



**PRESS RELEASE
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**Correctional Facilities in Jamaica ahead of the Caribbean despite COVID-19 Challenges-
Minister Samuda**

COVID-19 infections in Jamaican detention centres remain the lowest in the Caribbean and Latin America, according to Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator Hon. Matthew Samuda.

The Minister was addressing staff of the Department of Correctional Services' (DCS) 11 correctional facilities virtually on the management of COVID-19 on Wednesday, February 10, 2021.

“This success is indeed your success and it is indeed an example of the ability of the correctional services to achieve. It proves we can indeed manage our affairs in a manner which will give the country confidence and will contribute positively to the ultimate goal of making Jamaica and Jamaicans safer,” Minister Samuda said.

Despite the successes, however, Minister Samuda cited budget constraints, which he said still pose another problem.

He said the challenge is as a result of the chronic underinvestment into the Department and its infrastructure, stating: **“This has been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of these challenges are manifested on a daily basis and oftentimes become the substance of critical reports from investigative agencies and auditors,”** Minister Samuda explained.

Minister Samuda said that both health and infrastructural issues within the country's correctional facilities can be fixed when everyone associated with its administration perform his or her duty, stating that what is required is a recommitment of hearts and minds to the task at hand, pointing out that the COVID-19 threat is manageable if rules are followed and protocols are observed without failing.

Currently, there are 24 active COVID-19 cases among inmates at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre. However, DCS reports that 39 inmates and wards have recovered along with a total of 63 staff members.

Referencing the 24 active COVID-19 cases among inmates at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre, Permanent Secretary, Courtney Williams implored the DCS staff to



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remain strong while the Ministry of National Security continues its drive to establish **“a safe and secure society not just against crime but also against COVID-19”**.

“I am imploring the DCS staff to share their views and concerns, as your firsthand experience is seen as invaluable in battling this virus. As we continue to work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we must remember to remain vigilant while practicing physical distance, washing of hands and wearing of face masks”, he concluded.

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