



**PRESS RELEASE
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Process to amend Corrections Act advanced as Government ramps up modernization of prison infrastructure

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, says the public can expect to see greater alignment of the nexus between the work of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and the other agencies of national security, as it advances the modernizing of the physical facilities and legislative framework that support their work.

“For far too long, the smuggling of contraband into the correctional facilities, for example, has been met with grossly inadequate penalties. This has facilitated the continued criminal conduct of offenders from behind bars, causing fear of reprisals in communities. This is unacceptable and will not be allowed to continue,” the Minister stated.

He added that the process to amend the Corrections Act to address the movement of contraband into the facilities is advanced, and will be tabled in Parliament during this fiscal year.

“We are increasing the penalties to treat with the offence of trafficking of contraband and thereby creating greater deterrence. Comprehensive amendments to the Corrections Act will be undertaken in the medium term,” Minister Chang said at Wednesday’s Orientation Session for members of the Boards of Visitors and Parole Board at the Jamaica Conference Centre in downtown Kingston.

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is an important component of Jamaica’s national security architecture. Admittedly, for many years, the work being done in Corrections has not received prominence nor prestige. **The work in Corrections is not sexy, neither is it flamboyant, but it is critical to ensuring public safety and security across the wider society.**

Speaking directly to members of the Board of Visitors and Parole Board, Minister Chang urged that they take their mandate seriously.

“Your service in this capacity is crucial to the broader work of ensuring the safety and security of Jamaica. I encourage you to take this mandate very seriously, even as you partner with the Department of Correctional Services and the Ministry of National Security to ensure that we have responsive correctional processes and a relevant rehabilitation mechanism,” Minister Chang said.

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The orientation session is regarded as a resetting of the work of the Boards of Visitors and Parole Board, as it signals the level of seriousness that the government is attributing to both the monitoring of operations within the facilities and enhancing the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

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