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**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, December 10, 2020

**Minister Samuda meets with Senior Management of DCS**

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, and Permanent Secretary, Courtney Williams, today met with senior officials from the Ministry and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), to revisit their 2020 activities and plan the 2021 strategic vision.

**“The meeting focused on the Department of Correctional Services’ COVID-19 response since March, the proposed amendments to the Corrections Act, the operational changes to include the management structure and ensuring the safety and security of the most vulnerable in the facilities”**, informed Senator Samuda.

He added that there are no active COVID-19 cases in the penal institutions - so far, there are 39 inmates and 58 staff members who have recovered from the virus. **“We will continue the distribution of masks and regular sanitization, especially areas that house inmates over 65. The simple fact is that there might be a second wave or one or two cases in the DCS and we, as leaders and the general community, have to be prepared”**, the Minister affirmed.

One of the issues which was of concern due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is air quality. As a result, Minister Samuda instructed that a project should be undertaken to assess air quality and implement measures to drive the improvement. He said the project will be **“handled in the same manner as the DCS’ Water Project done earlier this year, which has improved water supply and enhanced water security, in the facilities”**. An update on the Air Quality Project is expected in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, Permanent Secretary Williams reminded the team that collective efforts will be required to support the legislative and management changes. He further stated that, **“when contraband enters the facilities, inmates use these to facilitate crime and create mayhem on the system and the wider society. Consequently, the limited funds and resources which are earmarked to support the rehabilitation and vocational programmes in DCS end up been redirected to enforcing security measures and toward deterring and detecting the trafficking of contrabands”**.

The meeting also focused on management changes in recent weeks as part of a strategic programme aimed at enhancing command and control initiatives within specific correctional centres. Correctional officers, selected from the ranks of Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, have been rotated across eight of the department’s 11 correctional institutions. The changes in the service began on November 30 and are expected to be in full effect by next Monday.

The meeting, which was held at the Ministry’s Oxford Road office, was attended by Chief Technical Director, Shauna Trowers; Commissioner of Corrections, Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Gary Rowe; and senior staff from the DCS.

