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NEWS

BRITISH GOVT. ANNOUNCES BURSARY IN HONOUR OF MARY SEACOLE

LONDON, June 24 (JAMPRESS):

Distinguished Jamaican nurse, the Hon. Mary Seacole, O. M., who shot to prominence in the Crimean War, 1854-1856, has been honoured by the British Government with the announcement of a bursary valued at 25,000 Pounds, in her name.

Mary Seacole is well known for her celebrated humanitarian and medical services to cholera-stricken British troops during that war.

From her early days in Jamaica, Mary Seacole, nee Mary Joan Grant, born in Kingston in 1805, became involved in nursing. She later ran a small lodging house and private sanitorium and went to Panama where she continued nursing.

It was, however, during the Crimean War that she carved out her name in the medical annals. The Jamaican Government in 1990, awarded her posthumously with the country's third highest honour, the Order of Merit.

The female hall of residence at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, also bears her name in recognition of her distinguished contribution which won for her, comparisons with British contemporary, Florence Nightingale.

She was married to Edwin Horatio Seacole, Viscount Nelson's godson, but he succumbed to illness shortly after.

There are those in the United Kingdom who feel that Mrs. Seacole has not been given the recognition she deserves.

This view is also shared by British Minister of State for Health, Dr. Brian Mawhinney, which he expressed as he made the announcement about the bursary at a recent congress of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), at Harrogate, Yorkshire.

"I do not think she has received the recognition she deserves." he told the congress.

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Dr. Mawhinney said he knew that the RCN had campaigned strenuously for that public acknowledgement. There were many ways, he said, that this might be done, through a status, naming a hospital after her, or having a postage stamp with her visage.

"It is for you, who are closest to this issue, to campaign for the most appropriate commemoration," he declared.

The Minister of State, remarked: "I wish to acknowledge her achievements. So I am pleased to tell you that we will fund an annual bursary in her name to the value of 25,000 Pounds.

"It will support a nurse in study to prepare for leadership position in nursing so that the excellent examples Mary Seacole set can be followed by others," he added.

He stated that the late Jamaican nurse had faced prejudice, but rose above it and would not be deterred from caring for the sick and wounded.

Reacting to the news, Mrs. Connie Goodridge-Mark, Chair of the Mary Seacole Memorial Association, told the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) that she was happy that at last some credit had been given to Mrs. Seacole for her wonderful contribution.

Her association had, for the past 13 years, been seeking to get some recognition for Mary Seacole, reported Mrs. Mark, who has just been invested with the Queen's Empire Medal.

Mrs. Karlene Davis, chair of the Nursing Association of Jamaica, said the British Government was to be commended for acknowledging Mary Seacole.

"It is a tribute to those who have lobbied over the years for recognition to be given to Mary Seacole for the tremendous role she has played in nursing during the war and in Britain," she added.

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