



bespoke homes jamaica

RECONNECTING YOU WITH YOUR ISLAND

February 2013

Back To Your Heart

Issue 17

New role for red dirt?

Red dirt could be helping to run your smartphone some time soon. How come?

Well, scientists reckon that Jamaica's red dirt contains very high concentrations of minerals vital to our modern world. These are "rare earth minerals" (REMs). Nippon Light Metal estimates concentrations on the island at 13 times those in China. Prices have shot up in recent years.

There is lots of investor interest. But "we are not selling it out. We want to go as far downstream as possible" says Parris A. Lyew-Ayee of the Jamaica Bauxite Institute. Production go-ahead will, however, depend on tests over the next three months; and on estimates of environmental damage, to be made by the National Environmental Planning Agency - NEPA.



New roles for computers

A great new online retailing website has been launched by Appliance Traders Ltd – ATL. Delivery across the island and collection from one of ATL's four stores will both be possible. ATL sells residential and commercial equipment, including top brands.

With about 5,600 workers, the island forms Xerox's third largest business process outsourcing (BPO) site beyond the US. While one site is in Portmore and one in Kingston, there are five in Montego Bay. Another 180 ICT jobs are going to MoBay with a new LIME contact centre. On top of that, MoBay has more Twitter users than Kingston – though probably due to tourists.

NEW BROOM SWEEP CLEAN, BUT OWL BROOM NOE DEM CAHNA

We should strive for a happy blend between the freshness of the new & the valuable experience of the old

We're simply the best

We've had lots of new success recently. A Jamaica-born young woman now living in Cayman, Moya Williams, beat the rest of the world in the A/S Leisure and Tourism course. The US government honoured Dr Henry Lowe, a leading cancer specialist. And Jamaican skaters Tamra Mitchell and Nigel Davis won two historic silver medals in ice skating at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in South Korea.

Following the three awards for Usain Bolt that we reported in BHI News 16, we have news of two further awards. One, the World Sports Journalist Award, was presented in Switzerland. The other is the JAAA 2012 Golden Cleats Award, the female version of which went to Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce.



New tourism

The first direct flights carrying tourists to Jamaica from Russia and from the Czech Republic arrived around the turn of the New Year. Such flights are providing great new sources of revenue. In addition, the Chinese Ambassador to Jamaica set out the new opportunities to strengthen relations between the two countries. This coincided with news that the first Disney cruise will reach Falmouth by the end of the year. Other new developments saw an emphasis on "community tourism" in St James and "farm tourism" in St Ann.

All of which came on top of news that both visitor numbers and total visitor spending increased during 2012.

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Agriculture

There has been lots of good news about agriculture. Sugar output is up, so that much reduced imports will be needed this year. And there will still be scope for decent exports to Europe. A Chinese company is planning to invest US\$100m by 2016 in a fully automated plant at Monymusk, in the Vere Plains of Clarendon.

Red Stripe has set out plans to replace almost three-quarters of imported inputs by 2020 – mostly through local cassava and sorghum replacing barley.

Having fallen ten-fold in the last 20 years, cocoa output is set to rise. The Jamaica Cocoa Farmers' Association has just gained a US\$1.7m grant from the Inter-American Development Bank. That will train farmers to move from selling beans to setting up micro factories that produce chocolate bars and balls. Export earnings from the world-quality cocoa are expected to rise from US\$1m per year by at least five-fold.



The Trench Town Greenhouse Farming Project, started in 2011, is now doing very well, employing six young people growing callaloo, pak choi and tomato. The 1,200 sq ft greenhouse sells to schools, businesses, Coronation Market traders and individual shoppers. Youngsters at school are already learning the basics at nearby Trench Town High, Charlie Smith High and St Andrew Technical High. RADA is now helping to train 12 youngsters in greenhouse assembly ahead of further expansion.

Crime

Despite the awful shooting of a child from Britain in January, murder and other serious crimes were down significantly in 2012. At about 1,100, the number of murders was the lowest since 2003 and somewhat less than the approximately 1,450 average of recent years.



Security minister Peter Bunting highlighted how his National Security Policy is focusing on 5 key issues: end the profits of crime, reform the justice system, police by consent, dismantle gangs, and target at-risk individuals and communities. To tackle the first, there is the Proceeds of Crime Act. That is integral to the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption (MOCA) task force, which targets the main criminals and their "facilitators" – including those in the public service.

New security personnel are being recruited: over 1,000 police and 600 soldiers by March 2013. Murder fell considerably in St Catherine and St James during 2012 after MOCA resources were targeted on those parishes.

Some J\$600m is being spent on new vehicles this fiscal year – more than the entire amount spent in the previous 3 years. Voluntary and private efforts are also helping. Food For The Poor donated a boat to help the police catch drug smugglers. King Alarm's J\$100m will boost security in Montego Bay.

Things really are looking up. After all, the new Falmouth police station has been completed – some 12 years on from its start.

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Focus on Clarendon

Clarendon is the third largest parish by area and has a 215,000 population. The capital, May Pen, has 60,000 persons.

Bauxite is widespread. Much of the island's tobacco is grown in the parish, along with cotton, pimento, banana, coffee, cocoa and indigo. Citrous fruit packing is important in May Pen, especially for "Trout Hall" oranges.



Clarendon is famous for its Milk River Bath, a mineral spa. Famous persons from the parish include Freddie McGregor, Toots Hibbert, Millie Small, Liz Mitchell, Barrington Levy, Glen Johnson, Mona Hammond and Claude McKay.

Road safety

Great news. The government's target of fewer than 300 fatalities in a year was finally met in 2012. That left us on 110 fatalities per million population – a massive gain from the 185 of 20 years ago. We are now on a par with USA's 106, albeit somewhat behind Britain's 36 and Japan's 39. Even so, Trinidad and Tobago is on 155 and The Bahamas has 145 per million persons. Eastern Europe has poor rates, with Latvia on 200. Eritrea leads the world, however, with 480.

Jamaica's gains are partly down to better education, enforcement and road design. The Ministry of Transport is now focused on its 2017 target, of less than 200 fatalities – a target with wider significance, as part of the United Nations' "Decade of Action for Road Safety".

Cleaning-up the garbage I

Crucial for the future, the government reached an agreement in mid-February with International Monetary Fund officials on an economic support programme up to 2017. The deal to be able to draw on US\$750 million is aimed at enabling Jamaica to begin to tackle its unsustainable debt burden. However, it needs to be agreed by the IMF Executive Board, in March.

As part of the deal, Jamaica must cut spending. And it must raise almost J\$16 billion during 2013-14 through extra taxes. An eighth will come from property purchase/transfer tax. More than a fifth will come from annual property rates. In addition, GCT will be extended and a new customs administration fee established. There will be increases in the Education Tax, on gambling and in income tax on dividends. In addition, funding for the National Housing Trust is to be cut back quite considerably (see Housing on page 4).



Cleaning-up the garbage II

Great news for fans of the Palisadoes. The project to protect and restore the Palisadoes shoreline has been completed. And, amazingly, within budget.

Following a pilot project, the government is now analysing how to take forward garbage separation. Already a new company – Jamaica Recycles – has been formed in Kingston, with a 20,000 sq ft plant on Spanish Town Road. Some 5,000 tonnes of waste can be recycled per month – and is mostly exported. Initially the focus is on waste paper and plastic. Further plants are likely in Montego Bay & Negril.

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Housing news

In the last year or two, middle-income Jamaicans have been clamouring to get a better house, especially via the cheaper loans offered by the National Housing Trust (NHT). Phase III of the Longville Park scheme in Clarendon recently saw over 10,000 applicants chasing the 841 homes.

The housing market is, however, set to change as government measures in the first few months of this year take effect. We report above tax rises, both on purchase/transfer and for property rates. A further part of the IMF deal sees the NHT having to bear cuts in lending of J\$11 billion over each of the next four years. Fewer persons will buy houses. Many buyers will pay more if they have to borrow with less NHT help. How far these changes will slow the rise in house prices remains to be seen. They may also push up rents, if fewer persons buy.

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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 Catherine, Busy Park: J\$7.25m (c. £53,000)

This lovely, great value 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom house with open plan living has land for further expansion. Just 5 minutes from the highway.



St Catherine, Linstead - J\$11m (c. £80,000)

A great 3-bed, 4-bathroom house with garage. Almost 9,000 sq ft. A couple of minutes to the A1 N-S road; will be great for the new toll road. Living & dining rooms, helper’s quarters, laundry room, wraparound balcony.



Kingston 11: - J\$12m (c. £89,000)

A repair shop of 2 bays for 12 cars. 2 buildings with bathrooms & kitchenette. Near Spanish Town Road & Marcus Garvey Drive.



St Catherine: Green Acres: - J\$27m (c. £200,000)

A great 4-bed house with helper’s quarters. Lots of splendid internal features. Fantastic verandah and roof spaces from which to enjoy the magnificent views



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