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NEWS

IDC amnesty being considered for Chinese, Cubans

JULIEN NEAVES

NATIONAL Security Minister Stuart Young says he will be taking a note to Cabinet about the possible extension of the amnesty for Venezuelans at the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) to other nationals.

He was responding to a question in the House yesterday on whether all inmates of the IDC were able to register for amnesty like the Venezuelans.

Young said only inmates at IDC entitled to register are Venezuelans once they are not at the IDC for criminal charges but for overstaying their time in Trinidad or for entering illegally. He said the logistics for the process were currently being put in place.

"We had conversations in the Cabinet as we had announced when we talked about this policy of looking at Caricom nationals, African nationals, Chinese nationals, Cuban nationals and other nationals who are currently at the IDC and I will be taking a note to the National Security Council as to how we deal with some of these other persons who



National Security Minister Stuart Young, left, and Minister of Finance Colm Imbert at Parliament, yesterday. PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE

are at the IDC currently and maybe extending the amnesty to allow them a similar provision."

Barataria/San Juan MP Dr. Fiad Khan asked if it was true that the Prime Minister (at Thursday's post-Cabinet media briefing) said African nationals would be processed at the same time as the Venezuelans. Young reiterated that when he announced at Cabinet about eight weeks ago the implementation of the registration process for Venezuelans (which

will allow successful Venezuelans to live and work in TT for up to a year) he had said that Government would be looking at extending it to include those from the African continent.

"What the Prime Minister did say at post-Cabinet (is that) he was asking me as Minister of National Security to look at it and to come to the National Security Council with a policy along the lines of what we had already addressed at Cabinet previously."

Khan: New NGC chairman in 'shortest order'

JULIEN NEAVES

ENERGY Minister Franklin says there will be a new National Gas Company (NGC) chairman soon and thanked former chairman Gerry Brooks for his service.

He was responding to a question in Parliament yesterday from Oropouche East MP Dr. Roodal Moonilal on the reasons for Brooks' sudden departure at a time of heightened top-level international negotiations on energy pricing, contractual and commercial arrangements involving the Prime Minister and his touring party.

Khan said service on State boards was a voluntary position where people provided their skills and ex-

perience for national service. "It is not a job."

He said Brooks "brought to the table experience in law, negotiation and commercial evaluation."

He said the he as Energy Minister and the Government thanked Brooks for a well-served time as chairman. He pointed out Brooks faced many challenges with the most significant resulted from the tardiness and negligence of the UNC by not negotiating new gas contracts which left him with a burden of more than \$4.2 billion in claims.

"He has brought it down to manageable proportions. That is his greatest achievement"

Khan said Brooks' stated rea-

son for resigning was to focus on his family law practice which he planned to expand. He noted Brooks was recently bestowed with the professor of practice title by the University of the West Indies and he planned to dedicate more time to the university's thrust towards entrepreneurship and innovation.

Moonilal asked if Brooks' departure posed any challenges moving forward and when could the country expect the appointment of a new NGC chairman.

Khan replied: "Obviously one of the most important state sector positions is the chairman of the NGC so that position will be filled in the shortest order with the person with the required competency."

Attorney: Let Africans stay

SEAN DOUGLAS

ATTORNEY Matthew Gayle yesterday suggested African migrants at the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) should be allowed to stay in TT for a period similar to the length of time they had been held. While the regularisation of Africans comes on the heels of the Venezuelan migrants being allowed to stay in TT for a year, Gayle said African migrants should be allowed to stay long term.

Gayle, of New City Chambers in Port of Spain, has acted for IDC inmates from Africa, Dominica and Dominican Republic.

He welcomed the Prime Minister's attention to the plight of Africans, but noted a lack of detail in Dr. Rowley's remarks on Thursday where he cited the high cost of deportation as a reason for African IDC detainees to stay in TT.

"It is something that I'm certainly going to be monitoring very closely, on my clients' behalf. The Prime Minister really said very little about what is the nature of this regularisation," Gayle said.

"What would be interesting is to see if they would be any redress or acknowledgement for persons who have spent considerable amounts of time in the IDC and in not particularly good conditions."

Newsday asked if Africans

should get a year reprieve to stay in TT as given to Venezuelans. Gayle replied, "Some have been in custody for a significant time, a year or two years, with the reason given that funds are not available to send them home. Will they be given a similar amount of time, at least a finite amount of time, before they are repatriated? Is there going to be any consideration given to persons who have been in this country for a long time to be offered a long-term form of consideration?"

He noted that parts of Africa were welcoming Caribbean people and said this region could reciprocate. Asked what he meant by redress, he said, "I'm not necessarily speaking in monetary terms, but whether any accommodation would be made or any concession be given for persons who were incarcerated for a significant period of time?" He said many Africans had spent longer at the IDC than the time Venezuelans had been affected by their country's crisis.

Newsday asked about financial redress. "I think it is clear that for persons who have been incarcerated unlawfully the duty of the Government is to deport as soon as is practicable."

"Those persons who have been detained unlawfully are entitled to monetary redress. That's a matter of law."

Immigration official: '400-500 registered' at QPCC yesterday

JAMES LANSEER

At 9 am yesterday morning officials outside the Queens Park Oval said that between 400 to 500 Venezuelan people managed to register between 7 and 9 am without any issues.

"We have had no problems and things are moving very smoothly," an official said.

Onlookers said that there was a massive crowd of Venezuelan migrants since around around 5 am. By 9 am that crowd was gone and outside the oval was relative-

ly clear with only a few stragglers outside.

"They seem to be getting it right, things are speeding up, they even told the women who were either pregnant or with children to go forward to the front of the line," said an onlooker.

Once inside the Oval, the migrants were waiting in the stadium's seats for their chance to register. At 9 am, an estimated third of the Stollmeyer Stand's first level was packed with Venezuelan migrants awaiting registration.

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