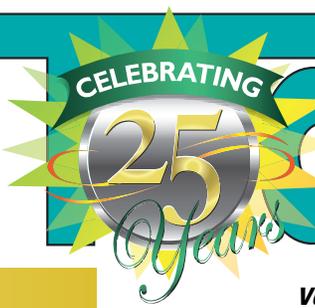


Caribbean Today

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DIRTY DEALS

~ United States government reports have accused Caribbean countries of various shortcomings. Inside, Caribbean Today highlights:

- Money laundering, corruption – page 4
- Human rights abuses – page 7



The United States has decided to extend Temporary Protected Status to Haitian nationals in the U.S. by 18 months. Applicants seeking extension must re-register during a 60-day period that runs through May 2, 2014, page 4.

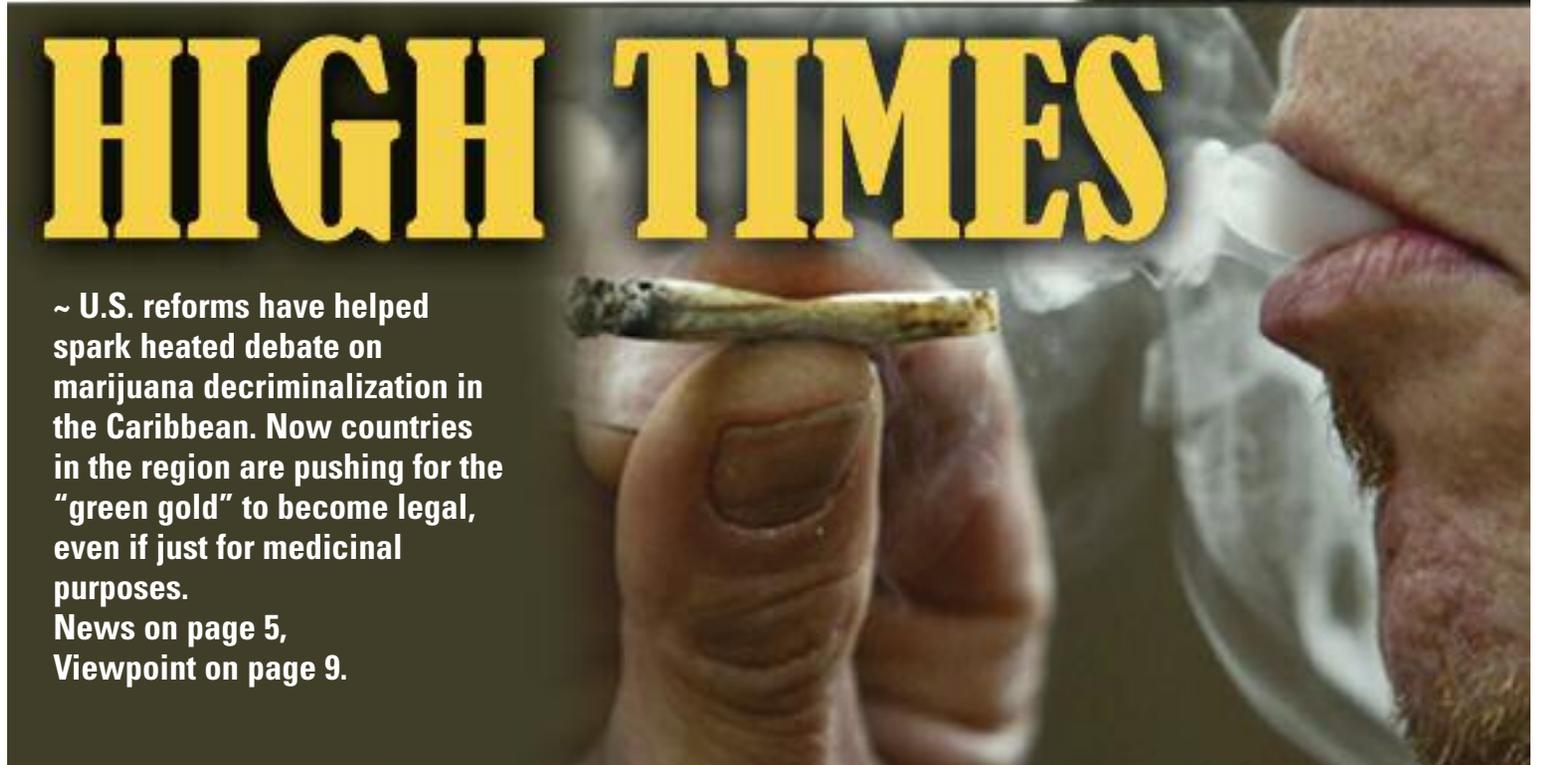


Tessanne Chin wowed the world by winning "The Voice". Now the fabulous Jamaican songbird is telling Caribbean Today about her rocky career path, from nearly giving up to big time success, page 7.

HIGH TIMES

~ U.S. reforms have helped spark heated debate on marijuana decriminalization in the Caribbean. Now countries in the region are pushing for the "green gold" to become legal, even if just for medicinal purposes.

News on page 5, Viewpoint on page 9.



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White House honors Caribbean American among 'Champions of Change'

MIAMI, Florida - A Caribbean American was among 10 other "Champions of Change" honored late last month by the White House in the United States capital for innovation in creating diversity and access in STEM fields.

Jamaican Felecia Hatcher is on a mission to create 10,000 African American Start-Ups as the Co-Founder of Code Fever.

The 30-year-old was among honorees who, the White House said, "are creating opportunities for young people typically underrepresented in STEM industries by using unconventional approaches to enhance student exposure ranging from

photography and film, to hip hop music, to coding competitions and community-based workshops."

Code Fever is an initiative that trains black youth in the areas of technology and entrepreneurship. As an author, social entrepreneur and the chief popsicle of Feverish Ice Cream, Hatcher has been featured in Black Enterprise magazine's "Innovator of the Week", Essence Magazine Tech Master, the NBC Today Show, The Cooking Channel, and Grio's 100 African American's Making History.

TARGET

In 2008 she co-founded Feverish Pops, a Miami-based



Hatcher

gourmet popsicle company that donates a portion of every pop sold to building community program that target South Florida's 13 Targeted Urban Areas (TUAs).

Before launching Feverish and Code Fever, Hatcher

worked as a marketing manager for technology and gaming companies. She is a frequent keynote speaker, presenting talks on entrepreneurship, tech education, and embracing failure at Google London, Girl Scouts of America, SXSW, Coca Cola HQ, FBLA, DECA, TEDxMiami and TEDxJamaica.

Hatcher is also the author of two books, "How to Start a Business on a Ramen Noodle Budget" and the "C Students Guide to Scholarships".

United States President Barack Obama issued an executive order creating the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans to help

restore the U.S. to its role as global leader in education; strengthen the nation by improving educational outcomes for African Americans of all ages; and ensure that American children receive a complete and competitive education that prepares them for college, a successful career, and productive citizenship.

The "Champions of Change" program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals, businesses and organizations doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities.

- Edited from News Americas.



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Haiti re-opens probe into 'Baby Doc' Duvalier's alleged crimes against humanity

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti – Human rights watchdog Amnesty International has welcomed a decision by the appeal court in Haiti to open new investigations into former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier for crimes against humanity.

Amnesty International said the decision is a "major boost for the victims in their long quest for truth and justice."

"This much-needed green light to continue the investigations is a victory for the victims of torture, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations committed under the rule of Duvalier and their relatives," said Javier Zúñiga, special advisor for Amnesty International.

"It also bolsters hopes for a new Haiti, founded upon the rule of law and equality of justice for all," he added.

Last month, the Court of Appeal reversed a Jan. 2012 ruling by an investigative judge. The earlier decision stated that Duvalier could not be charged with crimes against humanity filed by victims of alleged forced disappearances and torture during his rule from 1971 to 1986 because the time for the prosecution of those offences had elapsed.

'EVIDENCE'

But the Court of Appeal ruled there is "substantial evidence," pointing to the indirect involvement and alleged criminal responsibility of Duvalier for the alleged human rights violations during his presidency.

The court has appointed one of its sitting judges to further investigate the allegations. The judge has apparently been

tasked with obtaining new testimony from victims who did not have the chance to testify during last year's appeals hearings.

"The Court of Appeal has correctly ruled that there can be no statute of limitations for



Duvalier

crimes against humanity, and this is a major step forward for the Haitian justice system," Zúñiga said.

Although victims appealed against the 2012 ruling and Jean-Claude Duvalier himself appeared before the court last year, the judicial process had been stalled since last May.

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations denounced last January that the "lack of political will and unacceptable court delays" were allowing Duvalier to escape justice.

The Haitian authorities re-opened a criminal case against Duvalier shortly after he returned to the country on January 16, 2011, following a 25-year exile in France. He faced charges of serious human rights violations such as murder and torture of political opponents, and of corruption.

Duvalier, also known as "Baby Doc", inherited power from his father François Duvalier and ruled Haiti from 1971 to 1986.

- Edited from CMC.



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U.S., Canada join forces to hunt tax evaders in Caribbean

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Department of the Treasury says it has signed intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with Canada to halt offshore tax evasion in the Caribbean and other countries through implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA).

The Treasury Department said last month that similar agreements were also signed with Hungary, Italy and Mauritius.

The department noted that the U.S. Congress enacted the FATCA in 2010 to “target non-compliance by U.S. taxpayers using foreign accounts,” including those in the Caribbean.

“The provision has since become the global standard for promoting tax transparency,” noted the statement, adding that the U.S. has signed 22 IGAs and “has 12 agreements in substance to date.”

“FATCA implementation is critical to combating international tax evasion and promoting transparency,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Tax Affairs Robert B. Stack.

“The agreements announced ... clearly demonstrate the considerable international support behind FATCA,

and we are proud to lead the global charge on this pressing issue,” he added.

FATCA seeks to obtain information on accounts held by U.S. taxpayers in other countries. It requires U.S. financial institutions to withhold a portion of certain payments made to foreign financial institutions (FFIs) that do not agree to identify and report information on U.S. account holders.

OPTIONS

The Treasury Department said governments have two options for complying with FATCA: they can either permit their FFIs to enter into agreements with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or they can themselves enter into one of two alternative Model IGAs with the U.S.

Under a Model 1 agreement, the Treasury Department said FFIs report the relevant information to their respective governments,



which then relay that information to the IRS.

By contrast, a Model 2 agreement “contemplates that FFIs will provide relevant information to the IRS themselves, with government-to-government cooperation serving to facilitate reporting when necessary to overcome specific legal impediments.”

The Treasury Department said each of the countries in the announcement – Canada, Hungary, Italy, and Mauritius – signed reciprocal Model 1 agreements.

“This means that the United States will also provide tax information to these governments regarding individuals and entities from their jurisdictions with accounts in the United States,” the statement said.

It said the Treasury Department and the IRS will “continue to work diligently to finalize all related FATCA guidance so that FFIs and withholding agents have time to prepare and comply when withholding goes into effect on July 1, 2014.”

- Edited from CMC.



GOLDEN GLORY



Director Steve McQueen, who was born in Britain to Caribbean parents, gives an acceptance speech after his film “12 Years a Slave” was named winner of the Academy Award for “Best Picture” during the recent Oscars ceremony in California. The movie, which portrays pre-Civil War slavery in the United States, also won Oscars for best supporting actress, Lupita Nyong’o, and best adapted screenplay, John Ridley. McQueen’s father is from Grenada and his mother from Trinidad and Tobago.

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Caribbean countries 'guilty' of money laundering from drug trafficking ~ U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States has named several Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries as major money laundering states whose financial institutions engage in currency trans-

actions involving significant amounts of proceeds from international narcotics trafficking.

In its recently released "2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report", the U.S. State Department listed Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize and Haiti among major money laundering countries and jurisdictions around the world.

In addition to these CARICOM countries, the other Caribbean islands named are the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands.

The report also noted that countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Brazil, Russia, France, Canada, as well as the Dominican Republic,



Germany, Greece and the Netherlands had been designated major money laundering countries.

'COMPLEX'

The report, which describes the steps taken during the previous year by the governments of nearly 90

countries to reduce illicit narcotics production, trafficking, and use, as well as money laundering and financial crimes, said that the "complex nature of money laundering transactions today makes it difficult in many cases to distinguish the proceeds of narcotics trafficking from the proceeds of other serious crime.

"Moreover, financial institutions engaging in transactions involving significant amounts of proceeds of other serious crime are vulnerable to narcotics-related money laundering."

Washington said "this year's list of major money laundering countries recognizes this relationship by including all countries and

other jurisdictions, whose financial institutions engage in transactions involving significant amounts of proceeds from all serious crime".

The report also notes that Caribbean countries like The Bahamas, Belize, Haiti and Jamaica had been classified as major drug-transit countries.

The State Department defines a major drug transit country as one "that is a significant direct source of illicit narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances significantly affecting the United States; or (B) through which are transported such drugs or substances".

- Edited from CMC.



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...Eastern Caribbean fails to deal with official corruption

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Political leaders in the Eastern Caribbean (EC) have "largely failed" to address concerns of official corruption, according to a recent

report released by the United States State Department.

It said the seven Eastern Caribbean countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines – host abundant transshipment points for illicit narcotics primarily from Colombia and Venezuela destined for North American, European and domestic Caribbean markets.

"Drug transshipment through the Eastern Caribbean increased in 2013," said the document titled "2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report".

"... EC governments have made some improve-

ments to still largely antiquated criminal codes. Political leaders, however, have largely failed to address public concerns of official corruption," the report said.

VULNERABLE

Washington said national strategic law enforcement plans, including comprehensive vetting programs, remain largely unaddressed, however, creating a serious vulnerability to narcotics corruption. It said that as a matter of policy EC governments do not encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering

of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

"Nonetheless, U.S. analysts believe drug trafficking organizations elude law enforcement through bribery, influence, or coercion," the report said.

It said all the EC countries have made use of the Regional Security System (RSS) polygraph vetting program, funded under Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), though the program does not provide complete coverage for all law enforcement personnel.

- Edited from CMC.



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U.S. extends Temporary Protected Status for Haitians

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States will extend, by 18 months, the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible nationals of Haiti.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said the new measure would

come into effect from July 23, and that Haitian nationals seeking to extend their TPS status must re-register during a 60-day period that runs through May 2, 2014.

It said eligible Haitian TPS beneficiaries, who re-register during the 60-day period and request a new EAD, will receive one with an expiration date of Jan. 22, 2016.

USCIS said it "recognizes that some re-registrants may not receive their new EADs until after their current EADs expire and therefore, it is automatically extending current TPS Haiti EADs bearing a July 22, 2014 expiration date for an additional six months.

REQUIREMENTS

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama administration had suspended deportation of undocumented

Haitians living in the U.S. soon after a massive earthquake struck Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010, granting TPS to thousands of Haitians. American officials said about 50,000 Haitian nationals with TPS reside in the U.S.

The U.S. warned Haitians who have been convicted of a felony, or two or more misdemeanors in the U.S., or are subject to one of the criminal or security-related bars to admissibility under immigration law, would not be eligible for TPS.

In addition, U.S. officials said an applicant cannot obtain TPS if he or she is subject to one of the mandatory bars to asylum, such as committing a "particularly serious crime that makes the person a danger to the U.S. community or persecuting others".



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HIGH TIMES: U.S. reforms help spark marijuana decriminalization push in Caribbean

KATHY BARRETT

Marijuana, the “green gold” of Jamaica, has been prohibited since 1913. Very few issues have been more topical and heated as those surrounding the legality of the “weed”, also referred to as “ganja” or “pot”.

Marijuana did not take root in Jamaica until the mid-19th century, when East Indian indentured laborers were brought to the Caribbean island by the British to work. Eventually, their knowledge of the plant diffused to the black working class.

While cannabis is presently officially illegal in Jamaica, it is integrated with many dimensions of Jamaican culture and is governed by social rules that guide its use and inhibit abuse.

Although prohibited over 100 years ago, a 2001 study found that a significant number of Jamaicans have tried marijuana, although possession is still a crime. But there's been gradual change. In Sept. 2013, the Jamaican Parliament debated the decriminalization of small amounts of ganja, exposing “sharp divisions” on the issue among members.

On Oct. 8, a symbolic vote



The president and others in the U.S. agree with this sign.

in favor of marijuana decriminalization was passed in the House of Representatives. The vote didn't actually change the country's ganja laws, but showed that the administration of Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller backs reform.

However, politicians are not taking all the credit for the shift in thinking. Minister of Justice Mark Golding said the changing policies in the United States has given the decriminalization effort room to breathe.

STEP

Another significant step

was made in Feb. 2013 when Jamaica's Minister of Science and Technology Phillip Paulwell announced that submissions will be made to Cabinet in the near future and this will be followed by legislative amendments in Parliament to decriminalize ganja.

Paulwell believes marijuana will be decriminalized before the end of 2014.

“In the past the country has been timid in moves to decriminalize ganja ... because it was felt it would breach treaty obligations to the point where Jamaica could be denied financing from international institutions such as the IMF or World Bank,” he explained.

Paulwell isn't worried that will happen if the issue is properly handled. He said through his ministry, the Scientific Research Council (SRC) will lead marijuana research to posi-

tion Jamaica to benefit economically from medical marijuana and other economic uses of the weed.

REGIONAL DEBATE

The debate on the use of marijuana is not limited to Jamaica. Other countries in the Caribbean and beyond have had their own issues. For its part, The Bahamas government said it will await a decision of Caribbean community (CARICOM) leaders before deciding on whether or not to decriminalize marijuana for medicinal purposes.

When CARICOM heads of government meet in St. Vincent and the Grenadines next month, marijuana legislation will be one of the hot topics. Last year, CARICOM countries agreed to discuss the issue of decriminalizing marijuana for health reasons at their upcoming summit.

In preparing for the meeting, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves wrote to his regional colleagues calling for a “reasoned debate,” led by CARICOM's political and civic leadership, in the context of the legalization of marijuana for

medical and health purposes in 20 states in the U.S.

But regional leaders, who met in Trinidad last September, said a decision had been made to have the Guyana-based CARICOM Secretariat conduct further research on the medical and legal implications of decriminalizing marijuana. The process will not be easy, as Grenada has already thrown cold water on plans to decriminalize marijuana, insisting the cultivation and use of the weed on the island were illegal.

“Government's position on this issue is very clear,” said Education and Human Resource Development Minister Anthony Boatman. “The cultivation and use of marijuana in Grenada is illegal, and therefore, we will abide by the laws of our land.”

DECISION

In Trinidad and Tobago, the National Drug Council in Trinidad and Tobago has developed a concept paper on the issue and that is expected to be sent to the Guyana-based Secretariat.

“The decision is no decision

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

SVG scandal leads to Canada crackdown on citizenship fraud

OTTAWA, Canada – As concerns heighten over the recall of former St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Deputy New York Consul General Edson Augustus, the Canadian government has announced that it is cracking down on citizenship fraud.

Canada's Citizenship and Immigration Minister Chris Alexander said he is reinforcing the government's commitment to tackling citizenship fraud through measures proposed in Bill C-24, the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act.

“The government is cracking down on citizenship fraud by enforcing stronger penalties for those who do not play by the rules,” said Alexander in a statement.

Under the new legislation, the Canadian government will have the authority to develop regulations to designate a regulatory body whose members would be authorized to act as consultants on citizenship matters.

CHANGE

“This change will help protect applicants and deter third-party fraud,” said the statement, adding that Bill C-24 “reinforces the value of citizenship by cracking down on fraud and ensuring Canadian citizenship is only offered to

those who play by the rules.”

The proposed measure includes stronger penalties for fraud and misrepresentation (a maximum fine of CAN\$100,000 and/or five years in prison); expanding the grounds to bar an application for citizenship to include foreign criminality, “which will



help improve program integrity”; and making it an offence for unauthorized individuals to “knowingly represent or advise a person on a citizenship application or hearing for a fee.”

Alexander said “ongoing large-scale” fraud investigations conducted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have identified more than 3,000 citizens and 5,000 permanent residents linked to major investigations - a majority of them related to residence. In addition, he said nearly 2,000 individuals linked to the citizenship fraud investigations have withdrawn their applications.

He said permanent resi-

dents who commit these acts will be barred from applying for citizenship.

‘BOGUS’

Claiming that its immigration system was broken and was being taken advantage of by “bogus” refugee claimants from “democratic, human rights-respecting countries,” such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Alexander's predecessor, Jason Kenney, last year announced a major overhaul of the system. Kenny's announcement had come amid what has been described as heightened fraudulent claims for asylum in Canada by Vincentians and other Caribbean nationals.

In an exposé, on Nov. 12, 2011, the Toronto Star, under the caption, “SVG - Is this Caribbean Idyll the Worst Place in the World to be a Woman”, said that the majority of Vincentians flocking to Canada, seeking refugee status, are women, who, it appears, are “fleeing domestic violence.”

In response, the then Consul General to Toronto Steve Phillips said there was “no political, religious or social conditions in St. Vincent that justify any Vincentian applying for refugee status.”

- Edited from CMC.

Buju appeals charges again

Jamaican reggae artiste Buju Banton is still trying to overturn his drug conviction in the United States.

Last month, attorneys representing Banton, real name Mark Myrie, filed another appeal in the 11th U.S. Circuit Court.



Buju Banton

“There is no way in the world he received a fair trial,” defense attorney Charles Ogletree, who is representing Banton, was quoted in the Jamaica Observer newspaper as saying.

Banton was arrested in

Dec. 2009 at his home in Tamarac, Florida and charged with conspiracy to distribute five or more kilograms of cocaine. The entertainer said he is innocent, but was sentenced to a 10-year prison term.

Ogletree is hoping that the appeal will be heard this year. In the meantime, the attorney told the Observer that Banton remains confident and in good spirits.

“He is very positive,” the attorney said to the newspaper. “I speak to him every other day. He read the brief and is happy with it. He is glad that the truth is being told about him.”



Cocaine bust in Caribbean Sea

LONDON, England – Britain says cocaine estimated at 60 million pounds (one British pound = US\$1.66 cents) was seized recently in the Caribbean Sea as part of a joint operation with the United States Coast Guard.

British Armed Forces Minister Mark Francois told Parliament last month that the 1.3 metric tons of cocaine was seized during the counter-narcotics operation in the Caribbean Sea on Jan. 22.

“The Ministry of Defense routinely deploys a Royal

Navy frigate or destroyer and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel to the Caribbean under the Atlantic Patrol Task (North),” Francois said.

“We are also working to improve our co-operation with regional partners,” he said, noting for example, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has recently concluded an agreement with the United States Coast Guard to allow their helicopters to operate from an RFA vessel.



Retired N.Y. radio personality indicted on child exploitation charge in Caribbean

NEWARK, New Jersey - The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency says a retired New York radio personality has been indicted by a U.S. federal grand jury for attempting to transport a seven year old girl from Bergen County, New Jersey to the Caribbean to sexually abuse her.

Last month, ICE said the indictment follows an investigation by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Newark, HSI San Juan and the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office.

David Herman, 78, of Airmont, New York, and St. Croix, was arrested in Oct. 2013 at the St. Croix airport, where he expected to meet the child, ICE said. He was indicted on one felony count of attempting to transport a minor to engage in sexual activity.

"This case shows anyone who attempts to exploit a child can and will be held

accountable for their criminal actions regardless of where in the world the investigation leads or how much time has passed," said Andrew McLees, special agent in charge of HSI Newark.

'CHATS'

According to court documents, beginning in Nov. 2012, Herman initiated a series of chats on a website with an undercover officer from the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office. Herman believed he was communicating with a 36-year-old single mother of a six-year-old daughter, the documents reveal.

Over the course of the following months, the documents allege that Herman had



Herman

multiple telephone and online communications with the officer, "during which he indicated his desire to engage in sexual activity with the officer's fictitious daughter." Herman also attempted to arrange illegal sexual encounters with the child in New York state and Bergen County, according to the court documents.

They say that, in early 2013, Herman told the undercover officer that he would like to fly the pair to St. Croix "so he could engage in sexual activity with the daughter."

The indictment states that on Sept. 30 2013, Herman purchased airline tickets for them to fly from LaGuardia Airport in New York to St. Croix.

If convicted, Herman faces between 10 years and life in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines.

- Edited from CMC.



Ex-St. Lucia minister sues over revoked U.S. visas

CASTRIES, St. Lucia - Former controversial St. Lucia Housing Minister Richard Frederick has filed a lawsuit in United States District Court in Washington D.C., claiming compensatory and punitive damages of \$25 million in relation to the revocation in 2011 of his diplomatic and non-immigrant U.S. visas.

Named as defendants in the action are three U.S. State Department employees at the American Embassy in Barbados; an officer at the prime minister's office in St. Lucia; and two unnamed State Department employees.

Frederick is represented by well known Washington lawyer and former U.S. Attorney Joe DiGenova, whose firm has been researching and preparing the case for a number of months before last month's filing. In an interview on local television, DiGenova explained that this was an unusual case since the action for damages is brought in the name of the U.S. as plaintiff "for the use of Richard Frederick".

"The object of this conspiracy was to cause consular officers to engage in acts of willful malfeasance, abuse of power, and corrupt conduct in their offices," he said.

"An innocent man was falsely accused. This is his vindication," DiGenova added.

'CONFIDENCE'

Asked for comment on the filing, Frederick said, "I have every confidence in the American justice system and in my legal representatives, who



Frederick

are among the very best in the United States. I expect that justice will not only be done but will be seen to be done."

Frederick has expressed the view that his visa was revoked as a result of false information supplied by members of the St. Lucia Labor Party, then in Opposition, in combination with a local propaganda campaign designed to tarnish his reputation.

While these efforts were successful in having his visa revoked, his personal political popularity was adequate to allow him to retain his Central Castries seat, although the news of the revocation of his visa may have played a part in his United Workers Party (UWP) being defeated in the 2011 general elections.

Prime Minister Kenny Anthony, then leader of the Opposition, campaigned in the last general elections on a promise, if elected, to make public the reasons behind the revocation of Frederick's U.S. visa. However he has not yet done so since being re-elected to office in Nov. 2011.

- Edited from CMC.



ICE nabs 20 for bank fraud, money laundering in P.R.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency says 20 individuals, including ringleaders, straw buyers, sellers, real estate agents and an accountant have been arrested in 10 different municipalities here for bank fraud and money laundering.

ICE said the charges stemmed from a scheme to obtain money from mortgage lending institutions and resulted from an investigation conducted by its Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"These arrests are a reflection of the success that comes when federal, state and local law enforcement agencies work together to target criminal organizations and individuals in Puerto Rico," said Angel Melendez, special agent in

charge of HSI San Juan.

SCHEME

As part of the fraudulent scheme, ICE said the defendants purchased properties through straw buyers by obtaining mortgage loans from US federally-insured financial institutions "in amounts substantially exceeding the sales price of the properties."

The defendants would receive the excess amount of the loans. Then, they would default on payment of the monthly mortgage premiums, ICE said.

"In order to ensure loan approval, the participants of the conspiracy created and submitted false supporting documentation such as financial statements, bank statements, employment verification letters and tax returns, among other items, with the loan application," the statement said.

According to the indictment, the defendants "aided

and abetted each other and knowingly made false statements to various financial institutions to obtain mortgage loans."

The financial institutions are Banco Santander de Puerto Rico, Doral Bank, Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, and RG Premier Bank of Puerto Rico.

The defendants face up to 30 years in prison and fines of up to \$1 million.



U.S. national arrested on adoption scam charges

BELMOPAN, Belize - American law enforcement authorities have arrested an American woman resident here on her involvement to defraud the United States government through an adoption scam.

The U.S. Department of

Justice, in a statement, said 53-year-old Mary Mooney was arrested at her San Pedro apartment during a pre-dawn operation last month. She was taken to the U.S. Embassy here and then flown to the U.S. to face trial.

Mooney, who has been

identified as the former the former executive director of International Adoption Incorporate, is charged with three other Americans of carrying out the adoption scheme.

- Edited from CMC.



HIGH TIMES: U.S. reforms help spark marijuana decriminalization push in Caribbean

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

on that issue except to say much further discussions, much more consultations in each other country will take place before a report is presented in February next year," when the regional leaders meet for their inter-sessional summit, said Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar.

While some countries continue to debate the pros and cons of legalizing marijuana, Jamaica is one step ahead. The country launched its first medical marijuana company, with prominent researcher Professor

Henry Lowe urging the authorities to take full advantage of the drug's medicinal components for commercial purposes.

Lowe, who is the executive chairman of Biotech Research and Development Institute, said it would be unfortunate if Jamaica lost out to a booming multibillion-dollar industry in Europe, Canada and the U.S. He said a recent survey had shown that 87 percent of Jamaicans want medical marijuana to be developed, adding "Jamaicans don't only want it to be developed, they want the

government to get behind it and make it happen."

TRACTION

From the Americas to Africa, Asia and Europe the movement on marijuana legalization is gaining traction. This undoubtedly hinged on steps taken in Colorado and Washington state in the U.S., where the use of marijuana is legal. Another significant move was made in the South American nation of Uruguay, which, in Dec. 2013, became the first country to approve nation-

wide legalization of marijuana.

The progress being made has largely been attributed to a U.S. White House that's more open to drug war alternatives. President Barack Obama recently told The New Yorker magazine that he considers marijuana less dangerous to consumers than alcohol, and said it's important that the legalization experiments in Washington and Colorado go forward, especially because blacks are arrested for the drug at a greater rate than whites, despite similar levels of use.

In response to the ongoing debate, Lowe, saying he would conduct clinical research to extract the components of hemp he believes can cure a variety of illnesses, believes the legalization of marijuana, particularly for medical use could be the answer to the economic woes of some countries.

"Why should we sit back and allow other people to take over?" Lowe said.

Kathy Barrett is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



VOICE OUT: Singing is my calling, my gift ~ Tessanne Chin

Tessanne Chin is one of the most amazing and powerful voices to come not just out of Jamaica, but anywhere, in a long time.

This daughter of two musicians and the younger sister of a popular artist in her Caribbean home, began to build her career by singing backup for the legendary Jimmy Cliff. Soon after, she began making her own music, including rock-laced reggae songs, which caught the fascination of the younger audiences throughout the Caribbean. Her voice shone through on songs like "Messenger" and "Hideaway", which soon became favorites in the region.

Unfortunately this did not necessarily translate into financial success for Tessanne, whose sister Tami (also known as Tami Chynn) did well enough to score a deal with the Universal record label.

Tessanne soon started working with international star and recording artiste Shaggy. They did a duet - "Never Let Me Go". More importantly, she sang on Shaggy-orchestrated songs which involved artistes from the Caribbean. They addressed

major issues in the Caribbean, such as helping save the lives of children ("Save A Life") and the earthquake in Haiti ("Rise Again"). The third song, "On A Mission", was a celebration of Jamaica's 50th year of Independence.

Shaggy, managing Tessanne, saw an opportunity to change the course of her career just as she was ready to give up. He arranged for her to be a contestant on NBC's "The Voice". Her amazing voice, performances, humility and the way she showed herself and Jamaican culture, wowed audiences. With the mobilized support of Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans, Chin won "The Voice".

Caribbean Today's freelance writer Jason Walker caught up with Chin as she helped Food For the Poor during a recent fundraising gala. Below is an edited version of that interview:

Jason Walker: Tell us about your vocal skills and your development.

Tessanne Chin: I just sang everyday, to the point where it



Chin hugs winning trophy from 'The Voice'.

drove my family nuts, until eventually my mom got the message, put me in "Little People" and "Teen Players" club (both in Jamaica), which is like a theater-based club. Then moving on and singing everyday, she finally put me in proper training with Ms. Lecie Wright, who I credit to this day for giving me the grounds for proper technique and how to use your voice and how to

protect your voice. I owe her a lot.

J.W.: There was a time you spent in England. Tell us about that and how that affected your development.

T.C.: My mother's mother is English, so half of my family is over there in terms of my mom's side, and actually my brother, sister and mom live there now. But we actually went to high school in England and my parents were separated at the time, so it was a very new ground for us and we were definitely culture shocked, cold shocked and every kind of shocked you can think.

The first chance we got Tami and I came back to Jamaica because it is our home and we knew we wanted to do music and we knew the type of music we wanted to do and from then daddy always supported us. But even before England we grew up with musical parents so we always grew up around rehearsals and all dem tings. It was just a wonderful way to grow up.

J.W.: What led you to start putting out the rock reggae fusion you were doing?

T.C.: When you grow up in Jamaica you naturally hear your greats first. You hear your Bob's, your Beres, your Marcia Griffiths, the Jimmy Cliffs. You hear your greats and that is wonderful because that is our blood. But I grew up listening to that program called "Fast Forward", where we would get radio programs from abroad and we would be listening to people like Boyz II Men. And when I went to England I would listen to people like the Cranberries, Oasis and Limp Bizkit. My horizon just got a little bit broader and that was the type of music that spoke to me then. I don't know why but it did. It was something about it, very raw, very true - not pretentious. They weren't trying to be pretty, they weren't trying to be perfect, they were just singing about their emotions and what they felt, and there is something about that rawness, very much like reggae, I could identify with.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

U.S. blasts Caribbean for human rights abuses

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States continues to assail human rights practices in the Caribbean.

In its "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013", released here recently, the U.S. was particularly scathing in its criticism of Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and The Bahamas.

HAITI

The Department of State said the most serious impediments to human rights in Haiti involved weak democratic governance in the earthquake-ravaged, French-speaking Caribbean country; "insufficient respect for the rule of law, exacerbated by a deficient judicial system; and chronic corruption in all branches of government."



Martelly

Although the Michel Martelly administration took some steps to prosecute or punish government and law enforcement officials accused of committing abuses, the State Department said "credible reports persisted of officials engaging in corrupt practices," and that civil society groups allege that impunity was a problem.

JAMAICA

In Jamaica, the most serious human rights issues were alleged unlawful security force killings; cases involving the violation of rights that were not resolved in a timely way; and poor prison and jail conditions, including abuse of detainees and prisoners and severe overcrowding.

It said human rights monitors indicated that some killings by police went unreported, with police allegedly meting out the justice they believed was unavailable through the judicial system.

GUYANA

In Guyana, it said the most serious human rights abuses involved suspects and detainees' complaints of mistreatment by security forces, unlawful killings by police, and poor prison and jail conditions.

"There remained a widespread public perception of corruption involving officials at all levels, including the police and the judiciary," it said, pointing to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators that assessed that government corruption in Guyana was "a serious problem".

T&T

The State Department identified police killings during

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)



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Purchased citizenship allows couple to represent Dominica in Winter Olympics

NEW YORK, N.Y. - Under intense media glare, the president of the Dominica Olympic Committee has jumped to the defense of the Montana, United States couple who represented his nation at the just concluded Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Felix Wilson is standing by Gary and Angelica Di Silvestri, who admitted they paid \$175,000 for citizenship in the Caribbean island and went on to make global headlines as Sochi's oldest Olympians and the first husband-and-wife competing in the cross-country skiing event.

"The Di Silvestri family did NOT 'buy' their way to the Winter Olympic Games. Nothing was pre-arranged or pre-planned but done on merit after much sacrifice. There has been no violation of Olympic rules and principles," Wilson told the San Diego Tribune in an e-mail.

The pair qualified for the

Olympics, but barely competed in Sochi, meeting minimum performance even though they often skied near the back of the pack in pre-Olympics races. They then had to meet the requirement of full citizenship of the nation they were representing, and Dominica had to have a governing body for the sport they qualified for.

BOUGHT

The citizenship was bought and paid for. Gary Di Silvestri then created the country's first ski association and became its president, even though he had no residence there and never spent time there. The International Ski Federation granted Dominica provisional membership in Feb. 2013, even though the country is a tropical destination and has no ski slopes.

But the pair's Olympic performance in Sochi, a first time for both, was but a footnote. The Italian-born



— Photograph by Jae C. Hong/Associated Press

Angelica Morrone di Silvestri and Gary di Silvestri, center, with Felix Wilson, left, president of Dominica's Olympic Committee, and coach Thomas Troutner.

Angelica Di Silvestri, 48, reportedly skied off course during training and broke her nose, missing her race completely. Her husband Gary Di Silvestri, 47, who was born in Staten Island, New York, reportedly came down with a stomach illness and collapsed 300 meters into his 15 kilometer event.

Dominica is one of several Caribbean countries who now sell citizenship to foreigners willing to pony up cash. The country provides citizenship to

married couples who give at least \$175,000. Gary Di Silvestri – at least partially – saw the citizenship buy in as a favor to the country.

"They needed assistance, so did we. We acted the best we could at the time, made a

financial contribution to the country that went to different projects, and in return they granted us citizenship," he told the New York Times before leaving for Sochi.

DISPUTE

Fourteen of the 18 affiliate members of the Dominica Olympic Committee wrote to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) last June, asking for intervention in a dispute which developed

between them and the executive of the DOC. In the letter dated June 7, 2013 and published by the Dominica News Online, the members said they were "aggrieved" at the manner in which the DOC was being governed by Wilson and General Secretary, Thomas B. Dorsette.

They complained of irregularities during a meeting for the election of officers to the DOC executive on Jan. 24, 2013.

"The matter really escalated into total chaos during and after the meeting which was called for the election of officers to the D.O.C Executive on January 24, 2013," the letter stated. "There were many irregularities relating to this meeting which we are all convinced were illegal and unconstitutional."

More than a year later, however, Wilson remains the DOC president.

- Edited from News Americas.



U.S. blasts Caribbean for human rights abuses

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

apprehension or while in custody, and poor treatment of suspects, detainees and prisoners as the most serious human rights problems in Trinidad and Tobago.

The report noted that the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration took some steps to punish security force members and other officials charged with killings or other abuse.

THE BAHAMAS

Police abuse, detainee abuse, compounded by problems in processing them, a poorly functioning judicial system leading to delays in trial, and witness intimidation, were the most serious human rights problems in The Bahamas, according to the report.

It said other human rights prob-

lems included poor detention conditions; corruption; violence and discrimination against women; sexual abuse of children; and discrimination based on ethnic descent, sexual orientation, or HIV status.

ST. LUCIA

In St. Lucia, the State Department said the most serious human rights problems included long delays in investigating reports of unlawful police killings, abuse of suspects and prisoners by the police, and continued postponements of trials and sentencing.

ANTIGUA

In Antigua and Barbuda, the State Department said the most serious human rights problems involved poor prison conditions and violence against women.

ST. KITTS

Poor prison conditions, politicization of the Police Force, discrimination and violence against women, and child abuse topped the list for human rights abuses in St. Kitts and Nevis, according to the report. Discrimination against the LGBT community was the other human rights problem, it claimed.

ST. VINCENT

Occasional police use of excessive force and gender-based violence were the most serious human rights problems in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, according to the State Department.

BARBADOS

The most serious human rights problems in Barbados were "unprofessional conduct"

by police, violence against women, and discrimination against LGBT individuals, according to the report, adding that other human rights problems included child abuse.

DOMINICA

The State Department said domestic violence against women and children were the most serious human rights problem in Dominica.

GRENADA

Human rights problems in Grenada included poor prison conditions, violence against women, instances of child abuse, and laws that discriminate against LGBT persons, the report said.

- Edited from CMC.



VOICE OUT: Singing is my calling, my gift ~ Tessanne Chin

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

J.W.: When you made the reggae rock fusion song "Hideaway" a lot of people were confused about where to put the song. What did you think about that?

T.C.: I think that is what was so beautiful about "Hideaway" and I think that is what, is why, to this day I love that song because it proves that music transcends barriers. It's not about reggae or rock, it's about good music and do you like it. It does not have to fit anywhere. I think we get caught up about putting things in categories and where do I put this and if it

does not sound like ... Nah! Music is music and that is the one thing about music - you cannot pin it down!

J.W.: Tell us about "The Voice".

T.C.: (Shaggy) came to me with the whole opportunity about "The Voice" and was like "I really think this would be a great platform for you to break out". I was so afraid, I was so afraid to do it, because I did not know how America would receive me. I didn't know if my Jamaicans would think I was turning my back on them. I didn't know if I was ready for that, but I really had nothing to lose. I knew I wanted an international

career, you know, so God bless Shaggy.

There was a point where I definitely thought to myself: "Tess, is either you are going to find another job, or you are going to be singing for the rest of your life", whether I am in a hotel or on a cruise ship, at the Grammy's or pon di Voice!

That was the turning point for me as well, learning that I am here to sing. I do not know in what capacity, but I know that is my calling and that is my gift and that is what I will be doing for the rest of my life. But I would be lying if I did not say that there were times I was like "yuh know sey a 9-5 a do it, yuh know sey

a 9-5 mi a go get".



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Legalization vs. decriminalization

I. JABULANI TAFARI

Cannabis, called ganja in Jamaica and marijuana in the United States, is a naturally occurring hemp plant. From the 1970s, Rastafari reggae ambassador Peter Tosh was literally a walking advertisement for the legalization of the hemp.

Tosh's hit song "Legalize It" became the anthem of the pro-marijuana movement on every continent except Antarctica.

But even the reggae "Bush Doctor" would be disappointed and disturbed at the direction and ramifications of current marijuana legalization legislation in Jamaica and the U.S.

Rather than legalization, the simple decriminalization of the "wisdom weed" may be more helpful to ordinary people everywhere.

Decriminalization means freedom from law enforcement, while legalization means more regulations, more taxes, more enforcement, and even more money in corporate coffers.

MOVEMENT

Interestingly, Jamaica and the Caribbean seem to be moving towards decriminalization as an interim step towards full legalization of cannabis, while U.S. state governments appear to be moving full steam ahead towards complete legalization of marijuana.

In America there are presently 18 states with legal medical marijuana laws. There are another 10 states, including Florida, with pending legislation to legalize medical marijuana.

At first glance, however, legalization looks as if it will benefit big business and government more than the average marijuana user. For government, legalization means the ability to make marijuana a taxable commodity and to issue licenses. And for big business corporations, legalization means the opportunity to become super rich marijuana moguls

DECRIMINALIZATION

On the other hand, decriminalization will provide more practical benefit to ordinary citizens than to corporations and governments.

For people from all walks of life, decriminalization means being free to grow and possess small amounts of the herb for any and all personal uses without fear of arrest. That single step would reduce prison overcrowding caused by drug offenders, free up

clogged court systems, and eliminate needless criminal records for otherwise law-abiding citizens. That's all that cannabis users want - to be left alone.

As for the business opportunities made possible by legalization, that's another story.

The pre-existing and ongoing industrial and commercial applications of hemp are too numerous to fully enumerate here, but the range of



new cosmetic and pharmaceutical products being manufactured include skin lotions, shampoos, anti-wrinkle creams and sunscreens. Marijuana is also being used as an "infused edible" in baked goods, chocolate candy bars and assorted confectionaries.

Marijuana is still the number one agricultural crop in California, the leading cash crop in states all over the U.S. and, in Kentucky, the marijuana crop is reportedly worth three times the value of the tobacco crop. In Colorado, marijuana is an all-cash business.

Illegal marijuana was already a multi-million dollar industry in America and, by all accounts, legal marijuana and the medical marijuana industry, promise to turn the international herb into a multi-billion dollar enterprise. For many vested interests, therefore, marijuana legalization is all about mega money.

THERAPEUTIC

Marijuana has been used extensively medicinally and as a homeopathic home remedy for thousands of years all over the world - Africa, India, China, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean. Today, the confirmed therapeutic applications of the cannabis plant include its use to treat asthma, cancer, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, nausea, vomiting, pain and many other ailments.

There is no doubt, therefore, that legalizing the medical marijuana industry, whether in Jamaica, the Caribbean or U.S., would be a good thing.

However, the U.S. has a different kind of counter cul- (CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

Men ready, available – for a price

He was tall, handsome, debonair, erudite, witty, charming, athletic and, most of all, built like a horse where it counts.

He could be anything, but he chose a certain path, that of a man for hire.

A man for hire - or gigolo - is employed to be a woman's escort or dancing partner; a man who is financially supported by a woman not his wife. That's the official version, but you and I know that there's more to being a

man for hire than meets the eye, as his main function is not only to escort lonely women, but to offer sexual favors as well.

It really is a service industry and, unlike women who fulfill the same function, gigolos are not looked down upon, frowned upon or seen in a bad light. Women who do the same thing are called harlots, prostitutes, tramps, trollops and other vile names. Yet men who do so are admired and even have books, poems, songs, plays and movies written about them.

'PRIDE'

So many men who are players or wannabe players refer to themselves as gigolos, and with pride too.

"Honey, I can't be tied down to any one woman as I'm just a gigolo."

There was this famous song by Louis Prima, titled "I'm Just A Gigolo", plus countless movies such as "American Gigolo" starring Richard Gere and others that glorified the profession. I think that it was after seeing "American Gigolo" that many men secretly harbored thoughts about becoming one. All those beautiful women at their beck and call and, to top it off, they would be paid for services rendered.

But not only beautiful women, as portrayed in the movies, needed that service, but mostly middle aged, portly, withered, ageing dowagers who required stud service. That's perfectly logical, for beautiful women would have no need to pay for an escort service. There's even a reality T.V. series that shows the insight to these guys lives. Those men have an innate gift, to be able to squire and rise to the occasion for any type of woman that comes their way.

Perhaps the most famous throughout history were Casanova and Don Juan. But there are countless other



TONY ROBINSON

unsung heroes, fulfilling their role in society. You'd be surprised who utilize their services. This practice has been going on for a long time, with perhaps only countries in Europe like Italy, Spain and France giving prominence to the profession.

I saw this classic old movie where these ageing ladies would take their annual vacations in the Caribbean, and sought the services of these young virile beach boys. They really had a good thing

going until one silly romantic lady made the mistake of falling in love.

BUSINESS

That just wrecked everything, as she got jealous and caused worries, which led to murder and police business. That is the first and foremost and most important rule: Never ever fall in love with the man for

hire and neither should he fall in love either. It's a business and should be treated as such.

Jamaica has the famous rent-a-dreads, who patrol the tourist resort areas. But there are many discreet bald heads or even weaves, who earn a decent living, if not indecently.

I read that a large percentage of tourists worldwide actually seek out different sexual partners while on vacation, and cite that activity as one main reason for visiting certain countries. So like it or not, play hypocrite all you want, people do visit for sun, sea, sand and sex.

Some people flock to countries like Brazil, Thailand

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

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VIEWPOINT



• “Everyone deserves not just to survive but to live” – Steve McQueen, British-born direc-

tor of this year’s best film at the Academy Awards “12 Years A Slave”, McQueen’s parents are from the Caribbean.

• “You can’t just think that you want all the money. Fellas are being paid pretty well, but you must have some love for

West Indies cricket. And at the moment I’m not seeing how it could move forward. I would like to see more of a skill set” – former West Indies captain Clive



Lloyd expressing his desire to see current players from the region recommit themselves to the improvement of the game.

• “This means that the United States will also provide tax information to these governments (in the Caribbean) regarding individuals and entities from their jurisdictions with accounts in the United

States” - the United States Treasury Department outlines its co-operative efforts with Caribbean countries to track down tax evaders from the region.

- Compiled from various sources.



Legalization vs. decriminalization

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

ture than Jamaica. The “pot-head”/“stoner” kind of profile typifies the average recreational white user, whether hippie or yuppie. In the North American environment, where recreational use outweighs spiritual use and working use, legalization means cannabis clinics dispensing exotic buds to a mainly white clientele under the guise of medical marijuana.

In Jamaica, cannabis use is a way of life. The Rastafari claim ganja as a spiritual sacrament and have champi-

oned its use for decades. Ganja is also a traditional folk medicine that is known to be used by laborers and farmers prior to engaging in heavy physical work.

The sociology of ganja culture in Jamaica is radically different from the sociology of marijuana use in America. In the island environment, decriminalization is about people not money, and definitely seems like the better option.

Jabulani Tafari is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



Men ready, available – for a price

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

and others, and certainly not for the museums or lecture circuit. There was a time when women actually looked forward to having their rumps pinched by those street guys in Italy, but I suppose sexual harassment laws have curtailed that.

NEED

Men for hire do fill a need, and for that reason, many young men are taking it up as a full time profession. Many now boast of having uptown sugar mamas who cater to their every need - buy them clothes and stuff and give spending money.

Some have no permanent fixed place of abode, but live off any current girlfriend who they happen to be squiring at the time. They also drive their cars, prompting people to wonder.

“But how come Winston driving so many different cars and change address so often and he not working?”

The movies portray these guys as being debonair, swashbuckling, handsome and suave, who can charm the habit off a nun. But in reality, many are sleazy con artists who have a knack of beguiling gullible women who are in need of companionship and affection, and yes, sex.

Many women would swear on a stack of bibles that they would never succumb to this, but as one told me

recently: “When you touch the wrong side of 60 and have no one to talk to, go dancing with or have dinner occasionally, life can be lonely.”

Enter the man for hire.

QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications are rigid, and even though it may not seem like it, discipline is required.

He has to be all things to all women - a tour guide, showing and explaining the qualities and beauty of the country; and a protector; plus he has to be able to talk, for women do love to chat.

Basic social skills are a must, for they also act as escorts, and women love to be wined and dined. They have to be well endowed and be sexual athletes, for the bottom line is a happy ending after a day or night out on the town.

Men for hire are not only paid in hard cash, but many are paid in kind, as they are allowed to live in posh homes, drive nice cars and enjoy the luxury of laps, even as they live in the lap of luxury.

It’s a good life if you can swing it, but don’t get sick and don’t get old, for there is no pension plan for the man for hire, and just like older men do, older women love younger things. It’s a young man’s game.

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Rihanna loses \$9M in 2009, blames accountant

NEW YORK – Barbadian pop-singing sensation Rihanna blamed her New York accountant for losing \$9 million in 2009.

In new papers filed in Manhattan Federal Court and disclosed in media reports here last month, Rihanna, 25, whose real name is Robyn Fenty, claimed she had \$11 million in cash when 2009 began and just \$2 million when it ended, blaming her former accountant at the Manhattan firm of Berdon LLP for the loss.

The pop star claimed accountant Peter Gounis, of Berdon LLP, recommended she purchase a \$7.5 million Beverly Hills, California mansion in 2009.

“So she went ahead and bought it (but) soon enough, the ‘Run This Town’ crooner was running into serious financial trouble,” the **New York Daily News** reported.

“Gounis advised Fenty



Rihanna

that she could afford to purchase (the home) at a time when Fenty was in financial dismay,” her court documents revealed.

BAD DEAL

Rihanna’s lawsuit claimed the mansion turned out to be a bad deal, filled with mold, leaks and other problems, and she ended up selling it for a \$2 million loss.

The Daily News also

reported that the “Umbrella” singer also claimed the accountants failed to warn her that her “Last Girl on Earth Tour” in 2009 was likely to lose money. She fired the firm in 2010.

“These allegations are false,” said Thomas Manisero, a lawyer for Berdon LLP. “Berdon acted properly concerning Fenty’s affairs.”

In December, Gounis alleged in court papers that Rihanna blew her cash on clothes, jewelry and private jets.

“At the core of her claim is this belief: someone else is responsible for her conduct and its consequences,” Manisero said in court papers.

Rihanna has since bounced back financially and is now worth around \$43 million.

- Edited from CMC.



DANCEHALL REVIVAL



Jamaican dancehall stars Sean Paul, left, and Konshens, right, flank American late night television talk show host Arsenio Hall during a show last month. The show focused dancehall, especially the 10 years after big name artistes Shabba Ranks appeared on a previous edition of Hall’s show. Both Sean Paul and Konshens performed.

T&T honors Mighty Sparrow

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

diabetic coma in the United States, where he has been residing for years.

Persad Bissessar, speaking

at carnival activity in Siparia, south east of here last month, said that “like so many citizens from all walks of life, I have long admired and

enjoyed the impressive work of the Mighty Sparrow whose unparalleled contribution to our music and our culture has been hailed all over the world.

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TRIBUTE

She said Cabinet had agreed “that I recommend to His Excellency President Anthony Carmona to confer on you, Dr. Slinger Francisco, the Mighty Sparrow, the prestigious Order of Trinidad and Tobago, the highest national recognition and honor which can be awarded to any citizen.

“It is a fitting tribute to the contribution you have made to Trinidad and Tobago, and to the world,” she said, adding that she was also pleased to make the announcement in his presence.

“I am sure the national community will agree this is a richly deserved honor. I am also very pleased to announce that the Cabinet has further

agreed to cover all the medical expenses incurred by your recent illness, from which by the grace of God, you successfully recovered.

“In the immortal words of your calypsos and the unique style of your showmanship, you have entertained our senses and challenged our sensibilities. Your words have inspired, reflected, caused serious introspection and at times have just provided sheer musical and lyrical delight.”

Persad Bissessar also announced that Peter Minshall, the veteran mas designer whose work has also been hailed internationally, would be granted the lease to the state property which he has been occupying for several years.

“This is in keeping with similar grants made to noteworthy citizens, such as our first Olympic gold medalist, Mr. Halsey Crawford, who have brought significant acclaim and recognition to Trinidad and Tobago through personal talents and achievements.”

- Edited from CMC.



JUMP ‘N’ WAVE: Monarch champions...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

Summer” and “The Lost Psalm Of King David”, while crowd favorite Selvon “Mistah Shak” Noel took the third prize with his political commentary “Bois” and “Crime Round De Clock”.

Allen and Noel received prizes totaling TT\$500,000 and TT\$250,000 respectively. Defending Panorama

champions, PETROTRIN Phase Two Pan Groove successfully held on to its title by a single point.

The Len “Boogsie” Sharpe arranged band won a million TT dollars and finished ahead of the Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars, with BP Renegades third.

- Edited from various sources.



TOP GUNS: Bolt, Fraser-Pryce up for Laureus Awards

World and Olympic champions Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica are among 42 global sporting giants nominated for prestigious Laureus Awards to be presented this month.

Three-time winner Bolt and Fraser-Pryce have been nominated among the six men and six women shortlisted in the sportsman and sports-woman of the year categories.

Three other athletics top performers, Mo Farah (United Kingdom), Raphael Holzdeppe (Germany), and Yelena Isinbayeva (Russia) have been nominated to take home awards in other categories.

The Laureus World Sports Awards, established in



Bolt and Fraser-Pryce

1999, are awarded annually to sportspeople who have been outstanding during the previous year.

The 2014 staging of the awards is set for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Mar. 26.

Arbitration court clears Campbell-Brown of doping charges

Celebrated Jamaican sprinter Veronica Campbell-Brown has claimed redemption after she was cleared to resume her track career following her positive test for a banned substance last year.

The Court of Arbitration in Sports (CAS) cleared Campbell-Brown of any wrong doing paving the way for her to resume a glittering career that has included gold at Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008.

VCB, as she is popular known in her sport, released a statement late last month referencing black American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and stating her intention to resume her career and philanthropic work.



Campbell-Brown

"Yes, I lost out on the opportunity to compete for most of 2013 and the chance to defend my World 200m title, however, I press on," noted Campbell-Brown, who

missed the IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Moscow Russia last August.

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of the redemptive quality of unearned suffering and I must say I am redeemed."

SIDELINED

Campbell-Brown has been sidelined since testing positive for a banned diuretic at the Jamaica International Invitational in May.

She said the last few months of her life have "brought much pain and suffering" as she awaited a resolution of her drug case.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

Ex-Windies cricket stars knighted in Antigua

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua - Former West Indies fast bowlers Andy Roberts and Curtly Ambrose, and former Windies captain and batsman Richie Richardson, were knighted during the first one-day international (ODI) between the Caribbean team and England in Antigua late last month.

Roberts, Ambrose and Richardson, regarded as cricket legends, received their knighthood at a ceremony during the lunch interval of the game at the Sir Vivian Richards stadium.

Governor General Dame Louise Lake-Tack presented the three cricketers with their knighthood in a ceremony also attended by Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer.



Ambrose

"Andy Roberts and Curtly Ambrose both taught the world how rapid fast bowling could really be, and Richie Richardson showed both leadership as Windies captain and great skill with the bat," declared Spencer.

"Nobody can question his excellent record of wins or the 16 Test centuries he achieved during his career."

Roberts, the first Antiguan and Barbudan to represent the West Indies, made his debut against England in March of 1974. The bowler was part of the "quartet" of West Indian fast bowlers from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s that had a devas-



Richardson

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

T&T soccer international dies from heart attack

Former Trinidad and Tobago international soccer player Kevon Carter died from a massive heart attack late last month.

Carter, 30, also a player with the country's defense force, died while at training with his club.

"Kevon was a strong young man who gave 10 years dedicated service to the national team from U23 to senior level, playing most recently in the 2013 CONCACAF Gold Cup," said Trinidad and Tobago Sports Minister Anil Roberts.

"It is extremely disheartening to hear this news, but I hope it serves as a wake-up call to all of us to pay closer attention to our health and wellness. When death comes so suddenly, it is always shocking and difficult to under-



Carter

stand, but I hope Kevon's family and friends will cherish the time he spent with them."

Carter began his soccer career at Mucurapo Senior Comprehensive and went on to star with the TT Pro League outfit Defense Force. He earned 31 caps with the national team and scored five goals.

P.M. to 'Transform the Game'

Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the scheduled keynote speaker for the opening of the fourth annual Business of Sport International Conference in Jamaica.

Conference organizers said that Gonsalves will officially declare the conference open on May 1, under the theme "Transform the Game".

Joining him will be Jamaican and international speakers who will aim to pro-

vide the context for robust deliberations on critical issues affecting the sporting industry.

"This year will be riveting, with high-profile speakers, and the outcomes will be game changers," said Christopher Samuda, Business of Sport partner.

Like previous years, there will be targeted discussions for regional ministers of sport and collegiate students.



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SPORTS



Striker becomes first Belizean to sign U.S. pro soccer contract

ATLANTA, Georgia - Striker Deon McCauley last month became the first Belizean

footballer to sign a contract with a professional soccer team in the United States.

McCauley has signed with the Atlanta Silverbacks, which competes in the North American Soccer League (NASL), a second tier competition.

McCauley, who plays for

Belize's Belmopan Bandits, had been scouted by numerous international teams since his ascent to soccer stardom.

The 26-year-old scored 11 goals in eight matches for Belize during 2014 World Cup

qualifying to tie Dutch star Robin Van Persie and Uruguayan Luis Suarez for the most goals in the campaign.



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Arbitration court clears Campbell-Brown of doping charges

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

"The final court available to us as athletes have spoken and humbly I say they have confirmed my innocence," said the sprinter.

"I harbor too much self-respect and a similar respect for the purity of competition to resort to illegal means to success. This same self-respect will now enable me to leave behind the insensitive and ill-informed media remarks and

look towards returning to the track to give of my best to God's glory."

Campbell-Brown has been under scrutiny with Asafa Powell and Sherone Simpson also testing positive for banned substances, which also forced them to miss the 2013 World Championships. She was suspended pending a Jamaican disciplinary committee review, which deemed a reprimand sufficient because

the banned substance was not used for performance enhancement.

Campbell-Brown could return to competition this month's World Indoor Championships in Poland, with the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland in July also an option.

- Edited from CMC.



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Ex-Windies cricket stars knighted in Antigua

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

tating effect on opposition batsmen at both Test and ODI levels.

"We can all agree that these men have earned this honor in fine style," said

Spencer, "and players like these show the West Indies and the world how much talent our country has to offer."

Former West Indies captain and middle order batsman Vivian Richards was knighted by the Antigua government in 1999.



Roberts

Antigua unveils statue of cricket great 'Master Blaster' Sir Viv

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua, - Former West Indies cricket captain and Antigua national hero Sir Vivian Richards said he felt privileged to have a statue unveiled in his honor.

The unveiling occurred at a ceremony late last month in Antigua attended by dignitaries, including past cricketers.

"It's not often you see impressions you think look real and for the gift itself being a brand of Cuba itself, I am very pleased," declared Richards, arguably the world's greatest batsman of his era.

"I am privileged and over the moon to be in such a position."

The statue was unveiled at Sir Vivian Richards Cricket



Richards poses next to statue.

Grounds, venue of a one-day international (ODI) series between West Indies and England, which began last month. Officials said it will remain at the venue as a tourist attraction.

Antiguan Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer described Sir Viv, also known as the "Master Blaster", as a player whose fearless aggression put Antigua and Barbuda on the international map.



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St. Lucian finishes runner-up in TV's 'Top Chef' competition

Nina Compton, daughter of late St. Lucia Prime Minister John Compton, last month finished runner-up in Bravo television's "Top Chef" competition in the United States.

It was the first time in the 11-season history of the competition that a Caribbean national had reached the finale.

Compton is the chef de cuisine at the Scarpetta restaurant at Miami Beach's Fontainebleau hotel. Her dessert of chocolate zeppole with macadamia nuts and passion fruit anglaise, plus third course of swordfish with squash puree, braised kale and smoked onion jus was not good enough to beat chef Nicholas Elmi from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Compton

"It sucks ... I'm disappointed," Compton said. "Nobody likes to come in second place."

'PUNCH'

However, Compton's crudo dish of tuna and escolar tartar with tomato water and

jalapeno was deemed as packing "more punch" than Elmi's and her baby goat dish was called "sublime" by a panel of judges that included chef Masaharu Morimoto and Emeril Lagasse.

"I'm a role model for people in St Lucia now," Compton said. "You can come from a small island and make it to the finale in Top Chef."

St. Lucia's Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony noted: "Nina Compton has made Saint Lucia proud. She has taken the United States of America and the rest of the television world by storm in her quest to become America's Top TV Chef."

- Edited from News Americas



Seafood on tap for Deering Estate festival in Miami

A non-stop Caribbean celebration, in honor of its 10th anniversary, will mark this year's Deering Seafood Festival in Miami, Florida.

The event will be held from **10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mar. 30** at the Deering Estate at Cutler, 16701 S.W. 72nd Ave.

Among the highlights will be a kids adventure called "10 Leagues Under the Sea", stilt walkers, a junkanoo musical parade and live entertainment.

However, Florida's seafood is the main event. All types of fish will be steamed,

grilled or fried. Under the big top tent will be chefs conducting cooking demonstrations.

For more information, call **305-235-1668 Ext. 263** or visit www.deeringseafoodfestival.org.



TASTE TEMPTATION



- Photograph by Derrick Scott

Chef Sherene James demonstrates how to prepare jerk salmon at the "Taste of Travel Culinary Stage" held last month in Washington D.C. Jamaica's cuisine took center stage during the two-day show, with James, chef at the Embassy of Jamaica, displaying her creativity during a live demonstration of Jamaican cuisine preparation, including jerk dishes. Jerk salmon, tilapia salsa and jerk chicken were among the dishes she prepared. She also gave the audience a lesson in making Jamaica's famous jerk sauce.



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HAITIAN STUDENT CONFAB

The 16th annual Haitian Student Conference will be held **Mar. 28-30** at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The event will convene Haitian American students and professionals for networking and career opportunities.

This year's conference theme is "The Haitian Dream: Sa ou wè a sé sa". It is expected to combine emphasis on empowering individuals to achieve their goals and dreams in the Haitian community with belief that it is crucial to take a close look at local, national, and international issues.

For more information, call **202-681-4701** or e-mail publicrelations@nhsainc.com

'MARCH FOR BABIES'

March of Dimes will hold a walk in South Florida to raise funds and awareness to support preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

"March for Babies" will

be held **May 3** at Nova Southeastern University, 3301 College Ave. in Davie.

Registration is at **7 a.m.**. The three mile walk begins **8:30 a.m.**

To sign up for March for Babies, visit marchforbabies.org.

'FIT2PLAY' CAMP

Keep your kids active, fit and engaged during the spring school break during "Fit2Play" camps being offered by the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department.

Registration has started. Camps will be held **Mar. 24-28, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.** each day, with early drop-off available at **7:30 a.m.** and late pick-up until **6 p.m.**

Parents may register children by visiting the specific Miami-Dade County Park where they wish their child to attend.

Some parks offer online registration at www.miamidade.gov/parks, where the entire list of camp sites is also found. The public may also

dial 311 for the Miami-Dade County Information Hotline.

MIRAMAR CAMPS

The South Florida City of Miramar, home to a significant Caribbean American community, will open registration for its children's summer camp this month.

Registration for the city's residents begins **Mar. 22** at an open house from **10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at the Miramar Town Center, 2300 Civic Center Place. Non-residents can start registering on April 7 at the center where their preferred summer camp will be held.

Registration for M.O.S.T. Camp at the Miramar Youth Enrichment Center 7000 Miramar Pwy. will be held Monday thru **Friday 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.** beginning **Mar. 25** and registration for M.O.S.T. Camp at Fairway Park 6700 Largo Dr. will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays **3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.** beginning Tuesday **April 1**.

For more information, including camp schedule, call **954-883-6955** or **954-203-9817**.



U.S. revises citizen application form for Caribbean immigrants

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) says it has released a revised form for Caribbean and other



Swearing in.

immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship.

USCIS said through the Federal Register it received numerous comments from the public that helped inform the revision of Form N-400, Application for Naturalization.

"The revisions to Form N-400 provide USCIS with additional tools to make important eligibility determinations, present customers with clearer instructions, and incorporate technology that improves efficiency and accuracy for both USCIS and our customers.

"Although the form is now revised, the eligibility requirements for naturaliza-

tion have not changed," it added.

QUESTIONS

USCIS said the revised Form N-400 now includes additional questions to conform to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004 and Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007.

"The additional information is important for USCIS to make a complete and informed determination of an applicant's eligibility for U.S. citizenship," it said.

"The questions relate not only to concerns surrounding good moral character but also to issues relating to the security of the United States."

USCIS said clearer and more comprehensive instructions now highlight general eligibility requirements and help customers understand the naturalization application process by providing specific instructions on how to complete each part of the application.

USCIS said customers may continue to use previous versions of the form for a 90-day transition period and that from Monday, May 5, 2014, it will no longer accept older versions of Form N-400.



Jamaica's RGD launches diaspora outreach in U.S.

The Registrar General's Department (RGD) in Jamaica has announced it will embark on a "Jamaica Diaspora Outreach" to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut from Mar. 10-15, and to South Florida Mar. 17-20.

The RGD's visit will facilitate applications for the agency's services, including certificates for birth, death and marriage; genealogical research ("Family Tree" service), registry wedding and record updating, which includes correction of errors, late registration, addition of father's particulars and late entry of name.

Vital information on products and procedures will also be disseminated and relevant concerns addressed.

Deirdre English Gosse, the agency's chief executive officer, who will be a part of the outreach team, said "while the RGD offers service to the Jamaican diaspora via its website, the outreach team is looking forward to offering an even more personable service to its overseas customers and faci-

tating a greater level of interaction that distance does not normally facilitate."

The list of venues from which the agency will operate in the U.S. and cost of its services are listed on the RGD's website www.rgd.gov.jm. Payment will only be accepted in cash (U.S. dollars) and international money order.

Persons wishing to access RGD's services are encouraged to pre-register by sending their name, mobile telephone number, general area of residence and type of service required to outreach@rgd.gov.jm. Pre-registration is not required.

Persons who plan to access Record Updating Services should complete the relevant forms from the RGD's website and ensure that the supporting document requirement is met. If guidance or additional information is needed, the RGD will provide it via its e-mail address or by telephone **876-619-1260**, extensions **6111-3, 6116** and **6107**.



The April issue of Caribbean Today will feature a comprehensive examination of how the healthcare industry serves the Caribbean community.

With a proven track record now in our 21st year of service to readers in the United States and the Caribbean Basin, Caribbean Today reaches an audience of over 112,000 highly qualified readers. They have median household income of \$63,000 and enjoy a higher disposable income. 19% have a college degree, 32% have some college. In today's economy,

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CARIBBEAN CONTACT



- Photograph by Derrick Scott.

Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States Stephen Vasciannie, left, greets Michel Martelly after Haiti's president addressed the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) last month in Washington, D.C. Martelly said there are discussions in Haiti to possibly convene legislative and municipal elections in 2014 and assured the OAS his country is on the road to recovery from the devastating earthquake of Jan. 2010.

AFJ to honor businessman, philanthropist Robert Levy

Businessman and philanthropist Robert E. Levy will be honored next month by the American Friends of Jamaica, Inc. (AFJ) in recognition of his success and support for the Caribbean island.

The AFJ's Jamaica Charity Gala, presented in collaboration with the Jamaica Committee, will be held April 12 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Miami.

Levy is viewed as one of Jamaica's most remarkable entrepreneurs, an innovator and contributor to the development of Jamaica's livestock

industry. He is chairman of Jamaica Broilers Group Limited and a 2010 inductee into the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica Hall of Fame.

He is founder and current director of the Caribbean Poultry Association, director and past president of The American Chamber of Commerce, and serves as chairman or member on several agricultural and national development-related boards. For more information visit www.theafj.org.



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Miami-Dade County honors Haitian immigration activist

Jacques Despinosse, president of the Haitian American Leadership Coalition and immigration advocate, was among three members of the Miami-Dade County community honored last month.



Photograph by Armando Rodriguez
Despinosse, left, and Monestime.

Despinosse, who once served on the North Miami City Council, joined Dr. Shirley Johnson, George F. Knox to receive recognition from Miami-Dade County Commissioner Jean Monestime during a commission meeting in commemoration of Black History Month.

Despinosse hosts "Radio Citizen". He is founder of the Haitian American Citizenship and Voter Education Center, Inc., which has helped Haitian immigrants become United States citizens and registered

voters.

He has held several political posts, including U.S. Presidential Observer Delegate to the Elections in Haiti in 1995, and was a member of the Host Steering Committee of the Summit of the Americas in 1994 and delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004.

STALWARTS

Johnson, goddaughter of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, is an educator, civil rights activist and author. She serves as supervisor of curriculum and instruction for Miami-Dade Public Schools and is vice president of the NAACP Miami-Dade Branch overseeing the Youth and College Division.

Knox, an attorney, is a Miami business community leader. He is a founding member of the Miami Sports and Exhibition Authority and was the first African American to join the faculty of the University Of Arkansas School Of Law and the first person of color to serve as a Department Head and as city attorney for Miami.



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LITERATURE



St. Lucia bathes in spotlight of Sports Illustrated magazine's swimsuit issue

CASTRIES, St. Lucia - The beauty of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia is on display in the popular **Sports Illustrated** swimsuit edition.

The Time Warner-owned magazine shot its 50th edition in the island with its models showcased amidst the varied landscapes of St. Lucia, including the infamous world heritage site, the Pitons, and a fishing village.

Models Emily Ratajkowski, Cris Urena, Samantha Hoopes, Lauren Mellor and Hannah Ferguson are featured at three locations throughout St. Lucia, includ-

ing Soufriere waterfront, a fishing village, Malgretoute Beach, a mooring site for yachts and at Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort owned by the former accountant for the Rolling Stones.

"We chose locations for the 50th anniversary edition that we knew would grab readers' attention. Saint Lucia's iconic Piton mountains, gorgeous beaches, and lush



- Photograph by Sports Illustrated
Ratajkowski posing in St. Lucia.

rainforest were a perfect fit for this historic issue." Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Senior Editor MJ Day was quoted as saying in a press statement from the St. Lucia Tourist Board.

THRILLED

"We were thrilled to host Sports Illustrated as they shot the 50th anniversary issue," said Tracey Warner Arnold, deputy director of tourism for the St. Lucia Tourist Board.

"There is something almost magical about our island that clearly captured the imagination and eye of

MJ and her talented SI Swimsuit team."

The "Helen of the West Indies" St. Lucia is known for its natural beauty and diverse attractions, including the signature Piton Mountains, a tropical rainforest and one of the world's few drive-in volcanoes.

St. Lucia is one of the Windward Islands of the West Indies' Lesser Antilles and is nestled halfway down the Eastern Caribbean archipelago.



'Philomena': Thought provoking and well worth the read

MARIE GREGORY

Philomena is a true story, although it reads like a novel.

It is a tale of a young, naïve, motherless Irish girl who became pregnant after a brief association with a man she hardly knew. Her family

sent her to a convent to have the child, who would then be given up for adoption.

But the wishes of the mothers were not taken into account by the nuns. Many babies were sent - some would say sold - to women in the United States. The nuns were convinced this would ensure a

better life.

This was apparently general practice condoned by the Catholic Church in Ireland, which 60 or 70 years ago was the most powerful authority in the land.

It was 1952. So Philomena's harsh treatment at the convent, as awaited the birth of her baby, was not unusual. Babies were placed in the nursery and mothers had limited access. They could stay for around three years and be released if they were able to pay the nuns.

TWIST

In Philomena's case this was impossible. Her love for her son Anthony is strong, although she's aware he will probably be given up for adoption. The only hope for the girl was to go away, usually to England, to start life anew.

An American couple came to the convent looking

for a girl to adopt. Seeing Anthony so attached to his friend Mary, they took the two children to the U.S. Anthony Lee, Irish-born, was transformed into Michael Hess, an American citizen.

Philomena was sent to England, where she trained as a nurse, married and had a family. No mention was made of the son who had been given up, yet she thought of him every day.

But during Christmas 2003, Philomena drank too much and revealed a secret she had kept for 50 years to her daughter: She had a son in the U.S. and wanted to find him.

Writer and journalist Martin Sixsmith was at a New Year party when a woman approached him. Could he help Philomena find Anthony? A five year search followed. The nuns were not able or unwilling to help. Sixsmith and Philomena seemed to reach a dead end.

At the same time, Anthony/Michael was search-

ing for his birth mother. Each would return to the convent within days of the other, yet the nuns remained silent.

TRIUMPH

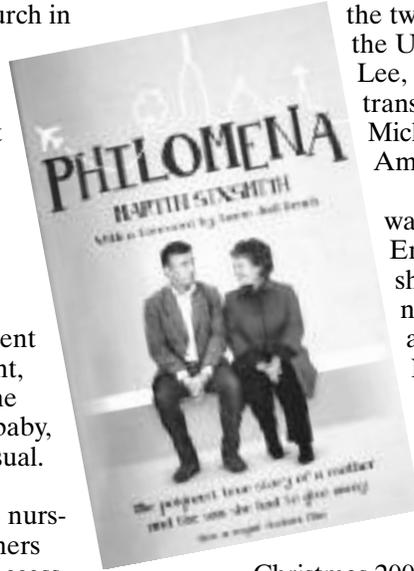
The eventual denouement brings some sort of satisfaction to Philomena. Michael's life is revealed in detail as Sixsmith was able to contact people who knew him and reconstruct events.

Though the story concentrates on Michael rather than on his mother, it's Philomena who triumphs, keeping her faith and exercising forgiveness. While perhaps more could have been revealed about Philomena's life during the 50 years, the book's ending is wonderfully cathartic.

The story was recently made into a film with Dame Judi Dench taking the title role. She was quoted as calling it "the extraordinary story of an extraordinary woman."

"Philomena" is an absorbing book. The author is to be congratulated on the sensitivity with which he handles delicate issues. It is thought-provoking and well worth reading.

Marie Gregory is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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AUDIT ALERT: 5 red flags to avoid on your tax return

RICK RODGERS

One of the biggest fears people in the United States have is receiving an audit notice from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It ranks right up there with being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.

The IRS does nothing to alleviate this fear because the more frightened you are, the less likely you will be to cheat on your taxes.

The IRS audited one out of every 104 tax returns in federal fiscal year 2013. It's becoming increasingly evident that the greater your total income, the more you'll attract the agency's attention.

Last year, the IRS audited about 10.85 percent of taxpay-

state and region may be red-flagged for a closer look.

This does not mean that you shouldn't take legitimate deductions. Your deductions could exceed the IRS range due to high medical expenses and large charitable contributions. Take all valid tax deductions – just be sure you keep your backup documentation.

Self-employment income

- The IRS believes that the vast amount of underreported income occurs among the self-employed. Self-employed taxpayers are audited by the IRS far more frequently than those who receive a W-2 for wages.

People who are employed by others and receive W-2

income, but also run a business that reports a loss are especially high on the IRS radar screen. You will need to be able to prove you are operating a business with the intention of earning a profit and not just trying to write off the expenses of a hobby. You will need to be able to pass both the "passive loss" and "hobby loss" rules in order for the deductions to stick.

Business expenses - Big deductions for business meals, travel and entertainment are always ripe for audit. A large write-off will raise red flags if the amount seems too high for the business.

Taxpayers claiming 100 percent business use of a vehicle is also a huge red flag. The IRS knows it's extremely rare for an individual to use a vehicle strictly for business. The IRS looks for personal meals or claims that don't satisfy the strict substantiation requirements.

Rental properties - The IRS is scrutinizing rental real estate losses for those who claim to be real estate professionals. You must meet two requirements: 1) More than

half of the personal services are performed in real property trades or businesses in which you materially participate, and 2) You perform more than 750 hours of services in real property trades or businesses in which you materially participate.

Home offices - Taxpayers who operate a business from their home are entitled to deduct the portion of their home that is dedicated to operating the business. The IRS believes that many taxpayers use this deduction as a means of writing off personal expenses and carefully scrutinize tax returns that claim the home office deduction.

Claiming this deduction greatly increases the chances that your tax return will be audited. You should consult a tax expert to determine if you are entitled to claim this deduction. If the tax savings are minimal you may opt not to claim the deduction simply to avoid the scrutiny. For details, see IRS Publication 587.

BE PREPARED

There is no way to completely audit-proof your return, and if you do get an audit notice from the IRS, don't take it personally. It does not mean the IRS believes your return is fraudulent.

When you get a notice, pick up a copy of IRS Publication 1 "Your Rights as a Taxpayer". Be courteous and helpful without volunteering more information than what is requested. Plan ahead so that you are organized and can answer questions promptly. Ask for a postponement if you need more time to prepare.

If you are a self-employed taxpayer or have unusual circumstances that place your return outside of the statistical norm, let a professional prepare the return. Self-prepared returns are themselves more likely to be audited. The IRS believes that a non-professional has limited knowledge of the 4,000 pages of tax code.

Tax law is complex. The fee charged by an enrolled agent or CPA can be easily justified by the peace of mind they bring if you get the dreaded audit notice.

- Edited from *News and Experts*. Rick Rodgers is a certified financial planner and president of Rodgers & Associates, "The Retirement Specialists" in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



Free tax prep in Miramar



DeVry University's Accounting Club is offering free tax preparation (VITA) at its campus located at 2300 S.W. 145th Ave. in Miramar, Florida.

The preparation sessions are being held **through April 12 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.** on Wednesdays and from **10 a.m.**

to **3 p.m.** on Saturdays in Room 229.

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) program that offers free tax preparation to individuals with income of \$57,000 or less. VITA volunteers are certified by

the IRS to prepare individual tax returns with free electronic filing.

For more information, call Andrew Hoo at **754-423-4365**.



Small business workshop in Miami

Small business owners looking to grow their investments are being invited to attend a free workshop to learn about growth strategies and resources that may be available to them.

Miami-Dade County Commission Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa, in partnership with the Beacon Council, will host an "Open for Business" small business workshop from **1 p.m. to 3 p.m.** Mar. 19 at the Miami Springs Recreational Center, 1401 Westward Dr., Miami Springs Florida.

"This workshop is designed to give small busi-

ness owners the tools to become more successful, which will benefit Miami-Dade County as a whole by promoting economic development," Chairwoman Sosa said in a press release to promote the event.

The workshop is scheduled to focus on how to: build a business plan; get funding resources; take advantage of tax credits; and grow with marketing (including Internet marketing).

Reservations can be made at www.beaconcouncil.com/events or call **305-579-1338**.



Minority business expo

"The Blueprint for Business Success" will be the theme of the Southern Florida Minority Supplier Development Council's (SFMSDC) 29th Annual Business Expo

Mar. 20-21 at the Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Attendees will learn about business opportunities and network with hundreds of local and national entrepreneurs, Fortune 500 companies

and government agencies.

The Southern Florida Minority Supplier Development Council is a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster the development and expansion of minority-owned businesses in South Florida.

For more information, call **305-762-6151** or visit www.sfmsdc.org.



'Small Business Summit'

Web.com, an Internet service provider of and online marketing solutions for small businesses, will host a free "Small Business Summit" designed to offer information on ways to successfully increase visibility and market their businesses online.

The summit will take place from **9 a.m. to noon Mar. 14** at the Newport Beach Country Club.

For more information, contact smallbusinesssummit@web.com or call **800-862-8718**.



Certain signs prompt closer IRS scrutiny.

ers with income greater than \$1 million. The audit rate dropped to 0.88 percent for those with income less than \$200,000.

Some audits were taxpayers pulled at random. The rest of the returns are selected for examination in a variety of ways.

HELP

Lowering your IRS profile will help minimize your chances of being audited. Here are five ways to help you stay off the audit list:

Large itemized deductions - The IRS has established ranges for the amount of itemized deductions based on a taxpayer's income. Deductions that exceed the statistical "norm" for a given



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Measles under control in Caribbean ~ PAHO

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) says there has been no endemic transmission of measles in the Americas, including the Caribbean, since 2002.

PAHO said since Venezuela reported the last case in 2001, measles deaths have “disappeared from the region.”

“These successes, achieved by the countries of the

Americas with support from the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (WHO), make the Americas the first region in the world to eliminate one of the world’s most contagious diseases and a leading cause of death for young children,” said PAHO in a statement here.

It said key reasons for the success include high rates of vaccination coverage in regional countries and early detection of cases.

THREAT

However, PAHO said the region continues to face the threat of imported cases from countries outside this hemi-

sphere, where the virus still circulates.

As of 2012, according to WHO estimates released last week, there were 226,722



Vaccinations help eliminate threat.

measles cases and 122,000 deaths in other regions of the world. These figures represent declines of 77 percent in cases and 78 percent in deaths since 2000.

“For more than a decade, there has been no endemic measles in the Americas, thanks to countries’ efforts to vaccinate children and maintain high coverage rates,” said Dr. Gina Tambini, director of PAHO’s Family, Gender and Life Course Department.

“But until the rest of the world eliminates the disease, we must be on the alert for any reintroduction of cases that could lead to outbreaks and jeopardize the continuity of

this public health milestone.”

Before the establishment of PAHO/WHO’s Expanded Immunization Program in 1977, more than 250,000 measles cases and 12,000 deaths were recorded yearly in the Americas.

DECLINE

Starting in the 1990s, PAHO said cases declined, but the most notable drop came after the region launched a major measles elimination initiative in 1994.

The last recorded endemic outbreak of measles was in Venezuela and Colombia in 2001-2002.

PAHO said vaccination campaigns to eliminate rubella have helped to maintain measles elimination by using a combination measles and rubella vaccines for adolescents and young adults.

A study on the cost-effectiveness of measles elimination in Latin America and the Caribbean, which included PAHO/WHO experts, estimated that the cost of preventing one measles case is \$71.75, and preventing one death costs US\$15,000, indicating cost-effectiveness.



What’s in that bag? Maybe enough to cause back pain

DR. BRITTANY
A. GOLDSOHN

A purse is typically considered a woman’s most prized possession. Whether it is used for a fashion statement or for storing items needed throughout the day, a purse can also be a causative factor of pain.

Depending on the weight of the bag, items that may be placed inside and the length of time wearing the bag can leave you susceptible to injury.

The neck, which is normally upright in sitting or standing, can be victim to extra force from having to counteract weight of a heavy purse on one side. When the weight is applied to that side, the muscles are forced to work harder in order to maintain an upright position. Heavy weight causes more muscle action, which can lead to spasms or increased muscle mass on one side of the neck area. This results in tightness and pain indicative of a muscle strain.

BALANCING ACT

If complaints of shoulder pain are not a result of a specific traumatic event, it is mostly due to repetitive wear on the joint, muscles, or ligaments. Long term weight placed on the shoulder causes wear to all

three structures. When the area is already compromised by a previous injury, it is best to avoid adding weight on to that side of the body.



Too much weight can cause back pain.

Applying more weight on one side of the body can shorten the ligaments and muscles on that side, causing a postural change. It will become more prominent with time that the spine has developed a curvature.

You may be unaware of the risks until you begin feeling pain, which is almost always the first signal that something is not right. Something as simple as wearing a handbag can be a quiet culprit in postural changes.

ADVICE

Wear a light handbag

weighing less than five pounds. Smaller bags limit the space allowed to store things you believe you may need.

Wear the bag on both sides on the body rather than one. If you wear the purse mostly on the right side, switch to the left to shorten the length of time subject to wear.

Students are at risk for developing scoliosis at a young age due to carrying heavy loads of schoolbooks and supplies. Over the years, with increased awareness, schools have done a better job of providing storage spaces for books. More students are also traveling with bags that have wheels.

Long term wear of a bag on one side can lead to chronic lower back pain. Prevention is the key to avoiding majority of repetitive or long term causative injury. Education on these topics at a young age can prevent future lower back issues or issues of other structures in the body.

Edited from an article submitted by Dr. Brittany A. Goldson, a physical therapist at Goldson Spine and Rehabilitation in Pembroke Pines/Plantation, Florida.



Protecting from flu virus

Flu cases have been on the rise in South Florida recently, but it is not difficult to protect yourself from the circulating virus.

The following simple steps will help you avoid influenza:

- Get a flu vaccination
- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands

Stay home when you are sick and avoid sick people

Take anti-flu medication if recommended.

“We urge people to take precautions,” said Dr. Paula Thaqi, health officer of the Florida Department of Health in Broward County. “Broward County and 22 other counties in Florida are reporting an increase in influenza activity.”

DANGERS

Flu is nothing to sneeze at. The virus can be mild, but it often hits hard with fever, cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose, muscle aches, vomiting and diarrhea.

Flu can be fatal, especially in children, senior citizens and those with weaker immune systems.

The most common flu bug this year is the H1N1 virus that caused an outbreak in 2009. Federal figures show

that the virus is affecting adults of age 18 to 64 more than usual – with high impact on pregnant women.

STEPS

Vaccination – There is still time to benefit from a flu shot or the inhaled flu vaccine. Your doctor and retail outlets are the best source.

Everyday precautions – Covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough helps stop the virus from spreading through the air. Washing your hands often can stop the spread of germs on surfaces. Hand-sanitizing gels can help, but are not as effective as soap and water, especially if hands are dirty or greasy.

Stay home when sick – Don’t go out and spread the virus, and avoid others who are sick. If you do get sick, take anti-viral medicine if your doctor feels it will help you.

More information, visit www.browardchd.org or call 954-467-4700.

Edited from an article submitted by Bob LaMendola, a representative of the Florida Department of Health in Broward County.



PAHO wants Caribbean to control growing tobacco ‘epidemic’

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is urging Caribbean countries to speed up the adaption of laws to control the tobacco “epidemic,” saying that, despite progress in the countries of the Americas, the epidemic continues to grow.

In a new report, PAHO, the regional office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO), said applying at least six measures could help prevent one million deaths annually. The measures comprise large, graphic health warnings on tobacco packaging that effectively inform consumers.

They include protecting young people from aggressive tobacco industry marketing; banning all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; monitor use of tobacco products; protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke; offer help to quit smoking; and raise taxes on tobacco products.

“These are the six practical, affordable, and achievable measures recommended by WHO to help countries implement specific measures in the Convention,” PAHO said.

The “Report on Tobacco Control in the Region of the Americas 2013”, summarizes progress in the implementation of the WHO Framework



Rising hazard.

Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first international public health treaty, which entered into force in 2005.

In the Americas, PAHO said 29 of 35 countries are parties to the treaty, which obliges its States Parties to apply a series of policies and measures to reduce tobacco consumption and protect their populations from second-hand smoke.

- Edited from CMC.



SPRING TRAVEL



U.S. agencies launch travel partnership with Caribbean

ST. THOMAS – A number of United States agencies have collaborated with Caribbean countries in launching a partnership aimed at raising public awareness about the risks associated with passengers potentially introducing pests and diseases into the U.S. and the Caribbean by carrying agricultural and food items in their luggage.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency said late last month that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have joined the Caribbean in the initiative.

In announcing the implementation of the international “Travelers Don’t Pack a Pest” program, the CBP said the U.S. Virgin Islands have joined Puerto Rico and Jamaica as locations in the Caribbean to partner in the initiative.

PROTECTION

“The Travelers Don’t Pack a Pest program was conceived to extend the protection of Florida’s food supply and environment to our Caribbean neighbors and beyond,” said Richard Gaskalla, Florida

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Plant Industry Division director.



“We are bringing information to all our constituents and partners because we want them to work closely with us,” said Leyinska Wiscovitch, from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

CBP said thousands of pounds of agricultural produce are confiscated at ports of entry from passengers on a daily basis, adding that some travelers are not aware these items are prohibited, while some knowingly attempt to bring in prohibited items.

“Agriculture inspections are a crucial part of the inspec-

tion process for items entering into the country,” said Marcelino Borges, director of Field Operations for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. “A single dangerous pest could cause millions of dollars of damage to our nation’s crops.”

THREAT

Borges said these undeclared items pose a “serious threat to our food and natural resources as exotic invasive pests can enter through this pathway and become established, causing millions of dollars to manage or eradicate.”

In addition, he said, “these unwanted invaders can result in loss of export markets due to quarantines and can negatively impact natural areas.”

CBP said if travelers know ahead of time what they can and cannot take in their baggage, they will avoid possible fines, as well as avoid having the items confiscated.

“The focus of this creative agricultural protection outreach program in Florida and Puerto Rico is very appropriate as both are linked as high risk areas vulnerable to new pest introductions through trade and tourism,” it said in a

statement.

CBP said the “Travelers Don’t Pack a Pest” program includes airing a 60-second video and the placement of signs at strategic areas in major airports and cruise ship ports, along with distribution of other public education materials to

the traveling public.

CBP said these program elements deliver a simple message: “When you travel, declare agriculture items, Don’t Pack a Pest.”



Arts, entertainment focus for Barbados in 2014

Barbados is continuing to showcase a variety of attractions, featuring music, performing arts and film festivals and sports, in 2014.

Below is a listing of upcoming attractions on the Caribbean island:

Holders Season – Mar. 22 to April 5 - Barbados’s season of operas, classical, jazz, Latin and Caribbean music in the open air gardens of historic Holders Plantation House. Visit www.holdersseason.org.

24th Barbados International Game Fishing Tournament – April 9-13

Anglers from Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada, North and South America compete with those in the Caribbean to catch blue marlin, yellow fin tuna and

wahoo. Visit www.barbados-gamefishing.com.

Oistins Fish Festival – April 19-21 - Held in the fishing town of Oistins on Barbados’s southern coast. Visitors can expect live calypso and reggae music, craft fairs, family games and stalls selling seafood dishes. Events include the fish boning tournament, boat races and grease-pole competition.

Reggae Festival – April 21-28 - The festival celebrates the history and culture of reggae in Barbados. Visit www.thebarbadosreggaefestival.com.

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Big growth prediction for PortMiami and MIA

International trade and commerce, a powerful economic driver for Miami-Dade County in Florida, will continue to grow in 2014, according to Bill Johnson, director of PortMiami, and Emilio González, director of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department.

In their presentations at the World Trade Center Miami's (WTCM) 27th annual State-of-the-Ports briefing last month, Johnson and González highlighted recent accomplishments at the seaport and Miami International Airport (MIA), and predicted another strong year for international trade and passenger traffic in 2014.

Johnson noted that PortMiami has \$2 billion in infrastructure improvements underway, and noted that the "deep dredge" of the port now

underway will enable fully loaded "panama" vessels to transit the wider Panama Canal and unload at PortMiami.

"We will be the closest U.S. port to the canal and the only one south of Norfolk with that capability," he said.

ADDED SERVICES

Other projects include the re-opening of Florida East Coast Railway service to the port and the scheduled May 19 opening of the Miami Access Tunnel, which will allow trucks and buses to reach I-95 without going through downtown or facing a single stop-light.

"While cargo volume was flat in 2013 at just under one million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units), we anticipate steady growth in the second half of the decade," Johnson



Johnson

said.

In the cruise sector, PortMiami surpassed four million passengers and believes it is headed for a record year.

"The world's busiest cruise port is getting busier and will approach five million

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

TRANSPORTATION TALKS



- Photograph by Michael Matthews.

Representatives of Jamaica and the United States-based company Laparkan Trading met last month to discuss issues of cargo and port security, customs procedures and barriers to trade, including the importation into Florida of agricultural produce from the Caribbean.

Among those representing Laparkan were, from left, Glen Khan, chairman, and Wesley Kirton, corporate manager for marketing and external relations. They were joined by Franz Hall, right, Jamaica's consul general. A team from the Jamaica Consulate visited Laparkan's corporate office and main warehouse for a working lunch with company executives.

Laparkan's plans to introduce air cargo service to Jamaica and use the country as a hub for reconsolidation and transport of ocean cargo from the United States destined to the smaller Caribbean countries.

LAUNCHING PAD: Caribbean projected among winners of enlarged Panama Canal

DAVID JESSOP

LONDON, England - In the last few years, almost every significant Caribbean country has announced that they are upgrading their port facilities and preparing to compete to attract the larger Post-Panamax vessels that from some time in 2015 will be transiting an enlarged Panama Canal.

Such is the opportunity, given the Caribbean's strategic location at the cross roads of north-south and east-west trade, and its numerous existing or new locations for deep-water ports, that Jamaica, Martinique, Cuba, Trinidad, The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic have all made clear that with the support of one or another foreign investor, port development will become critical to future growth.

However, what is still far from certain is whether there is enough opportunity for all of the existing or proposed super ports, hubs, and manufacturing and trans-shipment zones to succeed.

Viewed from another perspective, the more one speaks to experts, the less clear it is whether the winners will be those who have made an early start; those that are encouraging investment in co-located assembly, manufacturing and services, as well as trans-shipment; or those who have internationally respected marketing partners or shipping lines that can ensure success. This is not to argue that any particular proposal is unviable, but to suggest that these



Panama Canal

are among the factors, along with competitive rates, high levels of productivity, and a straightforward regulatory environment, that will enable the Caribbean to take advantage of its physical location.

VIABILITY

The issue of viability is far from simple as there are also other factors at play, including the deepening and enlargement of a number of already competitive United States east coast ports; vast 'capesize' vessels now being constructed by major shipping lines like Maersk that will, as their name suggests, sail far to the south and not pass through the Caribbean; plans for new trans-American rail links; and the possibility of a new Chinese financed canal across Nicaragua.

Which is to say little about possible delays to investment in the Caribbean and other parts of the world as a result of structural changes in China's economy as it starts to address its own financial and

economic problems by restricting credit for overseas investments.

This suggests that the most likely long-term winners may be Jamaica and Cuba, for very different reasons, plus The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, which already have an established business and the benefit respectively of Hutchison Wamphoa and Dubai Ports as

operators.

It seems also to point to success for those ports further south, like Curacao, that are seeking niches in ship repair and are known to be efficient, and proposals such as those in relatively embryonic form in Guyana and Suriname for ports linked to opening up parts of Brazil.

Although Jamaica has come late to the party, its geographic location, virgin deep-water site and its plans to become a logistics hub suggest success if it can mobilize the investment necessary to develop a related manufacturing base and ensure that that Jamaicans benefit from employment, not just in the construction phase, but from all subsequent economic activity. Cuba's new port at Mariel is another interesting example of forward thinking.

CUBA'S EDGE

Because of the restrictions on trade as a result of the

United States embargo, the creation of the development zone around it is potentially far more important. In the 180 square miles surrounding the port of Mariel, Cuba plans not just to encourage foreign owned high-tech assembly and manufacturing – the large Chinese car company Geely International is interested in an assembly operation there – but also sees the site, and others planned elsewhere, as locations for joint ventures in research and services; as a new quasi-offshore home for overseas investment in leisure facilities and villas; and has established preferential tax laws relating for operations in such zones.

It is probably also no coincidence that the first vessel to unload its cargo in Mariel was a U.S. flag carrier with a cargo of food from the U.S. being sold under license; an indication of what one day Mariel might become, given (CONTINUED ON PAGE 24)

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PortMiami, POMTOC sign 15-year operating pact

A new operating agreement between PortMiami and the Port of Miami Operating Company L.C. (POMTOC) was approved by the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners.

The agreement provides over the life of the contract more than \$225 million in guaranteed revenues.

"This agreement benefits both the South Florida shipping community and the people of Miami-Dade County," said Carlos J. Arocha, POMTOC's chief operating officer.

"We are excited about future opportunities and focusing on a combined effort with PortMiami to substantially improve Miami's status as the 'Gateway to Latin America'. We look forward to capitalizing on the substantial new and exciting port improvements, including the soon to be completed port tunnel, the re-introduction of freight rail service and deepening of the port's channel."

LAST DEAL

PortMiami Director Bill Johnson said the POMTOC

agreement concludes the last pending long-term agreement for PortMiami's cargo business.

"POMTOC has been a valued PortMiami partner since 1994 with longstanding ties to the local shipping community," Johnson said.

"We are pleased that the new operating agreement extends the POMTOC contract for another 15 years with two five year options."

PortMiami is among the busiest ports in the United States.



LAUNCHING PAD: Caribbean projected among winners of enlarged Panama Canal

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23)

its location just 28 miles from Havana and 240 miles from Miami.

OUTWARDS

Port development requires the Caribbean to look outwards, make use of natural advantage on globally competitive terms and be future proofed for at least 20 to 30 years.

In the longer term, the nature of future development and investment will be different as machines begin to take over many everyday tasks, making even the most productive low cost and unskilled laborless relevant. Already many of the activities in the most efficient container ports are computerized. This means that what is required is for a port to be seen either, as is the case in Cuba and Jamaica, as a way of stimulating use of the country as an offshore location for everything from manufacturing to research and services, or in very different ways, such as Guyana and Suriname which see their future port development as

opening up opportunity for others; in their case Brazil and China.

Put another way, port development, if well considered, conforms to a model that recognizes the limitations of the Caribbean's size, resource and geography, does not look back, eschews aspects of sovereignty, accepts globalization, and pragmatically accepts that the Caribbean's future role is as a facilitator for others, whether they be tourists or socially responsible multinationals.

This is a message that much of the region's private sector and particularly small island governments have yet to embrace. It implies that the Caribbean economy of the future has to be less protectionist and defensive, become skills and knowledge based, and relentlessly focus on education at tertiary and higher levels, to build skills for tomorrow.

Edited from News Americas. David Jessop is director of the Caribbean Council.



Big growth prediction for PortMiami and MIA

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23)

passengers in 2014," Johnson said.

Miami-Dade's aviation sector recorded four straight years of record passenger traffic, including 40.5 million air travelers in 2013.

TOP PORT

González noted that MIA is now the number one U.S. airport for international flights and international air freight.

In addition, 70 percent of Florida's international visitors and 97 percent of Florida's total air trade, by value, comes through MIA. MIA also recorded an increase of 2.11 million tons in cargo volume.

During 2013, MIA added seven new international routes and a new carrier, XL Airways of France, González said. This year, MIA will have new flights to Brussels and in June Qatar Airways will begin Florida's only direct service to

the Middle East. Four other air carriers are expected to launch service through MIA later this year.

Other infrastructure improvements at MIA include automated passport control kiosks that cut immigration wait times for United States citizens, renovations to the military hospitality lounge and the MIA Hotel lobby and lounge, González said.





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