

PM Sees Expanded Role for the Army

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government will ensure that the capabilities of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) are leveraged to tackle many of the country's socio-economic challenges.

He said it is important that the army be not limited to security, but should extend to offering training in a range of fields locally and regionally.

Mr. Holness was speaking to **JIS News** in an interview during a tour of the JDF's Technical Training Institute at Up Park Camp on May 26, following private meetings with the high-level members of the force.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) takes the captain's seat in the HMJS Cornwall vessel owned by the Jamaica Defence Force Coast Guard, during a tour of the unit's Port Royal facilities on May 26. He is assisted by Chief of Defence Staff, Major General Antony Anderson, while Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Derrick Smith (foreground), looks on.

Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Hon. Derrick Smith, and Permanent

Secretary in OPM, Elaine Foster-Allen. Chief of Defence Staff, Major General Antony Anderson, led the tour.

The 1st Engineer Regiment now partners with the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) in an apprenticeship programme. This has already seen hundreds of youth from inner city communities benefiting from skills training in auto mechanics, furniture making, air condition and refrigeration repairs, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation and masonry.

Mr. Holness also said the military has an "incredible capacity for earning" and is suitably positioned to play an ambassadorial role for Jamaica.

Bold and Decisive Measures Will Be Taken to Reduce Crime – PM

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government will be taking "bold and decisive" measures to significantly reduce crime and violence in the country, particularly against the most vulnerable.

Among the measures to be implemented is a special process within the court system for the prosecution and trial of murders, which will serve to expedite the cases.

Making his presentation in the 2016/17 Budget Debate in the House of Representatives on May 24, Mr. Holness said the Government will be amending the Bail Act, so that persons charged with murder will be ineligible for bail in some circumstances.

He further noted that the law is to be amended to introduce mandatory minimum sentences for certain crimes.

Mr. Holness said efforts to tackle lotto



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness makes his contribution to the 2016/17 Budget Debate in the House of Representatives on May 24.

scamming, gangs and the narcotics trade will also be intensified.

The Government will also increase the fleet available to the police by 400 cars and 200 motor-bikes.

"We will be starting the Security Enhancement Fund to have a dedicated stream of revenue for the maintenance of police vehicles and the repair of police stations," he added.

BoJ Bullish on Growth

BANK OF Jamaica (BoJ) Governor, Brian Wynter, is upbeat about the prospects for continued growth during the 2016/17 fiscal year, based on a number of positive economic trends.

Among these are falling market interest rates, a decline in unemployment, and an expansion of private sector credit for personal and business purposes.

Mr. Wynter noted that business and consumer confidence is high, the Government bond market has reopened, and the stock market is buoyant.

In addition, he said that the net international reserves have remained robust and continue to exceed benchmark levels.

The BoJ Governor was addressing the quarterly press briefing at the bank's headquarters in downtown Kingston on May 26.

"Looking forward, the bank's policy stance will be geared towards maintaining low inflation as our contribution to the foundation for higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in Jamaica," he said.



Bank of Jamaica Governor, Brian Wynter

Mr. Wynter informed that the bank's inflation target for fiscal year 2016/17 has been set at 4.5 to 6.5 per cent.

MIDA Disburses \$3.31 Billion Creating Some 63,000 Jobs

THE MICRO Investment Development Agency (MIDA) has disbursed \$3.31 billion and facilitated the development of over 35,000 businesses since its inception in 1991.

During 2015/16, the entity disbursed \$155 million, financed over 1,600 businesses, and generated more than 2,400 jobs.

MIDA has \$150 million to lend for the 2016/17 financial year.

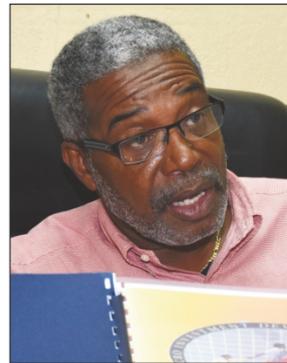
MIDA was established primarily to promote, encourage and facilitate the development of the micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSMEs) sector in Jamaica.

Through a revolving pool of resources generated primarily from the Government of Jamaica/ Government of Netherland Legacy Fund, MIDA provides financing to assist new and existing MSMEs in agriculture, manufacturing and services, among other sectors.

The funds are made available through micro-finance organisations for on-lending to the businesses.

The CEO told **JIS News** that MIDA has \$150 million to lend for the 2016/17 financial year and appealed for partnership from local and/or international financial donors.

"We are hoping that with the emphasis on the development and strengthening of the MSME sector that funds will be identified as they (MSMEs) are the backbone for job creation and employment," Mr. Henry said.



Chief Executive Officer of the Micro Investment Development Agency (MIDA), Lanville Henry

Chief Executive Officer of MIDA, Lanville Henry, told **JIS News** that the entity has contributed to the creation of close to 63,000 jobs.

Over 3,000 Farmers Benefitting From PROPEL Project



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson (left), is assisted in operating a mechanical harvester which was on display at a potato farm in Retford, Manchester, which he visited recently. The farm's owner, Peter Peart, is among over 3,000 beneficiaries under the Government of Canada-funded five-year Promotion of Regional Opportunities through Enterprise and Linkages (PROPEL) project.

JMA Praises Gov't for Increasing Access to NHT Loans

PRESIDENT OF the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association (JMA), Metry Seaga, has hailed the Prime Minister's Budget presentation for addressing the needs of low-income earners.

Citing the announcement in the House on May 24 that some National Housing Trust (NHT) contributors will benefit from interest-free loans, Mr. Seaga said this is a "step in the right direction."

"We at the JMA believe that there should be significant changes to the

NHT. Persons at the lower band of the working group (now) have something to look forward to," he said.

Mr. Seaga was speaking to **JIS News** at the Prime Minister's post-Budget Debate reception, held at Vale Royal in St. Andrew.

In his presentation, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said the Government will increase the income band for persons accessing interest-free loans from the NHT from \$7,500 to \$12,000 per week.

Additionally, contributors earning between \$12,001 and \$20,000 per week will now be eligible for a two per cent mortgage interest rate, down from four per cent; and persons earning between \$20,001 and \$30,000 weekly will be eligible for loans at four per cent, down from six per cent.

Contributors who earn above \$30,000 weekly will continue to pay at the rate of six per cent. The adjustments will take effect for mortgages written after July 1 this year.



President of the Jamaica Manufacturers' Association (JMA), Metry Seaga, offers his views on the Prime Minister's 2016/17 presentation during a post-Budget Debate reception at Vale Royal in St. Andrew on May 24.

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