

## Buju faces 15 years to life; to appeal conviction

On Tuesday, Reggae artiste Buju Banton was found guilty of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute five or more kilogrammes of cocaine, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking offence, and using the wires to facilitate a drug-trafficking offence.

However, he was found not guilty of attempted possession with the intent to distribute cocaine. Shortly after, Banton - whose real name is Mark Anthony Myrie -- met his legal team of David Oscar Markus, Marc David Seitles and Margot Moss. Markus emerged an hour later telling reporters that the conviction would be appealed. An emotional Markus read a statement prepared by Banton after the guilty verdict. "Our life and our destiny are sometimes pre-destined and no matter where this journey takes me, remember I fought the good fight," said the statement. "It was a great man that said 'my head is bloody but still unbowed'. I love you all. Thank you for your support. Keep loving God." Banton is to be sentenced in another three months and faces 15 years to life behind bars, Markus said. The lawyer is expected to apply to have Banton's US\$250,000 bail restored during the period leading up to the sentence. The artiste had been on trial since Monday, February 14. The 12 jurors, three of whom were African-Americans, started deliberating last Friday morning. Banton's first trial ended in September last year with the jurors being unable to reach a unanimous verdict, setting up the second trial. He was arrested on December 10, 2009, hours after two men -- Ian Thomas and James Mack -- were busted in an undercover warehouse where they had gone to purchase cocaine. US\$135,000 was seized and the gun for which Banton was charged was found in Mack's car. Both men had pleaded guilty and are yet to be sentenced.