

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**TOCO LIGHTHOUSE
ENHANCEMENT UNVEILING**

FEATURE ADDRESS

**THE HONOURABLE RUPERT T. GRIFFITH
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

Date: Monday September 19, 201

Venue: Toco

Time: 11.00am

- Mr. Keshwar Maharaj, Chairman Sangre Grande Regional Corporation
 - Mrs. Melba Dedier, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
 - Ms. Beverly Phillip, Director Maritime Services
 - Mrs. Sandra Perkins, Chief Executive Officer the Tourism Development Company and other Directors
 - Mr. Rawle Mitchell, Head of the Historical and Restoration Unit within the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure
 - Villagers of the Toco Sangre Grande Region
 - Media Representatives
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Good Morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to be in Toco today to officiate at the unveiling of an enhanced Toco Lighthouse.

This project is a collaborative effort, a partnership, between the Tourism Development Company (TDC), the Ministries of Works and Transport, the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and the non-governmental organisation the Turtle Village Trust.

The rehabilitation works on the Toco Lighthouse has once again ensured the Lighthouse's status as an icon ... a beacon in our national heritage landscape.

Completed in October of 1867 and officially opened on November 1, 1897 the Toco Lighthouse is considered the landmark attraction on the Northeast coast.

The Toco Lighthouse has been transformed with restoration of the tower exterior, the addition of safety barriers, outdoor furniture within the compound, landscaping improvements that enhance the first impression of this historic site, new interpretative signage, and restoration of water cisterns.

Moreover, we now have 10,000 square feet of car park space to meet the needs of the facility's users. Significant repairs, such as plumbing and electrical works, burglar proofing and roofing works, have been undertaken on the Light Keepers' building.

The Toco Lighthouse is not just a historic building. It is an important centre for tourism and community activity.

The Ministry of Tourism is proud to support projects that preserve our country's heritage while creating local economic opportunities. With the support from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and the Turtle Village Trust, we were able to properly preserve this valuable tourist attraction and better serve visitors with a unique experience.

I must congratulate all agencies for the exceptional work done to restore the architecture of the Toco Lighthouse. This is a perfect example of what can be achieved by public-private partnership and the involvement of the community.

I commend the vision of Turtle Village Trust and its dedication to economic development. This group has been making great strides in terms of facilitating community development and small business entrepreneurship. `

Turtle Village Trust has been assiduously working since 2009 with a view to providing tourism amenities and entrepreneurship opportunities for the people of the North East Coast. We recognise, by virtue of the fostering of partnerships amongst community groups, corporate entities, and the public sector, that Turtle Village Trust is well in-tune with the developmental needs of the North East coast.

Thus far the efforts of this community group has translated itself into a number of successful landmark community enhancing projects such as the Interpretive Signage Project visible throughout the North East region, the upgrade of the Visitor Centre in Grande Riviere, and the construction of the Valencia Visitor Centre.

It is my understanding that the Valencia Visitor Centre will be ready in November 2011.

This People's Partnership Government is committed to the development of a responsible, sustainable, and competitive tourism industry as a means for the social and economic transformation of Trinidad and Tobago and the edification of its people.

Indeed we recognise the critical importance of the preservation of our heritage resources.

There is no doubt that the Toco Lighthouse will provide recreation and leisure opportunities benefitting the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago as well as international visitors. Moreover, the Lighthouse will provide an avenue for international tourists to gain a snapshot view of the history, flora and fauna of our country.

I would like to especially acknowledge the efforts of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation in this particular project and I pledge to forge even closer ties with the Corporation as we seek to respond to the needs of villagers along the North East Coast

Without further ado, it is now my great pleasure to officially unveil the restored Toco Lighthouse, a beacon of light to all travelers and a beacon of hope.

I thank you.

September 18, 2011