



bespoke homes jamaica

RECONNECTING YOU WITH YOUR ISLAND

July 2013

Back To Your Heart

Issue 19

Crime and corruption

There are new signs of progress on corruption, especially among the police.

In December we reported that Jamaica had improved to 83rd out of 174 countries assessed by Transparency International. Now on a par with Trinidad & Tobago.

New evidence shows that more than 400 police officers have lost their jobs since 2007 as the government tackles corruption in the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). Re-enlistment after five years of service is judged much more robustly. Every year, each officer must submit evidence of their assets and liabilities.

As Commissioner of Police Owen Ellington said, a major culture shift both within and beyond the JCF has followed the work of the Anti-Corruption Branch. The public are now much more willing to report extortion and abuses of power.



Meanwhile, Supreme Court Judge, Justice David Batts, has given an important ruling – not least for those of us who have frequently been stopped by the island's traffic police!

Many had believed that Section 58 of the Road Traffic Act gave police the power to stop and search vehicles if they had "reasonable cause". "That Act does no such thing", said Judge Batts. "The reasonable cause to support that an individual has or is about to commit a crime must relate to the peculiar characteristics of the persons or the vehicle he is driving, or the manner in which it is operated, or to information received." He awarded J\$2.8m to the defendant.

Bespoke Homes Jamaica

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***CRAB NO WALK IM NO GET FAT;
WALK TOO MUCH IM LOSE IM CLAW***

To prosper you need to take risks, but not too many

Manley and Bolivar

The Norman Manley Museum opened on 27 June. That was the 120th birthday of National Hero Norman Washington Manley. Persons from near and far, young and old travelled across the island to Roxborough, Manchester.



Former Finance Minister of the Jamaica Labour Party, Audley Shaw MP, gave a fitting tribute to the founder of the People's National Party. The keynote address came from someone mentored by Manley - the former PNP Prime Minister, P J Patterson. "He had a passion about social activities...He regarded community effort as a pillar for national development." He first extolled the importance of "Brand Jamaica". Opening the doors of secondary schools to 2,000 children across the island "was a very revolutionary thing in those times...What it did was to create a new professional class in Jamaica that would be able to serve Jamaica in every aspect of our national development."

Downtown Kingston is close to seeing the opening of the Simón Bolívar Cultural Centre. A museum and library will be joined by an exhibition hall and a 350-seat multicultural centre. Venezuela's national hero lived in Jamaica in 1815.

Helping the police and our cricketers

Central Police Station in downtown Kingston recently gained a spring clean and re-paint courtesy of National Youth Service volunteers. Meanwhile, the Sandals Sports Foundation is helping rural sport, not least through its cricket academies.



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Business on the up

For the first time in two years, businesses saw now as a good time to invest. So the index of business confidence rose from 91.8 in the June quarter last year to 101.4 a year later.

Already we can see varied signs of new activity. Jamaica Aggregates Ltd is to invest US\$6m in a limestone plant on the north coast later this year. Its main plant is in Yallahs, St Thomas. The recent approval to export direct to Florida should see exports double within the year.



Grace Kennedy is looking to export much more to Haiti. A sorrell factory is being built in Bethel Town. Lucea now has a good fish market. Long Pond sugar is set to see booming sales. Kremi Ice Cream has just seen a major boost to profits. Kentucky Fried Chicken is to recruit an extra 150 persons, having added 140 in the last year.

An increasingly important niche market is that for wine. While decent wine was hard to buy 5 years ago, we now have small companies like Kacy's Chateau as well as better stock in supermarkets.

Diaspora conference

The fifth biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference was held in Montego Bay in June. Many persons attended from the UK, USA and Canada, with hotels reporting big increases in bookings. The government used the opportunity to encourage persons in the Diaspora to enhance their support for the country. New partnerships with the government could seriously help economic development. Help with the building of new schools was a particular priority right now.

Tackling JPS and the environment

Business and individuals are now responding to ever rising electricity prices from the Jamaica Public Service company by switching to solar power. The alternative energy market overall is worth US\$20m, with much growth expected soon.

The government helped recently by making 14 more products duty-free. And it has removed General Consumption Tax from a rather longer list of renewable items, including wind turbines, solar water pumping systems, solar panels and tubes, solar cells and photovoltaic batteries.

Suppliers and retailers are responding. ATL has opened its first eco store. As well as stocking a wide range of items, the store will carry out a customer's energy audit, with options tailored to particular budgets. One company, Renewable Energy Developers, is awaiting planning permission for a showroom in Montego Bay that will stock 1,500 solar panels. Another company, SolWind Energy, was only set up two years ago but is growing rapidly.



Tourism

Jamaica gained two major awards at the TravelMole 2013 Sustainable Tourism Awards. The Tryall Club in Hanover won the coveted Sustainable Accommodation Award. On the border of Portland and St Thomas, the Bowden Pen Farmers' Association gained the Community Benefit Award.

There is good news for hoteliers at both the small and luxurious parts of the market. Hotels of less than 100 rooms saw a 7 per cent occupancy increase in 2012. Meanwhile, Sandals has gone from strength to strength during the recession, purchasing several new hotels in the Caribbean.

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Focus on Hanover

Hanover is the second smallest parish, larger only than Kingston. Its population is around 70,000.

The capital, Lucea, has a functioning clock erected in 1817. The parish is largely mountainous, with many coves & bays. Some fine beaches mean that tourism is important, with the parish covering the northern half of the 7-mile Negril beach.



Noted for its fine breeds of cattle, Hanover's farming includes ginger, yam, sugar cane, pimento, rice, turmeric, arrowroot and breadfruit, together with pigs and goats.

National Hero and first PM after Independence, Sir Alexander Bustamante, was born in Blenheim.

Education and skills

Education minister Ronald Thwaites is encouraging more secondary schools to integrate Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) into their curriculum. Some J\$80m will be invested from the training agency HEART Trust, mostly for upgrading laboratories and workshops. Recognising that the days are long gone when TVET was inferior to general education, Minister Thwaites emphasised the benefits that can flow, including the much improved opportunity to set up a microbusiness. Some persons are now using that as a means of financing university.

Meanwhile, for persons beyond school age, Red Stripe is providing eight weeks of skills training for 1,000 persons in customer service, bartending and food and beverage service.

Farmers & fishers facing the future

Newer and more niche products are helping Jamaican farmers. Agriculture minister Roger Clarke recently mused about the possibility of growing tea in the Blue Mountain. At the same time, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture has called on Jamaicans to make much better use of crops such as cassava.

The EU is helping. Many farmers are gaining from the EU diversification programme. For example, the EU Banana Support Programme benefited 100 former banana producing farmers in Guy's Hill, St Catherine. By helping to introduce new crops and farming methods, including greenhouses, average earnings rose from J\$2m in 2011 to J\$17m.



The latter project was managed by The Competitiveness Company Ltd (TCC), a subsidiary and consulting arm of the Jamaica Exporters' Association. TCC is currently managing another fish-based project, this time funded by the Gates Foundation. Some 150 inner-city farmers are learning how to farm and market ornamental fish – what some call “tropical fish”. These will be exported to the USA and farther afield.

When the fish farmers achieve their targeted 2.4 million fish exported in a year, earnings should be US\$1.5m. That will make a big difference to the farmers involved. Even so, it will be only one-hundredth of the US market - and the world market is three times bigger. That is just one example of the massive untapped potential that exists in Jamaica.

Caribbean fishers are also seeing new EU cash, to enable the development of a more professional & sustainable industry.

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Schools

Recent UNESCO figures show 57 million children still out of school worldwide. Yet aid for basic education fell in 2011, for the first time since 2002. The UNESCO DG, Irina Bukova, said it was crucial to get children into school and to ensure that they learn the basics once there.

Yet a recent study from Jamaica's Ministry of Education found that a quarter of pupils graduating from primary school are "functionally illiterate". So the Digicel Foundation has joined with USAID to add US\$3.7m to expand the Enrichment Programme to a further 95 schools to boost literacy and numeracy. Thus far, the Enrichment Programme has added two grades to the performance of at-risk children. Bespoke Homes Jamaica's sponsorship of Saturday school in Trelawny is bearing similarly impressive results.

Jamaica Heritage and Other Things

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BHJ – “Helping You to Get Back to Your Heart in Jamaica”

Here at Bespoke Homes Jamaica we bring only positive news. Let's work for a better Jamaica - a better future for all of us. And if your heart is in Jamaica, we can help you get back to it.

St Andrew, Golden Spring: J\$16.95m (c. £120,000)

This 4-bed, 3.5-bath home comes with good-sized rooms. Land of 5.5 acres can also be bought - currently at J\$2.4m; but reasonable offers for both will be considered.



St Ann, Runaway Bay, Mount Pleasant: £255,000

This 5-bed split-level property has a beautifully landscaped garden. Area popular both with returnees and resident professionals. 6 ft high linked fencing.



Kingston 8, St Andrew: Stillwell: J\$43m (c. £310,000)

A newly built 3,000 sq ft 3-bed, 3.5-bath townhouse. Two minutes to Manor Park business district. Double carport. Helper's quarters. Open plan kitchen. Complex has pool & gym.



St Catherine: LAND: Green Acres: J\$4.3m (c. £30,500)

This level quarter acre lot offers great views. Barely half an hour from Kingston. Surrounded by well established homes, mainly returnees. Security patrol.



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