Maximizing assets for growth and development

The Bahamas strives to be a Caribbean hub for financial services and transport links

As the Bahaman economy's second-largest contributor after tourism, the financial services sector boasts 277 licensed banks and trust companies attracting offshore business from mainly Canadian, Swiss and US institutions. Supervised by the Central Bank of the Bahamas, the sector offers international business companies a vast range of funds and investment options. No taxes are levied on personal income, capital gains, corporate earnings, sales, inheritance or dividends.

Plans are now under way for the jurisdiction to become a global competitive international business center for private wealth management, capital investment in the Americas and emerging markets and residency.

As Wendy M Craigg, governor of the Central Bank of the Bahamas said: "The surveillance oversight activities we carry out over our licensed institution and activities to ensure our regulatory regime aligns with international best practices, is competitive and conducive to the growth of business here.

"Strengthening the links between SMEs and the main economic sectors remains a desirable objective. This would certainly include exploring opportunities for greater vertical integration of agriculture and fisheries activities with the tourism sector, which has a high food import content. China has a long history of successful rural small-scale farming and the ability to produce quality foodstuffs from family farms with minimal use of artificial fertilizers. Such expertise could prove useful as we continue to develop our agricultural sector.

"The discussion of energy alternatives is certainly gaining currency as a credible means of dealing with the high energy costs the country continues to grapple with."

Governor Craigg expects the Bahaman economy to continue on the mild growth trajectory it has observed over the past three years.

"The recovery is being supported by a more positive outturn for tourism, combined with foreign investments in this industry and public sector infrastructure projects which are providing important job opportunities," she said.

Michele CE Fields, Superintendent of Insurance at the Insurance Commission of the Bahamas explained how the infrastructure is now established for international business.



Strengthening the links between SMEs and the main economic sectors remains a desirable objective."

WENDY M CRAIGG CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR

"We have a very wealthy and developed financial services industry so we take leverage of that," she said. "We have well trained lawyers, accountants and so on. We have also developed a risk based supervised framework. We have the capacity for a flexible and adaptable approach to the market. The commission's philosophy is to have high-quality business. We have a good reputation that we want to maintain."

Ryan Pinder, minister of financial services would like to see Chinese financial institutions establish a presence in the Bahamas to help facilitate the flow of capital from Asia into the Americas.

"With our diplomatic relations, we are best placed in this hemisphere," he said. "Being independent, we can legislate for ourselves and create our own policies and that puts us ahead of the game." Investors looking for sound advice on investments will find expert help available at the Private Trust Corporation Ltd. Providing a complete spectrum of services revolving around their core business, the client-driven company has been built on professionalism.

"The Bahamas has been independent since 1973—other jurisdictions in the area are UK-oriented," said managing director Adrian Crosbie-Jones. "We have been in this business for a long time. If you look at the structure of our financial infrastructures, you will notice that only 4-5 percent of entities are foreign. Having local financial operators give much more stability."

Established in 1985, Equity Trust Bahamas Limited is one of the leaders in the offshore business and also ready to offer high-level support to Chinese clients.

"The potential of our financial sector is unlimited," said chairman Gilbert Cassar. "We recognize that the financial market is very competitive but the country has all the skills to succeed as a destination of choice for investments because we are the best for providing financial services.

"The world is now a village and the market has become more sophisticated and new products have developed during the years so it's important to be flexible and adaptable to client needs. The biggest challenge in this industry is the constant change, so you must be versatile and ready to provide solutions to problems."

Getting better connected

During the economic downturn, the Bahamas government commenced substantial infrastructural development initiatives, including the redevelopment of the country's principal airport, the deepening of the Nassau Harbor and the creation of a new cargo port outside the city of Nassau. It is also in the midst of extensive upgrades to existing road arteries and thoroughfares.

"The airport will be a premiere class airport in the Caribbean, and, along with Baha Mar, will place the Bahamas as world-class destination," said said Glenys Hanna-Martin, Minster of Transport and Aviation. "In the meantime, the Bahamas Maritime Authority plays a vital role in the cruise industry that drives the Bahamian economy. The maritime sector is a work in progress, a source of untapped potential in the Bahamas — and we are in the process of



PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Bahamas basks in investment potential.

tapping it as we speak." When the first ship was registered in the Bahamas more than 30 years ago, few realized that the fleet would grow to its current position as one of the world's largest Registers with over 50 million gross tonage of ships flying the Bahamas flag in every corner of the globe. The Bahamas Maritime Authority was duly established in July 1995 to register vessels, enforce ship safety requirements and constantly monitor and improve stan-

Quality and excellence are expected from all Bahamian-registered town Nassau at the mouth of Nassau Harbor. Safe, efficient and high-tech, the container port can process more than one million tons of bulk aggregate materials and cement per year. "Container volumes could double

Cay, just two miles west of Down-

overnight and the port is capable of meeting this demand. The Nassau Container Port stands ready to serve the world," said CEO Michael Maura Jr.

Meanwhile, Michael Darville, minister for Grand Bahama is excited about the potential of Freeport, an international port and industrial



It is important that China and the Bahamas support the energy sector and identify major investment areas."

LESLIE O MILLER EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, BAHAMAS ELECTRICITY CORPORATION

ships, their owners and crews and the BMA is proud of its reputation throughout the international shipping industry.

As Anthony Kikivarakis, chairman of the BMA said: "The Bahamas is the main maritime center in the Caribbean: we certainly have a star - Freeport in Grand Bahama which is the major transhipment area. The maritime sector has tremendous potential. We are looking into the Chinese market and have a small office in Hong Kong. We would like to see more Chinese vessels registered in our country, especially yachts."

Nassau Container Port is a strategically located port facility for container and general cargo shipping in the Caribbean, and beyond to North America and the world. The 56-acre port facility is located on Arawak

center set within his beautiful, lifestyle city jurisdiction.

"Gran Bahama has much potential. Our deep water harbor, abundance of land and state of the art infrastructure makes our island ideal for attracting investments. Within the next few years, the Ministry for Grand Bahama will aid in charging a course to a brighter future, and by extension, the overall economy of the Bahamas."

Carl-Gustaf Rotkirch of the Grand Bahama Shipvard Limited agrees.

"Thanks to our three dockyards, we have the flexibility to receive a wide variety of ships and ever since the beginning, have worked very hard to build a strong reputation. The first priorities for us are to deliver on time and provide top quality work, but we also operate at very



Grand Bahama Shipyard

www.grandbahamashipyard.com





www.privatetrustco.com

competitive costs. We have done a number of upgrades for cruise liners and other large projects."

Energy alternatives

As part of its commitment to implementing a diverse range of sustainable energy programs, the Bahamas has drawn up a series of policies aimed at developing alternative energy sources, expanding business opportunities in the sector, increasing energy efficiency and managing the demand on fossil fuel.

The Bahamas Electricity Corporation is a pivotal part of making this happen. For more than 50 years, the company has been committed to providing customers with safe, reliable electricity in a cost-efficient manner and serves approximately 85 percent of all electricity consumers in the nation. Solar energy is currently a prime focus.

"This year, we are hoping to sit down with major Chinese solar panel producers to negotiate supplies of their technology at competitive prices," said Leslie O Miller, executive chairman. "It is important that China and the Bahamas support the energy sector and identify major investment areas. I congratulate the new Chinese Premier and wish him the best for his 'journey'. I look forward to having a harmonious working relationship with people and entities from China."

InFocus provided the story







THE BAHAMAS TRULY PARADISE FOR INVESTORS







