

Ground to be Broken for Parliament Building by Year End

THE CONSTRUCTION of the new Houses of Parliament building is to be declared a national strategic project.

The undertaking forms part of the National Heroes Park Redevelopment and Government Campus Project, which is a component of the master plan to redevelop downtown Kingston.

This was disclosed by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness during a multistakeholder meeting on the Government campus and Houses of Parliament project at Jamaica House, on May 3.

He informed that Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, is expected to seek Parliamentary approval by the end of May, noting that Cabinet took a decision to declare the initiative a national strategic project.

“For Parliament, we await two approvals – one is the approval to build, and the other is to build using a



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) emphasises a point while speaking during a meeting held at Jamaica House on May 3. He is joined by Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (right), and Urban Development Corporation (UDC) Chairman, Senator Ransford Braham.

strategic project cover. The strategic project has to be declared through the Minister of Finance, and I am told by the [Financial Secretary] that that has been sent to the drafters and you should have that back next week. So, let

us say by the end of May... the Minister should be able to come to Parliament with the Order and, hopefully as well, by the end of May we should have in hand the Cabinet submission,” Mr. Holness said.

Cabinet’s approval is also needed for, among other things, land acquisition regarding a new parking facility for the Finance Ministry.

Ground is slated to be broken for the project in October or November this year.

Jamaicans Encouraged to Plant Trees on Labour Day

JAMAICANS ARE being encouraged to participate in a major islandwide tree-planting exercise on Labour Day, May 23, in keeping with the focus of this year’s observance.

Activities marking Labour Day and Workers’ Week, 2023, under the theme ‘Plant a Tree for Life – Promoting Climate Change Mitigation, Food Security and Road Safety’, were launched at the Office of the Prime Minister on May 2.

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness and several other key Ministers of Government provided details on slated engagements.

“On Labour Day, we will mobilise the nation in one action that we can all participate in, regardless of our

circumstances. That is, we can all plant a tree,” Mr. Holness stated.

He announced that the national project will be the planting of 10,000 trees on Highway 2000, in the vicinity of Hartlands.

Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries will be providing 15,000 assorted fruit seedlings to be distributed by all the parish offices of the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and National Irrigation Commission (NIC).

Prime Minister Holness also informed that a ‘Parish Tree Initiative’, targeting the planting of trees that are popular or endemic to the respective parishes, will feature on Labour Day, onwards.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) participates in a tree-planting exercise on the lawns of Jamaica House on May 2, alongside Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange (right), and Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda.

500,000 Health Screenings Targeted Under #KnowYourNumbers

THE MINISTRY of Health and Wellness is looking to provide 500,000 health screenings during the 2023/2024 financial year, under an initiative aimed at encouraging Jamaicans to do regular health checks to reduce premature death.

Portfolio Minister, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, who announced the #KnowYourNumbers initiative in his Sectoral Debate presentation on May 4, said it is a practical response to lifestyle diseases, which is the biggest health crisis facing the country.

It is aimed at getting people screened at least once annually to know their status and to take the necessary steps to modify their behaviour to reduce illness and preventable death.

The Minister said there has been an increase in the number of young people dying from NCDs.

Under #KnowYourNumbers, the Ministry will bolster health checks and promote



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, speaking in the House of Representatives on May 4. Looking on (from left) is State Minister in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Hon. Juliet Cuthbert Flynn.

screening in hospitals and clinics across the country.

“Once you enter a facility for any concern or examination, you will be provided with a health screening,” Dr. Tufton said.

Core services to be offered under the initiative include screening for body mass index, hypertension, diabetes, vision, cholesterol, and HIV/syphilis. Expanded services will include electrocardiogram (ECG), prostate

cancer, breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal cancer, dementia and frailty, and immunisation.

The Minister told the House that the mobile units used in COVID-19 service delivery will be “repurposed to offer mobile screening services to the community, place of work and play”.

PM Signs Condolence Book for Late Former Chief Justice



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness signs the condolence book for late former Chief Justice of Jamaica, Hon. Lensley Wolfe, at the Supreme Court Public Building in Kingston, on May 3. Mr. Wolfe served as Chief Justice from 1996 to 2007.

More Insurance Options for Farmers and Fishers

FARMERS AND fishers can now access increased insurance options to protect their lives and livelihoods, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Parnell Charles Jr., has informed.

Making his presentation in the 2023/24 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 2, Mr. Charles announced that GK General Insurance Weather Protect is now offering a new type of microinsurance.

“It is a trigger-based insurance policy designed to help non-salary income earners to cope with the impacts of extreme weather. It is massive,” he said.

The Minister noted that payout is based on the weather index (excess rainfall and high wind speed measured in each parish) and that once a trigger value



Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Parnell Charles Jr. is reached, the payroll will be triggered automatically.

Other products are available for life and health insurance for farmers and fisherfolk, such as the GK Insurance Agri-Care Plan and Sagicor Agri-Care Plan.

Mr. Charles said that the Advantage General farmers and fisherfolk motor and home bundled insurance package is now available where, for the first time,

insurance is being made available for fishing vessels. He pointed out that the range of insurance facilities is part of the ongoing efforts to build the resilience of the agricultural sector to climate change-related stresses.

“We are instituting smart programmes, initiatives, and resources to bolster and safeguard the livelihoods of our farmers,” the Minister said.

Emergency Funds to Repair Seaman Valley to Millbank Road

APPROXIMATELY \$15 million is to be allocated by the Government to effect emergency repair work on the Seaman Valley to Millbank Road in East Portland, to bring much-needed relief to scores of residents in that area.

This was announced by Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Everald Warmington, during a tour of the constituency on May 3.

Mr. Warmington said despite the alarming circumstances, residents in the area have had a “high level of understanding [with] the situation and have been very patient”, having expressed their concerns to the Member of Parliament, Ann-Marie Vaz.

“I asked the National Works Agency (NWA) team to scope a \$15-million emergency project for it right now, to try and make

the surface a little better to use,” the Minister said.

“We did \$30 million in phase one and now I’ve asked the team to do a next phase of \$50 million as phase two,” he added.

Mr. Warmington said he has also asked the NWA to scope several breakaways in the constituency, including those in Comfort Castle, Ginger House, Cornwall Barracks and Toms Hope.

Overall, Mr. Warmington stated that all the roads in the areas toured will be addressed.

“I can assure the Member of Parliament and the people of Eastern Portland that the Government listens, will react and all of these projects will be addressed this year,” he said.



Paving works on a roadway in rural Jamaica.

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