

The Media Association Jamaica Limited, MAJ, has raised concerns about the manner in which test transmissions are being done by a radio operator who appears not to have been granted a license for commercial broadcasting nor the permit to do test transmissions.

In an address to mark the 40th anniversary of the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Kingston, Gary Allen says the Kiwanis organisation has for decades provided a platform to encourage public opinion making and public policy debate on a range of issues, and he was taking the opportunity to raise one such issue.

“We have seen the authorities allow an entity without a broadcasting license to undertake full-blooded commercial activities on radio. We have seen one state agency indicate that test permission has been granted to the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica – not to the entity doing the present tests”, Mr. Allen told Kiwanians. He added that “more dubiously, there seems to be an absence of what is the definition of test transmission and what is different from test transmission and full commercial broadcasting” he says.

The MAJ Chairman, says with over 20 licensees already operating in the radio market, this issue is not one of opposing a specific entity. “There are issues of public policy, equity in the industry and an understanding of how the rules are being applied”, he said.

He also said several other questions emerge as a result of this action. “What is the policy on leasing spectrum? What is the policy on giving up airtime daily for government broadcasts but also paying for using spectrum? What is the policy on test transmissions in the Broadcast Industry? And what is the policy on who is liable, where there is no broadcast licensee, no direct spectrum allocation, but there is a financial breach? I am afraid that the answer may be – the taxpayer – and that would mean your business and ours”, he added.

Mr. Allen also encouraged his audience to support the Prime Minister’s push to have the laws of defamation modernised so that they can be used to encourage good governance and greater accountability in public affairs.