



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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DCS Merges Juvenile Correctional Facilities

Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, says the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) has consolidated its resources by relocating wards from the Hill Top Juvenile Correctional Centre to its Rio Cobre facility, which is situated on approximately 19 acres of land in St. Catherine.

“We’ve taken the bold step by consolidating these two facilities which allows for shared services and efficiency. It allows for better management of the space and I believe, sets the first layer of that foundation for greater consolidation for other plans. This amalgamation of efforts, teamwork, creativity and partnership, shows to the public and the rest of society that DCS is modernising and is modernising fast”, the Minister said.

Minister Samuda was speaking at yesterday’s unveiling of murals painted by wards, and the official opening of new block at the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Centre, which now houses an additional 17 wards relocated from the 30-year-old correctional facility in Bamboo, St. Ann.

“This sends a signal to the young men in our custody that although they are in our care they have not been discarded by society, and that in and of itself is another important milestone,” the Minister added.

In addition to the new block, the Rio Cobre facility was also expanded to accommodate more offices spaces, bathrooms, an upgraded medical amenity and perimeter fencing, at a cost of approximately \$120 million.

The relocation of wards, according to Superintendent Claudeth Hamilton, Director of Juvenile Services at the DCS, was being planned over five years ago. She pointed out that Rio Cobre facility is just over 50 per cent full and although wards from the two institutions are housed separately, they share academic, vocational, recreational and dining spaces.

She pointed out that the relocation to an already established institution enables the continued rehabilitation engagements and welfare needs for the wards.

“The wards continue to engage their families through the virtual platform established for them and the presence of a computer lab also ensures that engagement with other virtual programmes and activities, and communication with parents/guardians are more accessible. It is a new home with much opportunity and the dedicated staff to motivate them”, explained Superintendent Hamilton.

She further explained that the Correctional Services' mandate to rehabilitate and reintegrate, will be rejuvenated through a multifaced approach, which now includes art therapy. Hamilton further alluded to the murals that were painted by wards and the donation of art supplies through an initiative designed by the Youth for Development Network (YFDN).

To commemorate the organization's 10th anniversary, and due to the COVID 10 pandemic, the YFDN Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Andre Wilson, explained that the organisation has found more innovative ways to engage young people, particularly at-risk youth.

“Our programmes prioritise young people and their creativity by allowing them to express themselves and enhance their own psychological development”, Wilson noted. He further said that the initiative was able to unearth hidden talents among wards, underscoring the need to place emphasis on softer skills.

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