

PM Breaks Ground for \$9.5B Catherine Estates Houses

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, on Wednesday June 17, broke ground for the Catherine Estates housing development in Dunbeholden, St. Catherine, which will provide 1,650 affordable housing solutions at a cost of \$9.5 billion.

Being undertaken by the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) under a joint-venture partnership with China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC), the project will provide 850 duplex studio units with average size of 273 square feet and 800 detached one-bedroom starter homes at 367 square feet, with areas for expansion.

It is an integrated, sustainable community development targeted at low-income families, first-time homeowners and public-sector workers.

The National Housing Trust (NHT) will be providing 100 per cent financing for the houses.

Mr. Holness said that the Government is committed to ensuring that every Jamaican has the opportunity to own their own home.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (3rd right) breaks ground for the \$9.5 billion Catherine Estates in Dunbeholden, St. Catherine, on June 17. Others (from left) are Country Manager for China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC), Dangran Bi; Member of Parliament for East Central St. Catherine, Hon. Alando Terrelonge; Chairman of the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ), Norman Brown; Member of Parliament for South Central St. Catherine, Dr. Andrew Wheatley; Member of Parliament for South St. Catherine, Fitz Jackson; and Mayor of Spanish Town, Councillor Norman Scott.

“We are refocusing efforts to get the economy back on track and securing jobs that have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, so that you can be part of this great development,” he noted.

The housing development is scheduled to be completed within 54 months and will be developed in six phases, with 14 clusters.

Each cluster will be served by essential community amenities such as sidewalks, gro-

cery stores, recreational spaces, and have easy access to public transportation.

Lands will be reserved for the building of a primary school, secondary school, church, police station, health centre, and commercial facilities.

Gov't to Undertake \$220M House-Wiring Project

THE GOVERNMENT will commence a \$220-million house-wiring project in select constituencies during this fiscal year.

This was disclosed by Minister of Science, Energy and Technology, Hon. Fayval Williams, in her contribution to the 2020/21 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on June 17.

She said that the wiring project is being managed by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Ministry.

Work will get under way in constituencies for which Members of Parliament have submitted projects to the Ministry.

Meanwhile, Minister Williams told the House that work will be advanced on the development of a national solarisation programme for Jamaica, with assistance from development partners.

“We intend to bridge the last mile to reach every Jamaican on the grid or off the grid. The US\$2.8-billion investment projection in the electricity generation sector to 2037 aims to achieve 50 per cent renewable energy



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

mix based on the Integrated Resource Plan,” she noted. She said that for the five-year target (to 2025), Jamaica will be going to market for 320 megawatts (MW) of solar and/or wind; 120 MW of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and 74 MW of hydro, waste to energy and/or biomass.

“The Ministry will continue to lead the transformation of Jamaica’s energy investment ecosystem through encouraging private investment and innovative financing options. We will strengthen the policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks by updating the National Energy Policy; complete the Petroleum Downstream Act; and amend the Electricity Act of 2015,” the Minister said.

PM Commissions Bowden Hill Bridge

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, on Thursday (June 18), commissioned into service a new bridge in Bowden Hill, St. Andrew, which will benefit hundreds of residents in the rural community and adjoining areas.

The new structure, built at a cost of \$31 million, replaces a nearly 70-year-old bridge, which collapsed on February 18, 2019.

It connects Bowden Hill with Stony Hill and will also serve persons living in Airy Castle and surrounding communities.

The National Works Agency (NWA) and the Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) signed the contract for the project on June 6, 2019, which was undertaken by Chin’s Construction.

Prime Minister Holness, in his remarks at the com-



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (2nd right) walks across the newly commissioned bridge in the community of Bowden Hill, St. Andrew on June 18. With the Prime Minister (from left) are: Mayor of Kingston, Senator Councillor Delroy Williams; Member of Parliament, West Rural St. Andrew, Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn; Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie; and Councillor, Stony Hill Division, Tasha Schwapp.

missioning, implored the residents to protect the new infrastructure.

“Take care of the bridge; make sure it lasts another 70 years,” he said.

Mayor of Kingston, Senator Councillor Delroy Williams, for his part, noted that putting a new structure in place after the collapse of the old bridge was a top priority.

Member of Parliament for West Rural, St. Andrew where the community is located, Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn, said further development is taking place in the area, with a road being constructed near to the new bridge.

“I’m very happy that this (commissioning) is now coming to pass... and we are very excited about continuing our work here in the Stony Hill Division,” she said.

Jamaica Gets \$262M Grant from Japan for Medical Supplies

THE GOVERNMENT HAS received approximately \$262 million (¥200 million) in grant aid from Japan to purchase much-needed medical equipment and supplies in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Among these items are: bedside X-ray machines and monitors; X-ray protection screens and aprons; ultrasound scanners; and defibrillators.

The grant is being provided through the Japanese Gov-

ernment’s Economic and Social Development Programme.

Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke and Japan’s Ambassador to Jamaica, His Excellency Hiromasa Yamazaki, signed documents formalising the

arrangement during a brief digital ceremony at the Ministry’s offices in Kingston on Tuesday (June 16).

Dr. Clarke said the grant will enable the Government, through the Ministry of Health and Wellness, to improve its capacity to manage the COVID-19 caseload.

“Specifically, the public health facilities across Jamaica will be able to procure medical equipment that will allow for the treatment of cases,” he pointed out.

Dr. Clarke said that while Japan is experiencing its own challenges with COVID-19, the government has taken the time “to think about the needs of a small country, like Jamaica”, citing this as “a testimony to the strength and durability of the J-J (Jamaica-Japan) partnership”.

Ambassador Yamazaki, in his remarks, said since the onset of the pandemic, the Embassy of Japan has been working closely with the Government “to identify how best we could provide assistance for Jamaica’s health system, in order to combat this infectious disease”.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke (left), and Japan’s Ambassador to Jamaica, His Excellency Hiromasa Yamazaki (right), display signed agreements formalising the Government of Japan’s provision of approximately \$262 million in grant aid, to boost the Administration’s national coronavirus response. Sharing the moment is Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith. The signing took place at the Finance Ministry in Kingston, on June 16.

Ex-IM Bank to Provide Some \$8.1B in Loans to MSMEs

The EX-IM Bank will be disbursing at least \$8.1 billion in loans to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) this fiscal year.

This is an increase over the \$6 billion in financing to the MSME sector for 2019/2020.

Minister of Industry Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Audley Shaw, said that the increased support “is particularly within the context of the challenges being faced by MSMEs because of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

He was making his contribution to the 2020/21 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on June 16.

Minister Shaw said that the EX-IM Bank’s programmes will seek to incorporate new and innovative approaches, including the increased use of trade credit insurance, receivables financing, digitisation and e-commerce, and trade credit guarantees.

In addition, the Bank will continue to work closely



Minister of Industry Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Audley Shaw

with its public- and private-sector counterparts to support the provision of business advisory services geared at allowing MSMEs to pivot to increased exports as well as navigate through the crisis to recovery.

“I also wish to mention the National Craft Policy, approved by Cabinet as a White Paper and tabled in Parliament in November 2019, which is also intended to be an effective tool to foster growth and development in the small business sector,” Mr. Shaw said.

PAHO, USAID Support Jamaica’s COVID-19 Response



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (right), examines essential items donated by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), during a handover ceremony on June 16, at the Ministry’s New Kingston offices in St. Andrew. Looking on (from left) are Country Representative for USAID to Jamaica, Jason Fraser, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor-McKenzie; and United States Ambassador to Jamaica, Donald Tapia.