

NATIONWIDE

No.11. Saturday January 18th 2003

A publication of the Department of Information Services



A decisive step to transform the penal system

WELCOME BORDELAIS!



Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of St. Lucia addressing the opening ceremony of the Bordelais Correctional Facility

Back in 1958, Lord Farrington, a visiting British lawmaker, made a most damning condemnation of St Lucia's Royal Gaol. As reported by the Voice, he described the Bridge Street prison as an "abomination" and expressed the view that "the only remedy is to blow it up with dynamite".

On Wednesday this week, almost half a century later, St Lucia finally laid to rest the old Royal Gaol with the official opening of the new \$48 million Bordelais Correctional Facility in Dennery. Bordelais also signals a fundamental shift in St Lucia's approach towards the treatment of offenders, with new emphasis on rehabilitation rather than just punishment, as was the case in the past.

"I want to assure you that our switch from penal to correctional doesn't mean we're going soft on crime," Director of Corrections, Hilary Herman, made it clear to dignitaries and other guests at the two-hour-long

ceremony. "We'll be tough on crime but, on the same token, we'll concentrate on making every inmate a productive and tax-paying citizen."

In a moving speech which generated considerable applause, Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, described the investment in Bordelais as "an unfortunate necessity" brought on by "historical circumstances (that) have placed the failures of the past at our feet." He said it will bring St Lucia major benefits.

Peace and Security

It will help authorities, for example, to deal more effectively with crime. It will enhance national peace and security by ensuring dangerous criminals are kept behind bars, and it will contribute to creating a more conducive environment for social and economic development.

"This investment in Bordelais should be seen as a clear and tangible signal of the Government's commitment to curbing crime

see page 3



Bordelais, occupying 33.4 acres of Crown lands, is built to house 500 inmates. The old prison, for 60 prisoners, currently houses just over 400.

EDITORIAL

A FRESH APPROACH

Any effort, which contributes to uniting St. Lucians in pursuit of common interests, is worthy of the highest commendation. Especially at a time when our quality of life is under such serious threat from external forces operating under the guise of globalisation. Our banana farmers can relate from experience only too well.

Unity can be an invaluable source of strength in the face of adversity. Through unity of purpose and action, the impossible has often become the possible. While it's impossible for any country to ever achieve 100% unity, it's unity on the really critical issues that matter.

That's why remarks made around Christmas by both Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, and Opposition Leader, Marius Wilson, give good cause for hope. Their remarks pointed to an emerging spirit of bipartisanship in the conduct of the nation's business in Parliament.

It's an encouraging development, considering the divisive nature of politics in former colonial countries, which have adopted the competitive Westminster system of government of the old mother country. Hopefully, the new spirit of cooperation between Government and the Opposition signals too our emerging political maturity as a nation.

In recognition of the need for a more inclusive form of governance to confront the challenges of the time, this Administration has seriously reached out to key interest groups and created mechanisms, like the National Economic Council, to permit their input in policy formulation.

Notwithstanding their recent achievement, the very nature of our politics means there will always be rivalry between the Government and Opposition. "All of us here understand that politics is a competitive business," Prime Minister Anthony noted, "... but the bottom line is that it is important that we can say to the people of our country that we can work together and put differences aside." This Government and Opposition have truly embarked on a path, which augurs well for the future.



"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
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SHARING PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

Government Guards Against Control of the Country's Lone Electricity Supplier

The Government of St. Lucia regards electricity as a strategic national resource that shouldn't be left entirely to the dictates of the marketplace.

Government's position was spelt out by Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, as the House of Assembly passed legislation last December 17, regulating the ownership and trading of shares belonging to the St. Lucia Electricity Services Ltd. (LUCELEC).

At the same time, Dr. Anthony made it clear that Government has no intention of acquiring LUCELEC. He also emphasized that Government values public sector/private sector cooperation in developing the national economy.

"In the case of LUCELEC, we cannot allow the country of St. Lucia to be put into a vulnerable position," he said.

The Public Utilities (Restriction on Shareholding St. Lucia Electricity Services Ltd.) Act represents an attempt by Government to safeguard the national interest by blocking any single entity from acquiring outright control of LUCELEC, at a time when market forces have virtual free reign in global business.

"We have got to say that this asset is so important to us, it is so strategic that it is vital that we have a say in its future," said Dr. Anthony as he piloted the bill. "That's what is at issue here."

The British-owned Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) is the largest single shareholder of LUCELEC with a 44.8 per cent stake. The remaining 55.2 per cent is spilt up among the Government, the Castries City Council, the National Insurance Corporation and several small investors, including St. Lucian citizens.

Government - A Participant

Dr. Anthony also used the opportunity to address a widely held myth about the extent of Government's involvement in LUCELEC. "Contrary to the popular opinion, while the public sector owns a bloc of shares, the combined shareholding of the City Council as well as the Government in fact falls below that of CDC," he explained.

CDC was originally set up by the British Government to support economic development in its colonies and other so-called Third World countries through strategic investments. CDC, however, has moved away from this original altruistic focus and today is more driven by the profit motive.

The House of Assembly passed the law against this backdrop, plus the growing trend worldwide in which large corporations have pursued mergers, acquisitions and other activities with apparent little consideration for the impact of their decisions on the host communities.

The intent of the legislation is to prevent LUCELEC and, by extension St. Lucia, from suffering such a fate.

OECS Stock Exchange

The Act was also prompted by the establishment of the Eastern Caribbean Stock Exchange (ECSE) to facilitate the open trading of shares in public companies within the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) sub-region.

Under the Act, no new shareholder can acquire more than a 20 per cent interest in LUCELEC. However, existing investors can keep their present shareholding but they will not be able to increase it if it's already 20 per cent or more. CDC, for example,



The head office of the St. Lucia Electricity Services Ltd. located at Sans Souci in the capital city, Castries

can keep its 44.8 per cent but can go no higher.

"We are protecting a national asset, avoiding unnecessary speculation and ensuring that we continue to have a say in the future of LUCELEC," said Dr. Anthony. He indicated that a LUCELEC-related matter which will next occupy the Government's attention, is the surcharge on electricity bills. "We still have great difficulty with the price at which electricity is sold to our consumers," the Prime Minister said.

"That vexed question of the fuel surcharge is a matter we really have to come to terms with at some point and we have to deal with. Something has to be done to rationalize that issue," he added.

Dr. Anthony also called for the speedy implementation, by the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, of recommendations made by the Government-appointed Review Commission into LUCELEC.

LUCELEC's role in supporting the development of St. Lucia received considerable praise from the Prime Minister.

LUCELEC - a leader

Dr. Anthony singled out, for special mention, the company's capital investment programme, which has facilitated the island-wide expansion of electricity and also made St. Lucia a leader in power generation in the Eastern Caribbean.

"We have one of the most modern power generating plants in the entire Eastern Caribbean and I applaud the vision that led to the upgrading of LUCELEC. We are in producing electricity at a far cheaper rate than some of our neighbours," Dr. Anthony noted.

He revealed that business interests in nearby Martinique and Guadeloupe had approached LUCELEC about the possibility of accessing its surplus electricity for sale to consumers in their territories.



The power station at Cul-de-Sac has been modernised to provide a reliable supply of electricity to homes and the commercial sector.

BORDELAIS

from page 1

in St Lucia," Dr. Anthony said, noting it will also bring an end to "the inhumanity and indignity of the old Royal Gaol".

Bordelais, occupying 33.4 acres of hill-top Crown lands, is built to house 500 inmates. The old prison, built in 1827 for 60 prisoners, currently houses just over 400.

Bordelais comprises 18 building blocks, including a female unit, adult male unit, maximum security and condemned unit with adjoining gallows and cemetery, young offenders unit, remand unit, and segregation unit.

Modern Facilities

There is also a courtroom on the compound, workshops where inmates will learn various skills to help them find gainful employment on their eventual release from imprisonment, classrooms, library, gymnasium and chapel, among other modern facilities.

Bordelais allows for the separation of prisoners which was not possible at the Bridge Street prison. As a result, young offenders will no longer come into contact with and be influenced by hardened criminals behind local prison walls.

Under overcast afternoon skies, with intermittent rain and chilly gusty winds blowing in from the nearby Atlantic Ocean, Governor-General, Dame Pearlette Louisy, cut a ribbon to mark the official opening of the facility. Prime Minister Anthony unveiled a commemorative plaque.



Hon. Sarah Flood Beaubrun
Minister for Home Affairs

"The construction of this very institution was necessitated by acts of inhumanity," said Home Affairs Minister, Sarah Flood-Beaubrun, referring to the "barbarity" of conditions at the Bridge Street prison. "Conversely, the foresight and subsequent decision to construct this correctional facility was motivated and was an act of singular compassion."

Changing Lives

She noted that as far back as 1901, the Report of the Gaol and Police Commission had found the Bridge Street prison to be "unsuitable and inadequate."

Mrs. Flood-Beaubrun, who has ministerial responsibility for the prison service, praised her predecessor, Velon John, and the Prime Minister for their respective roles in making the new facility a reality.

She said the new emphasis on prisoner rehabilitation is "testimony of our belief in the most important resource in our country – our people and more particularly, our youth".

"On average at any one time," she noted, "the majority of our prison population is between the ages of 18 and 35, young men, fathers who should be heading their households, building strong families, and contributing in a meaningful way to overall national development."

"Lives will be changed and transformed for good in this correctional facility," she said. "Something which happens very infrequently at Her Majesty's Prison on Upper Bridge Street."

Government recruited and undertook an intensive eight-week-long training programme for 78 persons who will serve as correctional officers at Bordelais. With support services from other professionals, they will oversee a range of programmes designed to help offenders turn their backs on a life of crime.

"With the construction of this prison, we have taken a decisive step to bring to an end the ridiculous and untenable situation of a penal system which cannot keep its prisoners behind bars," said Dr. Anthony. "... it is now more difficult for hardened criminals to simply walk out of jail or scale the prison walls as was the case in the past."



Director of Corrections - Hilary Herman.

The Minister made it clear to the criminally-minded to expect to serve their full sentences when sent to Bordelais, as early release which occasionally happened to ease the overcrowding problem at Bridge Street will now be a feature of the past.

He is also hoping that critics of Bordelais, who said it shouldn't be built, will grasp the philosophical basis and importance of the project and give full support to the Government in the fight against crime.

Possible corruption involving prison officers is suspected to have contributed to the indiscipline and other problems which plagued the Bridge Street prison. Dr Anthony said the allegations of wrongdoing will be probed by Government.

When the move from Bridge Street to Bordelais is completed, the vacant old prison building is to be renovated and handed over for police.

GEARING UP FOR MORE GROWTH AT WASCO

The Saint Lucia Water and Sewerage Co. Inc. (WASCO) is inviting sealed bids from companies for the supply of 17,000 domestic cold water meters and 150 cold water turbine bulk meters. It's connected with the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)-financed Fifth Water Supply Project.

Eligible firms, or joint ventures of firms, either must be registered, or have their principal place of business in any member country of the CDB, the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), or the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Another condition is that they must be more than 50 per cent beneficially owned by citizens and/or bona fide residents of the said countries, or owned or controlled by a government of an eligible country. In the latter case, the firm must be legally and financially autonomous and operate under the commercial law of the eligible country.

The Fifth Water Supply Project involves: (a) establishment and implementation of an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework for WASCO; (b) implementation of critical capital works and (c) technical assistance to improve WASCO's operational efficiency.

Each bid must be accompanied by EC\$27,000 as bid security. Eligible bidders can obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents between 9 am and 4 pm at the Project Management Unit, WASCO's headquarters on L'Anse Road, Castries.

The deadline for the submission of bid is 4.15 pm on Tuesday, April 8, 2003. Bids will be publicly opened the following day at 2 pm in the Conference Room at WASCO's headquarters.

WASCO does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any other bid and will not defray any costs incurred by bidders.

CHINESE DELEGATION VISITS

A delegation from the People's Republic of China this week paid a two-day visit aimed at strengthening and deepening friendship and cooperation ties between China and St. Lucia.

Invited by the Government of Saint Lucia, the official Chinese governmental delegation was led by State Councillor, Her Excellency Ms. Wu Yi. They were on island from January 14 to 15. During her visit, the Chinese State Councillor held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony on issues such as bilateral relations, economic and trade cooperation, as well as other matters of common concern.

While here, the top Chinese government official paid an official courtesy call on Her Excellency the Governor General, Dame Pearlette Louisy.

Agreements on economic and technical cooperation between the two countries were signed on January 15.

Several renowned entrepreneurs from six major Chinese enterprises are accompanied the delegation. While in St. Lucia they explored possibilities for trade and economic cooperation with the local private sector.

The visit also featured a friendly but competitive football match between the well-known Beijing Guoan Club Football Team and the Saint Lucia National Soccer Team. The Chinese team won 2 - 0. The football match was held at the national stadium in Vieux-Fort, which was gift to the Government and people of St. Lucia from the Chinese government.

Among the spectators were district representative for Vieux-Fort South Hon. Kenny Anthony and the Minister of Education, Human Resource Development Youth and Sports, Hon. Mario Michell.

Chinese Embassy and Government officials said the visit served to further enhance the existing strong bilateral relations.

REPORTING WITH RESPECT

The people's right to know is an essential ingredient of

As St. Lucians prepared for end-of-year celebrations in December 2002, the *One Caribbean* newspaper announced it was shifting emphasis to highlighting the positive side of events and issues it covered. Then, in a remarkably frank explanation, the controversial tabloid provided the reason for what it describes as a "complete turnaround in policy".

It said Caribbean people, with whom its publisher had come into contact during recent travel around the region, were demanding this type of reporting. *One Caribbean*, therefore, was answering the call.

"...We constantly meet with persons who expressed the belief that newspapers around the region are too 'die-hard' and identify too closely with government or opposition and were too critical of the side they opposed," said the explanation. "These people felt that our biggest need as far as the media is concerned, is for a medium which brought good positive news to the people."

Coming from a newspaper, which confesses it previously, considered its job was "to find fault and criticize", it's an explicitly revealing statement, which implicitly challenges several fundamental assumptions, held by the local media.

Positive Reporting

Tacitly through the *One Caribbean* explanation, newspaper readers, radio listeners and television viewers are saying several things.

That they aren't as interested in a constant diet of sensationalism and scandal as some journalists seem to believe; that they wish the media to play a more developmental role by inspiring confidence

through positive reporting; that they want to see the promotion of more cohesive societies, instead of the current divisions stoked by partisan reporting.

It's quite a mouthful, which adds a new dimension to the never-ending debate on the role of the media in a developing country such as St. Lucia. More importantly, however, the questions provide a timely opportunity for the media to take a serious look at themselves, in view of a significant criticism coming their most important 'public' – their customers – that they are overwhelmingly negative.

Environment for Press Freedom

The incumbent administration, may not have always agreed with the media's approach on some issues in the last five years. Indeed, it has had reason on more than one occasion to chide the media for unprofessionalism.

Yet no one can seriously question this Government's commitment to enhancing the environment for press freedom and facilitating the development of a more professional media corps through various training initiatives for journalists and other media personnel. The latest training workshops, sponsored by the Department of Information Services in conjunction with UNESCO, were held last November.

"No one can doubt that the press, the mass media, the field of broadcasting, have a very important place in contemporary society," said Dr. Anthony, the minister for information and broadcasting, at the official opening of the new HTS headquarters on March 8, 1998.

"The press, both print and electronic, are the guardians of the public's right to information," he added. "The people's right to know is an essential ingredient of a free and democratic society."



Government has continued to provide training opportunities for the improvement of media practice in St. Lucia

What the Government has always insisted on, and will continue to insist from the media, is that they responsibly exercise the freedom they enjoy under the Constitution. Also, Government strongly believes there must be some form of media accountability, without state intervention, especially in cases where persons have legitimate grievances against the media.

There have been numerous cases of media irresponsibility in St. Lucia in recent times. Take, for example, an erroneous newspaper report last September suggesting that the administrator of the Victoria hospital was being paid at a particular level, not on the basis of his qualifications, but because he

be as wide as possible to support national development, especially in the less developed parts in the island; and that the media must respect the law like everybody else.

Government-Media Relations

It's a straightforward, uncompromising stance which has occasionally caused some friction in the Government's relationship with the media. Whenever Government has had cause to complain, the media's usual reaction is to charge that an attempt is on to muzzle the press. Such accusations, which sometimes serve to divert public attention from the real issue, stem from an erroneous view held by the media that they somehow enjoy absolute freedom when, in fact



Three of the local weekly newspapers with the largest circulation - so

was supposedly related to the Prime Minister. The allegation was untrue and the newspaper had to apologize to the Prime Minister.

Then, there was a case last month where a talk show host blatantly misrepresented the contents of a Government letter, explaining new operating requirements for broadcast companies designed to ensure proper management of the local media landscape. Government had to set the record straight and show up the misrepresentation for what it was.

Extensive Coverage

Government is saying, in a nutshell, that the media have a responsibility to ensure that the information they put out is always accurate; that their reporting should be fair, balanced and unbiased by telling all sides of the story so that readers, listeners and viewers can make up their minds independently; that opinion should never be presented to the public as fact, as happens fairly often; that coverage should

their freedom is limited by law, as is the case with every body else.

Notwithstanding these claims, the latest annual human rights report produced by the United States, has given St. Lucia top marks for respecting press freedom and other forms of free expression. This worldwide report is well known for exposing abuses of press freedom and other human rights around the world.

Human Rights Report

"The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice," the 2002 edition of the report observed.

It went on: "There are four major privately owned newspapers, two privately owned radio stations, one partially government-funded radio station, one government-operated television station ..., and two private television stations. These media carry a spectrum of political opinion and often are critical of the Government."

What may surprise many St. Lucians is that five years ago, Government considered the fu

ACCOUNTABILITY

free and democratic society

privatization of state-owned Radio St. Lucia "an attractive prospect". In other words, Government is leaning towards getting out of the media and allowing an entirely private sector-run industry.

It was a time when the Government felt that the privately-owned media was capable of providing quality of broadcasting which would meet the needs of all the people of St. Lucia, particularly the rural folk," said Prime Minister Anthony at a Radio St. Lucia visioning workshop last July.

Regrettably, the private media did not live up to these expectations and Government rethought its position. The administration sees a continuing, important role for a state-owned RSL, especially where meeting the need for community-type;

similar mission and provides a distinct St. Lucian alternative to the largely US programming which dominates local television.

Eastern Caribbean Press Council

There was a major triumph for Government late last year in its campaign for media accountability. The regional media, including St. Lucia's, agreed at a meeting in Barbados to set up an independent, self-regulatory mechanism in a bid to raise the level of professionalism in response to the criticism about declining standards.



Information Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony

public opinion formation

public service broadcasting which can have a favourable impact on national development.

"I am convinced now more than ever that Government must continue to maintain an interest in local broadcasting," said Dr. Anthony at the RSL workshop.

He then explained why: "Firstly, we need to maintain a public broadcasting system which will give extensive prominence to national issues without commercially influenced editorial decisions.

Secondly, our country needs a radio station which is sensitive to the information needs and language abilities of all St. Lucians. Thirdly, we need an institution which will assist in the continued expansion of our democracy and our civic awareness and responsibilities. Fourthly, we need a national radio station to serve as an incubator for national institutions like the Cultural Development Foundation charged with the mandate to develop the culture industry."

Just over a year ago, Government set up the National Television Network (NTN) which is reaping tremendous success as it pursues a

The Eastern Caribbean Press Council is to be scheduled to be launched here in Castries on January 25. At the meeting of newspaper editors where the issue was discussed, the Barbados Nation publisher, Harold Hoyte, said: "Self-regulation has the potential to strengthen the public service component of publishing, expand civic media sensitivity, tackle media irresponsibility and identify maverick publications and drive governments away from the distasteful trend of media law."

A draft code of ethics has also been drawn up for the broadcast media.

Recent events at least present a glimmer of hope of positive change. Whether they are the birth pangs of a more professional, responsible media is left to be seen. Only time will tell.

www.stlucia.gov.lc
The Official Website

RELIEF FOR BUSINESS

Government is giving additional support to help certain St. Lucian companies to adjust to a challenging new business environment, being shaped increasingly by the forces of globalisation. .

Through an amendment to the Income Tax Act, a company, which is a subsidiary of a group, can now claim any losses against the profits of another company belonging to the same group.

"This bill is very timely because Government accepts and recognizes that there are a number of companies which are experiencing difficulties of one kind or another," said Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, as he piloted the Income Tax Amendment No. 2 Bill at the final sitting of the House of Assembly for 2002.

"I refer specifically to those companies which operate not only on the basis of a single company but on the basis of a group, meaning that there are several companies. In other words, you may have a situation where you have a parent company with several subsidiaries..." he added.

An objective of the tax measure is to encourage companies to restructure to cope with challenges and position themselves to take advantage of opportunities in the present operating environment.

"(This legislation) is signaling to the business sector that ... it would be wise for many of them to begin to examine the possibilities of rationalizing their own operations internally," said Dr. Anthony, who is also Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs

He added: "The Government intends to go one step further very shortly. It proposes to amend the existing stamp duty legislation to provide relief to companies, which, as a result of such restructuring, incur costs.

"We recognize that this is a challenging period and we would want to assist as much as possible," Dr. Anthony said.

Companies registered under the International Business Companies Act do not qualify for the new tax benefit. "Those companies operate under a totally different regime," the PM pointed out.

COMMON RULE FOR ACCOUNTANTS

As St. Lucia becomes more integrated into a single economic space under the banner of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), chartered accountants on the island will soon be operating under the same rules and regulations as counterparts in other OECS countries.

At its final sitting for 2002 on December 17, the House of Assembly passed into law the Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Eastern Caribbean Agreement bill, fulfilling St. Lucia's obligations as a member country of the Monetary Authority of the Eastern Caribbean.

The law is to be adopted in the other member countries.

"The Monetary Authority decided that it is necessary as part of the process of putting in place adequate financial arrangements into the community, to enact a single act to govern the work of chartered accountants throughout the Eastern Caribbean," Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony explained as he introduced the bill.

He added: "As we begin to move even more into an integrated market, a single financial space, it is really very vital that we begin to create entities, organizations, organs that all of us can identify with, with ease."

"It is with accountants today. I hope that in the near future, that it will also be with other professional bodies," he said.

IMPROVEMENT TO THE MAJOR ROADS

US\$16 million to be spent on major roads in the next two years.

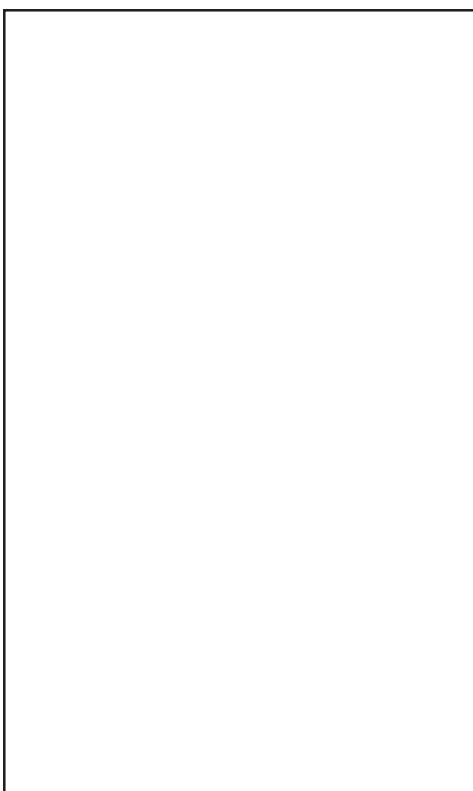
Phase 1 of the Castries-Gros Islet Highway Improvement project and Phase 3 of the Road Development Programme (RDP3) – are scheduled to come on stream as Government steps up its effort to improve the national road network.

Regrettably, progress always carries a price. And, in the short term during construction on the various projects, road users can expect some inconvenience. Government is appealing for the understanding and cooperation of the general public and is promising to do everything possible to minimize the discomfort.

An outline of road works to be undertaken in 2003, was provided on December 17 at the final sitting of the House of Assembly for 2002, in presentations by Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, and Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, Felix Finisterre.

Phase 1 of the much-anticipated Castries-Gros Islet highway improvement focuses on the stretch of road from the Choc junction to the Vigie Roundabout connecting to the John Compton Highway. It involves, among other things, the construction of flyovers to ease the recurring problem of heavy traffic congestion at peak time.

To minimize inconvenience for the traveling public, Government is improving side roads in the north – for example, the Corinth Road – as an alternative means of access to the City. Motorists are being encouraged to use these roads wherever possible.



Hon. Felix Finisterre, Minister of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities.

The Kuwait Fund is providing some US\$8.75 million towards the project and is seeking an additional US\$2 million from the OPEC Fund. Government is providing the remainder of the financing for the US\$16 million project.

Meanwhile, the contract for RDP3 – part of a five-year project involving the improvement of 117 kilometers of primary and secondary road island-wide — is expected to be awarded sometime soon. At year-end, tenders for the project were being evaluated.

Thanks to RDP3, the long-standing pleas of the community of Trois Piton for a better road will be answered.

Parliamentary Representative, Menissa Rambally, is happy for the residents. "I am very happy that the residents of Trois Piton will get some relief in the new year," she said.

14 kilometers of secondary roads

RDP3, being financed by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), involves the rehabilitation of 14 kilometers of secondary roads over an 18-month period. Besides Trois Piton, other communities which will benefit are Grand Riviere, Monier, Pais Bouche, La Croix, Rich Fond, Grand Ravine, Derniere Riviere and La Resource.

Other phases of the road project will involve the complete resurfacing of the Desruisseaux Road, from the highway way up to the rainforest, and this will be done towards 2004-2005.

Dr. Anthony praised the CDB for relieving St. Lucia of the original requirement of having to come up with counterpart financing for RDP3, which is benefiting from a US\$2.8 million loan. CDB relaxed this condition in light of the economic challenges facing Eastern Caribbean countries, which have suffered a decline in revenue as a result of the global recession.

Communications and Works Minister, Felix Finisterre, revealed that the Ministry is

building up its in-house capacity to undertake more road repairs and provide a more ready response to the needs of some communities.

The ministry has on order an additional grader, a potholing unit, and other pieces of equipment. In addition, the Dennery workshop is to be refurbished.

Finisterre endorsed the self-help approach, which some communities are adopting to improve their roads. He pledged the Ministry's support.

Community Self-Help

"Micoud North, in fact, was the first constituency to implement its community, self-help project," the minister revealed. "That is the kind of approach that we have also tried to implement with respect to the farmer-assisted road programme."

He added: "A number of farming communities have each had at least one such road done. The approach essentially is that our ministry would supply the technical assistance, rent the equipment and supply the material. The farmers, once they were mobilized, would come in and get those roads done."

The additional road projects are coming on stream as the Soufriere to Vieux Fort highway improvement, expected to revolutionize travel in the south, is making good progress.

IMF UPBEAT FORECAST

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global financial agency which assesses the economic performance of its member countries around the world, is upbeat about the 2003 prospects of St. Lucia's economy.

An IMF delegation was on island late last year conducting what is called an Article IV Consultation. This is a routine exercise in which the Washington-based organization makes a periodic visit to take a close-up look at the economic policies of member countries and express an opinion to the relevant authorities. St Lucia is an IMF member country.

Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, who is also the Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs, says the IMF's forecast that the economy "will enjoy a positive growth rate over the 2002 figure" is "encouraging".

"It proves the point that we have often made – that despite the rigours of the challenges that we face, the management decisions of this Government and the policies pursued have enabled us to fare

far better than we otherwise would," the PM told the nation in his New Year's address on January 7.

Dr. Anthony warned, however, that despite the efforts being made by Government to stimulate economic activity to create the conditions for increased growth, there are certain factors which could impact on the island's economic performance that are entirely out of St Lucia's control.

He referred, as an example, to the real threat of a US-led war on Iraq. "If such a war is unleashed, we will be immediately faced with a repeat of many of the difficulties which followed the

September 2001 terrorist attack on the United States," the PM warned.

He added: "There will be a reduction in travel by US citizens and citizens of allied countries, there will be continued fear of retaliation from pro-Islam quarters, the economies of the major production centres already in deep recession may suffer setbacks as a result of a war, and most critically, there will be an increase in the price of fuel, with its attendant consequences."

"So while we look forward to a year of improved economic performance, we must all pray that a war is not unleashed against Iraq, as the consequences of such war will be a tremendous blow to the economic recovery of St Lucia and the Caribbean region as a whole."



External trade and transportation sector provide opportunities for economic growth

ECPC LAUNCH

St. Lucia will be the venue next weekend for the official launching of the Eastern Caribbean Press Council (ECPC), a recently formed regional organization established by publishers, editors and journalists from across the OECS and Barbados.

Established last year in Barbados following meetings between editors from participating states, including St. Lucia, the ECPC will provide, among other things, a forum to address media standards and complaints involving media in the territories that have subscribed to its objectives.

Chairman of the Steering Committee for the ECPC is noted Barbadian journalist Harold Hoyte, who is President and Editor in Chief of the well-respected Nation newspaper.

The opening ceremony for the launching is slated for the Bay Gardens Hotel on January 25 and the feature address will be delivered by Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, who is also the island's Minister of Information. Also slated to address the ceremony are local attorney Michael Gordon, QC and Editor of the Grenadian Voice newspaper Mr Leslie Pierre.

Members of the local steering committee for the ECPC include Mr Gordon, Mirror Editor Mr Guy Ellis and Star Publisher Mr Rick Wayne.

Some 40 journalists and media executives from eight Eastern Caribbean territories are expected to attend the opening ceremony and the other functions associated with the January 25 launching.

THE MYTHS AND PREJUDICES ABOUT LEPROSITY

The following is the full text of an address delivered by Minister of Health Hon. Damian Greaves in observance on Leprosy Month

The year 2002 marked a significant year of mixed changes for various sectors of our society. The health sector experienced its share of opportunity and hardship. Sad to say, some of our negative experiences included an increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases and the number of individuals presenting high blood pressure, kidney problems and diabetes, to name a few.

Although we have so often focused our attention on these diseases, we must not forget that our nation is still affected by one of the oldest, yet curable diseases to date. This disease is none other than Hansen's disease or leprosy, which has its own history as far back as 600 B.C in China and India.

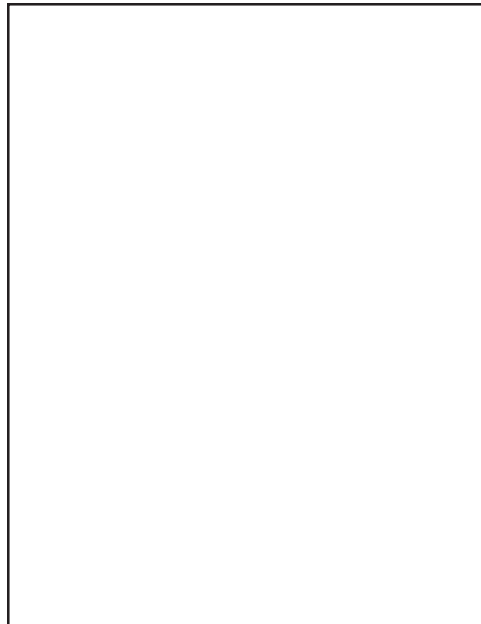
Maladi sala épi nou toujou

Lanné pase, nou pousé douvan anpil an zafé santé sent lisi, magwé adan divés mannyé, bagay pa maché mannyé i té siposzé. nou wé pa ékzanmp, pli moun afékté épi maladi kon hiv/aids, pressure, pisadou, épi poble nwa. jik an jou kon jodi, an maladi ki té ka afékté nou dépi tan jézi kwi, an maladi nou sa djéwi, maladi sala épi nou toujou. sa sé maladi lad.

“One of the greatest obstacles we are faced with is the fact that many people who suspect or know that they may be victims of leprosy, do not seek medical attention. This is sadly so because of the fear of being ostracized from a society that conveniently embraces only those diseases that are seemingly well understood and are apparently harmless.”

Unfortunately, leprosy is still prevalent in Saint Lucia. To date, eighteen (18) more cases have been discovered, adding to the already existing cases. This disease has affected a wide cross-section of our society and it dispels the myth that leprosy only affects certain social classes, ages, or geographical locations.

In 1976, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there was a worldwide prevalence of 10.6 million cases of leprosy. By 1995, that number decreased to approximately 500,000 cases. This is a healthy indicator that the fight against elimination of leprosy is effective.



Minister of Health
Hon. Damian Greaves.

The Ministry of Health of Saint Lucia has been active in sustaining the Leprosy Control Programme. There has been a visible sustained effort throughout the different community health centres and public hospitals towards leprosy elimination. For this I wish to thank our various health centre attendants, community nurses and health aides. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. Granderson-Didier for her tireless effort in sustaining the programme and now Dr. Joseph who has continued in the same vein.

The country has also received substantial technical and financial assistance from the Netherlands

designated authority on any disease. One of the greatest obstacles we are faced with is the fact that many people who suspect or know that they may be victims of leprosy, do not seek medical attention. This is sadly so because of the fear of being ostracized from a society that conveniently embraces only those diseases that are seemingly well understood and are apparently harmless. When an infected individual is not treated, he/she is capable of transmitting bacteria to unsuspecting susceptible individuals.

Minis santé jafé anpil pou fé asiwé ki poblenm lad anba kondwit, épi pou sa, nou ka wimésyé toute twavayé santé. mwen ka wimésyé osi, tout ogannizasyon entennasyonal kon paho, carec, ek fon Hollandé kont maladi lad, ki ka asisté nou wann pou twétman lad, san mandé piblik-la pou péyé pou sévis sala.

La ni an bagay ki ka anbété mwen anpil: zafé moun ki pa vlé vini chaché twétman lad pis yo pé sosyété-a widitjilé yo. moun poko kopwann ki nou sa tweété maladi lad.

There are some of us in this society who think that we have an innate immunity against leprosy and even the idea of possibly being at risk of contracting leprosy is perceived as a huge insult.

Due to our negative attitudes, we shun medical attention when affected and are become time bombs just waiting

to infect the next vulnerable victim. For those already affected by leprosy and are on treatment, we encourage you to continue and remember that the battle is soon over. For those who have been non-compliant with the treatment, we encourage you to return for treatment. Remember that only treatment can guarantee the avoidance of those serious disabilities like blindness, loss of limbs and crippled hands or feet.

An appeal is going out to the nation to embrace those affected by leprosy, to give them moral support and to respect their right as human beings to live as every other member of society. We implore you to show support by participating in different activities designated throughout the month of January, to mark leprosy awareness month. We further urge you not to rely on misinformation.

Call the Ministry of Health, your community nurse or doctor, to find out more about leprosy.

Mwen ka mandé tout moun pou sipoté moun anpami nou ki afékté épi maladi lad. annou wespékté yo épi si ou vlé pli enfómasyon asou maladi lad, eben mannyé pou viv épi moun ki ni maladi sala, telefóné minis santé, ében kwiyé népot nós ében dókté.

Thank you for listening, good day and may God bless you.



Following the successful opening of the Bordelais Correctional Facility, government officials are looking towards the completion of other major infrastructural projects including the southern police headquarters in Vieux-Fort.

READY TO SERVE COUNTRY



THE BORDELAIS “FAMILY”

PREPARES FOR NEW TASKS

They are among the finest St Lucia has to offer, having passed with flying colours the rigorous recruitment criteria and intensive training required by Government for persons seeking employment at the new Bordelais Correctional Facility.

Over 300 persons who had applied for appointment as correctional officers didn't make it. They came up short in various ways.

On Wednesday, at the official opening ceremony for Bordelais, the 78 new correctional officers demonstrated their military-like discipline, plus their readiness and determination to get on with the challenging job of rehabilitating the nation's offenders and making them fine citizens.

Describing the officers as “my family”, Director of Corrections, Hilary Herman, says they're well trained motivated and will aim in everything they do to get it right the first time.

“We'll make sure our inmates stay inside,” Herman promised.

YEAR OF THE CHILD

Government is designating 2003 as the Year of the Child. It's a move to mobilise the nation into taking decisive action to improve the lot of children.

It is expected that Governor-General, Dame Pearlette Louisy, will make the official designation during her Throne Speech to mark the official start of a new session of Parliament for 2003. Amid heightened concern about a worrying level of child abuse in the society, Government also intends during the year to get Parliament to enact a number of measures aimed at improving and protecting the rights of children.

The initiative, announced by Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony in his New Year's address, will ensure that children's issues are kept at the forefront of the national agenda through a yearlong programme of activities and sees a major role for the private sector in helping to improve the quality of life for the nation's children.

“As I drive around St Lucia, I am immediately struck by the absence of parks and other recreational facilities where our children can meet, play and have fun with their peers, closely supervised by parents,” he noted.



A BRIDGE IN GOOD SHAPE

The Caico bridge, damaged a few years ago by Tropical Storm Debby, is in good shape again. Much-needed rehabilitation work was carried out last year by contractor, C.O. Williams Construction, under the OECS Emergency Recovery and Disaster Management project, financed by the World Bank and the Government of St. Lucia. The cost of the project was \$578,427. An almost identical amount — \$586,451 — was also spent to rehabilitate the Marc-Floissac bridge, in Bexon, that was similarly in bad shape. A Nationwide photographer visited the Caico bridge site last month as heavy-duty equipment was clearing the river below as part of the finishing touches on the project. Government has spent millions of dollars in the last five years to improve the island's physical infrastructure to enhance the general prospects for economic development and to raise the quality of life for St. Lucians.

Saint Lucia NATIONWIDE is published every fortnight by the Department of Information Services.

Contact us at: The Department of Information Services, Greaham Louisy Administrative Building, The Waterfront, Castries, St. Lucia, West Indies
Tel: (758) 468 2116; Fax (758) 453 1614; E-mail: gis@candw.lc; http://stlucia.gov.lc