



STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

By Hon. DESMOND MCKENZIE

MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 23, 2020

- Mr. Speaker...
- In keeping with the objective of restoring Jamaica's economic and social life gradually, and with optimum public safety, the Government permitted the conditional resumption of general access to public beaches and rivers, effective Sunday June 7.
- When I made the announcement in this regard on June 5, I stated that this re-opening would be for an initial period of 14 days, under a clear series of protocols, and that an assessment of public compliance would be done to determine whether the resumption period would be extended.

- The country is aware that these protocols were developed to prevent and minimize the spread of COVID-19.
- These protocols include the requirement that social distancing of 6 feet is to be observed, and masks are to be worn;
- That no more than 10 persons at any time shall gather in any one area of the beach.
- That operators are not allowed to provide any form of seating, though persons visiting the beach can take their personal chairs. That no seating is to be provided for dining, and that vendors are not permitted to walk the beach with items for sale.
- That no sporting activities such as football, volleyball and dominoes are allowed.
- Mr. Speaker, we asked that every person who visits the beaches and rivers, acts in full compliance with all the protocols, so that enjoyment and safety would go hand in hand.

- **Most unfortunately Mr. Speaker, we have received detailed reports and have witnessed flagrant and repeated breaches of these critical protocols by large numbers of beach and river-goers.**
- The Social Development Commission observed activities at 58 beaches and 65 rivers over the last two weeks since these waterways were re-opened.
- **Mr. Speaker, the beaches especially, are overcrowded. Social distancing is being ignored. No masks are being worn. Vendors are in fact walking the beaches selling their items.**
- **There will be increased monitoring, and reporting of activities at all beaches and rivers starting this weekend .**
At the same time, I am urging the Operators of the beaches and rivers to strictly enforce the protocols. I am also once again urging our citizens to be responsible, to do the right thing, and fully observe the protocols.

- I wish to reiterate that the beaches and rivers have been conditionally re-opened, and the review of the manner in which our citizens are using these facilities is underway. There is no guarantee that this initial re-opening period will be extended.
- I emphasize Mr. Speaker, that the manner in which our people use these recreational spaces, will effectively determine whether the beaches and rivers remain open, or will once again be closed to the public.

BREACHES BY OPERATORS OF PLACES OF AMUSEMENT

- Our concerns as a Government also extend to breaches of the Disaster Risk Management Order, by some operators of sports bars, nightclubs and other places of amusement in a number of parishes around the country, including Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Catherine and St. James. Various events have been held, in some cases attracting over 100 patrons at a time.

- These entities were closed by Order since March. As the Most Honourable Prime Minister announced recently, Cabinet is considering the modalities of an orderly, protocol-governed re-opening of these parts of the entertainment sector.
- I wish to make it clear Mr. Speaker, that **those proprietors who are breaching the Order, are prejudicing the interests of the entire sector. They are effectively delaying the day when the sector can return to business.** The resumption of economic and social activities is important, but it will not be allowed to occur with undue risk to public health.
- I wish to report to the House that in contrast to this issue, **high levels of compliance are being observed among operators of community bars, taverns and gyms.** The Social Development Commission has been in the field monitoring and measuring this aspect of the phased re-opening of our economy, and I specially commend these business-people for demonstrating personal and civic responsibility as they work to recover their financial standing.

- The Government is continuing the process of restoring economic and social life in the safest way possible. **The upward trajectory of all the efforts made so far, relies heavily on a strong sense of personal responsibility by all: our resident Jamaicans, our returning Jamaicans and visitors to our island.** I am urging everyone to follow the safety protocols at all times.
- Mr. Speaker, the protection of public health remains paramount. **The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. There is no room for irresponsible personal conduct in the pursuit of leisure.** Important gains have been made in Jamaica's management of this pandemic, but the national recovery effort is at a delicate stage.
- I am appealing to people to be wise and to protect their personal health and that of their families.
- The Ministry will continue to do all that is necessary to ensure the safety of the beaches, rivers and public spaces within its remit.

- **The Local Authorities also have a crucial role to play as the Local Boards of Health in their jurisdictions.** I want to assure the House and the country that we are ready to continue our contribution to the national recovery effort.

- Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP

Minister of Local Government and Community Development

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