

Jamaicans to Pay More for Passports

JAMAICANS will have to dig deeper - much deeper - into their pockets to pay for passports come next Monday.

The Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA) has announced increases of between 80 and 380 per cent in the cost of passports with the new fees to take effect on November 16.

The changes will see the price of an adult passport increasing by 80 per cent, from \$2,500 to \$4,500.

The price of a passport for a child will also go up by 80 per cent, from \$1,500 to \$2,700.

The most painful increase will be felt by those who lose or have their passports stolen. The price to replace an adult passport which has been stolen or lost will increase from \$2,500 to \$9,500. This represents a 380 per cent increase.

Increase necessary

Persons will have to fork out \$5,700 to replace a child's passport which has been stolen or lost. This jumps from \$1,500.

In confirming the price increases yesterday, Angella Hamilton, communications officer at PICA, said that the price of passports was last increased in 2001.

PICA is one of a number of state agencies slated to be taken off the Government budget for the next fiscal year.

These agencies have been mandated by Prime Minister Bruce Golding to ensure that their charges cover their expenditure.

In January, Major Richard Reese, permanent secretary in the Ministry of National Security, announced increases in the fees for several services offered by PICA but declared that there was no plan to increase passport fees at that time.

"The proposal is not to increase the passport fee. The proposal is to increase all the other fees," Reese told the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of Parliament.

According to Reese, the revised fees would address the shortfall in revenue arising from the reduction in the sale of passports at the time.