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by Barbara Khol

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, April 25, 1991

On April 19, Finance Minister Percival Patterson told reporters that the Japanese and Jamaican governments had formalized an agreement to reschedule 545 million yen (about $4.25 million) in official debt owed to Japan. The agreement covers debt already due or soon to mature, and includes a five-year grace period. Japan is Jamaica's fifth largest bilateral creditor. At year-end 1990, Jamaica owed a total $170.48 million to Tokyo. In addition, Kingston owes $160.6 million to the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) granted in the form of soft loans with a 25-year maturity and concessionary rates of 4.3% per annum. The OECF assistance is being used to finance reconstruction work at the Jamaica Telephone Company. Telephone infrastructure was devastated by Hurricane Gilbert in 1988. OECF assistance has also been provided for motor vehicle imports for the tourist industry and the health sector, an agricultural sector adjustment loan, a coffee development project in the island's Blue Mountains and the local light and power company. Jamaica's foreign debt totals about $4.5 billion. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 04/19/91)

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