

Executive, Judiciary Must Partner for Justice Transformation

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has pointed to the need for partnership between the executive and the judiciary for the transformation of the justice system.

“The public, in whose interest we all serve, more than ever, wants to see an improved justice system through strengthening of the rule of law and timely justice outcomes. Let me again emphasise that this is a strategic priority of the Government,” he said.

“I have the highest respect and regard for the judiciary, and the executive I lead has no inclination to seek to undermine the independence of the judicial



Prime Minister the Most Hon Andrew Holness (2nd left) with Chief Justice Bryan Sykes (4th left) and wife, Dr. Annette Crawford-Sykes (3rd right) at the swearing-in ceremony held on March 1 at King's House. Others from left are: Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Pearnel Charles; Attorney General, Hon. Marlene Malahoo Forte; Minister of Justice, Hon. Delroy Chuck; and President of the Senate, Tom Tavares-Finson.

branch and, or even to trespass anywhere near the discretion of the judges. We are interested in a partnership to ensure the efficiency and accountability of the judiciary to the people,” he pointed out.

He was addressing the swearing-in ceremony for Chief Justice, Bryan Sykes, held on March 1 at King's House.

The Prime Minister noted that the Government has a responsibility to provide the necessary

resources, and the judiciary must use these resources in an efficient manner in order to secure economic and social development.

He informed that over the last two years, a lot of time and resources have been spent to improve the efficiency of the justice system, and further investments will be made during the new financial year to ensure that judges have the resources to facilitate timely justice outcomes that will reinforce the rule of law.

Focus Placed on Re-Establishing Essential Services in ZOSOs

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) Social Intervention Committee, Omar Sweeney, says the various initiatives being undertaken in Mount Salem and Denham Town, where a ZOSO is currently in effect, are aimed at re-establishing essential services to the communities.



Deputy Chairman, Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) Social Intervention Committee, Omar Sweeney

“Already, 160 persons in Mount Salem have now put their account in good standing and are in a formal relationship with the National Water Commission (NWC).”

Mr. Sweeney, who was addressing a JIS Think Tank on February 27, pointed out that even before the ZOSO, the communities were benefiting from engagements being undertaken by various entities as a means of effecting positive changes.

He said that through the work of the Committee, the agencies that have been operating in these areas every day will now have a coordinated approach in providing the intervention that is needed, whether through work on the physical environment, skills and educational development or social services.

“One of our main strategies and pillars is to

re-establish services such as solid waste management; citizen security and safety, that is, more community policing, neighbourhood watches; community groups; recreational activities as well as education and training programmes, to ensure that the people in these areas are fully engaged,” he pointed out.

Mr. Sweeney said a key area of focus of the Committee is formalising services such as water and electricity.

“Already, 160 persons in Mount Salem have now put their account in good standing and are in a formal relationship with the National Water Commission (NWC),” he noted.

He said that initiatives to foster job creation, skills training and business development are also being undertaken.

Public Debt Servicing Below 40 Per Cent of National Budget

FINANCE AND the Public Service Minister, Hon. Audley Shaw, says

public debt servicing is below 40 per cent of the National Budget.

“It is at 37.4 per cent. This is significant because we all remember the days in both governments when we had debt servicing in excess of 60 per cent (and) at one stage as high as 65 per cent,” he said.

The Minister made the disclosure during a meeting of the Standing Finance Committee in the House of Representatives on February 28.

Mr. Shaw explained that the total provision for debt servicing is \$289 billion or 37.4 per cent of the “overall expenditure budget, including amortisation”.

“This comprises \$137 billion in interest payments and \$152 billion in principal payments. This represents a significantly lower level of payment, 23.7 per cent lower than the \$378.6 billion in debt service payments estimated for the fiscal year 2017/2018,” he noted.

Mr. Shaw attributed the reduced debt service payments to the lower levels of debt maturing in 2018/2019, such as “the early redemption of bonds undertaken through the liability management operations of 2016/2017 and 2017/2018”.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Hon. Audley Shaw (left), makes a point during the Standing Finance Committee meeting held at Gordon House on February 28. At right is Financial Secretary, Darlene Morrison, and at centre is Deputy Financial Secretary, Lorris Jarrett.

1,000 Unattached Youth to Benefit from Training Programme

APPROXIMATELY 1,000 unattached youth are set to begin training on March 5 under the Technology Advancement Programme (TAP).

The programme, which will equip the participants with skills in data collection and analysis, involves partnership between the Universal Service Fund (USF) under the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology and the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU).

Associate Vice President for the Faculty of Advanced Skills and Professional Development at CMU, Cornell Brown, said that the training will provide the youths with an opportunity to gain a marketable skill.

Dr. Brown, who was addressing a JIS Think Tank on February 28, said

that “at the end of the training, participants will receive a recognised CMU competency certificate, which will indicate that they have expertise in data collection.”

Trainees will be employed by the USF for at least one year.

Some of them will be placed in various ministries, departments and agencies to undertake technology-related tasks, while others will be sent into the field to collect information on internet penetration across the island.

The TAP participants will cover nine modules over a 12-week period.

The first module, focused on employability skills, will begin at the Brimmer Vale High School in St. Mary for residents of the parish St. Ann and Portland.



Associate Vice President for the Faculty of Advanced Skills and Professional Development at the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU), Dr. Cornell Brown

On March 6, training will be held in Montego Bay for persons from Trelawny, St. James and Hanover.

The programme continues in Manchester on March 7 for residents of Clarendon, Manchester and St. Elizabeth.

More than 200 participants in St. Catherine will

be trained on March 8, and the first module will conclude in Kingston on March 9.

Gov't in Advanced State of Readiness for Primary Exit Profile Roll-Out

EDUCATION, YOUTH and Information Minister, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, says the Government is in an advanced state of readiness for roll-out of the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) in the 2018/19 academic year, which begins this September.

Addressing the Standing Finance Committee of Parliament meeting at Gordon House on March 1, Senator Reid said stakeholders are being engaged to ensure “all will be well”.

“There has been a lot of training for teachers and the training is still ongoing. Right now, we are working with Grades Four and Five teachers to



Education, Youth and Information Minister Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid

ensure they understand the design of the different assessments,” he informed.

Additionally, Senator Reid indicated that mock

exams for Grade Five students are scheduled to take place with sample questions being made available to the youngsters and their parents “so that they are familiar with the likely modalities of the questions”.

“We will make sure that we journey with our students and parents right into the execution of the first set of exams,” Senator Reid assured.

PEP replaces the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) and is intended to provide a better and more complete profile of students’ academic and critical thinking capabilities at the end of their primary-level education.

Jamaica Combined Cadet Force Receive Vehicle



National Security Minister, Hon. Robert Montague (right), presents the keys to a new vehicle donated to the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF) to Acting Commandant, Lt. Col. A. Gracey, during a handover ceremony at the Jamaica Defence Force, Up Park Camp, Kingston, on March 1.