

PM Warns Against Citizen Abuse During ZOSOs

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has urged members of the joint security forces in the Zone of Special Operation (ZOSO) in Mount Salem, St. James, to refrain from arbitrarily using special powers they have been granted under the law.

This, he says, is imperative in safeguarding the residents against abuse, reiterating that measures to prevent this are in the legislation governing the ZOSOs' operations.

He was speaking at a press briefing at Jamaica House on Friday, September 1, during which he declared the first Zone of Special Security and Community Development Operations in the Mount Salem community and its environs in St. James under The Law Reform (Zones of Social Operations) (Special Security and Community Development Measures) Act, 2017.

The Prime Minister also called on residents of the community to fully cooperate with the security forces for the duration of the operation, emphasising that no community will be allowed to be a safe haven for criminals.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (2nd left), displays the Gazetted Order declaring Mount Salem in St. James as the first Zone of Special Operations (ZOSO). From left are: Minister of Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck; Acting Commissioner of Police, Clifford Blake (partially hidden); and Attorney General, Hon. Marlene Malahoo Forte.

The Gazetted Order of the declaration is dated Friday, September 1, 2017 and the zone will operate for a period of sixty (60) days.

Prime Minister Holness said this is a new law of special measures for upholding and preserving the rule of law, public order, citizen security and public safety within certain geographically defined areas of Jamaica.

"The rule of law must be upheld and preserved in every nook and cranny of Jamaica. Zone by zone, community by community, square inch by square inch, we will establish and restore public order, citizen

security and public safety," he declared.

The Prime Minister said, in accordance with written nominations of the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commissioner of Police, Major Godfrey Sterling of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and Mr. Kirk Ricketts, Superintendent of Police of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) have been designated to be jointly in charge of operations within the zone.

Mr. Holness also announced that the Managing Director of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), Omar Sweeny, has been appointed as Deputy

Chairman of the Social Intervention Committee that is to be established within five (5) working days.

"The National Security Council took the deliberate decision to carefully sequence the implementation steps, as we learned from past mistakes. We also wanted to ensure that we complied with the legislative requirements," said Prime Minister Holness, explaining why a zone was not immediately declared after the law came into effect on July 14.

Chief of Defence Staff, Major General Rocky Meade said that a joint force of the JCF and the JDF was deployed to the zone on Friday morning.

Meanwhile, Acting Commissioner of Police, Clifford Blake, said the objective is to disrupt and dismantle gangs for a safe community.

Under the law, within the zone, the Joint Command has the power to establish cordons and impose curfews.

In addition, the National Security Council will convene to receive and consider the written report of the Joint Command that must be submitted every ten days.

The Prime Minister will also update the nation by making a statement to Parliament within 14 days.

Jamaica Records 10th Quarter of Economic Growth

THE PLANNING Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) is reporting that the country grew by an estimated 0.3 per cent for the April to June quarter of the 2017/18 fiscal year.

It also notes that Jamaica has now recorded 10 consecutive quarters of positive economic growth.

Director General, Dr. Wayne Henry, said growth in the June 2017 quarter reflected a 1.2 per cent increase in the services industry, which outweighed the goods producing industry's 2.5 per cent contraction.

Additionally, he said the economy grew by 0.2 per cent over the first six months of the calendar year, relative to the corresponding period in 2016.

The Director General attributed the calendar year out-turn to 0.8 per cent growth in the services industry, which outweighed the goods producing industry's 1.7 per cent decline over the period.

He was speaking at the PIOJ's quarterly media briefing at the Institute's New Kingston head office on August 30.

Dr. Henry said the service industry's out-turn for the June 2017

quarter reflected growth in all areas, except Producers of Government Services, which remained flat.

The top-performing sectors included hotels and restaurants, up eight per cent; and Finance and Insurance Services, up 1.5 per cent.

Additionally, Dr. Henry said the manufacturing and construction sectors emerged the top performers, despite the goods producing industry's contraction.

The manufacturing sector grew by 2.4 per cent, while construction was up by 1.5 per cent.

Dr. Henry said the growth prospects for the July to September quarter are "generally positive", based on anticipated strengthening in the performance of most industries.

"Despite the slowing in the rate of growth during the last two quarters due to weather-related shocks, it is anticipated that for the remainder of the fiscal year, there will be a strengthening in the pace of growth, resulting in a fiscal-year outturn within the range of two to three per cent," he added.

Jamaica and Chile Strengthening Bilateral Relations

JAMAICA AND the Republic of Chile have signed two bilateral agreements to boost investment and regional trade, and enhance sport development.

One of the agreements is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for technical cooperation between the Government's investment agency, Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), and ProChile, which promotes goods and service exports from the South American country.

The other agreement will facilitate technical cooperation in sport and culture.

Both agreements were signed during a one-day official working visit to Chile on August 30 by a

Jamaican Government delegation headed by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness.

Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, who was a part of the delegation and signed on behalf of the Government, welcomed the technical cooperation being forged, particularly in sports.

Noting Chile's expertise in gymnastics and tennis and Jamaica's prowess in athletics, Senator Johnson Smith indicated that "we will be working together to see how we can promote activity and physical well-being among our young people as well as, formal training in sports and culture."



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, discusses regional and hemispheric developments with President of the Republic of Chile, Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet.

The Prime Minister also delivered the keynote address at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he reiterated Jamaica's commitment

to the organisation's principles, and endorsed a proposal for debt relief for English-speaking Caribbean countries.

The delegation returned on August 31.

Ministries Collaborating to Boost Agriculture



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson (3rd left), is briefed by National Security State Minister, Senator the Hon. Parnell Charles Jr. (3rd right), on the proposed inter-ministerial collaboration aimed at boosting agricultural production at correctional facilities islandwide. The discussion took place during a recent tour of the Richmond Farm Adult Correctional Centre in St. Mary. Others listening include: Superintendent in charge of Richmond Farm, Leroy Allen (2nd left); Rural Agricultural Development Authority Chief Executive Officer, Peter Thompson (centre); Port Maria Mayor and St. Mary Municipal Corporation Chairman, Councillor Richard Creary (2nd right); and correctional officers based at Richmond Farm.

Government Rolling Out Pilot Rural School Bus System

THE GOVERNMENT will be rolling out a pilot rural school bus system in September, for which \$200 million has been provided for the first-year of implementation.

The initiative aims to provide safe and affordable transportation for students in rural areas while improving attendance in schools where absenteeism, in a number of cases, is as high as 20 per cent according to data from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information.

The project is a collaboration between the Ministries of Education, and Transport and Mining, and will initially target students on the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH).

Students from 91 primary and secondary schools in eight parishes will benefit under the initial phase. These include: St. Thomas, Portland, St. Mary, Clarendon, Manchester, St.



Education, Youth and Information Minister, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid (centre), outlines details of the rural school bus pilot being rolled out, during a Jamaica Information Service Think Tank on August 28. Others (from left) are Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Dr. Dean-Roy Bernard, and Chief Education Officer, Dr. Grace McLean.

Elizabeth, Hanover and St. James.

Education Minister, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, who made the disclosure during a Jamaica Information Service (JIS) Think Tank last week, noted that the rate of student absenteeism was particularly significant among PATH students.

"When you look at the rural areas, particularly, the

cost for transportation is extremely high, and we are very certain that it is a main contributory factor to the absenteeism," he noted.

In this regard, Senator Reid said the project "is one that we are very excited about" as he believes it will assist in significantly improving student attendance in school.

Additional \$350M Provided for Exim Bank Loan Facility

THE TOURISM Enhancement Fund (TEF) has allocated an additional \$350 million to the National Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of Jamaica to continue loan provisions to the operators of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs).

The allocation represents the second tranche of the \$1 billion TEF/EXIM Bank Jamaica loan facility, which was launched in September 2016 with an initial \$300 million capital injection by the tourism entity.

The facility enables the industry stakeholders to access between \$5 million and \$25 million at five per cent interest for five years.

Among those eligible are operators involved in spa and wellness; gastronomy – restaurants and food-related businesses; small accommodations; shopping



Tourism Minister, Hon. Edmund Bartlett (left), addressing journalists during the press briefing on the Tourism Enhancement Fund/EXIM Bank Loan facility at the Ministry's offices in New Kingston on August 30. Looking on is Managing Director, National Export Import (EXIM) Bank of Jamaica, Lisa Bell.

and galleries; attractions; knowledge networks; and sports and entertainment as well as manufacturers and suppliers.

Speaking at the official handover at the Tourism Ministry in New Kingston on August 30, Portfolio Minister, Hon. Edmund Bartlett, said the loan facility was a critical financial lifeline that had

allowed and would enable more sector stakeholders to create jobs, generate growth and facilitate economic well-being.

Additionally, he said it represented the Government's acknowledgement of the entities' integral role in the tourism value chain.