

2010-07-26

NO: 1114/10

SEALY: “MEETINGS WITH TOURISM PLAYERS IN CHINA A SUCCESS”

Meetings held with over 20 tour operators in Beijing and Shanghai over the past two weeks have been dubbed a success by Minister of Tourism Richard Sealy.

According to the Minister, the feedback was the same throughout the discussions – the Chinese travelling public is very keen to go to new destinations, including Barbados, now that there are fewer restrictions related to travel.

Acknowledging that there were challenges, such as the distance and visa requirements, Mr. Sealy maintained that a seed had been planted as a result of the meetings from which benefits would be realised in the future.

“It’s a bit difficult to get a visa - you have to get the visa through London, but with the approved destination status for guided groups of five persons or more with an approved tour operator, the visa can be issued on arrival in Barbados.

“So it means that there is a wonderful opportunity for us to get some group travel. And, the good thing about that, is that the Chinese tend to travel in groups, so perhaps we can get a charter going and start to get some business,” the Minister explained.

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ADD: SEALY: "MEETINGS WITH TOURISM PLAYERS IN CHINA A SUCCESS" - 1

He revealed that talks were also ongoing with several airlines. "We realise that the very long distance and having to connect and be in transit can mean that a long trip can be even longer, so we are looking to see what the possibilities are of having some direct airlift coming to Barbados," Mr. Sealy added.

He stressed that exploring the Chinese market in no way meant that government was "not doing what we are supposed to with the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America".

He disclosed: "Far from that, we have more seats now from those three markets than we have ever had - the US has increased by over 20 per cent year to date, and Canada has increased by almost 20 per cent year to date on a year where we had also increased in 2009. So we are shoring up our existing markets but we are also looking for new markets."

The Tourism Minister pointed out that China had tremendous economic growth and increasingly more of its citizens had disposable income. He also noted that according to the World Tourism Organisation, 100 million Chinese would be travelling by the year 2020. "About 50 million are travelling now. If one of every five of the world's tourists will be Chinese, and we are a serious tourism destination, we have to start to get our act together," he stated.

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ADD: SEALY: “MEETINGS WITH TOURISM PLAYERS IN CHINA A SUCCESS” - 2

Minister Sealy also said that the discussions started in China would be continued in Barbados in September during a high-level familiarisation visit for the travel media and tour operators.

“It will provide a valuable opportunity for them to see, feel and experience that Barbados experience, and meet some of the players on the ground in Barbados. Every single group we met with had expressed a desire to participate in that exercise,” Mr. Sealy observed. **(GA/BGIS)**

NO: 1115/10

GOVERNMENT HONOURING ITS HOUSING PLEDGE

Government has started to honour its pledge to fulfill the housing needs of Barbadians.

This was stated by Minister of Housing and Lands, Michael Lashley, while addressing the launch of Tamarind Village, a portion of Government’s newest housing project, last Saturday.

Minister Lashley said: “The Villages at Coverley represent our promise to the people of Barbados to provide quality housing in large volumes and to deliver them quickly. Evidence of this is visible as we look out over the vast expanse of roof tops which are indicative of what is to come and the pace at which this project is progressing.”

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ADD: GOVERNMENT HONOURING ITS HOUSING PLEDGE - 1

Tamarind Village is the first of 17 villages to be handed over in the Christ Church development. Some 230 more houses are expected to be handed over to Barbadians by December of this year.

“This can be viewed as a model development... [It] offers hope for many Barbadians and with the aggressive housing programme of this Government, the dream of owning a piece of this rock from Barbadians of all walks of life, now seems like a reality,” he emphasised.

The Housing Minister revealed that while the National Housing Corporation (NHC) had provided the land for the development, the developer had provided all of the financing for the infrastructural works and the construction of the houses. He deemed the Villages as proof that the current joint partnership was working and producing houses with quality finishes. Mr. Lashley outlined that as a result of failed joint venture partnerships in the past, the Cabinet of Barbados had, in May last year, established new guidelines to ensure that the state, prospective home owners and developers were protected in such transactions.

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ADD: GOVERNMENT HONOURING ITS HOUSING PLEDGE - 2

While noting that a portion of the land at “The Villages at Coverley” would shortly be transformed into Coverley Square – a town centre, Minister Lashley said that “it would provide further employment opportunities. I am reliably informed that residents will have first option to access these opportunities, thereby creating a live and work in the same community concept. This is welcome news in today’s environment because we will be developing and empowering a new business class, and by extension, generating further employment and economic activity,” he added.

The Town Square will include numerous amenities, including retail, medical, day-care and recreational facilities, while postal sites will also be located throughout the development, which, when completed, will include 1026 houses. The development also includes a state-of-the-art sewerage treatment facility, which provides for the reuse of water for irrigation and car washing, thereby enhancing the green aspect of the development. The houses will feature granite countertops, built in cupboards and a refrigerator, stove and washer/dryer.

Speaking on behalf of the homeowners, Carolyn Cumberbatch, described the dwellings in Coverley as “beautiful, spacious and ideal for young professionals, couples and families” who were looking for a place to call home. “Like some of you, today marks a significant step in my life and a day I will always remember,” she declared.

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ADD: GOVERNMENT HONOURING ITS HOUSING PLEDGE - 3

The development was officially opened by Acting Prime Minister, Freundel Stuart. **(LB/BGIS)**

NO: 1116/10

SUPREME COURT CLOSED FROM AUGUST 1

Members of the public are advised that the Supreme Court will be closed for business from August 1 to August 31.

However, applications of extreme urgency; applications for bail or habeas corpus; delivery of reserved judgments and sentencing of convicted persons will still be carried out. **(CL/BGIS)**

NO: 1117/10

SBA DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY

The proposed Environmental Levy and its impact on the Value Added Tax on locally produced goods, will be the topic of discussion, when the Small Business Association (SBA), hosts its monthly meeting.

The session will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, July 27, at the Barbados Public Workers' Cooperative Credit Union Limited, Belmont Road, St. Michael, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Tax expert, Charles Tibbits and Chartered Accountant, Doug Skeete, will outline the pros and cons of the proposed levy and reveal strategies to cope during the meeting.

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ADD: SBA DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL LEVY - 1

Further information on the event may be obtained by calling the SBA at 228-0162. **(JW/BGIS)**

NO: 1118/10

GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO BUILDING STRONG PRODUCTIVE SECTORS

There is a promise from Government to provide the enabling environment to allow businesses to develop strong productive sectors by offering world-class products to overseas markets.

Minister of State in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Patrick Todd, gave this undertaking today, while addressing the re-launch of the factory tours at the West India Biscuit Company (WIBISCO), as part of its 100th anniversary celebrations. It was held at the factory's Gills Road, St. Michael, headquarters.

Emphasising that government would continue to enforce a series of parallel initiatives at the macro level to assist large businesses such as WIBISCO to thrive, he also disclosed measures to assist the small and medium-sized sectors (SMEs).

"... Efforts are ongoing at the national level to create a dynamic SME sector, enhance the sector's capabilities and competitiveness and create meaningful jobs, through renewed entrepreneurial efforts within the sector," Mr. Todd explained.

The Minister of State also called for the development of an innovative entrepreneurial culture – a move that should enhance the island's prosperity and competitiveness.

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**ADD: GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO BUILDING STRONG PRODUCTIVE
SECTORS - 1**

“Knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship must remain the building blocks for our future. We must use the ambition to work harder, to innovate and to excel at developing an entrepreneurial culture that is as resilient as our people are in challenging times. So, we must, therefore, remain cognisant of the fact that new challenges create ideas that can lead to the development of new businesses which are dynamic,” he opined.

Mr. Todd lauded WIBISCO for re-engineering its operations to “weather the external shocks that may be presented as a result of the ongoing global economic crisis”.

“... Government continues to stress the importance of organisations becoming more focused, creative and effective in their business operation and delivery of service. Such initiatives, in my view, will reposition our economy to benefit from any opportunities that may be present when the world emerges from the recession,” he surmised.

At the end of the official opening ceremony, Minister Todd, along with campers from Quality Control’s Compu Camp, were taken on a guided tour of the factory by WIBISCO officials. **(JW/BGIS)**

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NO: 1119/10

I.S.E.E BRIDGE PROJECT TO TACKLE POVERTY

A review of old systems and implementation of new approaches are the steps Government is taking towards the eradication of poverty.

This was emphasised by Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural Development, Christopher Sinckler, todayas he met with the Director of the Organisation of American States' (OAS) National Office in Barbados, Francis McBarnett; Provincial Coordinator of the Puente Programme, Paola Barros, and other OAS representatives, at the Ministry's Warrens Office Complex, today.

The officials, who will be conducting a week-long sensitisation workshop on the Puente Programmes in Chile and the OAS, discussed the development of the Identification Stabilisation Enablement and Empowerment (ISEE) Bridge project in Barbados, and its effectiveness in the fight to eradicate poverty.

Minister Sinckler stated that there is an element of 'hardcore poverty' within our society that has proven difficult to tackle, despite previous efforts taken to address the issue. He stressed that although Government was so far taking the right course of action, the Bridge project would provide Barbados with the knowledge to effectively address that type of poverty.

The I.S.E.E. Bridge Project is modeled from the Chilean Puente or Bridge Programme which was established in 2002 to assist the extreme poor. **(SM/BGIS)**

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NO: 1120/10

REGULATIONS OF HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS TO IMPROVE

The Ministry of Health is moving with a great sense of urgency and determination to improve upon the regulations of health care practitioners in the public and private sectors.

Minister of Health, Donville Inniss disclosed this today, as he addressed the opening of the Continuous Quality Improvement workshop for health professionals, in the main conference room, 2nd Floor, National Insurance Building.

He said: “The new Medical Registration Bill was returned to the Ministry of Health from the Attorney General’s Office last week and it will shortly be reviewed by a committee of Cabinet and I eagerly await a robust debate on it both in Parliament and in the public domain.”

Stressing, however, that reforms and improved regulations in the health care system should not only centre on medical practitioners, the Minister opined, “Far too often we spend too much time focusing on doctors and not engaging our discussions on other health care professionals,” and he assured participants that no group would be left behind in the reform process.

To this end, it was noted that councils would be better regulated and would no longer comprise only members of a specific profession, but would “inculcate the views and experiences of ordinary Barbadians and other professions on each council”.

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ADD: REGULATIONS OF HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS TO IMPROVE - 1

The Health Minister opined: “The medical, dental, paramedical and pharmacy councils are all being restructured to become more reflective of our wider society and to bring greater checks and balances to the deliberations which must all be focused on improved patient care.

“Our effort will go way beyond the Councils which regulate the professions and begin to look at the facilities from whence these professionals operate, along with the quality of service and staffing as well. It is a mammoth undertaking which will not occur overnight, but your deliberations here today will help you and my Ministry move with pride along the right path of an improved health care system.”

Participants were also reminded that a few months ago Cabinet approved a request from the Ministry of Health for the establishment of a National Health Quality Council, as a regulatory body. Revealing that his Ministry was currently working with the legislative drafters to create this body via statute and to give it the authority, the Minister added that the Council would develop and apply strong licensing legislation.

“With this in mind a new Quality Act is currently being prepared. It will implement Risk Management as the first step in the roll-out of the national Health Care Quality Council,” he remarked.

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ADD: REGULATIONS OF HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS TO IMPROVE - 2

According to the Minister, the intention of the change is to promote safety and improve health care delivery in the private and public sectors. Adding that the coordination of Quality Management, under the remit of the National Health Care Quality Council had successfully been implemented in developed countries, Mr. Inniss said this intervention would undoubtedly achieve its goals, “given the calibre of the health sector workforce and the Barbadian demands for the highest standards of quality.” **(JG/BGIS)**

NO: 1121/10

CQI STILL HIGH ON HEALTH AGENDA

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is high on the health reform agenda.

This was stressed today by Minister of Health, Donville Inniss, as he addressed participants at the opening of a CQI workshop for health practitioners, in the main conference room, 2nd Floor, National Insurance Building.

The Minister said: “Our much more enlightened society is calling for greater accountability from health care providers, higher expectations in processes and outcomes associated with personal care services as well as community-based services, and an increasing demand for better value for money by purchasers and policy makers.”

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ADD: CQI STILL HIGH ON HEALTH AGENDA - 1

Noting that CQI was also being fuelled by other considerations, Mr. Inniss added: "It is not only the demands and rights of our citizens, but our recently announced Health and Wellness Tourism policy, which will drive these changes as well. There is increasing interest shown by our local and foreign investors to develop a niche in the international health tourism market, as indicated in the Tourism Health and Wellness Consultation in 2010, with strong emphasis on quality and accreditation."

This market, he stated was currently estimated to attract some US \$800,000 yearly and had potential, for increased revenue and employment in this sector.

Mr. Inniss acknowledged the Ministry's role was to regulate the quality standards of health services by monitoring and evaluating effectiveness, efficiency and containment. He outlined the importance of adopting the CQI approach and said: "Poor quality of care directly imposes a financial burden on health systems as well as an even larger economic burden on society. The cost of poor quality is the additional monies spent in litigation cost. Therefore, strategies under this CQI approach will address improving patient safety, patient care outcomes, containing health care cost and fostering patient-centred approaches in all areas of health care delivery."

It was also suggested that continuous quality care had to embody highly trained practitioners, enlightened patients and relatives, safe and secure physical plants and relevant legislation to govern all aspects of the health care system. And, the Minister further recommended that attention be paid to continuous patient education.

ADD: CQI STILL HIGH ON HEALTH AGENDA - 2

He remarked: “An enlightened patient is a tremendous asset to any modern effective health care system... Professionals should never feel threatened by a patient who asks questions and demand answers. Such a relationship can only benefit all parties involved.”

The training workshop is a collaborative effort between the Health Ministry and the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality and is aimed at sensitising all health professionals in public and private sectors to the dimensions of quality services. **(JG/BGIS)**