

# More BPO Offices Open in Portmore

**N**EW STATE-of-the-art business process outsourcing (BPO) office spaces at the Portmore Informatics Park in St. Catherine were commissioned by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, on May 5.

Constructed by the Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ), the additional buildings, comprising 157,000 square feet, complement the 50,000 square feet that previously existed and increased the Authority's BPO space in Portmore by 300 per cent.

Mr. Holness said the development is in furtherance of the Government's priority to support the Global Services Sector "and more importantly, it aligns with our strategic objectives to develop Jamaica's newest parish and to enable its citizens to thrive".

He noted that Portmore is ideal for BPO developments, as it has the highest concentration of university graduates in Jamaica and is,



**Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (fourth left); Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill (third left); President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ), Professor Gordon Shirley (fourth right), and other stakeholders applaud after cutting the ribbon to symbolise the commissioning of new state-of-the-art Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) office spaces built at the Portmore Informatics Park, during a ceremony at the facility in St. Catherine, on Thursday (May 5).**

therefore, ready to tap into the knowledge economy through this industry. He added that Portmore is also "well-positioned to become the Silicon Valley of Jamaica".

He argued that while the BPO sector has challenges,

"the truth is that it is the fastest growing employment-creation business in Jamaica, and regardless of the complaints, it is putting income in the pockets of over 52,000 Jamaicans. It is creating a basis and a ladder for progress, promotion and

prosperity, so I want to give my full endorsement to the BPO sector".

The Portmore Informatics Park is being developed at a cost of \$3.5 billion. The Park is managed by the Kingston Free Zone Company Limited.

## Court Infrastructure Being Upgraded

RENOVATIONS WERE carried out on several court-houses over the past year, as Government continues to invest in improving the country's court infrastructure.

Making his contribution to the 2022/2023 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on Wednesday (May 4), Justice Minister, Hon. Delroy Chuck, informed that refurbishing, roof repair and remedial works were undertaken at 12 court-houses islandwide.

He said that air-conditioning units were also installed and repaired at seven parish courts to include Portland, St. Thomas, St. James, and Kingston and St Andrew.

Additionally plumbing repairs were done at the Court of Appeal, and the Criminal Division of the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Court.

Meanwhile, major renovation and retrofitting works commenced at the Clarendon Parish Court in December 2021. The \$120 million investment, will include among other things, an elevator to support improved access by physically challenged persons.

Minister Chuck also reported that the Ministry is



**Justice Minister, Hon. Delroy Chuck, makes his contribution to the 2022/23 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 4.**

undertaking renovations at the Addison Park Sports Complex to relocate the St. Ann Parish Court in Brown's Town, which was gutted by fire earlier this year.

He said that the Ministry also advanced capital projects related to the construction of three fit-for-purpose buildings to house justice centres in May Pen, Clarendon; Sandy Bay, Hanover; and in Spanish Town, St Catherine.

Also, two Restorative Justice Centres were established in Greenwich Town and Pembroke Hall, St. Andrew.

## Gov't to Present Ministry Paper on Healthcare Financing

THE GOVERNMENT is set to unveil a Ministry Paper on sustainable financing for Jamaica's healthcare system.

The announcement was made by Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, as he made his contribution to the 2022/23 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 3.

"This is a follow-on to the Green Paper on a National Health Insurance Plan that was tabled in 2019, which was not pursued as desired due to the priorities of COVID-19," he said.

Dr. Tufton also informed that the Ministry will embark on a series of consultations within Government and the country, as well as with multilateral partners around healthcare financing.

"I have appointed Dr. Damien King, an economist and Executive Director of CAPRI, to lead the national discussions on the current



**Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, makes his contribution to the 2022/23 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 3.**

challenges we are facing with health financing and implications for poverty and the economic and social advancement of Jamaicans," he said.

The plans come as the country faces spiraling healthcare costs and the need to address the sick profile of the

country, which faces a growing challenge with lifestyle diseases.

Dr. Tufton informed that a close look at the budget of the National Health Fund (NHF) shows that costs have escalated by 139 per cent (\$4.6 billion in financial year

2015/16 to \$15 billion in financial year 2021/22, adjusted for COVID-19).

He said that projections for the next three years are suggesting further increases of approximately 30 per cent.

## EU to Provide €30M in Support to Jamaica

THE EUROPEAN Union (EU) has set aside an initial €30 million to support Jamaica in the areas of digital transformation, climate change resilience, improved governance, human rights, and citizen security up to 2027.

Ambassador of the Delegation of the EU to Jamaica, Her Excellency Marianne Van Steen, who made the disclosure, noted

that these areas have been identified as priorities of the Jamaican Government.

She was speaking during the EU's Media Editors' Breakfast held at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel on Wednesday (May 5).

Ambassador Van Steen noted that the EU, which has been in partnership with Jamaica for the past 47 years, has just begun a new

seven-year cycle of support to the country, which runs from 2021 to 2027.

The initial support is for the period 2021 to 2024, and the Ambassador explained that "we will certainly [provide] a top-up in 2024 for the rest of the years until 2027", once it is determined that the money has been well used.



**Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Jamaica, Her Excellency Marianne Van Steen (second left), fields questions from journalists during the EU's Media Editors' Breakfast held at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel on Wednesday (May 4). Pictured (from left) are Communication Specialist, Political, Press and Information Section, EU Delegation to Jamaica, Althea Buchanan; Deputy Head, European Union (EU) Delegation to Jamaica, Fredrik Ekfeldt; and Programme Manager, EU Delegation to Jamaica, Virginie Andre.**

## Electricity Bill Co-Pay Programme Starts This Month

CUSTOMERS OF the Jamaica Public Service (JPS), who qualify for support under the Government's Energy Co-Pay programme, will see that contribution reflected in their monthly bills as of this month.

Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon Nigel Clarke, on May 4, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with JPS bringing the programme into effect.

Under the MOU, the Government will pay a portion of the residential electricity bills for JPS customers who consume 200 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity or less per month, over a four-month period starting May.

Dr. Clarke first announced the programme during his closing budget presentation in March, describing it as part of

efforts to help the public mitigate the effects of higher fuel prices.

"The overwhelming majority of households in Jamaica consuming less than 200 kWh consist of hardworking people on smaller incomes, and we are concerned that they are more adversely affected by the higher energy prices.

"This programme, similar to all our social assistance programmes and policies, is therefore designed to prioritise and target their needs. We thank JPS for their support in this implementation," he said.

The Energy Co-Pay Programme will cost the Government an estimated \$2 billion and directly benefit 379,000 households.

This benefit for qualifying customers is automatic and does not require application.



**Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke**

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## Firefighters Hold Awareness Session With Students



**Firefighter attached to the Sangster International Airport's Emergency Response Service (ERS) team, Phillip McLaughlin (left), shows students of the Whitehead Early Childhood Centre in St. James how to wear a firefighter's helmet. The occasion was a fire safety awareness session hosted by the ERS at the facility on Wednesday (May 4), which was observed as International Firefighters Day.**

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