

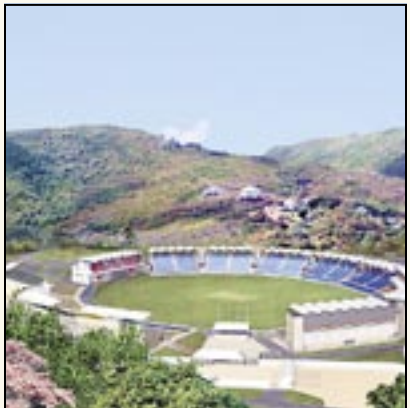


NATIONWIDE

A publication of the Department of Information Services



Best Government in the Region - page 1 & 2



CWC officials meet - page 2



Tribute to Florita Marquis - page 6



St. Lucia rich with role models - page 6 & 8



The Gardens prepare for drainage works - page 2 & 7



SAINT LUCIA WINS BEST GOV'T AWARD

The island of St. Lucia was celebrating after winning the Caribbean Hotel Association vote for Best Government, at the Crystal Palm Awards for Excellence, held at the Renaissance Chancery Court hotel on Saturday, November 2004. This recognises

St. Lucia as having the most amiable environment for developing tourism and investment.

The awards, which are voted for by all 36 Caribbean member countries, are a recognition of the CHA's travel industry partners in Europe, and with only six categories in total, competi-

tion for the elegant Tiffany statues is fierce.

The Hon. Philip J. Pierre, Minister of Tourism said, "We are thrilled to have accepted the CHA's Crystal Palm Award for Excellence in recognition of the St. Lucian Government.

Continued on page 2



"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



St. Lucia wins best Gov't Award

Continued from page 1

These awards are tremendously well respected and it means that the spirit of partnership between Government and the private sector is working, and the award is a tribute to that partnership”.

Hotel partners and hotel properties on the island were also present alongside the Minister to accept the award. Other winners on the night included Air Jamaica for Best Airline, Virgin Holidays for Best UK Tour Operator, and Tropical Places, Ireland for Best European Tour Operator.

Alec Sanguinetti, Director General

and CEO of CHA said, “The Crystal Palm Awards of Excellence is CHA’s premier event in European Market-place. It was established in 1997 to honour the Caribbean and Leading travel partners in the United Kingdom and Europe. They have grown year by year and are regularly attended by some of the Caribbean’s most important dignitaries. We have received excellent feedback from this year’s ceremony and are looking forward to next year’s event, to be held in November 12, 2005 at the renaissance Chancery Court Hotel.

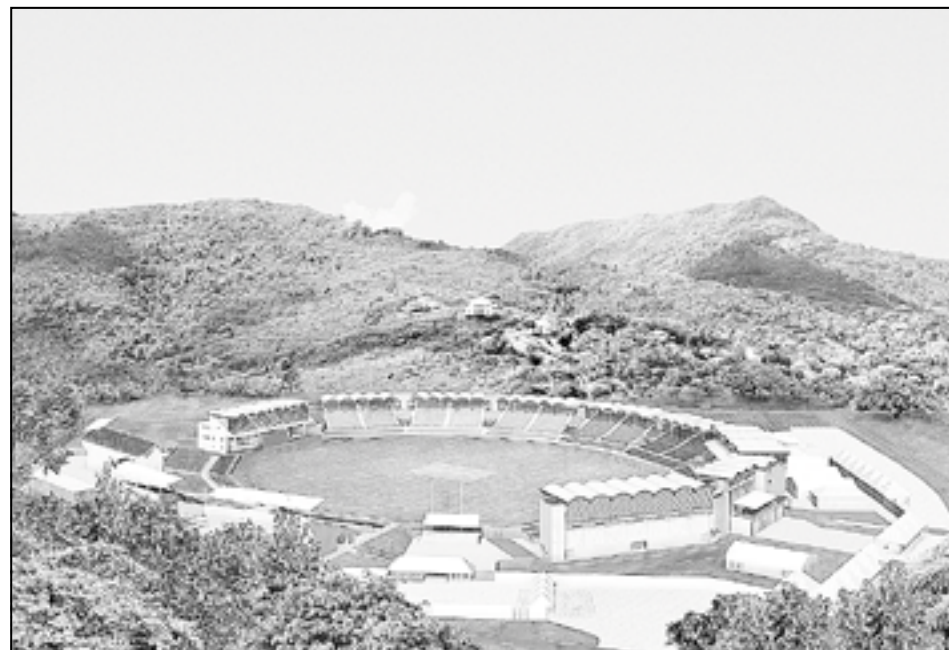
2007 Cricket World Cup. Beausejour is also the venue for one of the semi-finals matches.

For the ICC delegation, which was headed by ICC Chief Executive Officer Malcolm Speed, it was the first time that the world body for international cricket had held one of its quarterly meetings in the Caribbean..

In addition to their board meetings, the ICC/GCC/CWC delegation met with members of Saint Lucia’s Local Organising Committee (LOC) World Cup Saint Lucia Inc (WCSL) on Wednesday to discuss issues pertaining to Saint Lucia’s hosting of the Blue

Package in the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

Saint Lucia’s preparations for the 2007 Cricket World Cup continue this week with WCSL Chairman Dr. James Fletcher attending a meeting in Barbados on Monday (15 November 2004) of Chief Executive Officers/Chairpersons of LOCs and CWC 2007. Claudius Francis (Venue Development Project Manager) and Claude Guillaume (Venue Developer) will also attend meetings in Barbados pertaining to design and development from Wednesday 17 November 2004.



Beausejour Cricket Ground when completed

ICC, GCC, CWC, met in Saint Lucia

Members of the International Cricket Council (ICC), the Global Cricket Corporation (GCC), and the ICC Cricket World Cup W.I. 2007 Inc. (CWC 2007) concluded

a week of meetings in Saint Lucia on Sunday, 14 November 2004, with a two-hour visit to the Beausejour Cricket Ground, the home of England in the Opening Round of the

Unrestricted movement of goods to become a reality under CSME

As St. Lucia and other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States prepare for the advent of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), the unrestricted movement of goods throughout the region is one reality that will capture the attention of customs officials.

Comptroller of the Customs and Excise Department in St. Lucia, Mr. Claude Paul said several meetings have been held at CARICOM task force level, and that St. Lucia was working to meet its obligations under the Treaty.

Mr. Paul noted that the passage of the CARICOM Act put into effect the provisions of the Treaty, as far as national



Caricom Ministers at last meeting

legislation was concerned, including rules of origin: “This will facilitate the movement of goods between territories as the CSME takes more effect in St. Lucia. We already have under CARICOM, a situation whereby goods do not attract import duty and that will continue to be the case under CSME, and there would be removal of further restrictions, which are currently in place, for example, the import licence regime. In that regard, there are two aspects, the third and fourth schedule of the external trade restrictions order, restricted imports order, which I imagine, would be further reduced or removed in the longer term.”

Ministry mindful of concerns about flood mitigation works

Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities Hon. Felix Fenisterre said that his Ministry was mindful of concerns that may be expressed as a result of flood mitigation works, which are to start soon, in the area of the George the 5th Park.

Works in the Gardens, is part of a strategy used to resolve the issue of flooding in that part of the city, which in turn affects neighbouring sections. It will involve the elevation of darling road, the draining of ravines into the main drain in the park, which itself will undergo major modification and the construction of a new drain along Jn. Baptist Street.

“As soon as the first bulldozer goes into the gardens, there is going to be a public outcry that is what’s going to happen. We know that, we expect that and we will have to be prepared for it, to keep explaining that it was in

the budget, it was explained”, Minister Fenisterre said.

The Minister said the works to be undertaken, should add to the enhancement of the Gardens: “The Caribbean Development Bank was adamant, they

were insistent that they would get a signed no objection from, such as the City Council, the National Trust, the Archaeological and Historical Society and there has been concurrence from these interest as to what is being put

into the gardens will in fact lend some form of enhancement to the gardens to what it is right now”.

Four contracts were dished out among three contractors from St. Lucia, Martinique and China last week, for the commencement of works in December, to eliminate the incidence of flooding in the area in and around the gardens and in the West Coast Village of Anse-La-Raye.



George V Park (The Gardens) after flood water receded



Gros Islet bus stop among those to be affected by drainage works

Atlantic Rally for Cruisers sets sail for St. Lucia

St. Lucia is once again getting set to host more than 200 yachts for the 2004 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC), which sets sail from Las Palmas this Sunday, November 21.

This is the 6th consecutive year that the ARC has been able to attract over

two hundred yachts, with more than 24 nations participation The first yacht is expected to arrive at the Rodney Bay Marina between November 28 and December 1 2004.

This year marks the 14th year since the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers has been

coming to St. Lucia. The ARC has contributed significantly to the commercial economic activities in St. Lucia in the month of December.

According to Director of Tourism, Hilary Modeste, “this year the St. Lucia Tourist Board and the World Cruis-

ing Club are working even harder to provide better services and activities for ARC participants”.

Some of the activities planned for this year’s ARC includes: a Welcome Party at the St Lucia yacht club, Lazy Jazz Afternoon at the Rodney Bay Marina, A Caribbean Party at the Pigeon Island National Landmark, and other activities.

The organizers are looking forward to a record breaking performance this year.

OECS Heads Exchange Views with CIDA President on Canadian Assistance

OECS Heads of Government on Thursday discussed Canada’s assistance programme for the sub-region during an engagement with President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Mr. Paul Thibault.

The discussions were held during the first day of their 40th OECS Authority meeting in Tortola, BVI.

Mr. Thibault, his Vice President Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski, and Canadian High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Mr. Michael Welsh were part of a high level delegation to the meeting.

CIDA, the executing agency for Canada’s overseas development assistance, has an indicative planning figure of up to CND\$35 million in its 2002-2007 development programme for the sub-region. This excludes indirect assistance through other CIDA supported multilateral programmes.

The CIDA President used his visit to join OECS Director General in signing a Contribution Arrangement for an OECS Secretariat Institution Strengthening Project valued at CND\$3.75 million.

The Secretariat currently executes several CIDA funded projects for the

sub-region. These include the OECS Trade Policy project whose five-year life cycle ended in 2004 and to which a further extension was granted to March 2006. The project is designed to strengthen the capacity of the OECS sub-region to participate and compete in the global economy.

The OECS Secretariat also handles the CIDA funded Family Law project which is helping to reform the justice system and social support services in order to deal more effectively with family and domestic violence issues. The Secretariat performs a monitoring and facilitating role for the Eastern Ca-

ribbean Economic Management Programme (ECEMP) geared towards building capacity to support economic and public finance planning and policy development in OECS Member States.

There is also the Eastern Caribbean Education Reform project (ECERP) as well as the Environment Capacity Development project.

The CIDA President and his team journeyed to Grenada on Friday with Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell for a first hand look at damage from hurricane Ivan and to continue discussions on Canada’s support to the recovery effort.

PM concern about poor debt servicing by borrowers



Caption

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, International Financial Services, Economic Affairs and Information, Honourable Dr. Kenny Anthony has expressed concern about the poor servicing of debt by some sections of borrowers, and is to discuss the matter with the local Bankers Association at their upcoming quarterly meeting.

Speaking at the 31st Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Association of Indigenous Banks on Monday, November 15, at the Sandals Grande St. Lucian Beach Resort, Dr. Anthony said, “We are currently following up on the issue of systemic delays in the realization of residential property col-

lateral provided by chronically delinquent borrowers, who are able but are unwilling to meet their debt servicing obligations”.

He further reminded the bankers that, financial institutions provided the monetary means to the overall upliftment of the quality of life of persons,

and stressed that such institutions had the advantage over the average borrower and must therefore be held to the highest level of performance.

“In our society, the two parties are of unequal strength. The average borrower is normally in a disadvantageous position between himself and his bank,

both in terms of knowledge, sophistication and the leverage that he can exercise. The lender who is in a more advantageous position should try as much as possible to inform the borrower of his rights, obligations and the implications of the failure to comply with the terms of the credit”, Dr. Anthony said.

While highlighting some of the significant contributions that the banking system has been making in the region, Dr. Anthony acknowledged that government viewed the banking sector as an integral partner in the development effort of the region.



Front row from right: Hon. Mario Michel, Dr. Kenny Anthony, Dame Pearlette Louisy and Sir Dwight Venner

PM pledges further assistance to the Ex-Service League

Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Kenny Anthony has pledged further assistance to the St. Lucia Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League by increasing its subvention in the next financial year.

Dr. Anthony made the disclosure at

the Remembrance Day reception held at the Prime Minister’s Official residence on Sunday, following the annual parade on the Derek Walcott Square.

He further echoed a call by Patron of the Ex-Service League, Her Excel-

lency Dame Pearlette Louisy for the involvement of young people in the annual Remembrance Day observance. He said “But I think Mrs. Pilgrim gave us vital advice; she said let us start perhaps with the children”, Prime Minister Hon. Dr. Kenny Anthony said.

Dr. Anthony said while the involvement of young people was critical to sustaining the survival of the league, the entire St. Lucian community should embrace the contribution made by those who sacrificed for the sake of freedom.



**Address by Dr. the Honourable
Kenny D. Anthony
Prime Minister
at the Opening Ceremony
of the Caribbean Association of
Indigenous Banks Inc. (CAIB)
31st Annual General Meeting and
Conference, Monday 15,
November, 2004**

A warm welcome

Let me be one of the first to welcome our first time visitors to this "Our Fair Helen" that Saint Lucians and many others call home. No doubt, you would have been stunned by its natural beauty and fascinated by the hospitality of our people. During the days ahead, despite your very busy schedule, you will have the opportunity to savour its rich cultural heritage and enjoy some of its many attractions. But what is Saint Lucia? What are its challenges? What are we doing and will continue to do to improve the standard of living of our people and what is the role of the financial sector in meeting that objective? Allow me, even at the cost of boredom to share a few thoughts with you.

Seeking comparative advantage

Saint Lucia is one of the world's smallest sovereign states with a geographical area that is barely 238 square miles. The island is home to over 160,000 residents and possibly another 100,000 in the diaspora. As a very small open economy it is continually transforming itself and identifying and pursuing economic activities where it has a comparative advantage and for which the international demand is buoyant. Currently, it is hospitality services with an emphasis on leisure and pleasure but we are actively exploring opportunities in the fast-growing international financial services sector. Our strategies and efforts allow us to be ranked among the world's middle income developing economies.

We are not just a pretty place. Despite our very small size and resource limitations we are proud to say that we do make significant contributions to global achievements. Following from our rich intellectual traditions we have the unprecedented honour of two of our sons being awarded, thirteen years apart, Nobel Laureates in the academic disciplines of Economics and English Literature. In addition, many of our bright sons and daughters are contributing abroad in academic, business and professional pursuits.

This year has been kind to us. A few months ago our pitons were designated a World Heritage Site. A week ago, we received a Five Star Diamond Award from the American Academy of Hospitality Services, for excellence in tourism, the first Caribbean destination to receive such an award. On that

Saint Lucia's policy responses to the issue of International Competitiveness

same weekend, in London, Saint Lucia received the Crystal Award for the government most supportive of investment in tourism in the region.

These awards confirm that we are a hospitality destination, thanks to the workers of the hospitality industry. They have made us what we are today.

A fair share of challenges

But accolades notwithstanding, we face many challenges. The last five years have seen more than their fair share. Over the years we had built our economies on the tripod of tourism; small scale manufacturing, largely for the domestic and regional markets; and agriculture through bananas and food crops for domestic consumption. The continuing declines in the US stock market have seriously eroded the wealth of our typical potential visitors and reduced their financial ability to travel. The aftermath of 9/11 resulting in the continuing threats of terrorism and the Iraqi war have compounded the problem by heightening travel fears and inconvenience. To keep the tourism industry vibrant our hoteliers have had to discount room rates very deeply while both the government and the industry have had to intensify advertising and promotion.

Strictures of liberalization

We are rapidly facing the strictures of liberalization. We are losing our preferential access to the European market for our bananas –an industry that was once our lifeblood and that helped to transform and modernize our economy, particularly the rural one. If we are to maintain our accustomed share of our traditional market we would have to improve the competitiveness of our banana industry to world standards. That is we have to significantly reduce our cost of production, improve the quality and desirability of our bananas and the timeliness and reliability of our supplies. The imminent advent of the CSME will continue to erode if not eliminate the special treatment and protection under Article 56 that our manufactures enjoyed in the CARICOM market. This will likely produce negative impacts except for our manufactures that have niche markets and/or are competitive.

An apparent paradox

The economic adjustments over the last five years have resulted in a slower rate of growth in the context of increasing liquidity in the banking system. This apparent paradox, which was manifested not only in Saint Lucia, needs explanation. In the face of economic uncertainty, households increased their precautionary balances while businesses postponed their investment plans thus increasing their savings balances and simultaneously reducing their demand for loan funds. The unprecedented increases in corporate sector liquidity balances should not have been surprising as businesses usually finance a significant proportion of their business expansion from retained earnings, payables and other internally generated funds.

The government's response was to prime the economy to maintain some investment momentum and to provide some social safety nets to alleviate poverty. To use more technical language, the Government actively pur-

sued counter-cyclical policies. This, necessarily, placed a strain on the fiscal and increased debt levels. But these, though being closely monitored, are within benchmarks and much lower than in many neighboring economies.

Three challenges

The government's challenges are basically threefold: It has to enhance business and investor confidence and, simultaneously, it has to create the right policy and institutional framework to improve our export competitiveness. It has to provide a socially accepted framework to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of economic gains; and that all persons have a fair chance of contributing, to the optimum of their abilities, to development; and that those who cannot contribute are basically provided for.

The tools available to the government are a combination of policies and programmes including the establishment of appropriate supportive institutional arrangements. The realm of policies includes monetary, trade, commercial, investment, sector and fiscal policies. While I have compartmentalized them into distinct groupings, and theoretically they can be, in practice policies have to be part of an overall programme and hence have coherence and consistency and be mutually supportive and reinforcing of each other.

For purposes of this address I will focus largely on monetary and financial sector issues and policy responses to the challenges of enhancing investor confidence, boosting export competitiveness, creating opportunities for all and safeguarding the marginalized.

The financial sector in a modern economy is one of the key sectors impacting on development. In our economy the banks whose functions are to mobilize and allocate savings dominate the financial sector and, directly and indirectly, are not only critical to our development but impact on the lives of most of us. Savings and investment are two of the main requirements for economic growth and development. Bankers, to a large extent not only influence, through their service, products and terms how much is saved but also, how much is allocated to consumption and to productive investment. Since growth and development and the safeguard of the welfare of its citizens are also governments' prime objectives it is no wonder that governments have a keen interest in the activities of banks and see them as critical partners in the development effort.

Saint Lucia, together with six other states in the sub-region share a common currency as part of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. As such they have their own Central Bank and agree to the formulation of most monetary policy at the sub-regional level, through a Monetary Council, where each has an equal voice and where major decisions are by unanimity. The arrangement works very well. For over 25 years it has preserved the stability and integrity of the currency thus satisfying two of the sub-regions major objectives: maintaining economic confidence and enhancing international competitiveness through price stability. The ECCU's in-built currency pooling arrangement has not only allowed the sub-region to present a united position

in relation to our international reserves but has its own mechanisms to prevent any from abusing the patrimony of the many.

Requirements from financial institutions

In order to appreciate the rationale for domestic monetary and financial policy it is important to be aware of what the authorities require from intermediating financial institutions. The requirements are basically to: Enhance savings mobilization; Provide a fair return to savers; Allocate savings judiciously and prudently among the competing demands to reflect social and economic needs: e.g financing for such social and economic projects as education and residential low-income housing; loans to the productive sector for new and expanded feasible economic activities; personal loans to supplement savings efforts and financing for commercial activity; charge as low a cost as possible on loans, particularly social and economic loans, but paying due regard to cost of funds, credit risk, administrative cost and reasonable profits; adhere to sound management principles and practices, regulatory requirements and international accounting standards to ensure the institution's sustainability and the safety of the public's funds; and be a good corporate citizen.

All the policy responses pronounced by government and/or the Monetary Authority are designed to ensure that the aforementioned requirements are met.

Policy interventions since 1999

The Government, through a series of policy interventions over a period of time beginning in 1999, capitalized, privatized, consolidated and approved of strategic alliances for the financial institutions that it had established and owned from 1980. The objectives were basically to improve the efficiency, competitiveness and dynamism of the domestic financial system. It was expected that the new institution would have the critical mass to exercise leverage to lead and innovate not only in the domestic but also in the sub-regional financial system. Moreover, it is the intention that the model's success would be one that could be replicated in the rest of the sub-region as a precursor to a more unified sub-regional banking system. The model has achieved some very encouraging results so far. It is the largest and most profitable financial group, providing a broad range of financial products and services in commercial development, investment, offshore banking and in general insurance. It is the largest provider of the higher-risk lower middle-income housing and tertiary education finance and has established equity and student loan guarantee funds to minimize the risks and address the needs in those sectors respectively.

Influencing "on lending" rates

Another recent policy initiative was the Government's attempt to influence the commercial bank's on-lending rate by borrowing from abroad at lower rates of interest and using the proceeds to reduce its indebtedness with the domestic commercial banks. The strategy was to benefit from the low cost of external funds and at the same time increase the

Continued on page 5

Saint Lucia's policy responses to the issue of International Competitiveness

Continued from page 4

level of liquidity in the banking system with the hope that this would force the banks to reduce their on-lending rate as a fillip to stimulate economic activity. The strategy is now beginning to work but it did require some renewal of business confidence that was provided by the announcement of Saint Lucia as a major site for World Cup 2007 and the attendant fiscal incentives that the government is intending to provide for the establishment of new visitor accommodation.

But there is another lesson here, this time for the domestic banking system. The Government borrowed on the regional market, at much lower rates of interest than rates offered by domestic banks, admittedly in a cycle of declining interest rates. Of course, there are sound reasons why Governments should not borrow excessively on domestic markets. But this does not counter my broader point, that as the regional market becomes more sophisticated, domestic banks will have to re-adjust their approaches otherwise they will lose out on Government securities and other instruments.

All of government's policy prescriptions are intended to create the policy framework that would enhance the economy's competitiveness. More specifically, our goal is to have a financial system that competitively intermediates adequate amounts of resources to

the productive, social and commercial sectors. However, ultimately, our economy's ability to compete comes from the individual and collective efforts of the private sector in general, and the banking system in particular.

The government of Saint Lucia sees the banking sector as an integral partner in the development effort not only because of this sectors contribution to saving, investment and business competitiveness but also because of that sector's dominance in the financial system. We look forward to the quarterly dialogue between The Ministry of Finance and the local Bankers' Association on performance reviews, issues and concerns. We are currently following up on the issue of systemic delays in the realization of residential property collateral provided by chronically delinquent borrowers who are able but unwilling to meet their debt servicing obligations.

A word of advice

Whilst on the subject of non-performing loans I wish to remind banks that credit is a transaction between at least two parties. In our society the two parties are of unequal strength. The average borrower is normally in a disadvantageous position between himself and his bank both in terms of knowledge, sophistication and the leverage that he can exercise. The lender who is in a more advantageous posi-

tion should try as much as possible to inform the borrower of his rights, obligations and the implications of a failure to comply with the terms of the credit. The doctrine of 'caveat emptor' should not be pre-eminent in a banking transaction that has the potential, if it fails, to destroy livelihood, character, creditworthiness and reputation for life, and to deny a home to a family. More than due care and understanding should be exercised in such situations. A poorly performing credit portfolio is as much the fault of the creditor as it of the lenders and the borrowers should not bear the full burden alone and injudiciously.

Do we expand individually or jointly?

Given the high cost and rate of obsolescence of technology, the need for but high cost of research, product development and promotion, it is imperative that if we are to stay on the cutting edge of technology to deliver the range and quality of products and services that our increasingly more sophisticated customers are demanding we need either to produce for the international market &/or engage in much more functional cooperation. We need to make a choice. Do we cater to the needs of our very small domestic markets at high cost with very high risks and doom ourselves to a future of insignificance; or do we expand individually or better yet as a group to become global players from our sub-regional base?

A deserved commendation

I wish to take this opportunity to commend your association for not only 31 years of existence but also the progress that it has made in the recent past in pursuing many functional cooperation initiatives for its members. I do not want to speculate that this may have something to do with the relocation of your secretariat to Saint Lucia! But more needs to be done if we are to improve our effectiveness and, more so, our regional, if not global impact. We need to develop modalities to develop an efficient, representative, cost-effective sub-regional ownership and governance structure. We need to sublimate our tendency to parochialism and have the commitment to make it work and let efficiency be the watchwords in our decision-making.

Since the indigenous banks are all largely in the private sector the move in this direction has got to be private sector driven. You can be assured of the blessing and support of the regional monetary and regulatory authorities. It is the only course that logic and practical considerations dictate. The ball is your court especially for the indigenous banks in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union.

I wish your conference every success and look forward to some meaningful step being taken during your deliberations as we pursue options to enhance our economic survival.

St. Lucia receives Five Star Diamond Award



Prime Minister addresses the occasion

November 05, 2004

The Five Star Diamond Award was started by Frank Sinatra and originally recognized the best restaurants and Chefs in the World. The Award is now given under the patronage of Donald Trump and has been expanded to recognize the best in Hospitality including Hotels, Airlines, Services, Products and now Destinations.

Thus far only three destinations have been privileged to receive this prestigious award -- Baden Baden and Weimar in Germany and Monaco. We recognize and are privileged that St. Lucia is the first Caribbean Island to receive this award.

Past recipients of this award include world-renowned companies such as Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons, Mandarin Oriental, One and Only, Sandals, Singapore Airlines, Virgin Airlines and of course American Airlines.

Mr. Joseph Cinque, President and CEO of the Academy, has been relentless in promoting the Award, traveling the world and becoming a regular spokesperson in the US, Europe and Asia. Indeed, one could argue that Joe has become the face of hospitality excellence and we feel extremely privileged to have him return to St. Lucia

and to personally present us with this great honour. We are all aware that any company, product or destination which seeks to make its mark in the world of hospitality aspires to become a recipient of the Five Star Diamond Award. The Academy's Annual Award Ceremony which is held in Berlin, Germany, is now recognized as the premier event in hospitality and is loyally attended by industry leaders in the world of tourism.

On behalf of the Government and the people of St. Lucia, I wish to formally express the country's sincerest gratitude to the American Academy of Hospitality Science for their decision to recognize our efforts to establish a quality destination. We know that the global competition in Tourism is getting stronger everyday. The pressure to create new jobs and to just grow the industry must always be balanced with the prudence of value, quality and sustainability. Receiving this award tonight encourages me to believe that we are on the right path. This is not to say that we have completed our journey but that we have reached an important milestone.

In fact, 2004 has been a great year for St. Lucia. The Pitons, one of our national treasures has been designated a World Heritage Site. St Lucia has been awarded a premium package for the upcoming Cricket World Cup in 2007. Cricket World Cup is regarded as the third largest world sporting event, behind the Olympics and World Cup Football.

The fabric of our people is confirmed by our two Nobel prize winners, Sir Derek Walcott and Sir Arthur Lewis, not to mention the many accolades we receive about the friendliness of our people.

My Government intends to continue on a path of excellence, and we are further encouraged by the commitment of nearly 750 new rooms due to open in the next 6 months. Coconut Bay, owned by Carl Hendrickson and his son Butch, is a three hundred room family property, located in the Southern end of the island a stone's throw away from our international airport. This property will boast one of the largest lazy pools and water slides in the Caribbean. Plantation Villas and Spa, a new villa and suite development located on the east coast will have 72 villas and Suites will boast more than two hundred rooms and a world-class spa. Villa sales have been over subscribed and I understand plans are already afoot to expand. Coco Palm a three star EP property located in the heart of Rodney Bay Village was initially going to be an 84-room project but is now going to proceed immediately with phase two which includes 40 additional rooms and a 3000sq ft conference room along with a gym and spa. Another property coming on-stream soon is Calabash, a 23 room Boutique resort located in Marisule. Discovery Bay which held their ground breaking ceremony earlier this year will open in 2005 with over 60 villas and over 200 rooms. This property will assure St. Lucia's growth as a quality and upscale destination.

The Government has been instrumental in obtaining and the additional commitments for over 1000 new rooms over the next two years. Some of these include Beaches a 400 hundred room Family Resort developed by one of the Academy's past recipients Sandals. Praslin Beach which is planning to open as a Westin Resort with 150 rooms and a 18 hole signature golf course. Coconut Bay which will more than likely expand by another

three hundred rooms and along with a 18 hole links course. Mrs. Joyce Des-tang is far advanced with her plans for a third hotel in the Rodney Bay Village, Bay Gardens Beach Resort which will have approximately 150 rooms and suites and promises to set a new standard for St. Lucia. These developments represent a mixture of All Inclusive, EP Hotels and Boutique properties but more importantly they represent a cross section of Investors from abroad, the Caribbean and most importantly from St. Lucia. There are several other initiatives in the works which I hope to announce in the near future.

Coinciding with our success is the return of American Airlines with whom we are privileged to be receiving this award this evening. American has made an immeasurable contribution to the growth and development of St Lucia's Tourism and we are excited about their return. I am asking Mr. Scantlebury to please convey to Mr. Peter De-lora my gratitude for the confidence he continues to have in St. Lucia and to be assured of my Government's total and unequivocal support of him and American Airlines. I would like to recognize and thank Mr. Chuck Imof and his New York staff, Mr. Bob Troni and Mr. Tom Greenwald, all of American Airlines for their efforts during this week's activities. American Airlines not only is the largest airline in the world but more importantly is synonymous with the Americas.

Finally, Mr. Cinque, please convey our sincere appreciation to the Trustees of the Academy for bestowing this award on St Lucia and I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation for your tireless work to recognize the efforts of those who strive for excellence in hospitality.

Thank you.

St. Lucians bid farewell to Florita Marquis



Funeral reception

St. Lucians from all walks of life particularly residents from her home community of Canaries turned out in large numbers to pay final respect to prominent folklorist, Florita Marquis, who was laid to rest on Wednesday, November 10, 2004.

The 79 year old, who received national honours for her contribution to the island’s indigenous culture died on October 30.

Mourners got the last glimpse of her on the village square, where her grandson Eldric Bernard remembered her as a caring individual who loved to promote the indigenous culture of St. Lucia.

From the Canaries Square, Marquis’ body was taken to the Catholic Church where hundreds gathered to attend a ceremony in celebration of her life.

A very devoted La Rose celebrant, songs she penned and sang punctuated the ceremony, revealing the indelible contribution she made to the flower festival.

Eric Branford, a long time friend said he was particularly impressed by her delivery of Folk songs.

As in life, Florita Marquis also drew a large crowd in death, and her invaluable contribution to things creole etched in the minds of the hundreds who turned out to bid farewell.

Caricom joins fight against HIV/AIDS stigma

Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Mr. Edwin Carrington has issued a call for all persons in the CARICOM Region to strive to control the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and to give hope to persons living with the disease.

Speaking at a seminar held at the CARICOM Secretariat in Georgetown, Guyana on Monday, 15 November to sensitise staff about the issue, the Secretary-General pledged the Secretariat’s support for efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. The sensitisation forum came ahead of the CARICOM/United Kingdom High-Level Conference on Stigma and Discrimination, to be held 22-24 November in St. Kitts and Nevis under the theme, Champions for Change.

Mr. Carrington noted that the High-Level conference was taking place as the Region prepared for the advent of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME): “CARICOM Heads of Government are quite cognizant of the role of people in the efficient and effective operation of the CSME, and are concerned that the spread of HIV/AIDS would debilitate this most precious resource and constitute a major impediment to development”.

Noting that HIV/AIDS had become an epidemic, with the Caribbean being second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the prevalence of the disease, he said CARICOM Heads were persuaded to take urgent action to prevent and control the epidemic, which could severely impact the Region’s social and economic development.

Meanwhile, Guyana’s Health Minister Hon. Dr. Leslie Ramsammy in his address to the seminar, observed that despite pervasive education and awareness campaigns both at the national and Regional levels, stigma and discrimination persisted. In light of this, he said there was urgent need

for the enactment of laws with strict sanctions, to complement education and policy guidelines.

“As we in the Caribbean embrace the need to formulate a comprehensive legal framework as part of our overall response to HIV/AIDS, recognising that it is vital in the efforts to contain the epidemic, we must act with a sense of urgency and yet be careful that the human rights of all citizens are protected,” Dr. Ramsammy said.

St Lucia is rich with role models - National Archivist



Mrs. Margot Thomas

National Archivist, Mrs. Margot Thomas has said that St Lucia is rich with role models, and promised to present the evidence over the next two weeks. She was speaking at the launch of the National Archives Annual Exhibition, on Tuesday, November 17 at the Town Hall.

Mrs. Thomas of the Saint Lucia National Archives Authority said that at a time when there seemed to be a national outcry over a shortage of role models to inspire young persons, the National Archives Annual Exhibition at the Town Hall aptly featured several Saint Lucians, both living and deceased, who have made an outstanding impact on society.

“And the gist of most conversations is that the youth are floundering, because there are no good examples for them to follow. This I would like to disagree with. I know from my reading and from my personal contact with people that there are lots of

persons to be emulated”, she said.

Chairman of the Saint Lucia National Archives Authority, Victor Poyotte said the Archives felt it was necessary to depart from the norm of recognising the contributions of persons after they had died: “Not only are we highlighting the contributions of those who have passed but I think we believe it is important that we highlight the contributions of persons who are still with us. Many times we tend to forget that those

who are still alive need to be praised, honoured and recognised for their contributions”.

Some of the persons honoured include Dr. Earl Long, first Chairperson of the National Archives and Justice Suzie d’Auvergne, among others. The exhibition will run until the November 26 under the theme, “Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Endowed for the future.”



Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Eastern Caribbean Appoints First Council

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Eastern Caribbean (ICAEC) has appointed its First Council. The election of officers took place during the Institute's inaugural meeting held at the ECCB Headquarters.

Mr. Anthony Atkinson of St Lucia was appointed President and Mr.

Ervin Southwell of Antigua and Barbuda Vice President. Mrs. Marcella Lanns-Monish of St Kitts and Nevis was elected as the Treasurer and Mr. Frank Myers of St Lucia as the Secretary. The ECCB's representative is Mr. James Simpson.

Launched in June 2004, the ICAEC was established as the supervisory and

regulatory body for the accounting profession in the ECCU. It will provide for greater coherence and quality in the structure and organization of the accounting profession, and will seek to enforce high standards of professional practice. The ICAEC will establish a membership structure with clear categories and appropriate designations,

including a category for persons who are competent to conduct financial statement audits.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Eastern Caribbean will be headquartered in St Lucia. All existing Institutes in the OECS will function as the branches of the ICAEC.

Amalgamate Police Band with School of Music - Luther Francois

Musician extraordinaire and one of St. Lucia's most outstanding jazz performers, Luther Francois has suggested that the Royal St. Lucia Police Band be amalgamated with the St. Lucia School of Music, which may lead to the formation of a local symphony orchestra. He is also of the view that St. Lucia needs a central musical entity.

"I would think that St. Lucia is really at this point to go a little beyond

the police band concept and to add a section of string players, who would be salaried like the guys in the police band, but not necessary within the police force of course. We can look forward to the formation eventually, of a symphonic orchestra, if this sort of thing can be put in place", St. Lucia's leading Jazz Saxophonist and musician of International acclaimed Mr. Francois said.

Speaking with the GIS, the top St. Lucian musician said the Police Band

must be given a greater level of assistance, in order to enhance its profile: "I think that everything should be done to upgrade the operations of the band, particularly in the organisation of sheet music, preferably using computers. The band master should have a professional copyist assign to the band, to create a few more jobs and make life easier for the guys".

Francois, who rehearsed with the Royal St. Lucia Police Band ahead of

tonight's Gospel Concert, expressed satisfaction with the level of performance, which he said can be even better, providing the Band can be assisted at the level required. He said he was quite honoured to be performing with the Band.

Tonight's Gospel Concert is in keeping with the observance of the band's 57th anniversary, this month.

Meanwhile, the Royal St. Lucia Police Band, is hosting an exhibition at the Police Auditorium, displaying musical instruments used by the band in years past, as well as those of today. A number of the band's activities in its 57th years of existence are also being exhibited.

Workshop on Substance Abuse coming

The Substance Abuse Advisory Council Secretariat, in collaboration with the Inter-American

Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and the Correctional Services of Canada (CSC), will be hosting

a workshop entitled, "Effective Substance Abuse Programming for Offenders" from November 22-24, 2004 at the Bay Gardens Inn.

This workshop is intended to expose planners from correctional, health and community based services from different Caribbean Territories, to elements necessary to establish and implement

an effective substance abuse programming model for offenders within the various countries.

Individuals from Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the Cayman Islands and St. Lucia are expected to participate.

Dental and Nutrition Exhibition coming

The general public is invited to a Dental and Nutrition Exhibition to be held by Ministry of Health on the 1st Floor of La Place Carenage from Tuesday, November 23rd to Friday November 26, 2004 from 9:00

a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

A wide range of dental and healthy eating products will be presented to the public, with professionals available to offer advice.

Heavy rains + blocked drains from improper disposal of garbage = flooding



School Tour Starts on Monday at St. Joseph's Convent

The annual regional Caribbean Vizion's School tour starts on Monday, November 22 at St. Joseph's Convent, Jany's alma mater.

Caribbean Visions is a group led by Trinidadian Entertainer Kurt Allen and prior to her death, Calypso Queen of St. Lucia, Jany Williams.

The month-long school tour is aimed at promoting the value of education,

Caribbean culture, the concept of Caribbean integration and healthy living.

The St. Lucia leg of the regional tour was due to start the week Jany Williams died in a car crash near Canaries.

The members of Caribbean Visions agreed to continue the tour, which will include 14 performances at selected schools around the island. The group

has been able to refocus on this year's production in spite of the pain of losing one of their founding members in a tragic car crash. A new lead vocalist has been drafted to perform the roles that were created for Jany Williams.

The cast comprises young persons from Caribbean islands, such as Barbados, St. Vincent, Antigua, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and St.

Kitts.

This year's production will cover a number of themes, including HIV/Aids, appreciation for Caribbean Music, the issue of piracy and the value of education. The St. Lucia leg of the tour ends in early December.

The production is directed by St. Lucian Gary Burt.



Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Endowed for the Future.

 Ms. Sixtus Charles	 Mr. George Odum	 Ms. Martina Francis
 Mr. Primose Bledman	 Mr. George Theophilus	 Mr. Roderick Walcott
 Dr. Earl Long	 Mr. Laurie Auguste	 Mr. Jn. Baptise Gaspard
 Mrs. Daphne Auguste	 Justice Suzie d'Auvergne	

A photograph of a woman wearing a green dress and a green headscarf, speaking at a podium. The podium has a microphone and a small flag. There are yellow and white balloons in the background.