

Gov't to Introduce Voluntary Retirement Programme

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says a new programme will be introduced in the 2017/18 financial year for persons opting for early retirement.

He noted that the move represents an overall strategy to reduce the size of the public sector wage bill.

encourage persons to take it," he said.

Mr. Holness noted that for the programme to be effective, plans for its implementation must begin early. "We have to budget for it," he pointed out.

He stated that the initiative was not merely a requirement of the International Monetary Fund but that "we are doing this to secure Jamaica."

"We must reach the point where we can recognise clear and present danger and act as an independent Parliament in our own best interest and this is why we are acting," Mr. Holness said.

The Prime Minister was contributing to the debate on the Pensions (Public Service) Act 2016 in the



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

House of Representatives five per cent of their basic salary towards their pension. It will also improve actuarial sustainability and strengthen the governance of the scheme.

The Bill, among other things, seeks to make it mandatory for all pensionable officers to contribute

National Identification System (NIDS) Project on Target

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the National Identification System (NIDS) project is on track for implementation in the 2017/18 financial year.

A Bill, titled the National Identification and Registration Act, 2017, was tabled in Parliament recently. A NIDS White Paper and Policy have also been drafted and posted on the Houses of Parliament's website.

The Bill will, among other things, facilitate the formation of the National Identification and Registration Authority.

The Registrar General's Department will be transformed into the National Identification and Registration Authority. This body will be responsible for implementing the project.

It will be responsible for establishing and regulating a system of registration, verification and authentication of the

identity of citizens and other residents.

The Registrar General's Department will be transformed into the National Identification and Registration Authority. This body will be responsible for implementing the project.

The legislation will also make provisions for the operation of a National Civil and Identification Database for the comprehensive collection and storage of personal identity information.

Mr. Holness indicated that project funding was being negotiated through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and that a detailed work plan was already prepared.

A pilot project is expected to be implemented by September.

National Financial Inclusion Strategy Crafted

THE GOVERNMENT has crafted a National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS), which aims to bring further improvements to the country's financial system.

Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Hon. Audley Shaw, said the National Financial Inclusion Strategy is the Government's commitment to create the enabling environment that makes it easier for Jamaicans to save, invest, do business and obtain relevant financial products and information to empower themselves.

The Minister who was speaking at the official launch at the Jamaica Conference Centre, on March 29, said the Strategy has as one of its impact indicators, the goal of achieving an increase in the



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Hon. Audley Shaw, addresses the launch of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy and introduces the National Financial Inclusion Council at the Jamaica Conference Centre on March 29. At right is Bank of Jamaica Governor, Brian Wynter.

percentage of total private sector credit extended to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to 11 per cent.

The Minister also said the strategy forms part of policies being pursued by

the Government to achieve sustainable economic growth and development.

A National Financial Inclusion Council has been established to oversee the implementation of the initiative.

The Council, to be chaired by Minister Shaw, will foster a public-private partnership by engaging members of the private sector and non-governmental organisations through a Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Reduction on Non-Revenue Water to Boost Drought Resilience

MINISTER WITHOUT Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, says a 30 per cent reduction of non-revenue water (NRW) will significantly improve the country's resilience to drought.

"Non-revenue water might not be something we can eliminate, but if we can get it from 60 per cent to 30 per cent, that is an additional 30 million gallons of water at the same cost of production."

Addressing a luncheon of the Rotary Club of St. Andrew at the Hotel Four Seasons, on March 28, he said the periodic lock-off of water supply in sections of the Corporate Area during the dry seasons could also be eliminated.

"Non-revenue water might not be something we can eliminate, but if we can get it from 60 per cent

to 30 per cent, that is an additional 30 million gallons of water at the same cost of production," he said.

The Minister pointed out that the Kingston and St. Andrew Non-Revenue Water Co-Management Project designed to achieve this goal and to improve waste-water collection, has already been impactful.

Dr. Chang further noted that resolving this challenge will result in the National Water Commission (NWC) being more viable and being able to offer reasonable and stable water rates for the long term.

The \$42.5 million Project falls under the Kingston Metropolitan Area Water Supply Improvement Programme that was started in September 2015, through funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Several infrastructure projects are under way through the initiative, including the replacement of two water transmission pipelines between Ferry and Six Miles in St. Andrew.



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang

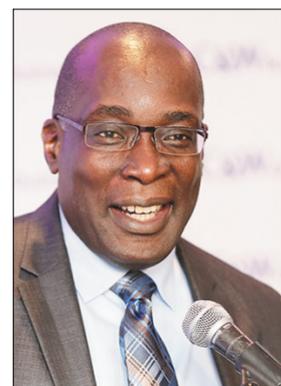
Rural PATH Students to Benefit from School Transportation

STUDENTS ON the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) in rural parishes are to benefit from a school transportation programme starting in September.

The programme will begin as a pilot project to be rolled out in St. Elizabeth, St. Thomas, St. Mary, Hanover and St. James.

This was announced by Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid, who said the Government is embarking on the initiative to address the problem of absenteeism among this cohort, which represents 50 per cent of all children in school.

"We still have an average of 20 per cent absenteeism of our children each day, because parents cannot afford to send their children to school," he said, while addressing a President's Forum hosted by the Private Sector Organi-



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

sation of Jamaica (PSOJ), at The Jamaica Pegasus Hotel on March 28.

The Minister pointed out that in several parishes, more than 40 per cent of households are on PATH, and many schools in rural areas have more than 90 per cent of students on the programme.

"It makes no sense that we are offering free access to education, but they can't receive it because they can't even reach (school). We have to get them to school and take them back safely," he said.

Justice Ministry Launches Tour Against Human Trafficking



Employee at the Ministry of Justice, Nesta Haye (left), hands out brochures to students of the Kingston High School in Half-Way Tree, after the launch of the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons tour, at the Ministry's offices in Kingston on March 28.