

PM Reinforces Commitment to Protect Cockpit Country

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says he understands the sensitivities surrounding the discussion on the Cockpit Country, noting that the Government is in a far better position to resolve the matter.

The Cockpit County will be protected from activities such as mining, deforestation and water contamination.

The Prime Minister who was addressing three major stakeholders in the entertainment industry, at a meeting held at Vale Royal in St. Andrew on August 28 noted that the Government is at an advanced stage in the process to decide whether any mining should be allowed in the area. He said the Government is exploring alternatives.

"We are committed to protecting that area. We are in the process of physically



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) with (from left): Reggae Singer, Tony Rebel; Government Senator, Matthew Samuda; Entertainer Queen Ifrica; Dancehall Artist, Bounty Killer; Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Daryl Vaz and Press Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, Naomi Francis, during a meeting at Vale Royal on August 28.

marking the boundary on the ground and we are asking the public and persons involved in the area to support the demarcation," he added.

Mr. Holness further noted that "the government is sensitive to the hydrological

issues, particularly what is happening now. So, that will feature heavily in any decision that the government makes."

In that regard, the Prime Minister stated that the geomorphology and hydrology of the Cockpit Country will be

protected from activities such as mining, deforestation and water contamination.

Also, endangered and indigenous species of flora and fauna will be protected, and harmful farming practices prohibited.

Education Ministry Expects Smooth Start to New School Year

THE MINISTRY of Education, Youth and Information expects a smooth start to the 2019/2020 academic year, which begins today, September 2.

At the Ministry's annual back-to-school press conference, held at its National Heroes Circle office, on August 29, Minister with responsibility, Hon. Karl Samuda, said the Ministry has invested millions in various aspects of the education sector for schools and students to benefit.

"As part of our general preparations, we have undertaken a number of things... selected schools are being renovated [and] all is being done to meet the great demand that is placed on us at this time," the Minister said.

Some of the disbursements from the Ministry towards activities for the new school year include \$327 million for the payment of 1,093 school cooks in primary schools, \$100 million for the upgrading of school canteens and provision of equipment, and \$661 million for 126 schools under the 2019-2020 Critical Repairs Programme.



Minister without portfolio with responsibility for Education, Youth and Information, Hon. Karl Samuda

Also provided are \$120 million for PATH students' literature books at the secondary level, \$26 million for the insurance of PATH students and wards of the State, a contribution of \$380 million to the transportation programme of schools in eight parishes, and book vouchers for the neediest of students to purchase school supplies.

Additionally, the Ministry has spent \$800 million on books for students under the National Textbook Loan Scheme and the Primary Textbook Programme.

Industry Ministry Launches Three-Year MSME Digital Marketing Plan

THE MINISTRY of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, in partnership with the Organization of American States (OAS), has launched a three-year Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME) Digital Marketing Plan, to strengthen and empower MSMEs in Jamaica with digital marketing solutions.

This follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU), on August 29, between the Ministry and Kolau, a partner of technology company Google, to collaborate on the digitisation of 25,000 MSMEs in three years.

The signing took place at the Ministry's St. Lucia Avenue offices in New Kingston.

In his address, Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon.

Floyd Green, said the Digital Marketing Plan will provide a space where MSMEs can create a dynamic and intelligent web page as the centre of their web presence.

"One big plus of the relationship with Google [is] it does help to provide location services that are directly aligned to Google Maps. The other plus is this will also provide our MSMEs with the ability to incorporate their provisions with a PayPal service. In this the age of e-commerce, one of the challenges our MSMEs have had is getting those services established," Mr. Green said.

He added that, overall, the initiative will give MSMEs increased online presence and access to resources that they would not normally come across.



Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Floyd Green (2nd right), along with Chief Executive Officer of Kolau, Danny Sanchez-Mola (2nd left), display a copy of the signed memorandum of understanding, which will facilitate the digitisation of 25,000 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in three years. The signing ceremony was held at the Ministry's New Kingston offices, on August 29. Others (from left) are Country Representative of the Organization of American States, Jeanelle Van Glaanenweygel; and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Dermon Spence.

16.8% Increase in Credit Extended to Private Businesses

THE BANK of Jamaica (BOJ) is reporting a 16.8 per cent increase in credit extended by deposit-taking institutions (DTIs) to private-sector businesses and households over the 12-month period to June 2019.

Newly appointed Governor, Richard Byles, says this out-turn exceeded the 12.3 per cent recorded at the end of June 2018.

He was speaking at the Central Bank's quarterly briefing on August 29, in downtown Kingston.

Mr. Byles noted that the acceleration in private-sector credit expansion in recent months is consistent with previous BOJ accommodative policy actions.

These actions, he pointed out, have seen a reduction, by 300 basis points, on central bank overnight policy rates for deposit-taking institutions between June 2017 and June 2019.

The latest was a 25-point reduction to 0.50 per cent, effective August 28.

Mr. Byles said the financial system's response to these



Newly appointed Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) Governor, Richard Byles

policy signals has been "significant", noting that "we have seen reductions in commercial banks' local currency lending rates".

Simultaneously, he said there has been a marked uptick in the growth in financing provided by DTIs, including commercial and merchant banks and building societies, to the private sector.

This, the Governor pointed out, demonstrates that the transmission of policy rates to market rates "has been working, albeit not as efficiently as we would have liked".

Health Ministry Allocates \$130M to Clear Mosquito Breeding Sites

THE MINISTRY of Health and Wellness, through the National Health Fund (NHF), will be spending \$130 Million on activities geared towards clearing mosquito breeding sites.

This announcement was made by the Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, at his quarterly press briefing on August 27, at the Ministry in New Kingston.

He said, for this initiative, the Ministry will be collaborating with the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) and the Parish Councils, through the Local Government and Community Development Ministry.

"We have agreed and we'll be mobilising \$130 million to these agencies for critical support in the field," Dr. Tufton said.

Dr. Tufton also reiterated



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (right), addresses journalists at the Ministry's quarterly press briefing, held on August 27, at the Ministry's head office in New Kingston. With the Minister is Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Dunstan Bryan.

the previous initiatives the Ministry has implemented in its fight against the spread of the dengue virus.

"The Ministry has embarked on a number of initiatives to date. In fact, since the start of this year, when we declared an out-

break, we have had a sustained programme to create awareness and to respond to the challenges that this health threat poses," he said.

He noted that 1,000 temporary vector aides have been deployed to visit homes, especially those in high-risk

communities, where they have been distributing material, inspecting water storage facilities and treating them.

Additionally, Minister Tufton said there are approximately 200 permanent staff members who provide appropriate supervision and support.

Portland School gets \$343,350 From Canadian Charity

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith (left), presents a cheque valued at \$343,350 to Principal of Comfort Castle Primary and Junior High School in Portland, Dalmain Moore, which has been donated to the school by Canadian charity, Tamara Gordon Foundation. The Minister made the presentation at the Ministry in New Kingston, on August 27.



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