

# Gov't to Expand Benefits Under PATH

**G**OVERNMENT WILL be expanding the provision of cash grants under the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH).

The enhanced benefits are to be facilitated through a J\$6 billion (US\$50 million) loan agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in support of Jamaica's Social Protection Strategy.

The loan agreement was one of two signed by the Government on November 25 with the IDB. The other loan support, valued at J\$3 billion (US\$25 million), is for the Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP).

Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips, in his remarks at the signing ceremony at his National Heroes Circle offices, said the loan provided for PATH will also go towards strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, which administers the conditional cash transfer programme.

Other components are: to enhance the services of PATH to support parenting programmes; design new



Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips, and Country Representative with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Therese Turner-Jones, sign loan agreements worth a combined figure of US\$75 million for support of the Education Sector Reform and Jamaica's Social Protection Strategy at the Ministry of Finance and Planning's offices on Wednesday, November 25. They are being assisted by: (from left, standing) Senior Negotiating Officer of the International Programme Management Branch (IPMB) in the Finance and Planning Ministry, Nadine James, and Branch Director in the IPMB, Rose Lemonius-Stewart.

payment systems; improve the financial and operational administration of the programme; modernise the social security services provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social

Security; and recruit personnel to strengthen the project's administration and evaluation.

The loan support for the ESTP is the final of three programmatic policy-based loans (PBL) with the IDB.

## Country's NIR at US\$2.9B

THE COUNTRY'S Net International Reserves (NIR) as at the end of October 2015 stood at US\$2.9 billion, putting the country in a better position to withstand external shocks.

Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips, who made the disclosure at the ninth staging of the dialogue for development lecture 2015, at the Jamaica Conference Centre, in downtown Kingston, on November 25, noted that the NIR in 2013 was approximately US\$800 million.

The NIR represent contingency funds, which can enable the country to survive severe external shocks, to cope with shifts in investor confidence and natural disasters.

While the reserves are not credited to the

country's revenues, they provide confidence to the markets that external obligations can be met.

**The NIR represent contingency funds, which can enable the country to survive severe external shocks.**

In particular, a country's reserve holdings represent an implicit guarantee that the sovereign debt will continue to be serviced, even in situations where access to new borrowing may be curtailed or become very costly.

## Education Minister Says ESTP Working

MINISTER OF Education, the Hon. Rev. Ronald Thwaites, says the Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP) is progressing well.

"I want to declare irrefutably that the transformation programme is working. Every index of progress that we want to measure is going in the right direction. We have a long way to go, but we are on the correct path," he said.

The Minister was speaking at the signing ceremony for the final of three programmatic policy-based loans (PBLs) with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), worth US\$25 million (approximately J\$3 billion), for support of the education sector reform.

The signing took place on November 25 at the

Ministry of Finance and Planning, in Kingston.

Rev. Thwaites said the Ministry is pleased that the IDB has seen it fit to continue the programme of support for the ESTP, noting that this disbursement will have a significant impact.

Some of the reforms achieved under the Education Sector Reform I and II include: maintaining a stable macroeconomic framework; modernisation of the Ministry of Education; improved curriculum, teaching and learning process and school management; building of relationships with communities and stakeholders; and behaviour modification.

These reforms will continue to be implemented under the current tranche of the PBL.

## PM Launches HEART Trust/NTA Mobile Programme

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller says the HEART Trust/NTA's Mobile Welding Laboratory and Career Coach is a bold and visionary initiative that will bring hope and new training opportunities to young persons, especially those in rural communities across Jamaica.

"This is the type of creative approach to providing public service that every Government Agency and Department must embark on," she said.

She was speaking at the launch of the Lab and Career Coach on November 25 at the St. Thomas Technical High School at Duckenfield in St. Thomas.

Prime Minister Simpson Miller noted that the initiative will be very helpful in supporting the Government's drive to significantly increase the number of Jamaicans in gainful employment.

"The main focus of my Government is securing



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (2<sup>nd</sup> right) along with Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Dr. Fenton Ferguson (right), listens as HEART Trust/NTA Executive Director, Dr. Wayne Wesley, explains the services offered under the mobile services vocational and technical education programme, during the launch at St. Thomas Technical High School on November 25.

economic growth and investments so that more and better paying jobs can be provided for our people," said the Prime Minister. She further stated "we are also focused on investing in skills training provided by entities such as HEART, so

that our young people can create businesses and jobs for themselves and for others."

The Welding Lab will train workers for Industrial Electronics, while the Career Coach will target untrained and uncertified

workers within the Hospitality and Tourism sector.

The Career Coach will also deliver the full range of HEART services including: recruitment, applications, career services, job placement, and placement in on-the-job training.

## Allman Town Primary Principal and York Castle High Teacher Cop Lasco/MoE Awards



Education Minister, the Hon. Rev. Ronald Thwaites (right), presents the Principal of the Year trophy to Kandi-Lee Crooks-Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> right) of Allman Town Primary School, while Founder and Executive Chairman of Lasco Affiliated Companies, Hon. Lascelles Chin, presents the Teacher of the Year trophy to Nickashie Hardware of York Castle High School. Occasion was the 2015/2016 Lasco/Ministry of Education Principal and Teacher of the Year Awards ceremony held on November 24 at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel.

## MoU Signed for Effective Operation of Drug Treatment Programme

THE MINISTRIES of Justice, National Security and Health, along with the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA), have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to clarify and expand their responsibilities for the operation of the Drug Treatment Courts (DTCs).

Justice Minister, Senator the Hon. Mark Golding, said the MoU re-commits the NCDA and the Ministries to contributing the various inputs required to ensure the sustainability of the programme, which facilitates the treatment and rehabilitation of persons, who commit minor offences, as a result of a drug abuse problem.

"The MoU provides clarity of the respective roles



Minister of Justice, Senator the Hon. Mark Golding

that each will play in the programme, which will promote accountability in the performance of these commitments," he said.

He was speaking at the signing ceremony on November 24 at the Ministry of Justice's offices in Kingston.

The programme, established in 2001 under the Drug Court (Treatment and

Offenders) Act, provides a structured and supervised treatment programme prescribed by the Drug Court.

By December 2014, approximately 887 persons in the pilot parishes of Kingston and St. James had been referred by the courts to the programme.

The judicial system benefits from the programme, by reducing the number of offences committed due to drug abuse; while the correctional services system benefits from a fall in the penal population and associated costs. There is also a reduction in medical treatment costs for the health sector.



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