

Jamaican Commuters, Motorists Feel Pinch of High Gas Prices

Praise and Worship

I was pleased to read in the *Town Crier* of a gospel concert at Ste. Anne's Church in honor of Jamaican independence. It was encouraging to know that such a special effort was made, especially with this year's absence of the usual Jamaican Independence Ball at Grand Hotel. Mr. Glen Bulgin and his dedicated team are to be applauded. I'm positive that the gesture was appreciated by many Jamaicans.

Down in Jamaica

At the first trade and investment seminar of its kind in the Caribbean last week, Jamaica and South Africa agreed on a trade and investment partnership between the two countries. Representatives from both sides confirmed that their geographical distance will no longer be a deterrent and that they will seek to foster greater opportunities for trade, investment, and finance. A Jamaican Mission will be shortly opened in South Africa.

Because of world oil prices, Jamaican motorists have experienced yet another increase in gasoline prices at the pumps Thursday, August 11. This has brought about further increases in bus and taxi fares, which came into effect Sunday, August 21. Apart from children, the elderly, and the disabled, members of the commuting public will now have to pay a \$50 charge for a stage 1 or 2 bus ride and a similar increase in hackney carriage taxis.

Despite his absence from Reggae Sumfest 2005, top dance hall artist Beenie Man is set to lead a star-studded lineup of his own, on his much-anticipated stage show titled "Beenie Man's Summer Sizzle," scheduled for Saturday, August 27. It combines performing acts all in one package, like reggae icon Jimmy Cliff, Hip Hop artist Bonecrusher, vintage reggae artists John Holt, Coco Tea, and Leroy Smart, international artists Kevin Lyttle, Beres Hammond, Cobra, Lady Saw, Vybz Cartel, Baby Cham, Assassin, Turbulence, Macka Diamond, Admiral Tibet and Admiral Bailey, Shane-O, Li, 1 QQ, Leftside and Esco, and Voicemail. U.S. celebrity Jermaine Dupree will be host of



by Ralston Blair

Island to Island



the show.

Jamaican prison authorities have implemented a rehabilitation program, which will use the influence of an imprisoned popular reggae artist named Jah Cure. Jah Cure has exhibited exemplary behavior behind bars and will record a song entitled "True Reflection" as a way of mentoring young males against illegal activity.

For Jamaican job seekers, there's a new ray of hope. A local Web site, called Splashjamaica.com, is aimed at bridging the job market gap. This career network brings job seekers and employers together.

Jamaican Rastafarianism and Its Origin

The Rastafarian faith in Jamaica had its birth within the 20th Century. Its beliefs, however, are by no means "new age." It is formally grounded in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Rastafarians regard Ethiopia as their spiritual and cultural homeland. Ethiopia was the only African state to retain its independence from European colonialism. Ethiopia's roots in Christianity has further significance to Rastafarians because they claim to have traced an unbroken line of Emperors to the Ethiopian throne dating from the biblical period following the visit to King Solomon by the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba (as written in Chronicles, chapter 9). Rastafarians claim to have proof that a child, named Menelik, was conceived by the couple prior to the queen's return to her native land. In their opinion, this act sealed the connection of Ethiopia as a favored nation of God along with Israel. There is also a

USA, Australia, and New Zealand.

The growth of Rastafarianism, and its spread outside of Jamaica, was mainly owing to the popularity of Reggae singer Bob Marley.

Place Profile: Negril

This resort, located on the western end of the island, is one which is most familiar to me, owing to the fact that I have both lived and worked there. It possesses a laid-back atmosphere with a very rustic tranquility.

The resort has two distinctive sides. There is the seven-mile beach area, where you will find parasailing, water skiing, and horseback riding, and then there is the cliff side area, where you can remain undisturbed.

Historically, Negril was a favorite haunt of Jamaica's most notorious pirate, "Calico Jack" Rackham, who was finally apprehended there in 1720 while relaxing on Bloody Bay Beach. This beach got its name when whaling was regularly conducted in those waters.

In Negril, one can witness the most spectacular sunsets.

At Rick's Cafe, you can enjoy the event with a tropical drink in hand or by diving from the cliffs into the calm waters below. Off the coast of Negril, a small island named Booby Cay is popular for beach picnics. That small

island was the scenery used in filming Walt Disney's movie, "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea."

The emphasis in Negril is relaxation, but once the sun sets, many nightspots come alive, some lasting until early in the morning. Negril is a place to clear your mind.

An Old Jamaican Saying

"Donkey seh di world nuh level."

Translated: The donkey says that the world is not level.

Considering that the donkey is usually a "beast of burden" it's saying that, unfortunately, life is not fair.

You can keep in touch with me at my e-mail address: blairnyou@hotmail.com. As usual, I welcome your comments.

Until next time, Stay Irie!

Ralston Blair is a Jamaican writer and journalist who has worked the past several summers on Mackinac Island. He is writing this year from Jamaica. Ideas and comments about his column can also be delivered in care of the Town Crier.

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