

Gov't Taking Disaster Resilience Seriously - PM

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government is taking seriously, its responsibility to build the country's resilience against disasters.

He said focus is being placed on the implementation of mechanisms and measures for disaster-risk reduction and strategic disaster financing planning.

He noted that the Government continues to assess vulnerability and risks in critical sectors, including energy.

"We have made significant progress in planning the use of our resources and identifying investment needs. We are now more than ever challenged to get fully on board with energy transition," the Prime Minister said.

He noted that the private sector has a key role to play by investing in energy infrastructure that will bring energy access to more Jamaicans at a fair cost.

Prime Minister Holness was addressing the opening



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre), Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson-Smith (4th left) and Minister of Science, Energy and Technology (MSET), Hon. Fayval Williams (5th right), with Energy Ministers from across the Region following the opening ceremony of the fourth Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) Ministerial Meeting at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St. James on February 27.

ceremony of the fourth Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) Ministerial Meeting, which was held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St. James on February 27.

This two-day meeting under the theme: 'Energy

resilience and investment opportunities', seeks to foster policy dialogue between business and government leaders in the Americas on priorities, challenges, and opportunities for economic growth and development.

Minister of Science, Energy and Technology, Hon. Fayval Williams, in her address, noted that the staging of the ECPA Ministerial Meeting is a signal that governments across the region are united in the pursuit of renewable energy for all.

US\$7.3B to be Invested in Electricity Sector by 2037

THE INTEGRATED Resource Plan (IRP) recently approved by Cabinet, will see some US\$7.3 billion of investment in the electricity sector by 2037.

Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, Hon. Fayval Williams, made the disclosure while addressing a meeting with the United States representatives and members of the regional energy sector at the fourth Energy Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) Ministerial Meeting, on February 27, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St. James.

She said that \$2.3 billion of this amount will be used to replace old plants.

"The country will be taking on 320 megawatts (MW) of solar and/or wind; 120 MW of liquefied natural gas (LNG); and 74 MW of hydro, waste to energy and/or biomass between now and 2025," she noted.

The IRP sets out Jamaica's 20-year plan for the electricity generation sector.

Minister Williams said that taking into account the



Minister of Science, Energy & Technology, Hon. Fayval Williams

total system spend over the 20 years, including capital and maintenance cost, the IRP is indicating there will be an overall decrease in energy cost to reflect the retirement of the old and inefficient generators.

She further informed the meeting that Cabinet has approved the new members for the Generation Procurement Entity (GPE) within the Ministry.

The GPE was established under the Electricity Act, 2015, and has a mandate to see to the procurement of electricity generation capacity for the sector.

PM Calls for More Business-Like Approach to Farming

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says farmers should take a more business-like approach to their trade and take advantage of the numerous opportunities the industry now offers.

He cited prospects available through linkages with tourism and other sectors, and encouraged them to utilise technology and follow best practices in order to increase productivity and income.

"If you are in farming, we want to associate you with profits. You must be able to profit from your enterprise, your industry, your effort, and the sweat that you put in," the Prime Minister said.

He was giving the keynote address at the 65th Hague Agricultural and Industrial Show in Falmouth, Trelawny, on February 26.

Mr. Holness called for removal of the stigma surrounding farming, noting that gone are the days when the profession was frowned upon, dismissed as being outside mainstream and unbecoming of persons with any kind of social status.

He said that farming is a lucrative business and participants must "take their rightful place as major contributors to the nation's coffers".

"Agriculture is the base of the economy. If agriculture doesn't grow, then you



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness looks at produce on display at the 65th Hague Agricultural and Industrial Show in Falmouth, Trelawny, on February 26.

can be certain that there will not be much if any growth at all in the economy," the Prime Minister noted.

Jamaica Extends COVID-19 Travel Restrictions

THE GOVERNMENT has increased to five, the number of countries on which travel restrictions have been imposed as a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Travel has been restricted between Jamaica and Italy, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore and Iran.

Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, said that in addition to the People's Republic of China where COVID-19 surfaced, travel has been restricted between Jamaica and Italy, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore and Iran, "where the majority of cases... have been due to in-country transmission".

He said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is in dialogue with representatives of the countries.



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton

Dr. Tufton was speaking during a media briefing at the Ministry's offices in New Kingston on February 27, where he provided an update on COVID-19.

He noted that the decision to impose travel restrictions on the four additional countries was based on a risk assessment, and the World Health Organization (WHO) February 26 COVID-19 Situation Report 37.

Under the restrictions, all Jamaicans, who have travelled to any of these countries within the last 14 days, will have landing privileges in accordance with the law, but will be subjected to health assessments and quarantines, once they have landed.

Persons visiting those countries over the same period, but do not have permanent residence or marriage exemptions, will be denied landing privileges at any of Jamaica's ports of entry; and non-Jamaicans with permanent residency and marriage exemptions, will be subject to health assessments and quarantines.

IDT Office Opens in Montego Bay

MINISTER OF Labour and Social Security, Hon. Shahine Robinson, on February 27, officially opened the Industrial Disputes Tribunal (IDT) Western Division office, which is housed at Blue Diamond Complex, Ironshore, Montego Bay, St. James.

The office will seek to protect the welfare of employers and employees in the parishes of St. James, Hanover, Trelawny and Westmoreland.

Speaking at the official opening ceremony, Mrs. Robinson described the establishment of the facility as "an important step in unlocking the door for justice in relation to labour disputes in western Jamaica".

She expressed confidence that the new office will improve the Tribunal's capacity to respond to issues affecting workers and employers in a timely manner, while reducing the backlog of cases requiring arbitration.

"There was a 28 per cent reduction in the number of individual disputes reported to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in 2019. We have also recognised that the caseload coming to our labour office in western Jamaica accounts for



Minister of Labour and Social Security, Hon. Shahine Robinson (centre), cuts the ribbon to officially open the Industrial Disputes Tribunal (IDT) office at Blue Diamond Complex, Ironshore, Montego Bay, St. James, on February 27. Sharing the moment (from left) are President of the Jamaica Employers' Federation (JEF), David Wan; Vice President of the Jamaica Association of Local Government Officers (JALGO), Shamir Brown; Chairman of the IDT, Marsha Smith; Deputy Chairman of IDT West, Sadeera Shaw; and IDT West panel members, Radcliffe Robertson and Keith Fagan.

approximately one-third of the overall caseload on the island. This has fuelled the Ministry's decision to establish the IDT West," the Minister said.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Robinson stated that the 90 per cent of cases that have been referred to the Ministry within the last two years were in relation to allegations of breach of due process in dismissal.

In that regard, the Minister urged employers to follow the regulations when seeking to carry out disciplinary actions against employees.

Marella Discovery 2 Makes Second Call to Port Royal



Passengers disembark the Marella Discovery 2 cruise ship on February 24 at the Port Royal Cruise Port in Kingston.