



**Address by Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell**  
**at the ceremony marking Grenada's 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Independence**  
**7 February 2006**

My fellow Grenadians, I greet you with a profound sense of pride as we celebrate another Anniversary of our Nation's Independence.

Today is a day to reflect on the bold and courageous steps taken by our Founding Fathers who paved the way for our accomplishments during the last thirty-two years. Today is also a day to thank God for the strength and resilience that He has given to Grenada and its people and to acknowledge the many blessings and benefits He has bestowed on us. Let us offer up to Him our dutiful praise and thanksgiving.

Sisters and brothers, we have gained our independence but in actual fact, have become more interdependent and more interconnected with the rest of the world. This was demonstrated when our Caribbean family, and our friends and supporters from outside the Region willingly came to us in our time of need, following the devastation from hurricanes Ivan and Emily.

Let us continue to express our appreciation for their prayers and assistance. Enough praise cannot be given to the Governments and people of the United States; Trinidad and Tobago; Guyana; all other Caricom and OECS nations; Cuba; Venezuela; the United Kingdom; The People's Republic of China; Belgium and Canada for their assistance.

Similarly, enough praise cannot be given to those teachers, nurses and doctors; Public Officers; members of the private sector and community groups; utility workers; dock workers; farmers, the employees within the tourist industry and the many volunteers who eagerly gave of themselves under such difficult circumstances - many of whom continue to do so.

Sisters and Brothers, all of us recognise that the road ahead will not be easy. Each of us will have to make additional sacrifices to safeguard our future and our children's future. Over the past few weeks there has been much debate about who should contribute to the National Reconstruction Levy and how much should be contributed.

I take the opportunity of this Independence Day Address to publicly thank the many groups and individual citizens who sought to help Government bring clarity and understanding to this issue. In particular, gratitude is extended to the Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce; the Conference of Churches; the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association; and the Employers Federation for their contribution to the process.

I would also like to thank the Trade Union Council for their part in the debate. I hope that in 2006 Government and the Trade union leadership can work closer together to move our country forward. In this regard Government is giving its full support to the continued dialogue with our social partners....Business and Trade Unions, mediated by the churches.

Sisters and Brothers, self-reliance and self-sacrifice were admirable strengths of our forefathers, qualities we should continue to preserve.

Therefore, it is important for us to acknowledge that while we appreciate the help of our friends, in the final analysis, we must accept fully the responsibility to help ourselves.

Grenadians must continue to work together and make the necessary efforts and the vital sacrifices that are needed to take this beautiful Country forward on a sustainable basis. During the past decade, we have made many strides as a people. In the process, we faced setbacks yet we maintained our course. We have worked hard to move our Country forward.

We have received commendation for our united efforts from many international organisations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index is now ranking Grenada higher than ever before.....we have moved from position number 93 in 2004 to 66 in 2005. Eastern Caribbean Central Bank Governor Dr. Dwight Venner recently called us a model for recovery and rebuilding. The International Monetary Fund Directors wrote to their membership telling them that the Government and People of Grenada must be commended highly for our response to the rebuilding of Grenada.

Sisters and Brothers all, let us on this Independence Day, be proud of our achievements...Let us be proud of one another and proud of our Country. Let us thank God for these and other achievements.....

Let us thank God for his mercy and thankful that we have lived to see another year of our country's independence. Let us thank God for the progress this country has made in the regional and international arena.

Let us thank the Almighty for peace and stability; let us thank God for the continued growth of our tourism industry and for the redevelopment and improvement of our hotels, the cruise terminal and other developments within the industry which will see it grow even further.

Let us thank God for the rebirth of our agricultural industry and the fact that we are now self-sufficient in many of the crops that we were importing at this time last year.

Let us thank God for the continued improvements in our roads, bridges and our infrastructure in general. Let us also thank God for those who have us proud....

Our sportsmen and women like Alleyne Francique, Hazel Ann Regis, Devon Smith, Rawle Lewis, Jason Roberts and others. For the bravery of Private Beharry; Gratitude must go to Sir Royston Hopkin and his team for our new Five Star Hotel, the first of its kind in Grenada and indeed to all other hoteliers who are making serious sacrifices to rebuild; to the many leaders who have been working tirelessly as volunteers on various community development projects including disaster management and the many students who have made us proud

The list goes on.....

Sisters and Brothers we should also at this time thank God for giving us the wisdom to accept criticism for our shortcomings and the strength to make corrections.

Given the limited natural resources and the complexity of problems that continually surface for Small Island Developing States like Grenada, in education and human resources, particularly in the young, is extremely worthwhile.

An educated society is not only the best hope for maintaining democracy but is also the best and cheapest way for small countries like ours to fashion and maintain free, fair and just societies. Experts in the USA claim that for every dollar they spend on education and youth development, get five dollars in return.

In this regard, your Government has led the way in prioritising youth development. Over the next few months we expect to launch our National

Youth Service which will provide training and jobs for thousands of our children.

This initiative, along with other youth programmes like our extremely successful scholarship drive, will greatly improve the lives of our children and help to create a better society. We have also invested heavily in the productive sectors. We will continue to provide incentives and financial help for our agriculture and business sectors.

We also expect to continue providing meaningful services and assistance to our most vulnerable citizens, including housing assistance, bus fares, books, school meals and uniforms support for our most vulnerable children.

We are also providing an increase in Old Age Pension.

Sisters and brothers, let us on this day pledge to create a better Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, in keeping with your Government's long term vision for a healthy, educated, productive and prosperous Nation. I have observed with very keen interest the number of Grenadians who have been proudly displaying our flag on their houses, vehicles and so on. This is the kind of nationalistic spirit and pride we need all year round not only at independence. Grenada must be first for the sake of our children.

In this same nationalistic spirit, let us all embrace the theme for 2006 Independence - Promoting growth, stability and poverty alleviation - today and every day of the year.

Indeed, sisters and brothers, let us dedicate ourselves to the preservation and improvement of democracy and to the education and development of our children.

Let us work together to stamp out the deadly evils of crime, and drugs.

And let us continue to work with our international partners to defeat terrorism.

Let us resolve to show more compassion and generosity to the poor and needy. Let us also give our best in whatever we do and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Finally, in the words of my favourite hymn, Bread and Wine..... "For our Brothers Lord we do pray, For our parish Lord we do pray, For our Country Lord we do pray."

Happy Independence Day everyone, and may God bless our Nation.