

## Children's Hospital to be Built in Western Jamaica

Ground is to be broken for a children's hospital in western Jamaica, during fiscal year 2013/14.

Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Fenton Ferguson, made the announcement on Tuesday (January 15) adding that plans are already underway for the establishment of the institution, which will be located on the grounds of the Cornwall Regional Hospital in St. James. "It is going to happen. We have already identified the site and we have done the prerequisites for getting it done. We are doing the consultations now with critical groups, and once that is through, the business plan for the public/private partnership will be the next step. This hospital will carry a private wing, and it is going to be part of the health tourism product," the Minister said. Dr. Ferguson was speaking at the media launch of the Rainforest Seafood Festival, a fundraising venture for the Cornwall Regional Hospital, held at the Sandals Royal, in Montego Bay. Outlining the need for a facility to offer dedicated care to persons up to the age of 18 years, the Minister noted that over the years, persons in western Jamaica have been forced to travel to Kingston to access the services at the Bustamante Hospital for Children. "We believe that the developments in western Jamaica, at this time, demand, not just a children's hospital, but a child/adolescent hospital. There is a gap. Bustamante (Hospital), by law, sees children 0-12 years of age, and there is a gap between the ages of 12 and 18. We need to close that gap," he emphasized. The Minister said that the Government has moved to fast-track the procurement process for the building. Meanwhile, Dr. Ferguson said that a new policy for persons making donations to health institutions is now in place. "Often times there are good intentions about gifts to the Ministry, but when we check on some of the things that are arriving, they are not in keeping with the standards and specifications for good operation. We have taken the decision about a policy that will help to guide our friends, both locally and overseas," he said. "We believe that going forward, it is going to be critical that health is seen not just as a social good, but must be seen in the context of production and productivity. It must be seen in the context that a healthy nation represents a prosperous nation," the Minister added. The Minister also endorsed the Rainforest Seafood Festival that is to be held on February 13 at the Catherine Hall Entertainment Centre, in Montego Bay and its organizers "We Care for Cornwall Regional Hospital". The Minister said that the group's efforts to raise funds for the hospital "represents a cause, and I want to be part of that history." "This kind of partnership that is emerging with this Festival...for me, it is a major policy area going forward. It is public/private partnership that will make the difference," the Minister told his audience.