

More Houses For St. Elizabeth

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness on Wednesday, October 11, launched Phase Two of the Luana Gardens housing development in St. Elizabeth.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (third right) and other officials break ground for Phase Two of the Luana Gardens housing project in St. Elizabeth on October 11.

for additional housing solutions for the area. Under the first phase, 1,032 serviced lots with basic infrastructure such as paved roads, water supply and electricity. The prices for the lots range from \$1.8 million to \$2.2 million.

Phase Three, planned for next year, will provide a mix of 500 housing units and serviced lots.

The entire project will deliver 1,700 housing solutions to the Greater Black River area.

The Prime Minister commended HAJ for bringing “much needed housing solutions to the people of St. Elizabeth.”

He said the entity is “helping to fulfil the Government’s mandate to provide safe, legal and affordable housing to Jamaican citizens.”

Mr. Holness also hailed the agency for realising a profit of \$183 million for the financial year ending March 31, 2017, coming from an operating loss of \$886 million for 2015/16.

He credited the turnaround to the effective management and strong leadership of the agency.

The entity is “helping to fulfil the Government’s mandate to provide safe, legal and affordable housing to Jamaican citizens.”

The \$286.6 million Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) project involves development of 168 serviced lots with basic infrastructure such as paved roads, water supply and electricity. The prices for the lots range from \$1.8 million to \$2.2 million.

PM Urges Greater Use of GIS for Economic Growth

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness is encouraging greater use of geographic information system (GIS) technology across all sectors in order to spur higher levels of economic growth and development.

He contends that despite Jamaica’s use of the technology over the past 25 years, its full potential remains untapped.

“It is certainly accepted by the Government... definitely at the administrative and executive levels. But we have still not yet moved to the point of utilising the technology where we leverage (its) predictive powers... which is to use it in a way to either prevent things from happening or facilitating things we want to happen,” the Prime Minister noted.

He called for its utilisation at the decision-making



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (right) interacts with National Security Minister, Hon. Robert Montague, at the Jamaica Geographic Information System User Conference held at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston on October 10.

level “as a management and planning tool.”

He was delivering the keynote address at the GIS User Conference held at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel on October 10.

Mr. Holness said the Government has been making

significant investments in using GIS technology to spur Jamaica’s growth and development while seeking to reposition the country as a knowledge-based economy.

These, he said, have been in the notable areas of job creation, with the estab-

lishment of the GIS Corps of National Service targeting unattached youth under the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) initiative, and the installation of key infrastructure designed to enhance public safety and security.

He noted that significant investments have also been made to install surveillance cameras and closed-circuit television (CCTV) to capture illicit criminal activities and traffic breaches, as part of the Government’s undertaking to engender a safe and secure society.

Gov’t to Assess Capacity Needs of Five Hospitals

THE GOVERNMENT, through a private entity, will be assessing the capacity needs of five public hospitals across the island, to provide resources for the expansion of services.

Minister of Health, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, who made the disclosure on October 12 in May Pen, Clarendon, said among the things that will be looked at are the technical specifications of the facilities, to expand medical services.

He said the assessment team will examine and determine the needs of the hospitals and what should be added.

“From there, we will use that plan for the next wave of infrastructure development,” the Minister informed.

Addressing a contract signing ceremony for

\$54.7 million to correct leaking problems at the May Pen Hospital, Dr. Tufton said that Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has “signalled” that the health budget will be increased for the next financial year.

“The budget is going to create some space for us to take advantage of expanded infrastructure,” the Minister said.

The hospitals that will be assessed for expansion are May Pen, Mandeville, Spanish Town, St. Ann’s Bay, and the Kingston Public.

The National Health Fund-financed roof project will benefit the Out-patient Department, Maternity Ward, Dietary Department, Laboratory, Female Medical and Surgical Wards and the Paediatric Ward.



Minister of Health, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton (fourth left), affixes his signature to a contract valued at \$54.7 million to correct leaking problems at the May Pen Hospital, in Clarendon, at the facility on October 12. Others (from left) are Regional Director at the Southern Regional Health Authority, Michael Bent (standing); Managing Director of Buildrite Construction, Owen Campbell; Member of Parliament for Central Clarendon, Hon. Mike Henry, and Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Fund, Everton Anderson.

Local Business to Benefit from Rebranded BSJ

LOCAL BUSINESSES are to benefit from a rebranded Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ), which will now focus on trade facilitation and business support, instead of regulations.

The new focus will aid Jamaican businesses in being more competitive in the local and export markets through the use of standards.

The shift is part of recommendations from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)/World Bank, based on a review of the structure and mandate of the BSJ.

This prompted the Government to separate the BSJ’s regulatory function, which has been transferred to the National Compliance and Regulatory Authority (NCRA).

Speaking at a ceremony to launch the rebranded BSJ, a new website and refurbished Energy Efficiency and Mass and Dimensional laboratories



Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Karl Samuda (left), makes a point to Acting Country Manager of the World Bank to Jamaica, Karlene Francis, at a ceremony to launch the rebranded Bureau of Standards Jamaica, at the agency’s Winchester Road offices in Kingston, on October 11.

held at the agency’s Winchester Road offices in Kingston on October 11, Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Karl Samuda, said, “the time has come for separation of the regulatory function and the setting of the standards.”

“We are one of the few, if not the only country now, that has regulations and standards under the same roof, driven by the same Board. The separation

had to take place. It was passed through the Cabinet, and the Permanent Secretary will take the appropriate steps to effect it,” the Minister said.

Meanwhile, Executive Director of the BSJ, Stephen Wedderburn, said with the rebranding of the Bureau, the agency “will be doing things differently and better.”

Woman Inc. Crisis Shelter Reopens

THE WOMAN Incorporated Crisis shelter in Kingston was officially reopened on Wednesday, October 11 after extensive upgrading.

Ground was broken in January for the renovation and expansion of the facility to house additional women and children who are seeking shelter from abuse.

The project was undertaken by the Government through more than \$14 million in funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Among the amenities are bedrooms, kitchen, bathrooms, housemother’s room, consulting room for counselling services, recreation and dining room, gazebo and garden



Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange

area, and reading room. The building can also accommodate the disabled.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Hon. Olivia Grange, said the Government is moving swiftly to establish a

national shelter in the Corporate Area. She said there are also plans to commence work on satellite shelters in rural Jamaica.

“The national shelter, which is long overdue, is being established as a Legacy Project of the Jamaica 55 commemorations, with the kind support of members of the Jamaican diaspora in the United States,” she pointed out.

Meanwhile, Ms. Grange said the Government is implementing the provisions of the National Strategic Action Plan to eliminate gender-based violence.

She stated that the plan sets out strategic action to be implemented across the whole of Government, and with specific targets towards eliminating gender-based violence.

Farmers Affected by Flood Rains to Receive Assistance



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. J.C. Hutchinson (right), listens to Managing Director of St. Jago Farm and Hardware Supplies Limited (SJFHS), O'Brien Johnson, as they discuss agricultural products supplied by the company. SJFHS, during a ceremony held at Morant Villas in St. Thomas on October 11, handed over vouchers valued at \$2.5 million for seeds, fertilisers, chemicals and plant nutrition products, which will be donated to farmers.

