

PM Says BPO Sector Must Shift to Higher-Value Services

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, is calling on players in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry to start shifting from call centre operations to higher-value services.

"We, the Government, understand that this industry is susceptible to rapid change. My view is that the industry will not go away, but ...artificial intelligence will transform the industry," he pointed out.

The Prime Minister noted that Jamaica cannot rest comfortably at the level that we are in. He said the industry "must increase its performance levels from merely being telephone operators to absorb more of the high-value skills."

Continuing, Mr. Holness said the sector "has to significantly and rapidly move from the business process engineering and development, to the knowledge process."

The Prime Minister was speaking at the official opening of the Montego Bay Free Zone Company Limited's Data Entry Building Number 7 in St. James on January 9.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre) cuts the ribbon to open the Montego Bay Free Zone Company Limited's Data Entry Building Number 7 on January 9. Sharing the moment (from left) are Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Karl Samuda; Attorney General and Member of Parliament for West Central St. James, Marlene Malahoo Forte; President and Chief Executive Officer of the Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ), Professor Gordon Shirley; and Chairman of the Montego Bay Free Zone Company Limited, Antony Mark Hart.

Mr. Holness said that the level of training must increase to meet the growing needs of the BPO sector.

"It cannot be that we have investors here and we are not

supplying, rapidly, the quality of trained workers. We have to get going on that in a more aggressive way," Mr. Holness said.

The Prime Minister lauded the Port Authority of Jamaica

(PAJ), which operates the Montego Bay Free Zone Company Limited, for undertaking work to provide additional BPO space.

Jamaica Welcomed 4.31 Million Visitors in 2018

MINISTER OF Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett, is reporting that Jamaica welcomed a record 4.31 million visitors in 2018.

"This represents the second year in a row that Jamaica has had more than 4.3 million visitors in a single year," he said at a press briefing held at his New Kingston offices on January 8.

He noted that the country saw an 8.6 per cent increase in earnings from US\$3 billion in 2017 to US\$3.3 billion last year.

Minister Bartlett said that the growth in earnings places the country on track to achieve the target set by the Administration of generating \$5 billion in revenue from tourism by 2021.

He said the projections are that by the end of the winter season, the country would have earned an additional US\$1 billion in tourism revenue since 2016.

"This is a powerful performance because what it means is that we would've earned US\$1 billion in three years when it took us 40 years to earn the first billion and 17 years to earn the second billion," he pointed out.

In the meantime, Minister Bartlett stated that there is more than US\$1 billion in circulation across Jamaica coming directly from tourism.

"The impact of this is seen in the growth of the small and medium enterprises across Jamaica," he said.



Tourism Minister, Hon. Edmund Bartlett, interacts with passengers arriving on the cruise ship, 'Carnival Horizon', in Ocho Rios recently.

Ganja Cultivation Project for Small Farmers to Begin by March

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says that the Alternative Development Programme (ADP), which will provide an avenue for small ganja farmers to benefit from the ganja industry, will start by March 2019.

The programme aims to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of ganja and channel the process through legal streams. The pilot, which will commence in Accompong, St. Elizabeth and Orange Hill in Westmoreland, will involve the farming of ganja to provide raw material for processors.

"It is a real fear that as that [ganja] industry emerges to become more corporatised, that the original ganja man, the original farmer, could very well be left out of the gains and the benefits, when you were the ones singing the praises and the benefits from how long," Mr. Holness said.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) listens attentively to Colonel of the Accompong Town Maroons, Ferron Williams (right), at an event to commemorate the 281st celebration of the signing of the peace treaty with the British, and the birthday of past leader, Cudjoe, in Accompong Town, St. Elizabeth, recently.

"So this programme is of significant importance to ensure that small farmers, and, in fact, communities like Accompong, where there is a certain discipline, a certain order, a certain social system that will ensure that it is

not used in illicit ways, will benefit," he added.

He was speaking at the Accompong Maroons' 281st celebration of the signing of the peace treaty with the British and commemoration of the birthday of legendary

leader, Cudjoe, in the Maroon village, St. Elizabeth, recently.

The programme will be administered by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries with oversight from the Cannabis Licensing Authority and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority.

Second Supplementary Estimates Tabled in House

THE GOVERNMENT on Tuesday (January 8) tabled the Second Supplementary Estimates, which show that the Administration is proposing to spend an additional \$11.4 billion for this fiscal year.

The document was tabled by Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, in the House of Representatives.

The Estimates reveal that the budget has been increased from \$791.11 billion to \$802.56 billion.

Recurrent (housekeeping) expenses have moved from \$572.46 billion to \$582.5 billion, for an additional expenditure of \$9.65 billion.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

In terms of capital (development) spending, this is proposed to be increased by \$1.36 billion, moving from \$218.64 billion to \$220.04 billion.

Of the increase, \$1.5 billion will go towards the maintenance of roads and structures. The additional funds are required to facilitate clearing of drains, removal of mudslides, patching and other repairs to roads affected by rain events.

In addition, some \$710.65 million has been provided in the Estimates for the settlement of amounts owing by ministries, departments and agencies to the National Water Commission (NWC).

The Second Supplementary Estimates will be debated in the House for its approval on January 15.

PM Visits Five-Year Old Letter Writer



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) lifts five-year-old, Makai McLawrence, when he visited Small Treasures Child Care, in St. Andrew, on January 8. Makai wrote a letter to the Prime Minister inviting him to visit the school.

Funds Allocated to Complete Classroom Block at Little London High

THE MINISTRY of Education, Youth and Information, has allocated \$13 million to assist with the completion of a classroom block at the Little London High School, in Westmoreland.

During a visit to the institution on January 8, Portfolio Minister, Senator the Hon. Ruel Reid said the new block will help to alleviate a shortage of space at the institution.

Construction on the new block, which will provide six new classrooms for students, began in August 2018 with funds raised by the institution.

The Minister told the teachers that the Government remains committed to creating a comfortable and safe teaching and learning environment for both teachers and students.

"While we are placing all our students now in secondary up to age 18, they are not always in a comfortable environment. We still need more classrooms in some instances, and more laboratory spaces to ensure that the school and the teaching and learning environment are adequate," he said.

In the meantime, Senator Reid informed that the Ministry will be providing a metal detector for the institution as part of efforts to further boost safety and security at Little London High.

Grange Hill and Petersfield High Schools in Westmoreland will also receive metal detectors.

Senator Reid also committed to providing additional equipment to support the technical and vocational programmes at the institutions.



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