

National Honours and Awards of Jamaica

Introduction

The National Honours and Awards recognise those Jamaicans or foreign nationals who, by their service, have made a meaningful and significant contribution to national development.

Under the **National Honours and Awards Act**, promulgated on July 18, 1969, formal recognition of service to Jamaica and its citizens may be given by the conferment of the six (6) Orders of the Societies of Honour, and the two (2) national awards, which are as follows:

The Orders of the Societies of Honour:

- **The Order of National Hero**
- **The Order of the Nation**
- **The Order of Excellence**
- **The Order of Merit**
- **The Order of Jamaica**
- **The Order of Distinction**

The National Awards:

- **The Badge of Honour**
- **The Medal of Honour**

Annually on Independence Day, August 6, recipients are announced in the press, and presentations are made on National Heroes Day, which is observed on the third Monday in October. The Governor-General presents the awards or instruments of honour to the outstanding Jamaicans and foreign nationals at the **Ceremony of Investiture and Presentation of National Honours and Awards**, which is usually held on the lawns of King's House – the official office and residence of the Governor-General.

Nomination of Recipients

The Chancery of the Orders of Societies of Honour in the Office of the Prime Minister administers the National Honours and Awards programme. The Chancery, which was established in 1969 under the National Honours and Awards Act, invites the public to submit nominations for the eight categories of the national honours and awards between January and March annually. Nomination forms are available at the Office of the Chancery, and from Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, as well as Jamaican Missions overseas.

An eight-member selection committee, comprising members of the Cabinet, shortlists the nominees, who are subsequently presented to the Prime Minister for review. The Prime Minister then presents the nominees to the Cabinet for approval, after which, the list of nominees is sent to the Governor-General for assent.

Orders of the Societies of Honour

The Orders of the Societies of Honour are the highest of the national awards, and are specifically bestowed on persons who have contributed significantly to national life.

The Order of National Hero



The insignia of the Order of National Hero

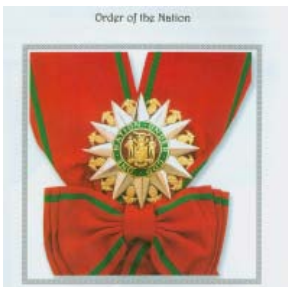
The Order of National Hero, established in 1969, is the highest of the Orders and may be conferred on any Jamaican or naturalised citizen who has rendered the most distinguished service to Jamaica. The recipient is styled 'The Right Excellent' and wears the insignia of the Order.

The motto of the Order, '**He Built A City Which Hath Foundations**', is engraved on the insignia. The insignia consists of a gold and white enamelled star of fourteen points, the centre of which shows the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica in gold on a black enamelled medallion. This is surrounded by the motto of the Order in gold lettering on green enamel. The collar badge is suspended from a black, gold and green neck riband by a gold and green enamelled laurel wreath.

Jamaicans on whom the **Order of National Hero** has been conferred are:

- The Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey
- The Right Excellent George William Gordon
- The Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante
- The Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley
- The Right Excellent Paul Bogle
- The Right Excellent Nanny of the Maroons
- The Right Excellent Samuel Sharpe

The Order of the Nation (ON)



The insignia of the Order of the Nation

The Order of the Nation is the second highest Order and is conferred on the Governor-General and Prime Minister, upon whom the Order of National Hero was not previously conferred. Recipients of this honour are entitled to be styled formally as 'The Most Honourable', wear the insignia of the Order, and use the post nominal letters 'ON'. Spouses of the recipients are also styled 'The Most Honourable'.

The insignia of the Order of the Nation bears the motto which is '**One Nation Under God**'. It consists of a magnificent breast star bearing the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica on a red

enamelled background in the centre, and surrounded by the motto of the Order in gold lettering on green enamel. Between the points of the star are gold representations of pineapples. The broad watered silk sash is in a brilliant red with narrow green ending.

The Order of the Nation has been conferred on:

Governors-General

- The Most Honourable Sir Clifford Campbell (post humously)
- The Most Honourable Sir Florizel Glasspole
- The Most Honourable Sir Howard Cooke
- The Most Honourable Sir Kenneth Hall
- The Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen

Prime Ministers

- The Most Honourable Donald Sangster (post humously)
- The Most Honourable Hugh Shearer
- The Most Honourable Michael Manley (post humously)
- The Most Honourable Edward Seaga
- The Most Honourable Percival J. Patterson
- The Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller

The Order of Excellence (OE)



The insignia of the Order of Excellence

The Order of Excellence, which was created in 2003, is reserved for foreign heads of state or heads of government. This Order is ranked with the same precedence as the honour of the Order of the Nation. Recipients of this Order are styled 'The Most Honourable'.

The insignia of the Order of Excellence is a twelve-point breast star in yellow gold, interspersed with representations of pineapples in white gold. In the centre is the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica in yellow gold, superimposed on a red enamelled background and surrounded by the motto of the Order, '**Excellence Through Service**', in gold letters on royal blue enamel. The insignia is worn with a yellow shoulder sash edged with a narrow band of green and black in equal proportions.

Since its inception, the Order has been conferred on three foreign dignitaries:

- President of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete
- The King of Spain, His Majesty Juan Carlos
- Former President of South Africa, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki

The Order of Merit (OM)



The insignia of the Order of Merit

The Order of Merit is the third highest honour and may be conferred upon any citizen of Jamaica who has achieved eminent international distinction in his or her field of endeavour. A distinguished citizen of a country other than Jamaica may be conferred as an honorary member of this Order.

This Order may be conferred on no more than two persons in any given year and have a total of fifteen (15) living members, other than honorary members. The recipient is formally styled 'The Honourable' and uses the post nominal letters 'OM' for members and 'OM (Hon)' for honorary members.

The insignia of the Order of Merit is a collar badge suspended from a deep maroon silk riband. The six-armed white enamelled star with twelve points has superimposed on it a lesser shaped star in silver. Between each of the outer six points of the star is the blue Lignum Vitae flower of Jamaica. In the centre is the Coat of Arms of Jamaica in gold on a contrasting silver background, surrounded by the motto of the Order '**He That Does Truth Comes Into The Light**' in gold lettering on red enamel.

Recipients of the Order include:

- The Honourable Dr. T. P. Lecky
- The Honourable Dr. Albert Lockhart
- The Honourable Edna Manley
- The Honourable Robert Nesta Marley
- Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford
- Professor the Honourable Michael Smith
- Professor the Honourable Manley West
- The Honourable Cecily Williams
- The Honourable Louise Bennett Coverley
- Professor the Honourable Mervyn Morris

The Order of Jamaica (OJ)



The insignia of the Order of Jamaica

The honour of the **Order of Jamaica** may be bestowed on any Jamaican national or any distinguished citizen of a foreign country other than Jamaica, who has demonstrated outstanding distinction in service to Jamaica. Members of the Order are entitled to be formally styled 'The Honourable', wear the insignia of the Order and use the post nominal letters 'OJ'. Foreign nationals receiving the award are honorary members and use the post nominal letters 'OJ (Hon)'.

So far, the youngest member is Ambassador the Hon. Usain Bolt. He was awarded at age 23 for outstanding performance in the field of athletics at the international level.

The insignia of the Order of Jamaica is made in gold and consists of a white enamel collar badge, the ends of which represent the ackee fruit and leaves, suspended from a deep green silk riband. The centre shows the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica against a gold background and this is surrounded by the gold lettered motto of the Order '**For a Covenant of the People**' on the green enamel.

Recipients of the Order of Jamaica include:

- The Honourable Wycliffe Bennett (post humously)
- The Honourable Peter Abrahams
- The Honourable Lloyd Barnett
- The Honourable Harry Belafonte
- The Reverend and Honourable Herro Blair
- The Honourable Lascelles Chin
- The Honourable Oliver Clarke
- The Reverend and Honourable Father Richard Ho Lung
- The Reverend and Honourable Dr. Carmen Lois Stewart

The Order of Distinction



The insignia of the Order of Distinction (Commander Class) - CD

The **Order of Distinction** may be conferred upon any citizen who has rendered outstanding and important service to Jamaica in any field of endeavour. The Order has two ranks; the higher class - Commander - being the higher of the two. Distinguished citizens of a country other than Jamaica may be conferred with this honour as honorary members. The motto of this Order is '**Distinction Through Service**'.

The insignia of the **Order of Distinction in the rank of Commander** is a triangular badge with curved sides. In the centre is a black medallion bearing the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica in gold. The words of the motto of the Order are in black. The Badge is suspended from a silk collar riband of black, gold and green by a silver finial of two intertwined letters "J" attached to the uppermost point of the triangle. Members of this rank use the post nominal letters 'CD' and 'CD (Hon)' for honorary members.



The insignia of the Order of Distinction (Officer Class) – OD

The insignia of the **Order of Distinction in the Officer Class** is suspended from a breast riband of black, gold and green, without the finial. The triangular silver badge has in the centre a

yellow enamelled square on which are placed the heraldic Coat of Arms of Jamaica in silver. Members of this rank use the post nominal letters OD and OD (Hon) for honorary members. On promotion of members or honorary members to the rank of Commander, recipients cease to use the post nominal letters 'OD' or 'OD (Hon)'.

The Badge of Honour



The insignia of the Badge of Honour

The **Badge of Honour** is awarded to civilian residents of Jamaica or to foreign nationals who are employed in the diplomatic or consular missions overseas. There are three categories of the award:

- **The Badge of Honour For Gallantry** – awarded to persons who have performed acts of gallantry and demonstrated great courage in dangerous circumstances
- **The Badge of Honour For Meritorious Service** – awarded to persons who have rendered loyal and meritorious service to Jamaica
- **The Badge of Honour For Long and Faithful Service** – awarded to persons who have rendered long and valuable service to Jamaica; worthy of special recognition

The Badge of Honour is made of silver and is circular in design bearing:

- a. On the obverse the Coat of Arms, the word “Jamaica”, Lignum Vitae leaves and flowers around the border.
- b. On the reverse the words “For Gallantry”, “For Meritorious Service” or “For Long and Faithful Service” as the case may be, with the name of the recipient and the date of the award.

The Medal of Honour



Insignias of the Medal of Honour

The Medal of Honour is awarded to members of the state's security corps and other uniformed groups, and falls into two categories.

- **The Medal of Honour For Gallantry** – The Medal of Honour for Gallantry is of silver gilt. This medal may be awarded to officers in the Jamaica Defence Force or the Jamaica Constabulary Force, or other members of the uniformed services, who have performed acts of gallantry or have demonstrated great courage in circumstances of extreme danger
- **For Meritorious Service** – The Medal of Honour for Meritorious Service is of silver gilt for officers and silver for other ranks or members of the relevant service. This medal may be awarded to officers and other members of the uniformed services who have performed distinguished service, or have displayed distinguished conduct or bravery

The circular Medal of Honour has a diameter of 3.5 centimetres bearing:

- a) On the obverse the Coat of Arms and the word “Jamaica”
- b) On the reverse the badge of the relevant uniformed service with the words “For Gallantry” or “For Meritorious Service” as the case may be

Conclusion

The national honours and awards of Jamaica serve to recognise Jamaicans and foreign nationals at the highest level. They symbolise appreciation from the Government of Jamaica to those who have distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavour, and have made a significant contribution to national development.

Persons can be bestowed with any of the following honours and awards: the Order of National Hero, the Order of the Nation, the Order of Excellence, the Order of Merit, the Order of Jamaica, the Order of Distinction, the Badge of Honour and the Medal of Honour.

References

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<http://www.opm.gov.jm/opm_programmes/the_chancery/_protocol/national_honours_and_awards>.