

**Ministry of Local Government and Community Development**

**STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**By Hon. DESMOND McKENZIE**

**MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**JULY 1, 2020**

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* Mr. Speaker…
* In my Statement to this House last week, I spoke about the alarming rate of non-compliance with COVID-19 protocols at our beaches and rivers. In appealing for improved levels of personal responsibility, I stated that the Social Development Commission would observe and measure whether our beach and river-goers obeyed the re-opening rules.
* You will also recall that at the Press Conference on Monday, it was noted that I would give further details today.
* **63 beaches and 74 rivers were visited last weekend**. **I regret to advise that the overall level of compliance was 33%. A clear majority, 67%, did not obey these rules.**
* The breaches of the individual protocols are even more serious. **97% of the people who visited beaches and rivers last weekend wore no masks, and 66% did not practice social distancing.**
* Many Operators of these facilities also failed to obey and enforce the protocols.
* **Only 22% of river operators worked within the designated opening hours.**
* **46% of beach operators were compliant in this respect. 19% of the beaches and rivers had sanitation stations. 42% had clearly marked areas for vending. Only 4% had signs erected stating the protocols to be followed. Parties and other events are still being held. Mr. Speaker, a football tournament with over 800 people was held at Hellshire Beach last weekend.**
* This situation is untenable. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, **as of tomorrow, Thursday July 2, all beaches and rivers will be strictly monitored and those found to be in breach of the protocols will be shut down with immediate effect. Both the beach and river operators as well as the public patrons will be warned for possible prosecution under the Disaster Risk Management Act. The onus will then be on the specific beach and river operators to satisfy the authorities that they have put in place all the protocols before they are allowed to reopen.**
* The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and the Social Development Commission, will be surveying the beaches and rivers to ensure that the protocols are being observed. **The SDC’s capacity will be bolstered by the employment of 200 temporary workers from all over the island.** In addition to ensuring compliance, this team will be sensitizing the operators about the importance of enforcing the protocols.
* Beach and river surveys will continue Mr. Speaker, as it is vital that all who operate and visit these facilities obey the COVID-19 protocols. I say once again, that the **manner in which people use these recreational spaces, will determine whether they remain opened or closed.**

**CONDITIONAL RE-OPENING OF CINEMAS, PLAYHOUSES AND THEATRES**

* Mr. Speaker, Cinemas, Playhouses and Theatres have been closed by Order since March. **These venues will be conditionally re-opened for 14 days effective Sunday July 5. The protocols include the requirement that no more than 60 percent of seating capacity must be used. There must be one way foot traffic (one way in and one way out) inside cinemas where possible. At least two rows must be left empty to facilitate movement of persons across the width of the venue.**
* **A maximum 4 persons from the same family or group are allowed to sit side by side. There must be a gap of two seat spaces between each group, and also between individual patrons.**
* **Mr. Speaker, in addition to the established Playhouses, many other locations such as school auditoriums and community centres are used for this form of entertainment. Promoters or managers must ensure that all actors are screened and where required, tested for COVID-19.** **For both indoor and outdoor venues, at least 6 feet must be between the stage and the first row occupied by patrons. This area must be marked and physical barriers erected where possible.**
* **All Cinemas, Playhouses and Theatres must be closed no later than one hour before the designated time for the nightly curfew.**

**RESTAURANTS**

* Mr. Speaker, **as of tomorrow, Thursday July 2, dining will once again be allowed in restaurants. The occupancy must not exceed 50% of capacity at any one point. No more than 4 persons can be seated at a table. There must be at least 6 feet of space between tables, and they must not be joined together to facilitate large groups.**
* **Mr. Speaker, the operators of all Theatres, Cinemas, Playhouses and Restaurants must allow access to officials from the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, the Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Jamaica Constabulary Force to monitor their operations. These officials must have proper identification.**
* There are other protocols, and the information will be shared with all stakeholders. Consultation and partnership remain critical to our efforts at normalization, and some of these measures emerged from discussions with the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica.

**ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR/PLACES OF AMUSEMENT**

* Mr. Speaker, these venues remain closed. However, we are having discussions this week about protocols that can effectively address the unique features of this sector. The talks will involve the police, the SDC, Jamaica Fire Brigade, ODPEM, the Municipal Corporations, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport.

**EXTENSION OF OPENING HOURS FOR MARKETS, ARCADES, TRANSPORTATION CENTRES**

* As was announced by the Most Honourable Prime Minister on Monday, **Markets will be opened for 13 hours per day, Monday to Saturday, up from 12 hours per day. That is, 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.** This time extension also applies to vending in public arcades and the operations of public transportation centres. The Markets will continue to be closed on Sundays to allow the Local Authorities to clean and sanitize them.

**PROTOCOL OBSERVANCE AT FUNERALS AND BURIALS**

* Mr. Speaker, the Government remains concerned that many people are not respecting the gathering and distancing protocols at funerals and burials. Large crowds and close contact at these events have already led to quarantines, to contain the resulting spread of COVID-19.
* I am appealing for full compliance with the protocols: No more than 50 mourners at the funeral, depending on the square footage of the church, and no more than 15 at the burial; of which no more than ten can be mourners.
* We are a sociable people, and turning out in numbers to pay our last respects is a long-standing tradition.
* However, I am asking for everyone to accept that these are not normal times. Do not risk your health, your life, and the lives of your family and friends, by breaking these rules that are there to protect you.
* **I am asking for public observance of all the COVID-19 protocols, as the Government balances business resumption and social life, with the preservation of public health.**
* Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP**

**Minister of Local Government and Community Development**

**July 1, 2020**