



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs Speaks to Jamaican Nationals

PORT OF SPAIN: APRIL 15, 2016

Minister Moses confirms Jamaican nationals were accommodated in the departure lounge at Piarco International Airport.

In an interview held on Wednesday April 13, 2016, Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs met with Mr. Vashan Brown, Reporter, Television Jamaica, to provide information regarding the refusal of entry into Trinidad and Tobago of nationals of Jamaica who had travelled to this country on Caribbean Airlines on March 21, 2016 and April 01, 2016.

During their stay at the Piarco International Airport, the passengers were accommodated in the Departure Lounge of the airport until their outgoing flights to Jamaica on the following day. **At present, passengers who are denied entry into Trinidad and Tobago late in the day and are scheduled to leave on an early flight the next day are routinely accommodated in the Departure Lounge, the same area used by all passengers.**

During the interview, Minister Moses stated that all foreign nationals seeking entry into the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are subject to the same procedure which involves being interviewed by an Immigration Officer to establish whether the person is a bona fide visitor, in accordance with the Immigration Act Chapter 18:01 of the Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. He said, "Should a person be refused entry, in keeping with our Immigration Act, then there is a possibility for a secondary examination. That examination will be done by an Immigration Officer at the airport. Then, if it is established that the person should be allowed entry, the person is allowed in. If not, then there is another tier in the system. It is a multi-tier system, a well-constructed, robust system that allows due process to take place to establish whether the person should be allowed entry." Minister Moses emphasised that once a person is denied entry they have recourse through an appeal process that is implemented at the airport.

Making reference to the decision that the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) handed down in the Shanique Myrie matter, Mr. Brown enquired whether Trinidad and Tobago follows that procedure and the law in that specific case.

Minister Moses responded that Trinidad and Tobago takes into account the outcome of the case and the decision that allows CARICOM Member Countries to determine entry at the border. He pointed out that, "There are two areas primarily dealing with one's ability to sustain oneself in the country and so not be a charge against the public purse and the other instance deals with undesirable persons..."

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The Minister confirmed that in respect of the recent cases involving nationals of Jamaica, the Immigration Officers came to a determination that the persons who were denied entry would not have met all the conditions of the criteria that are required to be met within the context of the outcome of the CCJ decision. He further stated, "We are very cognizant of the close relationship that exists between Member Countries of the Community - in particular, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have a long, friendly relationship: family wise, people to people, trade, commerce and values. We cherish such a close bond."

Minister Moses assured Mr. Brown that, "Trinidad and Tobago has followed and continues to follow in a very transparent, robust fashion - what is expected of our country within the fold of CARICOM. Ours is one of unfettered free movement throughout our Member Countries and there are statistics which show, in a very clear fashion, that that is in fact the case and we encourage all Member Countries to take a similar stand."

Mr. Brown informed Minister Moses that during his arrival interview with the Immigration Officer at the Piarco International Airport, he was asked to provide evidence that the interview with the Minister had been scheduled. He enquired whether that was the correct procedure. Minister Moses explained that the process was a case-by-case assessment and the information conveyed (by a passenger) to the Immigration Officers at the airport determines whether the person should be allowed or denied entry. Providing examples he stated, "Someone coming in for vacation purposes or someone coming in to work, or someone coming to pursue a course of studies, the questions that would be asked, the corroboration, the verification exercises and part of the interview process will differ. So in your case, it may very well be that the questions asked would have been as a result of the initial information you would have conveyed relative to your coming into Trinidad and Tobago. Some cases require work permits, some cases come within the framework of the CSME certificate, and others come in under the rubric of vacation, so it will ultimately depend on the information and the verifying of the incoming passenger."

Asked to clarify some of the reasons nationals of Jamaica were denied entry into Trinidad and Tobago and to share some data, Minister Moses stated, "The bases upon which refusal would have been meted out involve, in large measure, incoherence in the information they provided, the evidence of the ability of the persons to sustain themselves, corroboration of the information they would have provided. These are some of the elements that would have been involved in the exchange of information between the incoming passenger and the Immigration Officer." The Foreign and CARICOM Affairs Minister estimated that for the years 2014-2015 approximately 14,000 - 15,000 nationals of Jamaica would have entered Trinidad and Tobago and only a couple hundred would have been denied entry in keeping with the provisions of the Immigration Act and the outcome of the CCJ case.

Minister Moses went on to advise that he has been in discussions with representatives from Jamaica, which were conducted in a manner befitting the close relationship between Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and that he is optimistic that, ultimately, the outcome will be a favourable one.

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He concluded the interview with the Jamaica Television Reporter by affirming, "... We look forward to resolving whatever perception, whatever problems that might have been cast out in the public domain in a way befitting the relationship between our countries. We share many areas of commonality, and it is our intention in a very robust, determined fashion ... to treat with them and to come to a resolution befitting of our ties.



Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses,
Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

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