

South Trelawny Families Receive Housing Units

THREE FAMILIES residing in communities in Southern Trelawny are grateful and happy as they have been provided with stable, safe, and decent shelter under the Government's New Social Housing Programme (NSHP).

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness officially handed over the three-bedroom units in Albert Town, Ulster Spring and Battersea District on July 2.

The NSHP, implemented in 2018, is being administered under the housing component of the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) programme, with the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation having oversight. It aims to improve the housing conditions of the country's poor and indigent population.

As of June 18, a total of 33 units have been constructed under the initiative with another 10 nearing completion.

Speaking at the handover ceremony in Albert Town,



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) cuts the ribbon to officially hand over a new three-bedroom dwelling to Byron Reid (2nd right) and his common-law wife, Zeldia Jacobs (3rd right), in Albert Town, Trelawny, on July 2. Sharing in the moment (from left) are Member of Parliament for Southern Trelawny, Marisa Dalrymple-Philibert; Custos of Trelawny, the Hon. Hugh Gentes; and Mayor of Falmouth, Councillor Colin Gager (partially hidden).

Prime Minister Holness emphasised the Government's commitment to ensuring that every citizen has access to decent housing, no matter their socioeconomic status.

Mr. Holness indicated that greater focus will be placed on the programme, which was

suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have started with \$500 million and because of COVID-19, we had to suspend the programme. We just restarted it. We do plan, the next round, to increase the allocation [and] double it to a

billion dollars because we have been able to show and establish that we can build the houses, build them within the cost, build them on time and have a system of allocation to beneficiaries that is fair," he pointed out.

Significant Investments Made in National Security

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government continues to prioritise national security with significant investments made in improving police stations and procuring the necessary tools to fight crime.

"We spent \$40 billion on security in one year and now we have over 200 police stations that are being improved. We have improved the mobility of the police force, we have improved technology, we are increasing recruitment

and we are changing the ways in which the police interact and interface with the public," he said.

The Prime Minister was delivering the keynote address at the official opening of the Olympic Gardens Police Station in St. Andrew on June 30.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, said that strong community engagement and good relationship between the police and the community will ensure reduction of violence, improved public order and enhanced public safety.

The facility, which replaces an older, smaller police station, was built in collaboration with the National Housing Trust (NHT), which provided funding in the amount of \$157 million, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF).



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) cuts the ribbon to officially open the new Olympic Gardens Police Station in St. Andrew on June 30. Sharing in the moment (from left) are Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security, Courtney Williams; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang; Commissioner of Police, Major General Antony Anderson; Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda; and Mayor of Kingston, Senator Councillor Delroy Williams.

New Unit to Manage Lease of Farmlands in Greater Bernard Lodge Development

THE SUGAR Company of Jamaica (SCJ) Holdings Limited has been instructed to form a lease-management unit that will better manage arrangements made for the lease of agricultural lands in the Greater Bernard Lodge Development.

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness made the disclosure during a press conference at SCJ Holdings Limited in St. Catherine recently, after a stakeholders' tour of the project site.

He noted that in the past, arrangements for the lease of farmlands in the Bernard Lodge area have been "very informal", which has caused some challenges.

"One of the challenges that we met upon was that persons may have had the benefit of a lease of lands for many years and never used it, and other persons come and take over the lease and have no arrangements with the SCJ.

"Persons would have sublet [that is], leased to one person, who then sublet it to



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (2nd left) looking 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 Hyilton; 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.

10 or 20 other persons. Those things create quite a bit of confusion, but the greatest challenge is that these lands would have been leased to persons, many of whom never paid a dollar on the lease... that can't continue," Mr. Holness said.

He noted that under the new arrangement, a performance clause will be incorpo-

rated in the lease agreements with farmers.

"Every lease that is given within that 1,300 acres [reserved for farming] they must perform. Meaning that, you can't lease the land and have it sit down there doing nothing when there are other persons who would like to lease the land," Mr. Holness said.

Health Ministry Testing for Delta and Other COVID-19 Variants

THE MINISTRY of Health and Wellness has begun testing for the Delta and other variants of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

This was disclosed by Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor-McKenzie, who was addressing a virtual press briefing on July 1.

She said that the Ministry has arranged for the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) to test the samples for any mutations that would pose a concern.

She noted that the PAHO laboratory in Brazil received 200 samples from the Ministry last week, while the laboratory based in Panama, received 100.

Additionally, 92 samples are to be sent to the CDC for testing.

"The turnaround time once they receive the sample at PAHO, we have been told, is two weeks, so we are hopeful that in another



Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor-McKenzie

two weeks we'll have the first set of results," she said.

"We also have started to do some in-house testing using kits that are donated by PAHO that enables us to choose the samples better for testing," Dr. Bisasor-McKenzie said.

She noted that the Ministry is paying keen attention to the Delta variant because it has a higher transmissible and hospital admission rate.

The CMO is encouraging persons in quarantine to continue to adhere to the protocols.

Mexico Donates 65,000 Doses of AstraZeneca Vaccines



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, welcomes the arrival of 65,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines, donated by the Government of Mexico, at the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston on June 30. Joining him (from 2nd left) are Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith; Executive Director, Mexican Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AMEXCID), Dr. Laura Elena Carrillo Cubillas; and Mexican Ambassador to Jamaica, His Excellency Juan Jose Gonzalez.

Correctional Services Receive Medical Sanitation Supplies From CDC

THE DEPARTMENT of Correctional Services (DCS) has received a donation of medical and sanitation supplies valued at more than \$4.5 million from the United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Caribbean Regional Office.

The items, to support the DCS' COVID-19 infection prevention and control programme in penal institutions, were handed over during a ceremony held on June 29, at the Ministry of National Security's Oxford Road offices in St. Andrew.

Included are single-use face masks, non-contact thermometers, Automated External Defibrillator (AED), vital signs monitor, monitor rolling stands, medicine trolley, nebulising kits, eight-gallon sharps container, surface sanitiser and hand sanitiser.

Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, expressed gratitude for the donation.

"We are grateful for our partners at the CDC, that they were able to facilitate



Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda (left), and Commissioner of Corrections, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret'd) Gary Rowe (right), look at a piece of medical equipment, which was among medical and sanitation items donated to the Department of Correctional Services by the United States (US) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Caribbean Regional Office. Looking on is Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Jamaica, John McIntyre, who handed over the items at the Ministry of National Security in St. Andrew on June 29.

our requests at such a timely interval, when we were having particular challenges," he said.

He reported that as at June 24, there were no active COVID-19 cases in the country's correctional facilities.

Chargé d' Affaires at the US Embassy in Kingston,

John McIntyre, said that the donation complements the \$700 million that the US has committed to Jamaica to contain the spread of the pandemic.

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