

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller, says her administration is committed to working with all Jamaican Diaspora organisations in the on-going development of the country.

In her message delivered by Honorary Consul to Pennsylvania, Dr. Alston Meade, at Team Jamaica Bickle's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Independence Gala held downtown Philadelphia on Saturday (Aug. 25), the Prime Minister said that the Diaspora has a key role to play in the country's social and economic development.

"As we confront the global challenges, frame new policies and embark upon a new governance structure, we continue to depend on the interest, support and involvement of every member of our Jamaican family, both those at home and in the Diaspora," she stated.

The Prime Minister said that the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence provides a meaningful opportunity to not only reflect on the achievements, but also to resolve to work towards the full development and prosperity of all Jamaicans.

She commended Team Jamaica Bickle for providing a comprehensive range of services for the country's student athletes, who participate each year in the Penn Relays, and for its "wonderful work in flying the Jamaican flag high and contributing to nation building."

At the event, Philadelphia's councilwoman, Janice Blackwell, presented

Dr. Meade with a citation in recognition of Jamaica's 50<sup>th</sup> year of Independence. Six Jamaican nationals residing in Pennsylvania and one group, received awards, named after the country's National Heroes, for outstanding contributions at the community level.

Former pastor of the East Queen Street Baptist Church, Dr. Horace Russell, received the Marcus Garvey Award; the Norman Manley Award for accomplishment in medicine went to Administrative Director, Radiology Department at the Shore Medical Centre, New Jersey, Dr. Derek Suragh; while the Nanny Award for citizenship was presented to Sandra Haye-Carr.

The George William Gordon Award for entrepreneurial endeavors went to Cynthia Crenshaw; the Paul Boggle Award for leadership and community engagement in the Caribbean went to Barbara Wilson; Herb Pennicott received the Sam Sharpe Award for innovation in business; and the Alexander Bustamante Award for Communication in music and culture went to the Caribbean staff of WKDU Radio.

Just over 300 Jamaicans and friends of the island attended the gala, which was held at the Double-Tree Hotel in downtown Philadelphia.

Among those in attendance were: Chairman of the Mayor's commission on African and Caribbean Immigration Affairs, Stanley Straughter; Vice President of Marketing and Client Service, FIS Group, Annette Allison; Business Development Manager of the Constellation Company, Wayne Bennett; President and Chief Executive Officer of BFW Group, Blane Fitzgerald Stoddard; and Special Assistant to Philadelphia's Councilman David Ho, Kimberly Richards.