

Jamaica to build large cruise ship terminal

Construction of a cruise ship terminal expected to attract nearly one million visitors a year will begin now that Jamaica has secured financing, the government said Saturday.

The terminal will be the first in Jamaica's northern region to accommodate the largest of cruise ships and will create some 500 construction jobs and 900 permanent jobs, according to Finance Minister Audley Shaw. The HSBC bank in London and a Danish credit agency will provide nearly \$122 million US to help build the Falmouth terminal just east of Montego Bay. It will be able to accommodate a large and small ship at the same time, he said. Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines has invested \$102 million in the project, Shaw said in a statement. The announcement comes as Jamaica struggles with a 15 per cent drop in cruise ship visitors. Some 551,000 passengers arrived from January through June 2009 compared to 646,000 arrivals during the same period last year, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization. Jamaica's Port Authority will oversee development of berths and construction of the terminal, while Royal Caribbean will be responsible for landscaping and construction of shops and restaurants. The government expects to repay the 10-year loan through passenger fees, forecasting a minimum of 800,000 visitors a year. Legislator Patrick Harris said the project would "redefine Jamaica's tourism product." — Canadian press