

## Serenity Park up for sale

Kenny Benjamin's Guards-man Group Limited has placed Serenity Park on the market for sale, the once popular nature attraction featuring exotic animals whose value may rise above \$50 million.

On Friday, Guardsman's group finance director, Vinay Walia, said offers are being invited for the 30-acre farm, comprised of Lots 1A and 2 Grove Farm, at Bushy Park, St Catherine. The animal sanctuary was closed about two years ago when its occupants - comprising mostly birds, but also some donkeys, monkeys, iguanas and ostrich, said Walia - were donated to Hope Zoo in Kingston. Hope Zoo, which is home to the iguana and other indigenous species in danger of extinction, is now leased and operated by the non-profit Hope Zoo Preservation Foundation (HZPF). Benjamin chairs the foundation. Walia said the zoo runs a significant deficit and that HZPF is looking for assistance from other private sector interests to implement the needed upgrades. Guardsman's Serenity Park itself was established in 1986 as a mini zoo with exotic birds, llamas, ostriches and snakes, among other animals. Trailer rides as well as horseback rides were offered to children, who once visited the attraction in numbers ranging up to 12,000 annually, the company notes on its website. In 1997, a fishing village was introduced with three lakes of tilapia, as well as a play area for kids and a restaurant. The village was used for retreats, corporate fun days, school outings, children's birthday parties and weddings. Guardsman bought Serenity back in 1982, at which time it was run as a farm, but Walia said he was unable to recall the price and previous owner. The property is ideal for agriculture, fish farming or livestock rearing, he said, but as to the value the finance director said no valuation had been done on it recently. Realtors polled by Sunday Business gave varying 'guestimates' of the value, with riders. Estimated cost Edwin Wint, CEO of La Maison Property Services, said that if it is zoned as 'agricultural and virgin land with no crops', it may be worth somewhere between \$250,000 and \$400,000 per acre, noting that 30-acres would, at best, be considered a medium farm. "However, a developed property would cost a lot more. That cost would depend on the number of buildings, fish ponds, etc. Additionally, if it is a going concern, that would affect value," he said. Another realtor said because the property had a residence on it, an estimate would be difficult; while another person floated \$2 million per acre. Walia said that Guardsman Group had several projects in the pipeline - "somewhat similar to the wildlife venture" - and that more would be said about them later.