

SPEAKING NOTES
FOR
PRIME MINISTER
RT. HON. P.J. PATTERSON, Q.C., M.P.
AT
SUPERCLUBS 25TH ANNIVERSARY
LE MERIDIEN PEGASUS, KINGSTON
JULY 25, 2001

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The SuperClubs marvel, which we celebrate today, had its beginnings more than 25 years ago. In fact, it began in the 1940's, with the pioneering efforts of the Issa family, led by that great Patriarch, the late Honourable Abraham Issa.

The formation of the SuperClubs group in 1976 therefore, added a new dimension to what, had by then, become a formidable part of the country's growing tourist industry.

Today I salute this major milestone with full recognition of the fact that during the past quarter of a century SuperClubs has established itself as being one of the most successful components of the country's rich and enduring hospitality industry.

SuperClubs has established an undeniable reputation for excellence and in so doing, has played a major role in making the country's tourism product among the best in the world.

SuperClubs pioneered the all-inclusive concept at a critical time in its development of the industry.

It is therefore appropriate for me to convey the appreciation of a grateful nation for the positive and innovative role, which SuperClubs has played, in what has become Jamaica's most important economic sector.

In doing so, let me add special commendations to the Issa family for their belief in Jamaica and for their untiring efforts and dedication to its growth and development.

Many would make the mistake of giving full credit to John Issa, but I know that no less praise is due to his charming wife, Aida, and in more recent times to his son Joey and the twins - Zein and Muna.

Jamaica remains in the debt of this family, which continues to expand its horizons and to do even more to enhance its future prospects.

Applaud the other Senior Members of the Management Team.

The recent events in West Kingston were most unfortunate.

Indeed, the tourist industry, although far removed from the scene of the disturbance, has been, and is likely to remain its worst casualty.

The Government has taken a serious and proactive approach to dealing with the situation and to protect the future of the industry, which was already feeling the negative impact of the downturn in the US economy and other adverse factors in our major markets.

Through the fighting spirit of the major players in the industry and the emergence of a new spirit of co-operation, which has spawned the "Grow Jamaican Tourism Plan", we can say with confidence that "beyond every dark cloud there is a silver lining".

My Administration, not only endorses this Plan, but has begun to demonstrate its willingness to act by the provision of an emergency allocation of US\$5 million to allow the Jamaica Tourist Board to mount an immediate aggressive fight-back advertising campaign throughout its major markets.

In addition, the Cabinet has undertaken to seriously review proposals for additional funds and is in the process of seeking to search the budget to determine what can be provided.

The Government reiterates its faith and confidence in the ability of the industry to overcome its present predicament, and with the continued support of entities like SuperClubs, I believe that my confidence is well placed.

We are indeed facing challenging times, and the task ahead is to continue our plans and programmes for enhancing the tourism product, to improve the infrastructure, add to our attractions and most importantly, be even more hospitable to our visitors.

One of the strongest lessons, which we have learnt from the recent disturbances, is the oneness of our nation.

We are indeed one country, and events in any one section, has an impact on the overall society.

We have also learnt that we must protect our country's image for the sake of the greater good -- for ourselves and our visitors.

That is why, there is a renewed need for national pride in how we protect our facilities, how we enhance the cleanliness of our towns and how we nurture and exhibit new and better attitudes of national concern and togetherness.

Government, for its part, is forging ahead with several programmes designed to improve the infrastructure, to beautify our environs and lift the general standard of our surroundings.

Our aim is to provide a wholesome environment for more peaceful living and a better quality of life.

This is an undertaking in which the entire society is required to participate so that together we can build a society in which we can take justifiable pride and hope for the future.

It is this new spirit of oneness, which will allow us to surmount any and every obstacle, rise above misfortunes and declare ourselves winners in the end.

This red-letter day for SuperClubs can only be described as a great and worthy occasion.

I join the rest of the country in applauding its achievements and confidently expect the group to continue to rise to new levels of excellence and prosperity.