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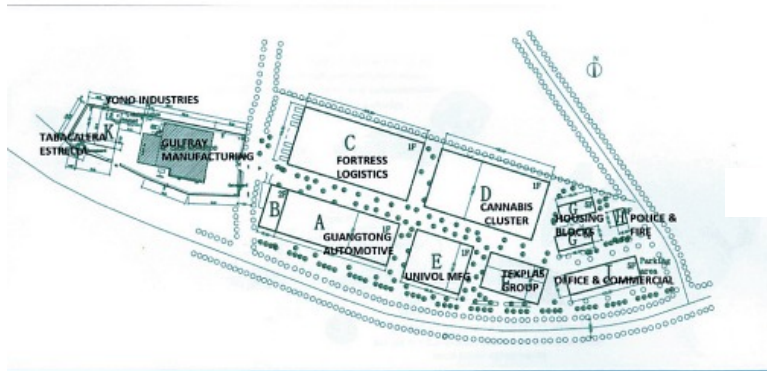
Logistics hub dream step closer to reality

Spanish Town beats Cuba's Mariel for US\$350m investment

BY KARENA BENNETT Business reporter bennettk@jamaicaobserver.com

Friday, October 30, 2015 30 Comments

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Proposed map of the Spanish Town Free Zone Facilities

JAMAICA'S long-anticipated logistics hub dream seems to be one step closer to becoming a reality.

Designated Free Zone administrator and operator Masada Jamaica Limited has entered a concessionary agreement with lubricant blender Gulfray America's Manufacturing Limited for the development and management of the Spanish Town Free Zone to the tune of US\$350 million.

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The planned redevelopment and expansion of the eight-acre property to more than 42 acres is being done to accommodate new expressions of interest -- one of which is for an assembly and distribution plant for the construction of motor vehicles, trucks, forklifts and buses by China National Automotive Industry International Corporation (CNAICO), a large state-owned group and a Fortune Global 500 enterprise.

Executive director of Masada Jamaica Limited, Robert Melamede at a press launch on Wednesday, told the audience that the first phase of the construction will be completed in June next year, after which nine international companies will occupy the zone.

What's more, the planned expansion is expected to contribute 2,500 high-level jobs to the local economy in the areas of chemical and mechanical engineering, manufacturing, petro-chemicals, logistics and research.

"Additionally, jobs in the service industry will be generated by business processing outsourcing clients within the zone, as will jobs outsourced to small- and medium-sized enterprises," Melamede stated. The project is expected to create 10,000 new jobs over the next two years.

CNAICO specialises in areas such as international trade, where it actively engages in global economic and technological cooperation. The company deals mainly with the import and export of vehicles, auto parts, agricultural and construction machinery, and other mechanical and electrical products with market presence in countries and regions all over Asia, Europe, Latin America and Africa.

Located at March Pen Road, St Catherine, the Spanish Town Free Zone is currently home to companies involved in the distribution of lubricating oil and greases, manufacturing and distribution of consumer products and product laboratory services.

Melamede stated that the expansion of the Spanish Town Free Zone will provide 1.5 million square feet of space in the first phase, representing the US\$350-million investment.

When completed, the facility will be used for the refining and regeneration of petroleum products, manufacturing of composite and insulation material, vehicle assembly, auto parts remanufacturing and distribution, manufacturing of pharmaceutical and nutraceutical products, research, development and manufacturing of tobacco products.

"We are able to maximise on Brand Jamaica, the logistics thrust of the island, its workforce and its strategic location in the heart of the Americas. We are able to secure these agreements with companies located in the United Arab Emirates, India, Dominican Republic, Singapore, USA and China just to name a few," Melamede told the audience.

"In some instances, we have been able to successfully convince companies to relocate to our Economic Zone from other parts of the world... Let me be clear, the choice to create the Spanish Town Free Zone was not taken lightly."

He added that availability of English-speaking skilled workers, central location and the increasingly welcoming business environment as reflected by the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report was considered.

Spanish Town over Mariel

General Manager of CNAICO Liu Xiado told the audience that the company reconsidered opening operations at the Mariel Economic Zone in Cuba and instead chose the Spanish Town Free Zone.

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Jamaica's logistic hub initiative is one the pillars of the Jamaican Government's economic growth strategy and is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce in conjunction with a number of other Ministry's, Departments and Agencies. The initiative focuses on the country becoming the Logistics Hub of the America's and the fourth node in the global logistics network joining Dubai, Rotterdam and Singapore.

The country's strategic location at the centre of the East-West and North-South trade routes, positions it play a significant role in international shipping and trade as a result of imminent expansion of the Panama Canal which is expected to double its capacity by the end of the year.

Chairman of the Logistics Hub Task Force, Eric Deans in explaining what is different about this project from other Government announcements that have gone unfulfilled, noted that "we have the occupants and tenants here with us roaring and ready to go. This is not a project which is due to start in two to three years, it's an expansion of existing operations utilising the suppliers of GulfFrays and building on that synergies and that network. This is why you see all the range of investors represented here today."

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Jangas · 3 days ago

Wow. This is a lot to digest. And by the sound of the report - the double-syllabled 'big' words, it came right out of Minister Hylton's dictaphone. Not knocking it though, particularly seeing that there are high-paying jobs in tow. Let's wait and see.

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clrey · 3 days ago

Our location alone makes this investment a no brainer, as mentioned above..
I don't know what part Minister Hylton, played in this project, but those following me over the years, will notice, I was never on the band wagon to critique him at every turn..
His personality alone , makes him come across as a serious businessman... Even those expensive suits say nothing, if not, 'sucess'.lo.

  · Reply · Share ›

davidtrottman · 3 days ago

Now we're smoking!! CONGRATULATIONS to the Professionals at JAMPRO; this has a 'real feel' to it.

  · Reply · Share ›

VivstaXtruth · 3 days ago

This is good news, I am still at a loss as to the goat island project,(though relieved, if it doesn't happen, as Jamaica's natural environment is very important). I hope the Government will move speedily in clearing the way forward in best standard regulatory practices, world wide.

I hope electricity, shipping, cost to container, storage, and etc; will be made easier and cheaper! Government get out the way and let the private enterprise compete. Hopefully workers will get to keep most of their hard earned income.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Dee · 3 days ago

Some good news, finally. I sincerely hope that this one will come to fruition. Tyad a di broken promises dem.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Owen · 3 days ago

Fantastic! Keep up the good work. Finally we are starting to see some positives from the efforts of the government.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

prizm · 3 days ago

This is big business, young people get in line to take up these well needed jobs.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Sly · 3 days ago

This is certainly good news, I hope the leaders of the country will start focusing on training the youth to take the positions that will become available. It's time we stop being the laughing stock of the countries in the Lesser Antilles. If we can get the CRIME under control Jamaica will once again be the Pearl of the Caribbean. Let's put our shoulders to the wheel and help with the development of THE ROCK!

10 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

horatiobarnes → Sly · 3 days ago

Well said I hope this is the real deal and not just a dream.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

John H Christian · 3 days ago

Dear Observer..just in case I Croak before 2017...please remember to Check on the Progress of the 10,000 jobs that these folks say will be available at the FreeZone in Spanish town, I know I can depend on you..With much Thanks....John H Christian....Ps,.. I have left instructions with my wife to advise u if I Croak,,,...

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Neil → John H Christian · 3 days ago

They did not say 10,000 jobs would be created in Spanish Town free zone. The project is expected to create 10,000 new jobs over the next two years which would include both direct and indirect, primary and secondary employments, both inside and outside the free zone. They made reference of jobs being created in the service industry as well as jobs being outsourced. I can understand your pessimism and your rush to pour cold water on the project based on your politics but please do not distort the facts to score cheap political points. There are times when country should take precedence over party and this is one such time.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Kevin Francis → John H Christian · 3 days ago

Portia workin working

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Richie → John H Christian · 2 days ago

John yu 'awright' man?? hope all is well.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

mchue · 3 days ago

Good to see after so many years of false starts something "appears to be happening". Surely this was an initiative that happened purely by chance as the people had Cuba as their first choice..this proves that the government really were not the instigator of this investment. I would advise them to avoid minister Hylton if they want the buy in and support from the people. Finally Jampro appears to be earning their keeps.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

flyonthewall → mchue · 3 days ago

If things go bad the minister gets the blame, if it goes good it happened despite him. Cant win for losing !

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

AllforJa → mchue · a day ago

While you are generally positive, the notion that this happens by chance is an idiotic comment. You think if Jamaica was not made more competitive and business friendly they would have picked them over Cuba. How is it purely by chance? Did they just toss a coin? Is it so hard for you to give credit where credit is due? Come on!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

harold g · 3 days ago

This is certainly great news for the country.Sounds as if this could really be a game changer in regards to the un-employment situation.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

va Jenkins → harold g · 2 days ago

I the trade unions don't chase these companies, out of jamaica unions don't invest they only collect dues,Sanders set a good example and the workers are happy.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

John · 3 days ago

Imagine how cheap new car prices would be if we got other car manufacturers on board too.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Alibaaba · 3 days ago

LOL...Minister "\$5B Dollar Man" must be sighing with relief. Hope this really becomes a reality. Remember, Spanish Town was once a fast developing industrial village...until FINSAC.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Aubin · 3 days ago

Good news, welcomed news.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

MrPlato · 3 days ago

What about THE REALLY BIG logistics hub announced years ago for Goat Island - gone to Nicaragua?

Is this what is called eating Humble Pie - going from MEGA project to mini Project (anything is better than nothing at election time)?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

JA4LIFE · 3 days ago

Excellent. It appears the hard work of Dr. Peter Phillips is reaping tangible benefits. Jamaica moving up in the Ease of Doing Business report played a factor.

The stabilization of the economy, reduced debt, honoring agreements with creditors all played a role.

10,000 jobs over two years is significant and all Jamaica should be excited.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

Steven Smith · 3 days ago

Okay so this is one node. How will this link up with the Kingston Container Terminal? Rail service will have to be in place as well as other infrastructure will have to be built. What does that plan look like and who is going to be funding it?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

@liqyliqy · 3 days ago

Good news, I love those MG cars that will be assembled there. We are heading in the right direction 🎯👑👠

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

IMF2014 · 2 days ago

the rush is on to see who can make the biggest announcement. yet iam still waiting for an update on PREVIOUS projects announced by the PNP.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

IMF2014 · 2 days ago

Interesting that PNP is now busy promoting free zone. in the 80s they told the Jamaican people that free zones are sweat shops and undermine seaga's effort in this regard.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

JustandBalance · 2 days ago

We hope this and the other projects get started soon and infuse the economy. We need to see some real movements and not just hearing this and that will be taking place.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

don tyndale · 2 days ago

Let us all pray about this one. We need a break!!

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

John Wits · a day ago

Well with this PNP administration - believe half of what you see and nothing that you hear.

When the actual works on ground begins then we can start hope. However I hope this is not one of those "announcements" tailored fitted for the upcoming "silly season".

^ | v · Reply · Share ›

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