

Hearing Impaired to Get Drivers Licences

By the end of August, persons, who are deaf or otherwise hearing impaired, will be able to drive legally on Jamaican roads.

"This will bring Jamaicans in line with citizens of other jurisdictions such as Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom where deaf persons are granted drivers licences," said Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Andrew Gallimore in his contribution to the 2009/10 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives. In preparation for these new drivers, 25 persons from the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Island Traffic Authority received training in basic sign language over a four-week period from March 4 to April 3, to communicate effectively with the hearing impaired population. For many years, the deaf community have been agitating for the opportunity to obtain drivers licences. However, one of the challenges was to obtain a signalling device required by law.

"The Ministry of Transport and Works has agreed that if they are unable to identify and certify the required device mentioned in the regulation to be affixed to a vehicle, within 30 days, they will take immediate steps to have the regulations amended to remove this requirement," Mr. Gallimore informed.