

## Gov't to Roll Out Islandwide Broadband Network

Government is in the process of rolling out an islandwide broadband network to provide universal access to digital technology for all Jamaicans.

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, says this will be provided through the Universal Service Fund (USF). Mrs. Simpson Miller opined that more can be done to achieve the vision of Jamaica being “knowledge-based and educated society, which is globally competitive and productive; thereby giving rise to the strategic placement of Jamaica as the key ICT hub within the region.” Addressing the official opening of the Digicel regional headquarters in downtown, Kingston on March 19, Mrs. Simpson Miller pointed out that digital inclusion ensures that vulnerable groups in the society have access to, and possess the necessary skills to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), thereby enabling them to contribute to their economic and social well-being. She said there is always the risk that carriers and service providers will favour geographical areas that are densely populated and where the cost of delivering service per customer is relatively low. “In these situations, the government has to directly intervene to promote universal access,” Mrs. Simpson Miller said. “We would expect service providers like Digicel, to respond positively and make the investment necessary to connect these low density communities, so as to achieve full digital inclusion,” she added. The Prime Minister acknowledged that issues regarding child protection and cyber security are important considerations in creating an enabling environment facilitated by broadband and ICTs, but said the Government will not be daunted as it seeks “to collaborate with all stakeholders, local, regional and international, to mitigate against these threats to development.” In the meantime, the Prime Minister congratulated Digicel on its bold investment in Jamaica, noting that through its network development and the work of its Foundation, the company has also invested over US\$800 million in its almost 12 years in the island. Situated along the waterfront on Ocean Boulevard, the building was officially opened by Prime Minister Simpson Miller; Digicel Chairman, Denis O’Brien, and young Brandon Thompson who attends the STEP Centre, which is a school for the therapy, education and parenting of children with disabilities sponsored by the Digicel Foundation. JIS