

Prime Minister Holness Urges Private Sector Partnership on NSHP

PRIVATE-SECTOR entities and individuals are being urged to support the Government's effort to provide sustainable housing for society's most vulnerable, under the New Social Housing Programme (NSHP).

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness made the appeal, during the handover of a house donated by Arc Properties Limited to Sidonie Eldemire and her 14-year-old son, Rohan Clarke, off Olympic Way in St. Andrew on December 14.

The two-bedroom unit was built at a cost of approximately \$6 million.

Arc Properties Limited is the first company from the private sector to partner with the Government on the NSHP.

Prime Minister Holness assured that the Administration has put all the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability in the execution of the NSHP.

"The only scepticism that you should have is that the project might take a little longer than you expect



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) looks on as (from left) Chairman, Arc Properties Limited, Norman Horne and New Social Housing Programme (NSHP) beneficiaries Rohan Clarke and Sidonie Eldemire, cut the ribbon at a handover ceremony held Off Olympic Way in St. Andrew West Central on December 14. Looking on are Managing Director of Arc Properties Limited, Ashley-Ann Foster Horne and Deputy Chair of Arc Manufacturing, Charlotte Hayles.

because of the rigour that we apply to ensure accountability and transparency of these projects," he pointed out.

Prime Minister Holness encouraged persons who cannot donate an entire

house to assist with materials or some financial support. "Anything that you can assist with... the programme is designed to work with you," he said.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Arc Properties Limited,

Norman Horne, said the company remains committed to giving back a portion of its annual profits as part of its corporate social responsibility.

He also encouraged other private stakeholders to come on board.

Gov't Close to NIDS National Rollout

THE GOVERNMENT is close to an islandwide rollout of the National Identification System (NIDS).

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, made the announcement as he officially launched the NIDS Technical Pilot at Jamaica Post Central Sorting Office in Kingston on December 13.

The Card Personalisation Centre, situated at that location, was also opened.

NIDS, an electronic form of identification, will provide a comprehensive and secure database for capturing and storing the personal information of citizens and non-nationals ordinarily residing in Jamaica.

Mr. Holness said the NIDS will be rolled out in various phases, with the technical pilot implementation being the first, "after which we will commence a national rollout all across Jamaica".

"In parallel, work is proceeding to establish the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), which will manage the NIDS. The technical pilot is a very important phase and, today, we launch a process to test



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (second right) displays a copy of his newly printed national identification card, as he toured the Card Personalisation Centre located at the Jamaica Post Central Sorting Office in Kingston on December 13. Looking on (from left) are Programme Director of the National Identification System (NIDS), Dr. Warren Vernon, and Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Floyd Green.

drive all the processes and sub-systems that we have been developing in the last three years," he informed.

Mr. Holness advised that a framework has been put in place to protect data collected under the NIDS.

Additionally, the system has built-in mechanisms to ensure that identity verification is detected and shared with the data owner, for transparency.

He said that during the pilot, the NIDS project will

move to obtain International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) certification.

As such, the Jamaica national identification card will be consistent with international standards for digital identity, enacted by the ICAO.

Gov't Embarking on Sensitisation Campaign for new Banknotes

THE GOVERNMENT, through the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ), will be embarking on a public education campaign to sensitise Jamaicans about the new series of printed banknotes, which is now in the country.

Speaking during launch of the notes at the BOJ's headquarters in downtown Kingston on December 15, Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, said the Central Bank is putting in place a transition period that will allow for focus groups to take place.

"This is a process where representatives of people can have an opportunity to interact with [the notes] before [they are circulated]," he explained.

Dr. Clarke said a process of retrofitting automated teller machines (ATMs) islandwide will also have to take place before circulation, pointing out that this will take up to six months.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, displays a \$500 note from the new series of banknotes that was launched at a press conference on December 15 at the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ).

BOJ Deputy Governor, Natalie Haynes, said the transition period is necessary, considering that with the public education campaign, "we have to look at the market vendors, the taxi operators, the bus crew... anyone who uses cash on a large basis, we

have to target those persons".

The new notes, which are printed on polymer substrate, are estimated to last 50 per cent longer than those now in circulation.

They are less susceptible to counterfeiting, more user-friendly for visually impaired

persons, and are more durable.

Traditional media as well as social media platforms will be utilised to convey the messages.

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More Benefits Added to NHF Card

MORE THAN 371,000 Jamaicans will have access to expanded benefits, following changes to the national programmes administered by the National Health Fund (NHF).

The changes, including the addition of the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test to the NHF Card Programme, are estimated to cost approximately \$516.59 million per annum and are scheduled to become effective by the end of February 2023.

Making the announcement in the House of Representatives on December 13, Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, said the changes cover subsidy increases and an increase to the Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (JADEP) Drug List.

"These changes will help to support access to healthcare for the 350,000 active beneficiaries of the NHF Card and the more than 21,000 beneficiaries of JADEP. At the same time, Jamaican men over 40 years of age who are enrolled with the NHF Card will now have ready access to screening for what is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in our male



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. Hon. Christopher Tufton

population – prostate cancer to be specific," he said.

Dr. Tufton informed that the NHF Card will now see an addition of 41 new active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) for the treatment of eight conditions, namely hypertension, heart disease, vascular disease, diabetes, psychosis, glaucoma, sickle cell disease and epilepsy.

For JADEP, five pharmaceutical items have been added for the treatment of five conditions – arthritis, asthma, glaucoma, hypertension and vascular disease – based on specific criteria.

US\$1.4 billion in Earnings Expected for Winter Tourist Season

JAMAICA IS expected to earn US\$1.4 billion for the 2022/23 winter tourist season, which commenced on December 15.

Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett said projected earnings were based on 1.3 million air seats which have been secured for the period and the full recovery of cruise shipping.

"This winter is going to be the best winter Jamaica has had with record arrivals for the season projected at this time to be 950,000 for stopovers and 524,000 for cruise. So, that makes it pretty close to 1.5 million visitors for the season, the largest number of visitors we've ever had," Mr. Bartlett said.

"For earnings, we're looking at US\$1.4 billion. In fact, closer to \$1.5 billion and that again is a 36 per cent increase on 2019 and significantly higher than the US\$1.094 billion earned last year, which will make 2023 the strongest winter earnings that Jamaica has ever had," he added.

Mr. Bartlett stated that this augurs well for the country's foreign exchange stability and growth as the Net Inter-



Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett

national Reserves "is going to be in a healthy state".

The Minister was speaking at an appreciation breakfast hosted by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) for various categories of workers at Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport.

According to the release from the Ministry, Mr. Bartlett thanked all stakeholders for the work that they have put into enabling "this very strong growth-filled recovery".

Brazil Donates 14,400 Litres of Hand Sanitiser Gel



Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams (left) accepts a donation of hand sanitizer gel from Brazilian Ambassador to Jamaica, Her Excellency Elza Moreira Marcelino de Castro (right) during a ceremony held at the Ministry's Heroes Circle offices on December 15. Looking on is State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Leslie Campbell. The Federative Republic of Brazil donated approximately US\$3560 worth of hand sanitiser gel, to be distributed to schools islandwide.