

# Poverty Rate Falls

**M**INISTER OF Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, is reporting a significant decline in the rate of poverty in Jamaica.

**“In the Kingston Metropolitan Area, poverty declined from 14.3 per cent to 11.9 per cent.”**

In a statement to Parliament on May 22, Dr. Clarke said that poverty fell by four percentage points from 21.1 per cent for calendar year 2015 to 17.1 per cent for 2016.

This represents a 19 per cent drop in the incidence of poverty, the largest annual reduction in 10 years.



**Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, speaking in Parliament on May 22**

“The rate of poverty in lowest since 2009,” he 2016 was, therefore, the noted.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) released the results as part of the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, conducted annually by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), capturing data on the living conditions of Jamaicans.

The figures show that rural poverty declined from 28.5 per cent in calendar year 2015 to 20.5 per cent in calendar year 2016, a fall of eight percentage points.

The Finance and the Public Service Minister said in the Kingston Metropolitan Area, poverty declined from 14.3 per cent to 11.9 per cent.

Dr. Clarke pointed out that the fall in poverty is consistent with rising employment, low inflation, the sharp jump in agricultural output of 12 per cent in 2016 relative to 2015, and increase in social protection.

## Gov't to Spend \$846 Million to Expand Court of Appeal

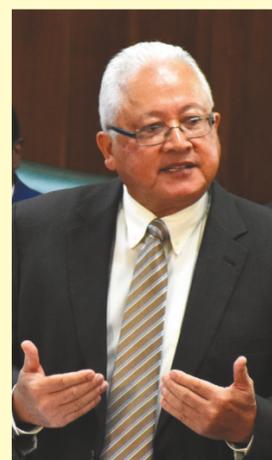
THE GOVERNMENT is to spend \$846 million on the expansion of the Court of Appeal, which will result in three new courtrooms, 15 judge's chambers and an expanded registry.

Minister of Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck, made the disclosure during his contribution to the 2018/19 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 22.

He stated that the Government intends to amend the Constitution for retired judges to sit beyond age 70, on an as-needed basis.

“A Standard Document and a five-year plan to guide the development of the physical infrastructure for the justice sector and the procurement of furniture and equipment will be developed. This will be a significant development, as that document will guide the infrastructural agenda for the fiscal years 2019/2020 to 2020/2021,” Mr. Chuck noted.

He said the country will “witness the new face of justice” when the Ministry starts the design and, hopefully, the construction of several judicial complexes across the island.



**Minister of Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck, makes his contribution to the 2018/19 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 22.**

These, he said, include the construction of the St. James Regional Judicial Complex; St. Ann Regional Judicial Complex; Manchester Regional Judicial Complex; Trelawny Parish Court Complex; and the construction of the Spanish Town Parish Court Complex.

The Minister also informed of plans for the establishment of five Family Courts, one per year, St. Catherine being the one for this fiscal year; and the expansion of the Supreme Court.

## Choose Employment Over Crime – PM

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has used the occasion of Labour Day to encourage all Jamaicans to commit to doing work and seeking employment over crime.

“I want every single able bodied Jamaican to commit to doing work and to commit to seeking employment over idleness or crime. We are providing you with the jobs, we are growing the economy and that is the way in which we are going to provide prosperity for all and remove poverty from our land,” Prime Minister Holness stated.

He was speaking at the Cumberland Health Centre in Spanish Town on May 23, at one of two National Labour Day projects.

Prime Minister Holness said the policy of the Government is to ensure that every Jamaican is involved in some form of work.



**Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) paints the exterior of the Cumberland Road Health Centre in Spanish Town, St. Catherine, as he participates in one of two National Labour Day projects on May 23. The other project was at the St. Ann's Bay Infant School in St Ann.**

As part of this policy, he said that the Jamaica National Service Corp was established.

“It is a means of taking in youngsters from your community who would probably

be elsewhere doing something probably destructive. So we bring them into the army where they are learning critical life skills. They are earning a stipend at the same

time, but we require them to give back and they are giving back through their labour to the benefit of the country,” Prime Minister Holness said.

## Heightening Investor Interest in SEZ

THE JAMAICA Special Economic Zone Authority (JSEZA) is reporting heightening investor/stakeholder interest in operating in the country's Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which are key components of the Government's Logistics Hub Initiative.

Chief Executive Officer of the JSEZA, Dr. Eric Deans, told **JIS News** that the Authority has 31 SEZ applications for established activities such as business process outsourcing, manufacturing and logistics, pointing out that a significant number of the applicants are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

“We are also seeing interest from a wide cross section of...new and emerging industries, particularly in the logistics and maritime sectors, which are deemed attractive to operate in Jamaica,” Dr. Dean noted.

Dr. Deans pointed out that a JSEZA market analysis identifies pharmaceuticals; higher-end agro-processing; electronics; medical device; auto parts; and motor vehicle assembly among the diverse set of additional activities for consideration.

Noting that there is local and foreign interest in pursuing activities in these new industries, he attributes this to new incentives being offered under the SEZ Act that “investors are taking advantage of”, coupled with Jamaica's strategic location in the Caribbean.



**Chief Executive Officer, Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority, Dr. Eric Deans, pointing out several areas of Special Economic Zone operations.**

The JSEZA's Director of Investor Relations and Communications, Kelli-Dawn Hamilton, said that the SEZ incentive regime includes an attractive

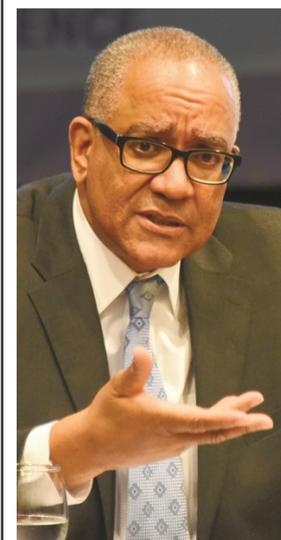
corporate income tax rate of 12.5 per cent, which she said can be further reduced to 7.75 per cent with the application of various promotional tax credits,

compared to 25 per cent in the regular domestic economy.

Additionally, she says SEZ companies are able to import items at the duty-free rate.

## Macroeconomic Indicators Continue to Improve

BANK OF Jamaica (BOJ) Governor, Brian Wynter, says Jamaica's overall macroeconomic indicators continue to improve.



**Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) Governor, Brian Wynter**

Speaking at the bank's quarterly media briefing at the BOJ Auditorium, downtown Kingston, on May 21, the Governor pointed out that inflation is low, the net international reserves (NIR) is increasing and the balance of payments will remain at “sustainable levels”.

Additionally, the Governor said market interest rates are at record lows and “still falling”, while fiscal performance remains strong.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wynter is projecting modest acceleration in economic growth ranging between 1.5 and 2.5 per cent per quarter over the next two years with inflation expected to remain contained.

The expectation is for inflation to remain low and anchored at the lower end of the bank's target of four to six per cent.

Mr. Wynter said the forecast is supported by buoyant conditions in the United States and some of Jamaica's other major trading partners.

The Governor also noted that the economy continues to show signs of gradual but sluggish recovery, pointing out that the estimated out-turn for the January to March 2018 quarter ranged between one and two per cent.

This, he stated, is above the 0.1 per cent recorded in March 2017 and above the 1.1 per cent out-turn for December 2017. He added that the March 2018 estimate “reflects some growth in net exports”.

## Stimulation-Plus Early Childhood Centre Opens in Rockfort

Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid (seated 3rd right), observes as student at the Stimulation-Plus Early Childhood Centre, Aidane Lawrence (third left), completes a puzzle. Also looking on (from left) are Managing Director of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, Omar Sweeney; Executive Director of the Early Stimulation Programme, Antonica Gunter Gayle; Chief of Operations at the Inter-American Development Bank, Adriana La Valley; and State Minister in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Zavia Mayne. Occasion was the official opening of the \$70 million centre in Rockfort, Kingston recently.

