



**PRESS RELEASE
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**Businesses pledge jobs to first batch of students in Security Ministry's Articulated
Truck Driving Programme**

Business leaders in Montego Bay, St. James, have pledged job opportunities to the first cohort of students enrolled in the Ministry of National Security's Articulated Truck Driving (ATD) Programme at the Caribbean Military Academy (CMA). The students are expected to complete their training early December 2021.

"I will have about 40 job vacancies for drivers", said Donald Smith, Vice President of Sandals Resorts, who gave a motivational talk to the students. He was one of several business leaders who accompanied Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Chang on a recent visit to the CMA in Montego Bay.

The purpose of the visit was to introduce prospective investors and employers to the Ministry's ATD Programme, where approximately 24 young men are being trained to operate trucks and other heavy duty vehicles.

According to Minister Chang, this ATD Programme will equip young people in vulnerable communities with the necessary skills needed for the job market while steering them away from gangs and criminal activities. **"The government is engaging all its institutions, including the Jamaica Defence Force in an all-out effort to crush the link between youth gang involvement and other unlawful activities"**, the Security Minister said.

He added that activities at the CMA play a crucial role in his administration's **"whole of government"** concept, of engaging young people, lauding the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) as a major partner in this effort. **"This model we are using is already showing success and it is our aim to persevere,"** said Dr. Chang. He pointed out that the government's youth investment thrust **"is more than the usual back-to-school handouts and conscience massaging activities"**, and is geared towards achieving more positive outcomes.

The Minister noted that the ATD Programme is a move in the right direction., **"what we are doing is the right thing, where we identify a cohort of young people for these types of intervention, invest in them and then set targets; so if we engage twenty-thousand (20,000) young people, which is half the population of high school graduates, then there's no question that we will have significant transformative change in our communities"**.

Pointing out that it is a fallacy to believe that the Government is not committed to youth engagement and transformation, Minister Chang opined, **"I want to set the record straight, it is believed that because we are not promoting certain popular programmes, referred to as community-based, then we are not involved and not committed to youth engagement and transformation"**.

Meanwhile, thirty year old Chevaughn James, a student in the ATD Programme who resides in Salt Spring St. James, described the training he receives as transformational and an ideal opportunity not only for himself but also for others. **“My life has changed in many ways since I started attending classes here. Not only am I now steeped in how to maneuver a manual shift vehicle, but the level of discipline and care instilled in us, gives us a sense of belief and the courage to do well and to be able to make a difference in our respective communities,”** said James.

The ATD Programme provides training for driving a combination of vehicles such as trailers, trucks, buses and other heavy commercial vehicles. The Programme, which began at the start of the year, is being offered at the Caribbean Military Academy in Kingston and Montego Bay. It equips participants with the requisite skills needed to compete in the global heavy duty driving workforce.