

Cruise ships skip Tobago over SoE

SCARBOROUGH

■ Elizabeth Williams

TWO cruise ships have cancelled their calls to Tobago due to the ongoing state of emergency (SoE).

The *Norwegian Jade*, which was due to dock at the Scarborough port last Friday with over 3,000 cruise passengers, was one of the cancellations.

The other cancellation is said to be the *Costa Fortuna*.

This was confirmed by Scarborough port sources as well as cruise ship agent Charles Carvalho.

Commenting yesterday on the *Norwegian Jade* cancellation, Carvalho said: 'I sent an e-mail to the ship, but the call was cancelled.'

This year Tobago is set to realise fewer cruise ship calls than last year. At last Thursday's Tobago Security Council Stakeholders meeting, Tourism Secretary Tashia Burris indicated there has been some fallout in the tourism industry since the SoE was announced.

Tour operator Ted Sunshine acknowledged the SoE fallout, but added there was now an uptick as bookings are returning.

Meanwhile, cancellation aside, Carvalho called on maxi-taxi drivers in Tobago to have a better response to the transportation needs of cruise ships.

'My concern with Tobago is we don't get the kind of information that we need from the transport providers. We would send them our requirement for people going on tours but we don't get the response from them saying that we have 'x' number of vehicles available and that is something we need to work on very, very, very soon,' Carvalho said.

Asked to comment on the issue of monies owed to maxi-taxi drivers in Tobago attached to the cruise liners, he said those monies were paid in full, including outstanding Covid-19 monies.

When contacted yesterday, Cloyd Williams, president of one arm of the Maxi-Taxi Association in Tobago, confirmed that monies due to them were paid.

'All outstanding monies were paid up by Carvalho including the Covid-19 money. We started the season and he is doing well. We have an improved relationship with him which we are happy about,' Williams said.

Williams did admit the need for improved transportation in Tobago but identified delays.

'We still have the issue of shortage of maxis and we applied and approached the Transport Commission several times and there was a promise to supply us with several maxis. We are hoping this problem would be addressed as we cannot be promoting tourism all around the world and when you come to the destination there is a shortage of transport,' he said.

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DAY 15



AGENT: Charles Carvalho