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STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

By the Deputy Leader of the House

Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport

The Honourable Olivia Grange, CD, MP

Wednesday, 5 May 2021

Madame Speaker, I rise today to advise this Honourable House about the plans being put in place for National Labour Day 2021.

National Labour Day 2021 will be observed on Monday, May 24th. In keeping with the provisions of the Holidays (Public General) Act, since May 23rd falls on a Sunday, the following Monday shall be known as “National Labour Day”.

Members are also being reminded that in keeping with the practice that was re-established in 2008, the invaluable contribution of the workers of Jamaica will be highlighted in the week leading up to Labour Day, which will be

designated as “Workers’ Week”. The activities to be observed for Workers’ Week 2021 will be carried out from Sunday, May 16th to Monday, May 24th.

Recognition of the workers of Jamaica will again be central to the celebrations. The week will accord respect and pay homage to workers for their contribution to nation-building, and provide an opportunity for the engagement of the wider populace on matters related to productivity, work ethic, industrial relations and other important elements of work and national development.

As has become customary during Workers’ Week, recognition will also be given to the commemoration of the contribution of Right Excellent Sam Sharpe, National Hero, who was martyred on May 23, 1832 as a result of his determination that slavery be abolished.

Madame Speaker, Jamaica’s contribution to the labour movement is enviable. We have earned the right to not only celebrate the significance of our National Labour Day, but also the opportunity to continue to ‘give back’ in the spirit of nation building.

The planning and administration of the National Labour Day and Workers' Week fall under the purview of the National Labour Day Secretariat in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

The National Labour Day Planning Committee works closely with the Secretariat, and is comprised of key Ministries, Agencies, Departments and private sector entities relevant to Labour Day and Workers' Week.

The Committee has been convening preparatory meetings to lay the groundwork for National Labour Day.

The theme and planned activities for Workers' Week and National Labour Day 2021 have been developed in keeping with the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions under the Disaster Risk Management Act. In this regard Jamaicans will again be encouraged to "labour at home".

The theme for Workers' Week and National Labour Day 2021 is –

"Promoting a clean and healthy environment"

and the slogan for National Labour Day 2021 is –

“This Labour Day... Stay Home, Stay Safe and Clean Up Yuh Space”.

As a government that sets the example for our citizens by practising what we preach, the Cabinet has decided that in keeping with the restrictions there will be no National Labour Day Projects this year.

Accordingly, the Prime Minister has already announced that the curfew which commences at 2:00 pm on Sunday, May 23rd will continue until Tuesday, May 25th, as there will be an all-day lockdown on Labour Day, Monday, May 24th. This means that in keeping with the theme, the public will be asked to - “Stay home and clean up your space”.

This Labour Day, particular emphasis will be placed on ridding homes and their surroundings of conditions/elements which will encourage the breeding of mosquitoes. This is guided by the recent announcement that the Ministry of Health and Wellness is on high alert for a possible increase in cases of dengue fever, especially with the forecast of rainfall in the ensuing months.

A secondary focus of Labour Day will be the encouragement of Jamaicans to either start or restart their backyard gardens. In this regard a special appeal is being made to Members of Parliament and Councillors to encourage their constituents to start a backyard garden at home if they do not have one.

Madame Speaker, in keeping with that objective, I have reached out to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Minister of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change to provide support for our citizens for their Labour Day projects and to raise public awareness about their initiatives.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, in collaboration with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) has recently renewed their “Backyard Garden Programme”. This programme seeks to assist three thousand (3,000) residents across the island to grow vegetables and herbs in small spaces in their backyards.

The National Labour Day Secretariat will be collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture and RADA to see how interested householders can be assisted with seedlings to establish their backyard gardens.

Another programme that we will be collaborating on is the National Tree Planting Initiative, which was launched by the Prime Minister in 2019 with the objective to plant three million trees in three years.

This initiative is designed to support national development in the areas of climate change and national reforestation efforts, with the aim to increase forest cover and establish high value urban green spaces for all Jamaicans and ultimately to get every Jamaican involved in the tree planting effort.

The Forestry Department, an Agency of the Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change leads the activities under this initiative. The Labour Day Secretariat will seek to intensify this effort by encouraging interested members of the public to collect ornamental and timber seedlings at the Forestry Department's nursery and to plant the trees in their yards on Labour Day.

The Secretariat will also be encouraging members of the public to participate in the two programmes and to work on their backyard gardens and plant trees on Labour Day.

Madame Speaker, the proposed list of activities for Workers’ Week and National Labour Day 2021 include:

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday May 16 th	Print media supplement with official Workers’ Week messages
Tuesday, May 18 th	Ceremonial Wreath Laying at the Aggie Bernard Monument in Downtown, Kingston
Monday, May 17 th , Wednesday, May 19 th and Sunday, May 23 rd	Workers’ Week Articles in the print media
Wednesday, May 19 th	Industrial Relations Webinar - “Labour Talks”
Sunday, May 23 rd	<p>Virtual National Labour Day and Workers’ Week Church Service hosted by the Mandeville Church of God in Jamaica commencing at 10:00 am</p> <p>National Observance in Churches:</p> <p>Official Messages will be read by Churches island-wide as they participate in the National Observance of Workers’ Week and Labour Day 2021. There will also be a focus on the National Labour Day theme during sermons.</p>
Monday, May 24 th	<p>Floral tributes to be laid at the shrine of Rt. Excellent Sam Sharpe at the National Heroes Park and at the Sam Sharpe Statue in Sam Sharpe Square</p> <p>Video messages saluting Jamaica’s everyday heroes – our frontline workers</p>

Virtual National Labour Day Concert aired
on national television

Madame Speaker, I thank you and the Members for the allowing me this opportunity to share this statement outlining the plans for Workers' Week and National Labour Day 2021 and I remind all Jamaicans that this Labour Day – “Stay Home, Stay Safe and Clean Up Yuh Space”.