

# Govt. Proposes New Curfew Hours for December to January

**PRIME MINISTER** the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says proposed new curfew hours for the December to January period will be 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. daily, except for the public holidays.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on November 24, Mr. Holness said that on Christmas Day (December 25) and Boxing Day (December 26), the curfew will commence at 7:00 p.m. and end at 5:00 a.m.

“Movement will, therefore, only be permitted between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Day and Boxing Day,” the Prime Minister noted.

He said on December 27 the curfew will revert to 10:00 p.m. nightly, and this will also



**Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness addresses the House of Representatives on November 17, at the Jamaica Conference Centre.**

include December 31, which is New Year's Eve.

On New Year's Day, January 1, 2021, the curfew will

commence at 7:00 p.m. and end 5:00 a.m. the following morning.

The Prime Minister noted that from January 2 to 15, the curfew hours will return to 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. daily.

Mr. Holness said the reduction in curfew hours is expected to have a significant positive impact on commerce, particularly in the quick service industry.

“It will increase economic activity and it will bring back many jobs. I believe we have struck the right balance to increase, but at the same time not encourage risky activities that would increase the spread,” he said.

Cabinet also proposed amending the Disaster Risk Management Act to limit gatherings to 15 persons in private and public places.

## First Shelter for Abused Women Now Operational

THE FIRST of three national shelters being established by the Government for women who are victims of abuse and their children is now operational.

The shelters form part of the Government's efforts to provide support to women and children impacted by gender-based violence, as well as other forms of abuse.

Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange, made the announcement during a statement in the House of Representatives on November 24.

“With the budgetary support of the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, we have purchased three properties to be transformed into national shelters, and the first property, after significant refurbishing and reconstruction, has been transformed into a safe and comfortable facility to house women who are victims of abuse and their children. We are now open and ready to take our women in who are being abused,” she said.

“The facility will accept clients even while we con-



**Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange**

tinue to receive donations to make it more comfortable and build out our programmes to help women to rebuild their lives and get back on their feet,” the Minister added.

Ms. Grange said women who need the facilities of the shelter or those who need expert advice should contact the 24-hour hotline at: 876-553-0372 and 876-929-2997.

She said the other two properties are in early reconstruction and/or refurbishing stages and will be transformed quickly into safe spaces for women.

## Antigen Testing Being Piloted at Nine Public Health Facilities

THE MINISTRY of Health and Wellness has commenced the pilot of antigen testing for the coronavirus (COVID-19) at nine public health facilities islandwide.

The month-long exercise, which got under way on November 23, is being conducted at the Kingston Public Hospital (KPH), Bustamante Hospital for Children, and Comprehensive Health Centre in the Corporate Area; Spanish

Town Hospital in St. Catherine; Mandeville Regional Hospital in Manchester; Cornwall Regional Hospital (CRH) in St. James; and St. Ann's Bay Regional Hospital in St. Ann.

These are in addition to the National Public Health Laboratory in Kingston, and the National Influenza Centre at the University of the West Indies (UWI), which are mainstay sites for COVID-19 testing in Jamaica.

Speaking to journalists following a demonstration of the antigen testing procedure at the Spanish Town Hospital on November 25, Health and Wellness Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, said activities under the pilot will be observed by representatives of some 12 private laboratories, which have been in touch with suppliers to import the test.

He indicated that on completion of the pilot, oper-

ators of the private labs will be able to source and administer the test for a fee, while pointing out that the service will be free of cost in designated public health facilities.

“So, we anticipate that within the next month or so, both private and public health facilities will have the test and it will be administered across the country. This will certainly add to the capacity that we have and, of course, add another dimension to [COVID-19] testing,” the Minister said.



**Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (right), is briefed on the function of the F200 machine, which is used to detect coronavirus (COVID-19) infections under the antigen testing procedure, by Medical Technologist at the National Public Health Laboratory, Sheamar Wiles. Occasion was a demonstration at the Spanish Town Hospital in St. Catherine, on November 25.**

## Education Ministry Partners with Microsoft

THE MINISTRY of Education, Youth and Information has partnered with Microsoft to provide, free of cost, 500,000 Microsoft Office 365 Education Software licences to students in educational institutions.

Making the announcement on November 24, during the sitting of the House of Representatives, Portfolio Minister, Hon. Fayval Williams, said the approximate annual value, assuming all 500,000 licences are used, is US\$15 million or J\$2.1 billion.

The free 500,000 licences of Office 365 EDU A3 plan for students in Jamaica include full office suite with Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, Publisher for personal computer (PC) only, Access for PC only and services that include Teams, SharePoint and Forms.

“This licence also allows 500,000 students to download the Office Pro Plus (Word, Excel, etc.) to any of their home PCs, so they



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

enjoy the same experience at school and at home,” she said.

Ms. Williams noted that the partnership aims to make technology readily available to students and expose them to a suite of skills and applications that enhance their learning experience, whilst preparing them for the 21st century workforce.

She said Microsoft, through its Country Manager

for Jamaica, has affirmed the partnership and its commitment to education in Jamaica, underscoring the mutual benefit.

Mrs. Williams informed that the Ministry will be distributing the licences to classroom teachers, principals, students at the secondary level, as well as students at teachers' colleges, community colleges and other multidisciplinary institutions.

## More Than 3,000 to Receive Birth Certificates under Integrated Community Development Project II

MORE THAN 3,000 Jamaicans will benefit from assistance to access birth certificates under a partnership between the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) and the Registrar General's Department (RGD).

The support falls under the Integrated Community Development Project-II (ICDP-II), which is being implemented by JSIF through funding from the World Bank.

Some 6,000 undocumented Jamaicans were able to acquire their birth certificates under phase one of the programme, which began in 2017.

Seven communities have been targeted for

assistance under this new phase. They are August Town, Greenwich Town and Denham Town in St. Andrew; Treadlight in Clarendon; Salt Spring and Anchovy in St. James; and another community to be named.

JSIF has allocated \$12 million for the undertaking, with \$6.4 million to be paid directly to the RGD, and the remainder will be used to finance key components of the project, which include a social survey, community fairs and the establishment of contact points in the beneficiary communities.

General Manager for Finance at JSIF, Orville Hill,

said that the programme has allowed the agency to see, first-hand, the importance of having a birth certificate, noting that the document provides persons with access to a myriad of social services.

“The glee in the eyes of persons who have lived for many years undocumented and unable to access basic amenities when they finally hold this document in their hands is reason enough for us to continue this very impactful project,” he noted, at the signing ceremony held at JSIF's location in Kingston on November 25.

## Minister Parnel Charles Jr. Participates in Youth Month Exercise



**Minister of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change, Hon. Parnel Charles Jr. (centre), plants a Lignum Vitae tree with the help of the Chief Executive Officer and Conservator of Forest, Forestry Department, Ainsley Henry (right). Looking on is President of the Jamaica Millennium Vision for Youth, Chad Rattray. Occasion was the Youth Month tree planting exercise on November 25, at Boulevard Baptist Church in Kingston.**

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