

Gov't Developing Protocols for Business Resumption

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says protocols are being developed to facilitate the expeditious reopening of businesses that have been adversely impacted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Among these, he said, are entities in the travel and tourism, and food and restaurant sectors, noting that the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and COVID Economic Recovery Task Force are “working assiduously” to conclude the protocols.

“We have done well to keep our curve flat and our death rate low for the last two months. This has given us time to prepare and educate the public about the disease, so that each and every Jamaican can be a ‘strong



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

fence’ against the spread of the virus,” Mr. Holness said in his Labour Day Message on May 25.

The Prime Minister contended that “this empowerment with knowledge, personal responsibility and continued

sound public health measures, will allow us to return to full productive economic activity”.

He noted that the Labour Day theme for this year, encourages Jamaicans to ‘Labour At Home, Clean Up, Fix Up, Plant Up’.

“This pandemic has also exposed the need for greater food security. Now, more than ever, I would encourage you to start your backyard garden. Let’s do productive things to improve our community... home by home... garden by garden,” Mr. Holness stated.

He pointed out that paying special attention to homes is especially important at this time, in light of the annual hurricane season commencing on June 1 and forecasters predicting an active period.

“Let’s do productive things to improve our community... home by home... garden by garden.”

“As Chairman of the National Disaster Risk Management Council, I will be convening a virtual meeting this week to officially signal the commencement of the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane season and move our preparations into high gear,” Mr. Holness said.

Jamaica Receives \$80M Donation of Medical Supplies From EU

JAMAICA’S HEALTH system has been further boosted to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic through a donation of equipment valued at approximately \$80 million (£535,000) from the European Union (EU).

The items, which include patient monitors, infusion pumps, defibrillators, and intensive care unit beds, were provided under the EU-funded Programme for the Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality (PROMAC).

The donation follows a previous contribution in April when the Government received 29 ventilators valued at approximately \$149 million (£1 million) from the EU, to support patients in intensive care in hospitals and to treat those infected with COVID-19.

Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, in expressing gratitude said that the items will help in boosting the country’s COVID-19 response in the first instance,



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (left), gives the thumbs up while trying out an intensive care unit (ICU) bed, which is among \$80 million worth of medical equipment donated by the European Union (EU) to assist in the fight against the coronavirus and enhance maternal and child health in Jamaica. The items were handed over at Medical Link Limited in St. Andrew on May 20. Head of the EU Delegation to Jamaica, Ambassador Malgorzata Wasilewska (centre), adjusts the bed, while Technical Director at Medical Link Limited, Lensworth Blake, looks on.

and significantly enhance child and maternal care in Jamaica.

“It is part of our COVID readiness, though it never started out that way,” he noted, at the handover ceremony

held on May 20 at Medical Link Limited in St. Andrew.

Head of the EU Delegation to Jamaica, Ambassador Malgorzata Wasilewska, for her part, said there is agreement with the Government to

utilise the equipment in the country’s fight against the COVID-19 and when the pandemic is under control, it will go back to its original use in support of maternal and child health.

Nursing and Midwifery Students at UTech Get Care Packages



Wife of the Prime Minister and Founder of the Save Our Boys and Girls Foundation, the Most Hon. Juliet Holness (centre), presents a care package to third-year midwifery student at the University of Technology (UTech), Ashleigh Mitchell (right). Looking on is Acting President of UTech, Professor Colin Gyles. The occasion was the presentation of care packages to 53 nursing and midwifery students at UTech’s Old Hope Road campus on May 19. The packages were donated through the Save Our Boys and Girls Foundation as part of its coronavirus (COVID-19) relief efforts.

Economic Rebound Projected for 2021/22

BANK OF Jamaica (BOJ) Governor, Richard Byles, says the economy is projected to contract by 5.1 per cent for the 2020/21 fiscal year, as a result of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, but will bounce back in 2021/22 with growth in the range of 2.5 to 5.5 per cent.

He was speaking during the BOJ’s digital quarterly press conference on May 20. Mr. Byles said the decline in economic activity is expected to be broad-based and

will affect the hotel and restaurant sector; mining; wholesale and retail; transport, storage and communication; manufacturing and distribution, among others.

He noted that while the full intensity and duration of the pandemic cannot be determined at this time, “there are signs that the daily infection rates appear to be stabilising in some countries, suggesting that we may be approaching the global peak of the outbreak of new cases”.



Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) Governor, Richard Byles, addressing journalists during a digital quarterly press conference on May 20.

Gov’t Compensates Jamaicans Affected by 2015 Bad Gas

PETROJAM ETHANOL Limited (PEL) has paid over J\$24.5 million to the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) as compensation for consumers who were affected by the bad gas incident of 2015.

Only persons who would have filed claims that were approved by the CAC will be compensated. Some 380 motorists stand to be compensated from the payout.

According to a release from the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology, Portfolio Minister, Hon. Fayval Williams, has welcomed the move by the board of PEL.

“I hope that this payout will bring closure to this matter and will be seen as the Government making good on its efforts to ensure compensation for the motorists who were adversely affected,” Mrs. Williams said.

The payment of compensation is a sign of good faith by the Government for the affected motorists as neither PEL nor the Government is liable for the incident.



Minister of Science, Energy and Technology, Hon. Fayval Williams

In 2015, motorists across the island were adversely affected when they purchased contaminated fuel.

The Petroleum Trade Reform Committee (PTRC) was subsequently established in 2016 to investigate the ‘bad gas’ reports and propose recommendations, several of which the Ministry has been implementing, to prevent a recurrence of this incident.

Minister Calls on Bars and Taverns to Regularise Operations

MINISTER OF Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, says now is the time for community bars and taverns to regularise their operations, in light of the findings of a survey conducted by the Social Development Commission (SDC) on the Ministry’s behalf.



Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie

“Of the survey that we did across the country, 80 per cent of our bar operators are operating without a food handler’s permit, which is part of the required Ministry of Health and Wellness regulations. Another frightening number that we have found, based on the survey, is that close to 85 per cent of bars are operating

without a spirit licence,” Mr. McKenzie said.

The Minister was speaking at the virtual press launch of Red Stripe’s ‘For the Bars: For Jamaica’ programme, on May 19. The programme will see Red Stripe and its partners providing reopening support worth \$28 million to more than 1,800 community bars.

The reopening of community bars and taverns began on May 19 for a two-week probationary period. During this time the operators must show that measures are in place in line with protocols outlined by the Government to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

“An opportunity... will be afforded to the operators to regularise their situation. We are in possession of application forms, which will be circulated to those persons when we are doing the inspections on a daily basis. These forms must be filled out, meeting the criteria that are there. The Ministry of Justice will assist to ensure that the protocols are observed, so that the proper licensing regime can be extended to the operators of bars,” Minister McKenzie said.