

INBOX



Linking the Caribbean and Central America

CENTRAL AMERICA is a region rich in natural resources and one that has continued to offer considerable business potential in a variety of sectors ranging from traditional crops such as sugar, coffee and bananas in Guatemala to electrical components and microprocessors in Costa Rica. The Chamber believes that Central America is the next important frontier in the development of markets for Trinidad and Tobago's goods and services.

On October 20, 2010, the Chamber, in conjunction with the Association of Caribbean States and with the assistance of the Guatemalan Chamber of Industry and Commerce hosted a one-day Conference entitled "Connecting the Caribbean and Central America: Exploring and Seizing New Opportunities". The Conference was supported by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and brought together selected businesses from Central America and Trinidad and Tobago. The targeted sectors were Food Production and Processing; Manufacturing in beverage, apparel and pharmaceuticals; Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Construction; and Wholesale and Distribution in food and beverage, pharmaceuticals and office products.

At the opening reception held at the Diplomatic Centre on the previous day, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, pledged the Government's commitment to deepening trade and economic relationships between Central America and the Caribbean. "Rest assured the Government is steadfast in its commitment to deepening the trade and economic relationship," she stated.

The Conference was attended by two Government Ministers, who reiterated full support for a deepening of the integration process and development of trade and investment relations between the two regions.

During the conference, challenges to developing regional trade, as well as opportunities, were identified and proposals made for developing a more permanent orientation toward our Central American neighbours, so that longer term benefits are realised.

From the Central American side, 11 leading companies attended the Conference in the following categories:

- Construction — GTC International, Coporacion Dinant and Cemento Progreso
- Manufacturing — enterprises Grupo Financier de Occidente, Indutex SA, Laboratorios Santa Fe, Savona Holing/Industria la Popular SA., Cabcorp, Industrias Licores de Guatemala and the Regal Forest Holding Company.
- Food production and processing — Dos Pinos

By the end of the conference, participants from both regions gained valuable insights into the economic and competitive landscape of both Central America and CARICOM.

It is incumbent on us, the region's private sector, to make the most of this open door to Central America as we venture further afield in strengthening our individual and collective economies of the region. This Conference was but a small step in the direction of maximising this open door to Central America and strengthening the individual and collective economies of the region. We hope it will prove to be a springboard into a large new market for CARICOM.

Belt-tightening is an international reality

THE EDITOR: The CPO's offer of 0-0-1 to the PSA may seem "insulting" but is it really? The question to ask is whether the Government would deliberately court the kind of "fall-out" that is threatening to come from such an offer.

Is it possible that the Government may have inherited a financial situation from the former regime that does not allow for even the standard demands of organisations like the PSA? I do not think that many understand, even at this point, the magnitude of PNM mismanagement of the national purse, the extent to which that purse may now be depleted, and the danger of further depletion arising out of contractual liabilities and payments like those being demanded by the Contractors Association.

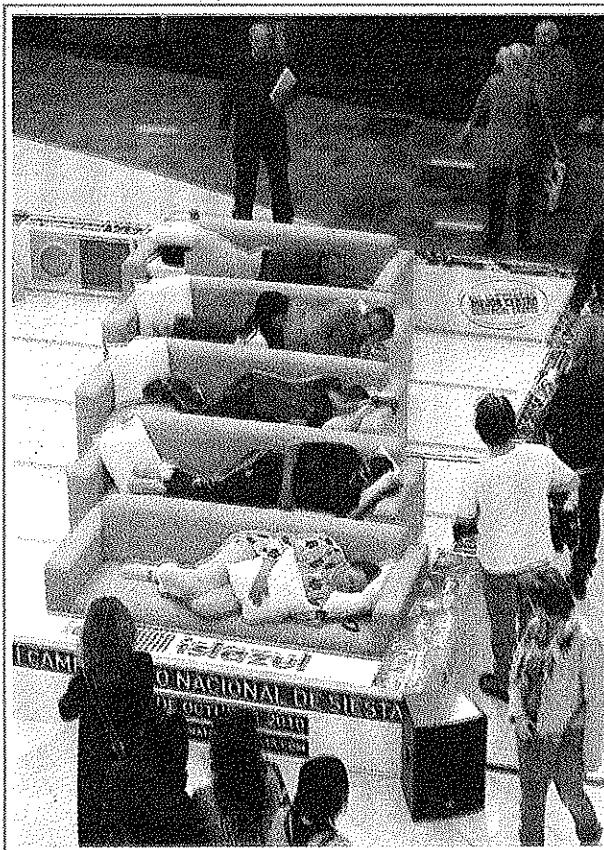
Then there is the Clico affair which not only threatens the entire financial system but is a burden which the government may be obliged to bear in the short term. Furthermore the issue of continuously decreasing revenue from gas and oil does not help the situation any which is compounded by a government which seems bent on avoiding any money-raising measures that would

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seem burdensome to the people. All of these seem to add up to a financial situation which is simply incompatible with the traditional demands of organisations like the PSA and no amount of screaming and threatening would change that hard fact. Severe belt-tightening is now an international reality and groups making demands on the Government can only hope for better days in the future.

DR ERROL BENJAMIN
via e-mail



CAN'T BEAT 'EM? JOIN THEM: People sleep a siesta on couches during the first Siesta Championship in Madrid, Spain. The participants of the siesta contest win points for the first person to fall asleep, the loudest snorer, best original sleeping position and best dressed sleeper. Doctors are present to check if the contestants are really asleep. See Page 26A. AP PHOTO

Spanish and Chinese writing

THE EDITOR: Of late both portable and mobile phones have been appearing on the shelves with operating instructions printed in Spanish only.

Although we were supposed to have been striving for literacy in Spanish — shades of Metrication— perhaps we should have been aiming for literacy in English first.

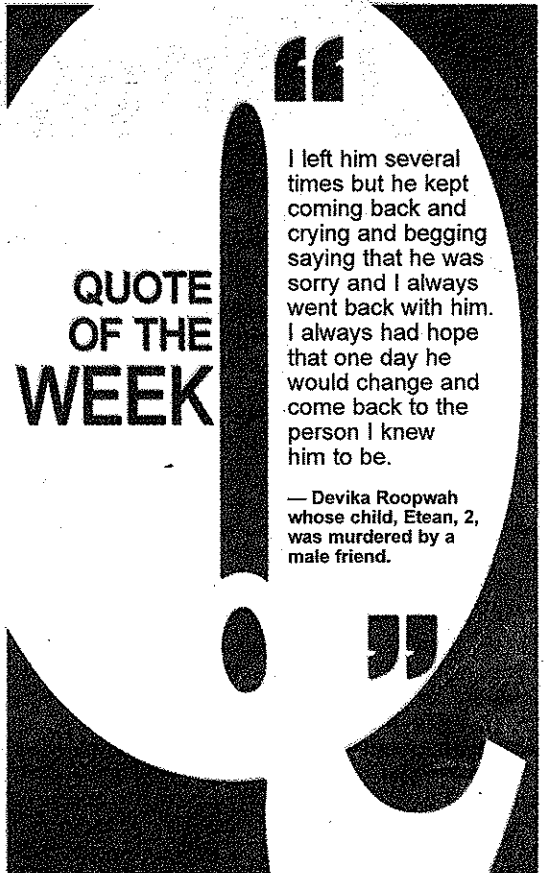
The official language of this country is English and as such this should

appear in all notices.

This also applies to the Cash Register tapes of the new rush of Chinese supermarkets. These tapes display Chinese characters next to the unit cost of the item.

The Bureau of Standards may wish to address this.

EVERARD A SHAND
San Fernando



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I left him several times but he kept coming back and crying and begging saying that he was sorry and I always went back with him. I always had hope that one day he would change and come back to the person I knew him to be.

— Devika Ropwah whose child, Etean, 2, was murdered by a male friend.

Keep up pay fight

THE EDITOR: I am a pensioner, and have to employ an assistant since I am not too well to move around. The increase in the minimum wage is now making it very difficult for me to pay my assistant.

I had been pleading with the authorities not to increase the minimum wage, but no consideration had been given to individuals who could not afford to pay this wage.

Now it is the State's turn, to pay increased wages demanded by the union. I hope they would not say they don't have the money, then all they have to do is pass a law similar to the minimum wages law and force the money to come, you know, do so never like so.

So come on unions, keep up the fight, if one sector gets an increase, it supports the increase in inflation, to fight this inflation, everyone is supposed to get an increase.

P DASS
Curepe

One percent unreasonable

THE EDITOR: As a retired public servant, I am sad when I hear "reasonable" persons say that the Government should fire all public servants.

The public servants run the Ministries/ Departments, not the Ministers. Without public servants how will you get your passport, driving permit or ID Card? Can you insert a card in a slot and obtain these services?

The problem in the public service is supervision. There are some cases of favouritism and some officers take advantage of the situation. There are many hard-working public servants. Are they to be punished because of the delinquent ones?

I do not know how any "reasonable" person can expect public servants to be satisfied with the one percent offered by the Government through the Chief Personnel Officer.

M E RODRIGUEZ
Trinity

