

Jamaica to the Rescue

Jamaica is to send a team of medical and support personnel to Haiti to help that country deal with the cholera outbreak.

With almost 1,200 persons dead and a further 15,000 persons infected with cholera in Haiti, Prime Minister Bruce Golding yesterday gave instructions for a team of medical and support personnel to be mobilised for deployment to the country.

In addition to medical practitioners, the contingent will include Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) personnel, who will provide logistical support and security.

The Jamaica team will take with them medical supplies for the treatment of patients, as well as water-treatment applications.

In announcing the assistance plan yesterday, Golding said he was heartened by the number of persons who, without a call-out, had volunteered to be part of the contingent.

Golding, who is the chairman of CARICOM, said he had been in touch with other regional governments as well as the region's special representative to Haiti, P.J. Patterson, to coordinate the region's response to this latest crisis.

Contain and defeat

According to Golding, the Jamaican Government will be working closely with other CARICOM governments and international agencies to contain and defeat the cholera epidemic, which is not only a cause for alarm in Haiti, but is a threat to the entire region, and in particular, Jamaica, because of its close proximity

Golding has instructed the JDF and the Marine Police to intensify their surveillance to intercept boat traffic between Haiti and Jamaica to ensure that the necessary quarantine procedures are fully enforced in relation to persons arriving on Jamaican shores from Haiti.

Surveillance and response procedures are already in place at the island's airports in relation to persons who have recently been in Haiti or who display cholera-related symptoms.

In the meantime, the medical charity group, Médecins Sans Frontières, has claimed that despite the huge aid-agency presence in Haiti, urgent needs are not being met.