



NEWSLETTER

The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

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**Press Statement by The Honourable Dr. L. Errol Cort,
Minister of Finance and the Economy:
CURRENT STATUS OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA'S
WTO CASE AGAINST THE UNITED STATES**

4th April 2006

"Almost exactly a year ago, the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) found the United States in violation of its commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services with respect to its prohibition on the provision of cross-border gambling and betting services from Antigua and Barbuda to consumers in the United States.

After a lengthy and contentious process, the WTO gave the United States until Tuesday, 3 April 2006, to bring its laws into compliance with the rulings of the DSB in our case.

The deadline has come and passed and the United States has made no effort towards compliance. The only laws introduced into the United States Congress in recent months would, in fact, further entrench the discriminatory nature of the United States' approach to cross-border gambling and betting services.

The United States Trade Representative has rebuffed every offer Antigua and Barbuda has made to engage the United States in an attempt to work out a reasonable resolution of this dispute. It is not just that discussions have proven difficult; it is simply that the United States has refused to discuss any compromise or settlement at all.

It is ironic that at this point in time when the United States is upbraiding other WTO nations for failing to meet their obligations under WTO agreements and failing to act as "responsible stakeholders" in international trade matters, the very same United States government would treat its own WTO obligations to Antigua and Barbuda with such scant regard.

As a member of the World Trade Organisation, Antigua and Barbuda agreed to abide by the rules and decisions of this esteemed body and, we expect that all other members would do likewise, irrespective of size and/or wealth.

While the United States flaunts the decision of the WTO in our case and attempts to shore up its own domestic monopoly on gambling and betting services, Antigua and Barbuda wants to point out that we have a highly regulated gaming industry in our country. We have and maintain strict laws that protect the integrity of the services provided from our shores; we prevent underage gaming and lock out this country's services from money laundering and other criminal activity.

We have offered to engage in co-regulation with the United States and to limit our gaming sector until the United States could observe and evaluate the effectiveness of our regulations. We have, in fact, agreed to work with the United States in any regard to ensure the safety of the services our providers offer to US consumers.

Regrettably, all of our offers have been not just rejected, but ignored.

It, no doubt, will be extremely challenging for our very small island state to effectively retaliate against this internationally unlawful conduct of the United States, but we remain resolute in our quest to fully enforce our international trading rights, thereby protecting and further enhancing the economic opportunities for our citizens and residents and also providing that needed level of economic diversification within the global competitive environment.

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Minister of Finance and the Economy,
Dr Errol Cort

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A MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY DR CARL ROBERTS, HIGH COMMISSIONER



My Dear Readers,

Easter is a time of much reflection as we remember the life, work, suffering, death and resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Let me therefore on behalf of my family, the staff of the High Commission and on my own behalf wish each of you a Blessed Easter and trust that the short time away from work will be well spent in your personal reflections.

The work at the Mission is intensifying as we strive to revise our strategies for our main industry, Tourism and strengthen our initiatives in many other areas which we believe will enhance the prosperity to our nation and bring about a better quality of life of our fellow citizens. This may result in some changes in our operations and/or personnel but rest assured that our every intention is for the prosperity of our beloved homeland.

As we reflect let us also remember those institutions which have helped the development of the Antigua and Barbuda which we have come to love today. Among these is a religious institution whose history in Antigua and Barbuda is nearly as rich as

our Nation's. I speak of the Moravian Church which this year celebrates its 250th anniversary in our state.

The Moravians first came to Antigua and Barbuda in 1756 out of a desire to "take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all oppressed peoples" [www.moravians.faithweb.com]. They did not stop at preaching about Jesus only but took on the arduous task of educating the slaves especially once freed. Their accomplishment of this was evidenced by their recognition as being the "first organised religious bodies to establish primary and secondary schools for slaves in the West Indies". [op.cit]

Many of you will remember the Moravian Schools in Antigua and the Teachers Training College at Spring Gardens. As a young boy I received my first education at the Moravian School and can readily remember such stalwart educators as Teacher Madge or Ms. Tanner.

Though the Church is not as active in education these days, we must take time out to remember it for what it has done. It was a selfless example of missionary work which did not limit itself to the Gospel.

The Church today is still vibrant in Antigua and Barbuda and its members, coming from all walks of life, continue to make their contribution to the development of our nation. May we all join in showing our sincere appreciation for the rich heritage of the Moravian Church and in praying that our Sovereign Lord continues to bless its membership so that the work of the Church universal can and will continue.

It is quite fitting that we take time to remember such institutions especially in this our 25th year of Independence. Going forward we will need many more contributors in our society to help us to mould the generations of tomorrow. Let us therefore pledge our united efforts to develop the necessary strategies to give hope and meaning to our fellow citizens especially the young, to look to God for guidance and to obey his command to love our neighbours as ourselves. Have a Blessed Easter.

**Dr Carl Roberts
High Commissioner**

Government files Suit against former Prime Minister Bird and eight defendants to account for millions

On 1st March, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Justin L. Simon QC, announced that he has filed a claim in the High Court by the Government against nine defendants including the former Prime Minister Lester Bryant Bird, the former Minister of Finance John E. St. Luce, Opposition Member of Parliament Asot Michael, former Ambassador to Israel and Russia and West Indies Oil Co. principal Bruce Rappaport and five companies two of which are associated with Mr. Asot Michael and the other three with Mr. Bruce Rappaport.

The claim is asking for an account of monies alleged to have been misappropriated from the government's account formerly at Swiss American National Bank and latterly at Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank, special damages in the sum of US\$41,414,904.00 and general damages for misrepresentation and misfeasance in public office.

We reproduce in full the text of the Attorney General's Statement:

"Against the background of the present headlines today, I wish to inform the general public that last week Monday the 20th day of February 2006, a claim was filed in the High Court by the Government against nine defendants including the former Prime Minister Lester Bryant Bird, the former Minister of Finance John E. St. Luce, Opposition Member of Parliament Asot Michael, former Ambassador to Israel and Russia and West Indies Oil Co. principal Bruce Rappaport and five companies two of which are associated with Mr. Asot

Michael and the other three with Mr. Bruce Rappaport.

The claim is in the main asking for an account of monies alleged to have been misappropriated from the government's account formerly at Swiss American National Bank and latterly at Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank, special damages in the sum of US\$41,414,904.00 and general damages for misrepresentation and misfeasance in public office.

This claim has been filed as a result of investigations conducted by Mr. Bob Lindquist who you will recall was appointed in the latter part of 2004 by this Administration to investigate certain questionable financial transactions conducted or executed by Ministers and other public officials in the last administration.

Allow me to briefly explain the basis of this High Court claim.

In October 1984 the Government and APUA contracted with a Japanese company "IHI" for the construction of the Crabbs desalination and Power Plant at a cost of US\$33 million. 85% of the cost or US\$ 29,750,000.00 was to be financed by IHI the Japanese company and repaid by Government under a guarantee at 8% interest over a period of ten years from November 1986 to May 1997. The total amount that Government would have had to pay over that ten-year period was US\$42, 245, 000.00.

Government fell behind in its repayment of that debt along with its repayment on two other debts: one to Foster Wheeler in relation to the desalination plant and the other to Credit Suisse in respect to the expansion of Halcyon Cove Hotel.

In March 1990 Government appointed Bruce Rappaport to negotiate the three outstanding debts on its behalf

and to obtain better repayment terms. That was done and Credit Suisse and Foster Wheeler debts were subsequently paid in full. Government however again fell behind with the IHI debt repayment arrangements.

In November 1996 Government authorized Bruce Rappaport to again renegotiate the IHI debt to allow for repayment within an extended period of at least twenty years. Mr. Rappaport subsequently reported that he had reached an agreement with IHI to repay the debt by monthly payments of US\$403, 334.00 over 25 years beginning December 31, 1996 until November 2021. An Agreement was signed on September 11 1997 on behalf of the Government by Lester Bird and John St. Luce to pay the monthly sum of US\$403,334.00 for the next 25 years to Mr. Rappaport's company in Bermuda, IHI Debt Settlement Co. Ltd., for onward payment to IHI. The monthly sum was to be paid from the consumption tax revenue paid to Government by West Indies Oil Company in respect of the sale of petroleum products. At that time WIOC was enjoying a monopoly on the importation of petroleum products into Antigua along with concessions, which were to expire in April 2001. Government then agreed to an extension of all rights, privileges, and concessions that had previously been granted to WIOC for a further 20 years to April 2021 – the very year that debt payments to IHI would end.

From September 1997 the Financial Secretary began questioning Government's arrangement with Mr. Rappaport but got no answers. He did his own calculations and concluded that the total debt figure as stated by Mr. Rappaport was highly inflated. He advised the Minister of Finance that

“under the circumstances therefore we cannot recommend signing of the agreement as the difference is too great.” In February 1999 in response to queries from APUA’s external auditors and senior accountant, IHI informed APUA that debt payment arrangement that they had reached with Mr. Rappaport was a reduced monthly payment by Government of US\$199,740.25 for 25 years commencing September 1997.

I remind you that Rappaport had advised and obtained from Government the monthly sum of US\$403,334.00 from December 1996 --- an excess monthly amount of US\$203,594.00. Further, Government’s monthly payments began in December 1996 while IHI stated that monthly payments were to begin in September 1997 and end in August 2022.

In June and again in August of 1999 the Financial Secretary sought an explanation from Bruce Rappaport for this great discrepancy and appealed to Lester Bird and Asot Michael. By letter dated November 3, 1999 Bruce Rappaport advised Lester Bird that out of the monthly payment of US\$403,334.00:

- US\$199,740.25 went to IHI for the debt repayment
- US\$133,837.14 was his monthly fee for settling the debts of Credit Suisse & Foster Wheeler
- US\$56,333.00 was his monthly costs for settling the IHI debt; and
- US\$13,244.00 was his “monthly success fee”

He further advised that as of February 1, 2001 Government could reduce its monthly payment from US\$403,334.00 to US\$269,317.00. Just like that! No explanations were given

and none was sought. The monthly excess payment was in 2001 reduced from US\$203,594.00 to US\$69,576.75, and that payment has continued until last month. We have estimated that Mr. Rappaport collected between December 1996 and January 2006 an amount of US\$14,414,904.00 in excess of the payments made to IHI to repay Government’s debt.

Where did that money go?

The payments were made from Antigua to Mr. Rappaport’s company’s account in a bank in Bermuda and later to a bank in Miami by way of a standing order given by Government firstly to Swiss American Bank and then to ABIB. The standing order could only be revoked or changed by the joint signature of Government and Mr. Rappaport. From the investigation it appears that some of the excess payments went to a Bermuda bank account of Bellwood Services, S.A. a Panamanian company whose directors are Asot Michael and his mother Josette Michael. And that from that account, monies were paid to the Antigua Labour Party, to Ron L. Lester, the ALP’s pollster, to the bank account of Patrick A. Michael Ltd., in Antigua, to a Florida company Giddie Ltd., and to Asot Michael personally, to name a few of the beneficiaries.

Finally, in May 2005 Mr. Rappaport’s company opened accounts at Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank into which it deposited the aggregate sum of US\$1,500,000.00, and from June 2005 the monthly excess payment amount of US\$69,500.00. These monies had been transferred from its account at the Miami bank.

Last week Tuesday I obtained an Injunction against Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank preventing the bank from transmitting any monies from the Government’s account; and from any of the Rappaport companies’ accounts on the instruction of any of the account holders or

their agents. That is the extent of ABIB’s involvement in the situation. On Thursday last week we obtained in Miami an Injunction against Mr. Rappaport’s companies and the Miami bank preventing disposal of any of the payments received from Government.

The investigation has been time consuming. The defendants are entitled to file their defence and to their day in court. The wheels of justice must now be allowed to take its course. For the time being no further statements will be made by Government on this matter.

The investigative attention of Mr. Lindquist will now be focused on the financial transactions of the Antigua and Barbuda International Ships Registry.

Hon. Justin L. Simon QC
Attorney General and Ministry of
Legal Affairs

March 1, 2006



Antigua and Barbuda and Spain to strengthen relations

On March 1 Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer welcomed the Spanish Ambassador Jesus Silva to Antigua and Barbuda for wide-ranging discussions.

Ambassador Silva during the deliberations explained that Spain was seeking to strengthen relations with CARICOM countries at this time. He pointed out that the

European Union/Latin America Caribbean Summit will be held in early May in Vienna, and that Spain was inviting CARICOM Heads of State to Spain at that time.

Ambassador Silva also revealed that in 2008, the International exhibition will be held in Zaragoza, Spain and he urged Antigua and Barbuda and CARICOM to use this opportunity to showcase the region especially in tourism. He said that it would also be an opportunity for political dialogue and to attract foreign investment.

Prime Minister Spencer welcomed Spain's initiatives and pointed to specific areas of cooperation for consideration. He mentioned that water was the theme of Expo 2008, and that Antigua and Barbuda would seek cooperation with Spain in water related projects.

Both men also discussed the promotion of Spanish as a language, and the possibilities for language instructors, both in schools and through exchange programmes. PM Spencer also elaborated on the CSME and the OECS.

Civil Registry soon to be computerized

The modernization of the Civil Registry has become a reality as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, through its Secretariat for Political Affairs and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda took place on Thursday, 9th March at the Headquarters of the Ministry of Justice on Parliament Drive.

The Memorandum of Understanding is intended for the implementation of a Cooperative

Agreement between the two parties, setting out the terms and conditions governing an OAS Technical Assistance Project to computerize Births, Deaths, Marriages and other Records at the Government's Civil Registry, and for the Provision of Advisory Services and/or Technical Assistance at the Government's Electoral Office.

According to Justice Minister Colin Derrick, the strengthening and modernizing of the Civil Registry further advances the Sunshine Government's pledge in its Manifesto, "Agenda For Change," to 'develop a comprehensive e-government platform to provide the population with easier access to government information and services, and to generally increase the efficiency of interactions between the government and its citizens,' and more particularly to 'computerize all government departments to ensure technology infrastructure remain at the leading edge and can deliver reliable government services at the lowest cost.'

The Manifesto also states that the UPP government would 'utilize computerized technology to provide secure, efficient and cost effective record keeping and retrieval.'

Antigua and Barbuda was recently selected as a Pilot and Demonstration Site to showcase the benefits of an integrated land administration and tax system, with the focus on affordable and measurable results. Consequently, significant progress has been made in the modernization and management of the Land Registry in the Ministry of Justice, and Land and Surveys Department, Ministry of Agriculture. This was made possible through an alliance established with Stewart Information International (SII) and the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development, Organization of American States.



IGWG pleased with ICC positive rating of Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium

Coordinator of the Inter-Governmental Working Group for Cricket World Cup 2007, Ambassador Sir David Shoul, has expressed great pleasure in the positive ratings given by the members of the International Cricket Council who recently made a visit to the construction site of the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

A five-member team from the ICC — comprising ICC Venue Consultant Professor Eugene van Vuuren; ICC Pitch and Field Consultant Andy Atkinson, Global Cricket Corporation Broadcast Manager Rick Jemison; ICC CWC 2007 Sports Agronomy Team Co-ordinator Professor Jeff Artherton and Chief Operations Officer and Venue Development Director of ICC CWC 2007 Don Lockerbie — recently declared that the construction of the facility was well on schedule, while making a tour of the stadium at North Sound as part of the 5th ICC Venue Tour.

The ICC team met with Co-ordinator of the Inter-Governmental Working Group Ambassador Shoul; CEO and Managing Director of World Cup Antigua Inc. George Goodwin; Venue Development Co-ordinator of World Cup Antigua Inc. Sheon Samuel, other members of the World Cup Antigua Inc. and the ground staff at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

"All of the various bodies responsible for the successful completion of the stadium have been working tirelessly in ensuring that we meet all of the deadlines set by the ICC and ourselves. The construction



North Stand under construction

talks quite a few months ago that we were concerned about the pace of the stadium and the negotiations with the Peoples Republic of China and the LOC has worked tirelessly to move beyond that. We are happy to say that reports are all favourable," he said.

more under current arrangements, its basic elements are similar to those proposed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works, Transportation and the Environment Wilmoth Daniel, who called for the establishment of such a fund during his address to the Ministerial segment of the thirteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2005.

team from CCECC has been remarkable in their efforts to complete the job on time," said Ambassador Shoul.

Ambassador Shoul who was recently a part of a two man delegation to Trinidad to negotiate the supply of cement for the stadium said that a large amount of the credit for the successes being achieved at the stadium must go to the resident Chinese Ambassador Madam Ren Xioping whom he said has been very instrumental in ensuring that the various deadlines are met by the Chinese team.

During the tour of the facility, Venue Development Director of ICC CWC 2007 Don Lockerbie said the ICC officials are very satisfied with the progress that has been made thus far with the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, which is being built by Chinese workers on a grant from the Peoples Republic of China to the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda.

"It is my second visit within the last three weeks and I can honestly say that the amount of progress that we are seeing in the stadium is excellent. The amount of work to date is on time and to target. The ICC and the Cricket World Cup 2007 organising committee are very satisfied with what they are seeing here today," Lockerbie said.

"There is no doubt about the history of the stadium and there were

Antigua and Barbuda and the region stand to benefit from United Nations disaster relief fund

Antigua and Barbuda and countries in the region stand to benefit from the landmark US\$500 million fund launched by the United Nations recently. The Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) is designed to jump-start relief operations in future natural and man-made disasters and save thousands of lives that would otherwise be lost to delay under the current under-funded mechanism.

"It is indeed an increasingly rare event at the United Nations to see both rich and poor countries pledging increasingly scarce resources for humanitarian causes, before a major catastrophe has occurred," said Ambassador Dr. John W. Ashe, Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United Nations. "And I am particularly pleased to see that, to date, some 36 countries have pledged \$256 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which is more than half of the initial target of the fund" he said.

While the CERF was a key reform sought by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to ensure swifter responses to humanitarian emergencies, with adequate funds made available within three to four days as opposed to up to four months or

Mr Annan said that "The CERF will provide a ready pool of resources that better empower the United Nations in funding immediate relief efforts in the aftermath of disasters...[and] for the international community, the CERF is not simply a fund; it is a statement of principle. It is a statement that in a world of plenty, unnecessary and avoidable suffering is inexcusable. It is a statement that suffering anywhere is a threat to humanity everywhere."

UN officials have indicated that plans are already underway to make the first disbursements from the Fund, with the two first allocations going to the Horn of Africa and Kenya drought, and to Côte d'Ivoire for humanitarian work and the civilian population.

Also at the launch, speakers from over 60 Member States, many of them representing states or regions that are frequently hit by natural disasters, warmly welcomed the setting up of the CERF, emphasizing how important it was to get rapid assistance to emergency situations and the critical need for funds.

The Caribbean region was represented by Dr. Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, who reminded the audience of the recent experiences within his own country

which was devastated by two successive hurricanes in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

"The Caribbean is among the regions in the world most vulnerable to natural disasters. The survival of our economies is dependent on the frequency and magnitude of these events. Together, we have an estimated population of 15.6 million inhabitants and a 2004 estimated GDP of US\$39,580 million... [Despite this] several decades of progress can be wiped out in a matter of hours, as was evident when Hurricane Ivan hit Grenada in 2004, resulting in catastrophic damage to the island," he said.

Ambassador Dr. John Ashe said that the Fund would be overseen by the UN Office for the Coordination Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which plans to allocate up to two thirds of the funds to rapid response measures, with the other one third devoted to addressing under-funded emergencies.

"In his role as manager of the Fund, on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, the head of OCHA will be guided by an Advisory Group of 12 independent experts. The general public will be able to keep track of how and where the money is being spent by means of a dedicated CERF website," Dr Ashe outlined.



RDI expands base in Antigua and Barbuda

Regional Country Directors and Strategic Business Partners convened in Antigua from March 10-13 for the first Regional Resource Development International (RDI) meeting.

At this meeting a strategic plan outlining "The Way Forward" in light of the CSME and in support of RDI's educational mission within the region was developed.

An official opening of the Local Resource Centre was held on Sunday 12th March 2006 at College Corner, Golden Grove.

The highlight of this activity was the presentation of the University of Leicester Certificate and Diploma in Management to Mr Collie Christopher and Mrs. Cheryl Whyte, respectively. Both have reached yet another milestone through "Distance Learning Education" and this according to Ms. Cleo Henry, the Country Director, is a true exhibit of the invaluable educational and developmental benefits, which can be accrued to our people, and, by extension, to the Nation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Resource Development International (RDI) is an international organization providing professional pathways through education and learning programmes for the development of people and organizations worldwide.

Currently RDI operates in numerous countries and already serves a substantial number of students in the Caribbean area including Antigua and Barbuda.

RDI works in partnership with local, regional and international partners with renowned British Universities and professional bodies, in order to deliver internationally recognized and accredited business and management education, by flexible methods, which include distance-learning programmes of the highest quality.

RDI can be assessed via the World Wide Web at www.rdi.co.uk

Probation Officer says services needed in Barbuda

Head of the Antigua and Barbuda's Probation Office, Mrs Junie Ruddy, recently completed a tour of duty on Barbuda.

Mrs Ruddy travelled to Codrington from the 6th – 9th March and said that her visit was two-fold. "My main purpose was to attend court, which was sitting at the time, in addition I met with council members to see what are their requirements of Probation", she explained.

According to Mrs Ruddy, from the meeting with the Barbuda Council Members she was able to ascertain that there is a great need for social services on the island and specifically the need for Probation Officers. According to her, Barbuda requires a full time Probation Officer for the programme to be effective.

While attending Court in Barbuda, she outlined that the Magistrate had requested that three juveniles cases be placed into her care. These cases are expected to come up for hearing at the next sitting in June.

Meantime, Ruddy explained that the services of the unit are being fully utilized and the Courts appear to be gaining further confidence in the system.

According to the Head of the unit, there are plans to host a Community Service Order workshop later this year and will involve all stakeholders involved in community service.



Ambassador Colin Murdoch

OECS representatives discuss maritime issues at meeting in St. Lucia

On 15th March representatives from OECS member states met in St. Lucia for a one-day consultation on the maritime boundary delimitation problems of the sub-regional grouping.

Representatives of the member states joined and had consultations with experts on maritime boundary delimitation issues. Representatives of the Canadian government were a part of the consultations and will consider a request for technical assistance.

Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented Antigua and Barbuda.

Director-General of the OECS, Dr. Len Ishmael, highlighted in her opening statement that maritime boundary delimitation issues had always been high on the agenda of the OECS Authority; and that as early as the second meeting of the Authority in 1982, the OECS heads of government had taken strategic decisions relating to the various maritime issues facing the

member states. Dr. Ishmael indicated that, in her view, what had been lacking was the consistent focus of the heads of government and the technical advice to support decision-making.

Also at the head table and speaking at the opening ceremony was Canadian High Commissioner to the OECS member states, Michael Welsh. The Canadian diplomat emphasized that Canada had a strategic and longstanding interest in global ocean governance, and that Canada recognized that there were issues to be resolved in the Eastern Caribbean. He pointed out that the Canadian government was willing to be helpful in assisting the OECS to assess the various options.

“It must be recognized that all OECS members are essentially maritime states, with maritime areas many times the size of their land areas,” stated Ambassador Murdoch. “It is vitally important for all of us to recognize and defend the territorial integrity of the OECS. Our borders are maritime borders, and we must prevent encroachment and avoid disadvantageous situations developing.” Murdoch pointed out that the maritime boundary delimitation situation in the Caribbean was very complicated.

Ambassador Murdoch further stated that under the UN Law of the Sea Convention, Antigua and Barbuda was an archipelagic state and that large maritime areas fell under Antigua and Barbuda’s jurisdiction. He said that it was in Antigua and Barbuda’s interest to defend its rights vigorously in relation to maritime claims.

One of the issues on the meeting’s agenda was the question of the Bird Rock, a large rock in the Eastern Caribbean Sea not far from Montserrat and Dominica over which Venezuela claims sovereignty. OECS member states contend that Venezuela uses its claim to Bird Rock to justify large areas of

Venezuelan jurisdiction in the Caribbean Sea.

The feature presentation at the one-day consultation was an address by Professor Ian Townsend-Gault, a Canadian expert in maritime boundary delimitation matters who was made available through the government of Canada.

The consultation will formulate proposals that will be considered by the OECS heads of government when they meet at the next OECS Authority meeting in June of this year in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Mill Reef Club donates library to Freetown Primary School

With the opening of a new Library on Thursday, 17th March, students at the Freetown Primary School are now better able to expand their knowledge through reading and research.

The library, which is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Education and the Mill Reef Club, is stocked with a wide variety of books geared at preparing the students for life’s challenges.

Annie McCabe and Sloan Simmons members of the Mill Reef, who were most instrumental in getting the over 2000 books and the furnishing for the library, looked at the venture as one of great importance since it will assist in the development of students within the area.

In a brief ceremony Zone Officer Iona George and Language Art Coordinator Glenford Joseph

Encouraged the students to utilize the facility and to read as much as they can since it is through reading that they will excel in life. They were also charged with the responsibility of taking care of the library.

The Mill Reef Club has on a number of occasions contributed to the Freetown Community, and according to a member of the Parent/Teacher Association Verdaline Parker, this latest gesture has further cemented the relationship developed between the Club and the community.

The Ministry of Education and the Freetown Community thanked the Mill Reef Club and expressed the desire for other private businesses to make similar contributions to schools throughout Antigua and Barbuda.

Commonwealth to assign ICT Expert to Antigua and Barbuda

Minister responsible for Information Technology Dr Edmond Mansoor has announced that the Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat has agreed to assign an ICT Expert to Antigua and Barbuda for two years.

Dr. Mansoor outlined that the ICT Expert will assist the government in creating a new ICT landscape and will be responsible for conducting national surveys to determine e-readiness usage, coordinating cross functional government projects to bridge the digital divide and also provide specialized training.

The Information Minister further pointed out that the expert will also assist government with developing and monitoring ICT awareness

communication plans and provide project development, systems management and support services to the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Telecommunications.

“The government is committed to ensuring that we develop a fully digital society that is exposed to the latest technology and we are delighted that the Commonwealth Secretariat will be providing assistance in ensuring that we bridge the digital divide in our nation,” noted the Minister.

He said that the government’s information technology initiatives have already resulted in an expanded Information Technology (IT) Centre with added human resource in network engineering, software development, e-commerce, network design, and project management.

Dr. Mansoor noted that more than 50% of government’s operations already have an electronic component with a full thrust towards e-government; rapid expansion of the Government’s wide area network and the new parliament building will be fully wired into today’s technology including wireless high-speed Internet access.

In addition, Minister Mansoor stated that over 1000 computers will be deployed within the operations of central government over the next 18 months and the Government will be developing a back-up (redundancy) centre to the present IT

Centre in keeping with international trends. He said the redundancy centre is a major commitment on the part of the Government.

The government’s ICT agenda has already resulted in Antigua and Barbuda being branded the “ICT City of the Caribbean” by the Commonwealth Secretariat’s regional office.

(continued from cover page)

In this regard, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is committed to exploring all available options within the framework of the WTO in order to have the United States comply with the WTO’s ruling on the provision of cross border gambling and betting services.

We believe this to be a watershed moment for the WTO—where we find out if the WTO works for all, or only for the most powerful. We also believe it is time for the United States administration to translate its words into concrete action by tangibly demonstrating that it truly believes in “free and fair trade”.

We remain ready to discuss the most appropriate form of compensation and remedies with the United States, and I have instructed our WTO delegation to remain ready to engage their US counterparts to this end.”

Don't miss the 47th International Social Service Spring Fair

on
Wednesday 9th and 10th May 2006
at
Kensington Town Hall
Hornton Street
London W8

Stalls from around the world brought to your doorstep by the diplomatic missions of over 100 countries



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer chairing the RSS Extraordinary meeting in Antigua and Barbuda

RSS Council of Ministers meet in Antigua

On the 27th March the Council of Ministers of the Regional Security System (RSS) gathered in Antigua and Barbuda for an extraordinary meeting.

The ministerial representatives flew in from across the sub-region for the meeting which was convened under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer MP, who has ministerial responsibility for national security in Antigua and Barbuda. PM Spencer was joined by Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerritt of Dominica.

Other members of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda were Commissioner of Police Delano Christopher; ABDF Commanding Officer Colonel Trevor Thomas; ONDCP Director Mr. Alec Vanderpoole; and Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Barbados was represented by Joseph Atherley, Minister in the Prime Minister's office in Barbados; while

Ambassador Anthony Severin represented St. Lucia.

The meeting heard presentations from US Lt Gen H. Steven Blum who heads the US National Guard Bureau and from US Ambassador Mary Kramer who arrived from Barbados for this meeting.

High on the meeting's agenda was a review of how the partnership

between the US and the RSS could be preserved and strengthened. RSS member countries maintain a close working relationship with US authorities on military and security matters.

The RSS Council also reviewed the Council's financial and administrative matters, with a view to being able to support the security operations in a sustained way.

"While I obviously cannot go into too much detail, key decisions were taken at this meeting," PM Spencer said. "We need to further review our strategic direction, and to ensure that the security requirements of Cricket World Cup 2007 and beyond are put in place."

PM Spencer pointed out that with so many territories of metropolitan powers located in the Caribbean; it made sense for RSS member states to partner with the US, the UK, France, the Netherlands and others in developing appropriate security arrangements for the region.



US Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum who heads the US National Guard Bureau and US Ambassador Mary Kramer addressing the meeting



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer meeting with the Cuban delegation

Cuba to assist Antigua and Barbuda in cutting energy cost

A Cuban delegation led by Ambassador Rojas paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and updated him on progress in assisting the country to cut its energy cost.

Ambassador Rojas brought greetings from President Fidel Castro and introduced the two other members of his team, a social worker and engineer. He explained that Cuba was developing many energy-saving measures which had been introduced in the Cuban society. He noted that Cuba intended to share the results of the programme with Antigua and Barbuda and other CARICOM countries.

It was pointed out that the team, working along with Antigua Public Utilities Authority, had carried out research in Antigua and Barbuda relating to energy consumption. The Cuban proposal is to replace 215,000 bulbs in Antigua and Barbuda with energy saving light bulbs. Cuba will supply the bulbs and a team of social workers to assist in the implementation.

It is expected that the project will save EC\$11,000 per day in fuel costs, or EC\$4 million per annum.

PM Baldwin Spencer commended the team for the fantastic job done during the research phase of the project. He explained that when CARICOM leaders met President Castro of Cuba and President Chavez of Venezuela in Jamaica some months ago, the proposal was discussed. He indicated that the team's efforts had the full support of the government of Antigua and Barbuda and that government would work with the Cuban team to bring the project to fruition as soon as possible.

The Cuban team indicated that they also met with and briefed Deputy Prime Minister Wilmoth Daniel and General Manager of APUA Leon Symister on the project.

They explained that the cost savings would be immediate, and that Cuba was ready to implement the project as soon as Antigua and Barbuda was ready.

Also attending the meeting with the Prime Minister were Mr. David Palovich of the Cuban Embassy, Pedro Alfonso, Head of the Cuban Medical Team;

Ambassador Colin Murdoch and Ambassador Bruce Goodwin.



Antigua and Barbuda Highlighted at Curacao Expo 06

Antigua and Barbuda made full use of the opportunity to market its many assets to the consumers present at vacation expo Curacao 2006.

Staff of the Marketing Department of the Ministry of Tourism took time out to present Antigua and Barbuda, its festivals, beaches and other special tourist products to over 4900 persons who attended the show.

Marketing Manager for the Caribbean region Joyce Henry and Public Relations Officer Annette Michael, relayed that the country could not have been presented to Curacao at a more opportune time.

The consensus of persons visiting the Antiguan and Barbudan stall was that they were tired of the metropolitan areas of the world and would like to indulge a bit more in whatsoever the Caribbean has to offer, particularly Antigua.

Airlift, was a major area of concern, and Caribbean Star Airlines answered the call as it will begin flights to Curacao in June direct from its hub in Antigua.

Although a contingent from the Carnival Office did not present at this showing, flyers and DVD presentations were made and this festival peaked interests as well.

Public Relations Officer Annette Michael, made use of the PR opportunities presented, mainly with Trois Paradise a local radio station in Curacao, and the Flamingo Broadcasting System whose on-air personalities strolled the stalls of the Curacao Vacation expo.

Nationals' Corner

Mr Oliver Joseph of Haringey North London recently celebrated his 90th Birthday in style with families and friends from all over the country. Many fond memories were shared by all the happy guests as they listened to each speaker reminding everyone else of the massive contribution that Oliver had made over the years and the impact he has had on the lives of so many people throughout the years.

A long serving policeman back home in Antigua, Mr Joseph was known for being the most friendly policeman ever. Perhaps this is due to the well-known fact that no arrest in his distinguished police career has been recorded.

Grand and great grand children also had their stories to tell about their experience with granddad.

May you live to see many, many more happy years, Mr Joseph.

PM Spencer congratulates Moravian Church on 250th Anniversary

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has commended the Moravian Church for its "unparalleled" role in



Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer with his family at Church Service

shaping the minds of the people of Antigua and Barbuda spiritually and educationally.

The country's leader was speaking at the Anniversary Banquet of the Church which celebrated its 250th Anniversary in Antigua and Barbuda.

"I am grateful to the Church for this. Let us continue to work together to make our nation more considerate, more conscious and a better place for every citizen and resident"

"The importance of education was quite clear to the Moravians. Through their work in Antigua and Barbuda and in the Caribbean, the early Moravian Missionaries demonstrated that education is the knowledge of putting one's potentials to maximum use," PM Spencer said.

He noted that the Moravians' work in Education, from under the Sandbox Tree to over fourteen schools and a college in Antigua and Barbuda by 1888, provided

that great hope for the survival of our people and for the forward progress of civilization.

"I am deeply honoured to share this momentous occasion with you, since the Moravian Church in Antigua and Barbuda embodies, espouses and promotes true Christian values and continues to contribute greatly to the character of our society. The work of the church as a spiritual guide, influencing the moral principles essential to building strong communities, is deserving of our nation's enduring gratitude," the country's leader stated.

Prime Minister Spencer also noted that the Moravian Church has been a valuable partner to the government, in tackling the problems with young people. "I am grateful to the Church for this. Let us continue to work together to make our nation more considerate, more conscious and a better place for every citizen and resident," he told the large gathering at the Royal Antigua Resort.