

PM KING SEEKS SUPPORT FOR CRUISE & YACHTING TOURISM

In an effort to secure investment for Government's proposed expansion of Port Castries as a major Cruise ship and yachting destination, Prime Minister the Honourable Stephenson King visited the second largest cruise port in the world at Port Canaveral, Florida between October 24th to the 29th.

While in Florida, the Prime Minister was able to observe the operations of the Port Canaveral facility which incorporate land, sea, air and space divisions. The visit highlighted the smooth handling of cargo, cruise ships, and yachts, from which St. Lucia could adopt ideas for similar operations in the island.

The PM discussed opportunities for mutual assistance such as shipboard firefighting, training and cargo opportunities from North Eastern Florida. He also met with officials from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), and Carnival Cruise Lines, who were upbeat about sustaining Carnival calls into Port Castries. He was particularly impressed that security arrangements permitted the general public to enjoy recreational activities such as fishing and sea bathing within the port without comprising the security of the facility. A grand tour of the Port, which covers 700 acres in active use, included the opportunity to watch the launch of the space shuttle Discovery. Canaveral was extremely keen to be twinned with Castries, which will be done following exchange visits between operational staff.

The Prime Minister then moved on to Ft. Lauderdale to attend the 48th Annual International Boat Show, which attracts about 150000 visitors, is the largest in the world, with 1200 exhibitors from 30 countries, and 1300 of the world's finest yachts on display, on the water! The Marine Industries Association of South Florida (MIASF), organizers of the show, hosted the PM on a tour of a 120 ft yacht, for a close up appreciation of what the top end of the market offers. One such yacht has an annual impact of US\$500000.00 on the South Florida economy. Prime Minister King also had the opportunity to interact with manufacturers of marine equipment, who responded positively to his suggestions about engaging St. Lucian labour. Such a programme could achieve the skills transfer needed for St. Lucia to be able to support its expanding yachting industry.

The Prime Minister also had discussions with officials of the Cayman Islands Maritime Authority, who have volunteered to advise St. Lucia on the establishment of a St. Lucia Ship's Registry. St. Lucia is one of the very few OECS countries without a Registry. The tour also included a visit to International Global Yachting (IGY), the new owners of Rodney Bay Marina, where he met the IGY President Charles Garner.

He described the visits to Port Canaveral and Ft. Lauderdale as testimony to his commitment to explore new opportunities for job and wealth creation in the local economy. Said the Prime Minister, "the new marine based developments at Marigot, The Landings, Rodney Bay Marina, plus Government's planned redevelopment of the city of

Castries, centered on the Castries harbour, requires that we have a clear understanding of what is required to allow St. Lucia to gain the most out of these new ventures”.

The visits were arranged by the St. Lucia Air & Sea Ports Authority (SLASPA) and the Marine Industries Association of St. Lucia (MIASL).

(For further information contact: Keats Compton)

keats@miasl.org

(758) 484-3646



Photos: Port Canaveral, L to R: PM Stephenson King; Keats Compton (SLASPA/MIASL); Stanford Deno, CLIA; Brendan Corrigan, Carnival Cruise Lines; Stan Payne, Port Canaveral; Robert Beh, Carnival Cruise Lines



Ft. Lauderdale: Keats Compton - SLASPA/MIASL; Gordon Connell - Marine Industries Association of South Florida; Charles Garner, IGY; Prime Minister Stephenson King.