

# Sandals Royal lift for Maxwell Wednesday

MAXWELL COAST ROAD is getting an upgrade, thanks to the presence of Sandals Royal Hotel which opens its doors to business next Wednesday.

Sandals Barbados general manager Ferry Zievinger disclosed the luxury hotel chain's plans to invest "between US\$300 000 and US\$400 000 in the upgrade of that section of the road bordering the new 222-room hotel, at a meeting of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre Wednesday.

Zievinger said Sandals considered the roadworks it would be carrying out as "very important for the neighbourhood and the neighbours" of the hotel.

He also mentioned that the issue of drainage in the Maxwell Coast Road area, about which residents had previously raised questions, would be



The new Sandals Royal just before the finishing touches were completed. (Picture by Sandy Pitt.)

addressed before the surface of the road was repaired.

Zievinger told BHTA members the all-suite Sandals Royal would be welcoming its first guests next week with 80 room arrivals as final preparations were progressing for the "soft opening." He said the hotel's official opening would take place next year.

With occupancy projected

between 85 and 100 per cent by the end of December, Zievinger said Sandals Royal was off to a "very good start".

The hotel has six restaurants, a conference centre and a 1 500 square foot spa among other amenities. The full time staff of over 600 has been undergoing intensive training, following a recruitment drive that saw hundreds turning up

at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre hoping to secure employment with the hotel.

It is the second Sandals resort to be opened in Barbados, and is located next door to Sandals Barbados, which began operations two years ago.

Zievinger said this hotel was running at 95 per cent occupancy.

Meanwhile, he disclosed preparatory work was being done for the start of construction of Beaches Resort on the site of the former Almond Beach Resort in St Peter next year.

Sandals Resorts International is the parent company of Beaches Resorts, Sandals Resorts and Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts. (GC)

# Brighter winter

## Tourism officials expect sector to outstrip last year's performance

The 2017 winter tourist season officially begins today and tourism officials are predicting an even better performance next year.

Reporting to the fourth quarterly meeting of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association on Wednesday at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, chief executive officer of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), Rudy Grant, predicted "an exciting year".

Grant expects the industry to build on the soaring visitor arrival numbers for 2017, which were up in two of the major source markets.

"Visitor arrivals between the period January to October and overall long stay arrivals increased by 6.46 per cent. Major growth was in the USA market - 14.2 per cent, Canada was 9.8 per cent and we saw the United Kingdom somewhat flat, a growth of 0.7 per cent," Grant said.

In the cruise sector, passenger arrivals rose by 18.9 per cent.

Grant said the increase in long-stay visitor arrivals was being supported by more airlift coming out of the main source markets, but said with this boost, support services at the Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA) needed to be improved.

Meanwhile, BHTA chairman Roseanne Myers said businesses taking advantage of visitors arriving on cruise and stay packages and tours, were already seeing "throngs" of people.

### Bearing fruit

But she expressed concern that while marketing efforts were bearing fruit, issues that negatively affected tourism were not being addressed.

Myers said Barbados' tourism product needed to be protected.

She also cited the long wait for passengers arriving at GAIA, which she said was "still not acceptable", and the sewage problems along the South Coast had

"actually gotten worst".

"The reputation of the destination is at stake, the viability of our businesses is at stake and we have fought hard to ensure that the health of all users is protected. We must and can do better." (GC)

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