

## Jamaica aims to be manufacturing leader

■ KINGSTON

JAMAICAN Prime Minister Andrew Holness says the government intends to have Jamaica established as a leader in logistics and manufacturing, as well as an investment destination. 'Nearly five decades ago, the Garmex Free Zone was established... and since then, it has been the cornerstone of industrial development in Jamaica. It has become a catalyst for job creation, particularly in the 1980s and early 90s, employing at its peak over 12,000 Jamaicans,' Holness said at the official opening of the first phase of the Garmex Free Zone Redevelopment and Expansion project.

The project, which is fully funded by the Factories Corporation of Jamaica Ltd (FCJ), is aimed at providing additional space for manufacturing, logistics, and warehousing, among other activities. Phase one, which was completed at an estimated cost of Ja\$1.1 billion (US\$8.8 million), includes 31 units occupying approximately 126,000 square feet of space. The units include 22 mini-warehouses for micro, small and mediumsized businesses, six mixed-use spaces and three warehouses.

Holness told the opening ceremony that the expansion project is a clear indicator of the government's intent to have Jamaica established as a leader in logistics and manufacturing, and an investment destination.

He commended FCJ for the successful execution of phase one of the project that began in May 2020.

'Over the years, this complex has evolved to serve as a hub for manufacturing, logistics, warehousing and even education and healthcare. Today, it is the most diverse free zone in Jamaica and the largest commercial industrial complex on the island,' he said.

The new facilities at Garmex Free Zone have garnered almost Ja\$200 million (US\$1.6 million) annually in revenue during its two years of operation to date, and FCJ chairman Lyttleton Shirley said that infrastructure work has commenced for phase two, which involves the development of 5.7 acres of greenfield land on the west side of the campus to expand the complex to meet the constant demand for commercial space.