

Caribbean shippers make security high priority

...PM urges guard against terrorism

By Neil Marks

SECURITY of the Caribbean's ports, because of terrorism concerns, is high on the agenda of a meeting of regional shippers which opened in Georgetown yesterday.

Addressing delegates at the opening of the first mid-year Caribbean Shipping Association's (CSA) Executives Conference, Prime Minister Sam Hinds urged a guard against threats of terrorism.

Mr. Hinds noted that the international movement of

ships and cargo, together with their care, safety and security, are governed and facilitated by a number of international conventions and codes developed by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) with the aim of fulfilling the main objectives of safer shipping and cleaner oceans.

He said at the Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel in Kingston, Georgetown, where the formal sessions of the meeting are taking place, that Caribbean shippers must

guard resolutely against that which threatens their very existence.

Mr. Hinds referred to the debate now engaging the IMO on the prevention and suppression of terrorism against ships, and said Caribbean shippers must always be reminded that if aircraft are viable terrorist targets capable to be used as weapons, then ships may also be manipulated in the fulfillment of "horrific purposes".

He said Caribbean shippers must therefore increase vigilance to ensure such threats are minimised and ultimately predominance in nearly every aspect of life.

"The maritime industry, in particular, has been placed on heightened alert. Ports and vessels have long been potential targets for criminals and now

eliminated from the region.

President of the CSA, Captain Rawle Baddaloo, said the association needs to consult and coordinate with its membership and relevant organisations in the development of a general set of guiding principles for security for the maritime industry.

He said that this approach will serve to ensure a safe and secure maritime industry in the Caribbean.

Baddaloo said that since the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, the issue of security has shot to consideration also has to be given to the situation of vessels and their cargoes (being) used as potential terrorist weapons.

"There is consequently a need to reassess existing ship and port security plans to ad-

'There is...a need to reassess existing ship and port security plans to address potential terrorist activities' - Captain Rawle Baddaloo



'SMOOTH SAILING?': from left, Mr. Glenn Khan of Laparkan, CSA President Capt. Rawle Baddaloo, CSA Vice-President, Mrs. Corah Sylvester, and Prime Minister Sam Hinds enjoy the refreshment break after the opening of the CSA mid-year conference in Georgetown. (Winston Oudkerk photo)

dress potential terrorist activities", Baddaloo said.

At today's meeting, there will be a panel discussion on the latest development in port security in the United States and the Caribbean.

The panelists are Executive Director of the Maritime and Security Council of the U.S., Kim Petersen; President of Security Identification System Corp. U.S., Anthony Zagami; Chief Security Officer of the Barbados Port Authority, Lois Sealy and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security of Jamaica, Gill Scott.

Among today's agenda items is also a panel discussion on the state of shipping in Guyana.

In its 32-year history, this is the first time that the CSA is meeting in this country.

At the end of the conference today, participants will be taken on a tour of Port Georgetown, situated along the East Bank of the Demerara River, stretching 16 kilometres inward from the river mouth along the Demerara ship channel, with an average depth of 6.21 metres at low tide.

Port Georgetown has a number of independent pier operators, principally John Fernandes Limited, Muneshwer's, Guyana National Shipping Corporation, Guyana National Industrial Company Inc., Guyana Fertilisers Limited, Demerara Sugar Terminals and Deo's International Distribution Company (DIDCO).