

Public Health Authorities Close Justice Ministry Offices

The Gleaner



Last year, the Justice Ministry reported that the longstanding ventilation problem at the NCB Towers had been reported to the Michael Lee Chin-owned AIC Group which controls the NCB South Towers where the Justice Ministry is housed.

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Sherine Williams, Gleaner Writer

Newly sworn in Justice Minister Delroy Chuck was unable to complete his first at the ministry's Oxford Road office in St. Andrew today, as it was ordered closed by Public Health authorities.

Chuck told **The Gleaner/Power 106 News Centre** that he and his staff were given until 1 p.m today to vacate all the floors occupied by the Justice Ministry's NCB Towers offices.

Earlier today, Chuck said the staff may be temporarily housed by another ministry.

The Justice Ministry has since issued a release saying its regular services will be scaled down from March 9-16 from 9 a.m to noon and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

"Thereafter the ministry will be relocating to 61 Constant Spring Road," a spokesperson from the Ministry is quoted as saying.

The Ministry has not said why the Public Health authorities have closed its offices and the South East Regional Authority would not immediately provide an explanation.

However, last March, officials from the Health Ministry, Jamaica Fire Brigade, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and the National Environment and Planning Agency visited the offices to examine ventilation issues.

Public Health authorities then ordered the closure of the second floor offices.

At the time, the Justice Ministry complained that several of its employees showed signs of serious illness, and some had to seek medical attention.

The Justice Ministry also reported that the longstanding ventilation problem had been reported to the Michael Lee Chin-owned AIC Group which controls the NCB South Towers where the Justice Ministry is housed.

Delay Any Referendum, PM - Commentators

The Gleaner

Jermaine Barnaby

Prime Minister Andrew Holness is being urged to move slowly before carrying out his plan to stage a referendum on key constitutional issues.

Holness used his inaugural address last Thursday to underscore his commitment to give Jamaicans a chance to have their voices heard on constitutional matters, but some analysts say that should not be a priority.

There is need for us to have a say in the fundamental institutions that define Jamaica, the rights we secure for our citizens and how we want Jamaica to be," said Holness in his first address after being sworn in as Jamaica's ninth Prime Minister.

"We will give form to that voice in a referendum to decide on the constitutional matters and social matters," added Holness whose Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) has repeatedly argued that matters such as the Caribbean Court of Justice as the nation's final court of appeal and the retention of the buggery law should be decided by the people.

But, hours before the prime minister's utterances some participants at a Gleaner Editors' forum suggested that the prime minister should delay the staging of a referendum.

"A referendum is not a priority for the new Prime Minister. It's not important right now," said attorney-at-law Dr Paul Ashley.

"I think he should leave that alone. We would have to pass all the International Monetary Fund tests to get the money to pay for the referendum. Put that down," urged Ashley.

Fellow attorney-at-law Bert Samuels, agreed that there should be no referendum anytime soon.

"Do we know how much these elections cost? Could we just put that in the bag? We would have to put several issues on the referendum. We can't take it on," argued Samuels.

While in opposition, and on the campaign trail, Holness and other members of the JLP, frequently argued that there were several advantages to holding a referendum on the CCJ.

They argued that this would give the electorate a chance to participate in the legal reform, and help to strengthen the people's faith in the democratic process.

But the then governing People's National Party countered that this was not a constitutional requirement as it requires only a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament for the CCJ to

replace the Privy Council as the country's final appellate court.

Antiguan ‘Ras’ gets 12 months for ganja

The Observer



A Rastafarian Antiguan national, who claimed he was trying to leave the island with 21 pounds of ganja for religious use, was sentenced to 12 months in prison when he appeared in the Corporate Area Resident Magistrate’s Court last Friday.

The Antiguan, Dorian Aaron, 45, was also fined \$612,500 after pleading guilty to drugs charges before Senior Magistrate Judith Pusey. If the fine is not paid he will serve an additional six months in prison.

Aaron was recently held at the Norman Manley International Airport with the ganja in tins of coffee, instant cocoa and instant chocolate hidden inside his suitcase.

Attorney Diane Jobson told the magistrate that her client was taking the substance home to use for religious purposes because it was not as accessible there as it was in Jamaica.

“If you in Jamaican and a pound finish you can get it back but that is not so in Antigua,” she said.

But the magistrate reminded Jobson that the law in Jamaica only makes provision for individuals to have up to two ounces of ganja for their personal use.

“Using it is one thing but exporting it is a completely different thing,” the magistrate said. “I don’t think anyone takes 21 pounds to ganja to Antigua for religious purpose,” she added. Aaron was then sentenced to serve 12 months in prison. He was also ordered to pay \$87,500 or serve six months for possession of ganja, \$175,000 or six months for dealing in ganja and \$350,000 or six months for taking steps to export ganja.

Court withdraws Mandela grandson rape case

The Observer



JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AFP) – A South African court Wednesday temporarily abandoned a rape case against the grandson of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela after the prosecution brought an application to "provisionally withdraw prosecution."

The 25-year-old was accused of raping an underage girl at a pub in Johannesburg last year.

Under South African law, a suspect's identity cannot be revealed until the accused pleads to the charge.

The National Prosecuting Authority said withdrawing the case for now was in the best interest of the trial as they were probing new evidence linked to the case.

"We have now obtained new information that requires further investigation," prosecution spokeswoman Phindi Louw told journalists.

Louw said withdrawing the case did not mean that the accused was "off the hook".

"The charge could be reinstated at a later stage, pending our investigation," she said.

According to the prosecutor, the 15-year-old complainant was said to be "seeking mechanisms to cope with the trial."

Mandela's lawyer had previously argued that the sex was consensual and that the girl was 16 years old, the legal age for consensual sex.

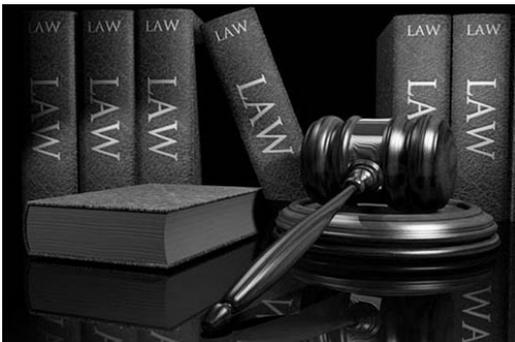
The icon's grandson was arrested in August 2015, and spent 10 days in custody before being freed on bail.

He is the latest Mandela family member to be embroiled in legal trouble likely to tarnish their name.

Several Mandela family members were in court to support the man who appeared relieved after the magistrate's ruling.

Rastaman beats lover for 'playing games'

The Observer



KINGSTON, Jamaica — A Rastafarian man who used a mop to beat his lover, claimed he attacked her because she was "playing games" with him in the relationship.

Clevon Temple was arrested and charged with assault occasioning bodily harm after he used a mop to hit the complainant in her head and on her shoulder during a dispute.

Last Thursday when he appeared in the Corporate Area Resident Magistrate's Court he pleaded guilty to the charge before explaining why he had assaulted the complainant.

"This young woman in a me bedroom playing games and me get fi find out..." he said before he was quickly interrupted and silenced by Senior Magistrate Judith Pusey.

"I am angry with you so I am going to sentence you," the magistrate said.

"Isn't it refreshing to know that a woman is playing games?" she then asked Temple, who did not respond.

Senior Magistrate Pusey, before ordering Temple to pay \$10,000 or serve six months in prison, told him: "You need to control yourself."

Tanesha Mundle

The End