

52nd Anniversary of Independence Message

By Prime Minister

The Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC,MP

31 August 2014

Fellow citizens of Trinidad and Tobago,

It is with great pride that I join you in celebrating the 52nd Independence Anniversary of our great nation.

Our face to the world

Much has been bestowed on our beautiful twin-island Republic over the past 52 years.

Indeed our history, cultural legacy, resources, economic success and the contribution of our people in many international fora often appear inconsistent with the geographic size of our country.

We boast world-class athletes, cultural icons, diplomats and academics, all of whom have ensured that Trinidad and Tobago maintains a positive and enduring presence on the world stage.

We have impressed visitors with our policy of free education for all from early childhood to tertiary level.

We have attracted the attention of high-profile foreign leaders and dignitaries, who recognise the potential of Trinidad and Tobago.

Who we are

We have walked many paths together in our journey of self-determination.

As a country and a united people we have overcome violent threats to our freedom and democracy.

We have risen above partisan self-interest in favour of the National Good.

We have celebrated together our many accomplishments and collectively mourned the loss of our great leaders and ordinary citizens.

And we continue to stand as a beacon of harmony in diversity, religious tolerance and multicultural acceptance.

The questions we must now ask ourselves are, “how do we as citizens of a maturing democracy approach our next 52 years of Independence?” “To what shall we continue to aspire?” “What do we want to achieve?” “How determined are we to walk the talk and firmly take control of our destiny?”

Change is coming

I believe that over the past few weeks many of those questions have been answered.

The passion, interest and dialogue elicited by my Government’s proposals for Constitutional reform have been unprecedented, clearly negating the view that our citizens are lukewarm on matters of national governance.

Rather, what has been so strongly demonstrated is that we truly are the deserving inheritors of the courage, will and fierce determination that brought our ancestors out of bondage into the light of freedom.

Certainly there will always be dissenting voices on issues of political reform, economic thrust or social policy. The mechanics of the democratic principle allow for reasoned debate and a multiplicity of views.

As citizens of an independent, democratic nation we have the responsibility to ensure that in the practise of our democracy, each and every citizen holds the right to determine how they are governed and by whom.

We cannot allow fear and intimidation to impede the progress of our Nation.

In 1962 we took the bold and brave step to chart our own destiny.

In 2014, fifty-two years later, we have again displayed the confidence in ourselves and the temerityto forge a new political path.

We now have greater power to choose the representatives, best suited to serve and service the needs of community and country.

We stand on the threshold of an exciting era in our political history.

Into the Future

Independence means stepping out of our comfort zone.

Independence allows an opportunity to embrace change.

As a Nation, our creativity, innovativeness and enterprising spirit have brought us much recognition and acclaim.

I have no doubt that our stories of success will continue to be born out of our resolve, determination, and unity of vision.

Each sector of our community has a role to play in the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Individually and collectively the contribution, service and sacrifice of each of us will support and sustain the well-being of our country.

As a Government we have sought to develop and implement measures which provide an enabling environment for local and foreign business and investment.

As a Nation, we have the skills, intellect and talent to achieve every goal and task that we set ourselves.

In 2014, it is not business as usual. My Government understands that expectations are high among our citizenry in all aspects of national life. Areas of health, personal and national security, governance, job and wealth creation all dominate the national psyche.

I give you the assurance that in our policies, programmes and projections; my Government will continue to seek the best interests of **all** citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

But it will take the collaborative efforts and energy of all of us, working with a shared vision, to ensure Prosperity for All.

Let us together make this 52nd Independence Anniversary a celebration which signalled the dawn of a new stewardship of our great Nation.

As we commemorate our Nation's 52nd Independence Anniversary, let us be mindful that we do so as the ones who have accepted our responsibility to do what we must for our Nation's passage to greater democratic power for the people.

We do so knowing that our 52nd anniversary of Independence signals that we are prepared to take leadership and 'do' rather than speak about change, without the courage to see it through.

And we do so knowing that our 52nd anniversary of Independence places us on the threshold of an exciting future.

May God continue to bless all of you and may God bless our country, Trinidad and Tobago.

Happy Independence.