

MESSAGE FROM
HIS EXCELLENCY
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ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
TO MARK THE 39th ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE OF
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
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My fellow Vincentians it is an honour and privilege for me to address you on this the 39th Anniversary of our Nation's Independence.

On an auspicious occasion as this in our Nation's history it behooves us to reflect on our past, the progress we have made and to set goals for our future. Our forefathers fought unsuccessfully to regain Independence for over two hundred years, making the ultimate sacrifice of their life and culture.

On this Independence Day and always, let us never forget them and continue to always honour their bravery and determination which now allow us the right to determine our own destiny.

Since Independence thirty-nine (39) years ago, we as a people have achieved much with significant gains in the fields of Social Services, Education, Health Care and Transportation, to name but a few.

The Argyle International Airport, the new Poly Clinics, the new Medical Complex, the large number of students graduating from Secondary and Tertiary Institutions are all testimony to the significant progress we have made as a small developing country, and our achievements in the field of Public Health and Pediatric Services are the envy of larger more populated countries.

As we celebrate these significant gains, we must ever be conscious of the difficulties faced by Small Island States in this global economy with the overwhelming negative influence on progress caused by climate change, world recession and the World Trade Organization.

In order that we continue to progress, we must always critically analyze our performance so that we can take measures to improve it; with the positive attitude that while we are doing well we can always do better.

I cannot in this short address list all of the issues which concern me, and will only highlight a few to bring them to your conscious thought so that you and all of us can suggest means to improve them.

We need collectively to redouble our efforts to control crime, especially the spate of gun related crimes, bearing in mind that there is no easy answer to this problem since the societal reasons which breed criminals are multifaceted.

While we applaud the significant gains in education which has produced some outstanding scholars, changes have to be made to make this education more relevant and prepare our students to cope in this new technological era. Moreover, too many of our students lack the basic skills of numeracy and literacy without which their future progress will be significantly limited.

We must admit that too many young men are joining the ranks of underachievers and explore means to stem this tide. This problem is not unique to St Vincent and the Grenadines and the solutions are as complex as the causes. I wish to applaud those who are starting a mentoring programme as one of the ways to help salvage some of these students before it is too late.

I have always had an interest in the Health Services and applaud the fact that for the first time in our history we can boast of having a surplus of nurses and doctors. However, even with excess personnel and fine facilities, complaints persist about the delivery of health care and these complaints need to be addressed urgently.

Vincentians must always be aware that in spite of Government's best effort, after thirty-nine (39) years there still exist some pockets of poverty. I always like in my Independence message to appeal to those most fortunate to get on board and make your contribution to help us eradicate all poverty in the next few years.

At great sacrifice, we built a magnificent airport and I truly believe that this has the potential to change significantly the economy of St Vincent and the Grenadines. We need now to redouble our efforts to maximize the use of this airport and forge new plans to attract more visitors to St Vincent and the Grenadines.

I have listed but a few of the issues which impact our progress knowing that there are no easy answers. Since Independence the world has changed, we are still feeling the effects of the global recession of 2008 and the pundits are forecasting another recession soon.

The time is now for us to band together as one, remembering that we are a country of limited financial and human resources; but working in unison we can overcome many obstacles.

I pray, therefore, that all of us can contribute to making this a better St. Vincent and the Grenadines where respect, love and forgiveness will replace disrespect, hate and animosity; striving always to make these Islands which we all love so much a better place for all of us.

My family and I wish you and your family a Happy, Peaceful Independence and may the Almighty God pour down His Blessings on all of us.