

Black Sands resort out, Sandals in

📍KINGSTOWN

THE St Vincent and the Grenadines government has confirmed it has pulled the plug on the Canadian investors involved with the Black Sands Resort at Peter's Hope, located on the most southern tip of the country.

The project remains incomplete eight years after the groundbreaking ceremony, and seven years after the first phase was to have been completed.

Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves, speaking on a radio programme here, said that the Jamaica-based Sandals Resorts International (SRI) will construct a US\$375 million, 375-room resort at Peter's Hope.

In September 2023, Tourism Minister Carlos James said that the government had given the investor, PACE Developments, a further three years to complete the project.

But Gonsalves told radio listeners 'we're going to sign an agreement with Sandals for the Beaches, 375 rooms; US\$375 million.

'Everything goes normal. They should be open by the end of 2027. Because it's Beaches, their family brand, you're going to need four employees, four workers for each key, 375 keys. Some rooms are two bedrooms; some more,' Prime Minister Gonsalves said, predicting that as many as 1,500 workers would be employed on a permanent basis.

'Then we are going to finalise the agreement with the investors, with Marriott over at Peter's Hope,' he said, adding 'we have informed the current developers there, PACE, that we want to bring that relationship to an end since it hasn't moved as fast as we had anticipated'.

Gonsalves said PACE has had challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the volcanic eruptions of April 2021 and 'all sorts of other things.

'And we are, at the moment, doing the appraisal, and we will purchase, that's our intention, to purchase what is there and move with this new development for the Marriott. 'It's 300 rooms. They'll need 600 workers. So those two hotels alone on that side of the island, you talk about 2,000 workers, additional. Of course, people from all over St Vincent and the Grenadines will go there and work. But the people in South Leeward, Central Leeward and North Leeward, Kingstown, everywhere,' Gonsalves told radio listeners.

At the groundbreaking ceremony in February 2017, Joseph Romano of PACE Developments told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that the company had about half of the 60 million dollars needed for the construction of the project.

He said that the project was 'self-financed for now', adding, 'there is no mortgage on the property. Cash was paid and we have a large chunk to start the service.'

The Gonsalves government sold PACE Developments 36 acres of land in the former agricultural estate for seven million EC dollars for the construction of the resort. As part of the deal, the investor had to construct the resort within a specified period of time or lose their alien landholder's permit.

In September 2019, the St Vincent and the Grenadines government and Marriott International signed a deal for the management of a state-owned hotel, with Minister of Finance Camillo Gonsalves noting that the hotel chain was experienced in managing resorts on black sand beaches.

The Marriott Hotel will be constructed at Mt Wynne, on the western coast of St Vincent, 11 miles from Kingstown and 22 miles from Argyle International Airport.