

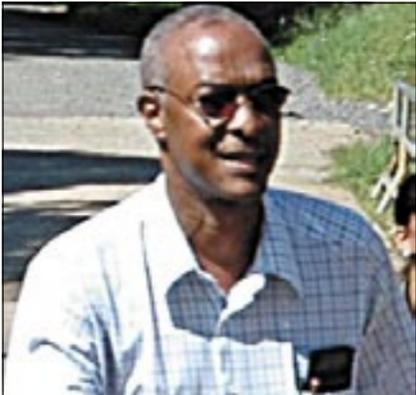


NATIONWIDE

A publication of the Department of Information Services



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NEW PRICES FOR CEMENT

CABINET APPROVES NEW DUAL PRICE STRUCTURE FOR CEMENT

The Ministry of Commerce, Investment and Consumer Affairs has announced an adjustment in the prices for imported cement effective January 31 2006, but the new dual pricing structure for St. Lucia is still among the lowest in Caricom.

Permanent Secretary Mr. Ben Emmanuel said the Minister of Commerce, Acting Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre, had invoked the relevant sections of Price Control Act #23 of 1967, "to allow for an adjustment to the price of cement imported from outside the Caricom region." The \$1.10 increase – which at the moment does not affect cement imported from traditional Caricom sources -- took effect as, Tuesday January 31, 2006.

The Permanent Secretary said the upward adjustment now takes the cost of a bag of cement imported from outside Caricom "to a maximum price of \$16.10 per bag." But, he added, "the price per bag of cement imported from sources within Caricom remains the same for now, which is at \$15.00 per bag". He also said it means that "cement is now a good controlled by percentage mark-up."



Hon. Philip J. Pierre
Minister for Commerce, Tourism,
Investment and Consumer Affairs

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce has reiterated that while the price of cement is controlled by Government, there is no restriction on who can import cement.

That point was made by the minister last week and was repeated by him this week following Monday's Cabinet meeting, which he chaired.

Importers and distributors explained that the price increase was necessitated because of the increase in the imported (CIF value) cost of cement per metric tonne from the available extra-regional sources.

They also indicate that the cost per bag in St. Lucia still remains among the lowest in Caricom.

It is expected that there will be a quick resumption in the accelerated pace of construction across the country, now that cement is again available.

Late last year, such was the pace of construction ahead of St. Lucia's hosting of the 2007 Cricket World Cup that, despite doubling the amount of cement imported from traditional suppliers in Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago, the main distributors announced a shortage in supply and their inability to meet demand.



Parliamentarians at the workshop on HIV/AIDS (see page 8)



"Take ②" - A fifteen minute news review of the week.
Every Friday at 6.15 p.m. on **NTN**, Cablevision Channel 2.

Government Notebook
A fresh news package
daily
on all local radio stations



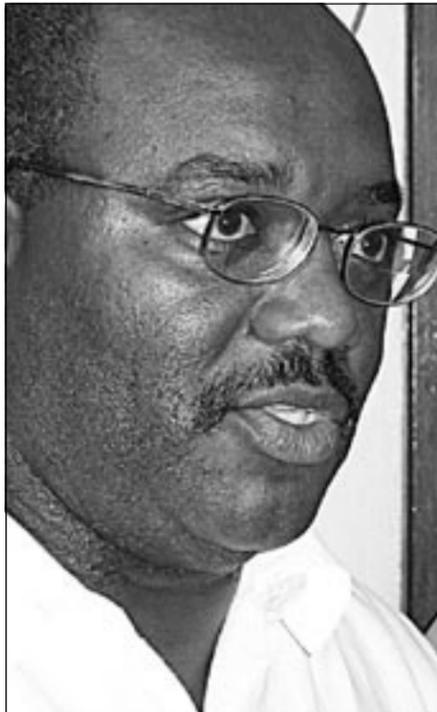
RSL ON THE DIGITAL CUTTING EDGE

Radio Saint Lucia has been set on the path towards enhanced news gathering and improved quality of news reporting. This follows the presentation of state of the art electronic news gathering equipment to the station earlier in the week. Reporters from the local print and electronic media gathered for the brief ceremony at the studios of RSL on Morne Fortune.

Providing a full description of the project to the staff and media workers present, General manager of Radio St. Lucia Ltd. Mr. Roger Joseph said "The project seeks to acquire equipment for the digital acquisition and production of news and to train, in two one-week workshops, a total of fifteen (15) journalists and news correspondents in the professional standards of electronic news gathering, production and dissemination paying attention to technological convergence and reporting for multiple media platforms (primarily radio and the Internet).

The training in journalistic practices and processes seeks to develop competencies in these areas while the training of news correspondents, particularly from the rural areas, will assist in providing greater contributions from the rural communities to the issues that receive national attention. The project will result in improved efficiency, timeliness and quality of reporting, more options for access to public information, improved visibility of rural issues in the broadcast media leading to increased participation of rural communities in national discourse and the reduction of urban-centric imbalance in the broadcast media.

The overall project cost is estimated at US\$33,000. UNESCO, through its IPDC programme, has approved some support for this project. However, the funds approved will only meet the equipment needs of the project and is conditional



Mr. Evaristus Jn. Marie
Chairman of the Board of Directors

upon funding for the capacity building component of the project being finalised."

Among the equipment received which will assist in the production of news are five computers, six solid-state digital field recorders, microphones and accessories to facilitate interviewing in studios on remote locations. In addition the project will provide digital cameras to be used in the development and updating of the stations news website, as well as equipment for on-going staff training. Funding for the project was provided by UNESCO with support from the Government of Saint Lucia.

In her brief remarks at the ceremony, Mrs. Paule Turmel-John Secretary-General Saint Lucia National Commission for UNESCO said "Access to information and knowledge is part and parcel of



Mr. Roger Joseph
General Manager RSL

UNESCO's important mission. Knowledge has become a principal force of social transformation. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) open up new horizons for building inclusive knowledge societies through education, the exchange and sharing of knowledge, the promotion of creativity and intercultural dialogue. They also bring about new challenges for freedom of expression, which is an essential condition for sustainable development, democracy and peace."

She said that UNESCO gives a high priority to encouraging the free flow of information and freedom of expression. The support for the Radio St. Lucia project is to foster the promotion of knowledge for development.

She said "With the support of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), UNESCO is participating in a number of initiatives that are being implemented in several countries, and which open the way to



RSL Chairman receives equipment from the UNESCO representative

Universal Health Care For All!

Saint. Lucians will soon have guaranteed, comprehensive access to the best of the nation's health facilities, under a new system of national health insurance, which will benefit the entire population.

Called Universal Health Care (UHC), the programme will provide all residents with equal access to quality health care services across the island.

It will involve a networking system between the main state and private health institutions -- including hospitals, health centres, pharmacies and other medical institutions -- to ensure the best delivery of health care to persons despite geographic location.

The UHC, which will come on stream soon, is part of the Government's ongoing efforts to improve the nation's health services.

It will cost in the region of \$90 million dollars and will be financed equally by a fixed flat tax on certain consumer items and proceeds from the Government.

The UHC will be administered by the National Insurance Corporation (NIC). Ms Hippolyte explained: "To access the health benefits offered under the UHC, you must first be registered with the UHC." She continued: "You will then be assigned to a hospital according to where you live or where you work. This hospital will be your health provider."

"However," she added, "you will be able to access emergency care at the closest emergency room."

The NIC Director explained that "the UHC will benefit all St. Lucians and non-nationals residing in the country for at least six months of the year in which coverage is being sought."

She indicated that the institutions to be involved in the programme at its initiation are Victoria and St. Jude's Hospitals, Tapion Hospital, Golden Hope Psychiatry Hospital and Turning Point Rehabilitation Centre.

Ms Hippolyte pointed out, however, that "the two general hospitals, Victoria in the North and St. Jude's in the south of the island, will be the main service providers, supported by the others."

Explaining how the funding mechanism will work, Ms Hippolyte indicated that the Government will foot half the bill and the existing Environmental Tax will be amended and adjusted to become a Health and Environmental Levy.

The NIC Director explained that apart from guaranteed access to health care services, persons covered under the UHC will also get "treatment for life-threatening illnesses, medication prescribed only by your doctor, and a letter of referral from your doctor or medical institution for follow-up needs after discharge."

Other services and benefits will include "a limited package of overseas care", in which the UHC will cover the cost of treatment overseas, "but only if you are referred to an overseas provider."

In addition, she explained, "you will also get an opportunity to make a complaint if you are dissatisfied."

Ms Hippolyte assured that "mechanisms will be put in place to provide for penalties under law against those providers or persons who abuse the system."

She identified such potential abuses as "unauthorised access to hospital or other institutional health records, access to pharmaceuticals that have not been prescribed by a doctor, wrong billing, inappropriate referrals by health

care workers, Breach of Confidentiality and non-adherence to standards."

Chief Medical Officer, Dr Stephen King, also spoke on the UHC this week.

Explaining the cost implications, he said the total budget allocation "will be in the region of \$90 million."

Comparing current and future costs under the UHC, Dr King noted that current expenditure on health is approximately \$100.45 million and after the UHC this is projected to increase by just over \$15 million, to \$115.5 million.

Dr King said the UHC will be "a national health priority" and it is expected to be up and running before the end of construction of the new national hospital.

The CMO and Ms Hippolyte both urged Saint Lucians to get registered for the UHC.

They also urged persons being interviewed in the enumeration process to cooperate with the enumerators, who will ask health-related questions to gather information required to establish a proper database for the UHC.

They also urged persons 16 and under who may not be registered on the List of Electors, to contact the nearest NIC office to get registered.

For its part, the NIC will get a sort of a test run in preparation for full implementation of the UHC.

Dr King and Ms Hippolyte both acknowledged that the programme for giving free medicines to pensioners who suffer from Diabetes and Hypertension, which was announced by the Prime Minister in his New Year's Address to the Nation earlier this month, will be administered by the NIC.

the development of community-based media. The latter ensures media pluralism, diversity of content, and the representation of a society's different groups and interests. But more specifically, it involves the participation of all persons especially those from rural communities. It gives a voice to the voiceless.

This project "Training for Digital Newsroom for Radio St. Lucia" has, as one of its objectives, exactly this, the involvement of rural communities, therefore providing opportunities for visibility and national attention as well as building capacity for more efficient and increased participation in the national discourse.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to officially hand over this equipment which is part of the first phase of the Project. I do hope that the other two phases will be successful and that upon completion, Radio St. Lucia will be better equipped to meet its objectives of facilitating widespread dissemination of information and knowledge throughout the length and breadth of Saint Lucia, and beyond."

Chairman of Radio St. Lucia Ltd. Mr. Evaristus Jn. Marie thanked UNESCO for the funding, noting that the acquisition of the new equipment was part of recent effort to implement major changes at the station.

Also present at the handing over ceremony were Cabinet secretary Dr. James Fletcher, Director of Information Services Embert Charles and directors of Radio St. Lucia Ltd.

NEW TOURISM PRODUCT FOR BABONNEAU

Parliamentary representative for Babonneau Hon Felix Finistierre is very optimistic on the effects of a proposed Aerial-Tram to be located in Chassin. Minister Finistierre says the economic benefits, tourism and rural development that will be derived from the project will be good for the community. "It is a very obvious economic benefit. Some seventy-five to eighty jobs including tour guide, hospitality industry which is the new era of development for Saint Lucia."

The minister said the new project, will not replace the agricultural industry within the community, but it will assist in its development with the provision of all year round employment.

According to Minister Finistierre "Technically this use to be a banana area-lots of bananas came from out of here. But young people having gone to school and being educated is very unlikely to go back to work with parents under banana fields. So what is happening tourism and rural development because we are right in the heart of a rural area, and then you have crown

lands which was use for annual Christmas tree harvesting. That operation is not lost it was shifted to the other side to the Badlaid area. So now instead of having just a state or crowns you have year round sustainable work quality jobs."

The parliamentary representative for Babonneau also noted that there is further work to be done to sensitize people from the community about the project and its importance. Now under construction by the parent company Rain Forest Trams, the rainforest sky rides will allow in-depth viewing of the

Babonneau rain forest from 90 feet above ground. The actual ride will be for eight passengers and one naturalist guide. The Rain Forest Sky Rides will

last approximately one hour and fifteen minute.

Also on tour of the trams project were Tourism Minister Hon. Philip J. Pierre accompanied by his Permanent Secretary. Minister Pierre said this is a project which speaks to tourism diversification and sustainable development.

"So you can come to st. Lucia to enjoy our beaches, to enjoy our forest. I am told that the project will be ready for visitors in March, that seems very ambitious, but the investors have told me that because of the quality of the workmanship and the ability of the St. Lucian public, the St. Lucia workman to work hard and diligently they will meet their forecast"

The Rain Forest Sky Rides Chief



Hon. Felix Finistierre
MP for Babonneau



Tourism Minister Philip J. Pierre on tour of the Aerial Tram Project

Operating Officer for the Caribbean Herena Cao said the project is in keeping with the company's vision to become a global leader for nature conservation and eco-tourism."The actual ride will be for 8 passengers and one naturalist guide, and the ram ride will take you approx. 1 hour and fifteen minutes at the moment it will only be a stop at the final station, there are 12 towers that you will see and people can get up there and observe nature at its best at the top of the mountain next year we will build the tower from where you will be able to see the pitons at one point"

It was welcome news for the Member of Parliament for Babonneau that the majority of the workers at the aerial tram will come from his constituency; an obvious economic benefit for families there. To date the company operates two similar aerial tram rides in Costa Rica and one in Dominica. The regional headquarters of the Rainforest Aerial Tram company's will be based in St. Lucia.

RAINFOREST SKY RIDES

An aerial tramway under way in Chassin promises to change the landscape, create jobs and add to the diversity of the island's tourism product. Rainforest Sky Rides is a US\$4 million venture in the Babonneau area to establish a tramway similar to one that exists in neighbouring Dominica.

It is being constructed on 1,200 acres of government land in the mountainous area and it will take clients on a 90-minute ride above and between the surrounding mountains. The land on which the project is located is owned by the Forestry Department and was made available to the investors through a Government lease.

The company entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Government to ensure the forest remains in a pristine state, consistent with Government's policy of protection of the forests. To this end, an environmental head tax will be charged to each client, the proceeds of which will go back into forest conservation.

Clients – visitors and locals alike – will be able to take the scenic aerial tram ride from Tete Chemin in the Chassin area, to Piton Flor and La Sourciere, high above the area's often misty forest. On Monday, February 13, 2006, 40 aspiring tour guides will commence a 4-week training programme at the Fond Assau Multipurpose Centre..

Towers for the tramway were assembled on the Fond Assau playing field ahead of construction and on completion each tramway will be able to carry eight persons and a guide.

Rainforest Sky Rides runs a similar tramway operation in Dominica, which is called Dominica Rainforest Aerial Tram and is located in the village of Laudat.

Both the Dominica and the St. Lucia operations will be marketed, managed and head-quartered in St. Lucia, and a local top management team of 12 persons – accountants, marketing personnel, site management, mechanical, on-site trainers – will be appointed to manage the two operations.



The tram car platform under construction

HISTORIC DAY FOR THE CARIBBEAN

The historic ceremony which formally launched the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) was held on the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, on the evening of Monday January 30th 2006. Among the many heads of Government present were Prime Minister of Saint Lucia Hon. Kenny Dy Anthony, Prime Minister Anthony and leaders of the Member states of the OECS affixed their signatures to a declaration of intent which committed these countries to full participation in the CSM by June 2006.

OECS Declaration of Intent

This statement read: "WE, the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Caribbean Community meeting in the City of Kingston, Jamaica on this the 30th day of January 2006, who have affixed our signatures to this Declaration;

CONVINCED of the imperative necessity for promoting sustainable economic development and the social progress of our peoples;

REAFFIRMING the relevance and significance of the goals, objectives and mechanisms set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME);

MINDFUL that the definitive operation of the CSME is quintessential for the sustainable development of the Region in the increasingly globalised economy of the twenty-first century;

RECOGNISING the importance of properly functioning Community institutions including the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) for achieving an effective CSME;

AFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO AND CALL FOR THE FULL AND EARLY IMPLEMENTATION of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas paying particular attention to the provisions on Special and Differential Treatment and to the provisions of Chapter Seven on Disadvantaged Countries, Regions and Sectors;

SOLEMNLY DECLARE the intention of our countries to join the other Member States of the Community by the end of June 2006 in this more advanced stage of the regional integration process into which they have entered on 1st January 2006, on bringing into being the CARICOM Single Market;

FURTHER DECLARE that we shall, in concert with the other Members of the Community, do all that is necessary to attain the earliest possible establishment of the Single Economy component of the CSME.

The first Signatories

The formal declaration by the heads of Government of the Caribbean Community Marking the coming into being of the

CARICOM Single Market was signed by the Governments of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Belize and Barbados.

It read: "WE, the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Caribbean Community meeting in the City of Kingston, Jamaica on this the 30th day of January 2006, who have affixed our signatures hereunder to this Declaration;

CONVINCED of the imperative necessity for promoting sustainable economic development and the social progress of our peoples;

REAFFIRMING the relevance and significance of the goals, objectives and mechanisms set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME);

MINDFUL that the definitive operation of the CSME is quintessential for the sustainable development of the Region in the increasingly globalised economy of the twenty-first century;

RECOGNISING the importance of properly functioning Community institutions including the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) for achieving an effective CSME;

RECALLING the decision of the Thirteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held in Belize City, Belize in February 2002 to adopt the programme for the removal of restrictions with a view to establishing the CARICOM Single Market by 31 December 2005;

DETERMINED to comply with the reaffirmation of the Eleventh Special Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held in Bridgetown, Barbados in December 2005 to bring into being the Single Market on 1 January 2006;

NOW SOLEMNLY DECLARE THAT OUR GOVERNMENTS, in compliance with the provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas Establishing the Caribbean Community including the CSME and relevant decisions of the Conference of Heads of Government, have taken the steps necessary to comply with the programme for the removal of restrictions and bringing into being on that date, 1 January 2006, the Single Market component of the CSME;

WE ALSO DECLARE our intention, without prejudice to the elaboration of a Protocol under Article 239 of the Revised Treaty relating to contingent rights, to grant to eligible nationals of participating Member States access to health care, education and such other social services as are necessary for their enjoyment of CSME rights, subject to considerations of national capacity;

WE REAFFIRM our commitment to the full implementation of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas paying particular atten-

CARICOM SINGLE MARKET LAUNCHED - SAINT LUCIA FULLY COMMITTED TO THE CSME



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony of Saint Lucia and Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

tion to the provisions on Special and Differential Treatment and to the provisions of Chapter Seven on Disadvantaged Countries, Regions and Sectors;

WE EAGERLY LOOK FORWARD to the other Member States of the Community joining us by the end of March 2006 in this more advanced stage of the regional integration process;

AND WE RESOLVE that we shall, in concert with the other members of the Community, do all that is necessary to attain the earliest possible establishment of the Single Economy component of the CSME."

The singing ceremony took place at the campus of University of the West Indies, which is one of the earliest symbols of regional integration. With respect to the three other member states, the Bahamas is not yet a part of the Single Market arrangement, while Montserrat, a British dependency, awaits the necessary instrument of entrustment from the United Kingdom in order to participate. Haiti has not completed its accession to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and is therefore not a participant in the Single Market.

Acting Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre said Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony's presence in Jamaica for the historic formal inauguration of the Caricom Single Market is a reaffirmation of the island's commitment to participate in the new regional trading arrangement. Mr Pierre, who is the Minister with lead responsibility for dissemination of information on CSME matters in the Government of Saint Lucia, says it is "a historic landmark in the evolution of the Treaty of Chaguaramas."

He says St. Lucia is "currently going through the legislative process and expects to become Single Market compliant in time

to join other participating member-states." The Minister reaffirmed that St. Lucia "is fully committed to the Single Market, and is not unmindful of the concerns of the OECS member-states regarding certain matters to be addressed prior to full entry into the CSME." Mr Pierre, who is also the island's Minister of Tourism, Commerce, Investment and Consumer Affairs, sought to allay fears of those concerned about possible mass migration and job losses through competition as a result of the new single market.

He says that while he understands those fears, "the history of the regional integration process does not lend credence to that theory." The minister noted that "while other Caricom nationals and companies will eventually have full and unrestricted access to the St. Lucian market, that will be equally so for St. Lucian nationals with regard to the market in the other member-states of Caricom."

The Saint Lucia delegation at the launching ceremony included H. E. Ambassador Anthony Severin and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association and the Small Business Association.

Chairman of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves, will spoke on behalf of the OECS, clearly stating the intention of the Member States to join the CSM in June 2006.

"The OECS has taken the principled position that, while we are fully committed to the process of regional integration, and intend to be fully participants in the CSME, we must ensure that the provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which speaks to our own special needs are in effect," Gonsalves told guests at the signing ceremony. "It is for this reason that



Hon. Owen Arthur Prime Minister of Barbados

we have sought from the Community, the deferment until the end of June for our full implementation of the Treaty."

The following are excerpts of the main speeches at the ceremony.

Prime Minister PJ Patterson of Jamaica

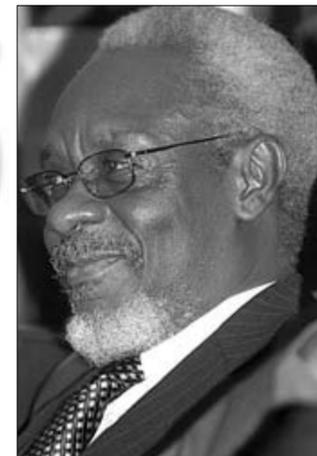
"Member States of CARICOM must continue to address, as a matter of urgency, the improvement in the efficient functioning of the Secretariat to support the next phase. In addition, measures that have been agreed with regard to Governance in the Community, and the creation of the accompanying framework and institutions that are necessitated by the CSME must be pursued expeditiously.

Any analysis of the benefits to each of us as individual states, which is based purely

on balance of trade statistics, is inherently superficial because it fails to calculate the gains to be made from a pooling of our collective resources and moreso in an era where traditional preferences for primary commodities have disappeared.

It is knowledge and creative skills which will determine our chances of success in a global marketplace, where the provision of unique and quality service holds the key to our survival."

"In a few years, we must successfully tackle the harmonization of economic, monetary, fiscal and trade policies of participating Member States, to enable the second pillar, the Single Economy, to enter into force. It is my ardent hope that we will not retreat in the face of these challenges.



Hon. PJ Patterson Prime Minister of Jamaica



Hon. Patrick Manning Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago

I am sure, as I prepare to depart the political stage, you will allow me one final personal indulgence. It is on this Campus that my passion for Caribbean regionalism commenced. As the sole CARIFTA Minister involved in the conduct of those earlier negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of Chaguaramas, still holding political office, I confess it has been an arduous and sometimes disconcerting struggle over these 33 years. But we have come a long way from Chaguaramas to Mona.

Today, I implore you never to abandon that passionate commitment to the full advancement of the Region which has allowed us to fulfil this part of the dream today.

The challenges abound, but with unity of purpose and direction, the Region will conquer whatever mountains we encounter on the journey so that all people of the Caribbean can realise their full economic and social potential"

Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados

"If we were to succeed, as we must, in making the 15 nations of CARICOM one Single Market and Economy, the stark reality is that such a regional economy would still be the smallest and most vulnerable economic bloc in a globalised world.

Ours is therefore the region in today's world where integration is most sorely needed as the indispensable foundation on which to rest national and regional endeavours in pursuit of equitable and sustainable development. We have tried all the others - various relationships and configurations with metropolitan powers, self-termination and national independence. It is time to now give Caribbean unity a chance. I have signed this Declaration this evening as the Prime Minister with the lead responsibilities for the creation of the CSME driven by no sentimentality, but by the pragmatic expectations of what we can now achieve for our people.

The rights that Caribbean nationals will now, for the first time, enjoy to establish enterprise wherever they wish in their region and will release entrepreneurial energy that has been bottled up for far too long in the Caribbean. Our regional society is the product of the ordeal of migrant labour. The conditions under which the Caribbean labour forced has been required over time to relate to our regional economy - beginning with slavery - have been the shabbiest part of our tortured economic history.

Economic integration in today's Caribbean would be a sterile and meaningless exercise were it not to have, at its very centre, a new dispensation, involving new rules for labour mobility, that affords the ordinary man and the ordinary woman the prospect of improving their circumstances by having a new and improved relationship with a new regional economy"

Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago

The Caribbean Single Market is a critical step in the growth of our Caribbean Society. It will certainly advance our economic integration, stimulating sustainable growth, jobs and social development in all our countries.

But, very significantly, as has been seen throughout history, economic integration has often been the catalyst for the social and cultural welding of peoples and nations. We could therefore be eventually provided with more potent reason for very serious consideration of deeper union among our nations. In the view of some, this is inescapable. Today's Single Market should consequently be seen as the forerunner of a greater singleness that is sure to grow in the course of this century. We must therefore seize the opportunity that we have created together. We must build on this achievement of the CARICOM Single Market, now that the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas is at hand. We also have some distance to go to complete that single economic space which is so vital to the viability of our nations in the fiercely competitive global arena, and must make that extra effort towards this end.

We must not fail to meet the deadline of 2008 for the establishment of the CARICOM Single Economy. This is of utmost importance. It is absolutely necessary to coordinate and harmonise, inter alia, our economic policies, interest rates, laws and tax regimes in order to create more even development across member states; enter more effectively and smoothly into trading arrangements and economic links with other countries and regional groupings; and ensure that our region improves its attractiveness for the increased inflows of new capital for the development of all our nations. Our region must become more internationally competitive.

Our survival depends on our growing togetherness. The world has always been a harsh place for the small and vulnerable, but is so even more now, as the intensified global competition for markets and investment increases the threat of marginalization. As we can see, the developed countries continue to pay particular attention to creating and improving their advantages, getting into regional and global arrangements across borders, oceans and cultures, enlarging their markets, efficiency and production capacity, as they further consolidate their lead in the race for development and succeed in improving their societies and economies".



Cultural workers will benefit



Free movement of people - essential part of the CSME

A CALL TO THE GET INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURE



Students of the leading secondary schools in the country

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Hon. Ignatius Jean has lamented the declining interest in agricultural science as a subject of study among the youth of Saint Lucia. Addressing participants at a School Feeding Programme workshop last week, the minister said that getting involved in agriculture will also contribute towards poverty reduction and food security. Mr. Jean's address follows:

"The Millennium Development Goals which most nations, including Saint Lucia have committed themselves to, focus on reducing poverty and hunger, eradicating literacy, ensuring environmental sustainability and promoting a collaborative approach to development. These objectives are also embodied in the Government

of Saint Lucia's national strategic priorities.

Development of the Agricultural Sector in Saint Lucia is constrained by a number of factors. We have an aging agricultural population, considering that the average age of a farmer is approximately fifty (50) years. Fewer young persons are opting to take up agricultural science as a subject at school or pursue a career in agriculture. I say "opting" as against "interested" in that some may be interested but cannot see the feasibility of undertaking agriculture as an occupation. Many young persons consider agriculture: as an occupation for uneducated or unskilled persons; a back-breaking exercise (although I will say that it may be considered a healthy and necessary exercise for our citizens); has very little economic or income generating poten-

tial; as only a primary production/fresh produce enterprise; as not receiving adequate support from government or the private sector

I am here to state that there are a number of opportunities and benefits to be derived from agriculture and I am speaking from personal experience.

Agriculture is just not a fresh produce enterprise as many would believe. The potential for enterprises related to value added such as agro-processing and production of services within the agriculture sector has not been fully explored by our citizens including our youth.

It has also been observed that fewer students are taking up science subjects as an option. (The Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports has or will expound on this). Agriculture, which is an applied science, suffers as a result. Those of us involved in agriculture recognise that a knowledge of Mathematics, Biology, and other sciences as well as Information and Communication Technology skills enhances our ability to profit from agriculture.

We have also recognised that a number of health problems are exacerbated by poor diet and nutrition, commencing with our children and extending into our productive age groups. The Chief Nutrition Officer, I am sure, will have more on this. Suffice to say that poor productivity (including absenteeism) in schools and in the workplace could be due to diet related health problems.

Food security is therefore a national responsibility (not just for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or the agricultural sector). The youth are vital to the food security of any nation. We are fortunate – for now - that Saint Lucia still has an agricultural sector but the landscape has changed



Hon. Ignatius Jean
Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

in many countries who depend greatly on food imports and are vulnerable as a result. A successful integrated school garden – school feeding programme could benefit Saint Lucia and Saint Lucians in a number of ways: Develop life skills; Engender in young people an enterprise or business approach to agriculture; Promote healthy nutrition in schools and enhance nutritional quality of school meals; Promote consumption of local produce and foods (both plant and animal); Teach basics of food production to primary and secondary school students; Ensure proper management of our environment including our physical and biological resources; Serve as a science laboratory where students can apply what they have learnt from subjects such as biology, physics, chemistry integrated science agricultural science, mathematics and information communication technology into practice.

The expectation is that when the students go home to their parents and siblings they will pass on the knowledge and skills they have received to the household and even to others in their communities. We also hope they would be involved in the establishment of home gardens.

I am pleased to see the number of agencies (local, regional, international) represented here today as I believe this demonstrates a commitment to the development of a school garden based school feeding programme. I take this opportunity to thank you all for this and also to express my Ministry's appreciation for the collaborative support of your agencies to agricultural development.

The Ministry has increased its focus on Youth in Agriculture by assigning two officers, one full time, to the Ministry's Agriculture Youth programme. The Ministry has also developed an Agricultural Youth Initiative for which we hope to source funding.

The Government of Saint Lucia is implementing the Youth Apprenticeship and Youth Enterprise programmes as articulated by the Prime Minister in his 2005 budget address.



Fisheries is another option for the youth

YOUTH

We welcome the complementary initiatives of other agencies, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports (TVET, School feeding, Junior Achievers and National Enrichment programmes) the 4H Club, IICA, UNESCO, the National Council for Science and Technology for Development, Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations to name a few.

The Ministry will continue to provide support to these organizations especially in the area of technical assistance. I

want to encourage us to place greater emphasis in fast-tracking our Youth in Agriculture initiatives if we are to ensure food security for our nation.

It is my hope that the integrated school garden – school feeding programme that will be developed will be sustained after initial financial inputs from the project have ended. To this end, the private sector, Non-governmental Organisations and community organizations must be involved in the implementation of such a programme. Thank you.



Efforts continue to improve banana production methods

MORTGAGE AND FINANCE BUILDING REOPENED



The new SLMFC building on Bridge Street

One of the long standing businesses operating in Castries has joined in the effort to set the stage for the urban regeneration of the city.

The Saint Lucia Mortgage and Finance Limited formally reopened its renovated premises last weekend. The architectural effort made to marry the city's heritage with modern day influences into the building has gained the approval of Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony.

The Prime Minister called on the corporate sector to play a meaningful role in the process. "As a country.... as a people we do not like to put money into buildings because we have not reached the point of maturity where we understand that our personality must be given expression in the architecture

of our country. The time has come to do that. Not only to reflect our growing sophistication but to reclaim the history that is ours."

Dr. Anthony identified some weak areas around the city which he says require urgent attention in order for the transformation of Castries to visibly take shape. "Buildings are going up in the city, all kinds of designs but at the same time buildings are going up by side with elements of decay. If you walk through the city of Castries, the side walks are in terrible condition, we can't have a modern city with like that. We cannot have a modern city that cannot cater to those who are disabled.

The St. Lucia Mortgage and Finance Limited is well known for providing low income earners with an avenue to become home owners.

DISCUSSING THE ISSUES

Member of Parliament for Castries South Hon. Jon Odum and Senator Rosemond Clery discussing the issues at the HIV/AIDS at the recently held workshop for parliamentarians. It was attended by parliamentarians from both sides of the House of Assembly



Casino Will Diversify Island's Tourism Product

Government, Gaming and Tourism officials speak on the issue

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Tourism and the heads of two related institutions have all come out in support of the government's decision to grant a licence to an American-based operator to establish the island's first casino.

The PM, the minister, the Chairman of the St. Lucia Gaming Authority (SLGA) and the Executive Vice President of the St. Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association (SLHTA) have been setting the record straight after criticism by a former prime minister and a leading Catholic priest.

Approached by the press for a response to calls for the position of the church, Catholic priest Fr Michel Francis said casino gambling "said the church's silence was by no means consent and reiterated his belief that the presence of a casino in St. Lucia "will do untold damage to the island's social fabric."

He said research had been undertaken by the churches in Barbados on the impact of casinos on the island, which had proven that "the negative effects far outweighed the politics, and they voted against it."

Fr Francis also claimed that the church's research had shown that "in the USA, our neighbour, where casinos are located, many communities were driven away" because of them.

He said protest by the church at this time would be somewhat ineffective, since the government had the legal authority to grant licenses.

The priest felt, however, that there was "not enough fair debate" before the law was passed.

But Chairman of the St. Lucia Gaming Authority, Mr Lisle Chase, does not agree.

Mr Chase, a chartered accountant who is also CEO of the Financial Centre Corporation of St. Lucia, insists that the authority granted the license "in keeping with the law" and that "procedures were observed every step of the way."

He pointed out that "from the beginning, advertisements had been placed in the local press indicating a license had been applied for and inviting persons desirous of objecting to the granting of such a license to write and inform the Secretary to the Board of the Authority."

Those advertisements, he indicated, were followed by others inviting persons who had submitted objections to a special meeting of the Gaming Authority at the NIC Building in Castries on June 22, 2005.

That meeting had been convened specifically "for the purpose of considering the application by Treasure Bay (St. Lucia) Limited for a Gaming Operators License."

Mr Chase also indicated that subsequent to the application by the US-based operator, the required due diligence was pursued before a license was granted last year.

Approached by the press, Prime Min-

ister Anthony acknowledged the Authority had granted an Operators License to the applicant to operate the island's first "stand alone" casino. He said this matter had been addressed before in official addresses to parliament and tourism policy speeches by himself and the Minister of Tourism and the license was granted only after "due diligence was observed and the letter of the law was followed."

The Tourism Minister, for his part, accused Sir John of "playing politics" with the casino issue. Asked to comment, Mr Pierre, who was Acting Prime Minister at the time, said the government "had complied in full with the laws" in considering the application.

The SLHTA Executive Vice President, Mr Terrence Gustave, while being "aware of the concerns" expressed by others, reflected the historical view of his association, that a casino would be welcome, as it would help "diversify the island's tourism product."

Mr Gustave took issue with the claim that the presence of a casino here would destroy or harm the island's social fabric or add to or worsen its social ills.

Saying that "all the island's social ills cannot be blamed on tourism," he pointed out that research had shown that "while most visitors don't come to St. Lucia based on whether there is a casino on the island or not, most who come would visit a casino if one existed here."

Mr Pierre, the Minister of Tourism, indicated that the license granted to treasure Bay "is governed by a Cabinet Conclusion which requires that the operations of the casino "shall be subject to periodic independent professional review" in order to ensure the terms and conditions of the license were carried out in full.

He said he understood the reiteration of the church's long-held position, but lamented that "Sir John Compton is playing politics with the issue."

Mr Pierre recalled that when asked what his position was regarding the opening of a casino here, Sir John made it clear that he was "not opposed to casinos and not interested in the moral argument."

All he was interested in, Sir John said, was "the fact that those who made noise before are silent now."

"It's all part of his policy of engaging in political mischief," said Mr Pierre of Sir John's call on the churches to "speak out."

Prior to 1997, the St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP), under the leadership of Julian R. Hunte, opposed the introduction of casinos to St. Lucia. But this policy changed after the party won the 1997 general election under the leadership of Dr Kenny Anthony.

The current Labour administration introduced the Gaming Authority Control Act in 2000 and it was amended in 2003. Treasure Bay is the first applicant to have been issued a gaming license.

15TH SAINT LUCIA JAZZ LAUNCHED

After much anticipation, the line-up for St. Lucia Jazz 2006 was released by the St. Lucia Tourist Board at an official press launch at the Sandals Halcyon Tuesday evening.

The formidable 2006 line-up includes Grammy Award winner Seal, known for his chart topper "Kiss From A Rose," R and B sensation Ciara, the legendary Al Green and Nancy Cole, Freddy Cole, Jazz greats Poncho Sanchez, Duke Ellington and Kenny Garrett.

The line-up also includes Barbadian singing sensation Rihanna and St. Lucia's Sisterhood

The St. Lucia Jazz has grown in stature over the last 15 years, moving from a sparsely-attended event in 1991 to a worldwide calendar event today. Statistics have shown that the festival is the island's main overseas promoter,

with more visitors getting exposure to the island through it than any other local event.

The festival has contributed to increased visitor arrivals each year.

Its varied repertoire of popular performers each year draws repeat visitors from the English, Kweyol, French, Spanish and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, as well as from locations in North and South America and Europe.

Minister for Tourism Hon. Philip Pierre, under whose watch the St. Lucia Jazz Festival has consolidated and expanded island-wide, says he expects that this year's festival "will again attract record numbers, as we continue to cater for all tastes and take the spirit to all corners of the island, from Pigeon island to Fond d'Or and from Vieux Fort to Bocage."



Jazz on the square has become a popular outing for schools

PARLIAMENTARIANS SCHOOLED IN HIV/AIDS ISSUES

The inaugural HIV/AIDS Sensitization Workshop for Politicians was held in Saint Lucia last week. It was an initiative aimed at addressing the need for an informed, proactive and supportive political directorate. The event targeted members of parliament as well as members from all political parties on the island.

Speaking at the opening ceremony to welcome participants Prime Minister and Chairman of the National AIDS Coordinating Council Dr Kenny Anthony said he was pleased with the presence opposition parliamentarians as well as the overwhelming participation of members of his own Cabinet. Dr Anthony said HIV/AIDS is a great human tragedy which tests the will of every one of us to be our brother's keeper. He spoke of the importance of the exercise to creating the kind of environment where politicians can talk to each other with honesty.

In addressing efforts to take action against HIV/AIDS at home the Prime Minister underscored the commitment of the Government of Saint Lucia to the cause. He however, indicated that his Government had no intention of changing the laws as it pertains to homosexuality and prostitution.

HIV/AIDS advocacy the world over has promoted the decriminalization of homosexuality and sex work. Advocates contend

that these laws fuel stigma and discrimination and are counterproductive in an environment where people are being encouraged to get tested.

The workshop organized by the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations through the National AIDS Program Secretariat was also addressed by CARICOM's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS Sir George Alleyne. He called for unemotional public debate of the issues particularly as it relates to homosexuality and sex work. He said if the public does not show a readiness to confront certain issues it cannot be expected that politicians will make changes to laws. He called for a decriminalization of homosexuality as an important step towards fighting HIV/AIDS.

Director of the National AIDS Programme Secretariat Mr. Nahum Jn Baptiste said while there was not a blueprint pointing success against HIV/AIDS it is widely believed that political will and leadership are priorities in any action against HIV/AIDS. Borrowing from a UNAIDS declaration Mr. Jn Baptiste said "Effective responses are characterized by political commitment from community leadership to a country's highest political level"

He called on participants to use their power, influence and personal involvement to ensure that HIV/AIDS programs receive the visibility, leadership, resources, and



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony

continued political support needed for effective action to limit the transmission of the virus, and mitigate the numerous impacts of HIV/AIDS on our people, communities, and systems.

The HIV/AIDS Sensitization Workshop for Politicians was held January 27th at the Royal St. Lucian Hotel.



THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. Jan. 28th Fri. Feb. 3rd,
2006

NTN – PROVIDING INFORMATION YOU NEED

Men discuss the issue of violence against women

Jan. 28th, 11:00 a.m.

On the threshold of Saint Lucia's entry into the CSME, the GIS speaks with educationalists about the way forward. Sun. Jan. 29th, 11:00 a.m.

Is it worth paying to protect watersheds? Find out on – Mon. Jan. 30th, 8:30 p.m.

Want Business Opportunities in St. Lucia? All the information you need – Tues. Jan. 31st, 8:00 p.m.

Saint Lucians have benefited tremendously from the Cuban Miracle Eye Care Programme – Get the real story – Wed. Feb. 1st. – 8:00 p.m.

Learn about the importance and construction of a business plan – Thurs. Feb. 2nd, 7:30 p.m.

Festival of Light 2005 – Fri. Feb. 3rd, 7:30 p.m.

Remember to tune in for: GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m. Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:

Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm : Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion): Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog). Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review) Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at www.stlucia.gov.lc and then click on the NTN icon.

www.stlucia.gov.lc

A VIEW FROM THE SLMFC

The new St. Lucia Mortgage and Finance Company building on Brazil Street, which was officially opened last weekend is adding architectural flavour to the city of Castries. In the picture above other business enterprises have led the way in modernising commercial properties with a cultural touch (see story on page 7).



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