

B/N Simpson-Miller, Portia

PM Makes First Budget Presentation

Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller made her inaugural Budget presentation in the House of Representatives on May 9, where she focused on a number of areas that would receive special attention during the 2006/07 fiscal year.

Vision for Jamaica

"My position is not merely political, but it is also deeply philosophical. The well-being of any society depends on the well-being of all its people. The measure of a good society, therefore, is how it treats the poor, the aged, those with disabilities and our women and children." Mrs. Simpson Miller said in her opening remarks.

"We must remind ourselves therefore, that people are the ultimate end, and not the means to the political or personal ambitions of others. We must remind ourselves that the worth of a person is not based on their economic, social or political status, but on their God-given possession of free will, ability to reason and, importantly, on the moral values they possess. We must never allow anyone to be encumbered by the geography of birth, social or economic status," the Prime Minister said.

Mrs. Simpson Miller said she had a clear vision of Jamaica becoming a country that, "will reach a stage where we have universal literacy and an education and training system that produces a first class human being

The Prime Minister added that, "my vision is about empowerment; where citizens take responsibility for the management of their economic, health, educational, cultural and recreational needs, supported and facilitated by the government".

Outlining some key areas of priority, Mrs. Simpson Miller said her administration intended to strengthen the macro-economic policy with a comprehensive upgrade of the development programme by rooting it in community empowerment.

"This means that the communities throughout Jamaica will play an important role in defining what is to be done and in ensuring successful implementation of the development programme," she said.

Investment Programmes

Turning to investment programmes, Mrs. Simpson Miller said a most impressive package of investments was underway in the country and strengthening the capacity of communities would only make this package more impressive.

"These investments are related to strategic industry clusters, identified in the National Industrial Policy. They include: Tourism, Mining, Shipping and Berthing, Information and Communications Technology and Agro-processing," she noted, adding that many of these investments were now being implemented, and "we need to organise ourselves in a way that will

about achieving growth that has associated with it, the widest possible range of employment opportunities. As part of the growth agenda, I am insistent that we facilitate, encourage and assist the Jamaican people who have the entrepreneurial spirit to grasp income-generation opportunities," she stated.

The Prime Minister cited what she said, was "critical" investment in transforming the country's educational system to raise educational standards for all, create a world class education and training system that produces a first class human being capable of competing in any sector of the global economy.

Transforming Lives

Mrs. Simpson Miller assured that it was her intention to accelerate the process of Educational Transformation, which would lead to major progress in several aspects of the programme.

Stressing that it was the responsibility of the State to provide the environment and support for each young person to discover his or her unique gift and develop this to its full potential, Mrs. Simpson Miller said youth development must be focused on positive issues surrounding the appropriate transition strategies from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood.

"It must not see young people as problems and therefore be mired in finding strategies to 'fix' the youth," she said. It was to this end, she noted, that for this year, the National Youth

Service (NYS) would be expanded from 3,000 to 5,000 participants, facilitated by a provision of \$500 million.

Turning to the National Housing Trust, the Prime Minister said tourism workers must be properly housed in communities that were convenient to their place of employment. Therefore, this year some 12 new projects consisting of 1,872 new units are to be constructed in the parishes of Westmoreland and Hanover. In addition, she informed the House that some 1,205 housing solutions would be delivered in the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Catherine, Trelawny, St. Elizabeth and Westmoreland.

As part of her mandate to "balance the lives of our people, while ensuring rural and urban development", Mrs.

Simpson Miller said the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) was expected to play a significant role in providing more jobs for people. Through the Lift-up Jamaica programme, Phase II, this year, another 11,500 persons would be employed, she disclosed, adding that these individuals would also be trained and certified, giving them a skill for life.

In addition to jobs created through



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller arrives at Gordon House for her inaugural budget presentation.

capable of competing within any sector of the world economy... a Jamaica where our people will all have access, across the board, to first class health care, and to safe and reliable transportation".

She explained that her vision was one of community participation, where "we create the space - the environment where people see their involvement in national life as their right".

maximise, nationally, at the enterprise level, at the community level and for individuals the impact of these investments".

Mrs. Simpson Miller said these investments would help to bring about a better quality of life for all, eradicating poverty and creating wealth.

"These are vital components of economic growth. We are passionate



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller delivers her inaugural budget presentation.

the activities of the UDC, many more jobs would be created through the construction of housing developments at Hellshire Park and Johnson Hill in St. Catherine, Mount Edgecombe in Westmoreland, Success in Montego Bay, and the Caymanas Development, she informed.

"We are not taking a chance with people's lives, where they may win or lose. By creating jobs, we are seeking to balance the lives of the people," she reiterated.

Urban Renewal

On Urban Renewal Programmes, Mrs. Simpson Miller said she was "insisting" that the people at the grassroots level be consulted in the development of projects at the community level. Therefore, this approach was adopted by the UDC as part of the Rural Township Re-development Programme for Port Maria.

As a result, she added, \$23 million would be provided by the UDC for specific projects chosen by the people. "This is how we intend to empower the people of our communities both in the urban and rural areas of Jamaica. Their involvement, I am sure, will make them become owners and protectors of the assets of their communities. Together we can make it; together we will succeed," the Prime Minister asserted.

Commending the country's sports men and women for the outstanding performances that they had made on the world stage over the years, Mrs. Simpson Miller said that over the next year, the government through the Sport Development Foundation, would undertake a detailed study of the contribution of sports to the Gross Domestic Product of Jamaica.

"My office will assess how much development potential lies unused in our communities and how to put it to the best use. Then, we will assemble

a complete plan to determine how we can become an even bigger player in this growing sector, so that we can use sports to boost every other linked industry, such as tourism and entertainment," she informed.

Mrs. Simpson Miller also used the opportunity to assure the nation that National Insurance Scheme funds were secure and that the interest of contributors would not be jeopardized. She explained that the investment of \$1 billion from the National Insurance Fund (NIF) NIF for micro and small business credit was "part of the strategic thinking of the NIF Board to participate in projects that have a significant developmental impact, specifically geared at economic growth and employment creation".

Regional Partnership

The Prime Minister said that while working with development partners in the international community to assist the country in achieving the broad visions and objectives, her administration would be paying particular attention to the completion of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

"It should be noted that our capacity as a region to complete the important negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) now taking place between CARICOM /CARIFORUM and the European Union depends critically on our completion of the CSME arrangements," she said.

On the issue of gender, Mrs. Simpson Miller said she was committed to finding new and creative ways to work towards a more secure and prosperous society for women, men and children.

"To this end, I will be emphasizing strategies that lead to the achievement of gender justice,

equality, development and peace," she said.

She added that there were still some serious social issues that were defined by rural and urban poverty, the feminisation and threat to sustainable development of the HIV AIDS pandemic, cross border and internal human trafficking, which expose young girls to dehumanizing sexual experiences, the rise in gender-based violence and the abuse of children, the educational under-achievement of the poor in general and poor boys in particular and the need to empower women and girls to take their rightful place in the Jamaican society.

"My emphasis on community empowerment and partnership with all stakeholders will result in the strengthening of the governmental and non- governmental sectors in the delivery of gender-sensitive programmes and policies," she said.

"I intend to give focus and serious consideration to the level of human and financial resources that can promote positive gender relations at all levels of the society," the Prime Minister outlined.

Mrs. Simpson Miller said she would enter into a process of consultation with the country's established international and national partners to plan a more pro-active and sustainable approach to the achievement of gender justice and equality in the Jamaican society.

Turning to Constitutional reform, Mrs. Simpson Miller said that, "there is now no major obstacle standing in the way of the agreement necessary to change the Constitution to a republican form of Parliamentary government". She indicated that discussions between the Attorney General and the Parliamentary Opposition members who speak on legal affairs, and the Senate had now "arrived at a point where a formula acceptable to both sides could be reached".

PM Delivers Charge ... cont'd

Peter Phillips, Minister of National Security and Leader of Government Business in the House of Representatives; Maxine Henry-Wilson, Minister of Education and Youth; Roger Clarke, Minister of Agriculture and Lands; Senator A.J. Nicholson, Attorney General, Minister of Justice and Leader of Government Business in the Senate; Dean Peart, Minister of Local Government and Environment; Phillip Paulwell, Minister of Industry, Technology, Energy and Commerce; Senator Anthony Hylton, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; Aloun Ndobet-Assamba, Minister of Tourism, Entertainment and Culture; Horace Dalley, Minister of Health; Derrick Kellier, Minister of Labour and Social Security; and Senator Colin Campbell, Minister of Information and Development. Senator Campbell, who resigned later in the year, was replaced by Donald Buchanan.

State Ministers Charged to Engage in Meaningful Consultation

Meanwhile, as part of her plan to further engage Jamaicans in the process of governance, Mrs. Simpson Miller in early April, charged the 12 appointed Ministers of State to listen to the voice of the people by consulting with them on matters of policy and garner their support for the successful implementation of those policies.

She said that no policy which affected the lives of Jamaicans should be brought to Cabinet without meaningful consultation with the people and the mobilization of their support for its successful implementation. The Prime Minister renewed her call for a partnership between the government and all sectors of the society, saying that this was crucial to reversing degradation in many urban communities, as well as the revitalisation of rural and primarily agriculture-based communities.

Members of Parliament for North Western Clarendon, and Central Kingston respectively, Richard Azan and Victor Cummings, were the two representatives who were appointed State Ministers for the first time. Mr. Azan was appointed State Minister in the Ministry of Housing, Transport, Water and Works, while Mr. Cummings was appointed State Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

The other State Ministers included: Fitz Jackson, Ministry of Finance and Planning; Errol Ennis, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands; Noel Monteith, Ministry of Education



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (front centre) is flanked by newly appointed State Ministers, at the swearing in ceremony at King's House on (April 4). Front row (l-r): State Minister for Finance and Planning, Fitz Jackson; State Minister for Education and Youth, Senator Noel Monteith; State Minister for Local Government and Environment, Harry Douglas; and State Minister for Industry, Commerce, Science and Technology (with Energy), Senator Kern Spencer. Second row (from left): State Minister for Agriculture and Land, Errol Ennis; State Minister for Labour and Social Security, Senator Floyd Morris; State Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator Delano Franklyn; State Minister for Agriculture and Land, Victor Cummings; and State Minister for Housing, Water, Transport and Works, Richard Azan. Back row: State Minister for Water and Housing, Dr. Fenton Ferguson; and State Minister for Tourism, Entertainment and Culture, Dr. Wykeham McNeil, are in the back.



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (centre) speaks with Minister of Labour and Social Security, the Hon. Derrick Kellier (left), and former Minister of Information and Development, Senator Collin Campbell at the swearing in ceremony for Cabinet Ministers at King's House.

and Youth; Floyd Morris, Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Kern Spencer, Ministry of Industry, Technology Energy and Commerce; Dr. Donald Rhodd, Ministry of National Security; Delano Franklyn, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

Foreign Trade; Harry Douglas, Ministry of Local Government and Environment; Dr. Wykeham McNeill, Ministry of Tourism, Entertainment and Culture; and Dr. Fenton Ferguson, Ministry of Housing, Transport, Water and Works.

Prime Minister Conferred with Order of the Nation

On May 29, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller was conferred with the honour of the Order of the Nation (ON) by Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Order of the Nation, the Hon. Mr. Justice Lensley Wolfe, at an investiture ceremony held at King's House.

In her response, the Prime Minister said she accepted the honour with humility and on behalf of all Jamaicans. She said she recognized "the enormous responsibility that had been placed on her and called on Jamaicans everywhere to join her in working to create a better quality of life for the poor and oppressed."

"As I move about this country seeking partnership, I ask all Jamaicans - the trade union movement, workers, employers - to join me as we work to create a better way for life for the poor and the oppressed," the Prime Minister said.

Mrs. Simpson Miller said she was honoured to have been able to break the 'glass ceiling' and that in so doing, she has paved the way for more women to make their contribution at any level of government and within the society.

The Order of the Nation may be conferred on any Governor General of Jamaica and on any person who

has been appointed Prime Minister of Jamaica. A member of the Order is styled 'the Most Honourable' and the spouse of the member is also entitled to be similarly styled.

Mrs. Simpson Miller was conferred with the Order of the

Nation in her capacity as Prime Minister of Jamaica, making her the second Prime Minister to receive the award while in office.

All former Prime Ministers of Jamaica are members of the Order of the Nation.



Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Order of the Nation, the Hon. Justice Lensley Wolfe congratulates Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller the investiture ceremony held at King's House, to confer her with the Order of the Nation.



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller (2nd left) and husband the Most Hon. Errald Miller (right) exchange pleasantries at the investiture ceremony held at King's House, to confer her with the Order of the Nation. Also participating in the occasion are: Governor General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Professor Kenneth Hall (3rd left) and wife Mrs. Rheima Hall (2nd right), as well as Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Order of the Nation, the Hon. Justice Lensley Wolfe