



THIRD QUARTER EDITION 2022



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SDC’s Role in Guiding Jamaica’s Youth Underscored

JIS NEWS: Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, has lauded the Social Development Commission (SDC) for its unwavering contribution to the advancement of the nation through community development.

Minister McKenzie said development initiatives spearheaded by the agency since its inception in 1937 have positively impacted the Jamaican populace.

The SDC works with the 775 communities across the island for the advancement of sport, social, cultural, and economic development.

“If I go back to the days when I was active in youth clubs... the benefit of the SDC at the time, was to give exposure to young people in communities across the country, in various sporting, cultural and educational activities,” Minister McKenzie noted.

“Beyond a shadow of a doubt, this organization has delivered in more ways than one and the Government appreciates and acknowledges your performance. I want to thank all of you for the commitment that you continue to make and give for the development of the country.”

The Minister was addressing the agency’s Long Service, Retirement and Staff Recognition Awards ceremony held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Rose Hall, St. James on October 20.

He congratulated members of staff who were recognised for their years of sterling contribution to the efficient running of the SDC.

Deputy Chairman of the SDC Board, Councillor Richard Creary, said that the agency continues to raise the bar in the execution of its mandate.

“We are pleased with the stewardship of the Social Development Commission. During Covid-19, your jobs got a little bit harder because there were new tasks that were placed upon you, but you did them with dignity and with pride,” he said.

Seventy-nine individuals were awarded for distinguished service to the SDC. Of the total, 61 were recognised for service of 10 years and more and 18 were retirees.

Minister McKenzie presented seven members of staff with special awards for exemplary contribution to the growth of the agency.





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Cheswick, St. Thomas to benefit from Rural Development programme

CHESWICK, St. Thomas: The community of Cheswick community in St. Thomas is to benefit from the multi-million Rural Development Programme being spearheaded by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Portfolio Minister, Honourable Desmond McKenzie Minister said the current infrastructure of the community is “non-existent” and that residents have complained of a lack of adequate and reliable water supply.

“What we are going to be rolling out in Cheswick over the next couple of months is the process to carry out the repairs to Hill 60 (a section of the community), and Rural Water Supply will work with the National Water Commission to look at how to improve the water supply system to the community.” Until these developments are completed, he pointed out that funds will be provided to have water trucked to the area.

The Minister was speaking during a tour of the community on August 30 where he observed some of the challenges affecting residents and met with stakeholders who will be instrumental in facilitating the upgrades. He also noted that the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) and the Rural Electrification Programme (REP) have identified 100 households within the community for retrofitting, which will commence shortly.

“I want to make the point that we are not going to retrofit 100 houses and just leave them like that. The Jamaica Public Service (JPS) will come in at the beginning of the process and they will be a part of the discussions with JSIF and REP on the rewiring of these houses, to make these residents eligible to be connected officially to the JPS system,” Minister McKenzie said.

Another upgrade for the community is the provision of six social-housing units for qualified residents. For this, the Minister explained that the parish’s Municipal Corporation has commenced investigations to identify the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, from a survey undertaken by the Social Development Commission (SDC), it was identified that the community is in need of a basic school and a recreational space. Noting that the community is home to a great percentage of young people, the Minister committed that, “after we have concluded all the other arrangements, we will erect a basic school and a community centre and we will restore the playing field as the recreational ground for this community”.

In his remarks, Mayor of Morant Bay, Councillor Michael Hue, expressed gratitude for the selection of the community for the series of developments.

“This demonstrates that even as deep rural, you can be recognised and you can feel a sense of pride knowing that the Government cares and you are not forgotten”.

He urged community members to embrace and protect the facilities when they are put in place, so that they can be enjoyed by future generations.

The J\$350 million Rural Development Programme was introduced last year and is to give new life to rural communities. The Cheswick community, with over 900 residents, is the second of six communities identified for the programme.

The first beneficiary was the Chambers Pen community in Hanover, which is currently experiencing upgrades under the initiative.



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COMMISSIONER STEWART BECKFORD

Reduction in Number of Fire-Related Deaths

JIS NEWS: The Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) has reported a decrease in the number of fire-related deaths between January and September 2022, in comparison to the corresponding period in 2021.

Addressing a recent Jamaica Information Service (JIS) ‘Think Tank’, Commissioner of the JFB, Stewart Beckford, reported that the number of deaths decreased by approximately 48 per cent when compared to last year.

“While we can be comforted by the fact that we have seen a significant reduction in fire-related deaths this year, we should all work to get that number down to zero,” he said.

Commissioner Beckford noted that discarded lit cigarettes, suspected arson, acts of nature, careless use of fire, explosions, spontaneous ignitions, and electrical short circuits were among the major sources of fire that the JFB has seen.

“There are cases where persons may be smoking, and they discard the cigarette while it is still lit. We have seen 247 instances of that and those would have resulted in fires occurring at some locations,” he pointed out.

The Commissioner added that there is also a decrease in the number of cases relating to the careless use of fire.

“This could very well involve you, but we have been speaking specifically to our farmers about slash and burn and, thankfully, we have been seeing a reduction in this category,” he said.

Reporting on the 91 cases of suspected arson over the period, the Commissioner said that the JFB will continue to work with the police to investigate these cases, some of which had been circulating in the news in recent times.

Commissioner Beckford informed that the JFB has responded to 40 cases of fire caused by acts of nature, 14 explosions, 34 spontaneous fires, and 264 cases of fire caused by electrical short circuits.

He expressed that there is a “deep concern” for fires caused by electrical short circuits, as some of the fires in this category are due to inappropriate connections to Jamaica Public Service powerlines.

The Commissioner implored persons, especially those in the inner-city communities to “get their electricity regularised... so as to reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring”.

“We are all responsible for our safety, and so I encourage you to practice good fire-safety principles, whether it’s at home or work,” he added.





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Cross Island Run makes a comeback Precursor to Local Govt and Community Month



RUN C



RUN D

PORTMORE, St. Catherine: The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development launched its 2022 staging of its Cross Island Run following a two-year hiatus due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Portfolio Minister Desmond McKenzie on October 19 set off the runners, who will carry the messages for Local Government and Community Month (LGCM), on their island-wide trek.

The Run culminated on November 5 at the National Church Service hosted by the Kencot Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kingston.

The activity - organized through the Social Development Commission - is the precursor to LGCM celebrated each year in November.

During the launch at the Portmore Municipal Corporation, Minister McKenzie urged young people to embrace music that encourages positive values, rather than glorifies illegal activities.

His call comes on the heels of a recent ban by the Broadcasting Commission on content that lauds unlawful activities such as scamming, gun violence and drug abuse.



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“We must talk about values... what values we are trying to instill in the country. Those persons who have the ability to write negative lyrics, also have the ability to write positive lyrics. So, we have to take a stand as a country.”

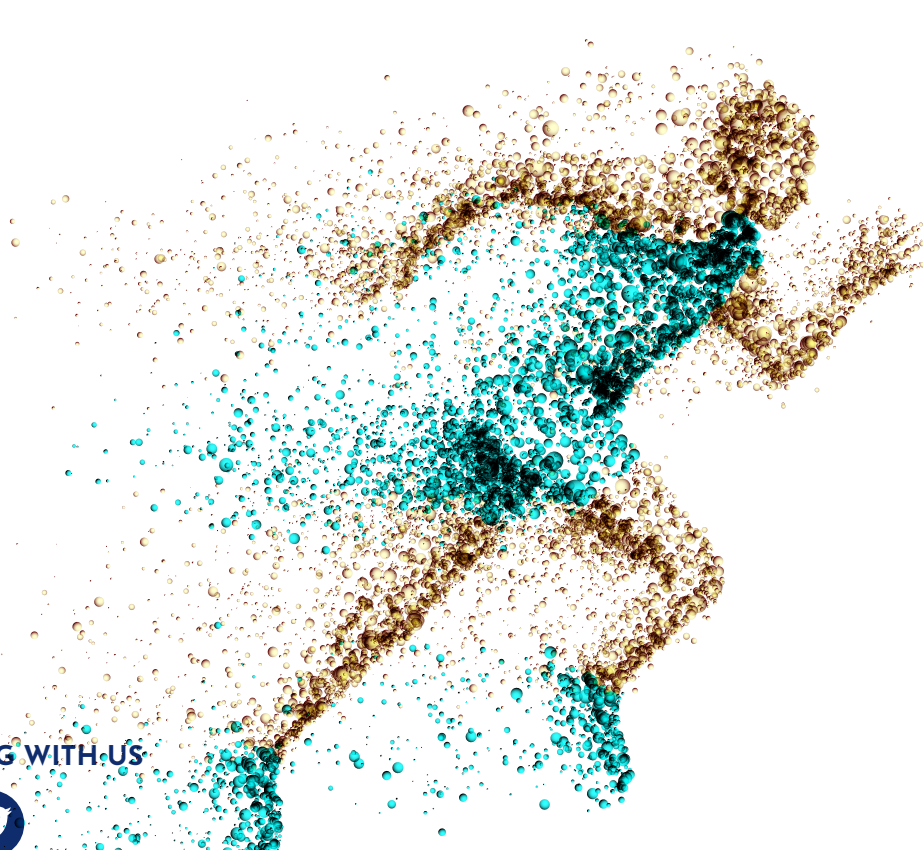
The Minister highlighted that the Government is not violating citizens’ right to freedom of expression.

“What we are saying is that whatever expression you are [voicing] in the public domain must be something that is edifying... something that is uplifting,” he maintained.

“Our music once had hope... our music once inspired...Nowadays, I don’t even know what the number-one song in Jamaica is, because there are times when the lyrics are not something you would want to encourage your enemy to sing.”

Reflecting on late popular Reggae artistes such as Dennis Brown, Alton Ellis and Bob Marley, the Minister noted that their music highlighted current happenings without vulgarity.

“It tells you that we have the ability to do what is right. Let us use the decision that was taken by the Broadcasting Commission to look at ourselves and to make the right decisions.”





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CENTRAL KINGSTON B

Two social houses handed over in Central Kingston

KINGSTON, Jamaica: Two social housing solutions were handed to needy families in Central Kingston through the Government's New Social Housing Programme (NSHP).

In his remarks, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, said more than 40 housing units have been constructed within the Corporate Area under the Ministry's Indigent Housing programme.

He added that funding has been earmarked for the construction of three additional houses in Central Kingston under the programme.

"The need for housing is the number one priority for the Government. It is our responsibility as a Government to respond to the social needs of areas such as Southside (Central Kingston) and other communities right across the country," the Minister shared.

"There is a need for serious social intervention in Central Kingston and for a constituency and for an area that for many years have been loyal. It speaks poorly to those who were at the steering wheel before."

The houses, which are sited at 27 Fleet Street and 29 Barry Street, were handed over during a special ceremony on October 6. The units were constructed from reinforced concrete and comprise two bedrooms, living and dining rooms, kitchen, and a bathroom.

Four more houses are also under construction in the communities of Allman Town and Rae Town.

Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, Honourable Floyd Green, who represented Prime Minister Andrew Holness, said the Government is tireless in its efforts to deliver on its promise of constructing 70,000 housing units.

"This Government appreciates that a home is essential if our Jamaican people are really going to embrace their prosperity, and our Prime Minister has set his sights on ensuring that our people across all social classes have access to owning a home."

Member of Parliament for Central Kingston, Donovan Williams, said the construction of the homes will revitalise the area and encourage civic pride.

The NSHP is the housing component of the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) Programme.

It was developed to improve the housing conditions of the country's poor and disadvantaged by providing quality affordable and sustainable housing. It is being implemented through the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, in collaboration with the HOPE Unit.



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Homeless Shelters in Trelawny and St. Ann Near Completion

KINGSTON, Jamaica: The new shelters for the homeless being constructed in Trelawny and St. Ann are near completion, says Secretary of the Board of Supervision under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Treka Lewis.

“Trelawny is almost complete. We are about 85 per cent complete and just fixtures, doors and windows are left to go in. St. Ann is about 70 per cent complete so, we are hoping that before this year ends those two facilities will be up and running,” she said in a recent interview.

Portfolio Minister, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, announced the construction of the shelters in May 2021 to collectively house 80 persons.

The facilities, being built in Falmouth and Ocho Rios, are extensions of the existing drop-in centres in the parishes and will aid the Poor Relief Departments of the municipal corporations to more effectively provide care and assistance to the vulnerable homeless population.

“The aim is to have our drop-in centres, have

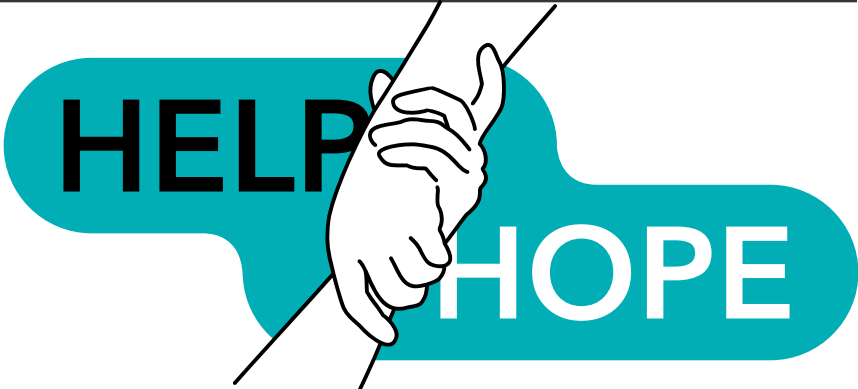
the shelters and then have a transitional component, so that we can transition persons [back into society]. So, we are putting the physical infrastructure in place as well as other aspects in terms of rehabilitation and development,” Ms. Lewis noted.

Rehabilitating the homeless and facilitating their reintegration into society, where possible, is part of the areas of focus of the Poor Relief Departments.

On World Homeless Day, October 10, Municipal Corporations, and their Poor Relief Departments treated the homeless to health checks and meals, with the added component of literacy and skills assessments along with networking assistance.

The day was observed under the theme ‘Changing the Lives of Persons Experiencing Homelessness Through Community Involvement and Career Development’.

There are more than 3,000 homeless persons in Jamaica, and the Ministry is committed to building an additional eight shelters across the island in the coming years.





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Expenditure approved for Alexandria Market in St. Ann

JIS NEWS: The expenditure to commence work on restoring the market in Alexandria, St. Ann, has been approved, says Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie.

Speaking at the launch of a joint programme aimed at strengthening Jamaica’s resilience to food and water insecurity, at the ROK Hotel in downtown Kingston, on September 30, he pointed out that the market is in “very, very high” demand by the small community, where farmers can take their produce.

Additionally, Minister McKenzie noted that several other projects are to take place island-wide.

“We’re also going to be building a brand-new market in Negril in Westmoreland. Shortly, I’ll be breaking ground for the construction of a multipurpose market there. Extensive work will [also] be undertaken on the Savanna-la-Mar market. And when we go into Montego Bay, the Charles Gordon Market is slated to benefit from over \$85 million in repairs,” the Minister outlined.

He said, further, that the Highgate Market, which was destroyed by fire earlier this year, will also be rebuilt.

The programme launched is being led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with funding largely by the European Union (EU), through the UN Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Fund.

Noting that Jamaica, like other nations, has had to deal with the issue of food insecurity, Mr. McKenzie said that “it is our markets that will ensure that the food gets to the population. And so, a companion of water and rural development is going to now be supplemented by work on improving and building new markets across the country”.

Moreover, the Cabinet has taken a multi-government approach to markets and a sub-committee has been established to look at a comprehensive market programme.

There are currently 37 markets across Jamaica, 70 percent of which were built more than 100 years ago.

