PAHO director praises Psychiatric Hospital

AN UPGRADED PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL has come in for some high praise from the head of the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO).

During a brief tour of the Black Rock, St Michael institution yesterday to mark World Mental Health Day, PAHO’s director Dr Carissa Etienne said she was very impressed with what she had seen.

“I want to say how very pleasant this visit to the Psychiatric Hospital has been. Certainly the facilities, the cleanliness, the atmosphere and the ambience which has been created is one that is healthy and looking to provide health and well-being for the population,” she said.

“I do think that the holistic approach which includes prevention, community care and also in-patient care is important. I’ve also noted that the number of persons who are in hospital has continued to drop and that is because of a very strong community psychiatric programme that has been instituted within the polyclinics and at the first level of care, and especially the special district nurses as well in that regard.”

Etienne, who was joined on the tour by PAHO’s representative for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Dr Godfrey Xuereb; Minister of Health John Boyce; Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health Tennyson Springer and the hospital’s acting director David Leacock, among others, also lauded Government for financing the refurbishment of the island’s lone mental institution.

In her remarks, Boyce, who was also present last month during the opening of a state-of-the-art $6.5 million kitchen facility, said the century-old hospital had come a long way.

There were several pieces of art and crafts made by patients on display, while a band comprised of patients played sweet melodies throughout the day.

Video posting slammed

by RANDY BENNETT

THE PERSONS who recorded a mental patient as she stripped naked in public and then published it on social media have been lambasted by the head of the Psychiatric Hospital.

In the video which made the rounds on Facebook over the weekend, the middle-aged woman was seen naked in a pool hall dancing around while people took pictures and recorded her.

The woman, an outpatient at the Psychiatric Hospital, was apparently suffering a mental breakdown.

After throwing several items on the floor, she proceeded to climb onto the three available pool tables and kicked off the overhead lighting on each of them.

All the while, the voices of men could be heard clearly in the background laughing and shouting, “Videotape she sees,” one would put on Facebook.

Two men were also heard instructing her to “get down on the ground now. Get down on the ground.”

At one point in the video, as the woman lay sprawled out across one of the pool tables, a man was seen “up close and personal” with his cellphone recording the incident.

According to DAILY NATION investigations, it was the second time the woman had a mental breakdown in public.

In May of last year, she attracted a large crowd after she took off all of her clothes and rolled around on the ground in Bridgetown. That incident was also recorded.

According to well-placed sources, she is now a patient at the Psychiatric Hospital.

However, the action has drawn the ire of the hospital’s acting director David Leacock.

Speaking to the media yesterday during World Mental Health Day activities at the Black Rock institution, Leacock condemned the behaviour of those who sought it necessary to post the video on social media.

“Now that is more damaging on the person doing it than perhaps the person experiencing the mental health challenge. We all have challenges and how we express those challenges are totally different, but the person who experiences a challenge like that, we don’t expect to find that sane and well-thinking persons should essentially take advantage of the situation and use it as a community experience just to post it on Facebook for a few likes or whatever the case may be,” he contended.

“A person may have a mental history and might have done some things that you would not expect the average person to do, and then the challenge comes when instead of persons helping that person, persons essentially just took photographs and plastered it on social media.”

Acting assistant director Heather Payne-Drakes revealed that the hospital had embarked on a programme to help better sensitise the public about mental illness.

“This, this added, would allow persons to better understand those persons.

“It’s really a matter of understanding the situation. We understand clearly the nature of diabetes or the nature of kidney disease or any other physical ailment, but when it comes to mental health, there are quite a few misunderstandings, primarily because of a lack of knowledge and that brings confusion,” Payne-Drakes explained.

“So we are looking at sensitising the general public and especially the special services that would have to respond to individuals in the community.”

She said that the National Mental Health Commission had recently established to familiarise the public on mental health issues.

BWA ‘could have been example’

GENERAL SECRETARY of the Barbados Workers’ Union (BWU) Toni Moore has dismissed allegations that some Barbados Water Authority (BWA) workers were delaying jobs during working hours so they could get overtime.

Instead, Moore said for about four years, workers had offered to cut down their overtime hours—a situation she said that was known by several Government officials:

“Workers have actually offered to the BWA to reduce their own overtime by working a 24/7 hour system, and this is an offer that has been on the table for over four years now. And although we reminded the authorities of that very fact, the BWA management, the level of the Minister of Labour, the minister responsible for agriculture, the Prime Minister, up to now there has been no response to the proposal,” she said.

“We hoped that the BWA could be the example for other departments and quasi-Government agencies to pick up on it because if we do it for the BWA, then the question would be why not other areas,” she added.

Moore was speaking to the media at the opening ceremony of the BWU’s Regional Youth Seminar, entitled Young Leaders With A Clear Focus And A Renewed Drive at the BWU’s Labour College in Mangrove, St Philip, yesterday.

She also said the problems that resulted in residents in several rural parishes not obtaining water were not solely connected to the BWA, as Barbados had been labelled as a water-scarce country.

She said if those challenges were anticipated, they might not have reached that magnitude. (RG)