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NEARLY 300 MILLION DOLLARS TO RECONSTRUCT PORT ANTONIO POLICE STATION

The Ministry of National Security has broken ground for the reconstruction of the Port Antonio Police station, which was closed and partially demolished in 2017. The renovation and repairs will be carried out at a cost of \$268 million through a collaborative initiative of the National Housing Trust (NHT), the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF).

The new 1,600 square foot station, which was designed and is to be built by a team of police personnel from the Maintenance Unit of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, fits within the 'Effective Policing' arm of the Ministry's five-pillar crime reduction strategy and will seek to provide a comfortable working environment for the men and women assigned to the Port Antonio division, in Portland.

Speaking at the ground breaking ceremony at the site of the old police station in Port Antonio on Friday, February 23, Minister of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague said the plan to reconstruct the police station is evidence of the determination of the Ministries and agencies operating within the Government of Jamaica to reclaim the country from the plots and ploys of criminals.

"We must say special thanks to our Prime Minister for his dedication to the fight against crime which has led to the initiative to build and upgrade police stations across the island through a combined investment from the JSIF, NHT and JCF," Minister Montague said.

“We must also say thank you to the NHT for using funds to not only build housing schemes, but build communities equipped with the amenities that are needed to ensure the safety and security of Jamaicans,” he continued.

The National Security Minister also noted that the new building is a well needed incentive for the police personnel in Portland who work assiduously to keep the parish as the safest in Jamaica, by recording an ongoing downward trend in crime.

“Portland has seen a continued decrease in all categories of crimes, except break-ins. When we think of crime in Jamaica, we think murder, but in 2017 Portland reported eight murders, the lowest among all parishes. These police officers who are working hard to keep the peace in Portland deserve proper working conditions which can only enhance their efficiency,” he said.

Also speaking at the groundbreaking, Senior General Manager Corporate Services at the National Housing Trust, Neil Miller, said the groundbreaking demonstrates the NHT’s dedication to providing an environment for contributors and Jamaicans overall to feel safe and secure. He noted that the NHT will provide project management for the reconstruction project, while the JCF will provide labour and administration for the day-to-day tasks.

“The men and women who serve this country deserve nothing less than the best working facilities and that is why the NHT will be putting in additional guardrooms, redesigning the administrative building, enhancing the building exterior, adding barracks and bathrooms, and installing a new roof and sewerage system,” Mr. Miller said.

Giving remarks on behalf of the Acting Commissioner of Police, Clifford Blake, Head of the Crime Portfolio in the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Deputy Commissioner Selvin Hay expressed gratitude for the project, noting that in order for the police to deliver the quality service that is required, the facilities in which they work and live must be at an acceptable standard.

“I am very proud that we will be able to house the very hardworking police officers in this new, modern facility. The much needed enhancement of the facility will ensure that the working environment for police officers is synonymous with the exceptional service they are required to provide,” DCP Hay said.

He also implored the officers who will occupy and utilise the station to take care of it and treat it as their own. He urged them to guard against maltreatment of the station, lest they end up at in the same situation of having an unsatisfactory building in a short period of time.

West Portland Member of Parliament, Daryl Vaz, who is also Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation Daryl Vaz, said the new station is a reward for the hard work the police officers in Port Antonio had been doing. This, he said, is the first police station to be refurbished under the new partnership.

Member of Parliament for East Portland, Dr. Lynvale Bloomfield commended the National Housing Trust and Ministry of National Security for moving forward with the construction of the facility, which he said was well needed and well deserved.

He said he's happy that ground is being broken for a station that will match the beauty and peace of the parish.
