

\$14B Support for Businesses, Agriculture and Tourism

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has announced plans to provide more than \$14 billion in support for businesses, tourism interests, and farmers over the next three years.

This, Mr. Holness says, will form part of ongoing financial support to assist in ensuring that the operators of entities in these sectors and, by extension, Jamaica are able to recover from the economic impact caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Prime Minister made the announcement during a ceremony at King's House on September 7, where he was sworn in to serve as Prime Minister for a second consecutive term.

Mr. Holness said the funding provisions will include \$10 billion in loan guarantees to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); \$3 billion in agri-care support for farmers and fisherfolk;



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness speaks at his swearing-in ceremony at King's House on September 7.

\$1.2 billion in grants to small and medium-sized tourism operators, to be deployed through the EXIM Bank; and \$500 million in grants for micro and small community-based businesses.

"This will help our economy recover stronger... and ensure

that together we recover stronger," he said.

Additionally, Mr. Holness said the new Administration is targeting the creation of approximately 150,000 new jobs across various sectors.

"We will improve the business climate and invest to

improve competitiveness by reforming Customs, develop the national business portal and establish business incubators. We will diversify our economy to increase resilience, promote innovations, support youth entrepreneurs and explore opportunities within the green and blue economies. We will support the development of coding, animation, film, logistics and fulfilment, among other sectors," Mr. Holness said.

Gov't to Establish Six New STEM Academies

SIX NEW science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) academies are to be developed at the high-school level that will prepare students in the public education system for careers in STEM fields.

This was disclosed by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, as he outlined some of the plans of the Government for the new term, at his swearing-in ceremony held at King's House on September 7.

"We will also develop an academy for the creative and the performing arts and we will improve access to financing, so that all our students can have a fair and equal opportunity to access

The Government is committed to closing the digital divide and to the creation of a digital society.

tertiary education," Mr. Holness said.

The Prime Minister also pledged to improve broadband connectivity in public schools and expand the tablets in schools initiative, starting with the procurement of just over 100,000 for teachers and students, "and then building beyond that number with creative solu-

tions to focus on access for students in need".

In the meantime, Mr. Holness said the Government is committed to closing the digital divide and to the creation of a digital society, "where technology is woven into the fabric of business and everyday activities, so that it engages and empowers every Jamaican, especially in the context of the pandemic".

"We will implement a national identification system, and we are far advanced in this regard, where all Jamaicans will have the opportunity for a robust and secure identification that will improve access to public-sector services," he said.

EXIM Bank Accepting Applications for COVID-19 Tourism Grant

THE NATIONAL Export-Import Bank of Jamaica (EXIM Bank) is accepting applications for its coronavirus (COVID-19) CARE Tourism Grant.

Applications for the \$1.2 billion grant programme close on September 30.

Managing Director of the EXIM Bank, Lisa Bell, told **JIS News** that the grant is part of the Government's COVID-19 Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) Programme and is targeted at registered small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) that have been "disproportionately affected" by the pandemic.

Eligible entities must be licensed by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) or registered with the Ministry of Tourism, and include businesses such as attractions, bike rentals, car rentals, guesthouses, homestays, hotels, tour operators, water sports operators, in-bond merchants, travel agencies and villas.

"The grant supports the Government's efforts in providing a path to recovery for these entities," said Ms. Bell.



Managing Director of the EXIM Bank, Lisa Bell

She noted that the grant is expected to be used by the SMTEs to put in place the necessary measures and protocols that are required to get their physical locations COVID-ready.

Ms. Bell indicated that applications should be submitted along with the relevant supporting documents. They should include a description of what is expected to be accomplished and procured, along with the associated costs. The amount requested will then be assessed.

Businesses interested in applying for the grant can access the application form and other relevant details at <https://www.eximbankja.com/>.

Health and Wellness Minister Participates in the Distribution of Masks



Health and Wellness Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (right), hands a mask to a taxi operator, during a public awareness exercise put on by the Ministry recently to promote the use of masks in public spaces.

Field Hospital Coming in Two Weeks

MINISTER OF Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon Christopher Tufton, says a field hospital will be established in the Corporate Area within the next two weeks to boost the health sector's capacity to treat coronavirus (COVID-19) patients.

"We're now building out the base for that facility," he said, noting that the hospital will allow for over 80 additional beds.

He was speaking at the weekly virtual COVID Conversations press briefing from the Ministry's New Kingston offices on September 9.

Dr. Tufton said that the hospital is being established in collaboration with a bilateral partner and a formal ceremony will be held.

He informed that two additional field hospitals will be established, one on the south coast and the other on the western end of the island.

"We will add a fair bit of capacity to providing additional beds and you will see



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton

the manifestations of that over the next few weeks. So, we are definitely moving in that direction as part of the preparation of what is happening," he added.

Dr. Tufton announced recently, that the country has reached the community transmission phase of the virus. This means that there will be significant increases in the number of COVID-19 cases over the next six to eight weeks and that the virus can no longer be easily traced from one person to the other.

PM Pledges that New Government Will Operate with Highest Integrity

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has pledged that the new Administration will operate with the highest level of integrity, in order to gain the trust and confidence of the public.

He said that the Government will be tough on corruption, and every elected representative and appointed Minister will participate in sensitisation and public education programmes, to be established by the Integrity Commission.

"This to increase their awareness and understanding of the anti-corruption legislative framework, not just to sensitise them alone but to ensure they are seized of their duties under the law and understand that this will be an accountable Government," he noted.

Mr. Holness, in his first address as Prime Minister, after being sworn into office by Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen at King's House on September 7, said



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) proudly displays his Instrument of Appointment during his swearing-in ceremony at King's House on September 7. Beside him is Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, who oversaw the process.

that every member of the Government must be an active agent for the stronger recovery of the economy and society, and must understand that "this mandate is not about them; it is about the people".

The Prime Minister further pointed out that while the Government has "built out a good anti-corruption

structure" through the Integrity Commission and the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA), it is constrained by the need to complete their legislative framework and expand their investigative and prosecutorial resources.

"We will ensure this is completed early in this term," Mr. Holness assured.