

Citizens' Rights Will be Protected During State of Public Emergency

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness is assuring that citizens' rights will be protected during the State of Public Emergency now in effect in the parish of St. James.

Speaking at a press conference at Jamaica House, on January 18, Mr. Holness said while the security forces will have extraordinary powers and some rights are suspended, "this does not mean that the use of these extraordinary powers can be arbitrary or are beyond review.

"The declaration of a State of Public Emergency does not mean the suspension of the rule of law. The security forces are expected, and have been directed, to treat citizens with respect and protect the dignity and safety of all," he said.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness speaks at a press conference at Jamaica House, on January 18, where he declared a State of Public Emergency in the parish of St. James.

Mr. Holness implored the public to cooperate with the security forces, adding that the operations may cre-

ate some level of discomfort.

"Now is the time, if you know where the guns are, please tell us; if you know where the criminals are, please tell us," he said.

The Prime Minister added that the reward for guns programme is still in effect, and that persons may call Crime Stop at 311 or the security forces hotline at 837-8888.

For his part, Minister of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague, appealed to the citizens of St. James for their full cooperation during the period.

During the State of Public Emergency, the security forces will have the power to search, curtail operating hours of business, enter places and detain persons without a warrant.

Finance Minister Says No New Taxes

Finance and the Public Service Minister, Hon. Audley Shaw, says no new taxes will be included in the 2018/19 Estimates of Expenditure.

He says revenue inflows have been doing "fairly well" this year, noting that the out-turn at the end of December 2017 was \$13 billion ahead of projections.

"Happily, with this trajectory, it is not the Government's plan to introduce a new tax package in the new Budget that is coming," the Minister indicated.

He was speaking at Mayberry Investments Limited's monthly Investor Forum at the Knutsford



Finance and the Public Service Minister, Hon. Audley Shaw

Court Hotel in New Kingston, on January 17. Mr. Shaw said the Government will, however, focus on implementing non-tax initiatives to ensure that importers, in particular, "pay their fair share at the wharves."

To this end, he said the Jamaica Customs Agency has been instructed to take the necessary steps to acquire the requisite modern state-of-the-art X-ray equipment to enable them to scan all incoming containers.

Meanwhile, Mr. Shaw advised that the Government plans to lobby the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to further reduce the Primary Surplus Balance.

"We had gotten a relaxation... from 7.5 per cent, which is where it (initially) was, down to seven per cent, and when the time is appropriate, we will seek to get it further down to 6.5 per cent and then six per cent. Of course, the more relaxation you have of the Primary Surplus is the more money you will have for capital expenditure," the Minister explained.

Registration of Political Parties Will Ensure Greater Transparency – PM

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the registration of political parties is transformational for the country's democracy and will ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Speaking at the official launch of political parties registration, at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston on January 15, the Prime Minister said this is a milestone achievement in the history of Jamaica.

"This launch is another manifestation of the Government's focus on institutional reform, in order to ensure our political and economic environment is conducive to productivity, transparency and growth," he said.

The Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ)

...the legislation formalises political parties, which are now required to provide details of their operations.

began registering political parties on January 2, in keeping with the Political Parties Registration Regulations, 2017.

The Regulations, which fall under the Representation of the People Act, provides a framework for the registration and deregistration of political parties, the monitoring of their finances, and also facili-

tates a system whereby an accurate and up-to-date record can be kept on each political party.

The Prime Minister said the legislation formalises political parties, which are now required to provide details of their operations, "thereby lifting the veil, because there is a sense that political parties are unregulated private fraternities."

He noted that the registration of political parties represents a "major shift" in how these institutions have been viewed in the history of Jamaica, and stressed that political parties must now lead from the front and set their houses in order.

"We must ensure that the mask of anonymity is removed," he added.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) is presented with a Provisional Certificate of Registration by Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica, Dorothy Pine-McLarty, during a ceremony to officially launch the registration of political parties at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel on January 15.

Spanish Town Hospital to be Upgraded to Type A

HEALTH MINISTER, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, says a pre-construction technical assessment is being undertaken at the Spanish Town Hospital as part of plans to upgrade the Type B facility to a Type A.

"Upgrading from a (Type) B to an A means more services, more facilities, more beds and, as a consequence, being better able to respond to the needs of the community," he said.

Dr. Tufton was speaking at the signing of a grant agreement between the Embassy of Japan and the St. Catherine-based hospital for \$9.4 million (US\$81,376) to procure an ultrasound machine, at the Ministry's New Kingston offices on January 15.

It is expected that the assessment will examine all areas of the construction project to create an accurate picture of all requirements before actual construction begins.

Hospitals in Jamaica are classified as either Type A, B or C. As a Type B facility, there are restrictions in terms of specialist services the hospital provides. The upgrading will, therefore, enable the facility to better serve the wide range of cases from St.



Health Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (left), signs a grant agreement for the procurement of an ultrasound machine for the Spanish Town Hospital, at the New Kingston offices of the Ministry on January 15. The Ambassador of Japan to Jamaica, His Excellency Hiromasa Yamazaki, looks on.

Catherine and neighbouring parishes.

Minister Tufton is hoping that "before the

end of the calendar year (and), if not, certainly early into the next (2019-2020) financial year... we will

break ground for the expansion of the Spanish Town Hospital."

Tourism Stakeholders Support Increased Security Measures

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says tourism stakeholders in St. James have expressed their support for increased security measures to be taken in the parish to curb crime and violence.

"Several stakeholders, including those in the tourism industry, have written to me to say that they would support the necessary actions to bring the parish of St. James under control and restore public safety," he said.

The Prime Minister was responding to a question during a press conference where he announced that a State of Public

Emergency has been declared for the parish of St. James. The event was held at Jamaica House, on January 18.

The Governor-General signed the Proclamation to effect the State of Public Emergency on January 18, 2018. The Proclamation has also been gazetted.

Mr. Holness said all members of the tourism fraternity can be assured that the security forces will act in a way that will be a credit to the destination.

He said the Government factored tourism and other interests before the declaration of the State of Public Emergency.



Education Minister Visits Jack's Hill Primary School

Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, interacting with grade one students at Jack's Hill Primary School in rural St. Andrew during his visit on January 15. The Education Minister has committed to provide \$10 million for infrastructural works at the school.