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New Call Center in Jamaica to Add 4,500 New Jobs, Bringing BPO Sector to 36,100

Top Stories / **Published On November 03, 2019 11:54 PM /**

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Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (centre), breaks ground for the \$3.5-billion business process outsourcing (BPO) complex, GTECH Park, in Cookspen, Portmore, on Thursday (October 24). Others (from left) are Executive Director of the Economic Gr By. Jamaica Information Service

JAMAICA -- "There are just some people who don't want to work. They prefer to sit on the street corner, be in gangs and a part of subcultures rather than join mainstream prosperity. Somehow we have to find a way to reach them. There has to be some social outreach."

That was the statement of Prime Minister Andrew Holness on Thursday, October 24. He was speaking at the groundbreaking for a JMD \$3.5-billion business process outsourcing (BPO) development at GTech Park in Portmore, Saint Catherine. According to Mr. Holness, the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) has approved more than US\$79 million worth of loans to the BPO sector. "The DBJ is seeking another US\$40 million from the Ministry of Finance to continue to enable the sector to grow. From our estimates, that will mobilize another 13,000 jobs. Before the end of next year, the next time I am on a platform opening a BPO business, I can say we are over 50,000 jobs," he said.

Business process outsourcing, or BPO, is a business practice in which one organization hires another company to perform a task that the hiring organization requires for its own business to successfully operate.

Partnerships and Opportunities

Mr. Holness went on to commend the local financial institutions who partner with investors on major construction projects. He also stressed the need for young people to take advantage of the job opportunities available to them.

This BPO development, funded by local investor Gordon Tewani, is expected to provide 4,500 new jobs and it is expected that 60 percent of the BPO's workforce will come from Portmore, Saint Catherine. Over a six-month period, the first building will be constructed. However, the construction on a 240,000-square-foot complex, comprising of three buildings is expected to run for a total of 18 months.

Growth Prospects in Jamaica

At the occasion, Mr. Tewani was optimistic about growth prospects in Jamaica, stating that "Jamaica definitely is going to grow. It won't stand still. It has to grow, no matter who the government is. Billions of dollars have gone into this project, and that includes land and everything."

Mr. Tewani indicated that the call centers to be operated will be almost identical to existing ones, however, he was willing to consider technology- based models of business too.

Types of Jobs Available

According to Gloria Henry, president of the Business Process Industry Association of Jamaica, as of March 2019, the BPO workforce stood at 36,100 and generated annual revenue of US\$500 million (JMD\$69.5 billion).

Despite the creation of many new jobs, there are still valid concerns about the types of jobs that are available to the Jamaican people. In recent times, Central Bank Governor Richard Byles has made comments regarding the low wages and the low tech model of BPO entities in Jamaica. Only time will tell whether the surge of BPO's on the island will truly be beneficial to the economy.