

Trade Imbalance and Poor Planning Choking Jamaica's Supply Chains, Warns Hylton

Kingston, Jamaica: 22 December 2024: Spokesperson on Industry, Investment, Trade & Global Logistics, Anthony Hylton, MP, has attributed the annual Christmas congestion at the Port of Kingston to the government's inaction, ineptitude, and lack of vision in capitalising on the opportunities the Port presents to local businesses. He describes the Port as a "global and local asset."

Mr. Hylton, responding to a question, stated:

"Until the cargo imbalance that characterises Jamaica's trade situation is addressed, the annual congestion at the Port of Kingston will remain a source of frustration and risk to local importers, including manufacturers and distributors."

The Opposition Spokesperson explained that while the current congestion stems partly from uncertainties in the global and regional shipping industry, Jamaica's inability to develop the logistics infrastructure in and around the Port of Kingston has been the key inhibiting factor. This shortfall undermines the Port's resilience and flexibility and prevents it from being recognised by the global maritime industry as a logistics hub and a major player in regional and global trade, despite its status as a well-known transshipment hub.

"We must act urgently to take the Port to the next level," Hylton argued.

"It is unacceptable that nearly eight years after Cabinet accepted the World Bank report endorsing the Logistics Hub Initiative, and more than ten years since the Caymanas Special Economic Zone was first proposed, the government is only now promising to 'break ground' for the 'de-risking' of the project," he continued. *"This failure is compounded by the lack of new, significant investments in industries attracted to the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to date. Altogether, this reflects a lack of understanding of the critical connection between the Port, SEZs, and the necessary investments in logistics infrastructure to build resilience in Jamaica's supply and value chains."*

Hylton emphasised that addressing the cargo imbalance is essential for Jamaica's economic growth. He noted that local importers are not being prioritised by mainline container carriers, whose focus remains on their transshipment business, despite sizable investments by CMA CGM/KFTL and KWL terminals aimed at mitigating supply chain challenges.

"The government's failure to resolve this problem is a key constraint on Jamaica's anaemic economic growth. This lack of resilience in local supply chains affects all businesses—particularly Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises—not just at Christmas but throughout the year," Hylton concluded.

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