

"NO TIME FOR PANIC" SAYS JAMAICAN JUSTICE MINISTER

PARAMARIBO, Suriname: CARICOM member states at this moment should push forward to establish the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in its original jurisdiction. All the options to come to a solution on this matter should be explored exhaustively.

“Now is not the time for panic,” said Jamaican justice minister A.J. Nicholson in an interview with Surinamese journalists in Paramaribo, Suriname, where he was attending the 8th Meeting of the Legal Affairs Committee (LAC).

“In my view panic is a very bad word. What we have to do as attorneys and advisers to the Heads of Governments, is to keep level heads and make sure that we sit down and consider all the options, because we are all determined that the Caribbean Court of Justice must come in to being. We think that we can come up with good opinions and advise”, Nicholson noted.

He also stressed that the LAC-meeting will have to consider the implication of the CCJ ruling made by the Privy Council last week in regard with Jamaica’s implementation of the CCJ. Even more urgently he says, the committee has to consider how to move to cement all of the operations of the single market and economy. The single market and economy cannot operate without the mechanism that will be provided by the Caribbean Court of Justice.

According to the Jamaican minister at this point the Community should concentrate on the original jurisdiction, because that is most urgent. “The single market is slated to come in to being very soon. Next week Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago will sign the Declaration of Intent. So we have our work cut out and the time is already cut short,” said the Jamaican Justice Minister.

The opening of the LAC meeting that was planned for Thursday at 9.00 am was postponed until 4.00 pm because a delay of the BWIA flight from Port of Spain to Suriname which was carrying most of the delegates to attend the conference.

He further noted that CARICOM has some very experienced national lawyers, some very good common lawyers and equity lawyers, “who will help us along in coming to the kind of decisions and advise we should give to the Heads of Governments”.

Talks between the Patterson administration and the Opposition Jamaica Labour Party are according to Nicholson “merely preliminary efforts at this point in time”. These are not talks to come to any conclusion and the government and the opposition in Jamaica have decided that talks will go on, he said

He also stressed that the ruling of the Privy Council affects every CARICOM member because all of these states have to be part of the original jurisdiction. “So if one is affected all are affected”. The ruling has driven the CARICOM, Nicholson says, to rise to

the challenge as to how the Community will solve the problem. “And we, as attorneys general, intend to solve the problems”.

CCJ Project Co-ordinator Sheldon McDonald told reporters that inauguration plans for the CCJ are still on track for the coming April. The preparations are well advanced McDonald said. A proposed action plan will be approved by the CARICOM Heads of States when they meet in Paramaribo next week for the 16th Inter-sessional Heads of States Meeting.

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Caribbean Net News
11 February 2005