

Government Moves Ahead With Hurricane Recovery

THE GOVERNMENT is marshalling much-needed recovery activities, following the passage of Category 5-level Hurricane Melissa, which made landfall in Westmoreland and swept across Western Jamaica on Tuesday, October 28.

“The recovery is not beyond us, it’s not beyond government, it is not beyond the people, and we will get it done. So, keep the positive look, keep hope alive, and we will get through this,” Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, said as he gave the assurance while addressing the media on a tour of badly impacted areas, including Black River, on Wednesday October 29.

The Government has also made provisions for the country to receive relief through the Support Jamaica website, an online platform, launched to mobilise support, channel relief and coordinate recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. The website, which was developed by the Government of Jamaica, can be accessed at supportjamaica.gov.jm.

Prime Minister Holness viewed infrastructural damage and gave updates on efforts to provide relief for house-



Prime Minister Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness interacts with residents of Montego Bay, St. James, during a tour of areas badly impacted by Hurricane Melissa.

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holds affected by the strongest cyclone to impact Jamaica in recorded history.

Early recovery activities follow assessments through aerial and ground tours by the Prime Minister; Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and

Transport, Hon. Daryl Vaz; and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining, Hon. Floyd Green, who visited highly impacted areas in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane.

“We will start to see ... assistance coming in, including

assistance from ODPEM and other relief agencies, who I’m certain are already mobilised,” Prime Minister Holness said.

He provided an update on the status of the communities he visited on his tour, noting that he got a first-hand view of

the tremendous damage across the western and southern parts of Jamaica.

“I flew over the south coast into St. Elizabeth, into Black River and from Treasure Beach We could easily say that between 80 to 90 percent of roofs have been destroyed. A significant number of buildings were damaged. On the ground, the impact is even more palpable,” Prime Minister Holness said.

He noted that the Black River Hospital was badly damaged. Additionally, several other structures, including historic buildings, churches, the courthouse, the Municipal Corporation and other heritage buildings have been destroyed. He further informed that infrastructure, including the power grid and telecommunication systems in Black River were destroyed.

“The people are still coming to grips with the destruction. But from what I’ve seen and the interaction, the people here are strong, resilient and positive in outlook. The Government intends to complement that with bringing in the necessary emergency relief.

The first line of effort in this regard is to clear the roadways

to allow for vehicular traffic, not just to allow people to come in and visit relatives that they can’t get in contact with, but to bring in much needed supplies to the supermarkets and other supply centres,” Dr. Holness said.

Meanwhile, the Government has given the “all-clear” signal for utility service providers to begin restoration efforts islandwide.

Minister of Education, Skills, Youth and Information, Senator Dr. the Hon. Dana Morris Dixon, speaking during the October 29 press briefing at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Kingston, said the “all-clear” was issued on guidance from the Meteorological Service of Jamaica and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM).

“When we give an all-clear, it means that our utility companies should now commence restoration and recovery operations across the island. So, crews from the Jamaica Public Service (JPS), National Water Commission (NWC), National Works Agency (NWA), and also our telecommunications companies and other critical service entities have now and will be advised to mobilise immediately to restore electricity, water, and communication networks,” she said.

Minister Morris Dixon urged entities such as supermarkets, wholesales, gas stations, and pharmacies to open for business, particularly in the less-impacted areas.

“We are asking you to open and allow communities to have access to these essential goods and services. As always, we continue to ask and remind Jamaicans to exercise caution on the roads, especially where there are downed power lines, debris, or flooding... so please still be careful,” she urged.

Teams From NWA Mobilised to Clear Major Roads

TEAMS FROM the National Works Agency (NWA), Municipal Corporations, and other government entities have been mobilised islandwide to clear blockages and debris from major roadways following Hurricane Melissa’s passage.

Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, shared this update during a press briefing held at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), located within the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Man-

agement (ODPEM) in Kingston on Wednesday (October 29).

“We have not had a full [assessment] yet of the damage [to] our road infrastructure, but I know there are a lot of blocked roads. The National Works Agency team is mobilising to clear roads and to assess damage as conditions improve. All Municipal Corporations that can access their various municipalities will be out doing what is necessary,” he stated.

Mr. McKenzie noted that the NWA had already begun clearance operations as of

Tuesday night (October 28), including efforts to restore access along the Palisadoes Road and other major thoroughfares.

“So the public will see some general activities on our roadways, making the roads accessible so that persons can move about,” he added.

Relief coordination efforts now include the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) and the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA), who are working jointly to implement a national strategy for the clearance of fallen trees.

“We are now in the process of beginning the clean-up exercise on our main roads.

Members of the public are being urged to exercise extreme caution while traversing roadways, as debris and downed Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) powerlines remain a hazard in several areas.

“I want to urge the JPS to move, especially within the Corporate Area and other areas to where there are fallen lines. There are a lot of lines that are down, so we want persons to be very cautious,” Mr. McKenzie said.



Workmen from the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) use heavy equipment to clear a section of the Mandela Highway at the Portmore intersection on Wednesday (Oct. 29). Fallen trees and other debris from the passage of Hurricane Melissa, had left the westbound section of the Highway, towards Spanish Town, impassable.



Minister of Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, Hon. Daryl Vaz (left), tours the Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA) in Kingston on Wednesday (Oct. 29) in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. He is joined by Chief Executive Officer of PAC Kingston Airport Limited (PACKAL), Sitara English-Byfield (centre), and Director of Airport Operations at Jamaica Customs Agency, Devon Manahan (right).

Government Working to Ensure Safe Resumption of Flights

THE GOVERNMENT is working to reopen airports, following their closure on account of the passage of Hurricane Melissa which hit Jamaica on Tuesday, October 28.

The Norman Manley International Airport and the Ian Fleming International Airport (Boscobel) opened on Wednesday, October 29 for relief flights, and were scheduled to open on Thursday October 30 for commercial operations, which include incoming and outgoing flights.

Minister of Energy, Telecommunications, and Transport, Hon. Daryl Vaz announced that the Sangster International Airport was scheduled to open on Thursday, October 30 to accommodate relief flights.

“We will keep you advised to let you know when the recovery [effort] will start once these relief flights come. The devastation is enormous.

Words cannot describe, based on my aerial tour. So we need all hands on deck to recover stronger and to help those in need at this time,” the Minister said while addressing media.

Minister Vaz noted that an announcement will be made soon about the recommen-

cement of commercial passenger flights.

Meanwhile, the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority (JCAA) is expeditiously advancing restoration efforts to ensure the safe resumption of aviation services across the island in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa.

Speaking with **JIS News** following Wednesday’s (October 29) tour of Norman Manley International Airport, Minister Vaz and other airport stakeholders, including JCAA Director General, Nari Williams-Singh, advised that the Authority’s teams have been working around the clock to restore operations.

Mr. Williams-Singh explained that the JCAA had activated its business continuity plan and recovery protocols ahead of the hurricane, which included taking certain systems offline.

“We have communication and navigation sites across the island, at the major international airports, as well as at the Kingston Air Traffic Control Centre which is at our headquarters. So according to our plan, we took the necessary precautions and powered down,” he said.

The Director General noted that the current restoration effort is focused on returning all systems to full operation.

“We are now in the process of bringing these systems back online. We took down some of our communication dishes. We’re now putting those back up and doing the relevant testing of these systems,” he said.

Mr. Williams-Singh pointed out that while assessments are ongoing at all sites, the Authority’s immediate priority is the safe resumption of operations at Jamaica’s major international airports.

“Montego Bay, as we know, was very badly hit. But right now, we really want to concentrate on getting operations in and out of Norman Manley [International Airport] and the Ian Fleming [International] Airport, as quickly as possible,” he said.

The Director General added that reports from the JCAA’s technical teams confirm that several critical systems are already back in operation, “and we have all hands on deck to get up and running as quickly as possible.”

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