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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2016



Iberostar supports
New Day Prep
in Lilliput

Couples Tower Isle,
Sans Souci say
thank you to staff

MoBay Convention
Centre facilitating
business tourism



The Oceana property in downtown Kingston that is owned by PanJam.

Oceana development to breathe new life into downtown Kingston

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

A 200-ROOM hotel, offices, apartments and retail stores are among the mixed-use project that the Pan-Jam group has undertaken as part of its redevelopment plans for the former Oceana Hotel complex in downtown Kingston.

PanJam, which currently owns the Courtyard Marriott in New Kingston, said construction is ongoing and it hopes to replicate

the model in the old city centre.

"The project will be done in three phases, and the first phase will be completed in a couple of months," PanJam's chairman and chief executive officer, Stephen Facey, told **Hospitality Jamaica** last Friday night during the grand opening ceremony of the Courtyard Marriott.

According to him, the hotel's redevelopment will commence in Phase Two. He is awaiting approval from the respective agencies for

aspects of the project.

Located on the picturesque waterfront, the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) sold the Oceana to a Jamaican-Canadian consortium in 2014 for \$385 million. The consortium comprises Canadian real estate developers, Downing Street Partners Realty, and Jamaica Property Company Ltd, which is a member of the Pan Jamaica (PanJam) Group.

The property was sold to be used primarily as a hotel, former chair-

man of the UDC, K.D. Knight, said during the signing of the sale agreement.

The development of Oceana Hotel is expected to breathe fresh life into downtown Kingston, in sync with the many other corporate entities that have returned to the city with millions of dollars in investment.

Pan-Jam is also searching for a Montego Bay location, with the hope of bringing the Marriott brand to the tourism capital.

"If the right opportunity in Montego Bay presents itself, we would look at that, too," Facey stated.

For the Pan-Jam chairman, both hotels signal a return to his family's core business.

It was under his late father, Maurice Facey's, leadership that Pan-Jam made its sojourn into the hospitality sector, the younger Facey stated. He did so with the development of the Manor House Hotel, now known as Manor Park.

Pan-Jam also developed the



Above: A workman restoring a section of the former Oceana hotel in downtown Kingston.



Stephen Facey, chairman and CEO of Pan-Jamaican Investment Trust.



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett.

Skyline Hotel, now the Courtleigh Hotel and Suites, and the Sans Souci in St Ann, which is operated by the Couples group.

Facey's enthusiasm is matched by new Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett's who noted that Kingston was blessed with the world's seventh largest natural harbour, boasting a history of more than 200 years.

"As a capital city, it is the heartbeat of our nation, our culture, our history; and it has several major institutions and

historic buildings, which all have major appeal to tourists."

Bartlett announced that as his ministry seeks to diversify the country's product offerings, steps would be taken to further develop Kingston as a tourist destination.

He said focus would be placed on making "Kingston the centre of gastronomy".

Bartlett's vision is to see tourists flocking Kingston to experience mouthwatering cuisine bursting with flavour in one location.

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Jamaica, Cuba, Dom Rep to sign MoU

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

JAMAICA AND Cuba are to agree upon a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in relation to multi-destination marketing arrangements.

The agreement will also take in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean country the Dominican Republic (Dom Rep), said a media release by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT). Both Cuba and the Dom Rep are Jamaica's biggest competitors in the tourist industry.

According to the MoT, the agreement should be in place by next month when Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett visits Cuba.

The aim is to boost cooperation among the three countries in the area of tourism, Bartlett was quoted as saying shortly after a meeting with Cuban ambassador to Jamaica Bernardo Guanche Hernández.

Bartlett said the move would see the introduction of a tripartite tourism agreement, that would drive the growth of tourism in the region.

NEW ARCHITECTURE

"This is a very exciting moment for us here in the Caribbean. We are beginning to witness a seismic shift in the economic and social activities within our Caribbean space. The improved relationship between Cuba and the US has enabled us to begin to create a new architecture for tourism in the Northern Caribbean," said Bartlett.

"Our dreams of establishing multi-destination marketing arrangements and greater economic collaboration are now becoming potent realities. The ambassador and I discussed a number of critical issues that we can embark on



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (right) and Cuban Ambassador to Jamaica Bernardo Guanche Hernández hold hands as a symbolic gesture of their partnership as they announced plans to formalise a multi-destination marketing arrangement among Cuba, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic in May, 2016. The announcement was made during a visit by the ambassador to the Ministry of Tourism's New Kingston offices on April 13, 2016.

together. Among them is a multi-destination marketing arrangement, which will see cooperation between Jamaica and Cuba as well as the Dominican Republic in the area of tourism," Bartlett added.

The United States remains Jamaica's largest source market, and with Cuba coming into the mainstream of economic activities within the region, according to the

MOT release, the minister believes that the timing is now perfect to formally implement this crucial partnership.

Emphasising the potential of the agreement to boost the inflow of visitors to the region, the minister said: "There is also the possibility of Russia becoming a part of this arrangement, which will see airlift arrangements among Russia, Cuba,

Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic."

Quoting Hernández, the MoT said the Cuban emissary stated that he was pleased with the prospects of the arrangement.

"Cuba will never forget the important role Jamaica played to help lift the embargo and open the door to Cuba. Secondly, we have the potential for every country in

the area to have a very big market. There are many possibilities, and I suggested that Minister Bartlett visit Cuba as soon as possible to have a meeting with our minister, Marrero Cruz, in order to review the agreement and MoU in order to further strengthen our relations in tourism," Hernández said.

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Correction & clarification

■ The Gleaner welcomes comments and suggestions, as well as information about errors that call for correction. Messages may be emailed to editor@gleanerjm.com or left at these toll-free numbers: 1-888-453-2637 or 1-888-468-6397; or by fax: 922-6223.

The wrong caption appeared on this picture in our last issue. We regret any inconvenience caused. See correct caption at right:



From left: Vikings Production's chief operating officer André Dixon discussing the project with Rokeef's Kerry Thomas and AMResorts' Emilio Huhn, general manager of Secret Resorts at the Seawind Beach Club last November.

Will US cruises, scheduled flights end Congress' Cuba-travel restrictions?

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

AT THE time of President Obama's visit to Cuba last month, Carnival Cruise Line announced that it would start sailings from the United States (US) to Cuba on May 1. Its decision to do so marks the first time in 50 years that any cruise ship has been allowed to sail from the US to the island.

The company said that it had received the approval of the Cuban authorities to operate between Miami and Cuba under its Fathom brand, which involves sailings that encourage volunteerism and social support through cruising.

The cruises will be operated by the 704-passenger *Adonia* and will call at Havana, Cienfuegos, and Santiago de Cuba. They will include artistic, educational, and other activities such as visits to organic farms, meetings with Cuban artists and authors, and walking tours. In addition, the on-board experience will include discussions about Cuban history, culture, food, and entertainment, as well as the availability of Cuban literature and Cuban films.

Unlike other Carnival cruises, this one will not have an onboard casino, and the minimum age to sail will be eight, but it does have most other cruise amenities such as pools and a spa.

The introduction of the first US cruise is not, however, without controversy, especially in Miami, as it has emerged that these sailings cannot carry Cuban Americans.

The company has said that the decision is not of its making but follows guidance from the US Treasury and the Cuban government.

Although Carnival has requested a change in policy, this has not been granted as long-standing Cuban laws ban Cuban-Americans from travel to Cuba by any kind of seagoing vessel. This reflects, in part, a Cuban policy that regards all Cubans living overseas, even if they have taken other citizenship, as returning Cubans if they wish to enter Cuba.

Carnival said that while it sympathised with the concerns being voiced and would continue to work on the issue with Cuban officials, it had to obey the laws and decisions



David Jessop

of the destinations in the countries to which it sails but hoped that the decision will be reconsidered.

The arrival of the first US cruises to Cuba has for some time been of particular concern in the Eastern Caribbean. The fear there has been that the cruise companies can make more money sailing out of South Florida to and around Cuba, given its proximity and its many cities and different scenic and cultural attractions.

For the time being at least, this

seems unlikely as US regulations on travel mean that companies like Carnival will have to tailor their offering to whatever is broadly determined to be educational. However, very soon, other Cuba cruises for US citizens are expected to follow, and scheduled air services will enable individual travel, resulting, it is widely believed, in existing constraints on travel eroding, spurring a possible decision by the US Congress to lift the travel ban entirely.

MORE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

It is a possibility that is causing others in the industry to see opportunity.

Although beach vacations and tourism are prohibited under present US regulations, the new US rules for individual travel do not dictate where US citizens must stay or the number of people-to-people encounters they are required to make during their visit.

In the last few weeks, two major US hotel chains have announced

they are to manage upscale Havana hotels. Moreover, in what might be interpreted as a tourism pitch, Breezes Varadero has begun to encourage US travellers to stay at their resort. The resort says that it is not encouraging any one to break the rules but merely observing that the hotel is open for business should any American want to stay there.

Despite this, it remains far from clear how rapidly US travel to Cuba will grow in the future. Hotel capacity is limited, prices are increasing, service levels and cuisine are variable, and repeat business remains relatively weak. Above all, most US travellers still seem to be uncertain about travel to Cuba.

A recent survey by a leading travel insurer, Allianz Global Assist, found that despite US interest in Cuba as a tourism destination, 70 per cent of travellers said that they were currently unlikely to visit Cuba.

According to the survey, only seven per cent of those spoken to listed

themselves as 'very likely' to visit, with 22 per cent 'somewhat likely'. Of that group, only four per cent plan to visit in 2016, with another 10 per cent planning a trip in 2017, according to the company that undertook the survey during President Obama's recent visit to Cuba.

Allianz said that of the factors that would attract those surveyed to travel to Cuba, 33 per cent said that beach resorts would make them more interested, a figure well ahead of Cuba's cultural attractions (24 per cent), the Cuban people (12 per cent), Cuban food and rum (11 per cent), classic 1950s American cars (nine per cent), Cuban cigars (five per cent), and family and friends (five per cent).

These are figures that suggest that if US travel restrictions are freed later this year, enabling US visitors to lie on the beach in Cuba while taking in some culture, Cuba could, within five years and with significant product improvement, require mid-market Caribbean destinations to have to significantly up their game.

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Couples Tower Isle, Sans Souci say thank you to staff

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

OUTSTANDING STAFF members at sister hotels Couples Tower Isle and Couples Sans Souci in St Mary were honoured by the respective properties in ceremonies on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

COUPLES TOWER ISLE

More than 40 workers at Couples Tower Isle picked up long service awards, ranging from five to 35 years. Clarence Smith, 35 years; Donna Burrell, 30 years; Marlon McCarthy, 30 years; Winsome McPherson, 25 years; and Gwendolyn Tracey, 20 years, being the longest-serving staff members at the pioneering hotel.

Star performers were Kirk Barrieffe of front office, for Front of Hotel category; and Alecia Brown of kitchen, for Back of House. Other winners included Royan Marsh, Most Mentioned in CSQ; Errol Sewell of kitchen, Team Leader of the Year; Pollyanna Haber of administration, Junior Manager of the Year; environment manager, Carlinton Dodd – Manager of the Year; and Simone McKenzie of accounts – Most Active Environmental Warden. Grounds won for Department of the Year and accounts for Most Environmentally Friendly Department.

The event featured by wonderful performances by the Silver Bird Steel Orchestra; Dance Expressions; and Jermaine Michaels, who was backed by Fusion band.

COUPLES SANS SOUCI

With Couples Resorts having taken control of Sans Souci hotel 10 years ago, that figure represents the highest number of years staff members would have served.

A total of sixty-eight persons were honoured for serving 10 years and eight for serving five years.

Star performer for Front of House was Tasha-Gaye Braham of front office, while Samantha Pryce of kitchen took the Back of House category.

Team Leader of the Year was Andrew Rodney of Bar. The Junior Manager of the Year award went to Allesteven Johnson of cost control, while Leroy Walker of maintenance won the award for Manager of the Year.

Department of the Year was front office.

Jody Kay James, Digicel Rising



Manager of the Year at Couples Sans Souci Leroy Walker of maintenance.



Sasha Lewis picked up the General Manager's Award.

Star for 2015, provided entertainment for the afternoon.

Winners from both properties received several fabulous prizes including cash, appliances and weekend at north coast resorts.



Couples Sans Souci's Junior Manager of the Year, Allesteven Johnson, of cost control.



Employee of the Year Tasha-Gaye Braham of front office collects her award and a hug from general manager Pierre Battaglia.



Pollyanna Haber of the admin department seems quite delighted as she collects her Junior Manager of the Year award from Charmaine Bailey.



Natalia Harvey of the accounts department, Couples Tower Isle, looking gorgeous as she turned out to help hand out prizes.



Errol Sewell collects his Team Leader of the Year award from Charmaine Bailey.



Couples Sans Souci's Employee of the Year Samantha Pryce, of kitchen.



Couples Sans Souci's Team Leader of the Year Andrew Rodney of bar department.



Staff of the front office, the Department of the Year, at Couples Sans Souci, seen here with general manager Pierre Battaglia (left).



Alecia Brown of kitchen collects her award for being Star Performer from General Manager Leonard Henry.



Carlinton Dodd, grounds manager at Couples Tower Isle, collects his Manager of the Year award from the hotel's general manager, Leonard Henry.



Star Performer Kirk Barrieffe (left) is greeted by general manager Leonard Henry, who is about to present his award.

Top performers at Couples Negril honoured

COUPLES NEGRIL said thanks to its top performers on Friday at the annual staff award function.

Star performers (Employees of the Year) were Jerado Stewart of dining room for front of house, and Winston Douglas of engineering, for back of house, with both accepting their awards from general manager Wayne Williams.

Tyrone Jackson of kitchen was named Manager of the Year and gratefully accepted his award from Sharon Wallace, financial controller. Kitchen was named Department of the Year.



Manager of the Year Tyrone Jackson – Kitchen accepting his award from Sharon Wallace, financial controller.



Department of the Year – Kitchen.



Front of the House Star Performer of the Year Jerado Stewart (right), from Dining Room, receiving his award from General Manager Wayne Williams.



Back of the House Star Performer of the Year Winston Douglas (right), from Engineering, accepts his award from General Manager Wayne Williams.

There has never been a better time to vacation in Jamaica

JTB launches Staycation campaign

DESTINATION JAMAICA boasts more than 25,000 hotel rooms and more than 100 attractions. It is these and other irresistible attributes, like the warmth of the Jamaican people, that have attracted millions of visitors to the island each year. The offerings of the island's world-class tourism product is also the ideal playground for Jamaicans who continue to vacation at home.

Domestic tourism, also known as 'staycation', involves persons choosing to vacation in their country. This practice is believed to be the first form of tourism and is still a vital and vibrant part of a country's tourist industry.

On April 15, the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) launched its premier domestic tourism campaign – 'Experience Jamaica: The Ultimate Jamaica Staycation'. Through collaboration with tourism partners, the JTB has endeavoured to encourage residents of Jamaica to enjoy the best of the island's award-winning tourism product. Now in its eighth staging, the Experience Jamaica campaign features the diverse attractions and leisure opportunities that exist on the island. The campaign will continue through to November 2016 with black-out periods.

DISCOUNTS FOR CITIZENS

Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook said: "We at the Jamaica Tourist Board value leisure as a fundamental part of the Jamaican lifestyle. We and our tourism partners consider it a privilege to be able to offer discounted rates at some of our world-class properties. Our citizens help to make the visitor experience a very rewarding and unforgettable one, and it is only fitting that we also get to experience the service and award-winning hospitality that we offer visitors. I encourage Jamaicans to pack your bags and enjoy these 'ultimate staycation' deals."

Jamaican residents, including



Representatives from Prospect Outback demonstrate how to enjoy the Segway Personal Transporter machine.

expatriates will benefit from discounts between 10 per cent and 50 per cent at participating accommodations, spas, restaurants, transportation companies, and attractions. Vacationing where you live doesn't have to be an expensive undertaking. It can range from a day trip to an attraction or spending time at a hotel. At a time when overseas travel is sometimes cost prohibitive, the discounted offerings during the campaign are attractive alternatives.

At the heart of the 'Experience Jamaica: The Ultimate Jamaica Staycation' initiative is the commitment to highlight the importance of leisure and relaxation. Jamaica is a very family-centric place, where

time spent with family and loved ones is highly treasured. The campaign offers families opportunities to relax, reconnect, and rejuvenate, away from the encumbrances of everyday routines.

Over the years, the campaign has enabled many Jamaicans to explore, discover and enjoy the bounty of the island's tourism product. If it's an adrenaline rush through the canopy, or to be pampered by a masseuse, or to experience a dolphin encounter, or outback adventures, the possibilities are plenty for an exciting itinerary.

Accommodation options include all-inclusive resorts, boutique properties and villas, and are great for family or school reunions, weddings

JAMAICA

TOURIST BOARD



A Mystic Mountain representative engages patrons at the Experience Jamaica Show.

and honeymoons, weekend getaways, as well as an excellent gift idea.

For a list of the participating

tourism partners and to book your ultimate staycation, visit: www.visitjamaica.com/experiencejamaica.

Iberostar supports New Day Prep in Lilliput



1. Talk about full support! The Iberostar team demonstrated this by actively participating in the events at New Day Prep School in Lilliput on its sports day. From left Meisha McBean, Sherice Marsh, Stacey-Ann Linton, and staff and parent Colleen Brown.

2. Iberostar's director of human resources, G. Anthony Ferguson (right), and Meisha McBean (left), training and events coordinator, posing with a teacher and students.

3. From left: Director of Human Resource Anthony G. Ferguson, Principal Veronica Welds, and teachers Suzette Barrett, Ren O'Connor, and Brenda Dobbs.

4. Iberostar staff sorting out care packages for more 50 children and teachers of New Day Prep School in Lilliput.

5. Iberostar team from left: Bryan Fisher, Javel Davis, and Hakeem Daring powered to a close finish while participating in the New Day Prep School sports day.

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An Irie riparian day

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

JAMAICA ABOUNDS with rivers and streams, and locals and visitors cannot keep themselves away from them. Their rustic allure, smack in the heart of nature, makes these watery places irresistible.

It's all about water, but everyone has qualities that make it special. Whether the depth, stillness or rush, the freshness, the temperature, the vegetation around it, its accessibility, etc, every river gives a different experience.

I like super-clean, fresh-smelling, cool water rushing against rocks like that of the Buff Bay River at Charles Town, Portland. The ebullient water against the boulders is very refreshing and calming.

I have had my fair share of refreshing rivers. Last Saturday should have been a day when I immersed myself again, but I spent the time taking pictures and promising myself to return to Irie River because it really is an Irie place.

SPECIAL SECTION

I am talking about the section that is set up and operated by Robert Lee and his family. It's perfect for a day-out with family and friends. Apart from its natural attributes, it has man-made facilities that help to make it an ideal picnic, cook-out, and camping spot.



Breda Firestone of Cassia Park, Kingston, brought colourful excitement to Irie River.



Romario Powell is about to delve into the food after emerging from the water.



Having fun at Irie River.



Irie River is ideal for a day-out with family and friends.



Water volleyball is a thrill at Irie River.



Chanting down Babylon by Irie River.



How about texting in the river by the bridge?

I like the rich forest through which it runs, away from the hustle and bustle of modern living. But in terms of accessibility, it is very accessible. It's far, but not too far.

Situated in a ravine at Bonham Spring near Exchange, St Ann, a long, unpaved road leads down to it. All types of vehicles can make the journey. But for a real riparian experience, you take a nice walk down the road. You go down, and down, sweating, hot, and flustered, and then jump into the water to cool down.

It has many pools and scenic spots and a section from which you can jump from the edge of a rock or a piece of rope that dangles over one of the pools.

EARTH FAMILY DAY

I happened to have gone there on Earth Family Day, the celebration of Garnett Silk's birthday. I went for a particular reason, not to bathe, or celebrate. I was pleasantly surprised by the festive mood, which almost made me lose my focus.

But I couldn't drop the camera. Too much was going on. It was a lively day of reggae music, relaxation, healthful food and drinks, frolicking and fun for those who were there for the occasion. Yet, there was reflection on the life of the brother who left us too soon.

It was a two-day event, so when I arrived, overnight campers were already up and chilling or cooking. On the other side of the river, Rasta chanting was going on. The spot was draped with red, green, and gold cloth, adding much to the festive ambience. By the river of Irie, they were chanting down Babylon.

As the day progressed, I saw black, white, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Rastas. The sound system selector was Japanese, straight out of Japan. And anywhere Rastas are, they are going to make their presence felt.

But it was Bredda Firestone from Cassia Park in Kingston who took the excitement to another level. He entered the property with colourful confidence, much pep in his steps.

After frolicking in the river with his huge red, green, and gold flag, he jumped several times from a ledge with the said flag into the water. A pretty parachute it was. He outdid all the other jumpers with his spectacle.

Much entertainment was left to come when I departed about 4 p.m. While I was going, people were trickling in to join the night party by the river. Not far from the exit, I saw a silk cotton tree. And I thought about whom else would be dancing up a storm by the river.



Maria Andreu Martin-Mora, Jamaican community manager, Books4Kids, at Palladium Hotel Group with students at the Lucea Infant School, Hanover.



Tamika Higgins Baker, national sales and marketing manager from Iberostar Grand Rose Hall Beach & Spa, on the 2015 book distribution at the Hague Infant School, Trelawny.

Tourist industry comes together to raise money for Books4Kids Jamaica

EVIDENCING THE huge, charitable heart of Jamaica's tourist industry, Books4Kids Jamaica is a great example of how a destination can focus its efforts around a project to be a force for good.

Identifying with the Jamaican saying 'every mickle mek a muckle', the community project shows what can be accomplished when many contribute a little towards a common goal.

"All funds for the annual Books4Kids Jamaica book distributions are raised through the charity's annual online charity auction of hotel stays, vacations, flights, cruises, adventures, and experiences," Ragni Trotta of the Palmyra Foundation told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

She added that this was a creative way to turn excess hotel inventory, flights, cruises, restaurant meals, and experiences into cash for charity at a minimum cost for sponsors.

More than 100 hotel, travel, and hospitality companies donated items towards the 2015 Online Charity Auction, which raised US\$66,000 and bought book bags for 8,592 kindergarten children in 90 schools across Jamaica, Trotta revealed.

Founded by her husband, developer Robert T. Trotta, all administrative staff is paid out of pocket for



Jenny Wood, general manager of Goldeneye Hotel & Resorts handing out bookbags at Crossroads Basic School in Orocabessa, St Mary.

Books4Kids activity by Trotta. "So that all money raised goes towards the annual book distributions," said Ragni Trotta.

Accordingly, all hotel stays, flights, cruises, and experiences contributed to the online charity auction translate into the purchase of book bags for thousands of kindergarten children, many of whom would not have any books without the Books4Kids Jamaica programme.

Books4Kids Jamaica is now raising money for its upcoming September 2016 book distribution and welcomes all donations of auction items to its fifth annual online charity auction from April 28-May 7, said Trotta.

The auction, which will soon be live, has already received many items from local hotel companies, airlines, cruise lines, restaurants, golf courses, adventure companies,

and individuals.

"We wish to thank all our sponsors for the ongoing support and hope that many more companies will come on board and donate to this year's auction. It is not too late! Our goal is to donate book bags to 10,000 children at the beginning of the new school year, so please be generous," said the Books4kids chairperson.

WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

With **The Gleaner** and RJR on board as main sponsors, Trotta emphasises that the auction will be promoted to more than 10 million people worldwide, offering sponsors a good marketing opportunity.

"Last year's auction website had more than 80,000 hits and bidders from 10 countries. It is a great way to promote your business and support charity at the same time."

Some of the biggest supporters this year include Golden Eye, Grand Palladium Jamaica Resort & Spa, Half Moon Hotel, Jewel Runaway Bay Beach & Golf Resort, Iberostar Grand Rose Hall Beach & Spa, Couples Negril Resort, Secrets St James, Melia Braco Village, Hyatt Zilara & Ziva Rose Hall, Round Hill Hotel, Hilton Rose Hall, and Suncscape Resorts. Kingston hotels include Spanish

Court and Terra Nova hotels, with several smaller cottage resorts, including Negril's Country Country, Great Huts, and Strawberry Fields together.

Online bidders will also be able to bid on return flights for two donated by several airline companies, including Delta Air Lines, JetBlue Airway, Condor, and Caribbean Airlines; golf rounds, adventures; and restaurant vouchers.

For those who wish to explore the world, cruise packages on offer include a luxurious 12-day cruise for two on Holland America Line, a European river cruise, and a Caribbean cruise with Carnival Cruiseline. Vacation stays in Dubai, Italy, Malta, Thailand, Spain, UK and the US are also up for grabs.

The charity will celebrate the last night of the 2016 Online Charity Auction at Usain Bolt's Track & Records, Kingston on May 7, where partygoers will be able to engage in the bidding with mobile devices while watching live bids from all over the world coming in on the screens. Spirit Airlines has generously donated airline tickets to be raffled at the party.

For a link to the auction, visit www.books4kidsjamaica.com. Contact Frank Perolli: 383 4652 or frank@thepalmyrafoundation.com.



Montego Bay Convention Centre

MoBay Convention Centre facilitating business tourism

THE MONTEGO Bay Convention Centre has been a popular venue choice for major events and functions since it opened in 2011.

It is the largest convention centre in the Caribbean and boasts ocean front views and 21st-century facilities that are crucial when hosting large events.

The centre is the location for the fourth year for the Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX), slated for April 29-May 1.

"We have been truly privileged to host the Jamaica Product Exchange trade show for four years out of the last five stagings.

JAPEX is the premier trade event of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA); the Montego Bay Convention Centre is the pre-



Dittie Guise, general manager, Montego Bay Convention Centre.

mier meeting and event facility in the Caribbean, so that is a perfect partnership.

"We are committed to the development of our tourism product and

JAPEX is an important component in our tourism industry, hence, our privilege in hosting this event and ensuring its success as we do with all our clients," said Dittie Guise, general manager, Montego Bay Convention Centre.

The convention centre has more world-class facilities, with cutting-edge customer-focused features, flexibility and state-of-the-art services than any other facility in the region and has a total of 142,000 square feet of meeting, exhibition, ballroom and plenary space. These are crucial elements when planning large-scale events for both local and overseas users of the facility.

As part of a wider regional strategy on the development of tourism and leisure activities, there are plans to

carry out research on the profiles of business clientele who visit the island. It is estimated that more than 5,000 visitors come to Jamaica annually for business purposes.

AVERAGE BUSINESS TRAVELLER

It is further postulated that the average business traveller who comes to Jamaica is usually a man (64 per cent) mainly from higher socio-occupational categories, usually travelling alone (79 per cent) who has already been to this region in the last five years (90 per cent). The purpose of the trips is meetings and business contacts (57 per cent).

"We see that the business-tourism sector contributes a great deal to the nation's overall foreign direct exchange and offers a lot of

opportunities for growth in the future, given further research," said Guise.

"As we continue to implement projects across Jamaica, the JHTA takes great pride in being supporters and active partners with the communities where we do business. To that end, we have spent considerable time and effort over the past several years, listening, learning, and responding to various stakeholders in the industry. We're excited about partnering with the Montego Bay Convention Centre yet again as it will bring immense benefits to the JHTA membership, the immediate environs in Montego Bay and the tourism sector overall," said Nicola Madden-Greig, president of the JHTA.

Region to be challenged to move from good to great

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados: THE CARIBBEAN'S economic viability and sustainability must continue to attract the attention of leaders and policymakers in all walks of life as the region continues to grapple with the challenges of the 21st century.

"As companies and nation states, we must consider that what we have done in the past may not be good enough; what got us this far may not get us to the place where we create the loyalty and profitability we desperately need," said M. Ian Blanchard, an action business coach and former chief executive at telecommunications company Cable & Wireless.

Blanchard will be a presenter at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO)'s eighth Tourism Human Resources Conference in Antigua & Barbuda from May 11-13. He will speak on the topic, 'From Good to Great: Driving Leadership & Organisational Excellence' and will challenge participants to become better versions of themselves and fulfil the Caribbean's true potential.

"We live in an age where opportunities abound, where we have access to a global audience in ways that are much cheaper and easier than ever before. In order for us to move from good to great and derive leadership and organisational excellence we must care more, not just about our own islands, our own nationals, our own families or employees, but about the wider, the broader, the bigger picture.



M. Ian Blanchard

We must care about legacy, about building transgenerational capacity, and about making a difference that will outlast us," he said.

KEY TOPICS

The session will address four key areas – clarity, accountability, reflection and execution – that are essential to drive leadership and organisational excellence.

"We will explore our path and create clear actions for moving forward," he added.

The conference theme is, 'Making Excellence a Habit: Service, Loyalty and Profitability in Caribbean Tourism'. It is being organised by the CTO, in collaboration with Antigua & Barbuda's Ministry of Tourism and the Antigua & Barbuda Tourism Authority, and will be held at the Jolly Beach Resort and Spa.

For more information, including how to register, visit www.onecaribbean.org or email Marvella Sealy at the CTO at msealy@caribtourism.com.

Caribbean Travel Market returns to The Bahamas

CARIBBEAN TRAVEL Marketplace, the region's largest and most significant marketing forum, will return to The Bahamas for the second consecutive year when the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) stages the event from January 31-February 2, 2017, at Atlantis, Paradise Island.

In addition to CHTA, Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2017 will be organised with the support of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, Nassau/Paradise Island Promotion Board (NPIPB), Paradise Island Tourism Development Association (PITDA) and The Bahamas Hotel & Tourism Association (BHTA).

"We are delighted to announce that next year, CHTA's Caribbean Travel Marketplace will once again be hosted here on our beloved islands of The Bahamas. We look forward to welcoming back those delegates who joined us this year, as well as inviting new travel partners to enjoy our hospitality and see firsthand the exciting new products and experiences which The Bahamas and the Caribbean offer," said Joy Jibrilu, director general, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism.

"The Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association welcomes the opportunity to co-host Caribbean Travel Marketplace along with our partners at the Ministry of Tourism, NPIPB and PITDA. Marketplace is an invaluable forum for showcasing the incredible range of hotel and tourism-related offerings available in The Bahamas and throughout the Caribbean. Atlantis is the ideal host property for this event, providing one location for the more than 1,000 attendees to meet, network, and enjoy themselves. We will be offering attendees the opportunity to discover The Bahamas through pre- and post-trips to our Family Islands, Grand Bahama, and to several new properties just completed or under development in Nassau and on Paradise Island," said BHTA President Stuart Bowe.

CHTA will be adding several new components to the event aimed at attracting even more buyers and suppliers.

"With the support of the islands of The Bahamas, we are enhancing the scope and impact of Caribbean Travel Marketplace, attracting new delegates and building upon the suc-



From left: Obie Wilchcombe, minister of tourism, The Bahamas; Joy Jibrilu, director general, Bahamas Ministry of Tourism; and Frank Comito, CEO and director general, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association.

cessful sales and marketing professional development sessions offered earlier this year," said Karolin Troubetzkoy, president of CHTA. "Caribbean Travel Marketplace presents the best opportunity to generate last-minute seasonal business, while setting the state for long-term business and enhancing the relationship between hoteliers and buyer companies," she added.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Caribbean Travel Marketplace affords tourism suppliers the vital opportunity to meet face to face with wholesalers from around the world selling Caribbean vacation packages over the course of two days of business meetings. CHTA hopes to build on its success from 2016 by expanding its outreach to wholesalers in Latin America and emerging destinations, as well as tour operators specialising in niche markets. As a result of the concerted efforts made by CHTA, Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2016 attracted 19 new



Karolin Troubetzkoy, president, CHTA.

buyer companies, bringing the total to 109 companies. In addition to the buyers, there were 243 suppliers and over 1,000 delegates in attendance at Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2016.

CHTA will offer a full day of professional development opportunities for attendees on January 31, 2017, followed by the opening ceremonies in the evening.