



Plans are well advanced for this year's staging of the Prime Minister's Youth Awards for Excellence and Jamaican Youth in Concert, scheduled to take place on Sunday, March 24, at Emancipation Park, New Kingston.

Nearly 30 young men and women, 15 to 24 years old, will be honoured for achievement in sports, agriculture, academics, leadership, journalism, arts and culture, youth in service, entrepreneurship and international achievement.

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, will present the awards at the event, being held under the theme: 'Youth on a Mission...Project 2062'.

Speaking at a Jamaica Information Service (JIS) Think Tank on March 19, Producer of the event, Gregory Simms, said an exciting programme has been arranged in tribute to the young Jamaicans, who are making valuable contributions to national development in various spheres.

He explained that the awards component will feature all the pomp and pageantry befitting the occasion. For the Youth in Concert segment, Mr. Simms said there will be performances from the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), Jamaica Youth Theatre, Jamaica Youth Chorale, the Company Dance Theatre, Christopher Martin and Kevin Downswell.

"We have collected a fine array of performers and they represent what is best in Jamaican art," he said, adding that there will also be some surprises.

Mr. Simms said the youth awards programme seeks to motivate and inspire the country's young people and to show them that they are "a meaningful and relevant part of the Jamaican demography and they have valid ideas that can inform policy."



Meanwhile, former youth honouree, Jaevion Nelson, said the award programme was instrumental in his personal growth.

A graduate of the University of the West Indies and the University of Wales in Swansea, Mr. Nelson was the 2005 awardee in the category of International Achievement. He was the second person to receive the honour after 1998 Scripps National Spelling Bee champion, Jody-Ann Maxwell.

“When I looked at the profiles of nominees... I thought, well, I must be worthy, I must be doing something good for my country and so I should continue doing,” he said.

Mr. Nelson, who is Executive Director of the Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network, said his experiences and opportunities expanded after he won the award.

Some of his experiences include lobbying United States foreign policymakers on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on issues relating to youth sexual and reproductive health, and human rights issues. He is also a columnist with the Gleaner newspaper.

Mr. Nelson said the staging of the awards is important, to show young Jamaicans that they too, can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the country.

“It is important that young people look at others in their community and say: ‘this is somebody who I can emulate’. I did that when I was young,” he said.

The awards show is scheduled to start at 4:00 p.m. and persons are being asked to be seated by 3:30 p.m.

By E. Hartman Reckord, JIS Reporter