

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**LAUNCH OF THE CONSTRUCTION PHRASE  
OF THE MARACAS BEACH FACILITY  
IMPROVEMENT PRODUCT**

**AN ADDRESS**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE GERALD HADEED  
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

**Date:** Thursday July 09, 2015  
**Venue:** Hyatt Regency Trinidad  
**Time:** 3.30pm

- The Honourable Kamla Persad Bissessar Senior Counsel, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you so much for gracing us with your presence.
- The Honourable Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan , Minister of Works and Infrastructure
- Other Ministers of Government and Members of Parliament
- Ms. Donna Ferraz, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tourism
- Alderman Mr. Anthony Roberts, Chairman of the San Juan Regional Corporation and other Aldermen of the Corporation
- Mr. Umesh Rampersad, Chairman Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) and other TDC Directors
- Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer of the TDC and the other members of the TDC Executive Team
- Mr. Roger Ganesh, Chief Operating Officer KALL CO Limited and the Contractor for the Construction Phase of the Maracas Beach Facility Improvement Upgrade and the KALL CO Executive Team
- Mr. Raees Patel, CISL's Chief Executive Officer and the CISL Management Team. As you may be aware, CISL won the management bid for the Maracas Beach Facility Upgrade Project
- Mrs. Judith Gomez, President of the Maracas Community Council
- Presidents of the Tourism Fraternity
- Other Senior Public Servants

Allow me the opportunity to single out the Ministry's Beach Facility Staff, namely the lifeguards, maintenance workers and TDC staff - all integral aspects of the much loved Maracas landscape

- Members of the Media
  - Distinguished Guests and most importantly, the people of Maracas and environs
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Our Government came into office at a time when the local tourism industry was in throes of a rather challenging period. Tourism arrivals' figures, especially in Tobago, were falling and room occupancy was at a low.

Tourism recovery was, therefore, the first task of the Kamla Persad Bissessar led Government. This is by no easy task and needed good planning and organisation. This can only be achieved by recognising that a successful tourism industry is founded on partnerships with the various organisations and sectors which make up the industry.

One of our key priorities in getting the tourism industry back up, ladies and gentlemen, was product improvement. Hence the reason for this gathering here this afternoon - **we are delivering on a promise made over ten (10) years ago to refurbish Trinidad's flagship and much loved beach – Maracas.**

Since taking office as Minister of Tourism, I have been flooded with concerns regarding the urgent need to upgrade the facilities at our beloved Maracas Beach. That time has finally arrived.

The Maracas Beach Facility Improvement Project aims to provide an environmentally sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, modern, safe, clean and effectively managed beach facility of a high international standard.

Facilities to be provided include:

- New vending facilities and washroom and change room amenities
- Modern and efficient wastewater treatment plant
- Realignment of the North Coast Road to the southern limits of the Maracas Car Park to reduce the perennial weekend traffic congestion
- Improvement of drainage and garbage disposal
- Resurfacing and raising of car park area
- An alternative utility corridor to better facilitate operations of the Maracas entrepreneurs

Maracas Beach, situated on our northern coast and in close proximity to our capital city, is one of Trinidad and Tobago's national treasures. World famous for its idyllic and breath-taking scenery and bake and shark, Maracas Beach is an important asset within our tourism product inventory. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to ensure that its beach facility is world class.

But the situation is a complex one, involving not just the removal of derelict buildings and the renovation of existing ones. We, therefore, developed a comprehensive plan of action to address all of the problems. The works programme has already started with the engineering surveys and it is hoped that by the next calendar year Maracas Beach will be transformed to its former glory.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**It is imperative that we get our population to understand and buy into the concept of tourism.** The citizens of our beautiful country must appreciate its own before we can go out and market to the wider world.

This is the only way we can get our product and service quality to improve. This is our path for sustainable tourism development. The customers of today are extremely demanding and have high expectations. Trinidad and Tobago can only compete effectively if we provide **superior quality service and an international competitive product.**

The Ministry of Tourism and its marketing agency, the TDC, will implement a comprehensive local tourism awareness campaign which will focus not just on our schools but will “speak” to all elements within our community to explain how tourism works and how we can all, *by working together*, make our industry more successful.

And product development also means that more high quality hotel rooms must be added to our existing inventory if we want our tourism industry to grow. It is for this reason that Government is moving towards a public private partnership for a fantastic four star hotel and integrated resort in Mayaro.

Located on 510 acres of land at the Lagon Doux Estate in Mayaro, owned by Cape Developers Ltd, this investment will create 900 jobs and, like the Maracas project, has been long in the making. Indeed over fifteen (15) years. It is anticipated that work on this project will begin in 2016.

The Ministry of Tourism is of the view that this project which has been experiencing a long gestation period should now be expedited given that it could yield substantial private returns as well as contribute positively to the socio-economic benefits of southeast Trinidad by way of employment and income growth. It promises to be the largest single investment in the area - outside of the oil and gas industry.

The project is expected to be a major stimulus to the development of the south eastern coastal region and will have a wide, dramatic and equitable impact on the community there.

To attract the investment required to build these hotels will require potential investors, both local as well as international, to clearly understand that the existing commercial accommodation sector is profitable and that new hotels and guest houses can be equally profitable. The marketing programmes to be undertaken by the TDC will focus, therefore, on attracting more visitors from those markets which will profitably fill our hotels and guest houses.

The Ministry of Tourism is also moving full speed ahead on its Sugar Heritage Village and Museum project.

This is an excellent addition to our tourism product arsenal and Cabinet has appointed an Implementation Committee whose mandate is to seek out, yet again, public private partnership for execution of all its plans which include among other things a sugar museum, hotel, cultural centre, theme park, entertainment and restaurant complex and water park.

The Ministry of Tourism has also partnered with the Ministry of Energy and National Petroleum in establishing a series of mobile gas station facilities within a diverse range of fishing villages. These will certainly enhance the agro tourism potential of these coastal communities. The first such mobile gas station has already been setup in Moruga.

The thrust of this government is to sustainably develop our coastal communities; especially along the North East Coast so as to optimise its cultural and heritage resources and reduce the population urban drift and increase community sense of spirit.

**One of our other top priorities will be to invest in developing a state of the art website to promote Trinidad and Tobago.** More and more destinations are focusing their marketing efforts around their websites and social media. Typically, four out of every five visitors will consult the destination website or facebook page before they make their booking.

Not only will it provide the base information expected of any such website, that is information on places to stay, places to visit, places to eat and to be entertained, but it will do so using state of the art techniques such as streaming video and 360 degree tours.

As well, the website will present our diverse range of festivals and events in a dynamic and interactive format, with streaming video communicating the excitement and vibrancy of these unique events. It will allow customers to make their reservations online and will have opportunities for potential visitors to talk with local experts about things to do and places to see when visiting Trinidad and Tobago.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It should be noted that our most recent arrivals statistics shows that for the first six (6) months of 2015 a nine (9) per cent increase in visitor arrivals over 2014 (here I am specifically referring to January to June – from 203,000 visitors to 222,000 according to the Immigration Division records).

I have just briefly touched on some of what we have done and I believe that, with everyone's support, my Ministry will be able to advance the tourism agenda both at the national and international fronts.

With these remarks, let me state how excited I am that we are embarking on the Construction Phase of the Maracas Beach Facility Improvement Project. It has really been my pleasure to host this event and to unveil yet another landmark development in government's infrastructure programme.

Indeed, it is my privilege to present this flagship project in the service of our citizens.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God continue to bless our nation.

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