

Exercise Patience in the Recovery Process - PM

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says it is essential that all stakeholders exercise patience as countries begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the ribbon cutting and grand re-opening of the new, re-imagined Sandals Royal Bahamian Spa Resort, and Offshore Island in the Bahamas on January 27, Prime Minister Holness said while there are signs of recovery "we have not yet recovered".



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (4th right) and Bahamas Prime Minister, Hon. Phillip Davis (4th left), join Sandals Resort International, Executive Chairman, Adam Stewart (centre), in the cutting of the ribbon symbolising the grand re-opening of the new, re-imagined Sandals Royal Bahamian Spa Resort and Offshore Island in the Bahamas on January 27.

"As difficult as the last two years have been, I am very optimistic of a stronger recovery. I believe we are going to recover stronger and better than before the pandemic," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Holness noted that it was up

to Caribbean countries to be agile and embrace the post-COVID new normal.

"We have to be nimble and constantly adjust and adapt to whatever the pandemic throws at us. Almost two years into the pandemic, our populations know what

to do to keep themselves safe.

They know the protocols and they have access to vaccines. The balance of responsibility therefore now shifts from governments to individuals and families for their own protection," he said.

"I believe we are going to recover stronger and better than before the pandemic."

"The economy can only exist and grow in a society that is stable, that is looking out for the vulnerable, and people who have been affected, and their lives disrupted, by an event not of their making. All stakeholders have to be patient for the recovery to happen," he stated.

PM Says the Most Vulnerable Must be Protected

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says it makes "good business sense" to protect the society's most vulnerable citizens by being "fair and conscientious to everyone".



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

His comment comes against the background of the recently announced introduction of fees by commercial banks for transactions at automated teller machines (ATMs) that will range from \$25 to \$60.

Mr. Holness said the prevailing pandemic impacting Jamaica is not only manifesting as a threat of a virus.

"Persons whose income disappeared or was significantly reduced [due to COVID-19] still have mortgages piling up on them,

still have credit card bills that they were not able to pay, children are now going back to school. So fees are now coming back in, bus fares and lunch money have to be paid... then they have to now hear about increases in bank fees," he noted.

The Prime Minister maintained that Jamaica's economic potential exists in a social context and emphasised that "the leaders of the economy must pay close attention".

"My job as the leader of the Government is to facilitate...market-based approaches and solutions, but I have a higher duty to protect the vulnerable of the country," Mr. Holness added.

He was speaking during the Jamaica Stock Exchange (JSE) 17th semi-virtual Regional Investments and Capital Markets Conference at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel in New Kingston on January 25.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, advised that he has dialogued with the banks on the matter, "and I expect them to be responsive".

Gov't Plans to Undertake New Vaccination Campaign

THE GOVERNMENT plans to embark on a new vaccination campaign to increase public confidence in and uptake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines.

Addressing the House of Representatives on January 25, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said that the Government recognises that there remains a high level of misinformation in the public domain regarding the vaccines.

"The Government has not given up on the vaccination programme. We will come with another public health vaccination campaign. We recognise it is going to take time to convince Jamaicans; unfortunately, many of them have consumed the nonsense that is being circulated



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness speaks in the House of Representatives on January 25.

all around social media. It's quite unfortunate and many have died," he lamented.

The Prime Minister noted that vaccine hesitancy has

resulted in persons contracting the virus.

"I am personally aware of a case where... the son, because of his beliefs, would

not take his father to get vaccinated. His father contracted the disease and died. There are many cases like that... those actions have social consequences. They create the demand for hospital beds that deprive other people [of other treatments] that they need," he said.

The Prime Minister urged Jamaicans to exercise personal responsibility. He encouraged them to adhere to the guidelines under the Disaster Risk Management Act, as well as wearing masks, washing hands or sanitising, maintaining physical distance, strengthening the immune system through proper diet and exercise, and getting vaccinated.

Project Launched to Boost Coffee Export into Europe

THE JAMAICAN coffee sector will receive support to boost export into the European market through a joint project between the Government and the Caribbean Export Development Agency (Carib-Export).

The initiative aims to bolster the productivity and export competitiveness of local coffee within the European Union (EU).

Speaking at the launch held on January 27 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in downtown Kingston, portfolio Minister, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, welcomed the initiative, noting that it will deliver results to the country's coffee producers.

She said that Blue Mountain Coffee is "one of Jamaica's signature value-added agricultural products"

with approximately 80 per cent of production generated by small farmers.

"Europe, with its large consumer base and approximately 450 million people, poses strong prospects as a new and important coffee export market for Jamaica," she pointed out.

Minister Johnson Smith informed that Carib-Export has proposed a two-phase approach to undertaking the project, the first of which will focus on an analysis of the EU coffee market, including related market entry requirements, as well as an evaluation of the market penetration strategies of the other major coffee exporters to the EU.

The second phase will focus on developing a targeted marketing strategy for the EU coffee market, she said.

11,500 Tablets for PATH Students

Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams (right), counts some of the 11,500 tablets that will be distributed to students on the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), under the Tablets in School Project. Joining her is Chairman, Board of Directors, Postal Corporation of Jamaica, Professor Felix Akinladejo. The handover of the tablets was held at the Postal Corporation of Jamaica in Kingston, on January 25.



Prisons Get 500 Self-Testing Kits

CONTROL MEASURES against the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the island's prisons have been strengthened, with the Ministry of National Security handing over 500 self-testing kits.

Speaking at the ceremony, held on January 27, Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security, Hon. Zavia Mayne, said along with adhering to the prevention and control measures, the kits will play a big role in preventing the spread of the virus.

"This will go a far way... it will be a significant aid in your efforts, your fight and response against COVID-19 with your correctional facilities," the State Minister told the ceremony, held at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre in Kingston.



Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security, Hon. Zavia Mayne (2nd left), presents some of the 500 COVID-19 self-testing kits to Director of Medical Services at the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), Dr. Donna Michelle Royer-Powe (3rd left), during a ceremony, held on January 27, at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre, in Kingston. Sharing the occasion (from left) are: Chief Technical Director in the Ministry, Shauna Trowers, and Commissioner of Corrections, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Gary Rowe.

He said staff members at the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) have done "commendable" work to control the virus, adding that there are 94

active cases in the inmate population; 498 of them have recovered, while there are 24 staff members who are out with the infection, and 421 have recovered.

Mr. Mayne also reported that work is ongoing to improve the health of inmates, and to facilitate rehabilitation across the system, "so that they can become productive citizens when they exit the correctional facilities".

Meanwhile, Chief Technical Director in the Ministry, Shauna Trowers, said over the past two years, the correctional staff have "worked tirelessly" to ensure safety at the institutions, and the kits will assist with "effective management" of the pandemic in the prisons.



Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith (right), exchanges greetings with Executive Director of the Caribbean Export Development Agency (Carib-Export), Deodat Maharaj, at the Ministry's headquarters in downtown Kingston on January 27.

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