

## Strong bookings

INTEREST in the Sandals Barbados resorts is not waning, with the hotels expected to reach full occupancy by the end of the year, which is tomorrow.

Word of this has come from Ramel Sobrino, General Manager of Sandals Barbados. He made the comments yesterday morning while addressing a brunch the resort chain hosted for local media. Sobrino, who recently took over at the helm of the Barbados arm of the resort chain, said the occupancy stood at 97 per cent yesterday and was set to reach the 100 per cent by tomorrow.

“For the first and the following weeks in January 2019, we are going to be absolutely full. Sales are showing in our forecasts enormous bookings in advance, which is a very good signal and there are so many people interested already in the Beaches product,” he said.

He went on to reveal that the company has strong bookings for the first six months of the New Year, describing the occupancy levels for Sandals Royal Barbados and Sandals Barbados as very high. Moreover, Sobrino revealed that they are already seeing bookings increasing in June and July 2019. This, he maintained, is a strong indicator that the company will have a “very powerful” 2019 in comparison to a “very good” 2018.

Speaking more to the company’s success to date in Barbados, the general manager indicated that the company and its Chairman, Gordon “Butch” Stewart, are happy to have set up operations here and to be expanding their footprint with Sandals Beaches, which is to be built on the site of the old Almond Resort at Heywoods, St. Peter. He said the multi-million-dollar world-class resort, which will comprise 600 rooms, will feature a number of restaurants and bars, an “immense waterpark” which he said will perhaps be one of the largest in the Caribbean region, and it will be family-oriented. The latter, he explained, will be a plus for the resort and destination Barbados in general.

“Our travel agents are really, really looking forward for the Beaches Resort because of course families, it is a domino effect when they are travelling. When you have families coming to a resort, you have rooms that are hosting five people, six people, four people; the domino effect is immense,” he added. (JRT)

# Gov’t tackling unemployment



Minister of Youth and Community Empowerment, Adrian Forde.

**THE Ministry of Youth and Community Empowerment is focused on reducing the high percentage of school-leavers unable to find employment, by half, within the next year.**

Word of this came from Minister Adrian Forde, as he recalled the 2011 Tracer Study, which indicated that 70 per cent of school-leavers are facing the challenge of unemployment.

“It is our desire in this Ministry to reduce this level within the next year, by at least 35 per cent. Which means that by the end of 2019, the levels of employment, as it relates to school-leavers, should be down by half if we continue this current trajectory.”

He made the disclosure during the recent opening ceremony of the 10th Annual Caribbean Youth Leadership Retreat.

“That is why we have a National First Job Initiative. That is why we as a government [are] seeking to bring programmes like the Building Blocks; that is why we have opened up SMART Barbados as a new dimension; why there is the focus on the Green Economy and the Blue Economy; Renewable Energy Sector, Recycling Industry... All new

avenues that can help to reduce the levels of unemployment,” he highlighted.

The Youth Minister said the aim is to push entrepreneurship amongst young people. In fact, he also recalled that the same Tracer Study revealed that at least 50 per cent of those young people want to own their own business.

“We as a government think that there should be an entrepreneur in every household. I believe that there is no better opportunity than a person being able to work for themselves and make their own money and create their own destiny... I think that is very important for us as leaders to know that young people want to use their own creativity; their own imagination and innovation.

“And that is why we as a government decided to have a Youth Innovative Award for that young person or young group, who has come up with a concept to be able to change the way how we do business in Barbados in one of the many sectors,” he pointed out.

“We are committed to ensuring that we reduce the levels of unemployment amongst our young people – in a positive, productive and wholesome way.” (TL)

## Big waves not the issue, says lifeguard

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persons away. However, around the afternoon time, more tourists, and very few locals, were out with their families, enjoying the hot afternoon sun and the cool water.

Miami Beach was unnaturally calm, which appears to be the norm. However, even the popularly known “rough side” of the beach only had a few waves.

Ricardo Ward, a lifeguard at Miami Beach, told *The Barbados Advocate* that in terms of the sea and the weather, there was a strong wind, and the seas were a little rough yesterday morning. He noted that the issue was not the big waves, but the undercurrent.

“That’s the main problem I’m finding here, but other than that, we did not have any major issues. Other parts of the island may be experiencing different issues, but for here at this beach, everything is okay,” he said.

“The seas were rougher in the morning, but to be honest, ironically, more persons were in the water. We do have up red flags, but it is clear that these flags



Yellow flags were also put up.

are ignored. So, we could only do what we could do. It really is up to the tourists to adhere to these warnings.”

Even Accra Beach, which is popularly known for its undercurrents, was full of tourists, even though red and yellow flags lined the beach, straight down to the boardwalk.

A few tourists on Pebbles Beach and Accra Beach told *The Barbados Advocate* that they were aware of the meaning of the flags, but believed that as the waters were calm, for the most part, there was nothing for them to worry about.



This billboard clearly highlighted the meaning of the flags.