

## Golding explains why he's stepping down

Jamaica's Prime Minister Bruce Golding cited the Coke-Manatt extradition saga and the duration of his time in politics as factors, which influenced his decision to resign as head of government.

Golding announced last Sunday, through a press release, that he would not seek re-election as leader of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), at the party's upcoming conference in November.

The prime minister also said at the time, he would relinquish his post as prime minister once a new leader was identified.

His decision sent shockwaves throughout Jamaica and beyond its shores.

In a national broadcast tonight, Golding said that the perceptions, which resulted from the Coke-Manatt affair influenced his decision to step aside.

What Bruce Golding said Sunday, October 2, 2011:  
Prime Minister's address to the nation

"The entire episode has affected me deeply and the perceptions that are held by some people have not been dispelled, notwithstanding the exhaustive deliberations of a commission of enquiry.

"I cannot allow the challenges we face and the issues that we as a people must confront to be smothered or overpowered by this saga and the emotions that they ignite. It would not be fair to my country; it would not be fair to my party," he said.

The Coke-Manatt saga consisted of several months of international and local wrangling over the extradition of Christopher "Dudus" Coke to the United States (US) for drugs and gun smuggling.

The request that came from the US in 2009, which was initially denied by the Jamaican Government, cited issues of constitutionality breaches.

Coke was eventually extradited following standoffs between the Jamaican Government and the US government, the hiring of law firm Manatt Phelps and Phillips to lobby the US, subsequent public outcry and a security operation in Tivoli Gardens that claimed the lives of at least 73 Jamaicans.

Golding played a very visible role in the saga, and the fallout from the episode has damaged his and the JLP's fortunes, some analysts have said.

Golding, in his address, again tried to clarify his role in the affair during his speech.

"Questions about the role I played in the Coke/Manatt matter have remained a source of concern in the minds of many people. It was never about Coke's guilt or innocence.

"It was about a breach of our Constitution, and had it been a person other than Coke it perhaps would never have become the cause célèbre that it turned out to be," he continued.

Golding, who described his four years as prime minister as challenging, also said that it was time for those of his generation to step aside from the front line of the political arena.

"I was first elected to Parliament almost 40 years ago. In the next two months I will be 64. I feel it is time for me and people like me to make way and allow a new crop of leaders to step forward and unleash their energies and creativity," Golding noted.

"There are young people in my party, indeed in both parties, who are capable of providing the leadership that the country requires at this time," he said.

However, Golding said if his advice was needed then it would be available.

"It is time for my generation to make way for younger people whose time has come, who are more in sync with 21st century realities, whose vision can have a longer scope and who can bring new energy to the enormous tasks that confront us," he said.

In his speech Golding also sought to explain the timing of his resignation, saying that his announcement was done with the November JLP conference in mind.

“The annual general conference of the JLP is scheduled to be held on November 19 & 20. As stipulated in the party’s constitution, the deadline for nominations is October 19.

“Sufficient time, therefore, had to be allowed for potential candidates to consider offering themselves and meet the October 19 nomination deadline,” he said.

Golding also sought to reassure Jamaica, the international audience and the financial markets that his departure would not affect the island’s standing.

“I have been in contact with our major international partners and I have assured them that the direction of the government is firmly in place and that the transition will be smooth and seamless,” he said.

The financial markets remain sober while they await the appointment of a new prime minister, and confirmation that we will not deviate from the economic reforms on which we have embarked,” he continued.

Bruce Golding was sworn in as Prime Minister of Jamaica on September 11, 2007.

He is Jamaica’s eighth prime minister.