

Business, Consumer Confidence Up

FINANCE AND Planning Minister, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips, says higher public confidence has been recorded in the most recent consumer and business surveys.

“Consumer confidence surged in the fourth quarter of 2015, recording a 20 per cent increase from the prior quarter, and reaching its second highest (average) since the closing quarter of 2008,” he noted.

Addressing last week’s sitting of the House of



Finance and Planning Minister, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips

Representatives, Dr. Phillip said optimism improved in all regions of the country. He pointed out that all components of the overall confidence index improved, with the largest gains recorded in anticipated employment growth.

The current confidence survey has recorded the most favourable job outlook since 2008.

In relation to business confidence, Dr. Phillips said companies are more optimistic that their revenues and

profits will remain strong, allowing them to expand investments in their productive capacity in the year ahead.

“Overall, the average quarter readings during 2015 indicated that firms held the most favourable expectations of their finances in the history of the surveys; and the willingness of firms to invest in new plant and equipment, posted its highest average in the history of the surveys,” he pointed out.

Jamaica Up to 69th on the Corruption Perception Index

JAMAICA ROSE to 69th out of 168 countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in 2015.

This is 16 places higher than the 2014 ranking of 85th out of the 175 countries that were assessed.

Justice Minister, Senator the Hon. Mark Golding, has welcomed the improvement, noting that it “underscores the progress being made by our country in combating corruption.”

“We note that Jamaica is one of only 11 countries in the 2015 index that improved their rankings by 16 or more places. We have also moved closer to being among the least corrupt in the Americas, having improved from a rank of 14th of 31 countries in 2014 to 7th of 26 in 2015, making it into the top 25 per cent in the Americas for the first time in nine years. Indeed, no other country in the Americas made as great an improvement as Jamaica in the 2015 CPI scores,” he added.

Minister Golding attributed the improved ranking to the robust legislative programme undertaken to

strengthen Jamaica’s anti-corruption framework. This included passage of:

- The Law Reform (Fraudulent Transactions) (Special Provisions) Act, 2013, commonly referred to as the “Lotto Scam” legislation.

- The Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organisations) Act, 2014, also known as the “Anti-Gang” legislation.
- The Representation of the People Act which was amended by two pieces of legislation in 2014 and 2015.
- The Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act, 2013.
- The Financial Investigations Division (Amendment) Act, 2013; and
- Impending passage of the Integrity Commission Bill.

“The 2015 CPI ranking will further encourage investors to regard Jamaica as an attractive business environment that is built on the rule of law, a factor that is internationally recognised as significant in securing higher levels of investment,” Minister Golding added.

Prime Minister Launches Athletes Insurance Plan

THE JAMAICA Athletes Insurance Plan, which covers 1,323 athletes from 28 registered national sports associations and federations, comes into effect today (February 1).

The Plan was launched last week by the Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, who said the initiative represents “real progress” and is a “profound demonstration” of the Government’s investment in the Jamaican people, particularly the youth.

She further noted that it is also an example of investment in the nation’s economic potential.

The Prime Minister said in launching the Plan, “Jamaica is within the best practices of the international sporting community.”

“We are also trailblazers in this area among developing



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (2nd left) and President of Guardian Life Group, Eric Hosin (2nd right), display the contract formalising the establishment of the Jamaica Athletes Insurance Plan. Others (from left) are: Minister with responsibility for Sport in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Hon. Natalie Neita Headley; Managing Director of Allied Insurance Brokers, Amanda Beepat; and Permanent Secretary in the OPM, Elaine Foster Allen.

nations. It is a noteworthy national achievement,” she added.

The initiative evolved out of stakeholder consultations on the National

Sports Policy of 2013, which was introduced in 2013, which identified the need for provisions to offset athletes’ medical expenses.

Guardian Life Limited will provide group health insurance for the athletes, while group life and personal accident coverage will be provided by Allied Insurance Brokers, through Sagacor Jamaica Limited.

The Government will finance 95 per cent of the premiums, through provisions from the Sports Development Foundation (SDF), National Health Fund (NHF) and Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), over the next three years.

The remainder will be provided by the sports associations and federations collectively.

Positive Media Image of Women Encouraged

MINISTER WITH responsibility for Information, Senator the Hon. Sandra Falconer, says the negative manner in which women are being portrayed in traditional media must be addressed.

“The media cannot be neutral about the exploitation of our women and girls. They have many tools, programmes at their disposal that they can use to present a more positive image of our women,” she contends.

The Minister was addressing last week’s launch of the World Bank’s Next GENDERation media toolkit to tackle gender-based violence.

Senator Falconer expressed particular concern about the portrayal of women in reality television



Minister with responsibility for Information, Senator the Hon. Sandra Falconer

shows, noting that these unfavourable depictions are beginning to surface in Jamaica.

“If our media practitioners decide that they are going to help to change the cultural norms in Jamaica, we will see a different media land-

scape. We will see them playing different music and having different programmes,” the Minister said.

The Next GENDERation media toolkit initiative aims to contribute to reducing violence in Jamaica by promoting positive dialogue around gender roles and raising awareness of the link between gender stereotypes and violence among youth.

Persons With NCDs Urged to be Vigilant Against ZikV

PERSONS WITH non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are being encouraged to take the necessary steps to avoid contracting the Zika virus (ZikV).

Director of Health Promotion and Protection in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Sonia Copeland, says persons with conditions such as hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and cancers are at higher risk of complications and severe symptoms from ZikV.

Speaking at the Heart Foundation of Jamaica’s (HFJ) launch of Heart Month last week, Dr. Copeland said the theme for this year’s observance: ‘Obesity, A Weighty Matter’, was timely, as it “comes at a time when particular focus needs to be placed on the importance of observing a healthy lifestyle, as a result of the advancing threat of the Zika virus.”

\$42.9 Million Support for Poultry Farmers

OVER 2,000 small poultry farmers islandwide will benefit from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries \$42.9 million support project, which will enable them to achieve improved levels of productivity and profit.

Under the All-Island Small Farmer Poultry Project, being implemented by the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), farmers who are registered with the agency will receive chicks, feed and training in best practices for production and processing.

The initiative falls under the Ministry’s two-year Livestock Development Project.

Speaking at last week’s launch, Portfolio Minister, Hon. Derrick Kellier, said the programme is an “important step” in ensuring the nation’s food security.

“Poultry meat is the number one consumed meat in Jamaica and is a shared market by both commercial and backyard farmers. These small farmers have invested heavily in these operations, and the Ministry, through its extension services, has ensured that the farmers have the available resources and training to be successful,” he stated.

Over the years, poultry production has evolved from being a predominantly backyard operation to a commercialised enterprise, providing 70 per cent of the poultry consumed locally.

Production increased from 104,502,533 kilograms in 2010 to an all-time high 112,384,035 kilograms in 2015.



Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Derrick Kellier (right), examines chicks provided by Hi-Pro Feeds Limited for the Ministry’s All-Island Small Farmer Poultry Project being administered by the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA). Others (from left) are: Senior RADA Livestock Specialist, Maxine Brown; Sales Manager, Nutramix (Newport Mills Limited), Winston Thomas; Technical Sales Officer, Hi-Pro Feeds, Cabrini Edwards; and East St. Andrew Member of Parliament, Andre Hylton.

PREVENT MOSQUITO BREEDING

It's Everybody's Responsibility

DISPOSE OF GARBAGE PROPERLY

COVER ALL CONTAINERS

PUNCH HOLES IN TINS