

Business Hours

Business hours vary by company but generally are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday with an hour for lunch. Banking hours are 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday.

History

Christopher Columbus visited Jamaica during his second voyage in 1494 and claimed the island for Spain. Spanish settlers arrived within a few years, and when the native Arawak Indians succumbed to disease and forced labour, slaves were imported from West Africa. The island fell to the English in 1655, and most of the 1 500 Spanish settlers fled to Cuba. In the eighteenth century Jamaica became primarily a land of large sugar estates along the coastal plains. Sugar was immensely profitable, and slaves were transported in large numbers from the west coast of Africa to work on the plantations. A class of "free people of colour," mainly the offspring of slaves and their white overseers, soon appeared. Emancipation in 1838 followed by Britain's adoption of free trade greatly weakened the plantation-based economy. Many freed slaves took to the mountains and began farming small patches of land. Indian and Chinese indentured labour was brought in to replace them on the large estates. Meanwhile, those of mixed blood increasingly assumed an urban middle-class role.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, prosperity gradually returned to the island. Communications with North America improved, the economy began to diversify and bananas for a time replaced sugar as the chief export. However, a rapid population increase, crop disease and finally the economic depression of the 1930s brought about a new period of social and economic uncertainty and unrest, culminating in serious disturbances in Kingston in 1938. These led to increased trade-union activity, the establishment of two rival political parties and the emergence of two national leaders: Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley (the father of the present Leader of the Opposition). Manley used strikes on the waterfront and on the sugar estates to press for social, economic and political reform. Bustamante founded the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) and joined with Manley to launch the People's National Party (PNP). He later split with Manley to launch the Jamaica Labour Party