

3 to 8 Per Cent Growth 'Very Realistic' - Dr. Clarke

MINISTER OF Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, says the prospects of Jamaica rebounding from the economic fallout of the coronavirus (COVID-19) to record growth within the range of 3-8 per cent, beginning fiscal year 2021-22 are "very realistic".

"As long as we can roll out our vaccine programme, beginning April 2021, and our markets to the north continue with their vaccine roll-out, I'm confident that the projections will absolutely be met," he said.

He was speaking during Maybery Investments Limited's virtual investor forum on January 20.

The Bank of Jamaica (BOJ) and International Monetary



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

Fund (IMF) are among the institutions forecasting the turnaround from the 10-12 per cent economic contraction projected for fiscal year 2020-21.

"The biggest indicator of that [turnaround] is where we saw construction, in the middle of the pandemic, grow by seven per cent during the quarter ending September 2020," Dr. Clarke pointed out.

Dr. Clarke stressed that the nature of the decline in 2020, which was as much as 18 per cent during the April to June quarter "is not a result of any structural deficiencies in Jamaica, or elsewhere that we have imported," but rather COVID-19.

He said that the Government is continuing to assess the extent of the economic fallout on Jamaicans to determine whether to extend additional financial assistance to those adversely affected.

Justice Minister Calls on Jamaicans to Support NIDS

MINISTER OF Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck, has called on Jamaicans to support the National Identification System (NIDS), as it will prevent identity theft from affecting hard-working Jamaicans whose information fall into the hands of criminals through cyberspace.



Minister of Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck

ever means, identification that has been stolen," the Minister said.

"So, with the NIDS identity, probably the best benefit, if I might put it that way, is that the individual will have a unique identity and no one can steal it, and to that extent, it is a benefit that all Jamaicans should appreciate," added Mr. Chuck, who is also Chairman of the Joint Select Committee.

Meanwhile, NIDS Programme Director, Warren Vernon, also reiterated why the NIDS system is needed.

"We have no national identification card that is free for all to access. There are a lot of persons in the country that don't have an identification document and most times it is because they can't afford it. The NIDS is free for everyone," he stated.

"We have so many Jamaicans now who have suffered from identity theft, and their bank accounts have been depleted."

While responding to issues outlined during the third Joint Select Committee on National Identification & Registration Act, 2020, Virtual Town Hall Meeting on January 20, Minister Chuck reiterated the importance for Jamaicans to support the new identification system.

"One of the great benefits of the NIDS identification when it's actually implemented is that it will avoid identity theft. We have so many Jamaicans now who have suffered from identity theft, and their bank accounts have been depleted, because criminals are able to use, by what-

Gov't to Spend \$3B on Phase One of COVID-19 Vaccine Programme

THE GOVERNMENT is expected to spend \$3 billion to implement phase one of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine programme.

This was disclosed by Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, during a statement to the House of Representatives on January 19.

He said that the sum covers, among other things, the purchase of the vaccine(s), supply chain and cold storage items, personal protective equipment (PPE), transportation, staff costs including training, and public education and sensitisation.

Jamaica has committed to vaccinating 16 per cent of the population in phase one

and will receive 935,676 doses of the approved vaccine through the World Health Organization's (WHO) Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility.

Jamaica is to receive 292,399 doses starting in April, based on the COVAX vaccine delivery schedule.

The first phase will cater to the vaccination of vulnerable and priority groups in the population. The second phase will see the introduction of vaccine to the general public and in each subsequent phase, more of the general population will have access.

Dr. Tufton told the House that the acceptance and uptake for the approved COVID-19 vaccine in Jamaica



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, addresses the House of Representatives on January 19.

is critical in slowing the spread of the infection, reducing morbidity and mortality as well as rebuilding the economy.

As such, he said that a robust public education and sensitisation campaign will be implemented by the Ministry aimed at increasing acceptance and uptake of the vaccine.

MOCA to Receive Independent Agency Status Effective April 1

MINISTER OF National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, says as of April 1, 2021, the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA) will formally and legally be designated an independent Agency of the Ministry.

"Since its establishment in 2018, MOCA has consistently conducted its investigations and operations with the highest level of quality and integrity, and has always done so independently," Minister Chang said.

The Appointed Date Notice is a requirement under the MOCA Act and is a crucial step in the establishment of this independent, specialised law enforcement agency.

The announcement follows months of collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service to finalise the conditions and terms of service for MOCA officers. It comes on the



Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang

heels of the approval of the MOCA (Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures) Regulations in March 2020.

According to the release from Ministry of National Security, Dr. Chang said, "MOCA continues to demonstrate diligence in fulfilling its mandate to target organised crime and corruption, and to investigate and corroborate the evidence necessary to

prosecute perpetrators of these serious crimes, including cyber-crimes."

He further noted MOCA's invaluable role in law enforcement and emphasised that the Appointed Date Notice is a clear indication of the Government's unwavering and uncompromising commitment to addressing the twin problem of crime and corruption in Jamaica.

UNICEF Donates Technological Devices to Juvenile Facilities



Minister without Portfolio, Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda (right), expresses gratitude to Country Representative, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Jamaica, Mariko Kagoshima, for the donation of technological devices to benefit children in juvenile facilities. The handover ceremony was held at the Ministry's Oxford Road offices in Kingston on January 20.

JANAAC Invites Private Labs to Participate in Pre-Approval Programme for COVID-19 Tests

APPLICATIONS ARE being invited from private entities interested in conducting coronavirus (COVID-19) tests to participate in the Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation's Pre-Approval Programme (JANAAC PAAP).

Target groups include private laboratories and point of care testing facilities (doctors' offices, health centres, pharmacies).

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of JANAAC, Sharonmae Shirley, said that

the pre-approval programme aims to fast-track the accreditation of entities desirous of providing COVID-19 tests.

She noted that the facility is part of the Government of Jamaica's strategic response to the pandemic.

"The main goal of the JANAAC PAAP is to increase stakeholder confidence in Jamaica's COVID-19 testing capacity, assuring sustained quality health outcomes and to strengthen the national COVID-19 prevention and

containment strategies," she said.

Mrs. Shirley was addressing a virtual press briefing on the accreditation of private laboratories providing COVID-19 testing, hosted by the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce in association with JANAAC on January 21.

The move comes in the wake of recent requirement by the United Kingdom (JK), the United States (US) and Canada that travellers must have a negative COVID-19



Chief Executive Officer, Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC), Sharonmae Shirley

test in order to enter their jurisdictions. This has led to increased demand for testing for the virus locally.

Application forms for JANAAC PAAP can be accessed at: <https://www.janaac.gov.jm/>.

Support for applicants is being provided through the national accreditation focal point at the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ).

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