

■ JHTA to Jamaica Labour Party:

## Consult stakeholders before raising wages

■ KINGSTON/CMC

THE Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) said yesterday the ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) government should hold consultations with key stakeholders before proceeding with its proposed move to double the national minimum wage.

The JHTA warned that failure to do so risks creating economic shocks for businesses and workers.

'Any shifts in wage policy will therefore have wide-ranging implications for the sector, including employment levels, competitiveness, and the affordability of the Jamaican tourism product in a highly competitive global marketplace,' the JHTA said in a statement.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness says should his ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) be returned to office in today's general election, it will gradually increase the national minimum wage from Ja\$16,000 to Ja\$32,000 for 40-hour work week.

He said that a JLP administration will move the national minimum to Ja\$18,500 'in our first budget and then gradually after that for the next few years'.

'By increasing the minimum wage gradually you shift the incentive to work in favour of work so you going to get more Jamaicans voluntarily move out of the unemployment pool into the labour pool,' Holness said.

The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC) also said any plans to increase the minimum wage must be 'grounded in collaboration and transparency'.

The JCC said the law already provides for a consultative process that involves the Government, private sector, trade unions, civil society, and academia, with careful consideration given to factors such as the cost of living, food prices, and overall economic conditions.

'We urge the Government to continue with this process so as not to risk creating significant disruption to businesses and the broader economy.'

In its statement, the JHTA said tourism accounts for approximately one-third of Jamaica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is one of the country's largest employers, noting that as such any shifts in wage policy would have wide-ranging implications for the sector. 'Sudden wage increases, without proper dialogue and phased implementation strategies, could inadvertently result in reduced employment opportunities, higher operational costs, and increased prices being passed on to consumers,' it stated.

The JHTA said it wants to see structured dialogue that fully considers the realities of the tourism sector, the broader economy, and Jamaica's long-term competitiveness.

'Decisions of this magnitude must be grounded in collaboration, data-driven analysis, and transparency to ensure that policies designed to uplift workers do not inadvertently weaken the industries that sustain them,' said the JHTA, adding that the government should utilise the Minimum Wage Advisory Commission in its undertaking to ensure transparency, fairness, and balance in decision-making. President of the Micro,

Small and Medium Enterprise, MSME Alliance, Antoinette Hamilton, says while the minimum wage increase is welcomed, she believes consultation should have been held with the private sector.