

Housing and Agriculture Prioritised Under Bernard Lodge Development

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has given the reassurance that housing and agriculture are being equally prioritised under the Greater Bernard Lodge Development in St. Catherine.

Mr. Holness reiterated that while 15,000-16,000 housing solutions were programmed for construction, approximately 1,300 acres of land would be reserved for small and medium-size farmers, adding that the development would also incorporate light industrial and agricultural activities.

He was speaking during a press conference following a stakeholder tour of the project site on June 25 with representatives of SCJ Holdings Limited.

During the tour, the Prime Minister visited Jamagro Tech Farms Limited, one of the industrial-agricultural entities being built on some 400 acres of land.

Mr. Holness described the entity's operations, which will incorporate



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (second left) looks at a ditch being built to channel water during a tour of the Greater Bernard Lodge Development project site in St. Catherine on June 25. Looking on (from left) are: Greater Bernard Lodge Project Manager, Dave Hylton; Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Audrey Sewell; and Managing Director at the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) Limited, Joseph Shoucair.

greenhouses and grow houses, as "incredible" and a "fantastic integration of technology into agriculture".

"It will probably be the most modern agricultural facility in Jamaica with the ability to not only grow and produce, but to process as

well. It will be integrated with agriculture that is now taking place with small and medium enterprises," he said.

The Greater Bernard Lodge Development Plan aims to create a sustainable, vibrant and resilient community that addresses

challenges associated with affordable housing, transportation, access to jobs and services.

It targets the rollout of an integrated engagement incorporating development blocks, shared infrastructure, public facilities, and special programmes.

Education Ministry to Expand Coding in Schools Programme

THE CODING in Schools programme, which is now in its pilot phase in 20 schools, is set to be rolled out in other institutions shortly.

This was disclosed by Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Hon. Fayval Williams, who said the programme will be evaluated to determine the next steps toward wider implementation.

"The pilot... is [concluding] at the end of June, at which time we will be doing our assessment to get a sense of how it's been, the impact that that has had, and to see how best we could take it to other schools," Ms. Williams said.

The Minister was addressing the virtual inaugural Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA) Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Education competition awards ceremony on June 25.

The Education Ministry officially launched the pilot Coding in Schools programme on May 7.

The initiative, which involves partnership with Amber Innovations Group Limited, aims to promote the teaching



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

and learning of coding in public educational institutions across Jamaica.

The pilot is being conducted virtually in the selected schools and involves the engagement of approximately 2,000 students in grades four and nine.

Under the programme, classes in coding computer applications are being incorporated in the regular school curriculum.

Among the objectives of the engagement are developing skills such as logical and critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, teamwork and mathematics, and instilling confidence in students through coding.

Government's Adopt-A-Clinic Programme Generates \$154M

MINISTER OF Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, says the Government's Adopt-A-Clinic Programme has, so far, raised approximately \$154 million to assist in providing quality service delivery in hospitals and health centres islandwide.

Speaking during the adoption ceremony for the Steer Town Health Centre in St. Ann recently, Dr. Tufton said while the number of clinics adopted remains short of the target of 100, the programme has been working, and that the number of Jamaicans benefitting from it has been growing.

"We want to get to 100 health centres ... we have 65 more to go. So if anybody knows of anyone who wants to adopt ... please send them to us," he said.

Noting that health workers are under "tremendous pressure" emotionally and physically, the Minister said any help that can serve to alleviate this was welcome.

Dr. Tufton argued that efficiently operated health centres would help to ease the burden on the hospitals, whose staff have been experiencing their fair share of challenges throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"If we didn't have health centres during this time ... things would have been unbearable. This is why the Adopt-a-Clinic programme has been such an important initiative," he added.

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Dr. Tufton added that members of the Diaspora, including the husband-and-wife team – Ranny and Janice Watson, who

adopted the Steer Town Health Centre, should be lauded for their interests and contributions, while highlighting the important role overseas-based Jamaicans have been playing in accelerating the programme since its inception in 2017.

Minister Tufton said that the initiative is not about constructing new buildings, as the Government is cognizant of its core responsibility to provide primary health care infrastructure.

He maintained that the programme aimed to enhance the quality of the environment so that service delivery can be efficient, "and done in an atmosphere of relaxation ... of therapy ... of comfort."

For their part, the Watsons, who were born in Jamaica but now reside in Houston, Texas, USA, indicated that that they would be adopting the Steer Town Health Centre for three years at a cost of \$2.2 million.

"This is something we have always wanted to do ... to give back to our homeland ... to make a difference in something as important as health care," Mr. Watson said.

Student Receives Tablet Computer



Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for West Central St. Andrew, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right), presents Penwood High School Grade 11 student, Ricardo McIntosh, with a tablet computer through his Positive Jamaica Foundation. Prime Minister Holness visited students who participated in special 'super classes' facilitated at the institution on June 26, by Jamaica Millennium Vision for Youth, for candidates sitting the 2021 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination. (CAPE)

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