

Gov't Delivers Over \$100 Billion for Recovery Support

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government was able to reallocate resources within the Budget to deliver a record of over \$100 billion for social protection and recovery support.

Mr. Holness made the disclosure during his New Year's Day Message on January 1, where he said this was done, without any increase in borrowing.

"I understand that for some, this may seem like not a big deal, however in the past, shocks such as a storm, or commodity price shocks as we experienced in the 1970s and '80s, or a global financial recession as we experienced in 2009, would have precipitated major economic crises



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

with long recovery periods," he stated. "As the International Monetary Fund observed in its recent concluding statement on Jamaica, 'unlike in the past—the pandemic-related shock

was not followed by a fiscal, financial, or balance of payments crisis'," Mr. Holness added.

The Prime Minister noted that this is a solid testament to the maturing of Jamaica's economic management and how far the country has progressed in its quest for economic independence.

"This solid fiscal platform underpins the strong recovery that we are already seeing. Tourism has rebounded to almost 70 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, employment is rebounding with the return of some 93,000 jobs, and expectations are that the country will record growth of around eight per cent," Mr. Holness said.

Labour Ministry to Phase in Monthly Pension Payments Beginning January

BEGINNING THIS month (JANUARY 2022), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security will start to transition pension payments from fortnightly to monthly, for National Insurance Scheme (NIS) pensioners, who use the pension order books.

This was disclosed by Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Collette Roberts Riden, during a recent interview with JIS News.

She explained that historically, NIS pensioners would get their payment via vouchers in pension order books totalling up to 13 vouchers fortnightly, over six months. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been allowed to collect two or three payments in one.

"With this new thrust, we are moving to pay our pensioners 12 vouchers, one for each month instead. This would be in keeping with what has been happening over the past one year and nine months, with the early encashment of pension vouchers," Mrs. Roberts Riden said.

The phased implementation, beginning January,



Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Collette Roberts Riden

will be done depending on the payment cycle.

There are six payment cycles reflected by a letter at the end of the pension number assigned to each pensioner.

Pensioners who are to receive their new pension order books in January 2022 will receive the first set of six-voucher pension order books.

This will continue until June 2022, at which time, the NIS pension population paid by this method would have been phased to the six-voucher pension order book.

HMJS Alexander Bustamante Added to JDF's Fleet



National Security Minister, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang (second left), and wife of the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Lady Allen (right), are given a description of the capabilities of Her Majesty's Jamaican Ship (HMJS) Alexander Bustamante by Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Senior Grade Lt (sg) Marlon Marcos McHugh (left). Also listening on is Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Courtney Williams. The occasion was the naming and commissioning ceremony of the HMJS Alexander Bustamante, during a ceremony held at HMJS CAGWAY, Port Royal on December 30, 2021.

Tourism Workers Receive COVID-19 Home Testing Kits

MINISTER OF Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, on December 30, handed over 5,000 COVID-19 home testing kits to the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association (JHTA) for workers in the tourism sector.

Dr. Tufton handed over the kits at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Rose Hall, St. James, where he outlined that it is imperative that workers in the tourism industry be given the opportunity to self-test for COVID-19, given their exposure.

He said the tourism sector is the first of a range of critical local sectors that will receive the kits, noting that the Government intends to purchase some 40,000 kits valued at approximately \$56 million.

"The Government views the tourism sector as a very important part of our economic fabric. It is in keeping with balancing lives and livelihoods, [and] we appreciate and understand



Minister of Health and Wellness Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (right), and President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA), Clifton Reader, display the COVID-19 home testing kits during a handover ceremony at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Rose Hall, St. James, on December 30, 2021.

the importance of ensuring sustainability and continuity in the sector," Dr. Tufton explained.

"We also understand the risks given the need for the sector to survive based on the comings and goings, and

therefore the approach in targeting tourism workers in the initial stage justifies itself, based on its importance and also balancing those risks involved in the tourists who come in," he added.

The Minister added that

through self-testing, persons can determine whether they need to see a doctor for further assessment or whether they should self-isolate or advise others with whom they have encountered to take precautions.

New Firearms Act to be Tabled in Parliament

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says a new Firearms Bill will be brought to Parliament that will make it clear that the harshest consequences will flow from the possession of illegal guns.

"Possessing an illegal weapon increases the means and likelihood of the possessor escalating to committing murder or other serious crimes. All Jamaicans should speak

with one voice against the illegal possession of firearms," Mr. Holness said, during his New Year's Day Message.

He pointed out that some 85 per cent of all homicides in Jamaica are committed using an illegal firearm, meaning a gun that was brought into the country illegally, never registered in the national firearm database, and the owner was never put through a

process to determine whether they are fit and proper.

The Prime Minister also informed that the Government is to expand the use of Zones of Special Operation to control crime and homicides in selected communities.

"The Enhanced Security Measures Bill is being refined and should be brought to Parliament in the next financial year. This

will further augment the crime fighting powers of the police," Mr. Holness said.

He added that in the interim, the Jamaica Defence Force and the Jamaica Constabulary Force will continue to deploy strategically, as best as possible, its resources, in static and dynamic operations to secure affected communities.

Face-to-Face Classes Resume Today

THE MINISTRY of Education, Youth and Information is advising that face-to-face instructional delivery resumes today in all pre-primary, primary and secondary level institutions.

In a bulletin to the principals of all public and private schools, the Ministry said remote learning opportunities will continue to be available and include the online/computer-aided learning, audio-visual learning and learning kits.

Additionally, large primary schools and high schools must use the blended and/or the rotational schedule, given their capacity and student enrolment.

The document further noted that prior to allowing students back in classes, school administrators must obtain a satisfactory institutional health inspection and COVID-19 compliant approval report from the Ministry of Health and Wellness for the 2021/2022 academic year.

The Ministry encourages parents to engage in the relevant consultation to aid their preparation for face-to-

Remote learning opportunities will continue to be available and include the online/computer-aided learning, audio-visual learning and learning kits.

face learning. These can be done virtually or in small groups as per the guidelines of the Disaster Risk Management Act.

In addition, school administrators are required to submit to the Regional Office a copy of the satisfactory health reports from the Ministry of Health and Wellness and a letter signed by the Board Chairman indicating the extent of the parents' consultation and the start date for face-to-face engagement.

Some 856 schools have been deemed compliant by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.



Principal of August Town Primary, Jennifer Solomon (standing right), and teacher, Tameck Turner (standing left), interacting with grade one students at the institution.