

Main Address
Hon. Fayval Williams
Minister of Science, Energy & Technology
Universal Service Fund's Emancipation Park Public Wi-Fi Hotspot
Commissioning
Friday, March 22, 2019 at 2:30 pm

Salutations:

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Ladies and gentlemen!

Internet Access Granted!!

I am absolutely thrilled to join the Universal Service Fund (USF) as it commissions its seventh public Wi-Fi Hotspot, here, at Emancipation Park, one of Kingston's most popular public spaces.

Sixteen years ago, on July 31, 2002, Emancipation Park was officially opened. The Park was created to be a symbol of **our Freedom to Hope, to Excel and to Be**. This park has truly transformed the city as we know it - creating an oasis that attracts visitors and locals from all walks of life, to converge, take a break and connect with nature in the heart of the business district.

Today's commissioning of the public Wi-Fi facility injects a fresh and new way we can use this Park **to hope, to excel and to be**. In a world where Wi-Fi connectivity is almost seen as a requirement, the Government of Jamaica is giving you access to the tools to positively transform your lives.

Today's event, is without-a-doubt, a significant step in transforming Jamaica into a truly digital society.

As Minister with responsibility for the technology portfolio, I am heartened by events such as these, where we provide the access and opportunities for you, our people, to connect, communicate and build networking opportunities via the internet. We know that we can also admit that it is much sweeter when we can do all of this, without the added cost of a data plan on our devices.

Government Creating Access

Over the years, the USF has been very instrumental in empowering Jamaicans through technology. In fact, since its inception in 2005, the USF has invested approximately 11-billion dollars in improving the country's ICT infrastructure.

To date, the USF has:

- Established 309 Community Access Points (CAPs) across the island to provide internet and computer access in underserved communities;
- In partnership with e-Learning Jamaica Company Limited, the **Tablets in Schools** initiative, is bringing exciting and dynamic learning experiences at the primary and secondary levels by infusing technology in an engaging way; and
- The USF has been provisioning an island wide broadband network which allows public access to the internet through high schools, public libraries, post offices, health centres and police stations. Several institutions have been able to reap the benefits of high speed connectivity through this network.

I am extremely proud of what the USF has accomplished.

Connectivity in the Digital Age

Ladies and gentlemen, as a Ministry and certainly as a Government, we understand the growing need for connectivity for our people and the need to create a digitally-inclusive society where no one is left behind.

With more than 50% of the world population using the internet, more business activities are being done online and more persons are connecting to the internet through a multiplicity of devices, especially smartphones.

On the global scene, technology conglomerate, CISCO, projects that by 2022:

- there will be 5.7 billion mobile users up from 5 billion in 2017;
- there will be 12.3 billion mobile connected devices; and
- total public Wi-Fi hotspots will grow four-folds from 124 million in 2017 to 549 million by 2022.

Locally, we have more than 3 million mobile subscriptions and a Mobile Broadband Subscription Penetration Rate of 60.2% for the quarter ending September 2018.

Additionally, we live in a time where we are on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution, which is a time set to revolutionize the way we live, work and relate to each other due to the adaptation of cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things (IoT) and new and emerging technologies.

What this means, ladies and gentlemen, is that as a nation we will need to enhance our ICT infrastructure to meet the growing demand for seamless connectivity and also to facilitate the ease of doing business. As a Ministry,

we are committed to ensuring that Jamaica has the best ICT infrastructure to meet those needs.

Let's Connect for Innovation

This is an exciting time to be alive. With all the technological advancements that have and continue to be made, this tremendous use of and access to technology, presents endless opportunities for us to ignite our inventive and innovative capacities.

As the Government provides access to the technology, I urge you to utilize the connection for innovation. At your fingertips is the power to create the next invention that can drive economic growth and contribute to our overall development as a nation and human race. This is the time to produce those tangible products and services which can propel us leaps ahead into the future.

Connect Responsibly

Now, with great power comes great responsibility. So as you connect to this public platform I must reinforce the equal caution you must take to protect yourself from cyberattacks.

Ladies and gentlemen, **your data is you** and you're your passcodes and internet activities is the doorway that can lead cyber criminals to your

finances, banking details, pictures, videos, and other personal information that can cause you considerable pain and losses.

The types and frequency of cyberattacks are increasing every second.

A 2017 study conducted by McAfee found that:

- Cybercrime ranks 3rd among crimes with global impact;
- Ransomware is the fastest growing cybercrime tool, with more than 6,000 online criminal marketplaces;
- Cybercrime-as-a-service has also become more sophisticated, with flourishing markets offering a broad diversity of tools and services such as exploit kits, custom malware and botnet rentals.

The impact of cybercrime is so far reaching that computer experts predict that criminals will soon, if they have not already done so, use artificial intelligence to build hacking programs that are clever enough to evade detection by the best security programs.

Ladies and gentlemen, **we are all at risk**. Now, more than ever, we have to be mindful of our online presence.

- Think before you click on those links or install that app;
- Do not use this or any public Wi-Fi to conduct banking, shopping or other business transactions;

- Adjust your device settings and never automatically connect to this or any Wi-Fi connection;
- Be mindful of the websites that you visit; and
- Ensure that the safeguards that you use to protect your systems and devices are up-to-date.

Cyber security is everybody's business. As we traverse the information super highway and commission these Wi-Fi and internet facilities, I urge you all to be mindful of protecting your personal and financial data.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, today is truly a great day for the country's technology sector as it marks yet another milestone in our journey to become a digital society.

My commendations to the hard working USF team for this important initiative and for abiding by your mandate of ***bridging the information gap*** by providing ***internet access for everyone***.

Let's get connected!

Thank you.