

2020/21 Fiscal Year Priorities Outlined

THE GOVERNMENT has programmed several priority engagements for the 2020/21 fiscal and legislative year.

These were outlined by Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, in the Throne Speech delivered during the 2020/21 Ceremonial Opening of Parliament on February 11.

The legislative agenda includes tabling of: the new National Identification Systems (NIDS) Bill; the Microcredit Bill; the Jamaica Teaching Council, and Higher Education Bills, and Education Act and Regulations; the Act to Establish an Independent Fiscal Council; the Law Enforcement (Protection and Integrity) Act; the Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment Act; and the Disabilities Act, and Establishment of the Disabilities Rights Tribunal.

Additionally, the National Housing Trust Act will be reviewed, while amendments are slated for the Registration of (Births and Deaths) Act.

Other priority engagements include: significant ongoing investment under the comprehensive multi-year Greater Infrastructure Development



Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, delivers the 2020/21 Throne Speech, under the theme 'Towards a Decade of Growth to Anchor Our Peace and Prosperity', at the Ceremonial Opening of Parliament on February 11.

Programme targeting roads, sidewalks and ramps, bridges, street lights, water and sewerage, and drainage; the provision of water to an additional 180,000 rural residents; continued focus on infrastructural development to provide adequate school places for children; development of three regional judicial complexes in Manchester, St. Ann and St. James, and one

Parish Court in St. Catherine; and development of a National Policy for Productivity Improvement.

The Governor-General said these plans, policies, programmes and legislation demonstrate the Government's resolve to make the ensuing decade one of increased growth, peace and prosperity, "as we move to fulfil Vision 2030 Jamaica".



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (4th left) and his wife, Member of Parliament for St. Andrew East Rural, the Most Hon. Juliet Holness (5th left), lead Government Ministers into Gordon House at the Ceremonial Opening of Parliament on February 11.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Peter Phillips (left), lead Members of Parliament into the Chamber for the Ceremonial Opening of Parliament on February 11. Behind them is the Prime Minister's wife, the Most Hon. Juliet Holness.

Gov't to Implement More Programmes to Empower Young People

THE GOVERNMENT will continue to invest and implement programmes aimed at empowering young people through skills training and work placement opportunities.

Speaking at the official opening of the \$500 million Jamaica National Service Corps (JNSC) Multipurpose Building, at Up-Park Camp in Kingston on February 13, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said programmes such as the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE), are geared at engaging unattached youth in a meaningful way.

"Over time, we will make similar investments in other forms of national service, because, ultimately, the objective is to end this business of 'unattachment' in the society. There is no way the society can develop, progress and prosper if we are developing young men and women who are on the fringe and are excluded from the society," he argued.

The HOPE programme is intended to provide an avenue for the development of



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (3rd right) and Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Rocky Meade (2nd left), cut the ribbon to officially open the Jamaica National Service Corps (JNSC) multipurpose building, Up-Park Camp, in Kingston, on February 13. Sharing the moment (from left) are Executive Officer, Caribbean Military Academy, Lieutenant Colonel Blair Waddington; Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang; and Attorney General, Marlene Malahoo Forte.

fully rounded individuals who have the social, academic and technical skills to become productive members of the society. It also aims to provide educational and job opportunities for young people.

The Prime Minister noted that more than 20,000 Jam-

aiicans have been trained under the HOPE initiative, which has several components. These include, the Jamaica National Service Corps, as well as the environmental and digitisation components.

High-Dependency Unit to be Built at Hospitals

THE GOVERNMENT will be constructing high-dependency units (HDUs) at four hospitals to reduce neonatal deaths, from an allocation of \$620 million in the 2020/2021 Budget, now before the House of Representatives.

Under the Programme for Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality (PRO-MAC), procurement for the HDUs will be completed, and training of doctors, nurses and other health professionals will be finalised.

Completion of academic research on the cause and risk factors of premature birth will be done, and the award of grants to patients'

rights initiatives, as well as boosting of the skills for community health aids.

The programme, which commenced in 2013, has delivered achievements up to the end of December, such as provision of equipment to the Mandeville Regional Hospital HDU, six ambulances to the institution, and 150 midwife bags for various health centres.

Training for critical care nurses and post basic care was facilitated, and health seeking behaviour initiatives with Rise Life Management were also completed. Training for two nutritionists in postgraduate

diplomas as well as in-service training in neonatology for nurses was also completed.

The objectives of PRO-MAC, which is funded by the Government of Jamaica and the European Union (EU), are geared at reducing the incidence of neonatal deaths due to lack of access to high-dependency care, reducing maternal deaths due to lack of access to emergency obstetrics care, and improving the quality of management of high-risk pregnancies at both tertiary and primary healthcare facilities.

\$852.7 Billion Budget for 2020/2021

THE GOVERNMENT has presented a Budget of \$852.7 billion, with \$778.4 billion allocated for Recurrent (housekeeping) expenses and \$74.2 billion for Capital (development) projects.

Details of the projections are outlined in the Estimates of Expenditure, tabled in the House of Representatives, on February 11, by Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke.

The Ministry of Finance and the Public Service has been allocated the largest sum, with \$403 billion for recurrent expenses and \$7.9 billion for capital expenditure. A large portion of the sum will go towards meeting Jamaica's debt obligations.

Large sums have also been allocated to several other Ministries.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information gets the second largest amount with \$117 billion for recurrent expenses and \$1.4 billion for capital spending.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has been allo-

cated \$74 billion for recurrent expenses and \$3.9 billion for capital projects, while the Ministry of National Security has received \$78 billion for recurrent expenditure and \$15.9 billion for capital projects.

For the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, \$11.4 billion has been allocated for recurrent and \$22 billion for capital; Ministry of Justice, \$9 billion for recurrent and \$841 million for capital; Office of the Prime Minister – \$10.8 billion, recurrent and \$6.5 billion, capital; Ministry of Labour and Social Security – \$5 billion, recurrent and \$8.5 billion, capital; and Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries – \$10.6 billion, recurrent and \$3.5 billion, capital.

Education Ministry Filling Teacher Vacancies

THE MINISTRY of Education, Youth and Information has taken steps to fill vacancies created by the resignation of 390 teachers from the school system for various reasons, between the start of the academic year in September 2019 and February 5.

Portfolio Minister, Hon. Karl Samuda, said that the number, comprising mainly high school educators, represents 1.6 per cent of the approximately 26,000 teachers in the system.

He was speaking during a media briefing at the Ministry's offices in Kingston on February 13.

Mr. Samuda advised that the measures being taken include calling on the services of retired teachers, with 51 facilitated to date; temporary engagement of final year student-teachers enrolled in accredited institutions; hiring teachers on a part-time basis;



Minister with responsibility for Education, Youth and Information, Hon. Karl Samuda

and redeployment of staff and/or increasing teaching sessions.

Other interventions include merging smaller classes to reduce teacher demand; increased utilisation of information and communications technology (ICT) and video-taping of lessons; and sharing teachers' expertise through the Twinning of Schools Programme.

Mr. Samuda advised that a voluntary relocation strategy

is being considered, noting that "we have redeployed teachers previously engaged at all-age and junior high schools to assist at the high school level".

In addition, he said that the Ministry will allow schools to recruit pre-trained graduates and individuals with at least a first degree in areas of expertise that are in short supply.

