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National Security Minister tours St. James and meets with stakeholders

National Security Minister, Hon. Robert Montague and State Minister in the Ministry of National Security, Sen. the Hon. Parnel Charles Jr. today (February 4) toured communities in St. James.

The tour, which included Permanent Secretary, Dianne McIntosh and other senior officials from the Ministry of National Security, Jamaica Constabulary and Defence Forces, was conducted to speak with residents and ascertain how they are being affected by the enhanced security operations.

The Ministers toured the communities of Flankers, Norwood and Glendevon.

While on the tour, residents of St. James informed the Ministers that the security professionals were polite adding that they felt good about the increased presence of the security forces.

Both Ministers also visited the Barnett Street and Freeport Police Stations. At the Freeport lock-up, the Minister spoke with those who have been detained and observed the conditions in which they are held.

Senior members of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) briefed the Ministers on the operations being conducted, progress being made and the established procedures for treating with detainees.

The Minister also held a meeting outside the Freeport Police Station, with family members of those detained. The relatives said they understood that the security forces are doing what they need to, and said they felt their family members are being treated fairly. The relatives also said the members of the security forces have been respectful to them.

In an effort to obtain a further understanding of the operations, the Minister hosted a luncheon for over 60 off-duty JCF members involved in carrying out activities for the enhanced security measures.

Minister Montague also took the opportunity to meet with stakeholders from St. James business and civic groups, as well as, the tourism industry at the Montego Bay Cultural Centre.

The Minister updated those present on measures being taken through the Five-Pillar Crime Reduction Strategy to reduce crime islandwide.

Speaking at the meeting, Minister Montague said of the enhanced security operations, ***“I am happy to know that all residents who I spoke with today have said that the security professionals are polite. They are happy for the enhanced security measures and we have their support.”*** He further stated, ***“I am heartened that when I visited the Freeport Police Station, family members were being treated well, there was an established waiting area and the detainees also said they were being treated well. This shows that our security forces can be deployed, enforce the law and not violate human rights.”***

The Minister informed stakeholders that a Review Tribunal has been established to handle all concerns related to human rights.

The tribunal which will be located at the Office of the Prime Minister in Montego Bay is chaired by Attorney at Law and former President of the Jamaica Bar Association, Ian Wilkinson. The other members are Pastor of Swallowfield Chapel, David Henry and Retired Supreme Court Judge, Lloyd Hibbert.

Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, Brian Brown stated the Chamber of Commerce supports the operations and pledged its continued support to measures geared at creating a safer Montego Bay and a safer Jamaica.

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