

Gov't on Course to Deliver 70,000 Housing Solutions

THE GOVERNMENT is well on the way to providing the committed 70,000 solutions to the housing market.

The objective is to address a housing deficit of approximately 100,000 units in the country.

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said that the National Housing Trust (NHT) has pledged to deliver 43,000 of the 70,000 solutions, and 35,000 of these are at different stages of development.

"This means that they have [units] in the ground they have completed or they have plans they have drafted, they have identified the lands, or they have identified the developers to build those houses," he said.

"So, they have another 8,000 to figure out," he added, noting that the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) is providing 15,000 units.

Mr. Holness provided the details while delivering the keynote address at a launch ceremony for Up-Cycled Container Homes being intro-



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) cuts the ribbon of the Mod-donna two-bedroom container unit, which is being sold by Kingston Logistics Center (KLC) Limited. Looking on are KLC executives (from second left) Board Chairman, Michal Derfner; Head of Sales and Special Projects, Novelette Henry-Mathison; Managing Director, Kisha Williams-Hare; and Director, Captain Samir Ghosh. The official launch ceremony was held at KLC at Newport West in Kingston on April 19.

duced to the market by Kingston Logistics Center (KLC) Limited on April 19.

The Prime Minister noted that in working to provide suitable housing solutions, the identification of lands in proximity to infrastructure is one of the greatest challenges.

Additionally, he pointed out that informal settlements and communities in need of housing upgrades will need "easily deployed solutions in the housing market".

It is against the background that Prime Minister Holness has welcomed the

introduction of container homes to the local housing market.

He noted that the pre-built units can be constructed in a shorter time at affordable rates relative to traditional houses.

Public Awareness Campaign to Focus on Safe Road Usage

THE GOVERNMENT has begun a campaign to raise awareness to provisions under the new Road Traffic Act and Regulations.

The Road Traffic Act Public Awareness Campaign, dubbed 'Know the Road Code', will bring attention to key concerns regarding proper road usage and the desired behaviours to improve the quality of the road experience for all Jamaicans.

Cabinet was recently provided with an update on the campaign by Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister with Responsibility for Information, Hon. Robert Morgan.

Speaking at a post-Cabinet press briefing at Jamaica House on April 19, Minister Morgan said he outlined to the Cabinet that the Ministry of Transport and Mining had made adjustments to the Road Traffic Act

to focus on regulating behaviour and the laws concerning all road users of Jamaica, in an attempt to make the road safe and secure for every citizen.

The objectives of the campaign are to minimise road fatalities, build a culture of responsible driving in the wider community, and increase public awareness of the revised Road Traffic Act. It also aims to promote safer roads and sensitise the Jamaican public about the revised Road Traffic Regulations.

The Road Traffic Act, 2018 and Road Traffic Regulations, 2022 were implemented in February 2023.

Regulations under the Road Traffic Act cover areas such as fitness, registration and licensing of motor vehicles; construction of and equipment for motor vehicles; licensing of drivers; traffic signs; speed limits and rules of the road.



Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, with Responsibility for Information, Hon. Robert Morgan

20,000 New Rooms for Tourism Sector

APPROXIMATELY 20,000 new rooms are set to come on stream over the next five to 10 years, says Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett.

Mr. Bartlett provided an update on the investment projects while opening the 2023/24 Sectoral Debate in House of Representatives, on April 18.

The Minister pointed out that these additional rooms will be located in all the parishes.

The projects for the parish of St. Ann include Palm Beach Villas, more than 100 rooms; Secrets Resorts, 700 rooms; Bahia Principe, 2,500 rooms as well as more than 900 rooms from the Sandals brand.

For the parish of Trelawny: Harmony Cove, 1,000 rooms; Planet Hollywood, 650 rooms; RIU Aquarelle, 753 rooms and Excellence Oyster Bay, 50 rooms.

Mr. Bartlett informed that the projects for St. James include Unico, Hard Rock Hotel and Casino and associated resort developments, 2,000 rooms; Vista Ambassadors, 433; and Dreams Resort, 280 rooms.



Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett

He added that the parish of Hanover will see 4,000 new rooms in the next three years. These include Princess Resort, more than 2,000 rooms; Grand Palladium, Negril, 950 rooms; and Viva Wyndham, Negril, 1,000 rooms. He said the figure has not been finalised for Sandals Negril.

The projects for the Kingston Metropolitan Area will include Hilton New Kingston, 300 rooms.

Mr. Bartlett noted that 200 rooms will be built at Dragon Bay in Portland and that a local investor has committed to building 1,000 rooms in St. Thomas.

The parish of Hanover will see 3,000 rooms in the next 3 years.

Joint Industrial Council to be Established

A COMMITTEE, led by President of the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions (JCTU), Helene Davis-Whyte, has been appointed to establish a Joint Industrial Council for the regulation of the industrial security sector and protection of the security guards.

Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Karl Samuda, made the disclosure during a statement to the House of Representatives on April 19.

"I am sure the advisors to the other side will agree with this move. We will be holding town hall meetings, and I am going to invite you to attend with us... because we all have one thing in common, and that is the well-being of the Jamaican worker," Mr. Samuda said.

The Minister also informed that he will be per-



Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Karl Samuda

sonally meeting with the security guards and companies to discuss their concerns and assist the parties to resolve the matters affecting them.

Mr. Samuda was addressing the current controversy that has arisen as a result of the recent ruling of the Supreme Court on the employment status of security guards.

The court has determined that all security guards are

employees and not independent contractors.

Mr. Samuda noted that several guards have attended the Ministry's offices since March 2023 to seek guidance on whether they should sign new employment contracts.

He informed that all complaints lodged by security guards are being processed for amicable resolutions, as is done for all workers.

CARICOM Agrees to Ban on Assault Weapons

CARICOM LEADERS have agreed to a ban on assault weapons in the region, except for use by the security forces and in sporting competitions.

This was among a slew of measures coming out of the recently concluded regional symposium on 'Violence as a Public Health Issue - The Crime Challenge', which was attended by Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

The region's leaders also agreed to stand with Mexico on its legal action against United States (US) gun manufacturers and retailers.

Speaking to journalists in Kingston on April 19, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said that the region will be lobbying the US to prevent the illegal export of guns into the Caribbean.

He said that almost all Caribbean countries "are experiencing an almost exponential increase in crime", which is linked to the ease of access to illegal weapons.

"It has an impact on family life, an impact on our economy. We are known as the zone of peace and that has helped us. Our economies rely on tourism [and] it is starting to bleed over on our image as well," he pointed out.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

Other strategic outcomes from the regional meeting include the sharing of resources to tackle organised crime against the State, addressing the issue of marginalised males and the delivery of justice services and education.

Ministry of Finance and the Public Service Kicks Off Secondary Schools Tour



Students of Wolmer's Girls' School in Kingston display copies of the Citizens' Guide to the 2023/24 Budget, during the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service's Secondary Schools Tour launch, on April 18. The school tour is designed to sensitise students about the Government's Budget for the current fiscal year. Students of Wolmer's Boys' School also attended the event.

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