

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, says that approximately 12,000 permanent jobs were created in the country during the last quarter.

Prime Minister Simpson Miller made the statement at a special media briefing at Jamaica House on January 14, following a three-day Cabinet retreat that ended on Saturday (January 12).

The Prime Minister told journalists that Cabinet received status reports on several projects designed to breathe new life into the economy.

In giving an update, she reported that “steady progress is being made towards the creation of agro parks, which will protect and boost urban and rural food production”.

Mrs. Simpson Miller also said work is proceeding satisfactorily on the Mount Rosser leg of the North Coast Highway, which is expected to be completed by year-end. She noted that once the requirements of the environmental agencies are satisfied, work will begin on the Ferry to Linstead and Moneague to Ocho Rios segments of the highway.

Among the other projects mentioned by the Prime Minister at the briefing, was a US\$30 million private/public sector development initiative called the ‘Downtown Kingston Lifestyle Centre’, that is expected to accelerate the redevelopment of downtown Kingston.

“Serious commitments have been given by the local private sector to this exciting venture,” she said.

Mrs. Simpson Miller also promised to update the nation at a later date on the Jamaica Public Service Company’s (JPS) expansion project for 360 megawatts of load capacity.

She called on the local private sector to participate in the Request for Proposal issued by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) for the provision of 115 megawatts of renewable energy to the grid.

In the meantime, the Prime Minister stated that the budget for the fiscal year 2013/14 will present to the country, what the Cabinet believes, to be the best combination of “a coherent and credible macro-economic framework; a programme of increased public and private sector investment in a range of economic sectors; and an enhanced and co-ordinated programme to address the needs of the most vulnerable”.

She implored Jamaicans to avoid “talking down our country and abilities, and spreading rumours that cause undue anxiety and possibly weaken our negotiating position as a country”.