

# Public Urged to Adhere to COVID-19 Measures

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness is once again calling on Jamaicans to take greater personal responsibility to protect themselves from the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Addressing the official opening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade's new headquarters in downtown Kingston on January 19, Mr. Holness urged Jamaicans to adhere to the measures that have been implemented under the Disaster Risk Management Act (DRMA), noting that tighter COVID-19 measures could result in further economic setback for the country.



**Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness addresses the official opening and naming ceremony for the new headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, located in downtown Kingston, on January 19.**

"There are rules, regulations and requirements under the DRMA, which were set many months ago, which the nation has been advised of and it is these rules that we will continue to observe, he said. The Prime Minister noted that some Jamaicans may want to see tighter measures,

however he pointed out that there has to be balance.

"Tighter rules could mean less work, it could mean less economic activity, less income, and that could also mean more social problems," he noted.

Mr. Holness said while the Government has a duty to protect citizens, Jamaicans must use their freedom responsibly.

"This nation must develop and learn to use their freedom responsibly, and as the leader of the nation at this time, regardless of pushback, objections, I must stand firm... Each citizen must do their part. The Government can only do so much. Government has limits," he emphasized.

## Testing for COVID-19 Variants Underway at UHWI

THE GENOME sequencing machine at the National Influenza Centre (NIC) at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) is now being utilised for the testing of the first batch of samples for COVID-19 variants.

The testing of samples is part of the training in the use of the machine, which got underway recently.

Addressing the COVID Conversations virtual press conference on January 20, Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, said that professionals are being provided with the requisite training to operate the machine.

The Minister, who toured the NIC to get a first-hand look at the process, informed that six persons have completed four of the seven days of training necessary to operate the machine.

"I am very happy to note that we are finally commissioning the use of the machine. We do hope to get another machine sometime in the near future but for



**Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, addressing the COVID Conversations digital press conference on January 20.**

now, this machine will provide, I think, our own training, and a speedier response to how much of the strain is actually in the population," he said.

Dr. Tufton said that the public will be notified about the results from the batch that is now being processed locally as soon as they become available.

The genome sequencing machine was acquired last October, through funding from the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education Fund.

## Unemployment Falls to Record Low of 7.1 Per Cent

THE COUNTRY'S unemployment rate fell to a record low of 7.1 per cent for October 2021, according to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) Labour Force Survey for the month.

This is 0.1 percentage point lower than the previous 7.2 per cent pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) out-turn recorded in October 2019.

STATIN's Director General, Carol Coy, said the October 2021 figure also represents a 3.7 percentage-point decline, relative to the corresponding period last year.

She was speaking during STATIN's digital quarterly media briefing on January 17. Ms. Coy said there were 32.4 per cent less unemployed persons for the review period,



**Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) Director General, Carol Coy**

relative to October 2020. "The unemployment rate for males was 5.5 per cent and nine per cent for females. The number of unemployed males and females declined by 36.2 per cent and 29.4 per cent, respectively," she added.

The Director General further informed that youth unemployment fell by 9.3 percentage points to 18.9 per cent during the review period, with the number dipping by 17,600 persons to 37,400.

She noted that there was a larger decline in the female out-turn, down by 12.3 percentage points to 21.6 per cent. The male equivalent fell by 7.2 percentage points to 16.6 per cent.

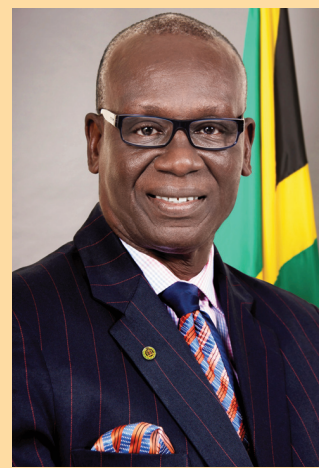
Ms. Coy also advised that the overall labour force, as at October 2021, rose by 31,400 persons or 4.2 per cent, to 1,329,100.

## New Montego Bay Fire Station to be Operational Shortly

MINISTER OF Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, says that the new Montego Bay Fire Station in St. James will be operational shortly.

The Minister, who toured the facility on January 19, said that the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) is completing minor details on the building, following which firefighters will begin utilising the station on a phased basis.

"The contractors have completed their share of the responsibilities in terms of this actual contract that they signed, and the Brigade is now working to complete the minor details. I am pretty confident that well before we celebrate 60



**Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie**

years [of Independence on August 6], this facility will be open for the benefit of the people of Montego Bay and the rest of Western Jamaica," he noted.

The four-storey facility, constructed at a cost of

approximately \$550 million by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), is considered to be the most modern fire station in the region.

It features dormitories for the firefighters, administrative offices, a gymnasium, and communal spaces.

Minister McKenzie informed that furniture has been secured to outfit the fire station, and connection to utility services such as light and water is being finalised.

"The sewerage line has been extended, and it is just now for connection with the National Water Commission (NWC) to be made, and a service provider to provide access to phones and Internet," he indicated.

## Rear Admiral Wemyss Gorman Installed as JDF Chief



**Governor-General His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen presents newly installed Chief of Defence Staff, Rear Admiral Antonette Wemyss Gorman, with the Instrument of Appointment, during the swearing-in ceremony at King's House on January 20.**

HISTORY WAS created when Rear Admiral Antonette Sandra-Lee Wemyss Gorman was installed as the Jamaica Defence Force's (JDF) first female Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on January 20.

Governor-General His Excellency, the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen presented her with the Instrument of Appointment during a ceremony at King's House, which also saw her subscribing the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Office.

Admiral Wemyss Gorman succeeds Lieutenant General Rocky Meade who retires from the JDF after serving for 38 years, the last five as CDS.

Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, the Most

Hon. Andrew Holness; Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Most Hon. Juliet Holness; and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, headed the Government and other officials attending the ceremony.

**Admiral Wemyss Gorman succeeds Lieutenant General Rocky Meade who retires from the JDF after serving for 38 years, the last five as CDS**

In highlighting notable achievements of Admiral Wemyss Gorman's 29-year military career, Mr. Holness said her tenure in the Coast Guard allows her to treat significantly with issues relating to maritime security and the blue economy.

"She will, therefore, bring a unique perspective to our discussions and efforts to strengthen our borders and prevent illicit inflows, protect the lives and livelihoods of our coastal communities, and ensure Jamaica can derive sustainable benefits from our maritime resources. I look forward to benefiting from her wise counsel on matters relating to defence and security," he added.

## Lacovia High School Receives Grant to Purchase Two Buses



**Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams (left); Head Girl of Lacovia High School (second left), Tobi-Kay Lyn; Principal of Lacovia High School (second right), Ricardo Bennett and Ambassador of Japan to Jamaica, His Excellency Masaya Fujiwara, display a symbolic cheque representing the grant approved to purchase two school buses for Lacovia High School. The official signing ceremony was held at the Ministry's offices in Kingston, on January 20.**

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