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**Dr. Cort discusses gaming with US ambassador**

Wednesday January 16 2008

by Patricia Campbell

Minister of Finance and the Economy Dr. Errol Cort will hold meetings today with United States Trade Representative Ambassador Susan Schwab.

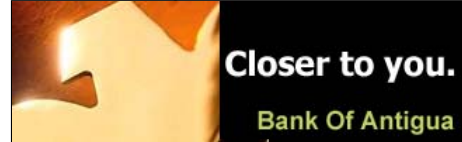
He said this is, to date, the highest level of meeting held with the US on the gaming issue.

The finance minister said last month's ruling by a World Trade Organisation panel granting Antigua and Barbuda US\$21 million per year in intellectual property-related trade sanctions puts his delegation in a strong position going into that meeting.

"That is a very, very potent sanction to have been awarded and we were very pleased in respect of that. We feel with that particular sanction being awarded to Antigua, it certainly sets the stage for meaningful negotiations between Antigua and Barbuda and the USA," he said.



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Despite his pleasure at the nature of the sanction, the finance minister reiterated his disappointment with the amount awarded by the WTO panel.

He noted that the panel started with a figure of US\$304 million as the award, but reduced that figure to US\$21 million, because it found that Antigua and Barbuda was only entitled to compensation in the horse racing aspect of the industry. Cort said that horse racing represented less than 10 per cent of the business of Antigua and Barbuda's gaming sector.

"We believe our previous rulings at the level of the appellate division clearly indicated that our compensation should be in respect of the entire industry and not limited to betting on horse racing.... If that panel had followed what we believe is the ruling of the appellate division of the WTO, then the award would have been in the vicinity of US\$304 million per annum. That's why we have said, and we strongly feel that the decision is flawed," Cort said.

Meanwhile, the finance minister has also said that he will lead a delegation to London next week Thursday, to meet with the UK minister responsible for gaming.

He said he was disappointed that Antigua and Barbuda did not get on to the UK's "white list" and intends to continue discussions with the gaming authorities in the UK in hopes of achieving this goal.

Cort said the delegation hopes to return with a better understanding of what is hindering the process.

Until Antigua and Barbuda is placed on the white list, its online gambling companies cannot legally advertise their services in the UK.

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