

Renewable energy first

NEWS EXTRA TODAY

BENN TALKS OF FUEL COSTS SAVINGS TO BE HAD FROM USING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Wherever possible, renewable energy products should be used to drive down fuel costs.

This assertion was made by Minister of Commerce and Trade, Senator Haynesley Benn, as he delivered the feature address at the opening ceremony of the 9th Annual Conference of the Organisation of Caribbean Utility Regulators at the Accra Beach Hotel.

Benn stressed that meeting energy needs was one of the biggest challenges facing countries today. He lamented that energy costs continued to increase and represented a severe drain on governments' financial resources. These costs, the minister noted, were also significant in the production processes of most products and ultimately manifested themselves in higher consumer

prices.

"Given these increasing costs, we have little choice but to seek greater investment in these



Attendees at the annual conference of the Organisation of Caribbean Utility Regulators.

renewable technologies. The main argument against the investment in renewables has always been their relatively high start-up costs. There is no doubt however, that renewable sources of energy are still in their infancy and will, hopefully, become less expensive in the future.

"Those pioneering firms and households who have sought to embrace these technologies need to be supported. We, therefore, need to devise incentive mechanisms to nurture and accelerate the investment in such technologies," he added.

Additionally, Benn pointed out that Government was committed to the development of renewable resources and to ensuring that the pace of implementation into the energy mix was fast tracked.

"We have already approved the requisite Energy-Efficiency and Renewable Energy policies intended to ensure that Barbados' electricity sector develops in a way that promotes the use of renewable energy," he explained.

Concerning another area of energy usage, Benn observed that the efficient management and delivery of adequate clean water supplies, especially to the most vulnerable, was also high on the agenda for government.

"As a water-scarce country, the productive use of water in all sectors in Barbados is essential if we are to reduce wastage and alleviate scarcity. We are, therefore, committed to doing all that is necessary including, the upgrade of our water distribution network; more effective rainwater harvesting; pollution control and water conservation to reduce our vulnerability to shocks and to protect the sustainability of our stocks," he said.

Benn told his audience that against the background of a competitive environment, the buying power of the consumer must be taken into consideration.

"The more informed the consumer, the more capable he or she is of making intelligent choices which will place added pressure on the service providers to deliver quality services. The consumers' power to choose, therefore, must be an important factor which is taken into account in your regulatory decisions as you endeavour to bring more competition into utility markets," he stressed.

The three-day conference has drawn 75 delegates from such countries as the Channel Islands, the United States, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Dominica, Ghana and Barbados. (BGIS)

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Scholarship reminder

Barbadians wishing to apply for scholarships to Romania must do so by January 31, next year.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania issued the reminder to qualified Barbadians, who will be applying for scholarships to that country for the academic year 2012-2013, today.

Scholarships are available at the undergraduate [bachelor] level and post-graduate levels of master and doctorate.

The scholarships will cover the costs of the successful candidates' studies and maintenance in Romania. Students will be required to pay for airfare and ground

transportation.

Persons must submit the following documents to the Embassy of Romania in Caracas, Venezuela by the closing date, January 31, 2012: legalised copy of their passports (first two pages); legalised copy of their birth certificate; legalised copies of their qualifications and student's record; curriculum vitae; legalised medical certificate stating that the candidate has no contagious diseases or any other disease that inhibits his/her studies; four recent passport sized photographs and the application forms completed in capital letters.