

Government to Advance Road Projects in 2023/24

THE GOVERNMENT will be heightening work on several key activities during fiscal year 2023/24.

Notable among these is the implementation of a multi-billion Jamaican dollar Special Capital Expenditure Programme, which will see the development of major corridors in the Corporate Area.

Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, outlined details of these in his Throne Speech, delivered during the 2023/24 Ceremonial Opening of Parliament at Gordon House, on February 14.

The May Pen to Williamsfield portion of the Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project is also scheduled to be completed in August 2023, while work on the Harbour View to Port Antonio Highway is progressing.

Also, several flagship projects are to be advanced, including the new Parliament



Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, delivers the 2023/24 Throne Speech during the ceremonial opening of Parliament at Gordon House, on February 14.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (third, left) marches down Duke Street on February 14, flanked by fellow parliamentarians ahead of ceremonial opening of Parliament.

Building; the Portmore Resilience Park; the Kingston Harbour Walk; expansion of the Spanish Town Hospital; rehabilitation of the Cornwall Regional Hospital; construction of the new Western Child and Adolescent Hospital; and upgrading of the University Hospital of the West Indies.

Meanwhile, modernisation of the law enforcement framework will continue with expansion of the Jamaica Eye Network, and construction and renovation of police stations and allied facilities.

The legislative agenda will include amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act; the Fingerprints Act; and Corrections Act, to further reduce crime and violence and enhance public order and safety.

The Government will also table an overarching policy for the country's Protected Areas System.

Government Tables First \$1 Trillion Budget

THE GOVERNMENT is proposing to spend a total of \$1 trillion for the 2023/24 fiscal year. This is Jamaica's first trillion-dollar Budget.

Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, made the disclosure as he tabled the Estimates of Expenditure in the House of Representatives on February 14.

Dr. Clarke said the funds are allocated across the main expenditure categories and is comprised of non-debt recurrent expenditure of \$665.7 billion, capital expenditure of \$75.3 billion, and debt servicing of \$280.6 billion.

Included in the non-debt recurrent expenditure are allocations to implement the second year of the three-year Public Sector compensation restructure and allocations to operationalise the Independent Fiscal Commission, which has been captured as Head 10,000 in the expenditure estimates.

Dr. Clarke also informed that the largest single item of expenditure is the amount of \$338 billion for wages and salaries, which includes provisions for the second year of implementation of the Public Sector compensation restructuring.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

With respect to the self-financing Public Bodies, the fiscal year 2023/24 programme budgets overall revenue of \$581 billion and an overall balance surplus of \$29.2 billion or one per cent of GDP.

The capital expenditure programme for Public Bodies is budgeted at \$75.9 billion with the National Housing Trust, Clarendon Alumina Production and National Water Commission, accounting for 68 per cent of the capital expenditure.

Details on the allocations in the 2023/24 Budget will be provided during Dr. Clarke's Budget presentation on March 7, 2023.

Jamaica and Canada Hold Bilateral Talks

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness held bilateral discussions with the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau on February 16.

"Our meeting was particularly significant as we continue to build on our coordinated efforts towards development financing and intensifying cooperation on climate change and energy security," Prime Minister Holness said.

The Prime Ministers were attending the 44th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Nassau, Bahamas from February 15 to 17.

Mr. Holness noted that Canada remains a strong voice and reliable partner in the pursuit of peace and stability in the region.

He said that the leaders, through engagement with CARICOM, "continue to monitor and explore how we



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (second left), holds bilateral discussions with the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau (right) at the 44th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Nassau, Bahamas, on February 16.

can bring to a resolution, the situation in our neighbouring country of Haiti".

"We discussed the need for a clear approach to restoring social and political order in Haiti in the interest of its people and for the overall security of the region," Mr. Holness said.

Prime Minister Holness noted that with Canada and Jamaica establishing an Operational Support hub in Kingston, there is capacity for deployment and rapid response of personnel, supplies and assistance across the

region in the event of emergencies and natural disasters.

The leaders, during their bilateral talks, also reflected on the decades-long friendship between the two countries having established diplomatic relations on August 2, 1962.

Prime Minister Holness Encourages Deepening of Tourism and Trade Links Between Caribbean and Africa

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness has encouraged the deepening of tourism and trade linkages between the Caribbean and the African continent.

Addressing the opening ceremony for the Global Tourism Resilience Conference 2023, at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Regional Headquarters in St. Andrew on February 15, Mr. Holness noted that African and Caribbean tourism trade present opportunities for both regions to create jobs, increase bilateral investments, and improve infrastructure.

He added that the model will also enable the exchange of best practices, sharing of experiences and identification of new opportunities for growth and development.

"From a long-term perspective, a robust tourism



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness addresses the opening ceremony for the Global Tourism Resilience Conference 2023, at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Regional Headquarters in St. Andrew, on February 15.

trade model has the advantage of providing a cushion against economic shocks and crises. For example, the prevailing evidence indicates that while the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global economy, including the tourism industry, countries that have diver-

sified their tourism markets and have established strong tourism trade relations have been better able to withstand the impact of the crisis," the Prime Minister noted.

Mr. Holness said the conference provided an excellent opportunity to explore and engage critical

challenges to enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of African and Caribbean tourism by fostering cross-sectoral collaborations, knowledge sharing and partnerships.

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Agriculture Minister Tours Onion Farms in St. Thomas



Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Parnell Charles Jr. (right), reaps onion on a farm in Yallahs, St. Thomas, during a tour on February 16. Observing (from left) are Acting Chief Executive Officer, Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), Winston Simpson; St. Thomas Parish Manager, RADA, Bevene Martin-Dickenson; and State Minister, Hon. Franklin Witter.

...The model will enable the exchange of best practices... and identification of new opportunities for growth and development.