

Gov't Widening Jamaica's Energy Source

THE GOVERNMENT is looking to introduce new energy sources, which will make power generation in Jamaica more reliable, available, and affordable.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Expo Jamaica 2023 at the National Indoor Sports Centre in Kingston on April 27, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said the Government has embarked on a path to ensure that 50 per cent of Jamaica's energy is generated from renewable sources.

"We are currently doing a new integrated resource plan to make sure that when we do introduce more green energy, up to 50 per cent, that the entire grid is stable, and that the capacity has been increased," Mr. Holness said.

"So, we are looking at pump hydro storage... looking at the Mahogany Vale project, which I announced as an important element in our energy mix. I have [also] met with the International Atomic Agency. Jamaica has to explore new technology in nuclear energy, small nuclear plants to generate energy in Jamaica,



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) is shown a product by Managing Director, RSS Natural Delights, Ronnetta Crooks Allen (left), at the opening ceremony of Expo Jamaica 2023, at the National Indoor Sports Centre in Kingston on April 27. Looking on is Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill.

which will be cheaper, more stable and more affordable," he added.

Mr. Holness maintained that the Government is serious about insulating the economy from energy shocks and high energy prices.

He pointed out that these initiatives will not all materialise in two years, adding that it may take a decade for this to happen.

"We have been lagging for 40 years. Let us start doing things differently. Let us start

looking at the big projects that are going to make the difference; and that is what we are investing in now, to create a new paradigm in energy in Jamaica," Mr. Holness said.

Gov't to Spend More on Social Programmes in 2024/25

THE GOVERNMENT will be spending more on social programmes in the next fiscal year, as the most vulnerable and poor must be protected.

This was emphasised by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness at the opening of the new male ward at the Westmoreland Infirmary in Savanna-la-Mar, on April 26.

He said the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc and brought untold hardships on the lives of many Jamaicans, especially the less fortunate, and that the Government has an obligation to assist.

"I want to take this opportunity to... commit the Administration to doing more in the next Budget. We have increased this Budget as well, but in the Budget to come we

must make a special effort to focus resources on the most vulnerable and the poor," Mr. Holness told the gathering.

"The pandemic has disrupted our trajectory. I do not believe that the country has fully internalised the effect of the pandemic and that one of the most [telling] impacts of the pandemic is inflation. And the people who are affected most by inflation are the poor," he added.

The Prime Minister said the Government has to deliberately ramp up its funding in support, and "we may have to create" new programmes in order to help the poor recover "their consuming income", which has been wiped out because of inflation.

There are already several programmes in place to



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (3rd right) tours the new \$53-million male ward at the Westmoreland Infirmary in Savanna-la-Mar, which he opened on April 26. With the Prime Minister (from left) are Matron at the Infirmary, Nedene Collins-Whyte; Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie; Member of Parliament for Central Westmoreland, George Wright and Mayor of Savanna-la-Mar, Councillor Bertel Moore.

support the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and also the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH).

Prime Minister Holness Hands Over New Houses in St. Thomas



PHOTO AT LEFT: Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (center) cuts the ribbon to a new three-bedroom house, for resident of Albion Meadows, St. Thomas, Louise Williams (left), during a ceremony on April 28. Sharing in the moment is Member of Parliament for St. Thomas Western, James Robertson. The dwelling was handed over under the Government's New Social Housing Programme (NSHP). PHOTO AT RIGHT: Paula Williams from Bull Bay, St. Thomas also received a brand new three-bedroom home under the programme.



\$840 Million Upgrading at Constant Spring Water Treatment Plant

GOVERNMENT'S INVESTMENT in the upgrading and reconstruction of the Constant Spring Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is providing improved access to potable water supply for some 40,000 Corporate Area residents, particularly as the country continues to face drought conditions.

The works, done between 2019 and 2021 at a cost of approximately \$840 million, were aimed at addressing water loss of approximately



Minister Without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda (right), listens as Plant Supervisor, Constant Spring Water Treatment Plant (WTP), Patrick Gordon, provides an update on the work done at the facility during a tour on April 27.

4.5 million gallons per day due to leakage of the two clear water storage reservoirs at the facility.

As part of the undertaking, the roofs of the reservoirs were replaced, a new structure was constructed, the walls and floors received waterproof coating, and pipes and valves were replaced and reconfigured.

Residents of areas such as Havendale, Stony Hill, Half Way Tree, New Kingston, Cross Roads, among others,

are now benefiting from the improvements.

Speaking during a tour of the National Water Commission (NWC)-managed plant on April 27, Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, said the investment was well spent.

"This is work that we're proud of [and] it is further supported by the work that would have been done on Constant Spring Road and

Hagley Park Road by way of re-laying new mains," Senator Samuda said.

He noted that the digitising of the water treatment process was also undertaken "so, we're digitally sure of the volumes that we have, we're very clear on the issues in terms of quality of our water".

Additional 328 Cameras for JamaicaEye Programme

THE GOVERNMENT will continue to expand the network of cameras to boost the country's national closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance programme, dubbed 'JamaicaEye'.

More than 860 Government CCTV cameras have been installed in townships across the island under the programme.

This was disclosed by Minister of National Security and Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, during his contribution to the 2023/24 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on April 25.

The Minister pointed out that an additional 328 cameras are earmarked for installation.

"We are building out the monitoring centre in Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth. We are prioritising Portmore, but we are looking at how we can expand this critical activity across the entire island in the crucial areas. It has proven extremely useful... in apprehending criminals," he said.

The public-private partnership, launched in 2018, is designed to network CCTVs owned by the



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang

Ministry as well as accommodate feed from privately owned cameras.

Right across the island where the cameras have been installed, members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) are leveraging the cameras to assist their investigations of crime and maintaining public order.

The feeds provide useful footage in relation to criminal activity and other emergencies and are monitored by a team of security professionals.

New Work Permit System Coming

THE MINISTRY of Labour and Social Security is replacing its existing legacy work permit process with a new web-based, mobile-friendly work permit and skills certificate management system at a cost of US\$927,000.

Portfolio Minister, Hon. Karl Samuda, made the disclosure during his contribution to the 2023/24 sectoral debate in the House of Representatives on April 26. Currently, the average processing time for applications that meet all the requirements is six to eight weeks.

"The new system will facilitate investment in identified areas of need, since it will be informed by Labour Market Intelligence, including training and certification needs, which is desperately [required] to close the skills gaps in the local economy," Mr. Samuda said.

"It will be safe, secure, efficient, business-friendly and client-focused, and it will facilitate the complete re-engineering of our work permit business process," he added.

Minister Samuda said the new system is scheduled to be completed in October 2023.

During the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the Ministry received 4,855 applications for work permits, of which 1,843 were from new applicants, while 2,246 were for renewals.

Of the remaining 766 applications, 599 were for work permit exemptions, and 167 were for marriage exemptions.

The Ministry also processed 187 CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) Skills Certificate applications and 11 Rights of Establishment applications.



Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Karl Samuda

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