



**MESSAGE FROM
THE MOST HON. ANDREW HOLNESS, ON, PC, MP
PRIME MINISTER**

Labour Day Message 2023

We observe Labour Day this year by focusing on three critical areas - Climate Change, Road Safety and Food Security.

Jamaica is already being impacted by Climate Change. As I speak, we are experiencing the driest six (6) month period in Jamaica's recorded meteorological history. Portland, which historically had heavy and consistent rainfall is currently suffering from one of its worst drought. The government has acted swiftly to provide immediate relief in trucking water and identifying new water sources. In addition, Jamaica is doing its part to mitigate the effects of Climate Change by planting 3 million trees across the country. Tree planting prevents soil erosion thereby reducing flooding and landslides, supports biodiversity, reduces temperatures, provides food, and captures carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Already we have planted over 2.5m trees and with your help and your labour we can achieve the three million target by September 2023. While the planting of these trees will not immediately ease drought conditions for those who are currently affected, our country will grow more resilient to droughts in the future. **PICKUP**-It is said that a "Society grows great when its elders plant trees whose shade they know they may never sit in." I, therefore, encourage all Jamaicans to continue planting trees on Labour Day 2023 and throughout the year.

Likewise, safe road use is not only for Labour Day but should become a way of life for all of us. Your government has adopted a safe systems approach to sustainably reducing crashes, injuries and loss of life on our roads. We are designing all our new roadways with safety in mind at the start, including the installation of jersey barriers and other rail systems, traffic calming measures, proper lighting, signage, signals, cameras and other sensors. Safe road designs and improved road conditions will go a long way to reduce the fatalities in the long run.

We have also modernized our laws regarding road usage and have stepped up our enforcement efforts. As of May 15, we have had One Hundred and Fifty-Five (155) road fatalities. The top three categories are -

- Motorcyclists – Forty-Five (45) fatalities
- Pedestrians – Thirty-Nine (39) fatalities and,
- Private Motor Vehicle drivers – Twenty-Two (22) fatalities.

Unfortunately we lost nineteen (19) children to road crashes in 2022 and sadly, so far this year, we have lost five (5) children.

Since February 2023, when the new Road Traffic Regulations came into effect, we have issued 129,739 traffic tickets.

The top five most ticketed offences are –

- Driving without a seatbelt
- Failing to comply with traffic and other signs
- Exceeding Speed limit
- Disobeying Traffic Lights or Stop Signs, and

- Obstructing Traffic

Two hundred and seventy-six (276) notices of driver's license suspension have been issued by the Island Traffic Authority.

Your government, through collaboration of the Ministry of Transport and Mining, the Island Traffic Authority and the National Road Safety Council, has an active public education programme within schools which naturally must be an ongoing activity to get our children as early as possible to be safe pedestrians and road users.

Parents, guardians, and children, let me remind you:

1. Always find a safe place to cross the road. Use pedestrian crossings, pedestrian bridges and signaled intersections. Never cross at corners.
2. When crossing a road raise your hand over your head to indicate that you would like to cross. This action allows drivers to see you better. Then look right, then left, then right again before you cross.
3. You should not run or play on the roadways.
4. When getting off the bus please do not cross the roadway in front of or behind the bus. Drivers in large vehicles like buses and trucks cannot see adequately if someone is in front of or at the back of their vehicle, particularly little ones.

We also have a very effective motorcycle driver training programme in the Western Parishes. I announced in March that the government will make freely available 10,000 helmets. Our motor cyclists account for the largest number of persons dying in road crashes. I appeal to our young riders wear your helmet and protective gears. Bare head, bare feet or slippers and shorts will certainly mean more injuries and a higher chance of dying in a crash. Too many otherwise healthy young

Jamaicans are being maimed, disfigured, and sometimes permanently disabled from bike crashes and this can be avoided by simply taking responsibility for your own safety and riding in a way that preserves your own life and limb.

Roads are vital for our social and economic activity. Improper and reckless use of our roads is having a terrible impact on our economy and society. In addition to the unnecessary loss of lives, road crashes are placing a heavy burden on our health services, our police officers, our firemen and women and all our first responders. Even more agonizing, so many families are torn apart when these crashes occur, inflicting tremendous grief and trauma, shattering their normal lives, and often leading to financial ruin and sustained emotional pain arising from the death or serious permanent injury of a loved one.

PICKUP-This Labour Day let us recommit ourselves to use our roads with more care and caution. And we can also give of our labour to repaint approved pedestrian crossings, or erect approved safety signs in collaboration with road authorities, and debush verges and medians whose overgrowth may impair visibility and obstruct sidewalks. Let's do our part to keep our roads safe.

I am encouraging all Jamaicans to eat what we grow and grow what we eat. We must also ensure that we grow enough and have the requisite systems in place to be able to sustain our tourism industry which yields significant profits for us.

Importantly, global uncertainties have reinforced the need for food security and we would have seen the necessity of this clearly during the pandemic. It is essential that we have our own individual back-up food systems just in case. As best as possible we need to innovate and

find ways to create backyard, rooftop or pot gardens to supplement what we buy to feed our families. A positive side effect of doing so is that it will prompt us to eat healthier foods. As a country we must reduce our food import bill and subsistence farming is one way we can do that.

I continue to urge my Jamaican family, take care of yourselves, and of each other. You have the power to ensure your own good quality of life. Practice safe and healthy habits in all areas of your life and watch how your destiny unfolds.

And on the subject of safe habits, remember this:

You sow a thought and reap an action.

You sow an action and reap a habit.

You sow a habit and reap a character.

You sow a character and reap a destiny.

Sow good thoughts, actions, and habits so your destiny can be more wholesome and more fulfilling.

PICKUP-So, let us celebrate Labour Day 2023 with a renewed sense of respect and love for our island nation and for each other. God has blessed our island home with beauty and abundance, and he has given us strength to labour, we are a blessed and talented people.

Let us treat each other with love, care, and respect. Let us together promote Climate Change Mitigation, Food Security & Road Safety.

God Bless Jamaica.

The Most Hon. Andrew Holness, ON, MP
Prime Minister