

Portia leads

For the first time in the history of independent Jamaica, a woman is in charge of government, even though it is only for six days.

Minister of labour, welfare and sports, Portia Simpson, has been left in charge of the government, in the absence of Prime Minister P J Patterson who left the island yesterday for Chicago in the United States on official business. The prime minister will return next Tuesday.

During his four-day visit, Mr Patterson will present the outline of the National Industrial Policy to potential investors, and will also hold discussions on trade and investment with business leaders.

He is also scheduled to address a fundraising dinner organised by the Jamaican community in Chicago.

Miss Simpson's debut as head of government comes as Seymour Mullings, the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs and foreign trade, is also off the island. Mr Mullings is due back next Wednesday. He left the country on April 20 for London, Brussels, Germany and South Africa.