

Jamaica bans scrap metal trade

The Jamaican government has put a stop on all scrap metal trade effective April 28, with the exception of manufacturers who generate their own material, and do not buy from other sources.

"This must be upon submission of evidence to the Customs department to verify," Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, Karl Samuda stated on Monday, as he made the announcement at the Ministry, in New Kingston. The decision has been made in the wake of the theft of millions of dollars worth of infrastructure across the island, and most recently at the Colbeck Irrigation pumping station in St Catherine, where scrap metal thieves vandalised critical agricultural equipment with losses estimated at some \$5 million.

Samuda said the situation, which has intensified over recent months, was untenable, and that the current way in which the industry was operating, is not in the best interest of the country.

The ban does not apply to containers that are already on the ports. Other containers, which have already been packed, will be inspected by a special team comprising the Jamaica Customs Department, the police and other stakeholders, and then repacked.

Samuda said the Customs Department has given an undertaking to have this process completed by Friday, April 30.

In addition, effective immediately, there will be no further export of copper.

"No metal that is smelted prior to being packed will be permitted for export. The metal must be in its original state, it may be compacted, it may be cut up into pieces, but it must remain in its original state, and that is particularly in respect of certain types of metal. They must not be processed in any way at all," Samuda emphasised.

The Minister said that when he speaks in Parliament on May 4, he will outline all the processes necessary as it relates to the export of scrap metal.

Samuda said that this morning's meeting with scrap metal dealers had not provided a satisfactory explanation (from the dealers) nor one that would "cause any other action than the one I decided to take."

He spoke of the importance of the scrap metal industry, despite the ban, but argued that, "the scrap metal industry is sick, and needs to be stabilised, and that's precisely what we are going to do."

"We cannot continue business as usual. There has to be some dramatic changes in how we do business in this trade," the Minister emphasised.

The scrap metal industry earned more than \$100 million in 2009.