



IN THIS ISSUE:

1. **Montego Bay Fire Station** nears completion
2. Local polls postponed
3. Spruce up for Lucea & Hopewell
4. SDC Retreat
5. Hanover Infirmary
6. Life vests for Rafters
7. Energy Efficient Buildings
8. What is mental health?

The new Montego Bay Fire Station in St. James

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Montego Bay Fire Station nears completion

MONTEGO BAY, St. James: The new Montego Bay Fire Station in St. James is to be commissioned into operation shortly.

“The contractors have completed their share of the responsibilities in terms of this actual contract that they signed, and the Brigade is now working to complete the minor details. I am pretty confident that well before we celebrate 60 years (of Independence), this facility will be open for the benefit of the people of Montego Bay and the rest of Western Jamaica,” said Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie.

Minister McKenzie was addressing reporters following a tour of the facility with officers of the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) on January 19.

Following the completion of minor details on the new building, which is located on Barnett Street in Downtown Montego Bay, the firefighters will utilize the station on a phased basis.

The four-storey facility was constructed at a cost of some J\$550 million by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF). It features dor-

mitories for the firefighters, administrative offices, a gymnasium, and communal spaces. The furniture to outfit the fire station has been secured and connections to utility services such as electricity and water are being finalised.

“The sewage line has been extended, and it is just now for connection with the National Water Commission (NWC) to be made, and a service provider to provide access to phones and Internet. That is almost at the stage of being completed and we are going to ensure that we put in a very reliable standby generating system that will allow the facility to operate if there is no electricity,” added the Minister.

JFB’s Assistant Commissioner in charge of Operations, Kevin Haughton, noted that plans are in place to facilitate the smooth transition of operations from Fort Street and Freeport to the new facility.

“The Jamaica Fire Brigade is pleased with the progress of the project. We would have put our relocation plans in place, and we are doing the necessary orientation of our staff,” he noted.



HON. DESMOND A.A. MCKENZIE, CD, MP, JP

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Local Government Elections postponed for a further 12 months

KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS NEWS): Local Government elections have been postponed for a further 12 months, to be held no later than February 2023.

This follows approval of The Representation of the People (Postponement of Elections to Municipal Corporations and City Municipalities) Act, 2022 in the House of Representatives on January 25.

The Bill was passed with one amendment.

Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, who piloted the Bill, said that given the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) and the fourth wave of the pandemic, the holding of an election at this time would put the country at greater public-health risk.

He noted that the fact that public schools would have to be used as polling and counting centres and the desire not to disrupt face-to-face engagement also factored into the decision to postpone the elections.

“As the Minister responsible for Local Government, I wish to assure the House and the country that we are still committed to having the next local government elections in the shortest practicable time. The commitment of this Administration to the local-government

system is well-known. It is a critical part of national life, and it will remain unthreatened. Despite the fact that we are seeking to postpone for an additional year, it does not jeopardise the existence of local government in this country,” he said.

The Minister also called for increased observance of the public health protocols, and greater take-up of the range of vaccines that are available “so that we can get back to life in the way that we ought to, and we can have elections that are going to be free from any concerns of any virus, et cetera”.

Just over 14 months ago, on November 24, 2020, the House passed an amendment Act to temporarily modify the Representation of the People Act, to postpone the holding of a general election of members to serve on the respective Councils of Municipal Corporations and a general election of the Mayor of the Portmore City Municipality.

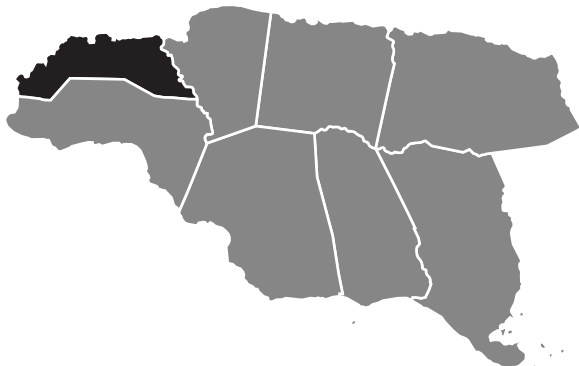
This was due to the public-health emergency posed by COVID-19, as well as the need for recovery from the extensive rains experienced in that year.

The amendment Act created a special extension period for the holding of local government elections to a date no later than February 27, 2022.



Spruce up for Lucea and Hopewell - Hanover towns to benefit from the 'Paint The City' Initiative

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LUCEA, Hanover: The rural townships of Lucea and Hopewell in Hanover are to benefit from the Government's \$300 million 'Paint the City' project that is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Hanover is among five parishes participating in the project aimed at generating employment through beautification, mural painting, street sign installation and improvements to selected markets.

For Lucea, it will entail painting of the transportation centre; painting of the stalls in the market; painting the exterior of the market; painting the walls, and painting the police station and post office," said Minister Desmond McKenzie during a press briefing in the western town on Friday, January 21, 2022.

"We are going to put in a recreational park just in front of the Hanover Municipal Corporation building and give the place a facelift, so it can lift the spirits of the people and give some energy and life to the town."

The beautification project, which was announced by the Minister of Finance and the Public Service during the 2021/2022 Budget Debate, forms a part of the Government's plan to drive the development of rural Jamaica and is to be executed over a three-year period.



HON. DESMOND A.A. MCKENZIE, CD, MP, JP

"Rural development cannot be done overnight. We have to know what it is we are up against, and that is why it is important that we conduct the surveys and then move in to do the development over a period of time," stated Minister McKenzie.

"This project represents the effort of the Government to put our people to actual, productive work. It is about generating hope through increased employment as we pull free from the grip of the pandemic, and restore activity, life, and vigour to our towns and parish capitals."

The town of Hopewell will see improved sidewalks and murals to complement an ongoing multi-million rehabilitation of its market.

The Minister also disclosed that the plans are being explored to alleviate the traffic congestion in Lucea.

"We are also looking at converting the one-way in Sir Alexander Bustamante Square into two lanes of traffic as a means of alleviating the traffic congestion in the town of Lucea," he noted. "I want to use the opportunity to urge the residents of Lucea to be a little patient with us. What we are doing is going to take some time, but for now there are some low-hanging fruits that we can pick."





Social Development Commission (SDC) Retreat

MONTEGO BAY, St. James: Portfolio Minister Desmond McKenzie participated in a three-day retreat with the Social Development Commission (SDC) on January 5 to 7, 2022.

The event, which saw the involvement of the board of directors; the SDC Management Corp, chairmen of Parish Development Committees and youth mayors from western Jamaica, was aimed at critically analyzing the agency's programmes and its overall impact in communities.

The retreat was used to discuss the SDC's areas of focus; promote team work and overall productivity among the employees as well as to identify outcomes for improved communication and working relationships with its publics.

Minister McKenzie also requested a further meeting to chart the course for the Strategic Review of the Agency and its possible implementation.

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KITCHEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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Work advanced on new kitchen at Hanover Infirmary

LUCEA, Hanover: Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, says work on a new kitchen at the Hanover Infirmary in Lucea is almost 75 per cent completed.

The kitchen, being constructed at a cost of approximately \$12 million, will replace the old facility, which was closed by the Public Health Department.

Mr. McKenzie, who toured the project site on Friday, January 21, told journalists that the work has been going at a “brisk pace”.

Minister McKenzie said that once completed, the new kitchen will be properly furnished at an additional cost.

“Despite the early challenges of the coronavirus (COVID-19), they have maintained a very high standard. I am really pleased with what I have seen, so far, and looking forward to the completion of the kitchen so that we can get back to full normality,” he said.

The Minister said that the work must be done in adherence with the coronavirus (COVID-19) safety protocols, “so, if anybody who comes here to work is sneezing, coughing or showing any signs of anything, they aren’t going to be allowed to come on the premise”.

“These are the [measures] we have set up for all the infirmaries where we have work taking place... and if we go over by a week, by a month, I am not going to be unhappy about that. The safety of the residents come first,” he added.

In the meantime, Mr. McKenzie lauded the work of staff at the Hanover Infirmary.

“This infirmary continues to maintain a very high standard and it is one of the infirmaries in the country that I am very pleased with because the maintenance that has been provided by the staff, the matron and the Poor Relief Department is very commendable,” he pointed out.

“This is one of the newer institutions that were built, and it is one of the better-run and kept facilities,” he added.



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Life vests for Lethe River rafters

LETHE, Hanover: The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has committed to provide 100 life vests for the raft captains who operate along the Great River in Lethe, Hanover.

Minister Desmond McKenzie gave the assurance to some 30 raft captains following dialogue to discuss their needs and that of the area last month.

The life vests, which will provide protection for the rafters and those who they transport on their vessels, will be made available through the Social Development Commission (SDC).

The SDC has also been tasked with devising a rural development strategy for the rural community of Lethe.

“What we are seeing is a group of young entrepreneurs who fit the profile for SDC support, and they have said clearly that one of the things that they need to enhance what they are doing is the life vests,” declared Minister McKenzie.

“I believe that when you find young people who are willing to go out and work to earn an honest living, you must at all costs support their efforts.”

He said that rural development is vital to the nation’s economic and social progress, noting that the rural development agenda of the Government does not only centre on enhancing the physical infrastructure of communities but also helping to develop the skills of individuals.

Raft captain Paul Barrett expressed gratitude to the Minister for responding to the needs of the rafters.

“We would love to get the life vests... because life vests are expensive, and we would want everybody to get a life vest on the rafts, so that we know the guests are safe. We are happy that someone sees that something needs to be done and has come to help us,” he said.



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Discussions on for construction of energy-efficient buildings

KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS NEWS): Minister of Local Government and Rural Development Hon. Desmond McKenzie, has said that the government is engaging construction industry stakeholders regarding the development of more energy-efficient buildings that would serve to reduce Jamaica's fuel bill.

Noting that the matter was "under consideration", Mr. McKenzie said it required the engagement of the wider industry and advised that, "those discussions have commenced".

The Minister indicated that industry stakeholders have also been in discussions with at least one local authority, the Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC), on the matter.

He was speaking at a press conference for the Seventh Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean (RP21), at the Jamaica Conference Centre, downtown Kingston last November.

Mr. McKenzie informed that steps have been initiated to ensure that new buildings are equipped with energy-saving features for, among other things, water harvesting.

He further indicated that all municipal buildings being constructed are required to be energy-efficient in terms of electricity and water supply, to reduce the associated costs.

"So, the Government is leaning towards that, and we are doing that with our infirmaries as a start," the Minister said.

Meanwhile, Mr. McKenzie said a strong and effective local government system was necessary in the quest towards disaster risk reduction.

He noted that Jamaica has a robust system comprising, among other stakeholders, parish disaster coordinators in all 14 parishes.

"We have a network of volunteers [who] can [indicate which] communities are vulnerable [and which] areas are prone to flooding," the Minister further informed, while highlighting the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management's (ODPEM) role in the process.

"So... I would recommend to my fellow brothers and sisters within the region that an effective local government system can help, in many ways, in the fight against disasters," Mr. McKenzie said.

The four-day conference ran from November 1-4, 2021 and was jointly hosted by the Jamaica Government, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).



Highlights of the
Ministry's End-Of-Year Staff Activity
in December 2021'

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual can cope with everyday stressors, work productively, reach his or her full potential, and contribute to their community. Mental health, along with physical health and social well-being, is an essential component of overall health.

It's also important to point out that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. You can have poor mental health without having an illness and likewise, you can have good mental health with a mental illness.

We believe mental health and human performance are not two separate pursuits but rather two parts of the same equation. Combined, they are what make humans flourish.

The relationship between body and mind is an essential component of mental health. Together,

er, they make up our internal equilibrium.

In today's world, employee mental health must be a top priority for businesses looking to hire high-performing employees.

To summarize, the five key takeaways on mental health are:

- Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness
- You can't have physical health without mental health
- Mental health aids in coping with stress
- Human performance and mental health go hand in hand
- Workplace wellness must be a top priority

Source: betterup.com



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