

Gov't Will Ensure Safety of Any Approved COVID-19 Vaccine

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says that the Government will ensure that any coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine that is made available to Jamaicans is safe.

He said that citizens will be able to access any future vaccine free of cost.

"Once a vaccine is available [and] we look at it, we study it, and we conclude it is safe, then we will make it available to all who would want the vaccine," the Prime Minister said while addressing a virtual press conference on September 22.

Mr. Holness pointed out that Jamaica has been very conservative and cautious in approving and using new medicines, vaccines and tests, noting that the Ministry of



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Prime Minister the Most Honourable Andrew Holnes at a virtual press conference

Health and Wellness strictly follows the guidelines of the top global health organisations.

"Our health professionals... maintain a very high standard and they also align their

approvals with that of the highest authorities on these matters of the world – the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). So we are not taking any risks with the health of our people," he assured.

Mr. Holness informed that Jamaica is a part of the WHO's COVID-19 Global Access Facility, commonly called COVAX, which is designed to accelerate equitable access by countries globally to appropriate, safe and effective vaccines.

He noted that the Government will be engaging in a public education campaign "to demystify and to place all the facts on the table" regarding any COVID-19 vaccination.

Jamaica Gets \$205 Million Field Hospital

JAMAICA'S CAPACITY to monitor and treat patients with the coronavirus (COVID-19) has been boosted through the donation of a field hospital, valued at approximately \$105 million, by the United States (US) Government.

The 70-bed facility, located on the grounds of the National Chest Hospital in St. Andrew, was officially handed over on September 24 by US Ambassador to Jamaica, Donald Tapia, and Commander, US Southern Command, Admiral Craig Faller.

It is equipped with handheld thermometers and patient beds.

Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, accepted the donation on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica.

Dr. Tufton in expressing gratitude, said that the field hospital "could not have come at a better time".

"Those who track what is happening as it relates to the COVID journey that we are travelling on, would recognise that just a few weeks ago, we declared community transmission, which is a phase of the virus that means more persons will have the virus. The response that is required as a result of this, means more infrastructure and so the facility here has come at the right time," he noted.

This modular hospital is equipped to operate autonomously and includes a high

efficiency particulate air and ultraviolet-light air-scrubber system, two diesel generators and eight air conditioning units.



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (left), examines one of the hospital beds in the coronavirus (COVID-19) field hospital donated by the United States (US) Government. The facility, located at the National Chest Hospital in St. Andrew, was officially handed over on September 24. Looking on (from 2nd left) are: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith; United States Ambassador to Jamaica, Donald Tapia; and Commander, US Southern Command, Admiral Craig Faller.

which aims to enhance access to basic urban infrastructure and social services and contribute towards increased community safety in selected economically vulnerable and socially volatile inner-city communities in Jamaica.

Speaking at the ceremony, held at the NSWMA headquarters in Kingston, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, commended JSIF for its ties with the NSWMA, noting that it is a "treasured partnership",



Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, in the new garbage truck handed over on September 23 by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), in Kingston. With the Minister is Managing Director of the JSIF, Omar Sweeney.

Islandwide Curfew Extended to October 7

THE ISLANDWIDE curfew, which the Government has implemented as one of the measures to manage the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), has been extended until Wednesday (October 7).

"The islandwide curfew time will remain at 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.," Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness advised, while addressing a digital press conference on Tuesday (September 22).

The Prime Minister noted that the time will be maintained given the concerns raised by the business community and the travelling public regarding a previously imposed 7:00 p.m. curfew.

"We wanted to tighten up the curfew, that is, to go to 7:00 [p.m.], but the concern about people rushing to get home in that one hour period between the close of business and people getting on to public transportation, that may defeat the purpose," he said.

Mr. Holness said the Government acknowledges that the curfew is still having a negative impact on production, employment and the economy generally, arguing that the quicker the surge in the number of cases gets under control, "the quicker we are going to be able to restore our economy to close to full capacity in terms of its operation,

and that really depends on how well people comply".

Further to the announced extension of the nightly curfew, the public should adhere to following:

- The 15-person limit on public gatherings will remain in place until, October 6.
- Churches are prohibited from hosting funeral services, conventions and other special events.
- Worship services may continue within the existing guidelines.
- Burials may continue, with no more than 15 persons at the graveside, including the clergy and the funeral home personnel.
- Employers are encouraged to allow employees to work from home where possible.
- Persons 70 years and older are required to work from home and otherwise, must stay home. They are however permitted to leave home once per day for medical care, food, exercise and other essentials of life.
- Taxi operators must carry one less person than the maximum number of persons allowed under the relevant licence, from September 23 - October 6, 2020.

JSIF Hands Over Garbage Truck to NSWMA

GARBAGE COLLECTION in the Western Parks and Markets (WPM) Waste Management Limited region, which covers Trelawny, Hanover, Westmoreland and St. James, should be improved, as the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) handed over a new garbage truck on September 23.

The truck was presented to the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) by JSIF, through its Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP),

which aims to enhance access to basic urban infrastructure and social services and contribute towards increased community safety in selected economically vulnerable and socially volatile inner-city communities in Jamaica.

Speaking at the ceremony, held at the NSWMA headquarters in Kingston, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, commended JSIF for its ties with the NSWMA, noting that it is a "treasured partnership",

which has benefited the organisation significantly in terms of personnel and equipment.

"As we receive this new truck, it will be a part of the continued improvement of the fleet of the NSWMA. We have indicated that we are still in the process of securing additional trucks for the entity and once we have done so, we are promising the country that they will see significant improvement in garbage collection," he added.

Gov't to Spend \$1.7 Billion to Purchase Tablets, Laptops for Students



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Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Hon. Fayval Williams

and these will be targeted for grades 10 to 13, again with an emphasis on PATH students," she added.

Mrs. Williams said the Ministry is looking at the feasibility of purchasing Chromebooks – a laptop or tablet running the Linux-based Chrome OS (operating system) – pointing out that "we have asked e-Learning

to do an assessment for us and to get back to us in short order".

She said e-Learning has confirmed the distribution of tablets to 25,000 teachers.

Mrs. Williams stated that the Ministry will also be looking to cover the Internet cost for the devices that it distributes.

JSIF Donates Computers to RGD



Managing Director of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), Omar Sweeney (left), presents Chief Executive Officer, Registrar General's Department (RGD), Charlton McFarlane, with a laptop computer during the handover of information and communications technology equipment on September 22 at the RGD headquarters in St. Catherine.