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August 10, 2018

Jamaica Welcomes 32 New Citizens

Thirty-two persons were today (August 9) conferred with Jamaican citizenship at a swearing-in ceremony organised by the Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA), at the Police Officers' Club in Kingston.

The men and women, who have been associated with Jamaica for some time, hail from countries such as Syria, Nigeria, India, Sri Lanka, Cuba, the United Kingdom, Suriname, Canada and Myanmar.

In his address to welcome the new Jamaican citizens, National Security Minister, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, said that Jamaica is a country that celebrates a legacy of **“tolerance and inclusion and the observance of universal freedoms and rights”**.

“In fact, we only recently established the Charter of Rights as a part of the Constitution, which gives every Jamaican citizen basic human rights,” he said.

Dr. Chang said the 32 citizens are now a part of the heritage of Jamaica and urged them to **“bear Jamaica’s name with pride”**.

“We encourage you to honour her with diligence and sincere labour, to strengthen her with your contribution to communities, to defend her integrity through a rejection of all corrupt and violent activities. We must all play a part in advancing our welfare,” the Minister said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Chang advised that all new measures to transform PICA form part of the Government’s efforts to establish a modernised and efficient public sector.

They include the online passport application system and the introduction of e-gates at the Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA) in Kingston and the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, St. James.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PICA, Andrew Wynter, in an interview with JIS News, indicated that there has been an increase in the number of persons wishing to become Jamaican citizens.

Among them are persons from South Africa, New Zealand and the diaspora.

“We have seen a growth. On average it’s about 3,000 to 4,000 persons per year. This is one of the areas the agency will be putting a lot of focus on. We are now reviewing the citizenship process, so that it can be faster. There are four categories in which persons can become citizens – marriage, descent, registration and naturalization,” he said.

“We are looking at how best we can streamline those processes, particularly to assist the Jamaicans living in the diaspora, who have their children and their spouses and other relatives who would like to become citizens of Jamaica,” Mr. Wynter added.

In her response on becoming a Jamaican citizen, Sangeeta Sharma of Falmouth, Trelawny, said she has been living in Jamaica for the last 18 years “and has never met a set of people who are as helpful, loving and warm”.

“As a resident, I have always tried to better my community and my neighbourhood. As a citizen, I will aim at helping and taking care of this paradise with all the resources at my disposal,” she said.