

Message from
The Hon. Patrick Manning
Prime Minister
on the occasion of
The
46th Anniversary of
The Independence of
Trinidad and Tobago

After forty-six years, we can be very proud of our achievements as an independent nation. Trinidad and Tobago is today a modern, thriving democracy where all citizens enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms; a progressive society where all have an opportunity for development; a cohesive country of dynamic diversity; and a respected member of the global community of nations.

Building on the foundations since the attainment of Independence, this society is

now in the process of making another giant step forward, as we engage in the transformation of our country into a developed nation. This would mean a continuously improving quality of life for all citizens; modern and competitive levels of efficiency and productivity; strengthened sustainability in our economic and social development; and enhanced national security and stability.

As we move towards this goal, the signs are abundantly positive. Our economy is today the strongest it has ever been, growing at an

average rate of 8.3% since 2001; there have been vast improvements in the reduction of time spent on the road in traffic. New roads shall be opened to get from place to place. Our ultimate goal is to be able to traverse the country from the furthest destination in under two and a half hours.

We are on the cusp of introducing the water taxi service and plans for the rapid rail are proceeding according to schedule. We have achieved full employment for the first time since independence with unemployment at

4.5% at the end of last year. There has been a one hundred percent increase in per capita income. Poverty levels have been reduced, impressive strides have been made in education – look at the results of recent examinations; improved quality and accessibility of education from nursery to tertiary. Our training programmes have been phenomenal with over one hundred thousand persons made employable through these initiatives. We have provided thousands of homes to citizens who would not have been able to acquire one otherwise, and thousands

more would be made available in the future. Waiting time for surgeries has been reduced considerably and free medicines are now available for eleven (11) common ailments.

On the world stage, our footballers have taken us to the World cup and more recently our athletes have made us proud with their outstanding performances.

Like every other nation, we are not without our challenges, particularly the unacceptably high level of criminal activity, fuelled, for the most

part, by the pernicious trade in illegal drugs. But we are confident of ultimately seeing the results of our efforts in eliminating this scourge, which today affects so many other countries of the world.

But there are things for which each of us must take responsibility. Let us review our attitude to each other, let us be considerate, caring and respectful of each other. Politeness and patience must replace high expectancy and quick results. Honesty must be triumphal always. It is obedience to these simple truths

and a deep respect for the Almighty that will curtail the unnecessary carnage on the roads, and eliminate the senseless killings taking place causing enormous heartbreak to relatives and friends.

It is our duty and our resolve to make tomorrow better than yesterday. It is the determination of this Government to continue to build a foundation for our children and their children upon which they can build further. Let us ensure that we, people and government, work together to accomplish this noble ideal.

The fact is that after forty-six years, the future for Trinidad and Tobago looks most positive indeed. Let us therefore be thankful that, as we approach our fiftieth anniversary as a nation, we can look back with satisfaction on what we have accomplished as a country; and that we can simultaneously look forward with confidence and great hope, that Trinidad and Tobago will endure into the future as a progressive, peaceful and prosperous nation, with the full confidence that we shall overcome the challenges before us.

Happy Independence celebrations to all and
may Almighty God continue to bless our
nation.