for violating Louima's civil rights by using a broken broom stick to sodomize

Louima, severely rupturing his internal organs.

Volpe is currently serving 30 years in a federal lock-up.

Louima, who spent several months in hospital to repair his spleen, bladder and other internal organs, was, subsequently, awarded over \$7 million by the City of New York to settle the civil suit.

In the Schwarz case, the

jury failed to reach a verdict on another count of perjury and on charges of violating Louima's civil rights by taking part in the 1997 assault.

Under the agreement, the government dismissed the three other counts, and Schwartz agreed not to appeal the perjury conviction. Schwartz also agreed not to ask the judge to reduce the five-year sentence, and the prosecutors said that if certain conditions were met, they would ask the Bureau of Prisons to seek the sentence reduction.

NARROW INTERPRETATION

But, unknown to both the prosecution and defense, it has been the practice of the Bureau of Prisons to seek such reductions only in cases of serious illness. That practice, lawyers on both sides contend, is an overly narrow interpretation of the law. Schwartz's lawyers argued that the Federal District Court judge who heard the case - Reena Raggi, who now sits on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit - should vacate the sentence because both sides mistakenly believed the Bureau of Prisons would



Volpe, sentenced to 30 years in prison.

consider the reduction request.

"The agreement was based on a mutual mistake, said Ronald Fischetti, who, along with Diarmuid White, repre-

sents Schwarz, "and Judge Raggi can now re-sentence him to 47 months if she so wishes."

"The defendant's consent to a (five-year) sentence, and his agreement (to the conditions) were clearly premised on the possibility of a reduction to 47 months," said Eric Corngold, chief assistant U.S. attorney.

Schwarz began serving his sentence on Dec. 27, 2002. Without a reduction, he will remain in prison until May 2007. But he could be released, with time off for good behavior, in Jan. 2007, Fischetti said.

Louima's lawyer Sanford Rubenstein said his client is not commenting on the issue.

"Abner Louima is confident the judge will do the right things," Rubenstein said.



Caribbean group condemns firing of Haitian judges

NELSON A. KING

NEW YORK, CMC - The Brooklyn-based Caribbean Guyana Institute of Democracy (CGID) has condemned as a portentous "return of the Francois 'Papa Doc' Duvalier era" the recent dismissal of five judges of the Haitian Supreme Court.

That era was characterized by wonton "brutalization and lynching of political opponents," said Grenadian Robert Antoine, CGID's international director, in a statement.

He said the United States-backed interim government's removal of the judges, after they ordered the reinstatement of Haitian-born U.S. millionaire Dumarsais Simeus in the forthcoming presidential race, is illegal.

Antoine said, according to Title V, Article 177 of the Haitian Constitution, "Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed for life. They may be removed from office only because of a legally determined abuse of authority or be suspended following an indictment leveled against them. They may not be

reassigned without their consent."

Consequently, he said, the government's action "undermines the rule of law in Haiti and has exacerbated political instability."

MANIPULATION

Though no official reasons were given, the five Supreme Court justices - half of the court - were fired reportedly on the direct orders of interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and his justice minister. The government had assailed the decision to allow Dumarsais to contest this month's presidential elections.

Antoine said Latortue's actions constitute "a crude, meandering attempt to manipulate the electoral process in order to gain an unfair political advantage" in the upcoming elections.

"His machinations have caused some of the presidential candidates to boycott the elections," he said, noting that the elections are the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed in Feb.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Parents of Vincentian killed in British Army denied view of son's body

KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent, CMC - The father of a Vincentian-born soldier says he wants the British authorities to tell him exactly how his son died in London last month.

Monroe Prescod said he had been prevented from viewing the body of his son Kerlon Shallow, who British Army officials said died of "multiple injuries" sustained in a vehicular accident at an unidentified army base on Dec. 8. Shallow had been a member of the British Army for three years, and he was buried here on Dec. 22.

But Prescod said an officer of the British Army came to St. Vincent when Shallow's body arrived on Dec. 17 and instructed a local funeral home not to allow anyone to view the body.

"He wanted the body to be buried as soon as possible," Prescod said, noting that the death certificate that

accompanied his son's body indicated that he had died from multiple injuries.

"There is nothing here that actually states what he died from," Prescod said, noting that a local pathologist had advised him to contact the relevant local authorities to get permission to contact a second autopsy.

But he said the second autopsy was not carried since the funeral home said that the "body was too decomposed to do a post mortem on."

"I said I am the father, here is the mother, can't you at least let us peek at it? He said this body is too mashed up for you to see. I won't even let my enemy see it. The whole body is mashed up, real mashed up," Prescod said he had been told by the funeral home.

Prescod said he is hoping to find answers through legal or political channels.



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many important ways. From upgrades to park facilities, to the expansion of healthcare facilities and improvements to water, sewer and drainage systems - Miami-Dade County will become a better place to live, work and play.

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- A variety of park improvements and enhancements at the following parks: **Homestead Bayfront, Homestead Air Reserve, Southridge, Larry and Penny Thompson, Colonial Drive, Chuck Pezoldt, West Perrine, Sgt. Joseph Delancy, Goulds, Sherman** and many others.
- Relocating the historic **Richmond Air Station** to a location near Miami MetroZoo and completing its rehabilitation as a military museum and memorial
- Redeveloping the old **Richmond Heights Shopping Center** into a multi-use facility.
- Various infrastructure improvements including sidewalks, resurfacing and guardrails.

For a complete list of projects, visit www.miamidade.gov/build or contact Commissioner Moss at 305-375-4832.

Fire kills three Caribbean family members in Atlanta

The Caribbean community in the United States suffered a tragic loss during the Christmas season when fire destroyed the Atlanta, Georgia home of Jamaican-born residents, killing three of its occupants, including two children.

Tracey-Ann Plummer, 37, her son Dijon, seven, and her stepdaughter Dilia, eight, died on Dec. 22 at the five-bedroom house. They were buried on Dec. 27, when hundreds of people attended the New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Atlanta to pay tribute to their lives. They were interred at Kennedy Memorial

Gardens.

Reports from the DeKalb County Fire Department indicated that it was informed about the fire at around 11 p.m. Dec. 22, but by the time they reached to the house it was already in flames. The three bodies were reportedly found on the second floor of the house.

The cause of the fire was still not clear up to press time.

Dijon Plummer Sr., Tracey-Ann's husband, was not at the house at the time of the fire.

The family previously lived in Fort Lauderdale before moving to the Atlanta area a year ago.

During the Dec. 27 ceremony, Plummer blamed the devil for the loss of his family members, but refused to accept defeat.

"It is the work of this idiot devil," he told the congregation, "but that devil is lost."

Tracey-Ann Plummer was remembered for her kind nature and love for her children. Dijon Jr. was remembered as an energetic child. Dilia had traveled from St. Maarten to be with her father and stepmother.

✻

Jamaican killed by hit-and-run driver in New York after giving out gifts on Christmas Day

NELSON A. KING

NEW YORK – A Jamaican man was killed by a hit-and-run driver on Christmas Day while walking home on a Brooklyn street after giving out Christmas gifts, the police said.

The police said Nevilly Mills, 70, was crossing Rockaway Parkway, at Avenue B in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, at 12:01 a.m., when a silver Nissan Murano struck him and sped away.

"He didn't suffer," said Neomi Mills, 71, his wife of 47 years. "God knew what he was doing, and I have no control over that."

The victim's sister Joysilin Mills, 67, said her brother was returning from her nearby home after giving out holiday presents – a toy truck and a dancing doll for the children and Christmas card and some cash for her.

"He hugged me and said, 'I love you,'" before

leaving, she recalled.

KIND

Minutes later, Mills, who migrated from Jamaica when he was 17 years old, was hit crossing the busy thoroughfare and dragged 100 feet.

"The doctor said (the driver) reversed back at him," Joysilin Mills said, adding, "the police tell me some kids saw it and ran."

Mills was rushed to the nearby Brookdale University Hospital, but the doctors could not save him.

"Everybody knew him," said his grieving wife, as neighbors and family members filled the Mills's residence on Rockaway Parkway, offering condolences and remembering the popular retiree, who lived in the same house for the past 30 years.

Mills earned a living as a dockworker in New Jersey for many years. Neighbors recalled a man who would

often volunteer to do household repairs for nearby residents and offered treats for area youngsters.

"Anything you ask Mr. Mills to do, he'll do willingly," said neighbor Elsa George. "When an ice cream truck comes, he'll buy ice cream for all the kids."

✻

Toussaint is Everybody's 'Person of the Year'

NEW YORK, CMC - A United States-based Caribbean magazine has named Trinidadian-born labor leader Roger Toussaint as its "Person of the Year".

The Brooklyn-based **Everybody's** magazine said Toussaint, who last month led a three-day strike that paralyzed New York City transit system, was chosen because he is "a man of principle who aggressively embraced the American credo of bequeathing a better future for tomorrow's worker."

"By waging an honorable battle to maintain workers' hard-won pension and other

benefits, Toussaint and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) demonstrated that they are keeping alive the best traditions of the American labor movement", the magazine said in a statement.

The magazine said that once the strike was called, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York State Governor George Pataki waged a "war of words" against Toussaint, and "conveniently forgot" to remind New Yorkers that it was the "thug" Toussaint who, in 2002, in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, accepted a "modest" contract for his union, much

to the chagrin of many union members who accused him of "selling out".

secretary, who live in Brooklyn and the Bronx, respectively, were unable to get to work.

DUEL
The duel between labor and management, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), began at 3 a.m. Dec. 20 when workers walked off the job en masse for the first time in 25 years. The TWU turned down

paign.

"There is an old African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Today, I'm that child, and you're my village. I promise you that I'll be the best judge that I can be."

DESERVING

Justice Hinds-Radix, who was honored recently by the Barbados government with the island's second highest award, said Ash truly deserves to sit on the bench.

"She has the judicial temperament, intelligence and commitment of the people in mind," said Hinds-Radix.

Last September Ash resoundingly defeated African American lawyers Norma Jennings and Sandra Roper in the borough-wide race in the Democratic Primary. She then went on to snatch the general elections in November in a crowded field of six candidates, running on the Democratic, Republican, Independence, Reform and Conservative parties' lines.

Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz said, while he rarely endorses candidates for the bench, he had supported Ash.

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Caribbean group condemns firing of Haitian judges

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

2004.

"CGID considers the actions of the Haitian government unconstitutional and inimical to the democratic process in Haiti," he said. "The arbitrary removal of the Supreme Court judges further enfeebles the entire judiciary."

Antoine said the government's action would also lead to further destabilization in the country.

"The independent deci-

sion of the Supreme Court symbolized a glimmer of hope in a society that has experienced an ongoing erosion of its essential political institutions," he said. "The political witch-hunt, however, undermines this trust and creates a political climate, characterized by reckless disregard for the constitution, institutional legitimacy and people's rights."

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Trinidadian leads mass transit strike in New York

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

"Everything should be back up to speed," said Campbell.

He disclosed that his office staggered staff to cushion the effects of the strike.

Crispin Gregoire, Dominica's ambassador to the United Nations, said on Dec. 22 his offices were "technically closed," because the acting consul general and the

secretary, who live in Brooklyn and the Bronx, respectively, were unable to get to work.

DUEL

The duel between labor and management, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), began at 3 a.m. Dec. 20 when workers walked off the job en masse for the first time in 25 years. The TWU turned down

the MTA's contract offer, which guaranteed 11 percent in raises over three years, because management wants new hires to pay a bigger share of their pensions.

But Toussaint ordered the workers back on the job without any public announcement of an agreement with management, saying only that details will be revealing in coming days.

✻

U.S. Congress honors Jamaica's consul general in N.Y.

NEW YORK - Jamaica's Consul General to New York Dr. Basil K. Bryan was last month honored for his dedication and service to the Jamaican constituency overseas by United States Congressman Major R. Owens.

The citation framed in a proclamation, was presented to Bryan by Ruby Harrisingh, a member of the board of directors of the Caribbean American Program for Empowerment (CAPE) USA, Inc., at a public forum to

Jamaica, U.S. conducting study on ackee

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC - The Jamaica Exporters Association (JEA) says it is conducting a study into the levels of a toxic substance found in ackees, a fruit used to prepare Jamaica's national dish.

The announcement followed the decision to recall a shipment of canned ackees exported to the United States after a high level of hypoglycin was found.

The study, scheduled to begin this month, is a joint



Ackees

effort between the JEA, the Jamaica Agro Processors Association and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The study will focus on how weather conditions result in higher levels of the harmful toxin in ackees.

The recall of the ackees has sparked fears that the U.S. could impose another ban on the shipment of ackees from Jamaica. The canned ackees were distributed to outlets in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York.

Ackees are poisonous if eaten before fully mature. For many years, the U.S. banned all sales of ackees out of fear that it could poison many of its nationals. In November, the Jamaica Bureau of Standards (JBS) announced that it would be moving to stamp out the practice.



Ruby Harrisingh, center, reads the proclamation from U.S. Congressman Major R. Owens saluting Dr. Basil K. Bryan, second left. Also present at the ceremony were, from left, Jose Richards, president of Sons & Daughters of Jamaica Inc.; Imam Tariq Dawan (CAPE); and Amir Abdullah Muhammed Abdul-Akbar, executive director of CAPE (USA) Inc.

launch the "Jamaica Diaspora in Motion" series in New York City held at the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Congressman Owens called Bryan a consummate diplomat, an eloquent spokesperson for Jamaica and someone who was always advocating to the overseas Jamaican community the importance of supporting the socio-economic development agenda in Jamaica.

The Congressman, who represents the 11th Congressional District (Brooklyn), noted that he was honored to be able to acknowledge the work of the consul general for and on behalf of the people of Jamaica who make up a significant part of his

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

- New four-lane extension of SR 836 between N.W. 107th Avenue and N.W. 137th Avenue. This is the first expressway extension in South Florida in more than 10 years
- New construction of a six-lane roadway, 137th Avenue, between S.W. 8th Street and N.W. 12th Street
- New sound barrier walls, lighting, landscaping and a bike path connecting to the Miami-Dade Bikeway System

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A dream deferred: First-ever national study on African hairbraiders finds tangle of cosmetology laws

ARLINGTON, Virginia - For more than a decade, African hairbraiders - who create attractive and artistic hairstyles without damaging chemicals - have been handcuffed, arrested, thrown in jail or fined thousands of dollars for practicing their cultural art form in the United States.

But thanks to the advocacy of the Institute for Justice and its clients, lawmakers and courts in a growing number of states are forcing overzealous bureaucrats to set braiders free.

Late last month, the Institute for Justice issued a first-ever national study that documents how 10 states have

led the way through this tangled mess-exempting braiders from all cosmetology requirements and leaving them free to twist, lock, weave and extend hair without unnecessary and costly cosmetology licenses. Not only do these states show no harm to consumers after opening up the market, but consumers are better served by a broader choice of braiders and once-beleaguered braiders can freely practice their craft and grow their businesses without worrying that the next knock on the door might be a government regulator looking to shut them down.

As noted in "A Dream Deferred: Legal Barriers to African Hairbraiding Nationwide", the freedom to braid has come in different forms:

- Simple exemption statutes in Arizona, California, Connecticut and Maryland;
- Optional licensing in Michigan;
- Registration and/or posted brochures on common sense sanitation guidelines in Kansas and Mississippi;
- Administrative exemptions in Minnesota, North Carolina and Washington.

In each of these states, braiders remain subject to gen-

eral business requirements and any applicable state health regulations. But they no longer need to take courses on unrelated cosmetology techniques like permanent waves and chemical straighteners, which too often cost braiders thousands of wasted hours and dollars. Instead, braiders are free to practice the skills many of them learned at their mothers' knees.

In its 15-page paper, the Institute for Justice summarizes the current state of cosmetology laws and their relationship to braiding. In doing so, the institute notes that although braiders are making headway through this maze of

bureaucratic red tape, there is much work still to be done. In nine states, braiding is included in the definition of cosmetology, either by statute, regulation or court decision-meaning that braiders must submit themselves to the onerous cosmetology laws if they want to practice their craft. In another 22 states, the laws are silent, allowing boards of cosmetology to determine whether to prosecute braiders or leave them in peace.

- AANEWSWIRE



'E-Filing' offers helpful options with immigration forms

Certain queries about United States immigration matters can be cleared up by going onto the Internet, instead of traveling to a U.S. government office. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offers an electronic filing or "E-Filing" option which is as easily accessible as getting onto a computer in your home.

This month, **Caribbean Today** offers insights into "E-Filing" through information obtained from the USCIS's website at www.uscis.gov

What is electronic filing (E-Filing)? Electronic filing, or E-Filing, is the filing and submission of an electronic petition or application for immigration benefits using the Internet. E-Filing for immigration benefits with the USCIS can only be done on the USCIS website.

Which applications and petitions may I submit through E-Filing? Currently, the following applications and petitions may be submitted through E-Filing:

- Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card

- Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker



- USCIS will no longer accept I-129 petitions for the H-1B category through its E-Filing system. All I-129 petitions that fall under the H-1B non-immigrant classification (both new applications and applications for renewal) must be filed in paper.
- Form I-129S, Nonimmigrant Petition Based on Blanket L Petition
- Form I-131, Application for Travel Document
- Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker
- Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status

- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status
 - Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service
- Additional applications and petitions will be made available for E-Filing in the future.

Can anyone E-File? You cannot E-File if:

- You are applying for a waiver of the filing fee; or
- You are requesting that your case be expedited (with the exception of Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing).

In addition, each form has different eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements are provided on each form's Form-Specific E-Filing Instructions.

What can I do if I am not eligible to E-File? USCIS continues to accept paper applica-

tions.

What do I need in order to E-File? Read the E-Filing Guidance on the website for steps on how to E-File.

What does "Session Timeout" mean? For security reasons, your session will automatically end (timeout) if your computer is inactive for more than 20 minutes after logging in. As long as you have not successfully submitted your application to the USCIS, the work you've done on your application will be automatically saved up to the point of the last completed page. After you log in to the E-Filing system again, go to the My Forms screen to find your application.

How can I get help with E-Filing? First, check the online E-Filing Guidance and Form Specific E-Filing Instructions. If you can't find the answer to your question, you can get live assistance by calling the USCIS's National Customer Service Center toll-free at **1-800-375-5283** between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.



U.S. Congress honors Jamaica's consul general in N.Y.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7) district.

Jamaican born Yvonne Graham, deputy president for the Borough of Brooklyn, joined Margaret Grey (representing Councilmember Yvette Clarke) and Jamaican-born Chester County Legislator Noel Spencer, in encouraging the Jamaican community to become more involved in the

political process, a platform for empowerment.

The Jamaica Diaspora in Motion series, conceptualized by Amir Abdullah Mohammed Abdul-Akbar and Milford Mahon, community activists with CAPE (USA), Inc., aims to engage the New York Jamaican community, through open fora, on such matters as economic development, educa-

tion and quality of life issues while promoting positive images of the island nation overseas.

The program received corporate support from Caribbean Food Delights, Grace Kennedy Remittance Services, Dennis Shipping Company, Christopher Owens, Apel International Travel, State Assemblyman N.

Nick Perry, Ruder Finn, LEM Accounting Service, Ruby Real Estate, Tower Isle Patties, Citibank NA and Topaze Restaurant, Brooklyn.

The series is scheduled to continue in each of the remaining four boroughs through this summer.



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VIEWPOINT

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No more wishing and hoping

GORDON WILLIAMS

It would be nice if the New Year meant that much of the Old Year did not exist.

See, that's what wish lists, or New Year's resolutions, are for – to pretend that things are different or are going to change dramatically.

So over a 24-hour period – between Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 – all that was wrong for 365 days (and sometimes even centuries before) will just vanish – poof! - or can now be made right if we just make a new list.

It doesn't really work that way. To paraphrase Bob Marley in the song "Zion Train": "Two thousand years of history, could not be wiped away so easily."

So let's not pretend that the Caribbean's ills of 2005 – with the frightening rise in crime heading the list – can be simply "wished" away. Let's try something else: like looking forward to a few promising developments that appear to be awaiting Caribbean people...if only we would embrace them.

WORLD WATCHING

For example, in 2006 Trinidad and Tobago will play in soccer's World Cup final round, the most popular sport's biggest stage. Unlike the "World Series" of baseball in the United States, the entire world participates in the World Cup, but only 32 countries make it to the finals.

This year it will be in Germany and everybody will be watching, even the snobbish anti-soccer sentiment that unfortunately still runs through America. So T&T will have a chance to parade its soccer pedigree, but more importantly, draw the spotlight to the Caribbean. The Soca Warriors can show the whole world in 2006 that the Caribbean and its people are passionate and beautiful - still. Jamaica's Reggae Boyz did just that in France 1998. The

region should be proud and happy for what the Soca Warriors have done, at least for a while, and there are few greater gifts that can be bestowed on a people.

In 2006, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy should hit its stride. The region has now become a bigger pie – much bigger – and more Caribbean people can have a piece. That sounds like a good thing. Caribbean citizens, or at least some of them, can travel to nations of the region to seek work without much of a fuss. It's about sharing knowledge, skills and revenue. It's also showing a united front to the world, a concept which has remained too foreign for far too long in the Caribbean.

Speaking of togetherness, another good thing to look forward to is the preparation for the Caribbean's hosting of one-day cricket's biggest show. Although Cricket World Cup will be staged in 2007, the bulk of the work is to be done this year. There is no more time for squabbling and ego clashes. The only way for the event to be successful is for the entire region to work together. Or everyone will lose. Once again the eyes of the world will be on the Caribbean and, because "wi easy fi shame", the region cannot afford to fail. So there is ample incentive for the region's people to drive themselves towards the common goal of making CWC 2007 a success. Embrace that.

OVERSEAS HELP

As for the Caribbean diaspora in places like North America and Europe, I suppose it would be easy to just give up on a region that seems compelled to shoot itself in the foot by, for example, fostering an image of crime and violence. But you know much better than that. For a region so small, the Caribbean has

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

New Year reflections

I don't care what anybody else wants to say, 2005 really flew off faster than you could say new millennium.

Hey, remember all the hubbub about the new millennium and how people were running up and down buying new computers and expecting the end of the world? All that's now a distant memory as time marches on.

Did I say march, make that more like a gallop, as it moves faster and faster every year. No wonder some people don't even bother to take down their Christmas lights, but instead leave them up as a permanent fixture on their houses.

"Cho, me can't bother tek down the lights yah man, for is too much trouble fi put dem back up in a few months time."

That, I've heard.

So now the end of yet another year has come and gone, and with boring regularity people are making their New Year's resolutions in order to be better persons for at least five days in the new year before they resort to their old bad ways. It won't happen. Just live with yourselves and accept who you are. Or better yet, make resolutions every waking morning as opposed to every year.

What I'll do though, is reflect a bit on the past year and even before, and about things and times in general. First of all let's take this column, my monthly rant, my scribbling, my dementia, my catharsis. People come up to me from all walks of life and tell me all sorts of things. From intellectual professors, to professed intellectuals, to the man in the street, all hail me up. Many ask me why I always touch on relationships and affairs of the heart. To tell the truth, it was no plan, but the grist that feeds my mills somehow always seems to take that slant. It pleases some



people, it irks others, while it makes many very afraid.

Men and women are always bombarding me with what's wrong with their relationships and keep telling me, "You make sure and write 'bout what a tell yu, people must know what a gwaan behind closed doors."

The e-mails that I get are oftentimes incredible as people relate their life's experiences. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction. In another life I could easily be a confessional priest or write an advice column like Dear Pastor.

I must say that it gives me some degree of gratification when complete strangers will approach me and say, "Boss, is true wha yu say, is same way my woman gwaan, dat's why me just show her de page and mek har see har bad ways."

WOMAN'S WORLD

I daresay that many men are appreciative, but moreso women, as I seem to expose the frailty, perfidy, weakness and general bad ways of the male sex.

Our streets are living theater, and just a few moments spent listening to a group of women prattling about their relationships or hearing men gloat and lie about their prowess is better than any Broadway play. But don't believe that I don't get cussed too. Sometimes I get e-mails from people that are as long as government's five-year plan, berating me about my opinion. The irony is, I'll get an equally lengthy and viru-



TONY ROBINSON

lent one praising me. Same subject, just different gender bias.

Because of all this I've been invited to appear on numerous radio programs, as if I'm some sort

of expert on relationships. You know that I'm not, but I keep my ears to the ground, listen keenly and love women can't dun. That's why they relate to me I suppose.

Still reflecting, at times we do and say things without really knowing what effect they have on different people. I have written so much about men and their bad ways, how they treat women badly and how women suffer at their hands. For this I get heaps of praises from the women, but when the tables are turned it's a different story, every single time. It's like women must not be touched, they are above reproach and nothing must be said about them. All men cheat, that's a given. All men sneak around and philander, that's okay to write about. But dare I suggest that women do the same thing? Dare I mention that women have affairs? Of course not. I always ask the question, if men are so bad, who are they bad with?

Well, I guess it's the price I pay. And yet, no one curses and berates women like other

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

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Caribbeans united in bumpy world trade ride

LLOYD ROHLEHR

World trade ought not to be only a matter of exchanging desired goods for profit. It should also emphasize the practice of accommodating one another.

Self-protecting measures obstinately pursued are often viewed as objectionable to the other side.

The Caribbean community is experiencing a bumpy ride in its topmost level of negotiations and is speaking with one voice – most commendably so – as commodities from which the countries get their livelihoods are at stake. Bananas and sugar, to name two.

Agricultural trade is vital to developing countries. All along the way, at conferences and negotiations, Caribbeans have held to this fact because they know that challenges to their markets could be very serious. For instance, the future trading regime for bananas is naturally a cause for much anxiety to the people of Dominica and other

Caribbean states. Banana production makes employment possible for over 85 percent of the rural population and is the primary source of employment for women.

Speaking during the Sixth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong recently, Caribbean foreign ministers made cases of the impact on their respective countries and called for some attention to be paid to the impact the new prices will have.

When 53 Commonwealth leaders, presidents and prime ministers, met in November in Malta last year, there was a concerted effort on their part to influence the outcome of another meeting, due to take place: the ministerial at Hong Kong. On the particular question of sugar, Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo, strongly supported by other heads of the Commonwealth governments, urged the European Union to provide transitional arrangements in which there is symmetry between compensation provided to Commonwealth

sugar producers on the one hand and E.U. producers on the other.

VULNERABLE

The Commonwealth heads of government also strongly advocated that the E.U. take into account the vulnerable small states less capable of adjustment envisaged reform-timetable.

Helen Clarke, prime minister of New Zealand, identified the need for E.U. to offer more compensation to the states adversely affected by its sugar reform lest the conflict over sugar reforms scuttle the negotiations to take place in Hong Kong. Indeed, some saw progress as unlikely at the Hong Kong summit meeting.

Worse still, previous trade-liberalization talks at Cancun, Mexico, in 2003 and at Seattle, Washington in 1999, had collapsed in disarray.

It was reasonable after those "bumps" on the world-trade road to hold some caution that another failure could seriously undermine a global free-trade agreement by the end of 2006 – already two

years later than had originally been planned. Much of the blame for lack of progress has been put on the E.U., which had declined to further reduce trade barriers protecting its farming market: a key demand of poorer nations.

Dame Billie Miller, senior minister and minister of foreign affairs and trade of Barbados, at Hong Kong underscored that while Barbados was committed to the process of trade liberalization, serious attention needed to be paid to the specific impact on developing countries. Barbados was small and vulnerable, but committed fully to trade liberalization, which nevertheless had to be at a pace which is manageable and which would not be "detrimental to our economy and development goals."

Caribbean community heads restated their case against the decisions of the E.U. In the case of sugar, the drastic 36 percent price reduction over four years starting this year. This, is seen within the Caribbean community as a radical unilateral and unprinci-

pled change to the African, Caribbean and Pacific/European Union sugar protocol even as the E.U., with respect to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, is seen as wanting when it comes to reflecting the concerns of small-states within the process of World Trade Organization negotiations.

HIGH STAKES

At stake is global economic growth and development. Couldn't the just-ended trade round deliver more to developing countries than they have received from trade rounds in the past? Hasn't the principle of partnership been damaged? How can we move the process forward?

The question of development was at the core when the round of negotiations started at Doha, the capital of Qatar. At least Caribbeans are unified amidst the uncertainties which abound.

Lloyd Rohlehr is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



No more wishing and hoping

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

constantly reminded the world of its wealth - in academics, sports, culture, everything.

So maybe 2006 is a good time for Caribbean people in

"farrin" to offer a bit more than criticism for the region. Help pay a needy Caribbean child's school fee, though his poor mother and father still haven't figured out child rearing expenses even after the

fifth or sixth offspring.

Or contact the local charities in the region and find out how you can help feed the hungry without depriving yourself of the regular manicure or the sixth beer at the club.

Or before you throw out those used pairs of shoes which you wore maybe once or twice and then decided you no longer liked, think about sending them home. A bare-foot child, or his mother, may need them even if you don't.

One more thing: Don't make a wish list. Please. Just do it.

- Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor.



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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

women. That's why so many women have told me that they prefer to work in a mostly male environment.

What's also very interesting is that these same women will secretly agree with what I say when we interact on a one to one basis, but, "It's just that I don't like to see it in print, it makes us look so bad," they say.

New Year reflections

Women are complicated, but I guess it's the same way we feel if an outsider talks about our country. It's okay if we curse it, but don't let anyone from another country dare speak ill about us. Even the Americans have a saying, "America, love it or leave it."

I mentioned earlier the wide cross section of persons that I relate to, but I was really surprised and flattered when this British lady from the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy, University of the West Indies, contacted me about my writing. She was doing her doctoral thesis on Jamaican creole or patois, and was using my column as the basis for her research. Placing me on the other side of the table, she spent many hours interviewing me about my style of writing and why and how I wrote the things that I wrote. What could I say? As far as I was concerned I just wrote what I felt. But she delved deeper and was analytical and scien-

tific in her approach. I must admit that I felt a bit vulnerable and strange being scrutinized and picked apart like that.

Reflecting on another high point was when people from all walks of life told me that they cut out and keep every one of my columns. Now that's frightening.

But our people are truly gifted and talented in almost everything that we touch. We can achieve so much when we put our minds to it. So much so that everybody wants to copy us.

Well, so much for my reflections, I have no resolutions except to perhaps be more tolerant of fools. I have much thanks though, for allowing me to relate and interact to you in this way, and to my parents for placing a book in my hands before I could even walk or talk. Have a wonderful and safe 2006.

Later.

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CaribChat

Caribbean well on stream for Cricket World Cup 2007 ~ Ken Gordon, West Indies Cricket Board president

The Caribbean is set to host Cricket World Cup 2007, the one-day version of the game's biggest showpiece event, the first time the region has been given such a job. **West Indies Cricket Board President Ken Gordon** talked about CWC 2007 and other matters involving West Indies cricket in an interview with **Gordon Williams, Caribbean Today's managing editor**, conducted on Nov. 12, 2005 in New Kingston, Jamaica. The following is that interview, edited for clarity and space.

GORDON WILLIAMS: (In 2005) you replaced Rawle Brancker as chairman of Cricket World Cup 2007. There was a lot of publicity about a falling out between him and Christopher Dehring, CWC's chief executive officer. What were your personal impressions about how CWC 2007's board was being run when you stepped in, and what is your impression now that you have had a closer look at the situation?

KEN GORDON: The problem obviously was one which surfaced between Mr. Brancker, as chairman, and the CEO. There was a history to it, in that there were some problems initially and this led to an apology from Mr. Brancker to the CEO, and subsequently the difficulties broke out again. And when this manifested itself in correspondence, which tended to undermine the CEO's position, there was an issue and the board looked at it and the board was in the process of resolving a formula for it when Mr. Brancker decided that he would resign.

At that point, clearly one had to move very quickly to try and ensure that there was no fallout, or you minimize the fallout. And it was felt that, given the fact that so much of what the World Cup Committee is doing, and has to do, as it runs down to the event, so much of this is tied in with representation of the ICC. Given the fact that we didn't have a lot of time for anymore mistakes, it was felt that the same person who was the president of the (WICB) would be best suited to straddle both camps.

G.W.: Meaning you?

K.G.: Meaning myself. And it was in those circumstances that I accepted the position.

G.W.: What were your impressions as to how everything was

being run at that point?

K.G.: Well, the structures were all in place, but as long as you have differences at the top you'll always have a potential difficulty. I was not around at the time so I can't speak from first-hand knowledge. But what I met was that things were reasonably well advanced. I can't say that I met any situation which was at the point of falling away or any such thing. Nothing like that.

But there were clearly problems in the environment.

G.W.: Before you took over as chairman of the (CWC) board, (in) the past administration there were differences. How would you describe your relationship - now that you are directly involved - with the CEO, who was also involved in the past administration in that same position?

K.G.: Oh I enjoy an excellent relationship with Mr. Dehring. I think he is a first class executive. I could not ask for more support than is forthcoming from him and his team; and he has a first class professional team.

G.W.: Speaking of the board, there were four new members added to the board. The total is now 18. These new additions came into effect essentially when you became the chairman. It is more representational, in terms of the region itself...Was that your stroke, your personal idea of what it should be about and how is that working out?

K.G.: I'm not sure it matters whose particular idea it was. We're a team. Somebody makes a comment, another takes it forward and out of it you get that direction. And that's how a team is supposed to function.

But I think what we all agreed on was that you needed to have every one of the territories, in which any event associated with the World Cup is taking place, and therefore had to be accountable. We wanted everyone of those territories to be represented on the board. And that's what we set out to do. And that's done.

So that there's no area, where there will be World Cup activity, that does not now have representation on the board. So they can all be sure that they are comfortable.

G.W.: But, looking at it now, was that an oversight...before?

K.G.: What we must remember is that the World Cup is one of the biggest undertakings that anybody can attempt. And therefore when you start, you start with this huge task ahead of you. And you have to prioritize things as you go down. So many of the improvements evolve. I wouldn't regard it as somebody's oversight or mistake or fault. People had to address the critical things that were necessary. As you went on and you began to refine and you began to discover that there were some areas which really didn't have a voice, you move to correct it.

So I would regard it that we have evolved in a very natural progression into being sure that everyone is being represented.

G.W.: One of the reasons you are here in Jamaica was for the ground-breaking ceremony yesterday (Nov. 11, 2005) in Trelawny. How would you rate the pace of the development of the whole project (of CWC 2007 as we sit here Nov. 12, 2005)? On a scale of one to 10, could you say where we are in terms of fully realizing the target of being ready for the World Cup in 2007? Ten being the best case scenario.

K.G.: Rather than my rating, which obviously would be thought of as biased, let's look at how the ICC (International Cricket Council), who are the monitoring people, it's their event after all. Let's talk about how they see it. They came down to do an evaluation and they've found it generally satisfactory. They've identified three or four weak spots, but basically they've identified that the thing is well on stream and they were, not pleasantly surprised, but they were pleased with what they heard.

G.W.: The Cricket World Cup is an event for the entire world, but for the Caribbean it is very important. In recent times, to be fair and honest, the region has experienced a lot of crime and violence, which can be a deterrent because tourism, after all, is very important to the people in the region. How concerned are you about this image and the effect it might have leading up to CWC 2007?

K.G.: We must all be concerned about crime in the region, the effect that it is having. But I think there is a

renewed effort to get on top of that and address it, and I'm seeing that effort in a number of fronts. We have to ensure that we get our act together, meaning the Caribbean. We are speaking as a Caribbean people now. We have to ensure that we are on the top of this situation because we can't afford to have any serious incidents during that period (CWC 2007)...

We have strong security steps which are being planned and which will be in place. We have good reason to believe that we will remain on top of it.

But even before that event comes up, we have to send a message that the situation is well under control. And we must do that by the way we deal with the problems in our respective countries.

G.W.: When the organizers of CWC 2007 in the region, yourself and your organizing board, when you go to the CARICOM level, the political level, how serious is your message to them as to the importance and the urgency of making sure that there are no hiccups on this level?

K.G.: Oh, we do that constantly, not only myself but the CEO (Dehring). But at the structural level, you've got people dealing with immigration, with hoteliers and accommodation and ministers of tourism...This is constantly going on.

We have Derek Jones, who is our legal man, working with the various governments to amend certain items of legislation which are necessary for movement between (territories). There's ongoing communication with the various levels of government. So the co-operation has been excellent.

G.W.: CARICOM leaders have been involved in cricket, more recently in attempting to resolve disputes between players and the (West Indies Cricket) Board...When you sit down with them to talk about issues, for example crime and violence, and their responsibility to deal with that with the World Cup coming up, what is the impression that you get from them? Is it that they are more than willing to stop it now?

K.G.: My impression is that every CARICOM leader to whom I've spoken is deeply concerned. And if you talk about one country they will broaden it, they say 'it's all of us, we all have this problem



Gordon

and we all have to address it'. It's no lack of concern. It is a difficult problem to identify and bring under control...

So the short answer is I'm satisfied that all the countries of the Caribbean are now serious about it. I think some have dragged their feet a little in addressing it, but I get a sense of a new urgency in terms of getting on top of it. And we must all give that every support that we can.

G.W.: Does a body like the ICC, looking on, seeing what is happening, and they are here from time to time monitoring the situation, do they give you feedback on this and also, is there a contingency plan regarding this issue of crime and violence? Is there a scenario, any kind of scenario, where you will say 'maybe it is time to bring in our outside help to help us deal with this issue before Cricket World Cup?'

K.G.: A couple of things. We are a sovereign country and ICC or no one can come into countries and say it's time for us to do anything. They are here at the pleasure of our governments. Let's not forget that. But let's also remember that crime is not unique to the Caribbean. Wherever you've had games all over the place you've had all sorts of incidents...So while it is a heavy burden on all of us, let's not make it into something it isn't. It is not a threat to whether the games go on or not at this stage. It is a concern. It is a concern we have to bring under control because we cannot afford, when we are on the world stage, to have wrong messages sent. If this would happen, then this would have a severe negative impact on our tourism.

So it's not a matter of whether there is a risk of cancelling the games or not,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

Onward, upward for Caribbeans in 2005

LLOYD ROHLEHR

The year 2005 saw English-speaking Caribbean states, as a grouping, facing challenges in forging ahead with their own regional relations as well as confronting those coming from the European Union and the United States.

The region's global agenda became more extensive, complex and difficult to manage, especially for small states with scant resources both human and financial. Diplomacy now transcends the management of external relations and has itself diversified into such key fields as finance, trade and sustainable development.

The Caribbean must negotiate as a bloc. Difficulties arise, but the journey has a guiding principle, onward and upward. If this month the region implements the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) on schedule it would, it is said, be the most advanced integration arrangement in the Americas. It would come 16 years after the Caribbean community envisioned the free movement of goods, services, capital and workers across the region.

Yet the real challenge, some observers think, might lie with public opinion. With all the necessary activities that have been taking place, have the grassroots people been targeted in a more down-to-earth way?

To the Caribbean community's credit the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) is

already functioning. With its seat in Port of Spain, Trinidad, the court has seven justices, headed by Michael de la Bastide, its president. It



Jagdeo

undertakes an original as well as an appellate jurisdiction. It will not replace national courts. It will preoccupy itself with hearing disputes from individuals and companies relating to the operations of the CSME.

RIVALRIES

However, it is in the nature of things that the Caribbean shall go on colliding with inter-island rivalries, longstanding disputes over borders, migration and equity, as the region confronts the fostering of a greater sense of regional identity.

When Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo told the permanent council for the Organization of American States (OAS) that preferential trade has its dangers and to apply it to sugar exported by the African, Caribbean and

Pacific (ACP) countries could harm the Caribbean's sugar trade significantly, affecting thousands of families, this, pointedly, came at a time when in St. Kitts 300 years of sugar processing was ending. Said the World Bank at this juncture: the Caribbean is at "a development crossroad" and it must take significant and concrete steps to improve productivity and competitiveness so as to accelerate or even maintain past growth.

Patrick Manning, the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, in the Red House took close to three hours to present his 2004-2005 national budget, the package being TT\$27.9 billion. The People's National Movement, his party, wants to diversify the economy and reduce the dependence on the energy sector. In the meantime, as the largest supplier of liquefied natural gas to the United States, the Caribbean country signed a preliminary agreement for the construction of a TT\$550 million fertilizer plant.

Guyana, along with Honduras, Nicaragua and Bolivia, were among 18 poor countries worldwide whose multilateral debt was forgiven as part of a deal announced by the Group of Eight wealthy nations.

Jamaica's poverty rate declined by over 60 percent. Government expenditure, which increased to more than \$42 billion since 1992, has been credited for this reduction.

On the subject of poverty,

a Caribbean Development Bank report in May indicated that levels vary between 17 percent and 39 percent among its member-countries and



Manning

poverty-reduction needs to be targeted.

Trinidad and Tobago became the first CARICOM member-state to put into practical effect the Free Trade Agreement between CARICOM and Costa Rica, which does more trade within the CARICOM than it does with South America.

Jamaica and Venezuela, in August, agreed on the broad outlines of an initial \$200 million expansion of the Petroleum Oil Refinery in Kingston. Thus, an analysis said, Jamaica became the first Caribbean nation to sign on to what is a new plan for the South American nation to supply oil to countries throughout the region under below-market terms.

Barbados welcomed back the Hilton Hotel with a new facility that it hopes will

attract big business, while St. Kitts is to have a multi-million-dollar tourist resort covering 1,600 acres.

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has issued a new Air Worthiness Certificate to LIAT, the Leeward Islands Air Transport, which is a regional airline. It was the first OECS operator to receive this recognition.

CRIME

Bermuda's Alliance for Tourism called for zero tolerance to crime against visitors if the already-ailing hospitality industry is to recover. Meanwhile, all over the Caribbean the incidence of crime, either apart from or including the illicit drug trade as well as money laundering, has caused governments to toughen up crime fighting. Still, murders continue to rise. It was reported in September that Jamaica is one of the deadliest places for law officers.

Kidnappings were repeatedly linked to Trinidad and in April motorists in the central part of the island drove through their area with their lights blinking and their horns popping during a protest motorcade.

The U.S. State Department again criticized Guyana for its police abuses and prison conditions in the 2004 country reports on human-rights practices, which it released early in 2005.

A joint operation

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25)

Fewer Jamaican women employed despite higher education ~ study

KINGSTON, Jamaica -A new study in Jamaica has found that although women were accessing higher education than their male counterparts, there were fewer women in the labor force.

The study says as a result, women as a group are under-employed.

The study, entitled "The Status of Men and Women in Jamaica", was conducted by the Bureau of Women's Affairs and its findings were disclosed at the final of a series of gender workshops hosted by the bureau recently.

Consultant in Gender Studies Dr. Imani Tafari Ama, said that the National Gender Policy would help to place gender and gender equality in the mainstream of major sectors of society.

'SOFT'

The study showed that

while females were outperforming their male counterparts and were better at attending educational institutions, there was a tendency for them to choose the "soft" subjects.

"Even though women and girls are outperforming their male counterparts in the educational system, they tend to do so in the traditional so-called feminized lines as they mainly dominate in the humanities and arts," said Dr. Ama. "This needs to be looked at critically in terms of re-evaluating the education system."

She said that the study also highlighted that boys tended to drop out of school at a higher rate than girls, and the literacy level among men and boys was much lower than it was for women.

Studies show that men in the 75 and over age group were mostly functionally illiterate in relation to their

female counterparts.

Dr. Ama said that women do not command lucrative positions in the labor market. In 2004, males continued to represent the majority of the employed labor force at 57.9 percent. When the differential between women and men in the labor force is examined, it shows that the male unemployment rate was 7.9 percent whilst the female unemployment rate in 2004 was 16.4 percent.

"When we look at occupational segregation, there is a differential of 35.8 percent between men and women meaning that there are many more unemployed women than men and also the sectors and levels at which they are employed is at a lower level than their male counterparts," Dr. Ama said.

The research also suggests that women tend to be

employed in the low wage earning sectors.

In terms of decision-making, women tend not to be as represented as their male counterparts whether it is in the corporate sector or in government. Dr. Ama suggested that more women needed to counteract the gender stereotypes of power when it comes to what positions they actually go for in the education system, noting that women tend to lack confidence when accessing power at the highest level of labor.

She noted that the occupations in which women dominated tend to be un-unionized and this resulted in less representation for them to get the best benefits.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Dr. Ama said that "the issue of sexual harassment has still not gone on our legisla-

tive instruments," adding that as a result, women were exposed to sexual harassment at the workplace without having legal recourse for that kind of offense.

In terms of discrimination at the workplace, she said there was also no legislative instrument in place and as such, people with HIV or those of a cultural minority are not protected.

Dr. Ama said that there were no flexible hours for both men and women to work. She said one issue that is being debated is whether flexi-time or paternity leave should be introduced. Another area that the bureau is contemplating is whether persons, who adopt children, should also be awarded maternity and paternity leave.

- CMC



FEATURE

www.caribbeantoday.com

2005 ~ Another challenging year for the Caribbean

PETER RICHARDS

In 2005, both man-made and natural disasters took their toll on the Caribbean. But the earthquakes, hurricanes and tropical storms seemed mild as compared to the murders and unfavorable global trade rulings that affected the region over the past 12 months.

For many Caribbean states, crime continued unabated. Both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica surpassed the 2004 murder figures of 262 and 1,451, respectively. Other territories like St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis and Guyana also struggled to cope with rising murders.

Bomb blasts created the new crime wave in Trinidad and Tobago, where kidnappings for ransom also increased in 2005 and, despite efforts by the government and Opposition to agree on new legislative measures to deal with the situation, by year-end more than 375 murders had been committed and 70 people abducted for ransom.

There were no arrests with regards to the bomb attacks in and around the capital, Port of Spain.

Jamaica's crime situation worsened in 2005. Last year's murder toll was surpassed quite easily, even though the authorities announced new measures to deal with the situation.

The trial of Reneto Adams, the controversial senior superintendent of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), was a major talking point in Jamaica. Charged with five other police officers for the 2003 killing of four persons in the small district of Kraal, the southern parish of Clarendon, all six men walked free after the court, presided over by the Chief Justice Lensley Wolfe, either upheld no case submissions or acquitted after the jury found the accused not guilty. Immediately upon his release, Adams warned criminals to leave Jamaica.

The St. Lucia law enforcement authorities paid money to persons who turned in their weapons, while in St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Denzil Douglas appealed for national unity in the face of a crime situation he described as foreign to the federation.

In Guyana, the crime situation was highlighted by the murder of an American healthcare consultant. Hubert Daniel Thompson, 55, who was found dead in his hotel room. U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents

were called in to assist local investigators.

DRUG TRADE

The illegal drugs trade affected every Caribbean state, and, in some cases, police officers and foreigners were hauled before the courts on drug related charges. Noted Caribbean criminologist Professor Ramesh Deosaran by year-end was calling for a Caribbean community (CARICOM) summit on crime to be held in 2006.

Crime apart, politics, trade, and in particular, the



Adams

various rulings by the World Trade Organization (WTO) as they related to the region's banana and sugar industries, the launch of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), all affected life in the region. By the time Caribbean delegates had joined their counterparts in Hong Kong for the Sixth WTO Ministerial meeting in December, the region had suffered blows to its two main trading commodities – sugar and bananas.

The Caribbean countries had already signalled a loss of confidence in the WTO process, with the Barbados-based Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), which coordinates the region's position at international trade talks noting, "there is a feeling that issues germane to these countries have been sidelined".

It was a sentiment echoed by all Caribbean states. Dominica's Foreign Trade Minister Charles Savarin said, "the region is in the throes of confronting what is an uncertain future, courtesy of the WTO."

PEEVED

The Caribbean sugar and banana countries have been peeved at the position of Europe regarding the sale of bananas and sugar on the European market, saying they were being held to ransom by the multilateral trading system and that recent WTO ruling have forced the E.U. to make decisions that could influence the lives of the Caribbean population.

In late November, the

European Union announced a new import tariff of Euro 176 (\$206) per tonne, in respect of its tariff-only regime, to apply from Jan. 1, 2006 to bananas imported mainly from Latin American or MFN suppliers. The new import regime will also include a duty-free annual import quota of 775,000 tonnes for African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) bananas, and to apply from Jan. 1, 2006.

George Bullen, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Ambassador to Brussels and chairman of the ACP grouping, labeled the E.U. deal as "draconian," while the Windward Islands Banana Development Company (WIBDECO) said it was disappointed with the new proposals.

The Caribbean banana producing countries have already warned that they would not be relegated to a "position of third party bystanders" as Europe seeks to find a solution to its long-standing battle to introduce a single import tariff for bananas.

As regards sugar, the Caribbean said it has been "woefully betrayed" by Europe over the proposals to reform the sugar protocol, with Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo, who has lead responsibility for agriculture within CARICOM saying, "the whole issue is unfair."

The African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states said they had been "subsidizing the European consumers in exchange for long-term access", to the European market for their product.

"But it seems as though Europe has forgotten that, and they think we are asking for charity today. But the world today makes decisions unilaterally," Jagdeo said.

Caribbean countries say they will lose \$100 million annually as a result of the E.U.'s decision to go ahead with a 36 percent cut in price for sugar exported to Europe by ACP states. Ian McDonald, the chief executive officer of the Sugar Association of the Caribbean, described the proposal as an "outrage," saying it is a "betrayal of the Cotonou Partnership, which advances the notion of safeguarding the benefits of the Sugar Protocol."

The launch of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in April signaled the region's quest to establish its own single market and economy (CSME) by the start of 2006 after many years of planning. The CCJ, which is head-

quartered in Trinidad and Tobago, functions as a trade court to deal with issues arising out of the CSME, and as an appellate jurisdiction to hear civil and criminal matters. It is expected to replace the London-based Privy Council, as the region's final court of appeal.

Regarding the CSME, regional countries agreed to establish a \$10 million Regional Development Fund (RDF) to assist the smaller Caribbean states participate in the initiative. In December, the region's finance ministers, meeting in Jamaica, said the RDF would be used to provide financial and technical assistance to countries and industries that stand to lose most on efforts to free up the movement of goods, skills and money across the region as part of the CSME.

The leaders of the sub-regional Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) had hinted at the possibility of not participating fully in the CSME that Caribbean leaders say is an adequate response to a changing global environment. The \$10 million dollar fund "is not the be all and end all of it because there is a committee led by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to look at the formula for which member states will make their contribution through the fund and also among other things to establish criteria as to how to assess the fund," a CARICOM official noted.

The finance ministers also agreed that a technical team would study the Recommendations, including how funding would be arranged and how member states would access the fund, with a report being submitted to CARICOM Council for Finance and Planning on Jan. 24 in Jamaica.

STORMY SEASON

The unusually active 2005 hurricane season brought more hardship to Grenada, recovering from the devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan the previous year. By year-end, the Keith Mitchell administration was facing the prospect of labor unrest, as the main trade unions were up in arms at the government's decision to impose a five percent levy on the salaries of workers that would be used as a contribution to the rehabilitation of the island. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) passed a resolution urging the mobilization of "all workers and other sections of society and to act with other organi-

zations which oppose the levy to take all lawful and constitutional steps to peacefully protest by way of mass action were the government to proceed to implement the levy deductions or refuses to with-



Mitchell

draw it."

But the Mitchell administration said the levy was necessary, and Finance Minister Anthony Boatman said the government would not back down to an ultimatum given by the TUC.

During the busy six-month hurricane period, the Caribbean suffered millions of dollars in damage as a number of tropical storms and even category five hurricanes made their way through the island chain. The hurricanes also left thousands dead, demolished infrastructure and forced the displacement of people, mainly in the U.S., even though some Caribbean states like Jamaica, still recovering from the passage of Hurricane Ivan, were not spared.

Guyana started 2005 basically under water, as heavy torrential rains, the most the country has seen in a century, resulted in widespread flooding, especially along the East Coast Demerara and parts of the capital. The authorities were forced to declare a number of places as disaster areas and appealed to the regional and international communities for assistance.

And as the year came to an end, Guyana was again battling with severe weather conditions, even as officials noted that the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC), which overtopped its dam and contributed to the devastating floods in January was holding up to the December rains.

POLITICS

Politically, the region ensured that democratic rule prevailed, even though by year-end, there had not been elections in Haiti and the prognosis for that taking place in early January seemed as uncertain as the period before

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)

FOOD

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Chicken creole: tasty and healthy start to the new year



Chicken creole

The new year is here. So, to start 2006 off right, **Caribbean Today** will introduce readers to some

“Down Home Healthy Cookin’” – recipes and healthy cooking tips – which will help you sample a tasty meal that is good for you.

The main course is the 20-minute chicken creole.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium chicken breast halves (1 ? lbs. total), skinned, boned and cut into one inch strips*
- 1 14-oz. can tomatoes cut up**

- 1 cup low-sodium chili sauce
- 1 1/2 cups chopped green pepper (1 large)
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbs. chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried basil, crushed
- 1 tbs. chopped fresh parsley or 1 tsp. dried parsley
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- Nonstick spray coating

METHOD

Spray deep skillet with nonstick spray coating. Preheat pan over high heat. Cook chicken in hot skillet, stirring for three to five minutes or until no longer pink.

Reduce heat. Add tomatoes and their juice, low-sodium chili sauce, green pepper, celery, onion, garlic, basil, parsley, crushed red pepper and salt.

Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer covered for

10 minutes. Serve over hot, cooked rice or whole wheat pasta.

Makes four servings.

* *You can substitute 1lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into one-inch strips if desired.*

** *To cut back on sodium, try low-sodium canned tomatoes.*



...and the side dishes are delicious too

Garlic mashed potatoes**INGREDIENTS**

- 1lb. potatoes (2 large)
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 2 large cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 tsp. white pepper

METHOD

Peel potatoes; cut in quarters. Cook, covered, in a small amount of boiling water for 20-25 minutes or



Garlic mashed potatoes

until tender. Remove from heat. Drain. Re-cover the pot.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan over low heat, cook garlic in milk until garlic is soft, about 30 minutes.

Add milk-garlic mixture and white pepper to potatoes. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed or mash with a potato masher until smooth.

MICROWAVE DIRECTIONS

Scrub potatoes, pat dry and prick with a fork. On a plate, cook potatoes, uncovered, on a 100 percent power (high) until tender, about 12 minutes, turning potatoes over once. Let stand for five min-

utes. Peel and quarter.

Meanwhile, in a four-cup glass measure, combine milk and garlic. Cook, uncovered, on a 50 percent power (medium) until garlic is soft, about four minutes. Continue as directed above.

Makes four servings.

Old-fashioned bread pudding**INGREDIENTS**

- 10 slices whole wheat bread
- 1 egg
- 3 egg whites
- 1 1/2 cups skim milk
- 1 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar

- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. cloves
- 2 tsp. sugar



Bread pudding

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray an eight inch by eight inch baking dish with vegetable oil spray. Lay the slices of bread in the baking dish in two rows, overlapping them like shingles.

In a medium mixing bowl, beat together the egg, egg whites, milk, quarter cup sugar, brown sugar and vanil-

la. Pour the egg mixture over the bread

In a small bowl, stir together the cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and two teaspoons of sugar. Sprinkle the spiced sugar over the bread pudding. Bake the pudding for 30-35 minutes, until it has browned on top and is firm to the touch.

Serve warm or at room temperature, with warm apple-raisin sauce.

Makes nine servings.

Source for all recipes: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health.



Beaches
(pick up Dec.2005,
printer has ad)

St. Lucia declares war on obesity

CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC – The government has declared war on obesity, noting that it is having a negative impact on the country’s productivity.

Health Minister Damian Greaves said government fears that it will eventually cost the country huge sums to treat affected persons and cautioned that more St. Lucians should be exercising and watching their diet in an effort to ward off what he says is an epidemic affecting the entire Caribbean.

Regional health experts say that while attention has, in the past few years, been focused on fighting HIV/AIDS, chronic diseases have quietly crept up on the Caribbean with obesity making a major contribution to illnesses such as diabetes.

In a radio broadcast Greaves said: “It is time to launch the battle of the bulge with obesity being one of the major points of focus. We have to ensure that people see the need to exercise and to facilitate this government will be seeing to remove import duties on exercise equipment so that it becomes more affordable to the nation.”

In November, Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony announced that pensioners suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure would no longer have to pay for their medication. Greaves, in wel-

coming the announcement, said this would go a long way in easing the burden of those who cannot pay and whose very survival may be at risk.



Greaves

COSTLY EFFECT

At the same time, the minister said St. Lucians could help reduce the likelihood of obesity contributing to chronic diseases like diabetes, which can impact negatively on the nation’s productivity.

“When you look at the effects on the productive capacity of the island and the morbidity rate in relation to the disease and ill health, the cost is extremely prohibitive in the context of secondary and tertiary care.



Caribbean explores new multi-marketing tourism possibilities

WESLEY GIBBINGS

FORT-DE-FRANCE, Martinique - Caribbean tourism experts exploring new possibilities for this leading economic sector are suggesting that the marketing of regional, multi-destination packages, offers one of the better possibilities for increasing financial returns from the industry.

Optimism over the prospects of a new thrust in this area led Jasmin Garraway, sustainable tourism director at the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), to conclude that once its challenges are overcome it can "take the tourism industry to another level."

But officials and technocrats gathered in Martinique recently for an ACS-convened conference on the subject, hosted by the French territory's Regional Council, suggested that the obstacles to success were not only numerous, but intractable. Former airline executive, development consultant Ian Bertrand, for example cited the need for "consistent delivery of the basic airline product."

COLLABORATION

In the end, it was proposed that greater collaboration among Caribbean airlines be fostered and Marie Claude Valide, head of international relations of the Martinique-based Air Caraibe offered to attempt the convening of a meeting of the indigenous

Caribbean airlines, including BWIA, LIAT, Air Jamaica, Caribbean Star and Air Caraibe. Valide said one of the problems with moving people smoothly through the region was that "we (airlines)

ers at all levels" of developments in the area of multi-destination tourism marketing.

"We also need to refine our intentions into language to inform the hotel groups, the airlines, the ground han-



The Caribbean is becoming a popular destination for visiting scuba divers.

do not talk to each other."

Another difficulty, if Martinique were to be included, would be the problems associated with receiving a French visa to visit the island. President of the Martinique Regional Council Alfred Marie-Jeanne, who also heads the independence-minded Patriot Party, was asked to pursue the lifting of visa requirements for intra-regional travellers.

St. Lucia's Consul General to the French Antilles Cassius Elias said there were many things that needed to be done to ensure projects such as these reach the stage of implementation. He said the industry had to "find a mechanism to inform all the decision-makers

and others," the former agriculture minister said.

Bertrand was however insistent that multi-destination tourism opportunities in the Caribbean existed and had to be exploited despite the many challenges. His consulting team presented a menu of "demonstration packages" to prove that, in selected areas, the idea of bringing extra-regional travellers to more than two regional destinations was not as remote as could be construed. The activities selected by Bertrand and his colleagues included golfing, diving and hiking.

Consultant David Coathup, who operates out of St. Lucia, said golfing was

"very serious business for a lot of people in the world that can be used to deliver additional people to our regional destinations."

TARGET

He however proposed, "an important part of putting the packages together is to work out exactly who you are going for. It is too wide as a subject."

He focused on the single woman golfer, female single parent golfers, retirees and "golfing families".

"To attract this niche, we have to have certain amenities including comfortable and safe accommodation," he said. "In today's world safety is a major component of anything we need to be successful."

He suggested that the countries that can be explored for multi-destination packages were Barbados, St. Kitts and St. Lucia.

Hiking was described by Coathup as a "multi-billion dollar industry" linked to cultural heritage tourism. He said this was an area not being adequately exploited by the Caribbean.

Among the advantages of this activity were that it was year-round, its participants tended to be environmentally conscious and the hiker has a greater propensity to interact with communities within their destination of choice."

St. Lucia, Martinique and Dominica were identified as key destinations for this activity. Coathup, however, said there also needed to be a change of mind-set on the question of hiking tourists.

"We must explore the

myth that all backpackers are undesirables," he said.

DIVING IN

Warren Solomon, former senior Trinidad and Tobago tourism executive, proposed that marine tourism was among the fastest growing sub-sectors in the industry worldwide. He said more than 20,000 divers were being certified every month in the United States and it was estimated there were 1.6 million certified divers in Europe. Solomon said scuba divers had "a high propensity to travel away from home to dive" and were likely to pay more for "environmentally friendly packages."

Profiling the average travelling diver, the **Dive Training Magazine** executive said the sport was moving away from being dominated by men, with women account for between 25 percent and 30 percent of annual certifications worldwide, and that divers spend an

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

Air Jamaica to resume flights to St. Lucia

CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC - Tourism Minister Phillip J. Pierre says Air Jamaica has agreed to resume flights to St. Lucia early this year.

While Pierre stopped short of providing any details of



Pierre

the agreement in a statement made last month, industry officials told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC)** that the airline return would coincide with the observance of St. Lucia's 27th anniversary of Independence on Feb. 22.

The package is expected to include at least two non-stop services out of New York weekly and direct services out of Montego Bay hub in Jamaica. Pierre, in a statement last month emphasized the importance of the new routes the Air Jamaica service was expected to provide to St. Lucia.

"This is a service that we have always requested from Air Jamaica, given our popularity in the tri-state area and the fact that we have a plethora of hotel rooms com-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

World's largest cruise ship goes to St. Vincent

KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent, CMC - This eastern Caribbean nation last month welcomed to its shores the world's largest cruise ship - Queen Mary 2 - with tourism officials saying the call this season will "make-it-or-break-it for St. Vincent and the Grenadines."

Ahead of the arrival of the vessel, authorities in Kingstown embarked on a virtual "operation Queen Mary II clean-up" with vagrants and other socially displaced persons being removed wholesale from the streets and taken to the Mental Health

Centre.

"A lot depends on the product that we offer, the

of Tourism Vida Bernard said.

The vessel went to this country just two days after the



services that we give and the experience the visitors will get when they come to St. Vincent and the Grenadines," Director

Christmas celebrations with some 5,728 passengers and a crew of 1,292.

"We have to show that we

can handle a crowd of that magnitude and let the cruise industry know that we are ready to get even more ships in St. Vincent and the Grenadines," Minister of Tourism, Glen Beache said.

"This will depend on how we handle ourselves," Beache added as he encouraged tourism stakeholders to be ready for the arrival of the vessel.

The tourism director appealed to stakeholders to be honest in their dealings with the tourists and not to swindle them.

"Do it for your country," she said. "It is important that as Vincentians we give our very best to the visitors when they come."



TOURISM BRIEFS

• Cruise ships boost Bermuda's tourism figures

Bermuda's air arrivals tumbled during the third quarter of 2005 year by 9.5 percent over the same period last year, but overall visitor totals climbed by 1.2 percent, thanks to an increase in the number of cruise ship passengers coming ashore.

According to the Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics issued by government last month, a total of 83,474 tourists arrived by air during the year's peak summer season (July to September). This figure was down from 92,222 a year ago and took the total air arrivals for the first three-quarters of 2005 to 215,005 - a marginal 0.5 percent decline from the

same period in 2004.

• Chastanet calls 2005 a good year for St. Lucia

Newly elected President of the St Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association Allen Chastanet says despite a very active 2005 hurricane season, the island's tourism sector performed reasonably well.

"For 2006 we are expecting a very strong year, the U.S. dollar continues to be weak against the European currencies, and we have the promise of a significant increase in airlift," he said.

- Compiled from CMC and other sources.



Auditions begin for new 'Ivan Martin' in 'The Harder They Come'

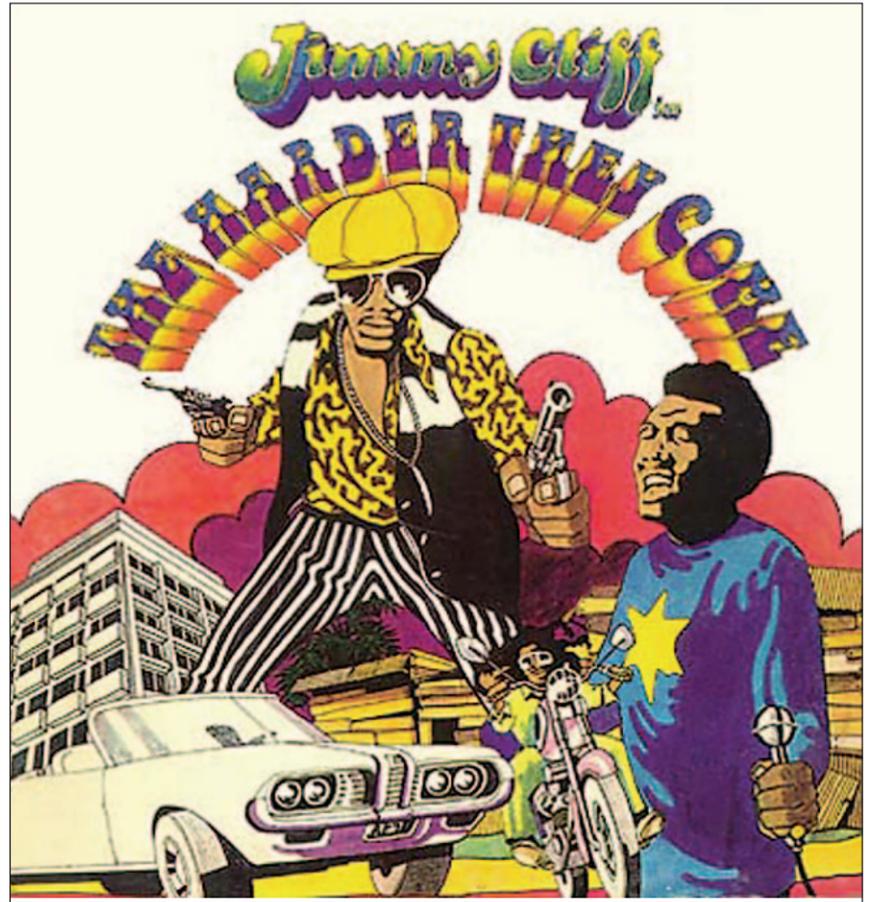
LONDON, CMC - A search is on in the United Kingdom to find an actor to once again bring to life the character "Ivan Martin", in a stage adaptation of the 1970s iconic Jamaican film the "Harder They Come".

"Ivan" was the lead character played by Jamaican reggae superstar Jimmy Cliff, who developed an international following after starring in the 1972 film that has become an international 'cult' classic written by Perry Henzell and Trevor D. Rhone.

Auditions began last month in London and are a part of a nationwide search launched by the Theatre Royal Stratford East and U.K. Arts Productions for a young Jamaican actor between the ages of 18 and 25 years to play the lead role of "Ivan Martin".

A release from the Theatre Royal Stratford said outstanding acting, singing and dancing skills are essential, as well as an ability to speak patois fluently. The successful actor must be available from Feb. 13 to May 6, 2006.

"We are searching all over



The original "Harder They Come" poster.

the country for a young, raw and talented Jamaican actor capable of bringing 'Ivan Martin' to life on stage. We know he is out there and we are determined to find him," said Dawn Reid, associate director, Theatre Royal.

"The Harder They Come" is scheduled to open at the Theatre Royal Stratford East

in Mar. 2006. It is a gritty period piece set in Jamaica and charts the story of the young protagonist Ivan Martin's journey from country boy looking for fame and fortune as a singer in Kingston and his eventual corruption as all his dreams are crushed.



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EO/ADA/MF/V/Drug Free

Caribbean explores new multi-marketing tourism possibilities

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

average of 60 percent to 80 percent more than regular tourists.

Solomon said the sport was a highly regulated one, a situation that minimized the possibility of injury to divers.

"The Caribbean," he added, "is a hotspot for diving."

He said divers were in constant search of "rich, healthy coral cover," fish diversity and clean water. He proposed packages that covered the islands of Tobago, St. Vincent and Dominica.

The conference proposed fuller elaboration of these and

other packages at a major travel convention which the Regional Council agreed it would host by May next year.

- CMC



Air Jamaica to resume flights to St. Lucia

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

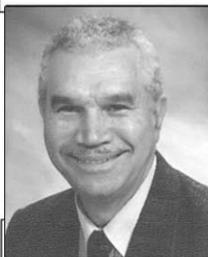
ing on stream," he said. "We believe we can sustain a non-stop service out of New York, and we hope to get an opportunity to prove that this coming winter."

Last year, Air Jamaica dropped the Eastern Caribbean from its schedule,

but later returned to service Grenada and Barbados out of Montego Bay and New York. St. Lucia was not included in the return bout because the airline said there was only one aircraft available to service the Eastern Caribbean route.



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Rev. Clinton Chisholm, Assoc. Pastor

BET joins JTB to boost Air J's 'Jazz and Blues Fest' Jan. 26-28

Black Entertainment Television in the United States has joined forces with the Jamaica Tourist Board to promote the Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival to be held Jan. 26-28 in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

Cybelle Brown, vice president of sales and marketing with BET Digital Networks, said it is no surprise that her network is involved in this year's festival since they have produced the event for Air

Jamaica for several years. In addition to a preview show, which was scheduled to air on the BET Jazz Channel last month, a festival commercial is scheduled to air on BET Jazz and



Shaggy



Patti LaBelle

VH1 Soul this month. BET also will promote the festival in Atlanta, Georgia on KISS 104.1 FM.

This year's jazz and blues fest will feature performers such as John Legend, Shaggy, Nestor Torres, Lyfe Jennings, Morgan, Al Green, Air Supply, Bo Diddley, Nicole Henry, Richie Stephens, James Ingram, Patti LaBelle, Maxi Priest, Kem and Reunion Jazz Quartet.

Festival promoters will

also recognize the work of Byron Lee, of Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, who is celebrating 50 years in the music industry. Joining him for the tribute will be The Mighty Sparrow, David Rudder, Arrow, Ernie Smith, Ken Lazarus, Keith Lyn, Pluto, "Merry Men" and portrait artist Jean Francois.

For further information, visit www.airjamaicajazzandblues.com



Caribbean offers diverse, exciting entertainment in 2006

In 2006, the Caribbean will offer many entertainment events filled with the fun and excitement of the region's unique food, music, sporting and cultural heritage.

A listing of some of those events, highlighted below, may serve as a guide to aid prospective visitors when selecting travel dates and a destination of choice within the Caribbean.

JANUARY

4-14 - St. Maarten French Carnival
9-15 - Barbados Jazz Festival
12-25 - Bermuda Festival of The Performing Arts
18-Feb. 1 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Mustique Blues Festival
19-22 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Bequia Music Festival
28 - Guyana - Mash Jamboree/Junior Calypso Competition
30-Feb. 3 - Curacao - Carnival Tumba Contest

FEBRUARY

1 - The Bahamas - Ebony Fashion Fair Fashion Show
3-4 - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - St. Vincent Blues Festival
5 - Antigua and Barbuda - Exhibition at Harmony Hall Featuring Cristiano Baggio
6 - Jamaica - Bob Marley Celebrations
8 - Cayman Arts Festival - Cayman Brac
8 - Jamaica - Hague Agricultural Show
10-18 - Cayman Arts Festival - Grand Cayman
11 - Guyana - Masquerade Competition
11 - St. Martin - French side/Dutch side "Unity Jump Up"
12-19 - Barbados - Hometown Festival
12 - Curacao - Horse Parade
12 - Guyana - Police Band Concerts - Strings and Military
12-13 - Martinique - Wedding Expo
12 - St. Thomas, USVI - Annual Antiques, Arts and Collectibles Auction
17-Apr. 28 - Jamaica - Bacchanal Jamaica Mas Camp and Road March
18 - Aruba's Tivoli Lighting Parade
18-19 - Anguilla - ABC Annual Flower Show
18 - Cayman Islands - Little Cayman Mardi Gras
18 - Curacao - Carnival Calypso Contest
18 - Guyana - Children's Costume Parade
18 - Guyana - Calypso Final
18 - Jamaica - Sugar Cane Carnival
18 - Martinique - Nautical Week
19 - Aruba - Children's Grand Carnival Parade in Oranjestad
19 - Curacao - Children's Carnival Parade
19 - Guyana - Police Band Concert for the Elderly
19 - Martinique - Jazz Concert
20-21 - Guyana - Steel Pan Competition
23 - Guyana - Mashramani (National

Festival)

23-Mar. 1 - St. Martin - Carnival
24 - The Bahamas - Renowned Bahamian painter Alton Lowe Art Exhibition
25 - Anguilla - St. Gerard's Garden Party
25 - Curacao - Traditional "Midnight Ban Topa" in Otrobanda
25-26 - Martinique - Jazz Concerts
25-Mar. 1 - Martinique - Carnival
26 - Aruba's 52nd Grand Carnival Parade
26 - Curacao - Gran Marcha "The Grand Parade"
27 - Aruba - Old Mask Parade and Burning of King Momito
27 - The Bahamas - E.C. Bethel National Arts Festival
27-28 - Trinidad and Tobago Carnival
28 - Aruba - Old Mask Parade and Burning of King Momo

MARCH

4 - Jamaica - Skazz Music and Food Festival
5 - Antigua and Barbuda - Exhibition at Harmony Hall Featuring Melinda Hackett
8-12 - Martinique - Foire Expo de Dillion - Traditional exhibit and fair
10-15 - Jamaica - Fun in the Sun - 'The Premier Christian Festival in the Caribbean'
12-13 - Martinique - 15th Agricultural Fair
12-18 - Montserrat - St. Patrick's Week of Celebrations
15 - Cayman Islands - Cayman Food and Wine Classic
16-19 - Anguilla - Moon splash
17-25 - Bermuda International Film Festival
17-25 - Grenada - St. Patrick's Day Festival
17 - Turks and Caicos - 15th Annual St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl - Providenciales
23 - St. Martin - Red & White Jump Up

March-April - The Bahamas - Circus of the Stars

APRIL

4-8 - The Bahamas National Youth Choir Annual Bahamian Cultural Show of Music and Dance
12-17 - Suriname - ISFR Fly's Paramaribo - International Film Festival
13-17 - St. Vincent and The Grenadines - Easterval, Union Island
14 - Bermuda - Annual Good Friday Kite Festival
14-May 2 - St. Maarten - 37th Carnival
15-17 - Barbados - Oistins Fish Festival
17 - Curacao - Easter Monday Harvest Parade
17 - Martinique - Easter Crab Festival
17 - St. Eustatius - Easter Monday Celebrations - Big Bam
17 - Turks and Caicos Tourist Board's

14th Annual Kite Flying Competition
18 - Trinidad and Tobago - Buccoo Goat Race Festival
20-29 - Cayman Islands - Cayfest - The National Arts Festival
28 - Bonaire - Simadan (Harvest) Festival in Rincon
28-30 - Grenada - 6th Annual Carriacou Maroon Music Festival
30-May 1 - Curacao - International Food, Beverage and Cultural Festival
30 - St. Eustatius Queen's Birthday Celebrations
30 - St. Maarten - Grand Carnival Parade and Queen's Birthday



St. Lucia hosts its annual jazz festival in May.

MAY

1 - St. Martin - Fish Day at Cul de Sac Village
4-7 - Grand Bahama Gospelrama
5-14 - 15th Anniversary St. Lucia Jazz Festival
7-8 - Martinique - Beauty Fair
11-13 - Cayman Islands - Batabano Carnival
13 - BVI - Spring Music Fest
13 - Cayman Islands - Little Cayman Cook-off
19-28 - Curacao Dive Festival
20-29 - The Bahamas Film Festival
20-28 - Barbados - Gospelfest
21-26 - Cayman Islands - Inner Space Week 2006
21-22 - St. Martin - Nautical Fair
24-29 - Aruba Soul Beach Music Festival 2006
26-27 - The 19th Annual Curacao Jazz Festival
27 - Curacao - International Caribbean Gospel Festival

JUNE

4-July 2 - The Bahamas - Junkanoo in June Festival
7-11 - Jamaica - Caribbean Fashion Week
10-18 - Jamaica - Ocho Rios Jazz Festival
10 - Montserrat - Queen's Birthday Celebrations

14 - Martinique - Sugar Cane Crop Over
17-24 - Bonaire - Dive Into Caribbean Adventure Bonaire
20-21 - St. Martin - Summer Heat Music Festival
21 - Suriname - Fete de la Musique - French Music Festival
29-July 2 - St. Kitts Music Festival
30 - Suriname - Miss Alida Pageant

JULY

1 - The Bahamas - Sir Lynden Pindling Legacy Ball
1 - Annual Bonaire Arts Day
1 - Jamaica - International Reggae Day
2 - Antigua and Barbuda - Caribbean Comedy Festival
3-10 - The Bahamas - Independence Activities
3 - Turks and Caicos - Annual Turks and Caicos Music and Cultural Festival
7 - Aruba - 17th Heineken Green Synergy Festival
7-8 - Aruba - 13th Annual Aruba Reef Care Project
7 - Cayman Islands - Summerfest - Little Cayman
15-17 - Jamaica Food Festival
16-22 - Jamaica - Reggae Sumfest
17-18 - St. Lucia Carnival
21-30 - St. Eustatius - Statia Carnival
23-Aug. 15 - Martinique - 17th Edition Cultural Nights
28-30 - Montserrat - Cudjoe Head Celebrations
29 - Anguilla - Miss Ecstasy Beauty Pageant

AUGUST

All Month - St. Martin - Film Festival
2 - Turks and Caicos - Annual Underwater Photographic Competition
3-13 - Anguilla Summer Festival
6 - Jamaica - Heineken Startime 16 "Love is Overdue"
14 - Dominica - Lady of Health Castle Bruce Feast
15 - Curacao Cuisine, Cultural Heritage Festival
19 - Jamaica - Caribbean Model Search
30 - St. Lucia - Feast of St. Rose De Lima

SEPTEMBER

16 - St. Martin - 3rd Edition of the Artist Corner
19 - Dominica - Carib Celebration
24 - Curacao - Culture Week

OCTOBER

All Month - Turks and Caicos - 10th Annual Oktoberfest
3-4 - Martinique - Fashion Perfumes Expo
6-7 - 5th Aruba Music Festival
88 - Jamaica - Peter Tosh Symposium
12 - Jamaica - Africa Jamfest
15-17 - Jamaica - Port Royal Annual Seafood Festival

17 - Jamaica - Heritagefest
20-22 - Cayman Islands - 10th Anniversary of the Sinking of the MV K.P. Tibbetts
21 - St. Eustatius - Antillean Day
22-28 - Dominica - Creole Week
27-Nov. 5 - Cayman Islands - Pirates Week Festival
27-29 - Dominica - 10th Annual World Creole Music Festival
28 - Jamaica - Oktoberfest

NOVEMBER

1 - Antigua and Barbuda - Ceremonial Parade and Independence Food Fair
8-12 - Anguilla - Tranquility Jazz Festival
13-27 - Suriname - Salsuri Festival - International Salsa Festival
24-26 - Antigua and Barbuda - 'Moods of Pan' hosted by Gemonites Steel Orchestra

DECEMBER

1 - Bonaire - Bari Festival Period
3 - St. Martin - Miss Caribbean Hibiscus Pageant
13-Jan. 1 - St. Kitts and Nevis - National Carnival
15-17 - Grenada - Carriacou Parang
16-24 - St. Vincent and The Grenadines - National Christmas Festival - Caroling Competition
18 - St. Martin - Pudding and Tart Competition
27-31 - Suriname - Surifesta End of the Year Festival
31 - Jamaica - Harbour Fest and Fireworks on the Waterfront
31 - Montserrat Festival Day



St. Kitts and Nevis jump carnival in December.

Compiled from the Caribbean Tourism Organization's 2006 Caribbean Calendar of Events. The CTO is the Caribbean's tourism development agency and comprises membership of 32-member governments and a myriad of private sector entities. For more information, visit www.doitcaribbean.com or www.onecaribbean.org



Breathe easy ~ know all you can about controlling asthma's 'triggers'

Asthma is a disease that can make it hard to breathe.

When you take a breath, air goes in your lungs through air tubes in your chest. When you have asthma, these tubes can become blocked, making it hard to breathe.

The tubes can get blocked due to smoke, dust, or other things around you.

Common symptoms of asthma may include coughing, wheezing, tightness in the chest and shortness of breath. A person with asthma may even hear himself or herself breathing or need extra effort to breathe.

The most important thing you can do to prevent asthma in your home is to control indoor asthma "triggers" – the things that can set off asthma symptoms. The following is a list of the most common triggers and what you can do to reduce them:

Trigger – Secondhand tobacco smoke

Action - Do not smoke in the home or car and don't allow others to do so either. This includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes and other smoke-producers such as incense.

Trigger - Dust mites (too small to be seen, but found in every home)

Action – Use zippered, plastic or specialized covers on pillows and mattresses. Wash sheets and blankets in hot water once a week. Choose washable stuffed toys and wash them off in hot



water and dry thoroughly. Keep stuffed toys off bed. Keep humidity inside the house at a low level. The best way to do this is with a dehu-

The most important thing you can do to prevent asthma in your home is to control indoor asthma "triggers" – the things that can set off asthma symptoms.

midifier that you can buy at the drug store. You can also try to identify where the humidity is coming from and solve the problem.

Trigger – Pets

Action – Keep pets out of the bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times. Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets and stuffed toys. If planning to buy a pet, make sure the pet does not

shed any hair.

Trigger – Molds (they grow on damp materials. To control mold, you need to control moisture or wetness.)

Action – Wash mold off hard surfaces and dry completely. Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water. Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator, and dehumidifier clean and dry. Use exhaust fans or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking or using the dishwasher. Vent clothes dryers to the outside.

Trigger – House dust

Action – Remove dust once a week with a damp cloth and vacuum carpet and fabric-covered furniture to reduce dust build-up.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; The Allergy and Asthma Network; and PBSKids.org



Bermuda approves smoking ban

HAMILTON, Bermuda, CMC - Smoking in public places will be banned in Bermuda from next year after senators followed the lead of Members of Parliament in the House of Assembly and unanimously approved tough new tobacco laws.

The new legislation, passed by the Senate (Upper House) last month, will make it an offense to light up in bars, restaurants, hospitals, hotels, offices and schools across the island. It will also result in cigarette vending machines banned, along with tobacco advertising at sporting events, and will make it illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone under age 18.

The sales and advertising ban was scheduled to come into force on Jan. 1, with the other provisions coming on April 1.

Offenders face a \$1,000 fine for breaking the law.

GRACE

However, there will be a six-month grace period when the rules first come into effect

to give people the chance to get used to them.

Introducing the bill, Government Senator Raymond Tannock said: "Rights can be suspended in the interests of public health and it's for the public health that I bring this before the Senate."

He explained that the ban is part of a global health treaty – the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - which has been signed by 168 countries and ratified by 115 of them, and involves the tightening of anti-tobacco laws. Italy, Ireland and Sweden are among the nations that have already brought in a ban similar to the new one in Bermuda.

Tannock said five million people across the globe die as a result of smoking each year, and that 17 percent of the of Bermuda's 65,000 population are regular smokers with 28 percent exposed to second-hand smoke.



PAHO launches ambitious HIV/AIDS project in Guyana

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has launched an ambitious \$35 million project to help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in Guyana.

The 10-year, six-point plan will end in 2015 and PAHO is projecting a 50 percent reduction in the estimated number of new HIV infections by 2010.

There are an estimated 18,000 Guyanese affected by the HIV/AIDS virus.

PAHO's Country Manager Dr. Enias Baganizi, said the project aims to help governments and organizations working in the health sector to unify efforts, maximize available resources and mobilize support.

"Three hundred persons die a day in Latin America and the Caribbean from HIV/AIDS and it is imperative that we take regional action," he said.

BENEFITS

Among the benefits of the project include HIV/AIDS awareness and education; prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and



Ramsammy

Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT).

As part of its target, officials said the reduction of the

"Three hundred persons die a day in Latin America and the Caribbean from HIV/AIDS and it is imperative that we take regional action"

- PAHO's Country Manager
Dr. Enias Baganizi

incidence of mother to child transmission by five percent, and the incidence of congenital syphilis less than 0.5 cases per 1000 live births by 2015

have also been identified.

Health Minister Dr. Leslie Ramsammy said he is confident that Guyana would achieve all identified targets five years ahead of schedule.

"Guyana will meet most of the targets set for Latin American and Caribbean by 2010. This will be achieved through Guyana's national strategic plan, which will begin this year and end 2010," Ramsammy said.

He said the Health Ministry would also be paying 100 peer educators to interface directly with the public to complement the work of some 50 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) already working to back national efforts.

"Every single home must be visited and educated," he said.

Ramsammy said Guyana is one of the few countries where experienced physicians are available in all geographic regions to provide treatment to HIV/AIDS patients.

"We are close to where we ought to be in 2010," Ramsammy said.



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Much-touted FTAA is on 'life support' ~ Bernal

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC - Richard Bernal, director general of the Barbados-based Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), says he is not so optimistic that the much-touted Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) will become a reality soon.

He described the FTAA, which is being negotiated by 34 countries of the Americas and intended to be the most far-reaching trade agreement in history, as being most definitely on life support.

"I am not sure what the future holds for the FTAA," Bernal said in an interview with **Trade Beat**, the official organ of the CRNM.

Trinidad and Tobago has been pushing to become the headquarters of the FTAA and Bernal said no consensus had been reached at the recent Summit of the Americas held in Argentina on continuing the negotiations to form the FTAA.

"I believe however there is a strong interest outside of the



Bernal

MERCUSOR (countries) and Venezuela in having some sort of hemispheric trade arrangement. We will see early in the new year if these countries can get together," he added.

CLOSER TIES

The MERCUSOR grouping consists of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, and in recent time Cuba, which is not part of the FTAA negotiations have

joined Venezuela in seeking to establish closer relations with the grouping. Bernal said that the Caribbean did "everything possible to keep the FTAA alive," adding "as an option we also have worked on the preliminary stages in terms of information exchanges between MERCUSOR and CARICOM (Caribbean community)."

Bernal said that the region was also now prepared to hold talks with Canada on an enhanced CARICOM-CARIBCAN trade agreement. He said the talks would begin "once the Canadian elections are over and things settle down there." He also disclosed that "substantial progress" had been made on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with Europe, describing as "con-

structive" the negotiations that had encountered initial problems.

"Yes there are differences, but we believe that we could

work it out and we are pursuing that in the first quarter of the new year," he said.



BUDGET BRIEFS

• St. Kitts presents \$700M package

Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas last month presented an EC\$700.4 million (\$259.4 million) budget to Parliament saying it promises hope and cheer to the entire society and "establishes quite clearly and unequivocally" the transformation of the economy of the federation.

According to the prime minister, recurrent revenue for fiscal year 2006 has been estimated at EC\$363.5 million (\$134.6 million), representing a 12.8 percent increase over the 2005 estimates. He said recurrent expenditure for the new fiscal year is estimated at EC\$336.9 million (\$124.7 million) an increase of nine percent over the comparative estimate last year.

"We are therefore projecting a Recurrent Account Surplus of EC\$26.5 million (\$9.8 million)," he added.

Douglas told legislators that there had been "dramatic improvement" in the performance of the island's main revenue earners and this trend is expected to continue in the 2006 fiscal year.

• **No new taxes in Guyana**
Guyanese can expect no new taxes in the 2006 national budget to be presented early this month, Cabinet Secretary Dr. Roger Luncheon said.

According to Luncheon, the government has projected that positive growth in the economy for 2006 would be some two percent.

Finance Minister Saisnarine Kowlessar told his Cabinet colleagues that there would be no

new tax measures and there are unlikely to be many new initiatives in the budget. He said "the plan for the capital budget is being completed with inputs from sector ministries. As before, substantial investments would continue in the infrastructure and social services sectors..."

The government has projected that growth in the economy for 2005 has shrunk "somewhere in the vicinity of three percent", which Luncheon blamed on the unprecedented January floods which cost the local economy some \$15 million and spiralling fuel prices on the global market.

• BVI to spend \$233M

Finance Minister Ron Skelton has presented a \$233 million national budget for the 2006 fiscal year, saying it clearly reflects growth and optimism for the economy of the British Virgin Islands (BVI).

He told legislators that the budget with the theme "Advancing Our Social Services" is a 7.4 percent increase over the budgetary figure of \$217million last year. Skelton said that the government had decided against raising taxes to improve the economy, but would encourage economic growth through various measures. He said that the budget is geared towards business people and would create employment.

- Compiled from CMC and other sources.



Domestication of foreign corporation – a good pre-immigration tax planning strategy

OSCAR I. ALFONSO & MICHAEL ROSENBERG

As we have discussed in many prior editions of the **Caribbean Today**, there are many planning strategies that a foreign individual for U.S. income, estate and gift tax purposes should consider before immigrating to the United States.

Such planning can lessen the potential adverse U.S. tax impact. Consider the following scenario: In 2006, H is a resident of Country X. H owns 100 percent of Corporation T, which is a Country X corporation. Corporation T owns a U.S. real property interest (a USRPI). H is planning to permanently immigrate to the U.S. on Jan. 1, 2007, and for the year 2007, H will be considered to be a U.S. resident for U.S. income tax purposes and a U.S. domiciliary for U.S. estate and gift tax purposes.

Under the above scenario, if no pre-immigration planning is done, in addition to H becoming subject to U.S. tax on his worldwide income for 2007, Corporation T would become a Controlled Foreign Corporation (CFC), thus making H subject to the complex CFC substantive and reporting rules.

Also, ownership of the USRPI in a CFC can result in

very onerous U.S. tax consequences starting with corporate ordinary income tax rates assuming the USRPI is sold at a gain.

Worse yet, without proper planning, the second level branch profits tax could result as might a third level dividend tax upon payment of an actual dividend.

AVOIDING RISKS

In order to avoid the above-described risks, as a pre-immigration planning strategy, H before immigrating to the U.S., should "domesticate" Corporation T by changing Corporation T into a U.S. state corporation. Thereafter, once H becomes a U.S. resident taxpayer, H may elect to treat Corporation T as an "S" corporation. Please note that certain complex U.S. tax rules would need to be examined to determine the overall tax cost (if any) of the domestication.

The domestication of a foreign corporation can generally be accomplished without any U.S. tax consequences under the corporate reorganization tax rules. In general, under these reorganization rules, the new U.S. state Corporation T would be treated as a continuation of the old foreign Corporation T. As a domestic corporation, H would no longer be subject to the CFC rules.

In addition, by electing to

treat Corporation T as an "S" corporation, and subject to the following paragraphs, the income earned by Corporation T would "pass-through" to H and would no longer be subject to income tax at the "corporate" level (unlike a "C" corporation).

Nevertheless, there are certain limitations applicable to "S" corporations that should be addressed. For example, the "built-in gains tax" results in a corporate level tax and a shareholder tax if corporate assets that are appreciated as of the date of the "S" election are disposed of within 10 years of the "S" election. However, even if a sale occurs within the 10-year period, any double tax will be limited to the excess of the value of the assets on the first day of the election. The corporate level tax and shareholder tax would not apply if no sale occurs until after 10-year period expires.

The second limitation relates to an "S" corporation that has accumulated earnings and profits at the close of a taxable year (as can be the case where an existing "C" corporation converts into an "S" corporation); however, this special rule only applies if more than 25 percent of the "S" corporation's gross receipts are from passive

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 20)

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St. Lucia's Parliament approves tax breaks to encourage investment

CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC - Individuals, households, companies, sporting organizations, university graduates and persons trained by the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) stand to benefit from amendments to the Income Tax Act, which were passed in the House of Assembly last month.

The amendments were introduced by Prime Minister Kenny Anthony, who said they were being proposed in an effort to encourage private sector investments in persons, organizations, clubs, sporting activities and sporting facilities, and to benefit homeowners who invest in solar power.

The bill authorizes tax breaks for companies that invest in sporting organizations and sporting facilities. It also encourages businesses to employ NSDC graduates in return for deductions on the salaries paid to such individuals.



Anthony

The amendments, the

prime minister said, "will help build synergies between the private sector and the NSDC."

Another amendment sought to encourage households to invest in solar energy. It specifically allows for persons purchasing solar water heaters costing up to \$6,000 to claim a tax deduction for that amount when filing their income tax returns.



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Caribbean honors top bankers

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua, CMC - The Caribbean Association of Banking and Finance Institutes (CABFI) has honored several of the region's top bankers.

"Candidates for consideration had to be persons of distinction in the profession of banking and/or have contributed in a very significant way towards the advancement of the knowledge of the theory and practice of banking and finance and/or have given distinguished and meritorious service to the banking and finance industry," the CABFI said in a statement issued last month.

Among the bankers honored were Dr. Marion Williams, governor of the central bank of Barbados; Timothy Donaldson, the first governor of the central bank of The Bahamas; William Clarke, chief executive of Scotia Bank Jamaica; Dunbar McIntyre, past chief executive officer of Republic Bank in Trinidad; and Ronald Harford, chairman of Republic Bank.

Chairman of the Royal bank of Trinidad and Tobago (RBTT) Peter July, as well as



Clarke

Ronald Chan, chief executive officer of Scotia Bank Trinidad, and Ivan Browne, the head of the Antigua-based, Caribbean Union Bank, were also recognized by the CABFI.

They were all named honorary fellows of CABFI following their selection by a panel comprising Professor Nigel Harris, vice-chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor Rex Nettleford and Sir Courtney Blackman.

The honorary fellow is a lifetime award.



Domestication of foreign corporation ...

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 22)

income. This special rule then subjects the "S" corporation to a corporate level tax on its net passive income in excess of 25 percent of its gross receipts and could result in loss of "S" corporation status if the passive income threshold is surpassed for more than three (3) years.

'CLEANSING'

Needless to say, the easiest way to avoid this rule is for the foreign corporation to distribute all of its earnings and profits prior to H becoming a U.S. resident. This would "cleanse" the foreign corporation of its earnings and profits

and will allow further investment without concern for this special rule, subject to a possible Country X income tax associated therewith.

It is very important that a foreign person consult with competent U.S. tax counsel before immigrating to the U.S. in order to lessen the U.S. tax consequences related to his immigration to the U.S.

Michael Rosenberg is a shareholder and Oscar I. Alfonso is an associate with the Coral Gables law firm of Packman, Neuwahl & Rosenberg and can be reached at 305-665-3311.



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Cooped-up kids: Rules for computer and television

Kids ages two to 17 spend an average of 19 hours and 40 minutes watching television each week. With rising concerns about the diet and exercise habits of kids, it's important to have a strategy when you decide to cut back on television or computers.

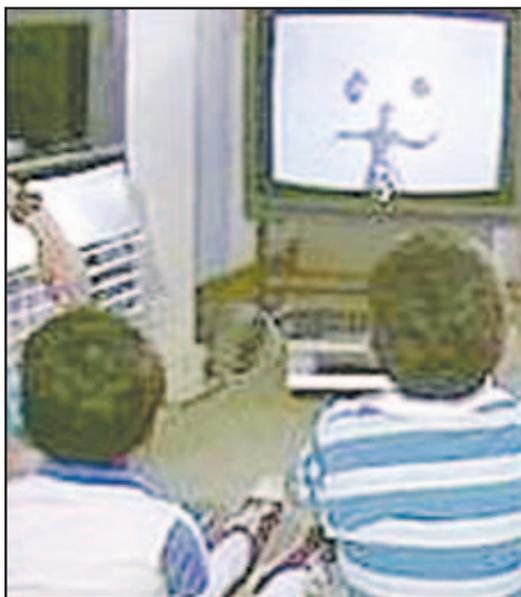
Kristine Berggren, author of "Strategies for Stay-at-Home Parents" (Meadowbrook Press) offers five good ways to help your family cut back on "screen time." Keep in mind that screen time is more than just TV time; computer use can spiral out of control as well (there are even computer addiction recovery camps for children).

According to Berggren, "It may seem counterintuitive to limit children's access to

computers in a society that can barely remember when a mouse was merely a rodent, but it's important to use computers in proportion to their true educational or entertainment value."

When cooped up inside, television and computer entertainment can be tempting. Use these tips to help limit the amount of time your family spends watching the infamous "tube" or surfing the endless Internet.

- **Set a time limit for your child** - Try using a simple chart to track screen time. Get some stickers and assign a value to each. (Let's say each sticker represents a half-hour.) Each week give your child the appropriate number of stickers. Have your child put the



stickers on a chart as screen time is spent. When the stick-

ers are gone, no more screen time until next week.

- **Limit your own screen time** - Set a good example. Try taping your own favorite shows to watch after your kids go to bed, and try not to aimlessly surf the Internet too much.

- **Establish priorities** - Homework, piano practice and other

responsibilities come before screen time.

- **Screen your child's selections** - Try to watch a program or movie before you let your child watch it so you can decide whether it's appro-

priate. Always check out computer games and Web sites before you let your child see them as well.

- **Control your screen population** - The fewer screens you have in your house, the less important they'll seem and the less they'll tempt you. Figure out the minimum number of screens that would serve your family's needs.

Of course, remember that time spent doing homework on the computer would not count against your child's limits," says Berggren. "Nobody is denying that computers and television, when used correctly, have educational possibilities. But practicing moderation can be very healthy."

Author: FeatureSource Staff



Hip hop music empowerment conference celebrates life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The teachings and inspirations of late American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be celebrated this month through hip hop music.

The African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida will host its 1st Annual Hip-Hop Music Empowerment Conference on Jan. 14.

The free conference will present six workshops to introduce participants to local DJs and artists in the industry that can provide practical techniques to accomplish their goals of being in the entertainment industry. The workshops will include panel discussions on the entertainment industry on the following topics:

Education - Read & Understand Your Contract; Politics - Watcha Didn't Know

Will Hurt You; Economics - Manage Your Budget: \$\$\$ The Budget \$\$\$; Social Style &



King

Fashion - The Appearance; Ownership - Own Your Label/Copyright Your Music; Creative Freedom & Power - Write Your Own Lyrics/Making the Video.

Conference participants will also have an opportunity to participate in a question and answer session with the

panelists.

The conference will conclude with "The Remix" An Artist Showcase beginning at 3:00 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. featuring local artistes.

All participants are required to register for the conference. Registration forms can be obtained and returned to the AARLCC between the following hours: Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The conference will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. The AARLCC is located at 2650 Sistrunk Boulevard.

The organizers will provide participants with a gift bag and continental breakfast beginning at 9:30 a.m.



Baby at the center of legal battle dies

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - A baby whose health problems became a legal issue after his parents refused to have doctors give him a blood transfusion, has died.

His death was made public late last month.

Baby Amon, as he was called, was made a ward of the state last month after his parents, followers of the Jehovah's Witnesses faith, refused to allow him to have a life-saving blood transfusion to correct a low blood count. The baby was born three months premature on Nov. 25 with a low blood count. He

and his twin weighed approximately one pound 12 ounces.

While his sibling died hours after birth, the child fought to stay alive.

Baby Amon shot into the national spotlight when his parents Joanna and Winston Amon took issue with the hospital authorities refusing to use an alternative drug erythropoietin to treat their premature infant.

ASSISTANCE

On Dec. 8, the Head of the Neonatal Ward of the Port of Spain General Hospital Dr. Petronella Manning-Alleyne

sought legal assistance to allow her to treat the infant.

Attorney General John Jeremie granted authorization for an application to the Family Court and subsequently Justice Maureen Rajnauth-Lee made the baby a ward of the state in order for the blood transfusion and other treatments to be administered.

The court order placed the baby in the custody of doctors at the Neonatal Unit, where he remained until his death.



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2006 Full Council Meeting Calendar

Thursday, January 19, 2006

Thursday, February 16, 2006

Thursday, March 16, 2006

Thursday, April 20, 2006

Thursday, May 18, 2006
(Budget Workshop, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.)

Thursday, June 15, 2006

(Tentative) Thursday, July 20, 2006

Thursday, August 17, 2006

(Tentative) Thursday, Sept 7, 2006
(T.R.I.M. Public Hearing, 5:01pm)

(Tentative) Thursday, Sept 21, 2006
(Council Meeting, 4:00pm;
T.R.I.M. Public Hearing, 5:01pm)

Thursday, October 19, 2006

Thursday, November 16, 2006

Thursday, December 21, 2006

Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings will be held at:
6301 NW 5th Way, Suite 3000, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

** Please Note:**

Meetings are subject to change. Please check our website calendar, www.cscbroward.org, for updated information.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Amy Ricketts at (954) 377-1675.

If you require any auxiliary aids for communication or other special accommodations, please contact Evan Goldman at (954) 377-1000 at least one week in advance so that proper arrangements can be made.

www.caribbeantoday.com

F Y I

FAMILY EDUCATION NIGHT

"Building Literacy" will be the theme of Miami-Dade County Schools' "Family Education Night" to be held from **6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 12** at some 30 sites in the school system.

Tips and tools will be provided to help improve reading

and comprehension skills.

Interested parents should contact their child's school for more information.

'BIRTHRIGHT' INTERNSHIPS

GraceKennedy Ltd., one of the Caribbean's leading corporate entities, is offering a fully-paid summer internship

program for university students who are second or third generation Jamaicans living overseas.

It is called the GraceKennedy Jamaican Birthright Programme and is open students between ages 19 and 30 who are currently enrolled in a university/college (either undergrad or post grad). They must have Jamaican parent/s or grandparent/s and must not have lived in Jamaica for more than six months.

Applications are being accepted for the 2006 program. The application deadline is **Jan. 20**.

Application forms can be downloaded from: www.gracekennedy.com/GRACE/corp_Birthright.htm

FREE FAMILY DAY

"Friendship Pins" will be the theme of next month's Family Day presented by The Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, Florida.

During the **Feb. 19** event, children can create unique and personal friendship pins using colorful beads. Supplies will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis.

It is scheduled to run from **1 p.m. to 3 p.m.** in its upstairs gallery, 1650 Harrison St.

There will be free admission to the center's galleries. For more information, call **954-921-3274**.

PASSPORTS

The National Passport Information Center (NPIC), the United States Department of State's single, centralized public contact center for U.S. passport information, is offering a toll free service and has expanded its service availability/options.

Persons with questions or need status checks on pending passport applications can call **1-877-487-2778**. Customer service representatives are available from **8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday**, excluding Federal holidays.

Automated information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For e-mail access, visit: npic@state.gov Website of passport and other international travel information is available at travel.state.gov

NEW 'GREEN CARD' FILING

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced that aliens must mail applications to renew or replace permanent resident cards, commonly known as "Green Cards", directly to the Los Angeles Lockbox.

The Lockbox is a processing facility used by USCIS to accelerate the collection of applications and petitions. The announced change allows the agency to improve the processing of Form I-90 (Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card) by electronically capturing data and images and by performing fee receipting and depositing from one central location, rather than at the local district office, service center, or application support center (ASC).

Aliens filing a Form I-90, regardless of their state of residence, must mail those applications with an application fee of \$185 and a biometrics fee of \$70 to one of the following addresses:

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, P.O. Box 54870 Los Angeles, CA 90054-0870;

Or for non-USPS deliveries (e.g. private couriers):

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Attention: I-90, 16420 Valley View Ave., La Mirada, CA 90638

Applicants should not include initial evidence and supporting documentation when submitting the Form I-90 to the Los Angeles Lockbox.

Applicants will receive a notice for a biometrics processing appointment at an ASC and will submit their initial evidence during that appointment.

Applicants will receive their biometrics appointment in the mail.

GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP

A free workshop sponsored by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan, to provide training to newly-formed community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and community development corporations interested in learning how to write and apply for grants, will be held this month in Miami.

The grant writing workshop will be held on **Jan. 18** at the North Dade Regional Library, 2455 N.W. 183 St. in Miami Gardens.

Organizations with little or no grant application experience, as well as those with some experience in securing grants, will benefit from two separate sessions. The morning session, from **9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**, is for those organizations with limited or no grant application experience. The afternoon session, from **2 p.m. to 6 p.m.**, is for those with previous grant writing experience.

For more information, call **305-375-3521**.

CRISIS HOTLINE

Multi-lingual counselors are available to respond persons suffering from stress or needing help with housing, food, child care, caring for teens or other similar problems.

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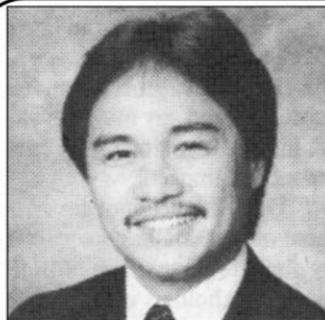
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SPORT

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Former cricket legends salute Lara's greatness

GORDON WILLIAMS

Retirement may have shifted them from the spotlight of international cricket, but former top players have been following the progress of Brian Lara and have high praises for the West Indies batsman who recently passed Australia's Allan Border to become the greatest run-scorer in the Test game.

Although ex-West Indies captain Jimmy Adams, teammate Nehemiah Perry, plus the pair of Devon Malcolm and Richard Illingworth would leave South Florida last month with mixed cricketing memories – Malcolm and Illingworth played for England in a 20/20 tournament, Adams and Perry did not, following the withdrawal of a West Indies masters team over a contract dispute – all took time out to recognize Lara's monumental achievement.

Malcolm, a tear-away fast bowler who was born in Jamaica but played for England, called Lara the best ever, a batsman so dominant he could alter the mindset of bowlers, as well as the course of a game, once he settled in at the crease.

"(Lara) actually forced you to try and claw things back (play defensively)," Malcolm told *Caribbean Today* at Brian Piccolo Park. "As a bowler you...want to be

able to attack the batsman. You want to try to keep him quiet, but it's very difficult to keep him quiet. He's trying to score runs. He's trying to score boundaries. So that's very difficult."

Adams, who played many Test and one-day international matches as Lara's teammate, sharing in several big batting partnerships, called the Trinidadian a special player whose abilities are difficult to define.

"Listen, I think only God can separate genius," Adams told *Caribbean Today* when asked to compare Lara with the other greats of the game, including former West Indies captain Viv Richards. "...But I think it is fair to say, easily, that Brian has proven that he is definitely one of the greatest players ever in the game, not only statistically, but in the manner in which he has achieved his runs."

"I think anybody who sits down anywhere in the world to think about naming great players past and present, his name would definitely be in there."

BEST EVER

Perry, Adams's former Jamaica and West Indies teammate, was willing to go a bit further, and he, like Malcolm, is still amazed at the ability of Lara – who moved past Border's world record of 11,174 with a double hundred in Australia – to rattle the



Lara celebrates

nerve of opposing teams.

"Brian Lara is the greatest batsman I've ever seen, I've ever bowled to," said Perry, an off-spinner. "I bowled to him and, I'll tell you what, you really have to be on your Ps and Qs because he has all the shots."

"Even at times when you really think you have him, you probably have him there or there about, all of a sudden he just cuts loose and three, four fours and a six and you're really and truly all over the place after that. So he can change games, he can change situations easily."

Malcolm got an up close look at Lara's dominance as a member of England's touring team to the West Indies in 1994, the year the master batsman broke Sir Garfield Sobers's longstanding record -

365 not out - for most runs in a Test innings. As he told it, they were at the Antigua Recreation Ground when his team's boss sounded an ominous warning.

"You know, we sat down and the England manager, Keith Fletcher, saw Brian and he just looked in a different zone," Malcolm recalled.

"And he got to about fifty and I remember the coach said 'he's gonna get a hundred today'. But a pity, I wished he only got a hundred, but he made about three hundred and seventy-odd, whatever it was, in the end (actually 375)."

MORE TO COME

However, not only those with Caribbean connections are in awe of Lara's talent as a batsman. Illingworth, who played nine Test matches for England as a left arm spinner, also admired Richards as "special," but added that Lara was "extra special" with a huge appetite for runs.

"He gets greedy as well, does Lara when he gets hundreds," Illingworth told *Caribbean Today*. "Because, what's he got, one hundreds, two hundreds, three hundreds, four hundreds, five hundreds to his name? So he's one of those batters that when he

gets on song he likes to go big. "...The fact that he has scored that amount of runs, you don't get there with not being one of the best, if not the best."

"That amount of runs' also means Lara remains a puzzle to opposing bowlers and captains, especially after he settles down at the wicket."

"Once he gets in, you can say, 'how are you gonna get him out?'," Malcolm asked, before offering his own answer to cricket's riddle that has become Brian Lara.

"He's gonna get himself out when his belly is completely full."

With well over 11,000 Test runs and counting, and Perry predicting that Lara has at least five more good years at the top although the batting genius has said he may not be around the Test game beyond Cricket World Cup 2007, it may be safe to back Illingworth's prediction.

"I'm sure (Lara's) gonna get 12,000 Test runs," Illingworth figures.

Few would bet against him.

Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor.



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Caribbean Today

Caribbean offering sporting variety in 2006

The Caribbean will be the featured location for many sporting attractions this year. **Caribbean Today** offers a glimpse at the wide range of upcoming events which potential visitors to the region may find attractive.

JANUARY

13-15 – The Bahamas - Jimmy Garvin International Golf Tournament

13-15 - Bermuda International Race Weekend

14 - Run Turks and Caicos 5K and 10K

18-22 – The Bahamas - Annual Brietling Golf Tournament

21-22 - Antigua Yacht Club - Round the Island Race

23-27 – Grenada - 37th Annual Spice Island Bill Fist Tournament

25 – Aruba - Betico Memorial 5K and 10K Run

27-31 – Grenada - 13th Annual Grenada La Source Sailing Festival

29 – Jamaica - JSP High Mountain Coffee 10K and 5K Road Races

FEBRUARY

1 - Bahamas Wahoo Fishing Tournament

10-12 – Curacao International Tennis Tournament (Davis Cup)

10-12 - St. Vincent Yacht Club Regatta

11-12 - Antigua and Barbuda - Jolly Harbour Yacht Club - Valentine's Day Regatta

11-14 – The Bahamas - Miami to Nassau Race Week

18-19 - The Bahamas - Valentine's Day Sailing Regatta

MARCH

3-5 - St. Maarten/St. Martin - 26th Heineken Regatta

4 - Barbados Sandy Lane Gold Cup

9-11 – Jamaica - The Royal Jamaica Yacht Club Spring Tournament 2006

11 - Antigua Yacht Club - Antigua International Laser Open

12-17 – The Bahamas - Bacardi Billfish Tournament

16-19 – Curacao - 40th Annual International Blue Marlin Release Tournament

17-18 – Aruba - Banco Di Caribe National Drag Race

19 - 21st Aruba International Half Marathon (21 KM)



Catch the excitement of thoroughbred racing at the Sandy Lane Gold Cup in Barbados.

19-20 – The Bahamas - The Annual International Dog Show and Obedience Trials

25 - Jamaica Open and Pro-AM Easter Scramble Golf Tournament

27-April 2 - BVI Spring Regatta and Sailing Festival

31-April 1 – Aruba - Thifty Car Rental Super Series Drag Races

APRIL

1 – Curacao - World Cup Mountain Bike Race

5-8 – The Bahamas - The Royal Nassau Sailing Club Snipe Bacardi Cub and Dudley

Gambling Series

7-9 – Curacao - International Tennis Tournament (Davis Cup)

9 - Cayman Islands - Brack Turtle Triathlon

9-13 - St. Vincent and The Grenadines Game Fishing Tournament

11-17 – Bermuda - XL Capital Bermuda Open

13-16 – Grenada - 4th Grenada Round-the-Island Easter Regatta

13-17 - St. Vincent and The Grenadines - Bequia Easter Regatta

15-16 – Guyana - Bartica Easter Regatta

15-17 – Jamaica - Montego Bay Yacht Club's Easter Regatta

15-17 - Jamaica Polo Association Pro/Am Tournament

20-22 – Jamaica - 5th Bowden Bay Marina Spring Invitational Tournament

25-30 – The Bahamas - The Exuma Family Island Regatta George Town, Exuma

28-May 1 - 35th Curacao International Drag Races

30-May 1 – Aruba – Queen's Birthday and Labor Day Golf Tournament

30-May 1 – Suriname - OZON NICOPA Rally - Car Rally

Compiled from the Caribbean Tourism Organization's 2006 Caribbean Calendar of Events. The CTO is the Caribbean's tourism development agency and comprises membership of 32 member governments and a myriad of private sector entities. For more information, visit www.doitcaribbean.com or www.onecaribbean.org



Caribbean well on stream for Cricket World Cup 2007

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

because I'm sure the people who come to play will be well protected, that's not the issue. It's a matter of do we want to take advantage of the opportunity to present ourselves as the kind of warm and inviting people we are, or are we going to run the risk of all sorts of negative messages going out there and damaging ourselves. We have a propensity to shoot ourselves in the foot. We've got to realize that this is an opportunity to rise above that.

G.W.: Speaking of opportunities, following the trend in terms of investment, are you satisfied with the pace of investments, from each territory, the people putting money into efforts with CWC 2007 in mind?

K.G.: No I'm not. But again I think, in all fairness, there is a build-up and the first thing we have to do as a board running it is to get that message over to people that it (CWC 2007) is happening, it is big, it's an opportunity that people look for. They're wondering if it's an opportunity for themselves. They're not going to do it out of the goodness of their heart. They've got to see the opportunity and our task, the road shows that we have started recently, have been designed for that purpose - to let the man in the street understand how he fits into this, how he benefits from it...

Even though I told you that I'm not satisfied, it doesn't mean that I feel we have been badly served by it. What I do feel is that we

are now at the stage where we have to accelerate that whole process and my hope is that people will respond.

G.W.: Any particular reason why you think the response would have been not at the pace you would have expected, considering that cricket, after all, is the one unifying force in the region and everybody plays cricket here and everybody watches cricket here? Why is that on this one big opportunity they've been slow to leave the gates in terms of people talking about investing?

K.G.: Remember I did not say it was not as good as I expect. What I said was it is not as strong as you would hope that it was, because there is a build-up process and we are now at the point where we are now going out to it. So it would have been a little unnatural almost if it had started before, because so far people are hearing about the World Cup. Now they are identifying with it. Our task is to make them identify with it.

So from here on we would expect a building involvement. So if you ask me this question in a year's time, then we'd be in trouble if it hasn't been happening. But I think the build-up should solve that.

G.W.: On the field the West Indies has been in a prolonged slump, as far as results go, nothing close to the heyday of the past...With the World Cup just over a year away, are there any specific plans for the team that will hopefully guarantee that the host nation, meaning the West Indies, is not, let's say, bumped aside in the first round?

K.G.: Let's understand, the problems that we are experiencing now are not problems that you can blame the last board or the previous board, or perhaps even the previous board for. They go back to the late '80s when we began to, having dominating the scene for so long, people who were around i.e. the Australians particularly, decided 'we're not gonna lie down and let people run over us'. And they set out to find a formula. And they found their formula. And they realized they had to employ people and make them work at cricket, the same way that you're working now and everybody else is working, everyday. So you work at your weaknesses, you build your strengths, and that means putting you under contract. That means players starting, not coming together for two months at a time when you go on tour, but everyday they go

to work. And they are working at whether it is they're not using their feet well, whether it is they're bowling fast but they are not in control...There is no substitute for work.

The first thing you've got to do is to get the essentials right. You've got to resolve the impasse with the players. We think we're in the process of doing that. Then you've got to put them under contract and you're gonna work with them, and you're gonna build them.

Fortunately we have a young team. They're talented. But talent doesn't go far enough. They've got to become professional, like the Australians. We can't expect that because we start this now that we're going to, in two months, arrive. The Australians took 20 years to get where they are.

G.W.: I'm really puzzled by that. You seem to be saying that 15, 20 years ago, when (the West Indies) was on top of cricket, up to late '80s, you're saying that these nations buckled down and decided that they wanted a different approach, a more professional approach, and they're getting the results now. What was (the West Indies) doing at the time?

K.G.: That's the point. That's where the problem started. That's what I'm saying. It's not the last board or the one before. It goes way behind. We should have been doing the same thing.

G.W.: (The WICB) didn't do its job?

K.G.: We didn't do our jobs, no. We just assumed talent would continue to be the answer and we have an unending reservoir which would throw up that talent. It doesn't work like that.

G.W.: But how did that escape them?...How could they possibly have missed something like that?

K.G.: Winning could be a lovely thing, but it could be a very unfortunate thing sometimes. When you're winning your head (gets) stuck sometimes a little too high in the air and you don't look down.

Of course, it's easy for us to level blame. But when things are going right, it's not everybody who stands back and says 'well one thing I'm sure about is they'll start to go wrong at some time'. You tend to carry on.

(At the time of the interview the West Indies was being whitewashed 3-0 by Australia in a Test series Down Under.)



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Notice of Discount Extensions for 2005 Property Taxes

Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners has approved an early payment discount extension for the 2005 Property Taxes, pursuant to House Bill 15-B, which was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by the Governor on December 14, 2005.

The new early payment discount periods for property taxes are as follows:

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- Taxpayers that paid the 4% discount prior to the additional extension will not be entitled to a refund.

For Property Tax information call: 305-270-4916 or visit

www.miamidade.gov/taxcollector

CARICOM single market takes effect in six countries

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC – The Caribbean community (CARICOM) single market takes effect this month with six of the 15 members of the regional bloc on board.

Effective Jan. 1, 2006, the participating countries are Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.



Carrington

Although CARICOM Secretary General Edwin Carrington said the event would not be marked in any significant way, leaders will attend a special launch in Jamaica on Jan. 23. Carrington said while he was happy about the event, he would have preferred if all of the 15 members were on board.

"I would have been

extremely pleased if we had all on board, but I understand that in life things don't always go the way we want them to.

Carifta started with three countries, CARICOM with four, and if the CSME (CARICOM Single Market and Economy) starts with six or a few more, then I am happy," he said.

Meanwhile, new CARICOM Chairman Patrick Manning said the coming into being of the CSME was a significant step along the road of regional integration.

"With the Single Market now in force, work continues with a view to bringing into being the CARICOM Single Economy by 2008," said the Trinidad and Tobago prime minister, in a statement to mark



Manning

the occasion.

NO RESTRICTIONS

With the advent of the single market, which was first mooted in the Grand Anse Declaration adopted by CARICOM heads of government at their 1989 meeting in Grenada, restrictions on provision of services, free movement of capital and of approved categories of skilled CARICOM nationals, have been removed among

all participating member states.

Further, CARICOM nationals now have the right to establish businesses, provide services and move capital in any member state of the community under the same terms and conditions granted to the nationals of that country.

Like Carrington, head of the CSME Unit in Trinidad, Ambassador Plenipotentiary Jerry Narace, said he too was pleased with the progress

made by the region in getting this far. Narace was particularly pleased by the level of commitment shown by the region's leaders, saying Caribbean nations have demonstrated a seriousness never before seen.

"Even though it is only six of us we can still feel proud at this tangible success," he said.



DEA may set up office in Guyana

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC - The Guyana government says it is holding discussions with the United States regarding the possibility of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) establishing a presence in the country.

Head of the Presidential Secretariat Dr. Roger Luncheon said the government has recognized the important role and ensuing benefits the DEA's presence would have in the fight against the illegal drugs trade in Guyana.

"We are in discussions with the Americans and the American Administration and some small details need to be addressed for us to see that the plans come to fruition," he told reporters late last month.

"I don't believe it is a great concession that the facilities and skills available in Third World and developing countries to deal with the trans-national money laundering and narco-trafficking are obviously inadequate and one can then concede some merit in the U.S. Government acting as a sort of international or hemispheric policeman to

keep on top of narco trafficking (and) money laundering in the Americas," Luncheon said.

PROBLEM

Luncheon told reporters that none of the countries in the Americas, including Guyana, could state that they were satisfied with the level of national efforts in fighting narco-trafficking and money laundering.



Luncheon

"I don't have a problem in recognizing that we need a DEA in Guyana; in fact we need two DEAs (because) it probably would have been even better," Luncheon said.

"I think if one were to factor in the desire, if one were to put in the need, then they would have probably been here two years ago, but we still have to deal with the details and often times the delay lies in the details. We still have to iron out some issues and hopefully that

could be done soon," Luncheon added.

He said that the DEA's presence in Guyana would enhance the local drug and law enforcement agencies in the committed and combined fight against money launderers and drug traffickers.

Guyana and the U.S. have been exploring the idea of establishing a DEA office here since 1999, as the country became a trans-shipment point in the narco and money laundering trade. An International Narcotics Control Strategy Report released by the U.S. Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in the first quarter this year cited Guyana as a major trans-shipment point for South American cocaine destined for North America, Europe and the Caribbean. It said the joint U.S./Guyana operations in combating narcotics were "quickly compromised due to corruption", which triggered a growing interest and involvement by the DEA in Guyana over the past two years.



Onward, upward for Caribbeans in 2005

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12)

between Britain and Jamaica helped cut the amount of cocaine smuggled into the Caribbean from Colombia by 80 percent. A Royal Navy spokesman said, "This was a Jamaica initiative and we were very happy to help them."

Government and Opposition in Guyana aligned for a national workshop sponsored by the private sector to fight the crime scourge. Proposed legislation for a gun and kidnapping court and new police reform bills retaining the Police Service Commission were among the package of nine bills that Opposition and government agreed to bring to Parliament to stem rising crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Eight out of 10 Guyanese graduates live abroad, according to the findings of the latest annual report on trends in international migration by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, covering Europe, U.S.A., Canada and Australia. Caribbean countries coming after Guyana in this report were Jamaica, Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago.

In his final address to Jamaica's Parliament, Opposition Leader Edward Seaga of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) returned to a familiar theme as he challenged the Members of Parliament to address the persistent problem of "two Jamaicas."

Orret Bruce Golding, 57,

officially took over control of the JLP on Feb. 20 and is now Jamaica's leader of the Opposition.

Shirley Chisolm, former U.S. congresswoman born in New York to West Indian parents and educated partly in Barbados died in 2005. Death also claimed another famous Caribbean woman of politics, Dame Eugenia Charles, 86, who was prime minister of Dominica. Like Lady Thatcher, a former prime minister of Britain, Charles got the nickname the Iron Lady in politics.

At the age of 82, Allan Rae, a West Indies opener and pivotal West Indies Cricket Board of Control president during the 1980s, died. With Jeff Stollmeyer he formed the opening pair on the England 1950 tour which inspired the joyful calypso, "Cricket Lovely Cricket". Robert Christiani in Canada departed this life at the age of 84. "R.J." to his friends, he was a versatile cricketer, primarily a batsman, from Guyana. He, too, was on the victorious 1950 West Indies tour of England.

Meanwhile, also in 2005, Bob Marley's mother Cedella Booker rejected any idea of removing the remains of the late reggae superstar from Jamaica to Ethiopia.

Lloyd Rohlehr is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



CAN WE TALK?



Peter A. Webley, Publisher

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Jamaica gains record as world's murder capital in 2005

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC – With a homicide rate of 60 persons per 100,000 population, Jamaica holds the unenviable distinction of being the murder capital of the world.

Last year more than 1,600 people were murdered in the Caribbean island and there is growing frustration among Jamaicans at government's seeming inability to bring the problem under control.

Crime, specifically murder, has been the island's num-

ber one problem for a decade, with an average of five people being killed each day in 2005. The murder toll pushed the country ahead of South Africa and Columbia this year to become the world's murder capital.

EXPERIMENTS

During last year, the country experimented with a number of initiatives to stop to the flow of blood. But despite those efforts, the mur-

der rate climbed.

In an interview with *The Gleaner* newspaper here, Derrick Smith, the Opposition Jamaica Labour Party's spokesman on national security, said the work of Operation Kingfish, one of the anti-crime



Smith

initiatives, was not impressive. He said that the unit should do much more work to win public support.

"I won't say they haven't been doing some good work, but it's not at the point where I'm totally acclaiming them," Smith said.

"The mandate is to really dismantle the major criminal networks and we estimate that there are 13 such major networks operating in Jamaica. They were all involved in drug

trafficking, illegal gun-running and extortion. What we should do is consolidate intelligence collected years ago on these organizations, analyze it and develop operational approaches to create new leads," he added.

Meanwhile, the trail of blood from last year has followed the country into 2006, with some four persons being killed on New Year's Day, Jan. 1.



2005 ~ Another challenging year for the Caribbean

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13) and immediately following the controversial removal of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office in Feb. 2004.

By year-end, it was announced that the elections, which were set for Jan. 8, were postponed for the fourth time. Delays in the distribution of voter-identification cards, a lack of voting centers and errors in the voting rolls are among the main problems blamed for the postponement.

Notwithstanding the problems in the former French colony, the Caribbean kept up the tradition of changing governments by democratic means. During 2005, elections were held in Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Suriname, and St. Vincent and

Grenadines. Apart from the Cayman Islands, where the Opposition People's Progressive Movement (PPM) led by Kurt Tibbets, romped to victory, the incumbent governments in the other countries were able to hold off determined challenges from their opponents. The two main political parties in Guyana continued to trade words on the efforts to ensure smooth and transparent general elections scheduled for next year.

Guyana Opposition political parties were also calling for the removal of the Cabinet of the ruling People's Progressive Party administration, following the resignation of embattled Home Affairs Minister Ronald Gajraj, who was implicated in the activities of a "death squad" blamed for many extra-judicial killings in

the country. But a commission of inquiry found no evidence to link the former government minister to the squad.

There were also threats of fresh elections in the Caribbean with Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer indicating he would be seeking afresh mandate as controversy swirled over the construction of an airport terminal building.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Patrick Manning was forced into a mini-Cabinet re-shuffle after his Communications and Works Minister Franklin Khan resigned amid allegations that he and another senior minister received a bribe from a governing party official. By year-end, Khan had been slapped with six criminal

charges arising out of the allegations.

Basdeo Panday, who was replaced as leader of the United National Congress (UNC) in Trinidad, will, along with his wife, Oma, and several ministers in his administration, appear in court in the New Year on fraud related charges arising out of the controversial multi-million Piarco Airport rehabilitation project.



Arthur

REFERENDUM

At the start of 2005, Barbados Prime Minister Owen Arthur had indicated that the issue of a referendum "died with the last Parliament" and that there would be such a vote before the island becomes a republic. However, when he addressed nationals on Independence Day on Nov. 30, Arthur said that a referendum would be held this year to decide on the island's constitutional status.

Arthur said he was now looking forward to a "lively and enlightened debate" on the issue, adding that he viewed the move to republican status as "a statement of confidence in our future."

In 2005, there were political comebacks for some and talk of retirement for others. Jamaica's Prime Minister P.J. Patterson will in 2006 hand over the leadership of the ruling People's National Party (PNP) to an elected successor, while in St. Lucia, former

Prime Minister Sir John Compton, who regained the leadership of the main Opposition United Workers Party (UWP), made a return to active politics.

Former Dominica Prime Minister Edison James was replaced as political leader of the UWP in that country by Earl Williams, a former communications and works minister. Lester Bird survived a challenge to his leadership of the Antigua Labour Party (ALP), but by year's end, was staving off attempts by disgruntled members in the Parliament to torpedo present Opposition Leader Robin Yearwood.

Sadly in 2005, the Caribbean bade farewell to a number of prominent personalities, including Dame Eugenia Charles, the former prime minister of Dominica, her Grenadian counterpart, Ben Jones, Hector McClean,



Charles

the former speaker of the Trinidad and Tobago House of Representatives and former West Indies Cricket Board President Allan Rae, of Jamaica.

The media also lost some stalwarts. Alister Hughes of Grenada, Keith Sheppard of Trinidad and Tobago and the Antigua-based St. Kitts-born journalist Norman "Gus" Thomas" all died in 2005.

- CMC



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Caribbean could benefit from 'brain gain' migration ~ U.N.

UNITED NATIONS, CMC – The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) says in a new report that Caribbean countries, with one of the highest net-migration rates in the world, may benefit from this movement by establishing “brain gain” networks for their diaspora and providing health and education services for foreigners.

Within the Caribbean area, the free movement of people presents both opportunities and obstacles, the report said. It said that many in the Caribbean see the benefits of free movement, but also admit that given the multicultural nature of the sub-region and its many different languages and cultures, the issue of multiculturalism needs to be further addressed.

The report, based on an expert group meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in mid-September, will be presented at the next Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development during the ECLAC meeting in April. It will also be presented to the U.N. General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development during its 61st session in September.

The meeting of experts from government, interregional bodies, international organ-

izations, civil society and academia, examined the relationship between migration, human rights and development.

The experts focused in particular on the state of knowledge of migration; migration policies from a regional and global perspective; migration and human rights; and specific country studies on migration.

The ECLAC report said more studies are also needed on the remittances sent by migrant workers overseas and the socio-economic impact on the receiving country.

HEAVY LOSSES

Caribbean countries have a long-standing history of emigration to Europe and Northern America. The figures released in 2003 by the U.N. Population Division indicate that the region has lost more than five million people over the past 50 years.

While these small regional countries lose nurses and teachers to Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, the health and education sectors of these countries are suffering from worker shortages, the report said.

The report said migration is often driven by external factors, such as social and politi-

cal upheavals, socio-economic differentials, social ties and the opening of international markets.

“However, quite often decisions taken at the individual level appear to counter socio-economic conditions,” the report said.

The report said one-third of Caribbean migrants reside in Trinidad and Tobago, about one-quarter in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and one in 10 in Barbados. The major sending countries include Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Guyana.

Some islands, especially those with growing tourist sectors, such as the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla, along with Antigua and Barbuda, the Dutch dependencies of Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, have resident populations in which one-third or more are foreign-born, the report said.

But it said that while some countries benefit from these migratory flows, through remittances or the influx of skilled people, other nations have been suffering severe consequences from the brain drain, especially from their public health and education sectors.



St. Vincent adds two to new Cabinet

KINGSTOWN, St. Vincent, CMC - The Cabinet of Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves was sworn into office last month reflecting what the St. Vincent and the Grenadines government leader said were relevant and fresh appointments.

The new Cabinet includes 12 ministers as compared with 10 in the previous government. Gonsalves said his new administration would also include a minister of state, three parliamentary secretaries and the attorney general, in comparison to three ministers of state, an attorney general and no parliamentary secretaries in last government.

Gonsalves has created new ministerial portfolios including that of national mobilization, non-governmental organization relations, urban development and informal human settlement.

The ruling Unity Labour Party (ULP) was returned to office by the same 12 to three margin it enjoyed in the previous Parliament following the



Gonsalves

Dec. 7 polls. The other three seats have gone to the main Opposition New Democratic Party (NDP), said.

LETTING GO

Gonsalves, who was criticized for holding 60 percent of the ministerial portfolios during his first term, said he had decided to give up four portfolios “to accommodate the workload and responsibility, which come with the assumption of the portfolios of

National Security and the Administration of Seaports and Airports.”

Sir Vincent Beache, who bowed out of politics ahead of last week's elections, held this responsibility and Gonsalves said he would be holding discussion with Sir Vincent with a view to retaining his a consultant to the office of the prime minister. Gonsalves also announced that he had advised the governor general to appoint four senators, including Julian Francis, who lost his bid to unseat NDP leader Arhmin Eustace in the East Kingstown constituency.

The prime minister said that his administration would this month establish a Directorate for Grenadines Affairs located in the Office of the Prime Minister. He said the ULP candidates Herman Belmar and Edwin Snagg who failed in their bid to represent the two Grenadines constituencies would occupy the two top positions in this directorate.



CARIB Comments

the court from political input”

- Michael

De La Bastide, a judge on the Caribbean Court of Justice, seeking to dispel what he says are misconceptions and ignorance about the court.



• **“If someone is lying to me he will lose his job”**

-President Bharrat Jagdeo threatening to dismiss any official who deceived him as Guyana continues to deal with floods in three communities east of the capital.

• **“I am optimistic that we do not have long to wait”**

- Attorney General John Jeremie last month saying Trinidad and Tobago will resume hanging of convicted killers soon.

• **“We pay homage to the memory of Eric Williams, Errol Barrow, Forbes Burnham and Michael**



Manley” - Cuba's President Fidel Castro last month commending CARICOM leaders for being his country's staunch ally for more than three decades.

• **“I am not exaggerating, in terms of the measures which have been taken to insulate**

• **“Let me reiterate that the E.U. has no hidden agenda, no quest for commercial gain in the Caribbean. These markets are too small”**

- Karl Friedrich Falkenberg, deputy director general for trade at the European Commission, last month claiming that the European Union had no desire to undermine the economies of the Caribbean and was not seeking any commercial gain in the region.

• **“As a political retiree Sir John should just cool out and take it easy”**

- St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves locking horns with former St. Lucia Prime Minister Sir John Compton over statements made about the conduct of recent general elections in his country.

- Compiled from CMC and other sources.



REGION BRIEFS

• **Gov't, Opposition agree on new T&T crime measures**

The Trinidad and Tobago government and Opposition have agreed to legislation that would deny bail to kidnappers.

They also agreed to support the Bail Amendment Bill, which was tabled in Parliament last month.

• **JLP discloses committee on crime**

Leader of the Opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Bruce Golding has revealed the full committee established by his party to formulate an action plan on crime.

The members of the team, led by former Police Commissioner Colonel Trevor McMillan, are management consultant Dr. Henley Morgan; criminologist and University of the West Indies lecturer Dr. Anthony Harriott; management consultant Margaret Orane; and insurance executive Peter John Thwaites.

Golding made the announcement in his New Year's message to the nation.

• **T&T's Manning promises full employment in 2006**

Prime Minister Patrick Manning is promising full employment for all and a reduction in poverty in 2006.

In his New Year's message, which was broadcast to the nation on Dec. 31, Manning identified the reduction of unemployment and poverty as major weapons in the fight against crime. He conceded that crime, particularly the drug trade and its turf wars along with kidnappings was the biggest challenge facing the government. Some 375 people were murdered and about 70 kidnapped in this oil rich twin-island republic in 2005.

Compiled from CMC and other sources.



Bermuda's dead-beat parents run up millions of dollars in arrears

HAMILTON, Bermuda, CMC - The Bermuda government is chasing more than \$13 million from dead-beat parents who have failed to keep up with child support payments.

Figures released by the government showed that, while payments totalling \$4.3 million were made by parents in the first seven months of this year, a whopping \$13.1 million was still owed by over four thousand parents. Nearly 700 of those

owe more than \$5,000.

Records showed that last year more than 30 deadbeat dads were jailed for failing to make child support payments while 91 parents were locked up in 2003 for the same offense.

A government spokeswoman confirmed that officials were now examining how the system of collections could be improved.

"The Minister of Justice has an inter-ministry committee look-

ing at how the arrears can be reduced and the system of collections improved. Those involved include Transport, Labour and Home Affairs, Court Services and Corrections," the spokeswoman said.

But Shadow Home Affairs Minister Michael Dunkley, described the statement as "yet another broken promise by this government."

✽

Opposition parties form alliance to contest elections in St. Lucia

CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC - Two of the island's three Opposition political parties are getting set to announce the formation of an alliance in preparation for this year's general elections, which are constitutionally due by December, but which Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony says he would call much earlier.

Leader of the main Opposition United Workers Party (UWP) Sir John Compton has confirmed that he has put a seal on a tentative agreement between his party and New Democratic Movement (NDM) led by former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance Ausbert d'Auvergne,

The agreement was scheduled to be brought to the party executive by early this month for endorsement.

d'Auvergne, who has long expressed his interest in forming an alliance with the UWP, has also made known his willingness to merge.

Up to press time Sir John said that the details of the agreement would remain under wraps, and the NDP when contacted appears to have taken the same approach.

Sir John said that the UWP so far has no relationship with the third Opposition group, the Organisation for National Empowerment (ONE), led by

break away St. Lucia Labour Party Minister Sarah Flood-Beaubrun.

"We have a problem with ONE because the political leader of that party is unwilling to make certain adjustments. There is a contention with the Central Castries seat. She will not let go off that seat and we already have our endorsed candidate for that area. She missed the boat," Sir John said.

The UWP's endorsed candidate for Central Castries is Dr. Vaughan Lewis, who Flood-Beaubrun twice defeated under an SLP ticket in the last two consecutive general elections.

✽

Anthony supports election finance reform

CASTRIES, St. Lucia, CMC - Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony says he is interested in the matter of election financing and has already given thought to introducing a law prohibiting governments from financing political parties.

Prime Minister Anthony was reacting to leader of the Opposition United Workers Party (UWP) and former Prime Minister Sir John Compton, who called for the introduction of measures to control election campaign financing from third parties.

In an earlier statement, Sir

John said he was convinced that "big bucks will talk" in this year's elections in St. Lucia. But the prime minister shot back at Sir John, suggesting that he was creating a smoke screen.

"One of the things I think we need to consider very seriously, and we discussed it at a recent Caribbean meeting, is whether we should pass a law to prohibit governments from financing political parties as it is likely to happen in the case of the next general elections in St. Lucia," Dr. Anthony said.

'COME CLEAN'

Prime Minister Anthony said that he was convinced that this was the purpose of Sir John's visit to St. Vincent earlier this month when he met with the president of Taiwan.

"Sir John should come clean and tell the country whether that was the nature of his talks with the president of Taiwan: election financing in return for support for Taiwan over the Peoples Republic of China should his party win the general election," Anthony said.

✽

New court to settle disputes in Bermuda

HAMILTON, Bermuda, CMC - Bermuda is to establish a new commercial court to deal with trade disputes, Chief Justice Richard Ground has confirmed.

Ground said the court would resolve business cases and is expected to mainly handle complaints involving the island's huge insurance and reinsurance industry. The chief justice will assign judges, known as commercial judges, to the new court.

The creation of a commercial court is part of a series of rule changes designed to modernize the day-to-day workings of the Supreme Court. Drawn up by senior legal officials, they

will come into effect on Jan. 1 and update existing rules that came into force 20 years ago.

CHANGES

Other legal changes include an "over-riding objective", enshrining the main aim of the court to deal with cases fairly, save expense and come to a verdict as quickly as possible.

Government Spokesman John Burchall said, "although these principles have always been implicit in the administration of justice, it is felt by spelling them out they can be more readily understood and applied."

Another change will see a modern costs system introduced that would enable winning parties to recover a "realistic portion" of their legal expenses. The majority of fixed scales of allowable expenses would be swept aside and the court registrar would have the final say on what legal expenses should be allowed, official said.

The new rules also bring Bermuda into line with other worldwide commercial centers, updating the guidelines governing when the court can serve proceedings out of its jurisdiction, they added.

✽

IDB promises flexible lending to Caribbean

NELSON A. KING

WASHINGTON, CMC - The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) says a new administration and new lending framework in the New Year would permit greater flexibility and sharpened country focus for loans and grants to support economic and social development in the Caribbean and Latin America.

IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno, who, on Oct. 1 assumed office as head of the world's oldest and largest regional development bank, said the bank would continue its role as a major contributor in assisting the region increase its growth in a framework of stability, poverty reduction and modernization.

"We live in a time of important changes and challenges to our region, with many of our countries electing new leaders," he said in his New Year's message. "The

IDB member countries can count on the bank to be at their side as they consolidate the recent gains of the past two years and adopt strategies and programs to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all of our citizens."

IDB lending reached \$7 billion during 2005, a 17 percent increase compared with 2004, when lending reached \$6 billion. More than 50 percent of lending during 2005 was targeted to poverty reduction and social equity programs, exceeding guidelines set by the Board of Governors.

A total of 92 projects were approved, compared with 77 in 2004. In addition, the bank approved 390 technical cooperation projects during 2004 for a total of \$83.5 million, compared with 340 projects, totaling \$56.7 million during 2004.

✽

Abu Bakr's retrial in T&T High Court this month

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - The controversial Jamaat al Muslimeen Leader Yasin Abu Bakr is to face the Trinidad and Tobago High Court this month for a retrial on the charge of conspiracy to murder.

Bakr, who remains behind bars at the state's maximum security prison, is also facing six counts of sedition and arms and ammunition charges arising from a statement made recently.

The conspiracy to murder charge was laid against him on June 4, 2003 when Bakr was charged with conspiring to murder two expelled Muslimeen members, Salim Rashid and Zaki Aubaidah, his son-in-law at his (Bakr's) mosque at Citrin Drive Diego Martin.

SPLIT VERDICT

A nine-member jury who had heard evidence against Bakr returned with a split verdict 6-3 on Mar. 16, 2005, causing trial judge Mark Mohammed to order a retrial.

The disclosure that the Muslimeen leader's matter will be heard in January came after Public Administration Minister Lenny Saith informed the Senate that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Jeffrey Henderson was awaiting word from the criminal registry on the date of the retrial.

Minister Saith was



Abu Bakr

responding to a question posed by Opposition Senator Wade Mark who questioned why no steps had been taken to re-list the retrial of Abu Bakr.

Bakr is still awaiting bail on the recent charges and has been locked up since November after threatening war against rich Muslims who refuse to pay Zakat, Islamic charity for the poor.

Bakr who led an unsuccessful coup against the government in 1990, in which several people lost their lives, could face up to 25 years in prison if found guilty.

Following his arrest on Nov. 7, police and soldiers raided the Jamaat compound in St. James and seized a rifle, a hand grenade and 500 rounds of ammunition during the operation. He has been charged with possession of these items.

✽

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