

NOTES FOR THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

After the Governor-General mounts the dais, bows to the Members of the Senate and the President of the Jamaica Council of Churches:

MADAM CLERK, WOULD YOU KINDLY INVITE THE MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO ATTEND AT THE PLACE APPOINTED FOR THE MEETING OF THE SENATE.

After the members of the House of Representatives take their seats in the Chamber:

I NOW INVITE THE PRESIDENT OF THE JAMAICA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TO SAY A PRAYER.

After the President of the Jamaica Council of Churches prays say:

PLEASE BE SEATED

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S THRONE SPEECH

INTRODUCTION

Honourable Members, we thank the Almighty for His kindness and mercy. The challenges of the past year—Hurricane Beryl, Tropical Storm Rafael, and the unseasonal rains that tested our infrastructure, economy, and communities—confirmed not just the strength but also the **indomitable spirit of the Jamaican people**.

Through courage, ingenuity, collective action, and the grace of God, we have rebuilt and risen above adversity.

We place our trust in the Almighty's promise: "*The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*" (**Psalm 18:2**).

END OF PAGE 1

Indeed, Jamaica has stood firm, emerging stronger, more dynamic, and closer than ever to achieving the destiny we envision—a **Jamaica that is peaceful, productive, and prosperous for all.**

Today, we gather as a stronger, more prosperous Jamaica— ready to embrace boundless opportunities. By every measure, we are indeed writing the Next Chapter in our post-independence development journey.

- Our **unemployment rate is at a historic low of 3.5%**, empowering more Jamaicans with opportunities to thrive.
- Our **debt-to-GDP is targeted to be below 70%** at the end of March 2025, the lowest since the 1970s.
- Jamaica’s **credit ratings are at the highest levels** since our debt has been externally rated, signalling our enhanced credibility and fiscal strength on the global stage. We are now just three (3) upgrades away from achieving “investment grade” status.

END OF PAGE 2

- After 57 consecutive years of deficits on our Balance of Payments Current Account since 1966, we have, for the past two fiscal years, managed to achieve a **Balance of Payments Surplus**.
- Our **Net International Reserves** closed 2024 at US\$5.6 billion dollars, another record high.
- Before the interruption caused by Hurricane Beryl, we recorded 12 consecutive quarters of **economic growth** after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Business Confidence** has rebounded by 7.3% over last year and is now just 2 points shy of the all-time high set in 2019. **Consumer confidence** has also rebounded, increasing 4% over the previous quarter.

END OF PAGE 3

- In 2024, **murders declined by 19 per cent, following an 8 per cent** decline in 2023. This positive trajectory has continued into 2025, with a 16 per cent decline in January 2025. In fact, murders in January 2025 were 51% lower than in January 2022. Jamaica is safer today than at any time ever in the past two decades, with major crimes recorded in 2024 being the lowest since such breakdowns began to be tracked in 2001.

Honourable Members, as we reflect on these remarkable achievements, let us recognise that they are not merely milestones of progress, but stepping stones toward an even brighter future.

Our nation stands at the dawn of a new chapter in its journey—one defined by resilience, ambition, and the unwavering determination of our people. Together, we have weathered storms, risen above challenges, and set the stage for a **transformative era of growth and prosperity**.

END OF PAGE 4

Let us now move forward with boldness and vision, confident in the strength of our foundations and **our nation's limitless potential.**

Let us now write **Jamaica's Next Chapter: Aspiring to Greatness.**

END OF PAGE 5

OFFICE OF THE CABINET

Honourable Members, as we continue our journey to implement a customer–centric ecosystem within the public sector, we are determined to improve **public sector efficiency, governance and accountability** through innovative performance reporting systems.

Efforts to planning, monitoring, and evaluation will continue with the development of an electronic Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System, which will standardise processes across the government and facilitate real-time data access to enhance decision-making.

END OF PAGE 6

In the ongoing thrust to transform the public sector, the **Public Sector Learning and Development Policy** was launched.

This initiative will:

- enhance the capabilities of public servants, foster a culture of continuous learning, and
- establish a **Leadership Development Centre**, and create a dynamic and responsive public service that meets Jamaica's evolving needs.

END OF PAGE 7

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to transforming Jamaica into a digital society, ensuring that a **unique digital identity** is available to every citizen. In 2024, the legal framework was completed with the gazetting of the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) Act Regulations, operationalising NIRA and issuing **Jamaica's first electronic national ID cards**.

To strengthen digital privacy, **1,056 data controllers** applied for registration with the Office of the Information Commissioner by December 31, 2024.

Additionally, the Government has developed a **National Cybersecurity Framework and Cyber Incident Response Plan** in recognition of growing cyber threats.

END OF PAGE 8

Digital services continue to expand with the development of a **Proof of Life Application, which will be introduced shortly** to simplify verification by pensioners. Also, the **Jamaica Data Exchange Platform** will streamline government data validation for the TRN, driver's licence and the new National ID.

END OF PAGE 9

MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Honourable Members, significant progress has been made in **financial management, social support, and operational efficiency**.

For the first time in Jamaica's history, the **Reverse Income Tax Credit Programme** provided **\$20,000 dollars each to three hundred and forty-seven thousand, one hundred and thirty-three (347,133) eligible citizens**, totalling **\$6.9 billion dollars** in direct financial relief.

The Government **accelerated digital transformation**, implementing **electronic systems** such as the:

- **Fixed Assets Inventory Management System,**
- **My Pension Plus, and**
- **a Queue Management System, improving efficiency and data accessibility.**

END OF PAGE 10

The **securitisation of revenue** from **Norman Manley International Airport** raised **US\$480 million dollars**, supporting **infrastructure development** and **debt reduction**.

Legislative priorities remain on track with the **Financial Institutions (Resolution) Act 2024**, which establishes a framework for **resolving non-viable financial institutions**, tabled in the **Senate**.

The Cabinet approved the **amendments to the Public Procurement Act**, which will enhance efficiency when they are passed.

Additionally, changes to the **Income Tax Relief (Large Scale Projects and Pioneer Industries) Act** are being refined to create a **cohesive fiscal incentive framework**.

END OF PAGE 11

For **2025/2026**, priorities include **modernising Parliamentary operations** with a **Legislation Management Information System** to **streamline bill and document management**.

Additionally, the **repeal and replacement of the Pension (Superannuation Funds and Retirement Schemes) Act** will advance **private pension reform**, ensuring **benefit security and effective industry regulation**.

END OF PAGE 12

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Honourable Members, with macroeconomic stability achieved, the Government is now focused on leveraging these gains towards transformative and inclusive growth while remaining cognizant of climate change threats. In 2024/2025, Jamaica approved its **2050 Long-Term Emissions Reduction and Climate Resilience Strategy** and continues mobilising funds for adaptation and mitigation projects across key sectors.

Investing in resilient and sustainable infrastructure is crucial for economic growth and quality of life.

Under the Urban Spaces Programme, the **Portmore Resilience Park** is scheduled for completion by 2025/2026 to enhance wellness and climate resilience.

END OF PAGE 13

The Government has delivered 280 housing units with 648 rooms, impacting 968 individuals across 57 constituencies under the **New Social Housing Programme**.

Road infrastructure has also advanced. The **Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project**, now 95% complete, is enhancing connectivity and socio-economic equity. The **Montego Bay Perimeter Road** is on track for completion by mid-2026.

In urban areas, under the **Special CAPEX Programme** integrated upgrading of roadways, drainage, water, sewerage, and broadband infrastructure for selected corridors in Kingston, St. Andrew, and St. Catherine continues.

END OF PAGE 14

In December 2024, the **SPARK Project**, a J\$45 billion dollars, three-year initiative, was launched to improve secondary, local, and community roads while upgrading water infrastructure. Work will be underway on 126 roads across all constituencies by March 2025.

Access to potable water remains a priority. Construction of the **Rio Cobre Water Treatment Plant** begins in March 2025, significantly improving supply to the Kingston Metropolitan Region. Thirteen (13) rural water supply projects have already benefited 13,500 citizens, with the 2025/2026 expansion set to impact 45,000 more.

Key legislative reforms are progressing. The **Construction Industry Policy** which will promote sustainable development and growth, and enhance competitiveness and productivity, is on track for revision by FY 2026/2027.

END OF PAGE 15

Amendments to the **Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act** and **Wildlife Protection Act** have introduced stiffer penalties. The **Quantity Surveyors (Registration) Bill** is in development to enhance professional standards and accountability.

END OF PAGE 16

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to **reducing major crimes, improving public order, and enhancing public safety.**

Significant progress has been made in **modernising Jamaica's anti-crime policies and legislative framework** to achieve these goals in accordance with Plan Secure Jamaica.

The amendments to the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency Act and the Interception of Communications Act have strengthened investigative tools, enabling more effective action against **organised crime and firearm offences.**

END OF PAGE 17

Border security is being modernised through the **National Visa Policy** and **amendments to the Immigration Restriction (Commonwealth Citizens) Act** and the **Aliens Act**. The review of the **National Correctional Services Policy** and **Corrections Act** also reinforces the Government's commitment to **offender rehabilitation and reintegration**.

Integrating **legislation, technology, infrastructure, and social investment** is creating a **safer Jamaica**.

The **JamaicaEye CCTV network** is expanding, and the **C5 Security Business Solution contract** is advancing **data-driven policing**.

END OF PAGE 18

Renovations at **seventeen police stations, ongoing divisional headquarters construction**, and the near completion of the **Forensic Pathology Autopsy Suite** are **enhancing law enforcement capacity**.

For **2025/2026**, legislative priorities include **updates to the Firearms Act** to include a framework for plea negotiations, among other things. This is consequent to the effectiveness of the new mandatory minimum penalty, which has increased the level of interest among accused persons in entering guilty pleas. Updates will also be made to the **Proceeds of Crime Act** and **Fingerprints Act**, alongside a **comprehensive reform of the Corrections Act**.

The **Child Offender Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration Strategy** will also be launched to support **transformative justice**.

END OF PAGE 19

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Honourable Members, the Government remains committed to **accessible, modern, and high-quality healthcare** for all Jamaicans.

In 2024, Jamaica achieved a **historic milestone** by **eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis**, reflecting **expanded rapid testing, anti-retroviral therapy, improved antenatal care, and enhanced monitoring systems.**

The "**Know Your Numbers**" **initiative** conducted over 220,000 tests empowering **Jamaicans** to monitor **key health metrics**, with **80,000 persons** being referred for care, ensuring **early detection and intervention.**

END OF PAGE 20

To strengthen the healthcare workforce, the Government launched the **Dr. Barry Wint Memorial Scholarship**, investing **J\$2.5 billion dollars** to support **607 Medical Technology, Nursing, and Biomedical Engineering** students.

The Government will continue to focus on **infrastructure, legislative reform, and health campaigns**.

The **Western Child & Adolescent Hospital** will be completed, offering **12 specialties**, including **paediatric cardiology and psychiatry**.

END OF PAGE 21

The **Spanish Town Hospital Redevelopment** valued at **J\$5.5 billion** and **Cornwall Regional Hospital rehabilitation** along with health centre upgrades, including:

- **Greater Portmore** valued at **J\$660 Million dollars**,
- **Old Harbour** valued at **\$930 Million dollars**, and
- **St. Jago Park** valued at **J\$704 Million dollars**, are enhancing healthcare access.

Legislative priorities include the **Tobacco Control Bill**, which will align Jamaica with **World Health Organisation regulations** by **restricting tobacco and e-cigarette use**; and the **Food and Drugs (Amendment) Bill**, which regulates **natural health products**.

Amendments to the **Nurses and Midwives Act and Pharmacy Act** will legalise **Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)** prescribing approved pharmaceuticals, improving healthcare efficiency.

END OF PAGE 22

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SKILLS, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

Honourable Members, the Government continues to make remarkable strides in education, skills development, and digital transformation—key pillars of Jamaica’s national development.

Importantly, progress is ongoing in implementing the 365 recommendations from the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission Report (the Patterson Report).

The government remains committed to **improving early childhood education** by having one trained teacher in every early childhood institution in the country.

END OF PAGE 23

Notably, the government has also expanded the number of shadows working with our special needs children. In addition, a key priority is **enhancing nutrition support programmes** across the education system that provide much-needed meals to our students on PATH. Currently, over 162,000 students benefit from this important support.

In digital transformation, broadband access now reaches 68% of schools, with 260 Information Communication Technology (ICT) labs and 21 Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Labs at the primary level.

1,500 tablets were distributed to early childhood institutions and 144 interactive smart boards provisioned across the system. The first phase of the digital financial management system has also been implemented in 50 schools to improve fiscal management.

END OF PAGE 24

Legislative priorities include revisions to the **Jamaica Teaching Council Bill** to establish teacher licensing, **amendments to the Education Act (1965)** to update principal and board appointments and continued progress on the **Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission Bill** for tertiary regulation.

For 2025/2026, the Government will focus on Literacy and Numeracy as a priority, targeting children aged 0-8. There will also be the implementation of a **Special Education Policy** to ensure equity and inclusivity, and the expansion of the **Education Management Information System (EMIS)** to more schools for real-time monitoring of attendance, performance, and behaviour.

END OF PAGE 25

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Honourable Members, Jamaica's tourism sector demonstrated **resilience, innovation, and growth in 2024.** It overcame challenges, including **travel advisories and severe weather,** to welcome **4.1 million visitors,** generating **US\$4.3 billion dollars** in revenue.

This moves the sector closer to the **5 by 5 by 5 goal, that is, 5 million visitors and US\$5 billion dollars in earnings by 2025.**

Tourism Investments continue to show strong growth. During this fiscal year, six new Hotels totalling 5,600 Rooms and 1,000 Hotel Workers' Housing will commence construction. When completed, this will bring foreign direct investment of US\$2.5 billion dollars and 10,000 new jobs.

END OF PAGE 26

The Revolutionary **Tourism Workers Pension Scheme** has now surpassed 10,000 registrations and savings under investment of J\$4 billion dollars.

This success reflects **strategic planning, robust partnerships, and a focus on sustainability and inclusivity.**

The **Tourism Innovation Incubator**, administered by the **Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF)**, fosters **groundbreaking ideas**, including **virtual reality tours and health and wellness tourism**. Additionally, the **Artisan Village**, opened in April 2024, celebrating **Jamaican culture and creativity**, incorporating **augmented reality** to enhance visitor experiences and **directly benefit local artisans**.

END OF PAGE 27

The Government is committed to **reshaping tourism** through:

1. **Digital Transformation**, automating licensing, applications, and training access to boost efficiency and stakeholder engagement.
2. **Culinary Tourism**, with the Montego Bay Convention Centre Gastronomy Institute, empowering chefs and showcasing Jamaican cuisine on the global stage.
3. **Market Diversification**, targeting Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, while expanding African American engagement in the US. These initiatives are backed by expanded airlift capacity and dynamic marketing by the Jamaica Tourist Board.

END OF PAGE 28

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND MINING

Honourable Members, we take pride in the strides made in **agriculture, fisheries, and mining** this financial year. Although Hurricane Beryl severely damaged the agriculture sector, this industry is a symbol of the resilience we have embedded into our economy. Shortly after the hurricane's passage, the government was able to implement the **J\$1.4 billion dollars Disaster Recovery Programme** for our farmers and fisherfolk.

Over **24,800 farmers** have directly benefited from this recovery programme. These farmers, spanning key parishes like **St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, and Westmoreland**, received seeds, fertilisers, and technical support to rebuild their farms and livelihoods.

END OF PAGE 29

An additional **6,000 beneficiaries** were supported through the efforts of the Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (JACRA), the Banana Board, and the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), bringing the total number to over **30,000 farmers and fishers**.

Significant progress was made in **agricultural infrastructure**, with **98 farm roads rehabilitated** at a cost of **J\$870 million dollars** and **J\$100 million dollars allocated for backup generators** to support irrigation pumps.

The **Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project** will bring **795 hectares under irrigation** by **2025/2026**, alongside progress on **Essex Valley and Pedro Plains projects**. The **J\$7.75 billion dollars Irrigation Development Programme** will expand irrigation across **2,253 hectares** over three years.

END OF PAGE 30

Investments in **alternative fisheries and aquaculture** yielded **663 metric tonnes of production** in 2024, while **export expansion initiatives** target a **25% increase** through **export clinics, pest-free zones, and value-added products**.

The **Agribusiness Cold Chain Initiative** will introduce **modern cold storage facilities** to reduce **post-harvest losses by up to 30%**, while the **Agricultural Wardens Programme** will recruit **200 wardens** to protect farmers and their livelihoods.

The **mining sector** rebounded to **pre-COVID levels**, with **5.3 million metric tonnes of bauxite** and **2.87 million metric tonnes of industrial minerals** exported.

END OF PAGE 31

Key legislative reforms in **2025/2026** will include **amendments to the Praedial Larceny Act**, the **replacement of the Plants (Quarantine) Act with the Plant Health Act**, and the **Minerals Industry Act**.

END OF PAGE 32

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT AND COMMERCE

Honourable Members, the Government continues to **drive economic growth and exports** by working with local manufacturers and service providers, including those in the **micro, small, and medium-sized (MSME) sector**. The export thrust includes activities to develop existing and find new markets for Jamaican products and services.

The **EU-funded €1.7 million euros Digitalisation Programme** will establish **nine Digital Transitioning Centres** and train **2,700 MSMEs** to improve **efficiency and productivity** and enhance competitiveness.

END OF PAGE 33

The **Export Jamaica platform**, launched to provide **market intelligence, global access, and compliance information on over 190 countries**, has attracted **2,400 visitors and 10,000 page views** and has **registered 80 businesses so far**.

The **MSME Business Roadshow** engaged **over 1,200 participants**, offering **grant funding and business support**, with **Phase 2 underway**. In manufacturing, the government provided **J\$78.9 billion dollars in duty relief** to businesses under the **Productive Inputs Relief Programme**, which seeks to reduce business costs and boost productivity.

The **Common External Tariff (CET) suspension on lithium batteries** supports the ongoing development of the **renewable energy sector**.

END OF PAGE 34

The **J\$1 billion dollars Screen Development Fund**, launched in **January 2024**, aims to **strengthen Jamaica's creative economy** by supporting **local filmmakers**. A total of **269 grant applications** have been validated and are under review for final approval and disbursement of grant funding.

Key legislative advancements include the finalisation of the Joint Select Committee of Parliaments' review of the **Security Interest in Personal Properties Act (SIPPA)** to improve financing for business and the **Segregated Accounts Companies Act, 2024** to expand the financial services sector by attracting operators from outside of Jamaica.

END OF PAGE 35

Amendments to the **Companies Act and Insolvency Act** are advancing to **simplify business processes and support the rehabilitation of insolvents.**

Jamaica continues to position itself as a **financial services hub** to attract greater international investment and high-value jobs. Significant progress has been made on the **Jamaica International Financial Services Authority legislative suite.** The **Limited Liability Companies Act**, the **Partnership (General) Act**, and the **Partnership (Limited) Act** are being amended to comply with global standards.

END OF PAGE 36

**MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS
AND TRANSPORT**

Honourable Members, energy resilience, digital connectivity, increased innovation and efficient transportation remain central to Jamaica's development.

Public transportation saw a **J\$3 billion dollars investment** in:

- **100 Compressed Natural Gas buses,**
- **including 10 buses for persons with disabilities, and**
- **reducing costs and supporting clean energy goals.**

END OF PAGE 37

In **renewable energy**, the **UHWI Deep Energy Retrofit Project** installed **1,500 rooftop solar panels**, saving **1.5 million kilowatt hours annually**, while the recent award of **100 Megawatts of renewable energy projects** moved Jamaica closer to **50% renewables by 2030**. A memorandum with the **Canadian Nuclear Laboratory** will explore **nuclear energy integration**.

Jamaica will become the first **Small Island Developing State (SIDS)** in the **Caribbean** with a **UNESCO GO-SPIN Science, Technology, and Innovation (ST&I) country profile**, which will guide the **National ST&I Policy**.

The **Nurturing Early Scientific Thinking (NEST)** initiative is equipping early childhood educators with **STEM kits and activity books**.

END OF PAGE 38

A US \$4 million dollars energy security investment will install **6,368 rooftop solar panels** across **six hospitals and 16 government facilities**, saving **5 million kilowatt hours annually**.

Infrastructure upgrades include the **Ian Fleming International Airport**, enhancing runway, terminal, and flight capacity to support tourism growth.

Public transportation will see an additional **J\$3 billion dollars investment** with:

- **100 more buses** procured and slated for delivery by **July 2025**,
- Of these, **10 buses will also be fitted for persons with disabilities**.
- This will bring the total investment in improving this mode of public transport to **250 buses in 24 months**.
- At the same time, **port security** will be strengthened through increased **Ports Security Corps recruitment**.

END OF PAGE 39

Legislative advancements include the **Petroleum (Downstream Activities) Bill** to regulate **imported fuel quality** by **2025/2026**. Updates to the **Civil Aviation Act and Shipping Act** will align with **international safety standards**.

END OF PAGE 40

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

Honourable Members, Jamaica continues to strengthen its global presence, forging strategic partnerships that drive inclusive economic growth and improve the quality of life for all citizens. Through international cooperation, the country has secured critical investments in climate resilience, digital technology, energy and food security, health, education and disaster management.

In 2024, bilateral engagements yielded:

- **J\$47 million dollars** for capacity-building;
- **J\$60 million dollars** for citizen security;
- **\$230 million dollars** for security operations and equipment; and
- **\$7.6 million dollars** for sports equipment for schools.

END OF PAGE 41

Agreements were also secured for a research vessel valued at **\$1.2 billion dollars** and sporting infrastructure development valued at **J\$15 billion dollars**.

Jamaica continues to thank international partners and the diaspora for their global solidarity in disaster response, as we mobilised over **five hundred and twenty-five (J \$525) million dollars** to aid recovery efforts following Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Rafael.

The country reaffirmed its commitment to trade by completing its 5th Trade Policy Review at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2024. Within CARICOM, Jamaica also secured Common External Tariff (CET) suspensions, safeguarding local industries while expanding seafood exports to Asia and Latin America.

END OF PAGE 42

Jamaica continues to champion its interests globally, strengthening its role within international organisations. This year, Jamaica will be seeking re-election to the International Maritime Organisation Council. In July 2025, Jamaica will also assume the **Chairmanship of CARICOM's Conference of Heads of Government**, leading initiatives in peace and security, digital innovation, food security, and health, while advancing the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Complementing expanded offerings to clients and service excellence delivery initiatives is a call to unity among Jamaicans at home and abroad, through widened engagement and programmes such as the **new Diaspora Mentorship Academy**.

END OF PAGE 43

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Honourable Members, the Ministry of Justice remains committed to access and equity through modern infrastructure, inclusive services, and legislative advancements.

In the past year, construction began on a **state-of-the-art centre in Hanover**, a J\$200 million dollars investment that will provide restorative justice, victim support, and mediation services.

Major courthouse repairs were completed across St. Elizabeth, Hanover, St. Catherine, Manchester, and Portland, reinforcing resilience and accessibility to justice services.

END OF PAGE 44

Over 1,000 individuals accessed legal aid through fairs, and more than 100 incarcerated persons with mental illnesses received legal representation. Justice professionals received Jamaica Sign Language training to improve access for persons with disabilities.

Restorative justice referrals achieved an 81% agreement rate, while over 700 young people (ages 12-17) were diverted from the formal court proceedings towards rehabilitative treatment plans. Whereas over 1,000 victims of crime received intervention services.

The Government is advancing the construction of the St. Thomas Judicial Court Complex at the new Morant Urban Centre, marking a significant milestone in modernising our justice infrastructure and also prioritising centres in Clarendon and St. Catherine. Work is also expected to commence on the Manchester Regional Judicial Complex.

END OF PAGE 45

The commencement of a phased introduction of an Integrated **Electronic Case Management System** in the justice system will modernise legal processes, enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and improving accessibility, particularly for persons with disabilities.

The Ministry of Justice has made substantial progress on several legislative matters.

- Stakeholder consultations are completed, and the **Notaries Public (Repeal and Replacement) Bill** will soon be presented to Parliament.
- The **Legal Aid (Amendment) Act** will integrate the Legal Aid Council into the Ministry as a department.

END OF PAGE 46

- Passed in 2024/2025, the **Maintenance (Amendment) Act** allows maintenance orders for children aged 18–23 who remain in education or training, and the **Judicature (Rules of Court) (Amendment) Act**, passed in 2024 / 2025 grants greater flexibility to the Rules Committee of the Supreme Court.

END OF PAGE 47

MINISTRY OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Honourable Members, the Government is making historic strides in transforming its legal and constitutional landscape, guided by a vision of self-determination and modernisation.

The Report of the Constitutional Reform Committee was tabled in the Parliament. The **Constitution (Amendment) (Republic) Bill, 2024**, was also tabled, read a first time and is being reviewed by a Joint Select Committee of both Houses.

This is the most advanced step taken towards achieving the national goal of replacing the Monarch as Head of State and establishing Jamaica as a republic.

END OF PAGE 48

The stage was set with the prior enactment of the **Constitution (Amendment of Section 61) Act, 2024**, which modernised the words of enactment by replacing references to the Monarch with references to the Parliament, and the people of Jamaica where appropriate, as a critical move toward patriating our Constitution.

In the 2025/2026 legislative year, the remaining steps will be taken to pass the **Constitution (Amendment) (Republic) Bill, 2024** and then have it approved by the people.

The reform work will continue into the next phases, with a sharp focus on Chapters 3 and 7 of the Constitution (the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and the Judicature).

The people of Jamaica will also be provided the opportunity to have their say on the matter of Jamaica's final court.

END OF PAGE 49

Among other pieces of legislation, a **Referendum Bill** will be tabled to provide for the procedures for the people's participation in the reform of the Constitution. Work is also far advanced to revise the **Law Revision Act**, to establish a new framework for revising and publishing our laws in digitalised form, among other things.

END OF PAGE 50

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

Honourable Members, Jamaica has once again secured a place on **UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage**, with the 'Pilgrimage to Watt Town' inscribed in 2024. This milestone celebrates the revivalist tradition and its contribution to Jamaican culture and identity.

In November 2024, the Government partnered with Guardian Life Limited to launch the **Jamaica Entertainers and Creatives Insurance Plan**, providing life and accident insurance for registered creatives. A **Group Health Insurance Policy** covering 4,000 members of the Entertainment Registry free of charge will be launched by March 2025.

END OF PAGE 51

Jamaican athletes excelled at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, securing six medals—one gold, three silver, and two bronze. Roje Stona’s gold and Olympic record of 70.00 metres in the discus throw marked Jamaica’s first-ever medal in the event.

The Government provided **\$68 million dollars** in grants to Olympic and Paralympic delegation members, with Jamaica placing 8th in athletics and 44th overall.

The **National Stadium Redevelopment Project** will break ground in early 2026, with construction spanning three years.

END OF PAGE 52

The Jamaica Anti-Doping Commission will enhance anti-doping efforts through partnerships with the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica Customs Agency, and private entities to expand its sample collection personnel under a national duty programme.

Legislative reforms are advancing, with amendments to the **Jamaica National Heritage Trust Act** to strengthen heritage protection expected to be completed in 2025/2026 FY.

The Government will revise the **Legal Deposit Act** to ensure publishers deposit literature, audiovisuals, and other works to the National Library of Jamaica.

END OF PAGE 53

The Cinematograph Act which became operational in 1913 and was last amended in 1969 will be reviewed to ensure compatibility with changes in the film industry.

A key element of the review will be the restructuring and redefinition of the functions of the Cinematograph Authority to make it more relevant to secure economic advancement in the area of film production.

END OF PAGE 54

**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

Honourable Members, the Government continues to strengthen **social, regulatory, and governance frameworks** to enhance **community development and quality of life.**

Jamaica has fully adopted new **residential, fire, and international building codes,** with extensive training provided to **Municipal Corporations and Agencies.** The **Jamaica Fire Brigade** will also modernise **forensic fire investigation** through partnerships with **UWI** and **specialised training.**

END OF PAGE 55

Support for the vulnerable remains a priority.

- Over **337,000 meals and care packages** have been distributed to the homeless,
- **14 houses have been completed under the Indigent Housing Programme**, and
- **critical repairs and medical upgrades** have been made to infirmaries islandwide.

Youth empowerment saw record participation in the **Youth Summer Employment Programme**, employing **7,300 young people** who contributed to **local governance and service delivery**; an **82% increase** over 2023.

END OF PAGE 56

Legislative progress includes:

- the **Counties and Parishes (Amendment) Act, 2025**, which seeks to grant parish status to the Portmore City Municipality, making it the 15th parish of Jamaica., a milestone in **local government reform**
- the **Human Services Bill** to modernise **poor relief laws**, and
- efforts to **validate pension contributions** for **National Solid Waste Management Authority employees**, ensuring worker welfare.

In **2025/2026**, the Government will **employ and train Psychiatric Nurses' Aides** to enhance **mental health services** in infirmaries and drop-in centres.

Jamaica faces numerous natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes.

END OF PAGE 57

To **bolster disaster resilience**, the Government will **overhaul disaster risk management**, restructuring the **Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management**.

In partnership with the **UN Capital Development Fund**, the **Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility** will channel **climate finance to local governments**, with **Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessments** evaluating municipal disaster risks.

END OF PAGE 58

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Honourable Members, guided by the principle of “**No One Left Behind**,” the Government continues to **strengthen social protection, promote decent work, and enhance productivity.**

In 2024, the **national minimum wage increased by 15%** following a **44% rise in 2023**, contributing to **higher living standards** alongside a record-low **3.5% unemployment rate.**

Social security expanded with **17,800 new NIS benefits issued to new applicants**, while contributions outpaced payments by **J\$18.99 billion dollars**. Senior citizens saw a **76% increase** in the **Social Pension Benefit**, from **J\$6,800 dollars to J\$12,000 dollars.**

END OF PAGE 59

Productivity efforts included the **Future of Work and Productivity Summit** and the launch of the **Public Sector Productivity Improvement Initiative**. Support for persons with disabilities advanced with a **J\$53.5 million dollars investment** in the “**New Life, New Limb Programme,**” providing **prosthetic devices to 158 individuals**.

Legislative progress included the **Occupational Safety and Health Bill** to improve **workplace safety**, **amendments to the Minimum Wage Act** to align with **international standards for domestic workers**, and the **development of a modern social protection framework**.

END OF PAGE 60

In **2025/2026**, we will expand industry **and academic partnerships**, fostering national productivity and incentivising **private-sector growth**.

The **Social Protection for Increased Resilience and Opportunity (SPIRO) Project** will **modernise social protections**, including **upgrades to social and labour market information systems**.

Further, the PATH programme will be reformed to address design deficiencies and improve operational efficiencies in delivery. The **National Insurance Scheme** will be further automated to **streamline benefits and life certificate distribution**.

END OF PAGE 61

A **National Action Plan to eliminate child labour** will be introduced following the implementation of the Child Labour Risk Model. This Plan will integrate **public awareness campaigns and community interventions** to protect vulnerable children.

END OF PAGE 62

CONCLUSION

Honourable Members, we have weathered storms, overcome trials, and achieved what once seemed impossible. Our journey is far from over. Let us press forward together, united in spirit and purpose, each playing our part to create a Jamaica that leaves no one behind and embraces our boundless potential.

As we look to the future, let us stand resolute in our shared purpose and steadfast in our pursuit of a brighter Jamaica. Our progress is a testament to our people's resilience, ingenuity, and determination.

It is proof that the Jamaica we envision—**a nation of peace, opportunity, equity, and prosperity**—is our **Next Chapter**.

END OF PAGE 63

This is **Jamaica's moment**—a time to harness the potential of our people, our resources, and our unity to achieve the greatness that has always been within our reach.

With God as our guide and our people as our strength, we will seize this moment to **aspire to greatness**.

END