

**SECTORAL PRESENTATION
HONOURABLE DARYL VAZ, MP**

MINISTER OF ENERGY, TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

OPENING REMARKS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, AND SPECIAL MENTIONS

Madam Speaker,

I rise today in this Honourable House with gratitude and a deep sense of responsibility as we chart the path forward for the critical sectors under my portfolio—Energy, Transport and Telecommunications. These sectors are the backbone of our national development, driving innovation, strengthening connectivity, and improving efficiency in service to the people of Jamaica.

Before I begin, I pause to acknowledge those whose support makes this work possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & SPECIAL MENTIONS

I want to thank God for the strength to serve the people of Jamaica. To my dear and awesome wife, Ann-Marie; my children, grandchildren, family and friends—your unwavering support fuels my commitment to public service. I thank you for your patience, your sacrifices, and your constant encouragement.

To the leadership and dedicated staff of the Ministry of Energy, Transport and Telecommunications—your expertise, professionalism, and hard work form the foundation of the Ministry’s progress. I extend a special welcome to the new Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Kedesha Campbell Rochester, and thank her, along with the Senior Managers, technical teams, and administrative staff, for your continued service to the nation.

I also acknowledge former Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Carol Palmer, Who I have worked with from 2020 and thank her for her steady leadership prior to her retirement in 2025.

Madam Speaker, I remain deeply appreciative of our board members and advisors whose insight and guidance continue to shape the policies and achievements of the Ministry, that I will outline today.

To my CPOs, I thank you always for your steadfast support, which allows me to effectively balance my ministerial duties and my role as Member of Parliament. I am grateful not only to you, but also to your families for the sacrifices you make.

To the staff across all agencies and departments under this Ministry—you are the driving force behind implementation and success of all that was accomplished in the last Financial Year. Whether in offices, telecommunications networks, or transport hubs, your contributions are vital and deeply valued.

To the people of West Portland, who have entrusted me with the privilege of representation over the years, I remain committed to your development and well-being. Your voices continue to guide my work, and I thank you for your confidence.

As I proceed with today's Sectoral Presentation, let us remain focused on the task ahead—advancing policies and initiatives that will strengthen our economy, improve service delivery, and transform lives, particularly in these turbulent and uncertain times – ***Resilience in Action, extreme times require extreme actions and extreme responses.***

With the leadership of the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Andrew Holness, I am confident that Jamaica will continue to prosper despite the setbacks of COVID, Beryl and Mellissa.

Madam Speaker,

The true measure of leadership is not how we govern in moments of calm, but how we act amid uncertainty and competing demands of crisis. As Minister of Energy,

Transport and Telecommunications, I remain committed to a model of leadership that requires careful balance between the welfare of our people, the rigours of good governance, and the realities of political stability in making decisive actions even in the face of criticism. ***Extreme times require extreme actions and responses.***

Throughout the fiscal year, the key sectors under my portfolio—Energy, Transport and Telecommunications—have continued to advance despite the global and domestic uncertainties. Indeed, these gains have not been achieved in the absence of uncertainty, but with the hard work by the civil servants within the Ministry.

I will begin with the Energy sector, which continues to be profoundly impacted by the current geopolitical climate **while addressing the Opposition’s questions.**

ENERGY PORTFOLIO

Madam Speaker, As I rise to outline the achievements of the Ministry and its agencies, I take this opportunity to update this Honourable House and the country on the Energy Portfolio for the 2025/2026 financial year.

It is important to situate Jamaica’s progress within the context of a rapidly evolving and increasingly uncertain global energy landscape. Jamaica continues to experience sustained increases in fuel prices, driven by upward movements in the US Gulf Coast (USGC) benchmark—the primary reference for refined petroleum products across the region.

Madam Speaker, even as we respond to these immediate pressures, we must remain focused on the long-term solution. A global energy transition is underway. It underscores the urgency for countries like Jamaica to strengthen energy security, diversify energy sources, and accelerate the shift toward sustainable, affordable, and reliable energy for all.

OIL & GAS INFORMATION

Madam Speaker, Jamaica continues to advance its oil and gas exploration programme by United Oil & Gas Plc as part of a broader strategy to strengthen energy security and diversify our energy mix. While the contract was signed in 2014 under the previous administration, it is important to note that detailed execution, stakeholder alignment and ultimate progress have occurred from 2016 to present, multiple surveys and new findings. Challenges presented by COVID and a downturn in global oil and gas exploration caused delays to the project, but I can ultimately say the most recent preliminary findings are positive. United Oil and Gas continues its search for partners in the license to move to the next phase of the operation.

Further to developments in April this year, the latest updates from ongoing exploration activities continue to support a cautiously optimistic outlook, while underscoring the need for careful, evidence-based progression at each phase of the process.

The Government remains measured in its approach, recognizing that any discovery would require significant investment, rigorous environmental safeguards, and a clear regulatory framework to guide development. Importantly, this initiative is being pursued in a balanced manner, ensuring that exploration efforts align with Jamaica's national commitment to environmental protection.

ENERGY DIVISION

GENERATION PROCUREMENT ENTITY

Madam Speaker,

The Generation Procurement Entity has launched the largest renewable energy tender ever undertaken in the Caribbean initially comprising **220 MW of renewables paired with 110 MW of battery storage**. Madam Speaker, building on strong market interest and the GOJ commitment to accelerating the energy transition, this now has increased this number to **300 MW** of RE and **150 MW** of battery storage, with the tender scheduled by **August 2026**.

This builds on the **100 MW of solar capacity awarded in 2024**, bringing total new renewable additions to **400 MW**. Taken together, these investments represent a

decisive step toward enhancing energy security, reducing exposure to global oil price volatility, and advancing Jamaica's transition to a more resilient, sustainable, and diversified energy mix.

NET BILLING PROGRAMME

In parallel, the Government is advancing an additional 100 MW of distributed renewable energy through a strengthened **Net Billing programme**, empowering households and businesses to generate their own electricity.

The Net Billing Programme Terms of Reference has been completed and is being modernized through the introduction of a fully online application platform, expected to be operational by December 2026. This platform will support the acceleration of net billing. Additionally, discussions have started with Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) to increase the net billing threshold and to incorporate battery storage into the programme. The Ministry is also reviewing license fees and system capacity limits (of **10 kW for residential and 100 MW for commercial systems with mandated battery storage**), including the integration of battery storage, to better support modern energy needs such as electric vehicle charging.

Jamaica currently generates about 15% of its electricity from renewable sources. Ongoing and planned projects are expected to add roughly 35 percentage points, helping the country reach its 50% renewable energy target by 2030. Not only in Jamaica but also the Caribbean.

POWER WHEELING REGULATION

Madam Speaker, structural reforms are advancing in parallel. The **Power Wheeling Regulations** have been completed and gazetted, with final discussions underway to settle tariffs and billing arrangements, so implementation can begin shortly. This will allow more participants to access and trade electricity across the grid.

NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

At the same time, the updated **National Energy Policy**, along with its supporting Action Plan and sub-policies, is being finalized for submission to Cabinet, for which I signed the submission today. This policy sets a clear pathway toward a modern energy system that is secure, reliable, affordable, and sustainable.

It addresses key national priorities, including expanding access to the remaining 5% of Jamaicans without electricity, improving system efficiency, maintaining affordability, and strengthening resilience to natural disasters.

In practical terms, Madam Speaker, this is about building an energy system that works for the Jamaican people—one that reduces costs over time, supports economic growth, and protects us from external shocks.

HURRICANE MELISSA RECOVERY

Madam Speaker, on restoration, the response to Hurricane Melissa stands as a strong example of national resilience. With the support of **18 CARILEC partners**, Jamaica restored electricity to **98% of customers within three and a half months**, improving to **99.6% as of April 20, 2026**. Full restoration is on track for **April 2026**, except in cases where customers cannot yet safely receive power. This progress did not happen by chance—the **US\$150 million loan approved in December** was critical in accelerating recovery and avoiding a scenario where restoration could have stretched into **late 2026 or even early 2027**.

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of flip flop surrounding speed and accountability. I went back to the Hansard to remind this Honourable House of what the Leader of the Opposition stated in November of 2025 regarding the JPS loan. Here is what he said:

“So I would like your assurance, minister, that that 200 million will be coughed up by JPS—perhaps by its two large overseas shareholders, Marubeni and East West

Power (Korean government South Korean government-owned large utility)—or JPS is going to draw down on whatever funding it can raise from its creditors

I don't know how they plan to fund it, but we need to know it's funded before we put our 150 in.”

Madam Speaker, he went on to state that that is a risk we are not prepared to take as a country. Thankfully Madam Speaker, the results of September 3rd installed a government that knows how to dance in the rain. A Government capable of assessing risk and responsibility.

Those are his words, Madam Speaker. the other members of the Opposition including the member from St Catherine Southeastern, in a statement filled with more Flaws than Awes, said we should measure opportunity costs instead of fast-tracking the restoration by providing the loan to JPS. I say to the people of Western Jamaica, had we listened to the Opposition then, you would all still be without light and water for several months.

On that note, Madam Speaker, the initial JPS timeline for restoration without the \$150M loan was October to December 2026 has been revised and let me state on the record that the Utility provider now estimates that without the loan, restoration to many of the communities in Western Jamaica would have been delayed to approximately January or June 2027.

Madam Speaker let me make it abundantly clear that this Government has provided no further funding to JPS outside the \$150M loan and not only has electricity been restored to over 99% of Jamaicans; but critical infrastructure including water, ATM services, Hospitals and other critical services; are restored as well.

As at this morning, May 5, the number of customers without power is 1,343, so restoration completion is now at 99.81%.

The parish breakdown for remaining customers is:

- Westmoreland - 1,283
- St. Elizabeth - 60

Of the remaining customers to be restored approximately 40% (538) are not ready to receive power safely due to property-related damage, leaving approximately 805 customers who can receive electricity service still to be restored.

Remaining work is being impacted by difficult terrain, limited access to remote areas, adverse weather, and challenging ground conditions, which continue to slow progress. The final phase of restoration will proceed at a measured pace, with smaller daily gains.

JPS' Post-Melissa Performance is Best in Class

JPS' restoration performance after Category 5 Hurricane Melissa has been nothing short of outstanding.

When you benchmark with other utilities, the data shows clearly that JPS' performance is nearly twice as good as its peers in other developing countries, and almost on par with best-in-class utilities in developed countries with far more resources.

Let's step back for a moment and compare our post-Melissa experience here in Jamaica with say, Puerto Rico, after they got hit by Category 4 Hurricane Maria in 2017. Puerto Rico, as you know, is a little smaller than Jamaica, but has GDP seven times that of Jamaica, and the support of the United States.

- Here in Jamaica, **two months after we got a direct hit by the Category 5 Hurricane Melissa, 90 percent of JPS' customers had electricity.** In Puerto Rico, two months after being hit by the Hurricane Maria, 40 percent of their customers had electricity.
- It took Puerto Rico almost a full year to get electricity back to 99 percent of their customers after Hurricane Maria. **JPS accomplished 99 percent in four months.** At the four-month mark, Puerto Rico was at 57 percent.

Here in Jamaica, we can proudly celebrate the fact that in approximately six months after the most devastating hurricane in our recorded history, 99.81 percent of JPS' customers have power.

As of today, we have 1,343 JPS customers are without power. However, of those customers, about 800 are ready to receive supply at this point. And we wont stop until everyone is connected.

I want to pause Madam Speaker, to applaud the JPS President – Hugh Grant and the entire JPS team for a best-in-class restoration performance which will be a case study by many countries near and far for decades to come. I thank them on behalf of the entire country and especially those in the hardest hit parishes. Madam Speaker the collaboration between a proactive government and JPS has been nothing short of exceptional and to those naysayers I simply say **COMMITMENT MADE, COMMITMENT MET ARGUEMENT DONE!**

PETROJAM AND ENERGY SECURITY

Madam Speaker, there is no time more important than now to strategically position Petrojam within Jamaica's energy future. As the only operational petroleum refinery in the region, Petrojam is a critical national asset with significant strategic value—not only for Jamaica, but for the wider Caribbean. Its geographic location and refining capability provide a unique opportunity to strengthen energy security while expanding regional influence.

For the 2026/2027 financial year, Petrojam is projecting total sales of 12.21 million barrels, with 7.2 million barrels allocated to the domestic market and 4.9 million barrels for export. This dual role ensures reliable local supply while generating valuable foreign exchange earnings.

Between March 12 and April 8, 2026, transport fuel prices rose by about J\$49.20 per litre, but only J\$18 was passed on to consumers due to the government's pricing cap. The remaining cost was absorbed by Petrojam to cushion households and businesses. Madam Speaker that is a buffer of about US\$8.6 million (J\$1.3–1.4 billion) worth of protection that this Government has provided for Jamaicans during this energy crisis. So, Madam Speaker, when the Opposition Leader rises,

and tells the Jamaican people that gas is cheaper than water... I would urge him to be reminded that 63% of that cost is not being passed on to the consumer.

While this buffer is effective, this intervention is costly, with projections reaching J\$11.8 billion by June 2026 if maintained. As a result, the government is introducing a revised tiered pricing system to better reflect global market changes while managing price volatility.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Madam Speaker, Petrojam is not standing still. The company is investing approximately US\$15 million in critical infrastructure upgrades, including electrical improvements, new storage capacity, pipeline installations, and major furnace rehabilitation to strengthen reliability and long-term performance. These include electrical system improvements, the construction of a new asphalt storage tank, pipeline installations at Berth 2 in Montego Bay, and the replacement and rehabilitation of two key furnaces. In addition, a scheduled 90-day refinery turnaround will deliver key upgrades aimed at improving efficiency, reducing unplanned outages, and enhancing fuel quality.

At the same time, an independent technical assessment is underway to evaluate long-term upgrade options, ensuring the refinery remains competitive as regional refining capacity declines.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, the Government is actively exploring opportunities to further optimize Petrojam's role through strategic partnerships, diversification, and potential public-private collaboration. This includes examining cleaner fuel options

such as LNG, expanding renewable integration within operations, and aligning with broader climate and sustainability goals.

In essence, Madam Speaker, Petrojam is not just a refinery, it is a strategic national asset that must be leveraged wisely to support energy security, economic resilience, and Jamaica's long-term development.

ELECTRICITY SECTOR REFORM

Over the last few years, Madam Speaker, the Ministry has embarked on a programme of electricity sector reforms. Recognising its low capability the Ministry sought and engaged international expertise through the Inter-American Development Bank. In March 2025 the Ministry engaged the services of Fracis Maude Associates to assist with a rigorous analysis and review of the Electricity sector with specific reference to an All-island Electricity Licence and the robust regulation of the sector. This was achieved through funding from the Energy Management and Efficiency Programme. That phase 1 assignment provided a very detailed report outlining a detailed, timed plan of action. This report was analyzed and accepted by the Ministry and submitted for Cabinet Decision for the way forward. The position was taken to have a new licence being mindful of citizen welfare and the National interest specifically lower energy costs to the consumers and a competitive energy price for the industry.

The consulting firm was again engaged in November 2025 with GOJ funding and the activities towards an acceptable licence continued in earnest. At this point Cabinet has approved a Heads of Terms for the new licence which is to be negotiated with JPS subject to the execution of a Non-Disclosure Agreement between the company and GOJ.

At the same time a review of the Electricity Act and the Regulatory framework is to be done to give effect to the new licence regime.

It is to be noted that as was already outlined if there can be no agreement with JPS will approach the international market to identify a provider.

The Electricity Licence Negotiations Team (ELNT) awaits the signing of the NDA to proceed with negotiations. At the same time the process is underway to engage international Legal Counsel to support the process as the Ministry strives to achieve the most efficient and effective process.

A White Paper for Electricity Sector Reform has been drafted and is now subject to review. Naturally the White Paper will be brought to Parliament as soon as Cabinet approval is obtained.

ENERGY POVERTY - JAMAICA SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND (JSIF)

During the last financial year, the Ministry allocated one billion dollars to the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) under a MOU with the objective of support to Energy Poverty. This is addition to the over two hundred million dollars allocated to JSIF under the Rural Electrification Programme MOU. This is a part of the efforts to address non-technical losses and with which all Members of Parliament are aware.

Madam Speaker, collectively, these investments form part of a broader national strategy to expand equitable access to electricity, address non-technical losses, and improve the quality of life for vulnerable households—an initiative with which all 63 Members of Parliament are familiar.

Through National Energy Poverty Reduction and Community Electrification programmes, a total portfolio investment of approximately J\$2.356 billion has been mobilised to support electrification efforts across the island. Key outputs include the wiring of approximately 7,500 households, the establishment of 3,825 grid connections, and the construction of some 30 kilometres of pole line infrastructure.

Notably, during the fiscal year alone, over 3,200 houses were wired across both programmes, including targeted interventions in disaster-affected communities following Hurricane Melissa. The initiatives have also reached nine parishes and

more than 100 communities, demonstrating the Government's continued commitment to inclusive development and energy access for all. Additionally, Madam Speaker, JSIF interventions saw:

- 1000 houses wired in Eastern parishes through the CEP Project, prior to Hurricane Melissa.
- 2,200 houses wired in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Melissa through the National Energy Poverty Reduction Project in the worst affected western parishes.
- Programme wired 800 houses that were flooded within eight (8) weeks of the Hurricane Melissa- Catherine Hall, in St James.
- Over 3,000 households registered to received housewiring assistance through the JSIF and JPS community sign up sessions following ten (10) mobile sessions across the various parishes.

This is the largest annual fiscal allocation of J\$1.289 billion provided to boost the programme in the fiscal year 2025/26.

Madam Speaker, for months I have sat and listened to members of this house and by extension Jamaicans at large being misinformed and misled regarding the reality is that the increase in electricity prices.

Colleagues, The Member from East Kingston and Port Royal quantified the increase as moving from 0.26 cents to 0.40 cents while failing to mention that is largely a consequence of the fundamental licence restructuring undertaken in 2015/16 under his leadership.

Madam Speaker, these are the facts:

1. The existing license negotiated and implemented by the former Minister allowed a significant portion of electricity system losses to be passed directly on to hardworking Jamaicans by removing the threshold that previously limited this exposure. Madam Speaker, this decision has increased ratepayers' burden collectively to over **J\$30 billion per year**, representing approximately **20% of total electricity costs**. It also weakened the incentive

and accountability of the Jamaica Public Service Company to effectively contain and reduce system losses.

2. Madam Speaker, the same Right of First Refusal that he now calls to abolish was, in fact, introduced by him in 2015. This provision facilitated the **non-competitive procurement** of over **288 MW of thermal generation**, along with a floating LNG storage facility. The member is of the view, that he can make a mess, leave it behind them blame this administration for the suffering it causes. I say to the Jamaican people, we know the architect of the current license, but we will get it fixed as committed in the new license. When combined with rising global fuel prices, these decisions are among the primary drivers of today's elevated electricity costs. Madam Speaker, the implications of the **ROFR**, a legacy of his leadership arrangements will persist for at least the next **15 years**.
3. Madam Speaker the comments from the member regarding the **LED replacement streetlight project** are also grossly inaccurate. I must inform the Member and The House that this project was completed in April 2022. A total of 114,223 High Pressure Sodium (HPS) streetlights were replaced with Smart LEDs. (Approximately 6,000 HPS are outstanding pending an audit and the OUR approval. All new streetlight procured by JPS are smart LED type.
4. Similarly, Madam Speaker the smart metering provisions of the 2016 licence must similarly be enforced. This project is 99.7% completed since April 2025. 2,000 meters are outstanding due to access issues. A total of 698,000 meters has been replaced with smart meters.

Madam Speaker this sector has shown Resilience in Action.

TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

Madam Speaker,

The Transport Portfolio remains the largest portfolio within the Ministry, spanning land, maritime, and aviation services, and continues to play a central role to Jamaica's economic development and shown ***Resilience in Action.***

REVISIONS TO THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

Madam Speaker, we are advancing the revision of the National Transport Policy and Action Plan to support a modern, multimodal system that strengthens infrastructure, improves connectivity, enhances safety and security, and advances sustainability. With support from the United Nations Development Programme, the updated framework is being finalized for submission to Cabinet as a Green Paper in the 2026/2027 financial year.

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY POLICY

Madam Speaker, road safety remains a major national priority. The National Road Safety Policy is updated to reflect current realities and align with the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030. The updated framework will guide targeted interventions to reduce fatalities and injuries, while strengthening coordination across government.

Prior to my assumption of this portfolio, there was no allocation from traffic fines towards road safety efforts. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce the approval of a 5% allocation of traffic fines **(\$155,738,973.25)** to the Ministry of Energy, Transport and Telecommunications that will bolster national road safety efforts.

This works out to about **13 million dollars per month**. Some of these funds will be dedicated to public education and behaviour-change interventions across the country. Madam Speaker, an international tender, has begun to secure expertise in designing and executing this sustained national road safety campaign.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Madam Speaker, through sustained partnership among the Transport Authority, the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Island Traffic Authority island-wide monitoring activities have been sustained. These collaborations continue to improve order and safety within the public transportation system. During the period under review:

- 1,915 vehicles operating illegally were seized; and
- 19,413 enforcement actions were carried out against operators for various breaches.

These measures have strengthened compliance, improved order in the sector, and contributed to a record licensing year, reflecting a 3.8 per cent increase over the previous year.

TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

Madam Speaker, During the 2025/2026 financial year, the Transport Authority implemented several strategic initiatives to improve service quality, strengthen performance management, and enhance order and safety across the sector.

RIDE HAILING

Madam Speaker, ride-hailing services remain a pressing concern for this Government as we seek to modernize Jamaica's transport sector and ensure safe, regulated, and accessible mobility for all citizens.

I am pleased to advise that the Cabinet granted approval for the development of the National Ride-Hailing Policy, establishing the foundation for a comprehensive regulatory framework. This framework is necessary to guide the operations of ride-hailing in Jamaica. A Steering Committee has been established to provide oversight and ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the policy development process.

Madam Speaker, the next stage is to develop a Policy Green Paper. Work is actively underway to advance the development of the policy Green Paper to be tabled in parliament in the next four months. This Ministry is committed to transparency. The draft Policy will be exposed to public scrutiny, ensuring that the voices of citizens, operators, and stakeholders shape the final framework. The National Ride-Hailing Policy will not only regulate emerging services but also safeguard the public interest, promote fair competition, and enhance mobility across the island.

FARE ADJUSTMENTS AND RISING FUEL COST

Madam Speaker, I am aware that Jamaica's Public Passenger Vehicle (PPV) sector is under strain due to rising fuel prices as well as the outstanding **16% fare adjustment**. Fuel now accounts for up to **65% of monthly operating expenses**, alongside increasing tolls, insurance, and maintenance costs, threatening the sector's sustainability. In response, the Government is fast-tracking the implementation of the **16% fare adjustment** with a supporting public communication plan, while also exploring relief measures such as insurance premium reductions, concessionary tolls, and stronger enforcement against illegal operators. Long-term solutions include fleet modernization through an updated vehicle age policy, incentives for electric and hybrid vehicles, technical and financial training, and improved parking infrastructure. These interventions aim to balance the needs of operators and commuters, ensuring the continued viability of a sector critical to Jamaica's mobility, commerce, and economic resilience.

ISLAND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

Madam Speaker, the Island Traffic Authority (ITA) continues to play a central role in advancing the Government's priority for safer roads and improved public service delivery. For the period April 2025, to March 16, 2026, the Authority generated

revenue of **Thirteen Billion, Six Hundred Eighty-Eight Million, Thirteen Thousand, Eight Hundred and Eighty-Eight Dollars and Seventy-Six Cents (\$13,688,013,888.76)** for the Government of Jamaica.

As a key regulatory body, the ITA is mandated to administer the provisions of the Road Traffic Act through robust motor vehicle and driver management systems, supported by road safety education and data-driven oversight.

MOTOR VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

The Authority has continued to strengthen the regulatory framework governing motor vehicle certification, ensuring that only roadworthy vehicles are permitted to operate on the nation's roads.

A significant milestone was achieved with the introduction of the E-Fitness System on July 21, 2025. This system has modernized the certification process through the digitisation of fitness certificates, eliminating the need for physical documents and enhancing efficiency, transparency, and regulatory compliance. This initiative represents a critical component of the Authority's broader digital transformation agenda. Madam Speaker, during the period:

- 637,675 Certificates of Fitness were issued, including over 400,000 digital certificates since July 2025;
- 1,928 vehicle inspections were conducted through the Government Motor Vehicle Inspection Services (GMVIS);
- 6,674 motor vehicles were assessed during joint Road Spot Check Operations with the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF); and
- 69 special permits were issued for large and heavy-duty vehicles.

These outcomes reflect strengthened compliance and improved operational efficiency, while bolstering public confidence in the regulatory system.

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

While road fatalities increased marginally by two percent (2%) between 2024 and 2025—from 365 to 374—preliminary data for 2026 is encouraging, indicating a 32 percent reduction in fatalities to date when compared with the corresponding period last year. Madam Speaker, the Authority has expanded its public education initiatives across schools, workplaces, and communities. Key activities include:

- 16 Learner Driver Education initiatives conducted within secondary and tertiary institutions, with hundreds of students facilitated to sit the Road Code Test on campus; and
- 105 road safety awareness engagements held across communities, corporate entities, and educational institutions.

These initiatives are aligned with national policy objectives to reduce road traffic fatalities and promote a culture of responsible road use. Madam Speaker, the Island Traffic Authority continues to support the Government's commitment to safer roads and enhanced service delivery.

JAMAICA URBAN TRANSIT COMPANY LTD (JUTC)

TRANSITION TO CLEANER ENERGY – CNG AND ELECTRIC FLEET

Madam Speaker, the Jamaica Urban Transit Company Limited (JUTC) remains central to public transportation. The JUTC made steady progress in modernizing its fleet, improving service delivery, and strengthening governance. A key pillar of this progress is the transition from traditional diesel to cleaner, more cost-efficient energy sources—an approach that has helped cushion the impact of volatile fuel prices while advancing environmental sustainability.

Today, the JUTC deploys 204 buses powered by alternative energy sources each day, including 197 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, 6 battery electric buses (BEB), and 1 range-extended electric vehicle (REEV), which combines rechargeable battery technology with diesel capability.

EXPANSION OF NATURAL GAS CAPACITY

Madam Speaker, construction of a new natural gas facility at the Spanish Town Depot commenced in June 2025 and was successfully commissioned in December 2025. Since its commissioning, the facility has been fully operational and has been playing a critical role in providing additional refueling capacity for the Company's fleet of CNG buses. This is to ease the operational pressure on the Portmore Natural Gas Facility.

By providing an additional refueling location, the JUTC is better positioned to support the daily operational demands of its growing CNG fleet, minimize downtime associated with refueling, and maintain reliable service across its network.

RURAL SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

Madam Speaker, today marks 1 year since the pilot and launch of the Rural School Bus Programme and I must state for the record that despite the bad mind and the distasteful political rhetoric that was spread, including the member from Manchester Southern, Not One single student has been killed or suffered any serious injuries whilst commuting on the Rural School Bus Service.

Madam Speaker the Rural School Bus Service has also expanded significantly, since the pilot phase in the parish of Portland in May 2025, marking a significant milestone in the Government of Jamaica's commitment to expanding access to safe and reliable school transportation.

Following the success of the pilot, the programme transitioned to a phased national rollout under the management of the Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC). Phase 1 has been successfully completed, establishing a strong foundation for continued expansion. To date, 110 buses have been deployed, each selected to accommodate varying route conditions and passenger needs. The programme currently transports approximately 16,000 students daily.

Phase 2 is now underway, with plans to introduce an additional 100 buses. This expansion will further strengthen the programme's reach and ensure that more students across Jamaica.

Compared to 2025, We have seen a 56% reduction in the number of child fatalities from motor vehicle accidents. Madam Speaker, as a Rural MP, we have seen time and time again the news stories of the deaths of children and the serious injuries they suffer from unsafe and unreliable transport. Colleagues, if we saw a 1% reduction, I would have been the happiest member of this house.

Madam Speaker, members in this very house stood on political platforms and sought to use fear mongering to suggest that these buses were a threat to the safety and security of our children. Madam Speaker, we have seen 8 child fatalities since the start of the year, and we can proudly state that not 1 of those fatalities have been on the rural school bus. I use this opportunity to highlight the enhanced technology and security features on the buses and to urge parents to get their students registered so they can have safer and more affordable commute to school.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR UWI AND UTECH STUDENTS

Madam Speaker, our efforts regarding the safety and security of our students extend beyond the Rural School Bus Programme into our tertiary institutions. Significant strides have been made to address the transportation challenges facing the tertiary student population. The primary focus of these interventions has been to improve safety and accessibility for students attending late-evening classes. In direct response to the request for extended operating hours, the JUTC has successfully implemented later departure times for key student commuter routes. Madam Speaker let me commend the staff at the JUTC and the respective student body organizations at these institutions for the work done to make this a success.

REVENUE PERFORMANCE AND FARE SYSTEMS - CHARTER REVENUE

Charter revenue for the period April to January totaled \$121M, representing 86% above budget of \$65M for the period. Revenue Passengers for year to date as at January 2026 totaled 16.03M, which is 29% below budget of 22.54M.

Approximately 39% or \$502.67M of fare revenue related to smart card usage and 55% or 8.83M passengers used smart cards to pay fares. Currently, approximately 41% of adult passengers use a smart card, compared to 100% usage among concession passengers

At the end of January, 70 active point-of-sale locations were operating across the Kingston Metropolitan Transport Region (KMTR), including 4 JUTC top-up points to facilitate the loading and creation of SmartFare Cards.

KEY DISRUPTIVE MEASURES IMPLEMENTED

Madam Speaker, to prevent further losses and safeguard the Company's resources, the JUTC, in collaboration with law enforcement, has implemented a targeted and multi-faceted approach. Enhanced intelligence-gathering efforts have strengthened coordination with law enforcement, allowing for the identification and tracking of revenue pilferage, which has led to arrests and corrective action.

The JUTC continues to work closely with the Jamaica Constabulary Force to ensure that fuel security remains a priority, supported by ongoing monitoring and refined intervention strategies.

Madam Speaker, since the implementation of these measures, fare revenue for YTD January 2026 was \$1.42B or 12% above budget of \$1.26B.

FLEET EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION

Plans are underway to procure 100 additional JUTC buses to expand and renew the fleet, improve reliability, and replace ageing units. The Government will continue to prioritise cleaner and renewable energy options where feasible, in support of

sustainable transport. Madam Speaker, Dem ago tired fi see Bus. JUTC Bus. School Bus. Every Bus. And I hope Madam Speaker that when I do extend the necessary invitations to the members of the opposition for the relevant commissioning of these buses that they do attend. So that they can join myself and the Prime Minister in front of the entire nation and cut some ribbons.

MONTEGO BAY METRO COMPANY LIMITED

Madam Speaker, Montego Bay Metro ridership exceeded one million passengers for the first time in its 29-year history, reaching 1,003,955 and expected to rise to about 1,073,955. Growth was driven by four new routes carrying over 250,000 passengers, expanded service across 11 routes, and increased daily bus deployment from 10 to 13. Madam Speaker this again demonstrates the commitment of this administration to implement sustainable transportation solutions for all Jamaicans.

MARITIME AND AIR ACHIEVEMENTS

MARITIME AND INTERNATIONAL (AIR) TRANSPORT

Madam Speaker, Jamaica was re-elected to **Category “C”** of the Council of the International Maritime Organization during its 34th Assembly in London. This is an important platform to represent Caribbean and small island states.

This year, Jamaica will proudly mark 50 years of membership in the International Maritime Organization, with commemorative activities in May. This milestone speaks to decades of engagement, leadership, and commitment to the global maritime sector. Additionally, the Authority celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, a testament to its enduring role in advancing Jamaica’s maritime interests.

AIR SERVICES AGREEMENTS

Madam Speaker, Jamaica continues to expand its connectivity through strategic air services agreements. In July 2025, Jamaica signed an Air Services Agreement with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg at the United Nations in New York strengthening

opportunities for tourism, trade, and investment, and deepen diplomatic relations between our two countries.

At the same time, the conclusion of an Air Services Agreement with Curaçao expected in the 2026/2027 financial year, further strengthening regional connectivity and opportunity.

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF JAMAICA and JAMIACA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY - Jamaica's Aviation Resilience

Jamaica's aviation sector, led by the Airports Authority of Jamaica (AAJ), has demonstrated resilience in the face of significant external shocks while maintaining strong regulatory oversight and operational continuity across its network, including Ian Fleming International Airport and the domestic aerodromes at Tinson Pen Aerodrome, Ken Jones Aerodrome, and Negril Aerodrome, while overseeing major international gateways such as Sangster International Airport and Norman Manley International Airport; despite early 2025 sluggish growth, improved travel advisories and increased events supported a mid-year recovery, underscoring the sector's adaptability, further strengthened by strategic initiatives including a pending domestic air service incentive programme and sustained policy leadership and investment planning by the Authority.

Madam Speaker, the sector's resilience was severely tested by Hurricane Melissa, which disrupted aviation traffic and infrastructure—most notably at Sangster International Airport, where heavy damage and tourism dependency led to passenger declines to 4.5 million in 2025 and a projected 4.2 million in 2026—while Norman Manley International Airport rebounded quickly, maintaining steady growth from 1.8 million to a projected 1.9 million passengers; nevertheless.

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's civil aviation sector played a pivotal role in the Hurricane Melissa response between October 29 and December 2, 2025, handling **3,046 flights across all aerodromes**, including **935 relief flights at Sangster International Airport**, reflecting a **26% increase in activity**. An estimated **5,000–6,000 metric tons of relief cargo** were transported by air, with volumes projected to rise by a further **25%**, alongside **310 rotary wing flights** supporting operations.

The sector rapidly stabilized, restoring **all major airports within 24–48 hours**, domestic aerodromes within **36 hours**, and air navigation services within **24 hours**, exceeding the **72-hour recovery target**, while maintaining **zero aviation accidents**. Operations scaled down from a peak of **22 aircraft to 8**, now focused on logistics, supply distribution, and VIP movement, supported by **212 relief flight authorizations (up 32.5%)** and coordinated efforts involving **15 agencies and 29 briefing sessions**.

Madam Speaker, the Transport Portfolio under my stewardship is proof of Resilience in Action.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO

Madam Speaker, in today's world, the strength of a nation is measured by the strength and resilience of its digital infrastructure—and telecommunications sits at the very centre of that reality. The agencies—the Universal Service Fund, and the Spectrum Management Authority under the Ministry as well as the Telecommunications Branch at METT—continue to play a pivotal role in equipping our citizens with the necessary tools and resources to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS RESILIENCE

Madam Speaker, when I addressed this Honourable House last year, it was in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl. I emphasized the importance of preparedness and strong coordination among utility providers, particularly telecommunications operators in anticipation of future events.

At the time, I referenced the assurances given regarding their readiness to restore service following a major disruption. Just five months later, those assurances were tested when we were struck by a Category 5 hurricane. In the areas most severely

affected by Hurricane Beryl such as parts of St. Elizabeth, it took providers over five months to restore service.

This year, Madam Speaker, we saw measurable improvement. With damage at 100% in some areas across Western and Southern Parishes, service was restored to most customers in four months. Madam speaker, more damage shorter recovery period, this is true resilience.

Madam Speaker, this progress did not occur by chance. Telecommunications providers, in collaboration with regulators, expanded partnerships with satellite operators to bolster redundancy and ensure continuity where terrestrial networks were compromised. While services such as Starlink played a role, they were part of a broader ecosystem that included providers like Hispasat and Eutelsat. Working alongside the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and private operators, connectivity was restored in weeks—not months—after Hurricane Melissa.

Looking ahead, satellite technology will remain a critical component of our telecommunications landscape. Even prior to Hurricane Melissa, the Government engaged the International Telecommunication Union to support the development of a more agile legal, regulatory, and policy framework for satellite licensing.

Resilience, Madam Speaker, demands diversity, particularly in how we expand and sustain broadband access. As the Government continues to build out the national network, affordability must remain central. The high cost of international bandwidth affects households and businesses alike, limiting access to meaningful digital opportunities. While the Government does not intend to be a market participant, it will act as a market enabler. In this regard, there is clear room for increased competition.

SUBSEA FIBRE CONNECTIVITY

The Government's investment in subsea fibre connectivity, which commenced in the previous financial year, represents a strategic step forward. It will strengthen redundancy, especially as some existing cables approach end of life while expanding capacity and driving more competitive pricing.

Madam Speaker, despite the actions taken by the opposition of the liberalisation of the sector, the reality today is there is no real diversity in the provision of subsea cable facilities. Like the Opposition, the Government has also heard the cries, the cries from the sector that to increase viability and extend coverage and affordable access, prices for international connectivity must be reduced.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, in this financial year, the subsea cable project will move beyond the initial letter of intent, signed in February and subject to regulatory approvals, will advance toward the establishment of a submarine cable branching unit to Jamaica, with the expectation that this new cable system will be operational by 2027.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Madam Speaker, as another pillar of resilience, the Ministry has been working to finalize a National Emergency Telecommunications Plan. With continued support from the International Telecommunication Union, the plan was completed during the financial year and despite delays caused by Hurricane Melissa was formally presented by ITU to the Government in March.

The plan has since been shared with key disaster coordination agencies, including the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, which will play a central role in its adoption and implementation. Priority actions such as the establishment of common alerting protocols and the requirement for operators to develop and submit network resilience plans, alongside other critical measures to strengthen national preparedness will be the focus of the Ministry going forward.

SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Madam Speaker, the Spectrum Management Authority (SMA) strengthened Jamaica's wireless communications sector during the 2025/26 fiscal year by ensuring efficient spectrum allocation, regulatory compliance, and reliable telecommunications services essential to the economy. It exceeded key performance targets across licensing, interference resolution, band planning, and governance, advancing national goals under Vision 2030.

The Authority also supported national resilience by working with the Ministry to issue emergency spectrum licences before and after Hurricane Melissa, enabling the satellite-to-mobile connectivity via Starlink previously mentioned.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, Madam Speaker, the SMA will expand its monitoring systems, strengthen cybersecurity, enhance spectrum planning, and invest in advanced equipment such as FM modulation meters to improve compliance and signal integrity, positioning itself to support innovation and data-driven policy development.

UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND

And the final agency, Madam Speaker, the Universal Service Fund, continues to actively reduce the digital divide and advancing inclusive national development.

Through a partnership with E-Learning Jamaica the following devices have been distributed over the past 10 years:

Devices	Recipients	Quantities	Value (USD)
Laptops (Own Your Own Device)	Teachers	26,353	14,000,031
Laptops & Locks	High and College labs	16,000	8,500,000
Tablets	Teachers (Covid Support)	25,000	5,000,000
Tablets	Students Islandwide (Covid Support)	32,525	7,411,188.49
Laptops	PATH Students (Covid Support)	15,000	7,968,750.00
Interactive Panels	All Schools	957	1,065,141
Projectors	All Schools	1,190	1,582,173
Specialized equipment	Special Schools	1,738	1,390,400
Laptops & Locks	Primary Schools	12,690	6,741,563

Tablets	NSLP Schools (Used in the STATIN national survey)	3,500	1,050,000
Charging Carts	Primary and Secondary	759	303,600
Starlink	Support to Hurricane damaged schools	150	67,500
Laptops & Locks	Currently being procured for AUTOCAD Labs	2600	1,404,000
Replacement Laptops for teachers affected by Hurricane Melissa	Teachers	404	214,625
Total			USD 56,698,972
			JMD 9,071,835,470

CONNECT JAMAICA (PUBLIC WI-FI)

The USF continued its efforts to roll out **five (5) new public Wi-Fi hotspots** in the 2025-2026 Financial year, namely:

1. Waterfront (Kingston)
2. Spaulding (Manchester)
3. Craft Market (Kingston)
4. Port Royal (St. Andrew)
5. Ocho Rios (St. Ann)

With the addition of these new sites, there will be a total of forty (40) Connect Ja. sites available island wide as of March 2026. To date, 100% of our major townships have been outfitted with Public Wi-Fi facilities courtesy of the USF.

NATIONAL PUBLIC CONNECTIVITY RESTORATION PROGRAMME (NPCRP)

Madam Speaker, Hurricane Melissa caused severe island-wide disruptions across Jamaica's public Wi-Fi and Community Access Point (CAP) infrastructure. The programme was approved for a cost of \$863,250,000 saw a total of 418 sites affected, with restoration scheduled to be completed by end of June 2026.

Madam Speaker, a part of the National Public Connectivity Restoration Programme, restoration efforts across all parishes are as follows:

The Community Wi-Fi restoration:

Parish	Total Sites	Restored	Total sites remaining to be restored by June 2026
Clarendon	36	11	25
Hanover	12	8	4
Kingston	18	11	7
Manchester	24	10	14
Portland	12	2	10
St. Andrew	72	49	23
St. Ann	24	8	16
St. Catherine	66	42	24
St. Elizabeth	24	11	13
St. James	30	6	24
St. Mary	18	7	11
St. Thomas	12	4	8
Trelawny	12	3	9
Westmoreland	18	17	1
TOTAL	378	189	189

PUBLIC WI-FI RESTORATION

A total of 27 Public Wi-Fi sites were impacted. To date, only 3 have been restored, with 24 remaining to be completed by June 2026. The Public Wi-Fi restoration breakout is as follows:

Parish	Total Sites	Restored	Total sites remaining to be restored by April 2026
Clarendon	2	0	2
Hanover	1	0	1
Kingston	1	0	1
Manchester	2	0	2
Portland	2	0	2

St. Andrew	5	2	3
St. Ann	2	1	1
St. Catherine	2	0	2
St. Elizabeth	3	0	3
St. James	1	0	1
St. Mary	2	0	2
St. Thomas	1	0	1
Trelawny	2	0	2
Westmoreland	1	0	1
TOTAL	27	3	24

This underscores the scale of the work still ahead—but also the focus of the programme to bring every site back into operation.

COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT (CAP) RESTORATION

Madam Speaker, the progress under the CAP programme tells a stronger story. Of the 49 CAP sites affected, 46 have already been restored, with just 3 (2 in ST. Elizabeth and 1 in St. James) remaining island wide.

The CAP restoration breakout is as follows:

Parish	Total Sites	Restored	Total sites remaining to be restored by June 2026
Clarendon	1	1	0
Hanover	6	6	0
Manchester	4	4	0
Portland	3	3	0
St. Andrew	3	3	0
St. Ann	2	2	0
St. Catherine	3	3	0
St. Elizabeth	9	7	2
St. James	7	6	1
St. Mary	1	1	0
St. Thomas	1	1	0
Trelawny	6	6	0
Westmoreland	3	3	0

TOTAL	49	46	3
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POST-HURRICANE MELISSA NATIONAL DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS

Madam Speaker, after Hurricane Melissa, when communities were cut off and systems disrupted, the USF moved quickly. One thousand tablets, valued at \$72 million, were deployed to support national damage assessments. That is real-time data collection, real-time decision-making, and real support for affected families across Westmoreland, Hanover, St. Elizabeth, St. James, St. Ann, and Trelawny. That is what responsive government looks like.

This initiative was a collaboration with the Jamaica Defence Force, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, Municipal Corporations, and other local and international partners.

CLOSING

In closing, Madam Speaker, today's realities have sharpened the Government's resolve. Across the Energy, Transport and Telecommunications sectors, we are seeing both the weight of the challenges and the promise of transformation—and we are meeting this moment with urgency, purpose, and heart.

In Energy, we are investing in a more resilient, diversified system—one that lowers costs, strengthens energy security, and accelerates a path of transition to renewables, delivering tangible relief and long-term sustainability for Jamaican households and businesses.

In Transport, we are modernizing how our people and goods move—expanding connectivity and strengthening our air and maritime gateways, because an efficient transport network is not just about mobility, it is about opportunity, safety, and economic growth in every parish.

In Telecommunications, we are working to close the digital divide—expanding broadband access, strengthening infrastructure, and empowering our citizens with the tools to learn, innovate, and compete in a global digital economy. This is about equity, inclusion, and unlocking the full potential of our people.

These are not just policies or projects—they are investments in the lives, livelihoods, and future of every Jamaican. They reflect the Government’s belief that progress must be felt not in pockets, but everywhere. I had assumed duties of Minister with a clear determination to deliver meaningful, lasting change, and I remain steadfast in that commitment to all Jamaicans. We will not be daunted. We will press forward—deliberately, responsibly, and boldly. Madam Speaker, the Ministry will continue to show- Resilience in Action as we serve the Jamaican people.

Thank you.