

# Gov't Takes the Matter of Violence Seriously - PM

**PRIME MINISTER** the Most Hon. Andrew Holness is assuring the nation that the Government takes the matter of violence seriously.

"For many years, we have been ambivalent, as a Parliament, as a Government and as a people about violence. The ultimate measure of violence is the loss of life. It is a discrete way of measuring the concept of violence, especially if the loss of life was as a result of physical force," Mr. Holness said.

"There are many... forms of violence for which the society treats with less seriousness and outrage. And if we were firm in our stance as a Parliament, as a Government and as a people, generally, against all forms of violence, then the ultimate escalation, the loss of life would be minimised," he stated.

The Prime Minister was speaking in the House of Representatives on March 30, where Members of Parliament (MPs) expressed outrage at



**Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness addressing the House of Representatives on March 30**

the killing of Khanice Jackson, the 20-year-old accounting clerk from St. Catherine.

Mr. Holness argued that every person's body is inviolable, "meaning that I have a right for you not to touch me and that every woman...has a right to say no and we

don't interpret it as feeling that you are better than me."

The Prime Minister also expressed support for the review of the sentencing process, as MPs call for stiffer penalties to be applied to persons who plead guilty to murdering women.

"I am happy that the Leader of Opposition has acknowledged that it's time to look at that. When I visited Ms. Jackson's mother, her private plea to me and then her public statement is she wants the perpetrator to feel the full effect of the law. The pressure is building on us inside this House to respond [as] people are fearful," Mr. Holness said.

## SLB Expects to Disburse \$5.5B in Loans and Grants for 2021/22

JUST OVER \$5.5 billion in loans and grants are expected to be disbursed to some 13,325 applicants by the Students' Loan Bureau (SLB) during 2021/22.

These form part of the overall 13,858 eligible applicants on whose behalf the SLB will be disbursing funding to tertiary institutions to finance undergraduate and post-graduate studies.

As stated in the Jamaica Public Bodies Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure for the year ending March 2022, the provisions are part of initiatives that the SLB will pursue during fiscal year 2021/22, with the aim of achieving and maintaining operational efficiency and viability, and enhanced public perception and awareness.

The SLB will also be facilitating three loan types over the period: a) Targeted; b) Pay-as-You-Study; and c) Postgraduate.

According to the Public Bodies Estimates, the Targeted loans comprise approximately 99 per cent of the loan portfolio and benefits from extended moratorium periods (in school years) prior to the commencement of repayments.

The other two loan types do not have the moratorium feature, and are earmarked for growing the portfolio.

The document indicates that these products will be aligned with the shift in changes in academia, and aim to provide funding for short, certified, online and professional programmes.

Meanwhile, the SLB is slated to undertake enhanced marketing and public education initiatives to promote the entity's visibility, increase public awareness, improve customer satisfaction, and create positive public perception.

## Government Hosting 25 Vaccination Blitzes Over Three Months

THE MINISTRY of Health and Wellness will be hosting 25 vaccination blitzes over the next three months.

This was announced by Portfolio Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, in a statement to the House of Representatives on March 30.

"This will involve a mass mobilisation of persons within the particular age cohort(s) to begin a more robust attempt at getting to our herd immunity target, and this will continue as we have supplies available to inoculate the population," he said

The first COVID-19 vaccination blitz, mainly targeting persons 75 years and older, was held on March 27 at the National Arena.

The locations for the vaccination blitz planned for the weekend of April 9 include: the National Arena (Kingston and St. Andrew); Celebration Church (Portmore); Social Development Commission (SDC) Office, St. Thomas; Montego Bay Convention Centre (St. James); Lucea Anglican Church (Hanover); Denbigh Show Ground



**Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, speaking in the House of Representatives on March 30.**

(Clarendon); St. Mark's Anglican Church (Manchester); St. Matthew's Anglican Church (St Elizabeth); Bahia Principe Resort (St. Ann); Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium; Gayle Civic Centre (St. Mary); and Folly Oval (Portland).

Dr. Tufton noted that the Ministry will continue to review other locations to be used as sites.

"The special approach moving forward will include working with the Electoral Office of Jamaica, Members

of Parliament (MPs) and Councillors to assist with the identification, registration and logistics of moving the targeted groups to the relevant vaccination sites," he said.

However, the Minister informed that the option of persons registering online through the Health Ministry's website: [www.moh.gov.jm](http://www.moh.gov.jm) and through the National Vaccination Hotline-888 ONE LOVE (888-663-5683) remains available.

## PIOJ Launches Community Renewal Index

THE PLANNING Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) has launched its Community Renewal Index (CRI 2020), which aims to improve access to empirical data to inform decision-making for community development.

The Index is an initiative under the entity's Community Renewal Programme, which benefits from capacity development support from the European Union (EU).

Speaking at the launch during the virtual EU and Government of Jamaica (GOJ) conference on results-based and people-centred development on March 30, Director General of the PIOJ, Dr. Wayne Henry, said that the CRI will help address the gap in available data at the community level.

He noted that such statistics have never been con-



**Director General, Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), Dr. Wayne Henry**

sistently available or detailed enough to make certain policy decisions.

Dr. Henry said that the Index, which is in keeping with the agency's thrust for results-based management

and people-centred development, is "a tool that may be used by Government, private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development partners to achieve more effective and better targeted interventions across Jamaica".

"This should contribute significantly to the wider development of Jamaica, as it supports the 'leaving no one behind' agenda," he noted.

The CRI is to be produced every two years and will be utilised by entities like the Social Development Commission (SDC) and its partner agencies to help communities coalesce around a common goal for their development.

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## JIS Donates Publications to Bellevue Book Corner Project



**Reporter, Jamaica Information Service (JIS), Ainsworth Morris (left), hands over books published by the JIS to Medical Social Worker, Patricia Wilson (centre), and Chief Executive Officer, Bellevue Hospital, Marcia Mullings-Thompson, on March 30, at the hospital in Kingston, for the institution's new Book Corner Project.**

## NWC to Continue a Number of Capital Projects in 2021/22

FOR THE 2021/22 fiscal year, the National Water Commission (NWC) will continue the implementation of strategic initiatives and capital projects geared towards improving operational efficiency, expansion of coverage areas as well as service reliability.

Among them is the Kingston and St Andrew (KSA) non-revenue water (NRW) programme, which is slated to be completed by December 2021.

As stated in the 2021/22 Public Bodies Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the programme is expected to result in a reduction in NRW in the KSA from 59 per

cent to 30 per cent. It will be replicated in other areas.

The St. Catherine NRW Co-Management programme is slated to commence in the 2021/22 financial year.

A number of revenue-enhancing activities will also continue during the financial year, which include the replacement of aged meters, metering of unmetered accounts and the installation of more accurate meters. The NWC will also seek to increase its customer base and collection rate.

"The Commission will continue the implementation of several projects during the year, including the Spanish

Town mains replacement to increase the distribution of water in Kingston. The Commission will also pursue water and sewerage infrastructure upgrades required to support the infrastructure development plans for Port Royal," the document said.

Other priority projects for the NWC during the new financial year include continuation of the digitisation and modernisation of its operations by strengthening the capacity of its information and communication technologies infrastructure to improve efficiencies and ensure business continuity.



**The Mona Reservoir located in St. Andrew.**