

JA Could Attract Six Million Visitors in a Single Year

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says given Jamaica's favourable macro-economic conditions, Jamaica can attract some six million visitors in a single year.

Making the keynote address at the official opening of the US\$110 million Excellence Oyster Bay Hotel in Trelawny, on October 18, the Prime Minister said he has been watching very closely, as Jamaica had its best year ever with 4.3 million in visitor arrivals in 2017.

"I am challenging (Tourism) Minister (Edmund) Bartlett and his team to be even more aggressive and ambitious," Mr. Holness said, adding that in light of the favourable economic conditions, "we won't be talking about five million visitors by 2021, we will up that to six million visitors. It can be done."



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (3rd left) cuts the ribbon to officially open the Excellence Oyster Bay Hotel in Trelawny on October 18. Also participating from left are: Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Shahine Robinson; Tourism Minister, Hon. Edmund Bartlett; and Chief Executive Officer of Excellence Group Luxury Hotels and Resorts, Antonio Montaner.

The Prime Minister said the Government will continue to do its part in creating a business friendly environment where investors will be happy to come to Jamaica to get their share of "paradise".

He said that for investors here at home and abroad, these are the best of times where the climate is ripe for investment in not just tourism, but also in many other areas of interest.

"We will be showing our commitment to their investments. We will do this by ensuring good governance; safety and security; and a stable macro economic environment," Mr. Holness said.

EPOC Expects Growth Momentum to Continue

ECONOMIC PROGRAMME Oversight Committee (EPOC) Co-Chairman, Keith Duncan, said members are optimistic that the economic growth momentum will be sustained.

Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) data indicate that the economy grew by 2.2 per cent during the April to June quarter.

Speaking during EPOC's quarterly media briefing at Jamaica Money Market Brokers Limited's corporate offices in St. Andrew on October 17, Mr. Duncan noted that EPOC remains hopeful that the growth momentum being experienced in the economy will be maintained.

"We are hopeful that with an accommodative monetary policy enabling growth in credit to the private sector, the stimulus provided by the significant increase in capital expenditure and an overall optimism for a stronger economy... that this growth momentum will continue," Mr. Duncan said.

Mr. Duncan noted that the prevailing conditions in the domestic market, spurred by the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) monetary policy, are increasingly accommodative and likely to drive higher than anticipated private



Economic Programme Oversight Committee (EPOC) Co-Chairman, Keith Duncan

sector credit growth, which rose to 16 per cent in July.

Accommodative monetary policy is a strategy used by the Central Bank that seeks to stimulate economic growth by loosening money supply. On October 2 the BOJ announced its decision to hold the policy interest rate unchanged at two per cent.

Mr. Duncan also noted that external factors such as global oil prices, which are approaching US\$80 per barrel, as well as the tightening of United States monetary policies, could spur inflation, however, EPOC remains supportive of the BOJ's accommodative monetary policy stance.

Renewable Energy Target Increased to 50 Per Cent

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says Jamaica is to pursue a target of achieving 50 per cent of its energy generation from renewables by 2030.

"I think this is doable. There is a certain reality that we have to pay attention to (and that) is climate change.

We have to be resilient (and) a part of that is what we do with our energy mix. Pushing our energy generation to be 50/50 fossil fuels and renewables is in our national security interest. In our survival interest; we have to embrace renewables," he said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a ceremony to commission solar photovoltaic panels into operation at the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) on October 16.

Under the current policy, the country has a target of 30 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2030.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) presents winner of the Jamaica Solar Challenge, Ryan Bent, with a trophy for composing a song to communicate the benefits of solar energy. Occasion was a ceremony to commission solar photovoltaic panels into operation at the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) on October 16. At left is Director of Solar Head of State, James Ellsmoor.

Mr. Holness pointed out that this target could be achieved by 2020, if the country remains on track

in diversifying its energy use.

He called on all Jamaicans including Government

agencies to remain committed to using renewables.

The installation of solar panels at the OPM was done through a partnership with National Energy Solutions Limited (NESOL), the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica (PCJ), international non-profit group, Solar Head of State and the Clinton Foundation.

Jamaica Receives US\$36 Million From China to Build Western Children's Hospital

THE GOVERNMENT has received approximately US\$36.16 million (250 million RMB Yuan) from the Government of the People's Republic of China to construct the Western Children's and Adolescents Hospital in St. James, and undertake other projects to be agreed on by both countries.

The 220-bed facility, which will be the first such in Jamaica and the Caribbean, will be built on the compound of the Cornwall Regional Hospital (CRH) in Montego Bay, with work expected to commence by the end of the current fiscal year, in March 2019.

Funding is being provided under an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, which was signed on October 18 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, New Kingston, by Portfolio Minister, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, on behalf of the Government, and China's Ambassador to Jamaica, His Excellency Tian Qi.

The signing was witnessed by Health Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton.

Senator Johnson Smith said the agreement and, by extension, construction of the hospital, represent "another positive development and demonstration of the effective and strong cooperation between our countries."

She noted that the new facility will better enable Jamaica to reach its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "which we are seeking to attain in every aspect, including health."

In his remarks, Dr. Tufton said the new hospital will add significant capacity to Jamaica's health sector, by providing specialist medical care for youngsters up to age 18.



Health Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (left), observes as Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith (centre), and Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Jamaica, His Excellency Tian Qi, sign an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement that will facilitate the provision of approximately US\$36.16 million in grant support to construct the Western Children's and Adolescents Hospital in Montego Bay, St. James. The signing took place at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in New Kingston on October 18.

NSWMA Gets New Garbage Trucks



Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (left), and Executive Director of the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA), Audley Gordon, inspect one of the three new garbage trucks acquired for the NSWMA's regional offices. Occasion was the handover ceremony at the Authority's head office in Kingston on October 16.

Contracts Totalling US\$30M Awarded Under Tablets in Schools Project

TWO CONTRACTS totalling US\$30 million have been approved by Cabinet to continue activities under the Tablets in Schools project.

Of the sum, US\$16 million was awarded to GeoTech Vision Limited while US\$14 million was awarded to Innovative Corporate Solutions Limited for the supply and delivery of tablet carts and services.

Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, made the disclosure at the post-Cabinet press briefing at Jamaica House on October 17.

Among the objectives of the Tablets in Schools project are to provide children in educational institutions with



Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid

appropriate devices based on agreed guidelines for e-learning; provide all educational institutions with appropriate technology,

e-content and training of teachers in technology integration; and build competence in the use of technology.

Senator Reid said it is paramount that students be technologically adept, noting that very soon, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) will be administering aspects of their tests online.

"Tablets, laptops, all of this is part of the menu. Our information technology policy will give guidance to our stakeholders on how to manage the (technology) resources in our schools, so that is something we have to embrace," he said.

