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Tel: (305) 238-2868
1-800-605-7516
editor@caribbeantoday.com
ct_ads@bellsouth.net
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The mayor of a southern Florida city says a special election will be held by March to replace suspended

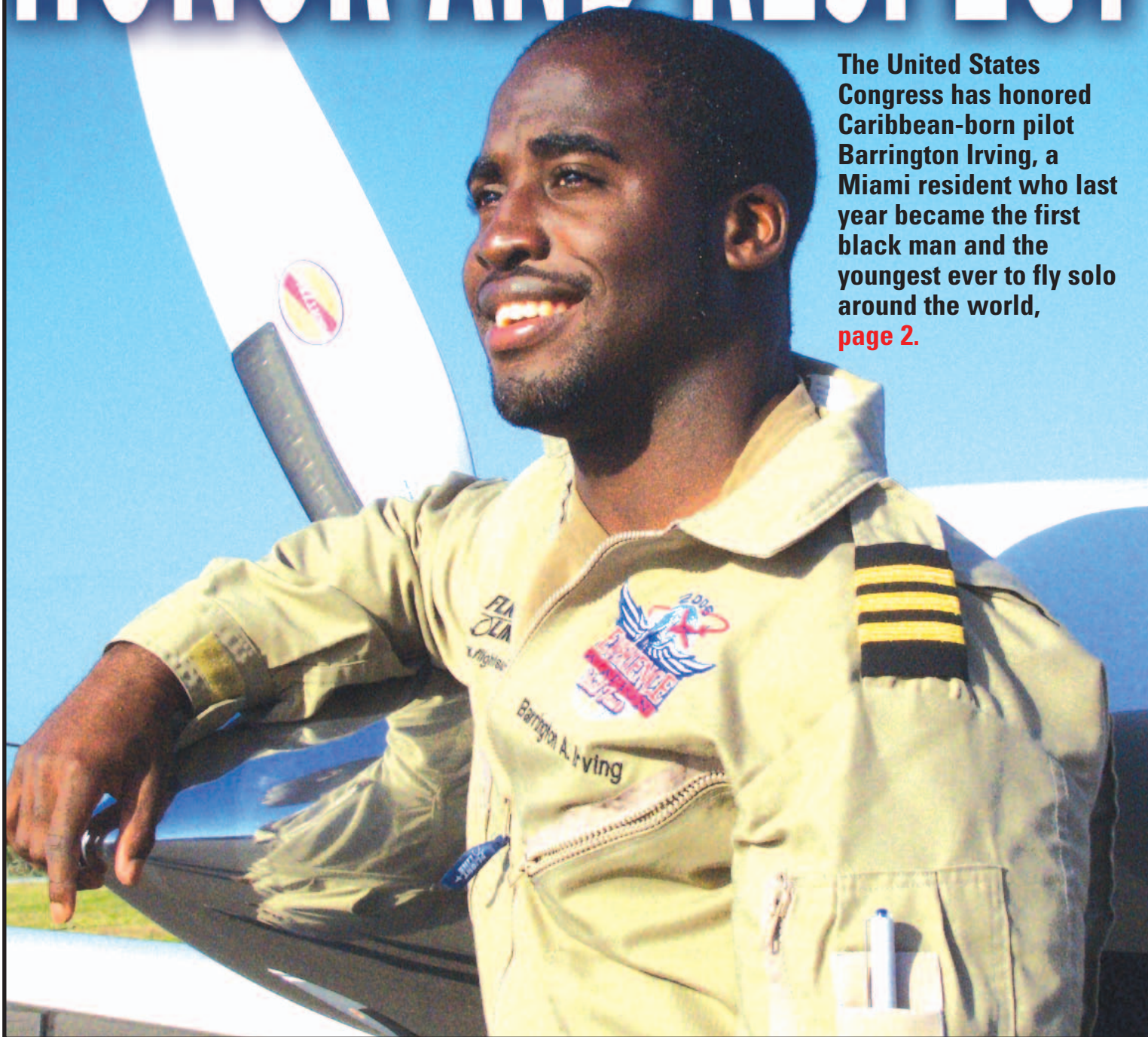
Caribbean-born City Commissioner Fitzroy Salesman, who is facing a gun-related charge, page 2.

Irving Burgie, a music composer who wrote the Barbados national anthem and a host of Jamaican and Caribbean folk songs, was recently honored for his work by the New York City Council, page 11.



The World Bank says that while the Caribbean and Latin American region remains the largest recipient of recorded remittances, growth of remittances to the area has slowed in recent months.

HONOR AND RESPECT



The United States Congress has honored Caribbean-born pilot Barrington Irving, a Miami resident who last year became the first black man and the youngest ever to fly solo around the world, page 2.

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U.S. Congress honors Jamaican pilot who flew solo around world

MIAMI – The United States Congress has honored a young Jamaican-born pilot who became the first black to fly solo around the world.

Miami-based Barrington Irving, 23, was recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives when it unanimously passed a resolution honoring him last month. The bill, sponsored by Florida Democratic representatives Alcee Hastings and Kendrick Meek, encourages museums across the U.S. to also commemorate Irving's accomplishment.

"When the younger generation is looking for a role model and hero, they need to look no further than Barrington Irving," Meek said in a statement.

"This young pilot proved that when you dream big dreams and work hard, the

extraordinary is possible.

"I am honored to call Barrington Irving a constituent," he continued.

'INSPIRATION'

Irving started his 26,000-mile journey on his single-engine plane "Inspiration" in March. He had convinced friends, politicians and corporate sponsors to believe in his aviation dream.

He had received recognitions from cities in southern Florida and his native Jamaica after returning to Florida in June, touching down at Orlando's Opa-locka Executive Airport.

"It's just so humbling to know that something that started so small is now being recognized across the nation," Irving said.

"But, no matter what, the greatest award will always be



Irving

the impact that I've made on youth and teaching them they can do or be anything."



New Jersey to apologize for slavery

NEW JERSEY - New Jersey is expected this month to join four other states in America in apologizing for slavery.

Under a measure to be considered by its legislators, New Jersey will join Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia in issuing formal apologies for slavery. If it does, it will also be the first Northern state in the United States to do so.

"This is not too much to ask of the state of New Jersey," said Democratic

Assemblyman William Payne, sponsor of the slavery bill.

"All that is being requested is to say three simple words: 'We are sorry'. If former Confederate states can take action like this, why can't a Northeast state like New Jersey?" he added.

RESOLUTION

The Caribbean diplomatic corps at the United Nations ended 2007 on a positive note by getting the U.N. to pass a resolution by acclamation,

designating Mar. 25 as "International Day" in recognition of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The resolution also adopted by consensus a call by the Caribbean community (CARICOM) for the erection of a permanent memorial in the halls of the U.N. "in acknowledgement of the tragedy and in consideration of the legacy of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade".



Cocaine traffickers shifting from Caribbean routes ~ U.S.

WASHINGTON – The United States Coast Guard says that illicit trafficking in cocaine is seemingly shifting from the Caribbean to the Pacific, as it announced record seizures this year.

"We have forced them to adapt to routes that are dangerous and are expensive,"

said Coast Guard Commander Bob Watts in announcing the record annual cocaine seizures worth more than \$4.7 billion.

Watts said the Coast Guard captured 355,755 pounds of cocaine in the past year, and that the largest seizure was 20 tons discovered aboard a Panamanian vessel in March.

Watts said because of the Coast Guard's increased surveillance in the Caribbean Sea, smugglers are turning to "riskier tactics" in trying to evade interdiction, including dissolving cocaine in diesel fuel.

ALTERNATIVES

He said they have also

Special election to fill seat of suspended Jamaican-born, Florida city commissioner

FLORIDA - The mayor of a southern Florida city says a special election will be held by March to replace suspended Jamaican-born Commissioner Fitzroy Salesman.

According to the Charter for the City of Miramar, a special election must be held within 90 days upon receipt of a suspension order to replace a commissioner. The commissioners were scheduled to meet on Jan. 9 to set the election date.

Mayor Lori Moseley said the election can't be held until March, so the city can give candidates an opportunity to contest the poll. So far, one candidate has emerged, but others said they are contemplating running for the seat.

Carl Lanke, 44, a school activist, who sits on the South Broward Drainage District Board, said he initially planned to run in 2009. But he said he will now launch a campaign and run in the March election.

"It's time to move on and for new leadership to represent Miramar," he said.

SUSPENDED

Last month, Florida Governor Charlie Crist suspended Salesman, 50, after he was charged with aggravated

assault with a firearm, a felony.

Prosecutors said Salesman pulled a gun on fellow shopper Lazavius Hudson, 18, at a Winn-Dixie Supermarket on Thanksgiving eve, Nov. 21.

Authorities initially charged Salesman with a misdemeanor, but the Broward State Attorney's Office upgraded the charge to a felony after interviewing more witnesses.

Salesman, who posted a \$5,000 bond and was released, holds a concealed weapons license and his attorney said he will plead not guilty.

The governor issued an executive order suspending Salesman on Dec. 21. Miramar City spokesman Romeo Lavarias said once the city received a signed suspension order from the governor's office Salesman's annual \$23,800 commission salary and benefits would be frozen.

This is Salesman's second suspension in two years. In June 2005, three months after Salesman was elected to a second term, then-Governor Jeb Bush suspended him after authorities charged him with driving under the influence and eluding police.

He was acquitted, and received \$88,000 in back pay and allowances, city officials said.

Salesman has been a commissioner in the south Broward County city of more than 100,000 people since 2001.



Moseley

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NEWS

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U.N. secretary general joins Caribbean in calling for end to 'modern day' slavery

UNITED NATIONS – United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has joined the Caribbean community (CARICOM) in calling for an end to “modern day” slavery.

In a message commemorating International Day for the Abolition of Slavery last month, Ban described as shameful contemporary forms of slavery, stating that such practices “sanctioned, supported or ignored by those with the power and the responsibility to end them should lead us to outrage.”

He said millions continue to live as “contemporary slaves, victims of abominable practices, like human trafficking, forced labor and sexual exploitation.”

Ban said “countless” children are forced to become soldiers, work in sweat shops or are sold by “desperate” families, and that “women are brutalized and traded like commodities.”

“Entire households and villages labor under debt bondage,” he said.

“The fact that these atrocities take place in today’s world should fill us all with shame,” the U.N. secretary general added.

‘CRIMES’

He said it is up to everyone to raise his or her voice against “crimes that deprive countless victims of their liberty, dignity and human rights.”

“We have to work together

to realize the equal rights promised to all by the United Nations Charter,” he continued.

“And we must collectively give meaning to the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that ‘no one shall be held in slavery or servitude,’” he said.

Stating that many of the post-slavery dependency arrangements still persist today, CARICOM recently called for their immediate end. Speaking on behalf of CARICOM, Dominica’s U.N. Ambassador Crispin Gregoire told the U.N. Fourth Committee that it is time for ending the “anachronism of new millennium colonialism in our part of the African diaspora.”



Former suspect in case of missing American student regrets no trial

ORANJESTAD, CMC – A former suspect in the disappearance in Aruba of American high school student, Natalee Holloway, says he regretted not having the matter go to trial so “everything could be out in the open.”

Joran van der Sloot, 20, was re-arrested in Aruba in November for a new interrogation about Holloway’s disappearance in 2005, but public prosecutors on the island closed their investigation Dec. 18, saying they believed Holloway was dead. They

also said they did not have enough evidence to prosecute van der Sloot or two other former suspects, brothers Deepak and Satish Kalpoe, 20 and 21.

The young men were charged in the disappearance of Holloway, 18, on May 30, 2005.

“I would have liked to



Holloway

have seen a trial, so that everything could be out in the open,” van der Sloot told reporters late last month, his first public remarks since being released on Dec. 7.

All three suspects denied any involvement in Holloway’s disappearance. Van der Sloot denied there was any new evidence to prompt his arrest again last month, as prosecutors had asserted.

“There was no new evidence at all,” he said.



New York governor pardons Jamaican man, sparing him deportation despite prison time

NEW YORK, CMC – New York Governor Eliot Spitzer has pardoned a 54-year-old Jamaican-born man convicted of robbery 16 years ago, saying the pardon would spare the man from being deported to his native land.

The man, Frederick Lake, entered the United States legally in 1987, but was facing deportation under a federal statute that calls for the removal of a lawful alien who is convicted of an aggravated felony.

Although convicted of robbery in 1991 and released from prison in 1997, Lake has long maintained his innocence, and a judicial inquiry suggested that he might have been the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

On Dec. 22 Spitzer said that he issued the pardon, at least in part, so that Lake, who suffers from heart disease and diabetes, could remain with his wife and two young sons in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, where he has lived

since his release from prison 10 years ago.

“Mr. Lake has fully served the sentence imposed upon him for his robbery conviction,” he said in a statement.

“He had a perfect disciplinary record while in prison, he has had no other arrests or convictions during his lifetime, and he has been living safely and without incident in the community for the last 10 years,” he added.

‘NO PURPOSE’

“No purpose would be served by separating Mr. Lake from his many family members who are United States citizens,” the governor continued.

Lake was arrested and charged with robbing a payroll company in Inwood, on Long Island, a New York City suburb, in 1989. At his trial in 1991, three people testified that Lake had committed the crime, even though the suspect was initially

described as short and stocky and wearing an earring. Lake was nearly six feet tall and did not have a pierced ear.

He also produced airline tickets and passenger manifests that showed he had flown to Jamaica several days before the robbery and returned months later.

“Lawyers dream about cases like this,” said John Lewis, one of Lake’s attorneys. “And it’s just an enormous privilege to be able to be there.”

“I think that Governor Spitzer has a lot of courage doing this,” he continued. “It would be hard to find a more worthy subject than Frederick Lake for this distinction.”



Spitzer

Haitian mother tries to stop N.Y. hospital from pulling plug on her brain-dead daughter

NEW YORK – A heartbroken Haitian mother in Brooklyn is trying desperately to stop a local hospital from pulling the plug on her brain-dead three-year-old daughter.

Marie Joseph, 35, said on Dec. 29 she needs more time to come to grips with the awful reality.

Only six days after Brookdale University Medical Centre in Brooklyn declared Patricia Joseph brain-dead, doctors told her mother that they were going to pull the plug - prompting her to get an emergency court order.

“All I’m saying is that I want my daughter to be able to go on her own,” said a tearful Joseph.

“I just want my daughter to live for a few more days, because when she is gone, she is gone forever, and I’m never going to see her again,” she added.

New York State law allows hospitals to declare people dead when they meet medical standards for brain death, but requires hospitals to have a plan for “reasonable accommodation” to the next of kin’s religious or moral objections.

In a similar case in 1989, a hospital was found to have the authority to take an infant off life support over the parents’ objections.

COMA

Joseph said she took Patricia to Jamaica Hospital in Queens on Dec. 16 to get her checked for leg pains. But she said doctors there transferred the girl, who suffers from sickle-cell anemia, to Brookdale University Medical Centre, where she was given morphine and a blood transfusion. The next day, Joseph said Patricia went into a coma-like state after doctors believed she had a stroke. On Dec. 18, doctors placed her on a ventilator.

Four days before Christmas,

Joseph said Brookdale University Medical Centre declared Patricia brain-dead, drew up a death certificate and gave Joseph the bad news.

“They came to me every day,” Joseph said.

“They told me that they did not need my permission, and that they were just letting me know,” she added.

“It was thanks to one of the doctors that they gave me a few days.”

PANIC

Panicking, Joseph said she immediately contacted lawyer Keith Sullivan, who got a temporary restraining order discussions with the hospital broke down. He was back in a Brooklyn court on the afternoon of Dec. 28 asking that the order be extended.

“Their conduct, on its best day, is heartlessly callous,” Sullivan told Justice Lawrence Knipel.

“On its worst day, it’s evil.”

Knipel heard testimony from a doctor, Mayank Shukla, who conceded that Joseph never gave the green light.

“She never said ‘O.K.’,”

Shukla said.

“But she understood the process,” she added. “She wanted more time, and we were giving her more time.”

Knipel adjourned proceedings until the new year, keeping the existing stay in effect until then.

Michael Hinck, a spokesman for Brookdale University Medical Centre, said the hospital had made every effort to come to an agreement with Joseph during the six days after the girl was declared brain dead. He said that staff had even facilitated an in-room baptism.

“The hospital is trying to be as sympathetic as possible,” he said.



Jamaican charged with drug smuggling in prosthetic legs

NEW YORK – A Jamaican man was held without bail at a Detention Centre in Brooklyn awaiting charges for smuggling cocaine into the John F. Kennedy International Airport using his prosthetic legs.

Dean Stewart, 22, who uses a wheelchair, was detained shortly after arriving on an Air Jamaica flight from Kingston last month.

According to an indictment filed in Brooklyn federal court, Stewart told custom officers that he could not walk and his prosthetic legs could

not be removed. However, inspectors became suspicious because Stewart’s airline ticket had been purchased in cash three days earlier and immigration records showed that he had traveled to the U.S. three times between June and August for brief visits.

Stewart’s prosthetic legs were removed and X-rayed where agents found multiple packages of cocaine concealed inside the limbs, according to the complaint.



Bhutto's death shocks Caribbean leaders

GORDON WILLIAMS

Caribbean leaders have reacted with shock and horror at the assassination of Pakistan Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto, who was cut down in her home country late last month.

Several condemned the killing of the 54-year-old leader of the Pakistan People's Party and some indicated her death could lead to significant upheaval in that country, while others warned people in the region not to let political passions lead them to violence.



Bhutto

Bhutto, a former prime minister, died after attending a political rally on Dec. 27 in her homeland. The exact cause of her death was still being hotly debated up to press time. One explanation was that a gunman shot her and then set off an explosion which killed him and at least 15 others near the scene. Yet Bhutto's death also ignited an emotional bombshell in the

Caribbean, with leaders directing outrage at the terrorist act.

"The government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago strongly condemns this act and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to international efforts to eradicate terrorism", read a statement issued by Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago express the deepest sympathy to the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and family members of former Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Ali Bhutto, political leader of the Pakistan People's Party, on the tragic incident which resulted in her untimely demise and that of innocent civilians".

CONFLICT

Caribbean leaders claimed that the political uncertainty in Pakistan, which up to press time was still scheduled to hold general elections this month, had been of serious concern to the region and was even discussed at November's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in

Kampala, Uganda. The Commonwealth had recently suspended Pakistan, claiming the Islamic state needed to move towards restoring democracy. Pakistan is ruled by ex-Army head President Pervez Musharraf, who had been expected to oppose Bhutto in the elections.

"The assassination of such a prominent political figure as Mrs. Bhutto has pushed the country (Pakistan) into further conflict, violence and uncertainty," said Jamaica's Prime Minister Bruce Golding in a statement.

Meanwhile, at least one Caribbean politician issued a warning to people in the region not to allow their political loyalties to get out of control and lead to violence similar to that in Pakistan.

"One would never want any such incidents to happen in the Caribbean," former St. Lucia Prime Minister Kenny Anthony was quoted as saying.

Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor. CMC reports contributed to this story.



Grenada's P.M. could face charges in U.S. ~ judge

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada, CMC - A district judge in the United States says that Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell could be brought back to face charges if he loses the next general elections in Grenada.

District judge Leo Glasser issued the ruling in dismissing a case brought against the Grenadian leader and his wife Marietta Mitchell by Boston businessman Charles Howland, on the grounds that Mitchell was subjected to immunity from prosecution given his status as head of government.

Mitchell's New National Party (NNP) government had written to the George W. Bush administration in Washington seeking immunity from prosecution on the grounds of head-of-government status.

In his ruling, Judge Glasser pointed to the case involving Ferdinand Marcos, a former president of the Philippines now deceased, and his wife Imelda. They were hounded down in the U.S. court and had to seek immunity from prosecution, which was later waived by the Philippine government.

"It would follow, therefore, that a similar waiver asserted by the government of Grenada depriving Dr. Mitchell of the immunity he might otherwise enjoy after leaving office would permit Mr. Howland to pursue his claims in this action," Judge Glasser explained.

"To be clear, this court cannot hold that head of state immunity does or does not

apply to former heads of state because that issue is not yet ripe; if the plaintiff renews his claim against the Mitchells at a point in the future when Dr. Mitchell is no longer the prime minister of Grenada, the issue will then be ripe."



Mitchell

LAWSUIT

Howling is suing Prime Minister Mitchell and his wife, along with his former Ambassador Eric Resteiner, the imprisoned international fraudster, in connection with a multi-million dollar mail and wire fraud in which the businessman lost thousands of dollars. Howland is alleging that Mitchell and his wife benefited financially from the Resteiner scheme.

The Grenada prime minister has publicly admitted receiving "approximately US\$15,000" from Resteiner, but Timothy Bass, the former chief of security for the imprisoned conman alleged that he videotaped Mitchell in June 2000 collecting \$500,000.00 in a briefcase from Resteiner.

The money was allegedly given in the form of a bribe for Resteiner to obtain a diplomatic posting, but Prime Minister Mitchell has consistently denied the claim.



U.S. to help CARICOM fight region's drug trade

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC - The United States has announced that it will be providing assistance to Caribbean community (CARICOM) states to help them battle the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the region.

U.S. State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack said under the CARICOM-U.S. Initiative to Combat Illicit Trafficking In Small Arms and Light Weapons, Washington will be assisting participating member states to address the problem. CARICOM states have often complained that they cannot fight the problem on their own.

"Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere because this thriving black

market provides weapons to terrorist groups, drug traffickers, gangs, and other criminal organizations," McCormack said in a statement released by the U.S. Embassy here last month.

He said under the agreement, which came out of last March's meeting between CARICOM foreign ministers and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, concrete and practical measures will be undertaken to address illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons throughout the region.

Recently, Barbados Foreign Minister Dame Billie Miller called on the United Nations and the international community to offer the region more assistance in fighting illicit trafficking in small arms and the illegal drugs trade.



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U.S. approves new passport card for travelers to the Caribbean

WASHINGTON – The United States Department of State has approved a passport card equipped with new features to allow greater ease for travelers to the Caribbean, Canada and Mexico.

The department approved the card on Dec. 31 that permits information on it to be read from a distance. But critics say the new passport is dangerous because it does not do enough to protect personal privacy.

Ann Barrett, deputy assistant secretary for passport services at the State Department, said the cards could be read from up to 20 feet away, and that processing only takes one or two seconds.

"The card would not have to be physically swiped through a reader, as is the current process with passports," she said in a statement.

Barrett said the chip on the card will not contain biographical information, adding that privacy protections will be built into the card.

In 2004, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that called for a "smaller and more convenient" passport card for frequent border crossers. Currently, immigration officers at ports of entry

swipe traditional passports, for Americans re-entering the country, through an electronic reader.

'THREATS'

Critics have already assailed the new technology passport card, saying that it does not sufficiently protect nationals' privacy.

"(The technology is) inherently insecure and poses threats to personal privacy, including identity theft," said Ari Schwartz, of the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology, in a statement.

Schwartz said this specific technology, known as "vicinity read", is better capable of tracking inventory rather than people.

Effective Jan. 31, American travelers returning to the country from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada or Mexico will be permitted to present a birth certificate and driver's license instead of a passport. Over the Christmas holidays, the George W. Bush administration delayed a requirement that Americans present passports when crossing U.S. borders by land or sea.

Administration officials said the measure requiring

passports will likely go into effect at the end of next summer.

A provision of the major end-of-year U.S. Congressional budget bill



Effective Jan. 31, American travelers returning to the country from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada or Mexico will be permitted to present a birth certificate and driver's license instead of a passport.

pushed back the plan by the Department of Homeland Security as a way of strengthening national security.

'NECESSARY STEP'

The Departments of State and Homeland Security said the change is a "necessary step to prepare travelers and ease the transition to the

future requirements of the WHTI (Western Hemispheric Travel Initiative).

"WHTI proposes to establish documentation requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada, and Bermuda", they said in a statement.

Currently, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers may accept oral declarations of citizenship from U.S. and Canadian citizens seeking entry into the U.S. through a land or sea border. However, the departments warned that, as of Jan. 31, 2008, "oral declarations of citizenship alone will no longer be accepted."

"U.S. and Canadian citizens, ages 19 and older will need to present a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's licence, along with proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or naturalization certificate", the statement said.

"Children, ages 18 and under, will only be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate", it added.



Immigrants file lawsuit to speed up citizenship

SANTA ANA, California – Even as Caribbean American Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke has tabled a bill aimed at reducing application backlogs for immigrants seeking United States citizenship, four immigrants have filed a federal lawsuit against delays in background checks performed by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).

The class action lawsuit was filed last month in U.S. federal court in Santa Ana, California, by the National Immigration Law Centre, a public interest law group in Los Angeles, and the American Civil Liberties Union. It was filed on behalf of four immigrants who have lived legally in the U.S. for many years and are eager to become citizens.

The lawsuit seeks to force U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to impose deadlines for completing all the checks and challenges the expanded searches. By law, the agency is required to decide on naturalization petitions within 120 days after the candidate passes that test.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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Ex-senator appointed Jamaica's new ambassador to the U.S.

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC – The Bruce Golding administration has appointed a former Jamaica Labour Party senator and Member of Parliament as ambassador to the United States.

Anthony Johnson, a senior lecturer in the Department of Management Studies at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus, will succeed Dr. Gordon Shirley, principal of that campus, the government announced last month.

Johnson, who holds a master's degree in international trade and finance and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of California, is expected to assume the post early in 2008.

Johnson was minister of

state in the 1980s in the ministries of Industry and Commerce, and Agriculture. He was also Opposition spokesman on a wide range of areas, including education, agriculture, mining, energy and technology.

He served as senator for several years, most notably as minority leader of the Senate during the past five years. From 1991 to 1995, Johnson served as a member of the Electoral Advisory Committee, the body that sets election policy here.

He was also the executive director of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica, as well as an executive of a number of business concerns.



Immigrants file lawsuit to speed up citizenship

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

DELAYS

After filing naturalization petitions, each waited a year or more without being approved because the FBI has not completed the required criminal record check, the suit said. They have received no explanation for the delays.

"I want to be assimilated into the system here," said Abbas Amirchimeh, a 41-year-old immigrant from Iran, who has been living legally in the U.S. since 1994 and is a plaintiff in the suit. "I want to vote for the president."

Prekash Khatri, the ombudsman of the immigration agency, said the FBI checks "may be the single biggest obstacle to the timely and efficient delivery of immigration benefits" by the agency.

Congresswoman Clarke, the daughter of Jamaican immigrants, who represents the predominantly Caribbean 11th Congressional District in Brooklyn, New York, said her bill in the U.S. House of Representatives would address the new bureaucratic backlogs resulting from an unanticipated flood of applications for citizenship and "green cards" for Caribbean and other immigrants. She told the **Caribbean Media Corporation** recently that it was important that immigration authorities do all in their power, as soon as possible, to ease the huge backlog of applications.

"Caribbean and other immigrants are stuck in the process of getting their status adjusted because of this nightmare," she said. "Their quality of life is impacted significantly because of this."

HEAVY WORKLOAD

Christopher Bentley, an

agency spokesman, acknowledged a backlog but said the cases were a relatively small part of the overall workload of background checks. Of more than 1.5 million checks the agency ordered from the FBI in the year ending Sept. 30, 90 percent cleared within six months, he said. Of about 300,000 name checks waiting to be completed, Bentley said, about half have been hung up in the system for more than six months.

Bentley and FBI officials declined to comment on the lawsuit, saying it was pending litigation.

Jim Moorhead, 56, another plaintiff, is a British citizen who said he had lived as a legal immigrant in the U.S. for 30 years. In 1991, Moorhead was named a citizen hero by Los Angeles County when he captured an armed robber. A name check delay has held up his citizenship petition for two years.

"I've given 30 years of my life to America," he said, "and now I can't even do the right thing by becoming a citizen."

CLEAN-UP

Clarke said her bill, the Citizen and Immigrant Backlog Immigration Act, would clean up the unnecessary bureaucratic logjam.

"This legislation would put the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Immigration Service and other agencies on the spot for erasing the backlog within 18 months," she said.

The backlog could also prevent Caribbean and other nationals from voting in this year's U.S. presidential elections. Immigrants must hold U.S. citizenship in order to vote in most elections, including presidential elections.



Over 200 Haitians repatriated on Christmas Eve ~ U.S. Coast Guard

MIAMI - The United States Coast Guard says it has repatriated over 200 Haitian migrants to Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

Officials said in a statement late last month that the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Venturous repatriated 202 Haitian on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.

"Crew members from the cutter Vigilant located a grossly overloaded 40-foot sail freighter approximately 33 miles south of Great Inagua, Bahamas, (Dec. 22)," it said.

"Once located, the Vigilant crew immediately launched their small boat and began taking the migrants off the dangerous vessel."

The Coast Guard said 25 of the 227 migrants were "uncooperative and refused to disembark the sail freighter, and the crew of the Vigilant determined it was best to allow the sail freighter to beach itself on Isle de Tortue, Haiti".

ASSISTANCE

It said the crew of the Venturous, while on a port call in Dominican Republic, was launched to assist and recover the migrants from the Vigorous.

"A 40-foot boat over-

loaded, with 227 people, is a disaster-at-sea waiting to happen," said Lieutenant Commander Chris O'Neil, public affairs officer for the Seventh Coast Guard District, based in Miami.

"Fortunately, the cutters Vigilant and Venturous were able to bring the migrants safely aboard their decks," he added.

"The sea is an unforgiving environment in the best conditions, and setting to sea in a grossly overloaded vessel is far from the best conditions," he continued.

He said once aboard Coast Guard cutters, all migrants are provided food, water, shelter and any necessary medical attention.

DISCRIMINATION CLAIM

Haitian immigration advocates here say the U.S. discriminates against their compatriots by allowing Cubans, who reach U.S. shores, to remain in the country; while the same is not done for Haitians. They said The Cuban Migration Act of 1994 and 1995 have produced a "Wet Foot, Dry Foot" policy. This means the U.S. would stop admitting Cubans intercepted at sea, and Cubans caught at sea, that is, with wet

feet, would summarily be sent to Cuba. But those who reach U.S. soil (dry feet) would be permitted to remain in the United States, and are eligible to adjust their status to permanent residence.

"This policy is in contradiction and violation of the third provision of the Cuban Migration Act of 1994, which clearly states that, 'The United States and Cuba agreed to cooperate on the voluntary return of Cubans who arrived in the United States or were intercepted at sea,'" said Claude Louissaint, a human services administrator for the Broward County government in Southern Florida.

"The unfair treatment of Haitian migrants, in comparison to Cubans, leads one to believe that many of the gains ethnic minorities have made in the areas of civil rights are being reversed before our very eyes," he added.

"The 'Anecdotal Wet Foot Dry Foot' policy represents a major deviation from the American laws designed to eradicate racial discrimination and guarantee equal protection under the law," he continued.



U.S. praises Guyana for fight against drug trade

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC – After years of criticism the United States government says it can now laud Guyana's fight against the thriving illegal drug enterprise and as a reward has tied the level of future assistance to commensurate improvements.

"I am very heartened to see that Guyana has doubled the number of interdictions in the drug trade this year with the security forces being more aggressive," said United States Ambassador to Guyana David Robinson.

The U.S. envoy here said U.S. government officials "understand how tough it is to

extradite someone and we are not at all disappointed with the co-operation we are getting from the government of Guyana."

Guyanese authorities are boasting of a handful of drug interdictions in 2007, which is a major improvement.

Scores of locals are currently facing illegal drugs charges overseas after passing frisking by the police; sniffer dogs and electronic surveillance at the Cheddi Jagan International

Airport (CJIA) at Timehri, south of the capital.

SATISFIED

The U.S. government, in its annual reports the last two years, has publicly cited Guyana as a major trans-shipment point in the multi-billion dollar illegal drugs trade, and criticized the government's response. This time though Robinson said Washington is satisfied with the level of cooperation his country is receiving from Guyana in relation to the illicit trade and extraditions.



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U.S. Congress honors Haitians who fought in Revolutionary War

WASHINGTON – The United States Congress has honored Haitian soldiers who fought for America's Independence during the Revolutionary War.

Florida Democratic Congressman Kendrick Meek, of Miami, introduced a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives commemorating the courage of Haitian soldiers who fought on behalf of the U.S. in the "Siege of Savannah" during the American Revolutionary War.

Meek introduced the resolution on Dec. 19, the same day that Haitians marked their Independence and the renunciation of slavery. Haiti celebrates its Independence as the first free Black Republic on Jan. 1.

MONUMENT

In October, the Haitian American Historical Society, a Miami-based nonprofit organization, erected the Savannah Monument Project in Franklin

Square, in Savannah, an historic city in Georgia. The society raised more than \$400,000 in private donations to fund the monument, and worked alongside Savannah leaders.

Meek, who represents one of the largest constituencies of Haitian American voters in Miami, said that the heroism displayed by Haitian soldiers in Savannah, during the American Revolutionary War, is a "source of great inspiration and pride for Haitians."

"Haitians bled for our country, and the Savannah Monument Project and this congressional resolution help honor the sacrifice of these brave Haitians who played a part in the founding of our great democracy," he said.

"Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Haitian American Historical Society, which initiated the effort to build the monument, this great achievement will be recognized by the U.S.



Monument in Savannah, Georgia honoring Haitians.

Congress," he added.

FIGHTERS

Meek said that on October 9, 1779, the soldiers of Chasseurs-Volontaires de

Saint Domingue (Haiti) served as the largest unit of soldiers of African descent to fight in the Siege of Savannah, alongside American and French forces.

"The Savannah Monument

represents the free black men of Haiti that helped America win its Independence from British rule," said Daniel Fils-Aimé, chairman of the Haitian American Historical Society.

"I am grateful to the city of Savannah for this overdue recognition."

The monument was designed by Miami sculptor James Mastin and consists of four life-size figures in military uniforms. One is wounded, one is shooting, and another is cocking his gun. The fourth figure is a 12-year-old drummer boy, a representation of Henri Christophe, who later became Haiti's ruler after freed slaves successfully staged their own revolution against France.



Judge grants bond to U.S. immigration agent accused of raping Jamaican woman

MIAMI – A United States federal judge here has ruled that an immigration agent accused of raping a Jamaican woman while she was being held in detention can be released on bond.

Judge Peter Palermo last month granted a \$50,000 bond for Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent Wilfredo Vazquez, who allegedly raped the 39-year-old Jamaican woman while she was being moved from a detention facility in Miami.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ben Greenberg, however, argued that Vazquez, 35, is "a danger to the community and a risk of flight" and, therefore, should be kept behind bars until trial on sexual battery charges.

But Vazquez's attorney Howard Schumacher countered that Vazquez should be released, noting he had 16 years of military service, including being a decorated veteran of the war in Iraq. He served there between Dec.

2002 and Feb. 2004, he said.

When Vazquez was arrested on Nov. 16, he was working as an active Air Force military police officer in Tampa, Florida.

ACCUSATION

Court records indicate that Vazquez allegedly drove the Jamaican woman from a Miami-Dade detention center to one in Broward County but, on the way, he took her to his home and raped her.

The woman said she was "afraid" of Vazquez, according to the criminal complaint, and "emphasized that Vazquez was wearing his firearm, at all times, and she did not know what he was capable of doing to her."

The woman was being processed at Krome detention center in Miami for transfer to one in Pompano Beach, Florida after being sentenced to time served in connection with a false claim to U.S. citizenship. Immigration officials said they plan to put her in

deportation proceedings. She has lived in the U.S. for 12 years.



Caribbean votes against U.N. moratorium on death penalty

UNITED NATIONS – The Caribbean community (CARICOM) has registered its strong opposition to a United Nations non-binding resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty.

Claiming that the General Assembly vote attempts to undermine its sovereignty, CARICOM has strongly protested the initiative, joining over 65 countries that either opposed or abstained from the vote.

Some 104 countries supported the resolution, while 54 voted against it, and 29 abstained.

The resolution called for "a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty."

"Capital punishment remains legal under international law, and Barbados wishes to exercise its sovereign right to use it as a deterrent to the most serious crimes," said Mohammed Degia, Barbados's first secretary to the U.N., whose country was among vociferous opponents of the measure.

"Beyond all of this, is the simple fact that the question of the death penalty is basically one of criminal justice, as enforced and upheld within national legal systems," he added.

ACCUSATION

CARICOM accused developed countries, particularly those in the European Union, of attempting to impose their will on them and threatening to withdraw aid if they voted against the initiative. But

Massimo D'Alema, Italy's foreign minister, speaking on behalf of the E.U., an ardent proponent of the death penalty, dismissed the allegations.

"The resolution is not an interference," he said.

"But we call on each member state of the United Nations to implement the resolution and also to open a debate on the death penalty."

"The moratorium is an important opportunity for international debate," he continued.

Twenty-seven E.U. member-states voted for the moratorium, along with over a dozen Latin American countries and eight African states. The United States, Singapore, Egypt and Iran joined CARICOM in opposing the measure.

Over 100 countries are said to retain the death penalty on their statutes, while about 133 have either abolished it in law or practice.

Despite the controversy, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the adoption of the resolution, stating that he was "heartened by signs that capital punishment will eventually be abolished worldwide."

"Today's vote represents a bold step by the international community," he said.

"I am particularly encouraged by the support expressed for this initiative from many diverse regions of the world."

"This is further evidence of a trend towards ultimately abolishing the death penalty."



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LOCAL

Callers beware: pre-paid cards failing to deliver on promises to consumers

TALLAHASSEE, Florida — Callers to the Caribbean often view pre-paid telephone cards as a way to make talk cheaper. But those phone cards may not deliver services as advertised to consumers, according to Florida's Public Service Commission (PSC).

Investigators from the PSC recently conducted random service quality checks on calling cards issued by 10 firms in Florida, United States. During these checks, PSC investigators found several cards that did not function as advertised.

According to PSC rules, the card provider must be registered with the PSC if the card can be used for intra-state calls. The PSC must also be notified of all charges, surcharges, and fees for the pre-paid card, and this information must also be disclosed to the customer at the point of purchase.

PROBLEMS

Problems with the prepaid cards included:

- The company was not registered with the PSC;
- The card was not charging for calls as expected;
- The addition of unadvertised surcharges and limitations was not disclosed;
- The access number for



the card's network was continuously busy;

- The card advertised no connection fees, yet charged disconnection fees, misleading consumers;
- The advertised per minute rate on the card only applied to one call. Additional calls were charged at a much higher rate;
- The advertised rate only applied to limited areas, which was not disclosed; or
- The card did not work at all.

WARNING

If a violation is detected, the PSC sends a letter to the card issuer directing the company to come into compliance and notifying it that fines may be assessed. Inter-state and international results from the investigation are being shared with Florida's attorney general to determine if any additional

investigation of consumer fraud is warranted.

If a consumer detects a violation of a card's disclosed fees or any additional problems, they should call the PSC at 800-342-3552 to register a complaint. The consumer may also take the card back to the point of purchase and attempt to obtain a refund.

If consumers are considering using a pre-paid telephone card, here are a few tips:

- Read the fine print before buying a card;
- Be sure you understand exactly what the calls will cost, including the per minute charge and any connection or disconnection fees;
- Check the card's expiration date;
- Look for a toll-free customer contact service number to call if you have problems using the card; and
- Make sure the card can be used to your calling destination. Fees may vary based on calling destination.

For more tips on using pre-paid phone cards, brochures in English and Spanish are available on the PSC's website at www.floridapsc.com. Consumers can also call the PSC's consumer line at **800-342-3552** (Spanish agents available).



Getting 'U' status in the United States

state, or local law enforcement official that demonstrates the petitioner "has been helpful, is being helpful, or is likely to be helpful" in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity. Qualifying criminal activity includes: Abduction, incest, rape, sexual assault, torture, murder, trafficking, false imprisonment, perjury, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, blackmail, abusive sexual contact, witness tampering, prostitution, slave trade, sexual exploitation and involuntary servitude among other related crimes.

Further, either the head of the agency or a supervisor designated with the authority to issue certifications on behalf of the agency must sign the certification.

APPLICATION

Currently, USCIS has designated its Vermont Service Center as the centralized location to receive all U nonimmigrant petitions. USCIS can grant up to 10,000 'U' visas each year authorizing the holder to remain in the U.S. for up to four years. The immigrant can then apply for permanent residency status, but the agency will have to determine that the individual's continued presence in the coun-

try is justified on humanitarian grounds to ensure continuation of a cohesive family.

Note that no fee will be charged for filing Form I-918. Petitioners must, however, pay the established fee for fingerprinting services for each person aged 14 to 79 included with each petition. The biometric fee is currently \$80 per person.

"Many immigrant crime victims fear coming forward to assist law enforcement because they may not have legal status," explained USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez. "We're confident that we have developed a rule that meets the spirit of the Act; to help curtail criminal activity, protect victims, and encourage them to fully participate in proceedings that will aid in bringing perpetrators to justice."

Compiled by Felicia Persaud. Answers provided here are for information purposes only, and do not create an attorney-client relationship; nor are they a substitute for "legal advice", which can only be given by a competent attorney after reviewing all the facts of the case.



Social Security's retirement benefits at your fingertips

ALFREDO BROOKS

The following are questions and answers relating to Social Security issues in the United States.

QUESTION: My parents have been asking me to help them with their retirement plans. I know Social Security is closed during holidays. Is there any way I can help them out over a holiday weekend?

ANSWER: Yes — our website, www.socialsecurity.gov/online-services, is ready to assist you. You can visit our online retirement planners to help them find out their full retirement ages and information to help them determine when the time is right to apply for benefits. And if that time is now, you can even help them complete and submit their application for retirement benefits online. Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/online-services to get started.

Q: My wife worked for a number of years. We noticed in her most recent Social Security statement that she is only three work credits shy of qualifying for Social Security retirement benefits. Can we voluntarily contribute money directly to Social Security so that she will have retirement benefits coverage?

A: No. People cannot get additional Social Security credits by voluntarily contributing money directly to Social Security. They can earn credits only by working in a job or business covered under Social Security. However, even if your wife does not have her own Social Security coverage she may be eligible to receive Social Security benefits based on your work record.

Q: What is the absolute earliest age that a person can retire under Social Security?

A: An eligible worker may start receiving Social Security retirement benefits as early as age 62. However, if you start your benefits early, they are permanently reduced for each month before your full retirement age. For example, if your full retirement age is 66 and you sign up for Social Security when you're age 62, you will only receive 75 percent of your full retirement benefit.

For more information about the relationship between age and benefit payment amounts, you can visit the Social Security website at www.socialsecurity.gov/retirement. Or you can call Social Security's toll-free number at **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) and ask for the publica-



Social Security benefits can make retirement enjoyable.

tion, "Retirement Benefits".

Alfredo Brooks is a Social Security public affairs specialist based in Orlando, Florida.



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PETER A WEBLEY
Publisher

GORDON WILLIAMS
Managing Editor

SABRINA FENNELL
Graphic Artist

DOROTHY CHIN
Account Executive

SUNDAY SELLERS
Account Executive

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Accounting Manager

Caribbean Media Source
Media Representatives

TOM JONAS
353 St. Nicolas Street, Suite 200
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 2P1
Tel: (514) 931-0422 • Fax: (514) 931-0455
E-mail: tom@cmsworldmedia.com

Jamaica Bureau
MARIE GREGORY
(876) 925-5640

P.O. Box 127, Constant Spring
Kingston 8, Jamaica

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H E A L T H

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Caribbean-born kids among those at risk for lead poisoning in N.Y.

NEW YORK – Immigrant children are five times as likely as United States-born children to suffer from lead poisoning in New York City, according to a new Health Department study. The risk is highest among the most recent immigrants.

The new study of children tested for lead poisoning in

2002, published online in the **American Journal of Public Health** last month, found that children who had lived abroad within the previous six months were 11 times as likely as U.S.-born children to have lead poisoning.

The most affected children were from the Dominican Republic, Haiti,

Mexico and Pakistan — nations where lead may be less tightly regulated than in the United States. The study is the first to look at lead poisoning in New York City's immigrant children.

Lead-based paint is the primary cause of lead poisoning for both U.S. and foreign-born children in New York

City, but immigrant children may face additional lead threats in their home countries, according to the study. Of the 800 lead poisoned children requiring home investigations in 2006, Health Department staff identified lead paint hazards in 80 percent of U.S.-born cases, but only 65 per cent of foreign-born cases.

While it is not possible to document the exact sources of lead exposure for these immigrant children, other research has shown that pollution, foods, herbal medicines, dishes, toys, jewelry, and cosmetics are sources of lead in foreign countries.

"This study suggests that immigrant children are being exposed to lead in their home countries before they arrive in

New York City," said Jessica Leighton, Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Health and co-author of the study. "And some immigrant families may be bringing tainted products with them to New York City. We encourage all parents, especially parents who are recent immigrants, to be sure their children are tested for lead poisoning at ages one and two, as required by law."

The Health Department's most current statistics show that while only 14 percent of the city's children were born outside the U.S., 18 percent of lead poisoned children with lead levels requiring home investigation were foreign-born.



Health screening tests everyone needs

The new year is here and maintaining proper health should be on everyone's priority list.

For the following diseases, the United States Preventive Services Task Force states that there are effective screening tests and that people should get them:

Cervical cancer - The task force strongly recommends screening for cervical cancer in women who've been sexually active and have a cervix until the age of 65. However, the panel also points out that there is no direct evidence that annual screening achieves better health outcomes than screening every three years. Most medical organizations in the U.S. recommend that annual Pap smears be performed until two or three in a row are normal; after that, the interval between screenings may be lengthened.

Colorectal cancer - Men and women 50 years of age or older should get screened for colorectal cancer. According to the American College of Gastroenterology, people should get either a colonoscopy every 10 years or a sigmoidoscopy and a test to detect blood in the stool every five years.

High blood pressure - Adults

ages 18 and older should be screened for high blood pressure, but there's no agreed-upon interval between tests. One influential report recommends screening every two years for people who have blood pressure lower than 130/85 and at more frequent intervals for people with higher baseline readings.



Women ages 40 and over should get a mammogram every one to two years.

Lipid disorders - The task force strongly recommends cholesterol testing in men ages 35 years and older and women ages 45 years and older who have heart-disease risk factors such as diabetes, hypertension, or a family history of cardiovascular disease. The task force makes no recommenda-

tion for healthy younger adults in the absence of known risk factors for coronary heart disease.

Breast cancer - Women ages 40 or older should get a mammogram every one to two years.

Osteoporosis - Women ages 65 and older should be screened routinely for osteoporosis. (Screening should begin at age 60 for women identified as being at increased risk for fractures.) The optimal interval for repeat screening is not clear, according to the task force.

Tobacco - All adults should be asked by their doctors whether they use tobacco, and smokers should receive an intervention designed to end their tobacco habit.

Alcohol - All adults should receive screening and behavioral counseling interventions to reduce alcohol misuse by adults, including pregnant women, in primary care settings.

Obesity - The task force recommends that clinicians screen all adult patients for obesity and offer intensive counseling and behavioral interventions to promote sustained weight loss for obese adults.



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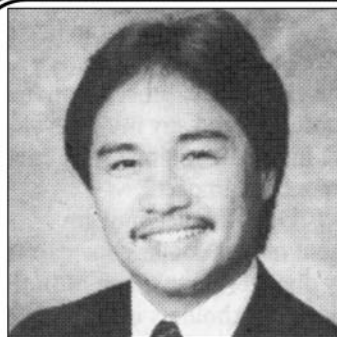


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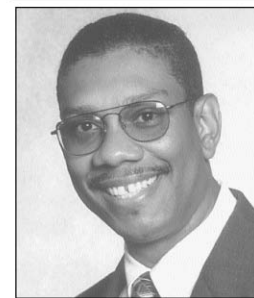
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2007: A year when the Caribbean broke new ground in sports, trade

PETER RICHARDS

Intense political drama, high profile legal battles, turbulence in the regional air transport sector and the signing of a new comprehensive trade pact with former colonial powers in Europe dominated the landscape in the Caribbean, but 2007 will long be remembered as the year in which the region hosted a major global sporting event.

For nearly two months of an event-filled year, the Caribbean stepped on to the world stage to host the Mar. 13 to April 28 Cricket World Cup, which was played in nine countries after the hosts met what many skeptics said would have been an impossible deadline to complete an impressive list of new stadia in the participating states. Impressed with the working of many of the systems during the event, CARICOM leaders, meeting two months after the teams departed the region and the spotlight had shifted, made a decision to maintain many of the structures set up for the global event.



Woolmer's death overshadowed Cricket World Cup.

MARRED

The death of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer, however, overshadowed the Cricket World Cup in the region. Jamaican pathologist Dr. Ere Seshiah kept to his claim that the former England cricketer had been strangled even though other pathologists found that Woolmer had died of natural causes when he was found in his hotel room on Mar. 18. The inquest into his death did not shed much light on the situation.

The controversial Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) signed with the European Union just weeks before the yearend deadline might not have been the biggest headline grabber, but it may yet be the 2007 event which most defines the future of these Caribbean states still proceeding along an ambitious path to merge their markets and economies. While, as expected, Caribbean governments lauded the accord, there were others, such as the Barbados-based Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), that argued that the agreement fell short of answering many of the critical sustainable development challenges facing the region and has little with which to move it beyond a traditional Free Trade

Agreement (FTA).

The EPA, which Europe is negotiating separately with the 79-member African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, replaces a special export regime for cane sugar and other economically critical goods from these countries that had been in place since the mid-1970s. But supporters and critics alike agree that the EPA pact would strongly influence how the region conducts future trade and economic relations and some prominent Caribbean nationals, including Professor Norman Girvan, the former secretary general of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), had called for a postponement of the Dec. 31 deadline for signing the EPA.

ELECTIONS

General elections were held in The Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, the British Virgin Islands and Bermuda in 2007.

Jamaicans swept aside their first woman Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller, in favor of Bruce Golding, whose Jamaica Labour (JLP) was able to squeeze out a two-seat majority in the 60-member Parliament. The victory by the JLP followed a similar pattern in The Bahamas, where Prime Minister Perry Christie and his Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) were replaced by Hubert Ingraham's Free National Movement (FNM), and in the British Virgin Islands, where the main Opposition Virgin Islands Party (VIP) won 11 of the 15 seats in that British Overseas Territory.

Patrick Manning stemmed the hemorrhage of incumbent parties falling out of grace with the electorate and was sworn in as prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago for a fourth term, one day after his People's National Movement (PNM) swept aside the United National Congress (UNC) and the Congress of the People (COP) in the Nov. 5 general elections.

By yearend, Premier Ewart Brown followed Manning and led his Progressive Labour Party (PLP) to a third successive victory over the main Opposition United Bermuda Party (UBP) in Bermuda.

A new prime minister was sworn into office in St. Lucia in 2007. Stephenson King took over the reigns of government nine months after the 82-year-old Sir John Compton, who had defied the odds, led the United Workers Party (UWP) to victory over the St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP). Sir John, who led the country for over 30 years as chief minister, premier and prime minister at various

periods, died in September after a protracted illness that included a series of minor strokes and pneumonia.

In Belize, where Prime Minister Said Musa is gearing for general elections in 2008, two government ministers were dismissed because they were not present when the Opposition sought to move a vote of no-confidence in the Musa administration.

The year also ended with much speculation that Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell will call early general elections in Grenada, particularly after the latest opinion polls had shown his ruling New National Party (NNP) had rebounded sufficiently to be in a position to defeat the National Democratic Congress and the Grenada United Labour Party (GULP).

U.S. LINK

In 2007, the Caribbean sought to improve its relationship with its most powerful neighbor to the north – the United States. Regional leaders traveled to Washington D.C. in



Golding

June for the inaugural Conference on the Caribbean that also included discussions with President George W. Bush and senior U.S. officials, including influential lawmakers in the Congress and Senate. The communiqué issued after the meeting with Bush noted that the leaders pledged to continue promoting the consolidation of democratic norms, values, and institutions throughout the hemisphere and to enhance accountability and respect for individual rights.

Not to be outdone, newly elected Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited the Caribbean and outlined a 10-year plan for a new economic partnership with CARICOM that includes assistance for member states as they make the transition towards the CSME.

But even as Washington

was outlining plans to help the region deal with threats of terrorism and crime, four Caribbean nationals were arrested in Trinidad and Tobago and the U.S. on charges of seeking to blow up the John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York. A magistrate court in Port of Spain ruled that a prima facie case had been made out against Trinidadian Kareem Ibrahim, 62, former Opposition legislator in Guyana Abdul Kadir, 55, and another Guyanese national Abdel Nur, 57, who were arrested in June and charged with conspiring to "cause death, serious bodily injury and extensive destruction" by blowing up the fuel supply to the airport. The men arrested in Trinidad have since challenged their extradition and by yearend the matter was still being heard in the courts in Trinidad.

In Suriname, the highly anticipated trial of 25 people implicated in the Dec. 1982 extra judicial killing of 15 political opponents of the then military regime of army commander Desi Bouterse began in November. In Grenada, a ruling by the London-based Privy Council, the island's highest court, paved the way for the release of some of the men convicted for the 1983 murder of then left-wing Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and several members of his Cabinet. The Privy Council ruled that the death sentence imposed on the former Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard and several others was invalid and ordered that the men be re-sentenced.

Trinidad and Tobago's Chief Justice Satnarine Sharma escaped impeachment after a tribunal appointed to investigate charges of judicial interference, in a case involving former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, found there was not sufficient evidence to warrant his removal from office. Panday was subsequently sent to jail for breaching the Integrity Commission rules by failing to declare millions of dollars he had in banks in London. He is out on bail appealing that decision.

Even some of the region's high profile entertainers went before the courts in 2007. In Jamaica, Moses "Beenie Man" Davis was charged with tax evasion amounting to J\$30 million (\$400,000), while the Trinidadian soca artiste Machal Montano was released on TT\$50,000 (\$8,300) bail as a result of an altercation outside a night club in Port of Spain. Other artistes, including Kernel Roberts, the son of the late calypso legend "Lord

Kitchener" (Alwyn Roberts) have also been charged.

BORDER CLASH

A ruling by the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration was interpreted by both Guyana and Suriname as a victory of sorts for each other in their longstanding border dispute. In its ruling, the United Nations tribunal slapped both Suriname and Guyana for failing to do their utmost to resolve the dispute according to established international practices. By yearend, Guyana was seeking an explanation from Venezuela over a military incursion into its territory and Suriname said it wanted an amicable border agreement with French Guiana.

As the Caribbean states sought to tighten their borders, efforts to establish a single Caribbean carrier were again a dominant agenda item in 2007. Caribbean Airlines, the new Trinidad and Tobago-based carrier, which replaced BWIA, took to the skies in January, but Air Jamaica, the region's single largest carrier, said it was not prepared to participate in any single regional airline, while Guyana and a Canadian-based firm have started talks to establish a national carrier by 2008.

High airfares, accompanied the buy-out of Caribbean Star by the regional airline LIAT and the Antigua-based airline defended the increase, saying it was "appropriate and realistic". But by yearend, some Caribbean governments were complaining loudly of the monopoly situation created by the multi-million dollar purchase of Caribbean Star assets.

While the region was spared the annual onslaught by hurricanes and other weather patterns last year, Hurricane Dean and tropical storms Felix and Noel did much to cause more than 60 deaths, mainly in Haiti. The murder of police officers in Jamaica, the death of escaped prisoners in Guyana as well as civilians at the hands of Trinidad and Tobago police underscored the ongoing crime problem in the Caribbean.

The release of journalist Mark Benschop in Guyana on treason charges under a Presidential Free Pardon masked the relationship between the media and Caribbean governments in 2007.

- CMC



Bouterse is on trial.

N.Y. City Council honors Irving Burgie

~ Music composer with Caribbean ties gets Big Apple recognition

NEW YORK – New York City Council has honored the composer of Barbados's national anthem and a host of Jamaican and Caribbean folk songs.

Irving Burgie received the council's proclamation on Dec. 19 during an elaborate Christmas celebration ceremony at New York City Hall presided over by three Caribbean Council members – Leroy Comrie, of Jamaican parentage; Vincentian Dr. Kendall Stewart; and Haitian Dr. Mathieu Eugene.

The council said Burgie, also renowned as the composer of "Jamaica Farewell" and "Day-O", was awarded the proclamation "in tribute to his lifetime of musical and philanthropic contributions".

"The incomparable Irving Burgie continues to serve as a source of tremendous pride for Caribbean nationals across the diaspora," Comrie told those attending the ceremony.

"He is a role model for aspiring singers and composers in our city and across the

world."

Burgie composed about 34 songs for singer Harry Belafonte, of Jamaican parentage, between 1955 and 1960.



Burgie

These included 11 songs on the 1956 Belafonte album "Calypso", which remained number one on the Billboard charts for 32 weeks and was the first album of any kind to sell over one million copies. Burgie also composed other songs for Belafonte, such as "Island in the Sun", which was the title of the 1957 hit movie.

In 1966, Burgie composed the words for the national anthem of the newly, Independent nation of Barbados. His songs have sold over 100 million records worldwide, and his music has been performed by artists around the globe.



Belafonte

Burgie has also penned songs for the Kingston Trio and many other groups. His songs have been featured in numerous films and music

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

Reggae gets international focus at UWI confab in Jamaica, Feb. '08

The worldwide impact of Jamaica's reggae music will be the focus of a weeklong international conference in the Caribbean island next month.

The University of the West Indies' Institute of Caribbean Studies and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Mona will host "Global Reggae: Jamaican Popular Music A Yard and Abroad" Feb. 18-24.

The conference, which will feature attractions at other venues in Jamaica as well, is the third in a series focusing on Caribbean culture. The first, held in 1996, honored Professor Rex Nettleford, UWI's vice-chancellor emeritus. The second, in 2002, celebrated the work of the Barbadian griot/historian, Professor Kamau Brathwaite.

This third conference, to be held in association with the Recording Industry Association of Jamaica (RIAJam), the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, the Bob Marley Foundation, and the Jamaica Tourist Board, will pay tribute to the generation of musicians who have created reggae – Jamaica's distinctive contribution to world culture – icons such as Count Matchuki, Don Drummond, Count Ossie, Mrs. Pottinger, and Prince



Marley helped reggae captivate the world.

Buster.

RATIONALE

The conference, coupled with associated reggae concerts, will consolidate and disseminate knowledge on the global impact of Jamaica's distinctive musical contribution to world culture. It hopes to build on the foundation of the 1995 symposium that was held at UWI, Mona, co-sponsored by the Reggae Studies Unit and the Bob Marley Foundation, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the birth of Jamaica's premier cultural ambassador Bob Marley.

The 2008 conference will provide an opportunity for musicians, scholars, cultural practitioners and entrepreneurs from Jamaica and around the world to reflect on

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

Music fests spice up Caribbean destinations this winter season

Several major cultural events are on tap in the Caribbean this winter season, offering visitors additional reasons to journey to the region. Among them are the following:

• **The St. Barth's Music Festival, Jan. 11-13** –

Offers a variety of musical styles, including jazz and classical. Check www.stbartsmusicfestival.org for details.



Hugh Masakela will be among the international stars performing in the Caribbean.

• **Barbados Jazz Festival, Jan. 14-20** – The website,

www.bjff.org for details.

www.barbadosjazzfestival.com, offers a listing of the artistes scheduled to be on show.

• **The Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival, Jan. 24-26** – Scheduled headliners include Diana Ross, Anita Baker, Taj Mahal, Jill Scott, Hugh Masakela and Spyro Gyra. Visit www.airjamaicajazzandblues.com/08

• **The St. John Blues Festival, Mar. 19-23** is slated for the Virgin Islands. Visit www.stjohnbluesfestival.com/bf/blueshome.



Beenie Man seeking to clear off tax debt

KINGSTON, Jamaica, CMC - International reggae and dancehall artiste Moses Davies, popularly known as Beenie Man, is seeking to make arrangements to clear his multi-million dollar tax debt, his lawyers have reported.

The lawyers, in an appearance before the Tax Court last month, disclosed that they are planning to meet with the tax authorities regarding the J\$47 million (\$661,000) in income tax which the Tax Department says it is owed.

The artiste is trying to obtain documents from his



Beenie Man

former management company, Shocking Vibes, which will assist him to make a case

before the Tax Department, the lawyers said. They told the presiding judge that once the documents are obtained, arrangements will be made to settle the debt.

Beenie Man was taken into custody in October after he failed to appear before the Tax Court to answer charges of tax evasion. The entertainer has blamed his former management company, Shocking Vibes, for his dilemma, claiming the company was responsible for paying all his taxes.

He is scheduled to return to court on Jan. 22.



A twisting tale of deception, intrigue and true love

• **TITLE: CONNECTIONS**
• **AUTHOR: CLAUDETTE KING-WELCOME**
• **REVIEWED BY: GORDON WILLIAMS**

When Carolyn Robinson relocated to Watertown to start fresh on her future, she couldn't possibly have envisioned the deep, disturbing links to her past that the move would cause.

In "Connections", Jamaican-born, Florida-based author Claudette King-Welcome takes Carolyn through a journey that is deliciously intriguing, if somewhat farfetched. It is one of broken families and dreams, spiced with shots at redemption, and glued together in the end by love and faith. It serves up a few shockers as well.

For those into romance novels, packaged with tissues for tears, "Connections" is a nice pick-up.

Carolyn, who tells the story, is a single, career-oriented, near-40, white woman who was raised by a single mom, Elizabeth Robinson. She longs

for love and eventually finds it in Larry, an ambitious landscaper and a black man with two grown children. He is also raised by a lone woman,

Gracie Mae Tate. At first Carolyn wiggles to fit uneasily into her new community, which is balanced unevenly on class barriers and racism, while

cementing a friendship with her elderly neighbor Cassie Brandon, a lonely widow.

The fairy tale tone of "Connections" kicks into gear

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)



www.caribbeantoday.com

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

T&T's 'Queen of the Caribbean' places fourth in 'Miss World' bid

PORT OF SAIN, Trinidad, CMC - Trinidad and Tobago's Valene Maharaj was crowned "Queen of the Caribbean" and placed fourth in the 2007 "Miss World" competition in Sanya, China last month.

Some 106 contestants participated in the competition, which was won by the People's Republic of China's Zhang Zilin. It is the first time an East Asian has won the contest.

Angola's Micaela Reis took the first runner-up spot with Mexico's Carolina Moran Gordillo coming in as second



Maharaj

runner-up.

In an interview published in the Trinidad Express last

month, an ecstatic Maharaj said: "It's been a great experience. I enjoyed every minute of it."

Maharaj's name was the fourth to be called when the finalists were announced. The order was Angola, China, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago then Sweden. Minutes earlier she had made it to the top 16 finalists, which included

Maharaj, who is a runway fashion model, has been in the beauty industry since age 16.



A twisting tale of deception, intrigue and true love

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

at a town ball when sparks between Larry and Carolyn first fly. The seemingly too-good-to-be-true courtship between the two sets a neat base for the intrigue that is to come later. The novel takes a steady boil, but when it finally does, the temperature becomes almost irresistible. At first, only the new couple seems in favor of the relationship. Cassie and Elizabeth both frown on it. "Mama was not happy when I told her about Larry being black," said Carolyn. Gracie Mae seemed more accommodating, while Larry's daughters eventually come around.

Brief forays into Carolyn's working life by King-Welcome

help to diversify the plot, but hardly disturbs the main course. The plot takes a while to develop and small pieces knit together to form the big picture. Eventually, it all comes to a head in a near-sudden whoosh! Family lines are crossed up. Sordid memories surface – or are forced out. Bam! An elderly woman bloodies another's nose. Old time "shame and scandal in di family" stirs up all kinds of emotional turmoil.

TALENT

King-Welcome has sure-fire talent as a storyteller. But "Connections" somehow rings with a "where have I heard that before?" feel. It seems

drenched with that "Lifetime" television channel flavor.

The editing could have done far more justice to the novel. A sprinkling of poorly placed punctuation marks and the occasional wrong use of words show that someone took their eyes off the ball while working on a more-than-worthy project.

Yet credit King-Welcome for a bold try. The author of "Paper Thoughts", a collection of poems, clearly understands how to pull the dots together to make pleasing "Connections".

Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor.



N.Y. City Council honors Irving Burgie

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

videos, with "Day-O" being the "wake-up call" for the astronauts on the space shuttle Atlantis in 1997.

CARIBBEAN TIES

Burgie was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1924, but his mother was Barbadian. He grew up surrounded by people from the Caribbean.

After serving in the United

States Army during World War II, Burgie studied music at Julliard School of Music in New York, the University of Arizona and the University of Southern California. He was influenced by folk music, and began performing and writing songs. In the early 1950s, he began performing in Chicago and New York, collaborating, during this time, with Louise "Miss Lou" Bennett, the late,

renowned Jamaican folklorist. He also assumed the name "Lord Burgess".

Last year, Burgie was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

He is a frequent visitor to Barbados, where he has established the Irving Burgie Literary and Creative Scholarship Awards for the last 28 years.



Reggae gets international focus at UWI confab in Jamaica, Feb. '08

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

and document the global impact of reggae. Keynote speakers from each continent will share their perspectives on the ways in which Jamaican reggae has been appropriated and adapted in a variety of cultural contexts.

The conference will also examine the local impact of the reggae music industry in

Jamaica and assess ways in which the Jamaican economy can benefit more directly from the investments of intellectual property in this vibrant multinational industry.

For more information, call **876-977-1951** or e-mail globalreggae2008@uwi-mona.edu.jm



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Inn is out: Five reasons to skip a hotel

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Your next hotel might not be a hotel. It could be a condo, a rental apartment or a home.

And maybe it should be.

It isn't just that traditional hotels, inns and resorts turn off many travelers. There are

Linda Frappia, a healthcare manager from Irvine, California. She has rented homes in Europe with two bedrooms and kitchens for as little as \$500 a week during off-season. That's about as much as it costs for a comparable suite in a nice hotel - for one night.

what a place is really like when you're miles away from any residents. But rent a condo, home or apartment, and you're more likely to be right in the middle of everything.

Extra flexibility - Hotels have rules. Some of them are very strict. For example, say you want to take the whole family - including grandma and grandpa - on your next vacation. Don't try squeezing everyone into a hotel room, or even a suite. But rent a home or an apartment, and no one is likely to tell you to cap the number of guests, or threaten you with a surcharge if there are too many people in the place.

REALITY CHECK

This is not for everyone. Some travelers will still be more comfortable in a traditional hotel. For example, business travelers who are in town for just a few days will probably want to stay away

from a condo or a home exchange. It's not worth it for them. Darryl Cohen, an attorney in Atlanta, explains his preference for hotels as follows: "I'm well taken care of, and if there is a problem, a staff member is available to remedy the situation."

But the longer I watch these non-hotel alternatives develop, the more convinced I am that they represent the future of lodging. In other words, for a lot of travelers, staying at the inn is out.

Edited from Christopher Elliott's travel troubleshooter column. Elliott is the ombudsman for National Geographic Traveler magazine. © 2007 Christopher Elliott. Distributed by Tribune Media Services, Inc.



Sometimes a cozy bed and breakfast is better than staying at a hotel.

plenty of reasons to check out of the lodge these days - through-the-roof room rates, being nicked and dimed for every little extra item - and the alternatives are often roomier, less expensive and more convenient.

No one is predicting the demise of the hotel industry. Not by a long shot, but when it comes to overnight accommodations on your next trip, you might consider an alternate to a traditional hotel. Here are five reasons why:

Lots and lots of room -

Renting a house or condo almost always gives you more room for less money. That's the experience of travelers like

More privacy - Hotels are, by their very nature, public places, from the lobby to the exercise rooms. If you want to go somewhere where you don't have to rub shoulders with the masses, you'll want to skip the hotel. The solution was to rent an apartment, which means, "comfort without intrusion".

A better place - Hotels are expensive. Even cheap hotels can be pricey, once you factor in taxes, "resort" fees and other surcharges. But that's not necessarily the case with one of the popular hotel alternatives.

You can go native - Most hotels are built in resort areas, and it's difficult to get a feel for

Grenada not banning gay cruises

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada, CMC - The Grenada government has announced that it would not prevent several cruise ships carrying gay passengers from docking at Port St. George over the next few months.

A statement from the Ministry of Tourism last month said there has been a negative fallout as a result of reports in the foreign press suggesting that the country was moving to ban gay cruises to the island.

Cruise liners, Queen Mary 2 and Legend of the Seas have scheduled cruises with gay passengers to several Caribbean countries, including Grenada in December, January, February and March. Officials were particularly upset about a headline appearing in the online edition of the *Toronto Star* newspaper, which read "Grenada considering ban on gay cruises".

"The Ministry of Tourism views with concern the recent negative and adverse reactions being promoted in some sections of the media on the perspective visit of homosexual visitors to our island," said the statement read by Permanent Secretary Arlene Buckmire-Outram last month, following several days of consultations on the matter involving tourism officials and various stakeholders.

CONCERN

"Equal of concern are the negative reports which have now appeared in the foreign press stating that Grenada has barred gay cruises from docking in our island," said Buckmire-Outram following a discussion with media representatives and tourism stakeholders.

Tourism Minister Dr. Clarice Modeste Curwin also complained that inaccurate reports suggesting that

Grenada was planning to ban gay cruises to the island have led to a number of cancellations at local hotels. Dr. Modeste Curwin told reporters that persons have also protested by dispatching



Modeste Curwin

letters to the Canadian government asking that country to cut aid to St. George's.

"As a result of this the numbers of hotels have had cancellations and this does not augur well for our tourism sector," the statement said.

"The ministry therefore wishes to make it clear that the cruise lines which regularly visit Grenada and are scheduled to do so during the cruise season are important to all of us and as such we will continue to welcome all visitors and we will work along with our population to ensure that their time and ours will be enjoyable."

Cruise ships carrying gay passengers have visited Grenada many times before, but the news that large numbers of them are scheduled to visit over a four month period has created a major stir here and has sparked a raging debate in the country. Sections of the society, including religious organizations, have voiced strong opposition to the planned cruises.



Katy Sorenson

Miami-Dade County
Commissioner District 8



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Economic Development Council of South Dade (EDC), 900 Perrine Ave., Palmetto Bay, FL 33157
Unique Coalition of Minority Businesses (UCOMB), 17510 S. Dixie Highway, Miami, FL 33157
Team Metro Kendall, 11609 N. Kendall Drive, Miami, FL 33183
Team Metro South Dade, 20505 S. Dixie Highway, Ste. 1623, Miami FL 33189

Previous recipients are NOT eligible for funding. Applications must be mailed or hand delivered at any of the above listed locations on or before January 28, 2008, by 5:00 PM

Any business that is awarded a grant must attend an informational workshop.

For more information, contact Alfie Sergio (Commissioner Sorenson's District office) at 305-378-6677 or Ms. Lawanza Finney, Neighbors And Neighbors (NANA) at 305-756-0605 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

All applications will be subject to selection committee review.

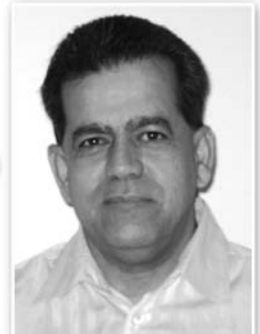
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FOOD

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B'dos Opposition backs regional food plan

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC – Opposition Leader David Thompson believes it's "unrealistic" for Barbados to meet its own food requirements, but has expressed con-

fidence that a regional food plan, which takes into account the vast resources of Guyana and Trinidad, could satisfy the island's needs and that of its neighbors.

"There are vast areas of land in Guyana, there is vast potential for agricultural production in Trinidad, there is vast potential for agricultural production throughout the

region, not only for export, but to help feed our own people within the region," Thompson told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC).**



Thompson

He was speaking ahead of last month's special summit of Caribbean community (CARICOM) leaders in Guyana called specifically to

discuss the high cost of living in the region, which currently imports about \$3 billion a year in food.

Agreeing that something must be done urgently about the problem, Thompson called for a more large scale "regional cooperative venture" that would allow Caribbean nationals to source cheaper items, including, but not limited to food stuff.



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If you have special needs or questions concerning accessibility, call the campus you plan to visit at least three days prior to the event.

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Is canned fish good for the heart?

DR. THOMAS LEE

Question: I know that eating fish is good for the heart. But fresh fish costs a lot and I can't get to the grocery store very often. Does eating canned fish help?

Answer: Canned salmon, tuna, sardines, kippered herring, and other types of fish are pretty much on a par with fresh fish. They give you as much heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids as fresh fish, and sometimes more. These essential oils help prevent potentially deadly heart rhythms. They also work against inflammation and the formation of blood clots inside arteries.

An Italian study published in 2001 found that people who ate fresh or canned fish at least twice a week were 30 percent less likely to have had heart attacks as those who ate fish less than once a week.

Whenever possible, choose fish packed in water. Since water and oil don't mix, omega-3 fats remain locked in the fish. When fish is packed

in oil, some of the omega-3 fats intermingle with the packing oil and are lost when the oil is drained.

About the only downside of eating canned fish is the extra sodium it contains. You can get more than 300 milligrams of sodium - one-sev-



Canned fish

enth of a healthy daily ration - from three ounces of canned salmon or tuna. Rinsing the fish can help a bit.

Dr. Thomas Lee is editor in chief, Harvard Health Letter. © 2007. President of Fellows Harvard College. All rights reserved. Distributed by Tribune Media Services.



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What's going on Mr. Salesman?

GORDON WILLIAMS

Fitzroy Salesman has made history for a lot of right reasons in the United States. A Caribbean American man who fashioned himself into a popular South Florida politician, he earned himself a seat on Miramar's City Commission.

A few years ago, Salesman was part of a trio of Jamaican-born men who held the majority on the elected commission, the first time English-speaking Caribbean Americans had achieved such a political feat in the U.S.

But in recent times Salesman has been making history for the wrong reasons. He has been involved in a few skirmishes with the law, which threatens his political legacy and also the reputation of Caribbean Americans everywhere.

In 2005 Salesman was suspended from the city commission by Florida's then Governor Jeb Bush after being charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and evading cops. His police station mug shot showed a man looking disoriented. The outspoken politician seemed to have taken a mighty fall. But Salesman rebounded. Last year he was cleared of those charges and reinstated to his \$31,599-a-year job by current Governor Charlie Crist. Lost wages were reimbursed, legal fees taken care of. Salesman said he felt vindicated.

The whole thing had blown over and Salesman was once more in the clear. That is, until the most recent incident. Salesman, 50, is facing firearms-related charges based on accusations that he allegedly pulled a gun at a man while at a South Florida store. Again, Florida's governor has suspended Salesman from Miramar City Commission duties. Again Salesman is getting ready to face the court system. Again his political future - and his freedom - are at stake.

DAMAGE

What is to be made of this? In the U.S., a person is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. But that has not stopped a few things from happening in Salesman's case. Although he is an American citizen, Salesman is repeatedly referred to as the Jamaican-born Miramar city commis-

sioner. He can't escape the tag and that casts a shadow on the Caribbean American community as well. Also, Salesman's connection to the Caribbean only fuels the snickering from some who believe that people from the region who settle in the U.S. are often unable to handle the same success they so desperately seek.

It is difficult to fully understand the damage that Salesman's latest legal woes can cause to the Caribbean American community. But rest assured there will be some damage. Miramar is a fairly affluent community with a huge Caribbean American population. Many there are eager to support their own, especially in achieving political office. But if Salesman's mug shot continues to show up on police blotters for all the wrong reasons, will it be fair to ask those same residents to stand behind him when he - again - seeks their support?

How long will it be before Caribbean American voters start thinking that maybe their elected officials should be spending more time serving their community than fighting personal legal battles?

NO RUSH

No one should rush to judge Salesman. It does not matter how many times he has to face the court. The system will be enough judge for him. As far as we know, he is innocent.

Yet maybe it is time that Salesman does some reflection into his own conduct. He should be aware of the Caribbean saying that "if it nuh go suh, it go near", which loosely indicates that even if the charges do not stick, they leave a mark.

Salesman, by virtue of his popularity and clout, is capable of creating a hugely positive image of Caribbean people in the U.S. He has lobbied for Caribbean people in the U.S. to be able to represent the governments of the region in matters relating to the U.S. government. I suspect that he, if he can only stay off the police blotters, would value himself as one who could do a good job at that.

And make the right kind of history.

Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor.



Multiple wives, multiple crosses

Last month I touched on the subject of husband training by wives. The indignity of it all, some men say, as wives are so much trouble.

Yet, some men marry not only consecutively, but concurrently, having more than one wife at the same time. Imagine, the idea of men having more than one wife, when in fact they often complain how one wife gives so much trouble.

The acquisition of multiple wives is as old as time itself. It has been practiced throughout history by people of many nations and religions, large and small. It is recorded in the Bible. The more the merrier, and if kings David or Solomon could speak right now, they'd both say, "It's good to be the king."

In this modern day, polygamy is still practiced by some, even in the great U.S., as many religious groups and sects live the life they love, and love the wives they live with. It is a pure and honest expression of a man's love for his wives. Meanwhile, the rest of society lives under the veil of hypocrisy, as men take vows with one wife but keep another on the side.

There is this television series called "Big Love", that explores this very same phenomenon, that of a man with his three wives and how they interact and co-exist amicably and civilized. It is almost every man's dream, to be able to have three wives out in the open, with no jealousy or problems.

"Man, multiple wives is the way to go, all of the pleasure, none of the guilt, that's civilised living."

In parts of Africa, men are still allowed to have many wives, as long as they can afford them. Each wife knows her place and the pecking order is maintained. In the West, the principle remains the same and the 'wives' are as loyal and devoted to their husbands as their African counterparts. They know where he is at all times, as he is always at the first, second or third wife's house. How many wives in our neck of the woods can purport to knowing where their husbands are at any given time?

In multiple marriages there is no need for dishonesty, as all the parties know what the deal is, and they know exactly what they were getting into.

BENEFITS

The benefits to multiples are many, with the



first being sex. Yes, sex, that all important ingredient of any successful marriage. In monogamy, sex wanes, even slightly, although many lie and say that it isn't so, but in multiples it is heightened, and here's why: Whether you like to hear it or not, people crave sexual variety, and it's not gender related either, as women also fall into this category. Some are shackled by so called morality however, while others don't venture because of fear.

But take those away and we would all sleep with whomever, whenever we wanted to. For this reason, people have affairs, as the need for sexual variety beckons.

With multiples, this hunger and thirst are satisfied, as the




TONY ROBINSON

man has a choice of different wives whenever he pleases. All the wives know their schedule and fit right in, or if he wants to keep it even more spontaneous and

real, he has no schedule, but just pops in and spends the night with whichever wife who strikes his fancy. A life of permanent booty calls. Because of this heightened sexuality, the marriages are kept fresh, alive, spontaneous, and honest.


(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)



It is with pleasure that we pause from our usual routine to say

Thank You

for your friendship, goodwill and loyalty. May the happiness and good cheer of the Holiday Season be yours throughout the New Year.



Connecting the Caribbean

CARIB Comments

• **"The backlog, under the requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), is outrageous"** -

Caribbean American Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke calling for a moratorium on all new passport rules in the United States.

• **"We, more than most, have tasted God's goodness"** - Jessica Odle, Barbados's New York consul general, highlights the Caribbean's blessings in her Christmas message.

• **"Haitians bled for our country"** -

Congressman Kendrick Meek, who last month introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives honoring the contributions of Haitians in America's Revolutionary War.

• **"We really feel like we have the upper hand here"** - Mark Mendel, a United States-based



lawyer, who is representing Antigua and Barbuda, said the twin-island state is looking forward to receiving a huge compensation from the U.S. in its Internet gambling trade dispute with Washington.

• **"Because of a long-standing attitude of that European country, which has always said that it does not favor the involvement of other cultural agencies and entertainers in its market, it has firm restrictions so Europe has put up barriers to liberalizing the market for our cultural workers and entertainers"** - CARICOM Chairman Owen Arthur last month revealing that one country (France) virtually stood in the way of the Caribbean completing the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

• **"Governments are designed to create and follow rules and because tourism involves creativity, thinking outside of the box, the bureaucracy in government can slow down progress"** - Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Secretary General Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace last month advising Caribbean governments not to get too involved in the day-to-day running of their vital foreign exchange earning tourism sectors.

• **"Any first year law student would know that this case was frivolous, vexatious, non meritorious and designed to harass a sitting prime minister"** - Grenada's Attorney General Elvin Nimrod saying it is wrong for anyone to object to Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell being granted immunity from prosecution in a United States court.

• **"Normally, a grand jury will indict anything or anyone, including a ham sandwich"** - Anthony Capetola, a New York-based attorney, explaining why the murder case against his Trinidadian-born client Kelly Forbes, was not strong. Forbes was arrested and charged with manslaughter for killing her husband of three months.

• **"You can't look that far in advance. Anything can happen. I'm just taking it one day at a time"** - Bahamian high jump world champion Donald Thomas last month playing down focus on the Beijing Olympics next summer as he looks to the start of 2008.

• **"The situation at the WICB is not conducive to productivity and if there isn't a change the problem will continue to exist"** -



Bruce Aanensen, former chief executive officer of the West Indies Cricket Board, expressing his view last month that the number of directors on the WICB is too large and causes problems to players and management. He also feels there is also too much interference from the directors of the WICB.

• **"When you add to that the number of persons who are coming back in our country who may not have jobs, who are displaced from their family members, who are angry at being returned then we have another social problem"** - Dr. Ann-Marie Barnes, the technical director in Jamaica's Ministry of National Security, highlighting the strain on regional local law enforcers caused by the influx of deportees to the Caribbean from developed countries.

• **"The passing of the generation of charismatic leaders who commanded and expected loyalty and the rise of a generation of technocrats in their stead provides no easy answers"** - Professor Alan Cobley, a University of the West Indies official, lamenting the high level of disenchantment among young voters in the Caribbean, which he said could cripple democracy in



the region.
• **"It smacks of desperation. The prime minister is clearly hoping to hide behind the season"** - David Comissiong, leader of the fledgling People's Empowerment Party (PEP), criticizing the pre-Christmas announcement of general elections in Barbados by Prime Minister Owen Arthur as a deliberate attempt by the government to "short circuit" public debate leading up to the poll scheduled for this month.

• **"There is always the balloon effect. Wherever you put pressure, they go somewhere else"** - Vito S. Guarino, assistant special agent in charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) Caribbean Division, said much of Colombia's cocaine now comes to the southern coast of Hispaniola, via Venezuela.

• **"Failure to stop these activities is an offense under section 68(7) of the Act and is punishable upon conviction by a fine or imprisonment or both"** - The Financial Service Commission in Jamaica issuing an order last month for the investment scheme Cash Plus Limited to immediately cease and desist its securities trading activities until the company obtains the required license.

Compiled from CMC and other sources.



Multiple wives, multiple crosses

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

With multiples there is no need for deception, no need for lies, no need for nagging. Ah nagging, the bane of marriages, the weapon of wives, the albatross of husbands. One would think that with three or more wives, the mathematical permutation of nagging would increase proportionally. But not so, and that is the beauty of multiples, for with multiple

wives, the very reason for nagging is taken away. No more is there a need to ask, "So where yu was, who yu was with, what's her name, are you sleeping with her?" That is the domain of the so called sole wife, she who is insecure and needs to have and to hold her husband close to her bosom when she feels like it.

There is sexual blackmail that single wives are famous

for. With multiples, if, heaven forbid, one wife decides to withhold her sexual favours, all the husband has to do is visit any of the others. This leads to a happy contented husband who may even forgive that errant wife her misdeeds. In fact, she would think twice before trying that stunt again, as she knows that if he doesn't eat at her home he always has another home to eat from.

Just think of it, a world with no mistresses, no guile, no guilt, no lying about coming home late, no tears. The phrase, cheating husband would be stricken from our vocabulary. But there are also negatives to multiples, a downside, although the pros may very well outweigh the cons.

EXPENSIVE

First of all, it can be an expensive undertaking, as each wife and indeed each household will have to be maintained equally. You very well can't have one wife living in a decent upscale apartment, while the others exist in squalor.

Therefore, each house has to be financed equally. That's three more rents or mortgages from one man, not an easy task. That's why polygamy is usually reserved for the privileged among us, the kings of old, the tribal chiefs, the affluent.

But at least it will be out in the open, unlike the victims of monogamy who have to hide their financial statements as they cloister away their mistress in a hidden apartment, hoping that the wife never finds out. Also with multiple wives, the man has to be virile, as each wife is expecting her just rewards. There can be no sexual fatigue or inequality on his part, or multiple love will

quickly turn to multiple crosses. Imagine one wife getting more than the others, or him not being able to perform at all?

But truth be told, with the variety offered up to him, just like a boxer who gets many prize fights, he will be kept in peak condition, always sharp, at the top of his game and won't need much stimulation.

Then there will be children, for each household will have many, and he will have to be a good father to them all, helping with homework and stuff. But come to think of it, that scenario occurs in so called monogamous society, with men having separate families, complete with children, albeit squired away in some secret suburb.

Still I say, big up multiples, and even though many of you ladies may be fuming as you disagree with me, almost every man I know would vote for it. Plus if you really gave it serious thought, you may even agree for the above reasons - no lying, no deception no suspicion. And you would always know where he is.

Hail multiples, but don't you ladies even dare think about taking multiple husbands; it goes against the laws of nature.

seido1@hotmail.com



CAN WE TALK?



Peter A. Webley,
Publisher

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R E G I O N

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Remittances to Caribbean slowing ~ *World Bank*

NELSON KING

WASHINGTON - The World Bank says that while the Caribbean and Latin American region remains the largest recipient of recorded remittances, growth of remittances to the area has slowed in recent months.

"Flows to Latin America and the Caribbean slowed on the back of a weakening U.S. (United States) economy and tighter enforcement of immigration laws", the bank explained in a statement last month.

"Although remittances to the Latin America and the Caribbean region continued to increase in 2007, including in Mexico, their rate of growth has slowed markedly, raising concern over the long-term sustainability of remittance flows", it added.

Nevertheless, the World Bank said the growth of remit-



A weakening U.S. economy has helped slow remittances to the Caribbean.

tances to developing countries remains robust because of strong growth in Europe and Asia. It said the remittance industry is experiencing some "positive structural changes" with the advent of cell phone and Internet-based remittance instruments.

"The diffusion of these changes, however, is slowed by a lack of clarity on key regulations, including those relating

to money laundering and other financial crimes", it stated.

"Remittance costs have fallen, but not far enough, especially in the South-South corridors".

RISE

The World Bank said remittance flows to developing countries are expected to reach US\$318 billion in 2007. Of this amount, remittances sent home by migrants from developing countries are expected to exceed \$240 billion in 2007, up from \$221 billion in 2006 and more than double the level reached in 2002, it said.

"This amount reflects only officially recorded transfers-the actual amount including unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels is believed to be significantly larger", the bank stated.



Daughter of slain revolutionary leader extends olive branch to father's killers

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada, CMC -The daughter of slain former Grenada Prime Minister Maurice Bishop has extended an olive branch to her father's killers.

Nadia Bishop called on Grenadians to join her in forgiving former Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard, ex-army strong man Hudson Austin, and the other 15 people convicted for the murder of Bishop and several members of his Cabinet in 1983.

Bishop, 39, said she was speaking for herself and her family and not on behalf of other family members who lost relatives during the political unrest in Oct. 1983.

"This invitation is not designed to provide a reason to judge those who are not ready to forgive or to reconcile. It has

taken me 24 years to get to his point," said Bishop, a United States-based lawyer.

"Everyone needs the time that they need and no one should be judge by anybody else's timeline, especially not the family members of those who were killed on October 19."

TURNAROUND

Political observers say her declaration is of major significance and a complete turnaround from the bitterness and anger that spurred many families to publicly campaign for the killers to remain in jail for the rest of their



Maurice Bishop

natural life.

"I am here today because I have come to the conviction that my father would be very unhappy to know that 24 years later that the people of Grenada, whom he considered his family, are still fighting and having divisions amongst themselves in the name of Brother Bishop," she said. "This is not what he would have wanted."

The young Bishop was joined by Marcel Belmar, whose sister, Jema, was among those killed during the palace coup in 1983. While Belmar, who has been at the frontlines of protest against the killer's freedom from prison, has had a change of heart, other family members were said to be unhappy with the position taken by the young Bishop.



Int'l tribunal clears T&T's chief justice

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - An international tribunal has found that the case brought against Chief Justice Satnarine Sharma over allegations of judicial misconduct was weak, clearing the way for him to resume his duties.

Sharma, 64, was suspended from office on June 13, 2007 allowing the tribunal to begin its task of investigating a claim made by Chief Magistrate Sherman McNicolls that he (Sharma) had attempted to influence his decision in the trial of former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday.

The international tribu-

nal, headed by retired Privy Councillor Lord Michael



Sharma

Mustill, and included St. Lucian jurist Sir Vincent Floissac Q.C. and Jamaican jurist Dennis Morrison Q.C., found insufficient evidence to

recommend to the president that the question of Sharma's removal be forwarded to the Privy Council for final determination.



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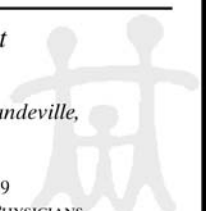
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NANA, 180 NW 62nd Street
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305-756-0605

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located at 15800 NW 42 Avenue



Barbara J. Jordan
Miami-Dade County
Commissioner District 1

All applications must be hand delivered and returned by 5 p.m.
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contact Ms. Lawanza Finney at (305) 756-0605 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.



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Barbadians vote for new govt. on Jan. 15

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC - Barbadians will go to the polls to elect a new government on Jan. 15, Prime Minister Owen Arthur revealed during last month's pre-Christmas national address to the nation.

Nomination Day was Dec. 31.

Arthur, who is seeking an unprecedented fourth successive term for his Barbados Labour Party (BLP), ended months of speculation when he announced the date for the much-anticipated poll during a two-minute address, which was broadcast live on radio stations and the Caribbean island's lone television station.

In the last general elections, which were held on May 21, 2003, Arthur's BLP won 23 seats in the 30-member House of Assembly, with the remaining seven going to the Democratic Labour Party (DLP).

DESPERATION?

Meanwhile, two

Opposition parties here slammed Arthur for his pre-Christmas announcement of the Jan. 15 general elections, while declaring their readiness to contest the poll. Opposition Leader David Thompson told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC)** that

while his Democratic Labour Party (DLP) is ready to contest the elections, he thought the announcement just days before Christmas Day was "an unfortunate cut into the most sacred event of the Christian faith."

David Comissiong, leader of the fledgling People's Empowerment Party (PEP), told CMC he believes the pre-Christmas announcement was a deliberate attempt on the part of government to "short circuit" public debate leading up to the poll.

"It smacks of desperation," Comissiong said. "The prime minister is clearly hoping to hide behind the season."



PLP returned in Bermuda

IVAN CLIFFORD

HAMILTON, Bermuda, CMC - The ruling Progressive Labour Party (PLP) swept to victory in last month's general elections with a resounding 22-14 seat majority over the main Opposition United Bermuda Party (UBP), according to preliminary results.

Both parties had nominated candidates for all 36 seats in this British Overseas Territory, and the results were a repeat of the 2003 election. According to the preliminary figures, the two main parties traded two seats each. The results also flew in the face of opinion polls that the parties were in a close contest.

Opposition Leader Michael Dunkley, who gambled on leaving a safe seat to take on PLP incumbent Patrice Minors, a former health minister, backfired when he was beaten by 92 votes. Dunkley made the switch in a do-or-die

attempt to take his party back to power it last held nine years ago.

Premier Ewart Brown, whose job had appeared to be on the line in a tight finish, or even defeat, easily held his Warwick South Central seat while his close friend and political newcomer Zane DeSilva caused an upset by beating former UBP tourism minister David Dodwell by 48

votes in Southampton East Central.

DeSilva became the first white member of the PLP since former tourism minister David Allen, who died five years ago.

Two independent candidates collected just 67 votes between them.



Guyana approves voters bill

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC - Parliament has approved legislation paving the way for the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to proceed with house-to-house registration despite reservations by the opposition that the measures may threaten the independ-

ence of the commission.

GECOM said it is ready to begin the exercise that is expected to end on July 4. The house-to-house registration is expected to be done before the local government polls scheduled for this year.



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DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS **FEB. 15, 2008**



SPORT

www.caribbeantoday.com

Haiti is Caribbean's 'Team of the Year'

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - The Caribbean Football Union (CFU) has named Haiti its "Team of the Year" for 2007.

CFU President Jack Warner made the announcement last month.

Warner said the Haitians were unquestionably the highest achievers in the region this past year.

Haiti landed the 2007 Digicel Caribbean Cup for the first time, qualified for the 2007 CONCACAF Gold Cup



Haitians celebrate their Digicel Caribbean Cup triumph in Jan. 2007.

and the FIFA Under-17 World

Championship, and also reached the final round of qualification towards the 2008 Olympics.

"Not only can Haitians take pride in those achievements but we, in both CONCACAF and the Caribbean Football Union...also feel a justifiable sense of pride," Warner stated. "Such accomplishments must be due to the vibrant leadership of the Federation Haitienne de Football."



...keeps top spot in regional ratings

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - Digicel Caribbean Cup champions Haiti celebrated 2008 as the number one Caribbean Football Union (CFU) team despite slipping three spots down the FIFA Coca Cola Rankings.

After achieving an all-time best 66th on the world soccer list together with the CFU top spot in November, the Haitians dipped to 69th on FIFA's December ratings list released last month, but remain head of the CFU rankings.

Cuba dipped one spot on the FIFA list to number 71 and

retain the CFU second spot, and Trinidad and Tobago stepped closer to the CFU front-runners by moving up two places to 81st on FIFA's list as the region's number three team.

Jamaica climbed two places up the CFU list to fourth with its number 97 ranking, to displace St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) and Guyana, which both suffered huge slides on the world list.

SVG, the highest ranked English-speaking Caribbean team in November, tumbled 24 places down FIFA's list to 101st, and is now fifth in the CFU.

Guyana plunged to 128th spot, a whopping 35 places down from its November world rating of 93rd, and now shares sixth in the CFU with Barbados.

Bermuda, 147th on the FIFA list, is eighth in the CFU, while Antigua and Barbuda (151) and Suriname (153) complete the region's top 10.

There was no change among the world's top teams, with Argentina at number one, stalked by Brazil and Italy, with Spain fourth and Germany fifth.



Johnson may fight American for world boxing title, but Jamaican desires revenge match against Brit

GORDON WILLIAMS

MIAMI - Despite plans for a warm-up bout this month and a crack at a world title fight in April, Jamaican-born former light heavyweight champion Glen Johnson still harbors an intense desire for a rematch with his ring nemesis Clinton Woods of Britain.

If familiarity breeds contempt, Johnson has seen enough of Woods to spawn a cauldron of bordering on hatred. The former International Boxing Federation king is vowing to inflict so much punishment on the current IBF titleholder he has difficulty finding ways to express it.

"I'm looking forward to that fight where I can't even put that in words," Johnson said while working out recently at the Warriors Boxing Gym in Florida, United States where he lives.

"I need to break about four (of Woods's) ribs and a jaw bone in that fight, because I definitely want to hurt Clinton Woods very, very, very badly."

Johnson, 38, scheduled to fight Colombia's Hugo Pineda this month in a warm-up bout, has also been reported to be in line to that on undefeated American Chad Dawson in April for the World Boxing

Council title. But it is Woods who riles up Johnson the most. The Jamaican has fought Woods three times before, all in Britain. The results have been mixed, with each fighter winning once and one draw. However, Johnson has long believed that the two fights he did not win were hometown decisions that favored Woods.

"I've beaten him three times," said Johnson, who holds a record of 46 wins, 11 losses and two draws. "They took one. Actually they took two...because one of them was called a draw, which I beat him. The other one I win the decision and the other one, they called a split decision, went to him."

BITTER

The Jamaican is especially bitter because he believes Woods, 35, has delayed his quest to be listed among the sport's greatest and deprived him of lucrative purses.

"Out of all the people that I've fought, he's done the most damage to my career," Johnson said.

"So this man has set back my career twice already and there's nobody else in boxing that has done that," said the man called the "Road Warrior" for his willingness to fight anywhere he's asked and who has suffered several dubious ring

decisions in his long career.

"There are fighters who have set my career back by rip-off wins and stuff like that. But they've done it once. This guy (Woods) has done it twice. So I am very, very angry when it comes to Clinton Woods."

Johnson is the top ranked challenger for the IBF crown and could get a crack at that title around mid-2008. If Woods is still holding the belt, the two will meet for a fourth time.

Johnson admits that Woods is not to bear total blame for what he considers bad ring decisions in their previous fights, but he refuses to play down his building animosity towards the Englishman.

"Yeah, it's a personal thing," said the fighter who also goes by the nickname "Gentleman Glen". "It's a grudge match. I know (Woods) is not the doer himself, because I know that it's his camp, you know, management, promoters and stuff like that. Those are the ones that do the dirty deeds. It's not so much the fighter."

"But he's the only one that I can catch and the only one that I can deal with. So, he's the only one that has to pay."

Gordon Williams is Caribbean Today's managing editor.



West Indies names rugby squad for Sevens World Series in U.S.

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, CMC - Rugby West Indies has announced a 12-member squad for the International Rugby Board's Sevens World Series tournament next month in the United States city of San Diego, California.

The players were picked following the NAWIRA Sevens tournament, a mini camp in Trinidad, and the

Trinidad and Tobago Sevens.

The squad includes Claudius Butts, Kevin McKenzie, Richard Staglon, Theodore Henry, Albert La Rose, Andre Carbrera, Kelson Figaro, Bevon Armitage, Elroy Graham, Donald Walters, Jeremico Cooper and Kurt Johnson.



SPORT BRIEFS

• Haiti, Cuba in final round of Olympic qualifying

Cuba and Haiti are among eight teams contesting the final round of CONCACAF's Under-23 men's soccer qualification for the 2008 Olympic Games in March.

The qualification will take place from **Mar. 11-23** at three venues in the United States. Cuba is in Group A with the U.S., Honduras and Panama. Haiti is in Group B alongside Canada, Guatemala and Mexico. The top two teams qualify for the Olympics.

• Kittitian Harris traded to Chivas in MLS

The United States Major League Soccer (MLS) club Real Salt Lake (RSL) has traded St. Kitts and Nevis international Atiba Harris to Chivas USA.

The attacking midfielder has been exchanged for the 2005 expansion partner's natural third round selection (37th overall) in the upcoming 2008 MLS SuperDraft. Harris joined RSL after a successful trial prior to the 2006 preseason, and made 43 regular season appearances with the club, scoring four goals and adding a pair of assists in two MLS seasons.

• J'can club faces D.C. United in CONCACAF soccer

Jamaica and Caribbean champions Harbour View will face D.C. United of United States Major League Soccer in the quarterfinals of the CONCACAF Champions Cup in March.

The first-leg encounter of the quarterfinals will take place between **Mar. 11 and 13**, with the return-legs set for **Mar. 18-20**. The

Caribbean crown earned the Jamaican club a berth to the Champions' Cup quarterfinals.

• Campbell, Powell in 'Track and Field News' top 10

Jamaican sprint stars Veronica Campbell and Asafa Powell secured top 10 positions as Tyson Gay and Meseret Defar snatched the number one spots in the Track and Field News magazine's poll for the top performers in 2007.

Campbell, the 100-meter gold medalist at the Osaka World Championships, took ninth spot in the women's poll and Powell, whose sizzling world-record equaling run in Rieti was voted the top performance at the IAAF awards, is number five on the men's list.

• T&T ends losing hockey streak to U.S.

Trinidad and Tobago's men's hockey team ended its run of five defeats against the United States with a 2-2 draw last month in the second match of five friendly internationals at the United States Olympic Training Centre.

• Haitian retains world boxing title

The unbeaten Haitian Joachim Alcine retained his World Boxing Association light middleweight title with a 12th round technical knockout victory over Panama's Alfonso Mosquera last month. The victory improved Alcine's record to 30-0 with 19 knockouts.

Compiled from CMC and other sources.



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Cricket World Cup, Lara, track make global headlines in '07

KEVIN PILE

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC – Cricket World Cup opened a new chapter in sports for the Caribbean in 2007, but the glittering fairytale that was Brian Lara's career drew to a close as the legend exited the world stage he had long dominated.

Hosted across nine nations and costing regional governments hundreds of millions of United States dollars, the tournament ended in sore disappointment for West Indies and their fans and led to Lara's sudden retirement.

The World Cup, staged from Mar. 13 to April 28, unveiled history as the cricket-mad region hosted international cricket's showpiece for the first time ever, and it virtually overshadowed several other accomplishments of which the Caribbean could boast.

Jamaican Asafa Powell rebounded from the huge disappointment of a third place finish at the World Championships of Athletics in Osaka, Japan, to set a new world record time of 9.74 seconds in the 100 meters run at the IAAF Rieti Grand Prix in Italy in September, while Haiti crowned itself champion of the Digicel Caribbean Cup, the region's premier soccer competition.

West Indies, seeking to claim the prestigious tournament for the first time since its back-to-back wins in 1975 and 1979, had its dreams of a win on home soil shattered with another of what has become its trademark performance. Though it progressed almost effortlessly from the group stage with comfortable wins over Pakistan, Zimbabwe and minnows Ireland, it subsequently lost its first four matches of the Super Eight second round to eliminate any chances of reaching the semi-finals.

The team's World Cup expedition was mired in rumors of internal wrangling and disunity among players. Lara's sudden announcement, that he would retire after the final match against England, added further fuel to the raging fires of speculation.

West Indies' wretched campaign also signaled the end of the line for the team's under-fire Australian coach Bennett King as he also resigned. There was no disappointment for two-time defending World Champions Australia, which played flawless cricket throughout the tournament to capture an unprecedented third World Cup.

West Indies licked its wounds, regrouped and took aim at England during the summer, but could find no success there either as the Caribbean team was comprehensively whipped 3-0 under the new

leadership of Guyanese Ramnaresh Sarwan, who had replaced Lara.

West Indies's gloom was brightened only by Shivnarine Chanderpaul's matchless form. The indomitable Guyanese scored heavily to compile 446 runs at an average of 148, with two centuries, and assumed the run-scoring mantle laid down by Lara's absence. In the process, he passed 7,000 runs in Tests, joining the prestigious club of great West Indies crick-



Lara made his exit from international cricket.

eters that included Brian Lara, Sir Vivian Richards, Sir Garfield Sobers, Desmond Haynes, Gordon Greenidge and Clive Lloyd.

In December, during the five-match ODI series in Zimbabwe, Chanderpaul also eclipsed 7,000 runs in one-day internationals, becoming only the third West Indies batsman to achieve the feat, after Lara and legendary opener Haynes.

EARLY EXIT

In September, the West Indies's disappointing run continued at the inaugural ICC Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa where the regional team exited in the first round. Hammered by hosts South Africa by eight wickets in the opening match in Johannesburg, despite a whirlwind century by Gayle, West Indies slumped to another loss in their second match against Bangladesh to bow meekly out of the tournament.

Administratively, the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) continued its musical chairs. In January, Dr. Roland Toppin, the man identified to become the WICB's chief executive officer, said he was no longer available to take up the position. In February, the WICB announced that former banker Bruce Aanensen would take up the vacant post from April, but the Trinidadian's tenure was short-lived. After several bruising battles with West Indies Players Association President Dinanath Ramnarine over players' con-

tracts, Aanensen announced his resignation in August. His move followed Julian Hunte's appointment as WICB president in July, the St. Lucian replacing Ken Gordon in the top post in regional cricket. He was elected unopposed.

Australian John Dyson, a former Test opener, was then named coach of the embattled regional side.

At the regional level, Barbados captured the Carib Beer Cup in January after playing unbeaten throughout the competition. In October, Jamaica's long wait for regional limited-overs glory – since 1999 – was ended when it captured the KFC Cup.

Earlier in August, Guyana continued its impressive performance in the West Indies Under-19 tournament when it won the three-day title in St. Kitts. Its hopes of doing the double were dashed by Jamaica, however, which produced a superb performance in the one-day final to secure that title.

In October, the long awaited Patterson Report was released, detailing its many recommendations to transform the structure of West Indies cricket.

Commissioned by the WICB and prepared by former Jamaica Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, along with Sir Alister McIntyre and Dr. Ian McDonald, the 138-page document recommended a name change for the WICB and a shake-up in the structure of the board.

According to the report, the WICB should be renamed Cricket West Indies, comprising a Cricket West Indies Council and a Cricket West Indies Board.

ATHLETICS

In athletics, Powell continued to be the talk of the town for more than one reason. Without a major medal to his credit, he entered the World Championships in Osaka in August as a favorite to take the 100 meters. But in the final, he was upset by American Tyson Gay. Bahamian Derrick Atkins finished with silver in 9.91 seconds. Powell earned bronze. But the next month in Italy, he reminded the world of his sublime talent by carving out a new world record in the event. That earned him the IAAF Performance of the Year Award in November.

Bahamian Donald Thomas

was good enough to capture gold at the World Championships, when he won the high jump with a leap of 2.35 meters. Jamaican Usain Bolt took silver in the 200 meters and shared in another silver performance in the 4x100 meters, while The Bahamas was also runner-up in the 4x400 meters.

Jamaican Veronica Campbell gave the region reason to celebrate when she captured gold in a thrilling finish to the women's 100 meters. In one of the closest 100 meters races in recent history, it took the judges several minutes to determine the winner. Campbell edged out American Lauryn Williams. It was Campbell's first World Championships sprint title and it followed her 200 meters Olympic title in Athens three years before. Campbell was forced into second in the 200 meters behind American Allyson Felix and picked up her third medal at the games when Jamaica copped silver in the 4x100 meters relay.

In July, the Caribbean shone at the World Youth Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic with powerhouse Jamaica giving a strong account of itself. Dexter Lee won the boys 100 meters and was followed home by compatriot Nickel Ashmeade for the silver, while Ramone McKenzie took the 200 meters gold with Ashmeade taking bronze. Barbadian Shane Brathwaite also stood out at the youth games when he snared the octathlon by tallying 6,261 points. In the process, the 17-year-old created history by becoming his country's first World Youth

champion and its first ever athletics gold medal winner in a global competition at any level.

There was also some success for the region's girls as the Jamaican trio of Latoya McDermott (400 meters), Shermaine Williams (100 hurdles) and Misha-Gaye DaCosta (high jump) landed silver. Bahamian Nivea Smith earned bronze in the 200 meters.

In July, the Pan American Games in Brazil also brought success as Antiguan sprinter Brendan Christian delivered his country's two medals by winning the 200 meters and taking bronze in the 100 meters won by the Netherlands' Churandy Martina. Bahamian Chris Brown joined the fun with gold in the 400 meters, while Dominican Chris Lloyd was good enough to claim bronze in the same event.

Jamaican Maurice Smith won the decathlon event and

The Bahamas powered its way into winners' row in the men's 4x400 meters relay.

Jamaican Delloreen Ennis-London sustained the success for the Caribbean with a win in the women's 100 meters hurdles and her country's 4x100 meters relay team followed that up with another gold.

FOR KICKS

Soccer also grabbed the headlines, with Haiti elevating itself to the position of Caribbean champions. In the final of the Digicel Caribbean Cup, Haiti upset favorites T&T in the final.

The cream of T&T's national players remained locked in a dispute with the local federation over bonus monies owed them from their appearance at the 2006 World Cup in Germany. A ban was imposed on the players in question, leading to a weakened squad for the Gold Cup contested in the U.S. in June, where T&T failed to win a single match.



Thomas outjumped the world.

In November, there was a changing of the guard in Jamaica's football as Captain Horace Burrell, who oversaw Jamaica's historic outing at the 1998 World Cup in France, took over the reins of power from the embattled Crenston Boxhill. The change came against the backdrop of the Reggae Boyz' lowest ever position in the 14-year history of the FIFA rankings, as they slipped to 103rd in October with Cuba, Haiti, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, T&T, Guyana and Barbados all ranked higher. Technical Director Bora Milutinovic was fired after completing just one year of his four-year contract and was replaced by René Simoes, the Brazilian who had guided the Reggae Boyz to the World Cup finals in 1998.

The Caribbean shone internationally on the horseracing circuit as Barbadian Patrick Husbands captured the jockeys' title in December at the Woodbine Racetrack in Canada and Jamaican apprentice Jermaine Bridgmohan won at the Tropical at Calder meet in Florida in January.

In golf, T&T's Stephen Ames reminded the world he merited his place on the PGA Tour with a win at the \$4.6 million Children's Miracle Network Classic in November.

- CMC

