



THRONE SPEECH 2025

Jamaica's Next Chapter: Aspiring to Greatness



**THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 13
2025**

**Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
Kingston, Jamaica**

**His Excellency the Most Hon.
Sir Patrick Allen, ON, GCMG, CD, KSt.J
Governor-General**

**Presented by the Honourable Steadman Fuller, CD, JP
DEPUTISING FOR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL**



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Honourable Members,

We thank the Almighty for His kindness and mercy. The challenges of the past year — Hurricane Beryl, Tropical Storm Rafael, and the unseasonal rains that tested our infrastructure, economy, and communities — confirmed not just the strength but also the **indomitable spirit of the Jamaican people**. Through courage, ingenuity, collective action, and the grace of God, we have rebuilt and risen above adversity.

We place our trust in the Almighty's promise: *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."* (**Psalm 18:2, NIV**). Indeed, Jamaica has stood firm, emerging stronger, more dynamic, and closer than ever to achieving the destiny we envision — a **Jamaica that is peaceful, productive, and prosperous for all**.

Today, we gather as a stronger, more prosperous Jamaica—ready to embrace boundless opportunities. By every measure, we are indeed writing the **Next Chapter** in our post-Independence development journey.

- Our **unemployment rate is at a historic low of 3.5 per cent**, empowering more Jamaicans with opportunities to thrive.
- Our **debt-to-GDP ratio is targeted to be below 70 per cent** at the end of March 2025, the lowest since the 1970s.
- Jamaica's **credit ratings are at the highest levels** since our debt has been externally rated, signalling our enhanced credibility and fiscal strength on the global stage. We are now just three (3) upgrades away from achieving "investment grade" status.
- After 57 consecutive years of deficits on our Balance of Payments Current Account since 1966, we have, for the past two fiscal years, managed to achieve a **Balance of Payments Surplus**.

- Our **Net International Reserves** closed 2024 at US\$5.6 billion, another record high.
- Before the interruption caused by Hurricane Beryl, we recorded 12 consecutive quarters of **economic growth** after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Business Confidence** has rebounded by 7.3 per cent over last year and is now just 2 points shy of the all-time high set in 2019. **Consumer confidence** has also rebounded, increasing 4 per cent over the previous quarter.
- In 2024, **murders declined by 19 per cent, following an 8 per cent decline in 2023**. This positive trajectory has continued into 2025, with a 16 per cent decline in January 2025. In fact, murders in January 2025 were 51 per cent lower than in January 2022. Jamaica is safer today than at any time ever in the past two decades, with major crimes recorded in 2024 being the lowest since such breakdowns began to be tracked in 2001.

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Honourable Members, as we reflect on these remarkable achievements, let us recognise that they are not merely milestones of progress, but stepping stones toward an even brighter future.

Our nation stands at the dawn of a new chapter in its journey — one defined by resilience, ambition, and the unwavering determination of our people. Together, we have weathered storms, risen above challenges, and set the stage for a **transformative era of growth and prosperity**.

Let us now move forward with boldness and vision, confident in the strength of our foundations and **our nation's limitless potential**.

Let us now write **Jamaica's Next Chapter: Aspiring to Greatness**.

OFFICE OF THE CABINET

Honourable Members, as we continue our journey to implement a customer-centric ecosystem within the Public Sector, we are determined to improve **Public Sector efficiency, governance and accountability** through innovative performance-reporting systems. Efforts to modernise planning, monitoring, and evaluation will continue with the development of an **electronic Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System**, which will standardise processes across the government, and facilitate real-time data access to enhance decision-making.

In the ongoing thrust to transform the Public Sector the **Public Sector Learning and Development Policy** was launched. This initiative will enhance the capabilities of public servants, foster a culture of continuous learning, establish a **Leadership Development Centre**, and create a dynamic and responsive Public Service that meets Jamaica's evolving needs.

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to transforming Jamaica into a digital society, ensuring that a **unique digital identity** is available to every citizen. In 2024, the legal framework was completed with the gazetting of the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) Act Regulations, operationalising NIRA and **Jamaica's first electronic national ID cards were issued**.

To strengthen digital privacy, 1,056 data controllers applied for registration with the Office of the Information Commissioner by December 31, 2024.

Additionally, the Government has developed a **National Cybersecurity Framework and Cyber Incident Response Plan** in recognition of growing cyber threats.

Digital services continue to expand with the development of a **Proof of Life Application**, which will be introduced shortly to simplify verification by pensioners. Also, the **Jamaica Data Exchange Platform** will streamline government data validation for the TRN, driver's licence and the new National ID.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Honourable Members, significant progress has been made in financial management, social support, and operational efficiency.

For the first time in Jamaica's history, the **Reverse Income Tax Credit Programme** provided \$20,000 each to **347,133** eligible citizens, totalling **\$6.9 billion** in direct financial relief.

The Government **accelerated digital transformation**, implementing **electronic systems** such as the **Fixed Assets Inventory Management System**, **My Pension+**, and a **Queue Management System**, improving **efficiency and data accessibility**.

The **securitisation of revenue** from **Norman Manley International Airport** raised US\$480 million, supporting **infrastructure development** and **debt reduction**.

Legislative priorities remain on track with the tabling in the **Senate** of the **Financial Institutions (Resolution) Act 2024**, which establishes a framework for **resolving non-viable financial institutions**.

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The Cabinet approved the **amendments to the Public Procurement Act**, which will enhance efficiency when they are passed.

Additionally, changes to the **Income Tax Relief (Large Scale Projects and Pioneer Industries) Act** are being refined to create a **cohesive fiscal incentive framework**.

For **2025/2026**, priorities include **modernising Parliamentary operations** with a **Legislation Management Information System** to **streamline bill and document management**. Additionally, the **repeal and replacement of the Pension (Superannuation Funds and Retirement Schemes) Act** will advance **private pension reform**, ensuring **benefit security and effective industry regulation**.

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Honourable Members, with macroeconomic stability achieved, the Government is now focused on leveraging these gains towards transformative and inclusive growth while remaining cognisant of climate change threats. In 2024/2025, Jamaica approved its **2050 Long-Term Emissions Reduction and Climate Resilience Strategy** and continues mobilising funds for adaptation and mitigation projects across key sectors.

Investing in resilient and sustainable infrastructure is crucial for economic growth and quality of life.

Under the Urban Spaces Programme, the **Portmore Resilience Park** is scheduled for completion by 2025/2026 to enhance wellness and climate resilience.

The Government has delivered 280 housing units with 648 rooms, impacting 968 individuals across 57 constituencies under the **New Social Housing Programme**.

Road infrastructure has also advanced. The **Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project**, now 95 per cent complete, is enhancing connectivity and socio-economic equity. The **Montego Bay Perimeter Road** is on track for completion by mid-2026.

In urban areas, under the **Special CAPEX Programme** integrated upgrading of roadways, drainage, water, sewerage, and broadband infrastructure for selected corridors in Kingston, St. Andrew, and St. Catherine continues.

In December 2024, the **SPARK Project**, a J\$45 billion, three-year initiative, was launched to improve secondary, local, and community roads while upgrading water infrastructure. Work will be underway on 126 roads across all constituencies by March 2025.

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Access to potable water remains a priority. Construction of the **Rio Cobre Water Treatment Plant** begins in March 2025, significantly improving supply to the Kingston Metropolitan Region. Thirteen (13) rural water supply projects have already benefited 13,500 citizens, with the 2025/2026 expansion set to impact 45,000 more.

Key legislative reforms are progressing. The **Construction Industry Policy**, which will promote sustainable development and growth and enhance competitiveness and productivity, is on track for revision by 2026/2027. Amendments to the **Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act** and **Wildlife Protection Act** have introduced stiffer penalties. The **Quantity Surveyors (Registration) Bill** is in development to enhance professional standards and accountability.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to **reducing major crimes, improving public order, and enhancing public safety**. Significant progress has been made in **modernising Jamaica's anti-crime policies and legislative framework** to achieve these goals in accordance with Plan Secure Jamaica.

The amendments to the **Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency Act** and the **Interception of Communications Act** have strengthened investigative tools, enabling more effective action against **organised crime and firearm offences**. **Border security** is being modernised through the **National Visa Policy** and **amendments to the Immigration Restriction (Commonwealth Citizens) Act** and the **Aliens Act**. The review of the **National Correctional Services Policy** and **Corrections Act** also reinforces the Government's commitment to **offender rehabilitation and reintegration**.

Integrating **legislation, technology, infrastructure, and social investment** is creating a **safer Jamaica**. The **JamaicaEye CCTV network** is expanding, and the **C5 Security Business Solution contract** is advancing **data-driven policing**.

Renovations at **17 police stations**, ongoing **construction of divisional headquarters**, and the near completion of the **Forensic Pathology Autopsy Suite** are **enhancing law enforcement capacity**.

“ Integrating legislation, technology, infrastructure, and social investment is creating a safer Jamaica. ”

For **2025/2026**, legislative priorities include **updates to the Firearms Act** to include a framework for plea negotiations, among other things. This is consequent to the effectiveness



of the new mandatory minimum penalty, which has increased the level of interest among accused persons in entering guilty pleas. Updates will also be made to the **Proceeds of Crime Act** and **Finger Prints Act**, alongside a **comprehensive reform of the Corrections Act**.

The **Child Offender Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration Strategy** will also be launched to support **transformative justice**.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to **accessible, modern, and high-quality healthcare** for all Jamaicans.

In 2024, Jamaica achieved a **historic milestone** by **eliminating mother-to-child transmission** of HIV and congenital syphilis, reflecting **expanded rapid testing**, **antiretroviral therapy**, **improved antenatal care**, and **enhanced monitoring systems**.

The **"Know Your Numbers"** initiative conducted over 220,000 tests empowering **Jamaicans** to monitor **key health metrics**, with **80,000** being referred for care, ensuring **early detection and intervention**.

To strengthen the healthcare workforce, the Government launched the **Dr. Barry Wint Memorial Scholarship**, investing **J\$2.5-billion** to support **607 Medical Technology, Nursing, and Biomedical Engineering** students.

“ The "Know Your Numbers" initiative conducted over 220,000 tests empowering Jamaicans to monitor key health metrics, with 80,000 being referred for care, ensuring early detection and intervention. ”

The Government will continue to focus on **infrastructure, legislative reform, and health campaigns.**

The **Western Child & Adolescent Hospital** will be completed, offering **12 specialties**, including **paediatric cardiology and psychiatry.**

The **Spanish Town Hospital Redevelopment** valued at **J\$5.5 billion** and **Cornwall Regional Hospital rehabilitation**, along with health centre upgrades, including **Greater Portmore** valued at **J\$660M**, **Old Harbour** valued at **J\$930M**, and **St. Jago Park** valued at **J\$704M**, are enhancing healthcare access.

Legislative priorities include the **Tobacco Control Bill**, which will align Jamaica with **World Health Organization regulations** by **restricting tobacco and e-cigarette use**; and the **Food and Drugs (Amendment) Bill**, which will regulate **natural health products**. Amendments to the **Nurses and Midwives Act** and **Pharmacy Act** will legalise **Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)** prescribing approved pharmaceuticals, improving healthcare efficiency.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

Honourable Members, the Government continues to make remarkable strides in education, skills development, and digital transformation — key pillars of Jamaica's national development.

Importantly, progress is ongoing in implementing the 365 recommendations from the **Jamaica Education Transformation Commission Report** (the Patterson Report).

The Government remains committed to **improving early childhood education** by having **one trained teacher in every early childhood institution in the country**. Notably, the

Government has also expanded the number of shadows working with our special needs children. In addition, a key priority is **enhancing nutrition support programmes** across the education system that provide much-needed meals to our students on PATH. Currently, over 162,000 students benefit from this important support.

In digital transformation, broadband access now reaches 68 per cent of schools, with 260 Information Communication Technology (ICT) labs and 21 Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Labs at the primary level. A total of 1,500 tablets were distributed to early childhood institutions and 144

interactive smart boards provisioned across the system. The first phase of the digital financial management system has also been implemented in 50 schools to improve fiscal management.

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Legislative priorities include revisions to the **Jamaica Teaching Council Bill** to establish teacher licensing, **amendments to the Education Act (1965)** to update principal and board appointments and continued progress on the **Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission Bill** for tertiary regulation.

For 2025/2026, the Government will focus on **Literacy and Numeracy as a priority**, targeting children aged 0-8. There will also be the implementation of a **Special Education Policy** to ensure equity and inclusivity, and the expansion of the **Education Management Information System (EMIS)** to more schools for real-time monitoring of attendance, performance, and behaviour.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Honourable Members, Jamaica's tourism sector demonstrated resilience, innovation, and growth in 2024. It overcame challenges, including **travel advisories and severe weather**, to welcome **4.1 million visitors**, generating **US\$4.3 billion** in revenue. This moves the sector closer to the **5 by 5 by 5 goal**, that is, **5 million visitors and US\$5 billion in earnings by 2025.**

Tourism investments continue to show strong growth. During this fiscal year, six new hotels totaling 5,600 rooms and 1,000 hotel workers' housing will commence construction. When completed, this will bring foreign direct investment of US\$2.5 billion and 10,000 new jobs.

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The Revolutionary **Tourism Workers Pension Scheme** has now surpassed 10,000 registrations and savings under investment of J\$4 billion.

This success reflects **strategic planning, robust partnerships, and a focus on sustainability and inclusivity.**

The **Tourism Innovation Incubator**, administered by the **Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF)**, fosters **groundbreaking ideas**, including **virtual reality tours and health and wellness tourism**. Additionally, the **Artisan Village**, was opened in April 2024, celebrating **Jamaican culture and creativity**, incorporating **augmented reality** to enhance visitor experiences and **directly benefit local artisans.**

The Government is committed to **reshaping tourism** through:

1. **Digital Transformation**, automating **licensing, applications, and training access** to **boost efficiency** and **stakeholder engagement**.
2. **Culinary Tourism**, with the **Montego Bay Convention Centre Gastronomy Institute**, empowering chefs and showcasing **Jamaican cuisine** on the global stage.
3. **Market Diversification**, targeting **Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East**, while expanding **African-American engagement in the US**. These initiatives are backed by **expanded airlift capacity** and **dynamic marketing** by the Jamaica Tourist Board.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND MINING

Honourable Members, we take pride in the strides made in **agriculture, fisheries, and mining** this financial year. Although Hurricane Beryl severely damaged the agriculture sector, this industry is a symbol of the resilience we have embedded into our

economy. Shortly after the hurricane's passage, the Government was able to implement the **J\$1.4-billion Disaster Recovery Programme** for our farmers and fisherfolk.

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Over **24,800 farmers** have directly benefited from this recovery programme. These farmers, spanning key parishes including **St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, and Westmoreland**, received **seeds, fertilisers, and technical support** to **rebuild their farms and livelihoods**.

An additional **6,000 beneficiaries** were supported through the efforts of Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory

Authority (JACRA), the Banana Board, and the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), bringing the total number to over **30,000 farmers and fishers**.

Significant progress was made in **agricultural infrastructure**, with **98 farm roads rehabilitated** at a cost of **J\$870 million** and **J\$100 million allocated for backup generators** to support irrigation pumps. The **Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project** will bring **795 hectares under irrigation** by **2025/2026**, alongside progress on **Essex Valley and Pedro Plains projects**. The **J\$7.75 billion Irrigation Development Programme** will expand irrigation across **2,253 hectares** over three years.

Investments in **alternative fisheries and aquaculture** yielded **663 metric tonnes of production** in 2024, while **export expansion initiatives** target a **25 per cent increase** through **export clinics, pest-free zones, and value-added products**.

The **Agribusiness Cold Chain Initiative** will introduce **modern cold-storage facilities** to reduce **post-harvest losses by up to 30 per cent**, while the **Agricultural Wardens Programme** will recruit **200 wardens** to protect farmers and their livelihoods.

The **mining sector rebounded to pre-COVID levels**, with **5.3 million metric tonnes of bauxite** and **2.87 million metric tonnes of industrial minerals** exported.

Key legislative reforms in **2025/2026** will include **amendments to the Praedial Larceny Act**, the **replacement of the Plants (Quarantine) Act with the Plant Health Act**, and the **Minerals Industry Act**.

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT AND COMMERCE

Honourable Members, the Government continues to drive economic growth and exports by working with local manufacturers and service providers, including those in the **micro, small, and medium-sized (MSME) sector**. The export thrust includes activities to develop existing and find new markets for Jamaican products and services.

The **EU-funded €1.7 million Digitalisation Programme** will establish **nine Digital Transitioning Centres** and train **2,700 MSMEs** to improve **efficiency and productivity** and enhance competitiveness. The **Export Jamaica platform**, launched to provide **market intelligence, global access, and compliance information on over 190 countries**, has attracted **2,400 visitors and 10,000 page views** and has registered **80 businesses so far**.

The **MSME Business Roadshow** engaged **over 1,200 participants**, offering **grant funding and business support**, with **Phase 2** underway. In manufacturing, the Government provided **J\$78.9 billion in duty relief** to businesses under the **Productive Inputs**

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Relief Programme, which seeks to reduce business costs and boost productivity. The **Common External Tariff (CET) suspension on lithium batteries** supports the ongoing development of the **renewable energy sector**.

The **J\$1 billion Screen Development Fund**, launched in **January 2024**, aims to **strengthen Jamaica's creative economy** by supporting **local filmmakers**. A total of **269 grant applications** have been validated and are under review for final approval and disbursement of grant funding.

Key legislative advancements include the finalisation of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament's review of the **Security Interest in Personal Properties Act (SIPPA)** to improve financing for business and the **Segregated Accounts Companies Act, 2024** to expand the financial services sector by attracting operators from outside of Jamaica. Amendments to the **Companies Act and Insolvency Act** are advancing to **simplify business processes and support the rehabilitation of insolvents.**

Jamaica continues to position itself as a **financial services hub** to attract greater international investment and high-value jobs. Significant progress has been made on the **Jamaica International Financial Services Authority legislative suite.** The **Limited Liability Companies Act, the Partnership (General) Act, and the Partnership (Limited) Act** are being amended to comply with global standards.

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

Honourable Members, energy resilience, digital connectivity, increased innovation and efficient transportation remain central to Jamaica's development.

Public transportation saw a **J\$3-billion investment in 100 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, including 10 buses for persons with disabilities,** reducing costs and supporting clean energy goals. In renewable energy, the **UHWI Deep Energy Retrofit Project** installed **1,500 rooftop solar panels,** saving **1.5 million kWh annually,** while the recent award of **100 MW of renewable energy projects** moved

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”

Jamaica closer to **50 per cent renewables by 2030**. A memorandum with the **Canadian Nuclear Laboratory** will explore **nuclear energy integration**.

Jamaica will become the first **Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the Caribbean** with a **UNESCO GO-SPIN Science, Technology, and Innovation (ST&I) country profile**, which will guide the **National ST&I Policy**.

The **Nurturing Early Scientific Thinking (NEST) initiative** is equipping early childhood educators with **STEM kits and activity books**.

The **US\$4-million energy security investment** will install **6,368 rooftop solar panels** across **six hospitals and 16 government facilities**, saving **5 million kWh annually**.

Infrastructure upgrades include the **Ian Fleming International Airport**, enhancing runway, terminal, and flight capacity to support tourism growth. **Public transportation** will see an additional **J\$3 billion investment** with **100 more buses** procured and slated for delivery by **July 2025**. Of these, **10 buses will also be fitted for persons with disabilities**. This will bring the total investment in improving this mode of public transport to **250 buses in 24 months**. At the same time, **port security** will be strengthened through increased **Ports Security Corps recruitment**.

Legislative advancements include the **Petroleum (Downstream Activities) Bill** to regulate **imported fuel quality by 2025/2026**. Updates to the **Civil Aviation Act and Shipping Act** will align with **international safety standards**.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

Honourable Members, Jamaica continues to strengthen its global presence, forging strategic partnerships that **drive inclusive economic growth** and improve the quality of life for

all citizens. Through **international cooperation**, the country has secured **critical investments in climate resilience, digital technology, energy and food security, health, education and disaster management**.

In 2024, **bilateral engagements yielded J\$47 million for capacity building; J\$60 million for citizen security; \$230 million for security operations and equipment; and \$7.6 million for sports equipment for schools**. Agreements were also secured for a **research vessel valued at \$1.2 billion and sporting infrastructure development valued at J\$15 billion**.

Jamaica continues to thank international partners and the diaspora for their global solidarity in disaster response, as we **mobilised over J\$525 million to aid recovery efforts following Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Rafael**.

The country reaffirmed its **commitment to trade by completing its 5th Trade Policy Review** at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2024. Within CARICOM, Jamaica also secured **Common External Tariff (CET) suspensions**, safeguarding local industries while expanding seafood exports to Asia and Latin America.

Jamaica continues to champion its interests globally, strengthening its role within international organisations. This year, Jamaica will be **seeking re-election to the International Maritime Organization Council**. In July 2025, Jamaica will also assume

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the **Chairmanship of CARICOM’s Conference of Heads of Government**, leading initiatives in peace and security, digital innovation, food security, and health, while advancing the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Complementing expanded offerings to clients and service excellence delivery initiatives is a call to unity among Jamaicans at home and abroad, through widened engagement and programmes such as the new Diaspora Mentorship Academy.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to access and equity through modern infrastructure, inclusive services, and legislative advancements.

In the past year, construction began on a **state-of-the-art centre in Hanover**, a J\$200-million investment that will provide **restorative justice, victim support, and mediation services**.

Major courthouse repairs were completed across St. Elizabeth, Hanover, St. Catherine, Manchester, and Portland, reinforcing resilience and accessibility to justice services.

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Over 1,000 individuals accessed legal aid through fairs, and more than 100 incarcerated persons with mental illnesses received legal representation. **Justice professionals received Jamaica Sign Language training** to improve access for persons with disabilities.

Restorative justice referrals achieved an 81 per cent agreement rate, while over 700 young people (ages 12 -17) were diverted from the formal court proceedings towards rehabilitative treatment plans. Over 1,000 victims of crime received intervention services.

The Government is **advancing the construction of the St. Thomas Judicial Court Complex at the new Morant Bay Urban Centre** marking a significant milestone in modernising our justice infrastructure and also prioritising centres in Clarendon and St. Catherine. Work is also expected to commence on the Manchester Regional Judicial Complex.

The commencement of a phased introduction of an Integrated **Electronic Case Management System** in the justice system will modernise legal processes, enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and improving accessibility, particularly for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Justice has made substantial progress on several legislative matters.

- Stakeholder consultations are completed, and the **Notaries Public (Repeal and Replacement) Bill** will soon be presented to Parliament.
- The **Legal Aid (Amendment) Act** will integrate the Legal Aid Council into the Ministry as a department.
- Passed in 2024/2025, the **Maintenance (Amendment) Act** allows maintenance orders for children aged 18–23 who remain in education or training, and the **Judicature (Rules of Court) (Amendment) Act**, passed in 2024/2025 grants greater flexibility to the Rules Committee of the Supreme Court.

MINISTRY OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Honourable Members, the Government is making historic strides in transforming its legal and constitutional landscape, guided by a vision of self-determination and modernisation.

The Report of the Constitutional Reform Committee was tabled in Parliament. The **Constitution (Amendment) (Republic) Bill, 2024**, was also tabled, read a first time and is being reviewed by a Joint Select Committee of both Houses. This is the most

advanced step taken towards achieving the national goal of replacing the Monarch as Head of State and establishing Jamaica as a republic. The stage was set with the prior enactment of the **Constitution (Amendment of Section 61) Act, 2024**, which modernised the words of enactment by replacing references to the Monarch with references to the Parliament and the people of Jamaica, where appropriate, as a critical move toward patriating our Constitution.

In the 2025/2026 legislative year, the remaining steps will be taken to pass the **Constitution (Amendment) (Republic) Bill, 2024** and then have it approved by the people. The reform work will continue into the next phases, with a sharp focus on Chapters III and VII of the Constitution (the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and the Judicature, respectively). The people of Jamaica will also be provided the opportunity to have their say on the matter of Jamaica's final court.

Among other pieces of legislation, a **Referendum Bill** will be tabled to provide for the procedures for the people's participation in the reform of the Constitution. Work is also far advanced to revise the **Law Revision Act**, to establish a new framework for revising and publishing our laws in digitalised form, among other things.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

Honourable Members, Jamaica has once again secured a place on **UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage**, with the 'Pilgrimage to Watt Town' inscribed in 2024. This milestone celebrates the revivalist tradition and its contribution to Jamaican culture and identity.

In November 2024, the Government partnered with Guardian Life Limited to launch the **Jamaica Entertainers and Creatives**

Insurance Plan, providing life and accident insurance for registered creatives. A **Group Health Insurance Policy** covering 4,000 members of the Entertainment Registry free of charge will be launched by March 2025.

Jamaican athletes excelled at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, securing six medals — one gold, three silver, and two bronze. Roje Stona's gold and Olympic record of 70.00 metres in the discus throw marked

Jamaica's first-ever medal in the event. The Government provided \$68 million in grants to Olympic and Paralympic delegation members, with Jamaica placing 8th in athletics and 44th overall.

“ The Government provided \$68 million in grants to Olympic and Paralympic delegation members... ”

The **National Stadium Redevelopment Project** will break ground in early 2026, with construction spanning three years.

The Jamaica Anti-Doping Commission will enhance anti-doping efforts through partnerships with the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica Customs Agency, and private entities to expand its sample collection personnel under a national duty programme.

Legislative reforms are advancing, with amendments to the **Jamaica National Heritage Trust Act** to strengthen heritage protection expected to be completed in 2025/2026. The Government will revise the **Legal Deposit Act** to ensure publishers deposit literature, audiovisuals, and other works to the National Library of Jamaica.

The Cinematograph Act, which became operational in 1913 and was last amended in 1969, will be reviewed to ensure compatibility with changes in the film industry. A key element

of the review will be the restructuring and redefinition of the functions of the Cinematograph Authority to make it more relevant to secure economic advancement in the area of film production.

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Members, the Government continues to strengthen **social, regulatory, and governance frameworks** to enhance **community development and quality of life**.

Jamaica has fully adopted new **residential, fire, and international building codes**, with extensive training provided to Municipal Corporations and agencies. The **Jamaica Fire Brigade** will also modernise **forensic fire investigation** through partnerships with **UWI** and **specialised training**.

Support for the vulnerable remains a priority. Over **337,000 meals and care packages** have been distributed to the homeless, **14 houses have been completed under the Indigent Housing Programme**, and **critical repairs and medical upgrades** have been made to infirmaries islandwide.

Youth empowerment saw record participation in the **Youth Summer Employment Programme**, employing **7,300 young people** who contributed to **local governance and service delivery** — an **82 per cent** increase over 2023.

The House of Representatives, on (Tuesday February 11), passed the Counties and Parishes (Amendment) Act, 2025, which seeks to grant parish status to the Portmore City Municipality, making it the 15th parish of Jamaica, a milestone in **local government reform**. The **Human Services Bill** to modernise **poor relief laws**, and efforts to validate pension contributions for **National Solid Waste Management Authority employees**, ensuring worker welfare. In 2025/2026, the Government will **employ and train Psychiatric Nurses' Aides** to enhance **mental health services** in infirmaries and drop-in centres.

Jamaica faces numerous natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes.

To **bolster disaster resilience**, the Government will **overhaul disaster risk management**, restructuring the **Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management**. In partnership with the **UN Capital Development Fund**, the **Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility** will channel **climate finance** to local governments, with **Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessments** evaluating municipal disaster risks.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Honourable Members, guided by the principle of “**No One Left Behind**,” the Government continues to **strengthen social protection**, **promote decent work**, and **enhance productivity**.

In 2024, the **national minimum wage increased by 15 per cent**, following a **44 per cent rise in 2023**, contributing to higher living standards alongside a record-low **3.5 per cent unemployment rate**. Social security expanded with **17,800 new NIS benefits issued to new applicants**,

while contributions outpaced payments by **J\$18.99 billion**. Senior citizens saw a **76 per cent increase** in the Social Pension Benefit, from **J\$6,800 to J\$12,000**.

“**In 2024, the national minimum wage increased by 15 per cent following a 44 per cent rise in 2023, contributing to higher living standards alongside a record-low 3.5 per cent unemployment rate.**”

Productivity efforts included the **Future of Work and Productivity Summit** and the launch of the **Public Sector Productivity Improvement Initiative**. Support for persons with disabilities advanced with a **J\$53.5-million investment** in the

"New Life, New Limb Programme," providing prosthetic devices to 158 individuals.

Legislative progress included the **Occupational Safety and Health Bill** to improve **workplace safety**, **amendments to the Minimum Wage Act** to align with **international standards for domestic workers**, and the **development of a modern social protection framework**.

In 2025/2026, we will **expand industry and academic partnerships**, fostering national productivity and incentivising **Private-Sector growth**. The **Social Protection for Increased Resilience and Opportunity (SPIRO) Project** will **modernise social protections**, including **upgrades to social and labour market information systems**. Further, the **PATH programme** will be reformed to **address design deficiencies and improve operational efficiencies in delivery**. The **National Insurance Scheme** will be further automated to **streamline benefits and life certificate distribution**.

A **National Action Plan to eliminate child labour** will be introduced following the implementation of the **Child Labour Risk Model**. This Plan will integrate **public awareness campaigns and community interventions** to protect vulnerable children.

CONCLUSION

Honourable Members, we have weathered storms, overcome trials, and achieved what once seemed impossible. Our journey is far from over. Let us press forward together, united in spirit and purpose, each playing our part to create a **Jamaica that leaves no one behind and embraces our boundless potential**.

Jamaica's Next Chapter: Aspiring to Greatness

As we look to the future, let us stand resolute in our shared purpose and steadfast in our pursuit of a **brighter Jamaica**. Our progress is a testament to **our people's resilience, ingenuity, and determination**.

It is proof that the Jamaica we envision — **a nation of peace, opportunity, equity, and prosperity** — is our **Next Chapter**.

This is **Jamaica's moment** — a time to harness the potential of our people, our resources, and our unity to achieve the greatness that has always been within our reach.

With God as our guide and our people as our strength, we will seize this moment to **aspire to greatness**.



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