



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Trade and Industry**

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***Press Conference for the  
Premiere of Season 32 of  
“The Amazing Race”  
featuring Trinidad and  
Tobago***

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REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON,  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020

## **SALUTATIONS:**

- Assemblyman Shomari Hector, Assistant Secretary in the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly
- Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry - Ms. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid
- Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company – Mr. Calvin Bijou
- Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company – Ms. Dionne Mc Nicol Stephenson
- General Manager of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company – Ms. Leslie Ann Wills-Caton
- Local Line Producer/Facilitator for Amazing Race - Ms. Lorraine O'Connor.
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning,

I am pleased to welcome you to this virtual press conference, to highlight recent successes in the local film industry, demonstrating that Government's investment in this sector continues to yield measurable returns.

The Government in its National Development Strategy/Vision 2030, identifies the Creative Industries, of which Film is a key component, as one of the new and emerging economic sectors that can provide numerous opportunities for expansion and global competitiveness.

In this regard, FilmTT, an agency under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, has been spearheading efforts to develop the domestic industry and undertake film destination marketing to attract international film production companies to this country. The ultimate objective is to showcase Trinidad and Tobago as a premier location for international productions.

I am pleased to announce that through the efforts of FilmTT, an episode of the Emmy Award-winning reality series "The Amazing Race" was filmed in Trinidad and Tobago.

As you may be aware, The Amazing Race TV Series is an adventure reality game show produced by Earthview Inc. in which teams of two persons race around the world against other teams. At each destination, the teams are required to deduce clues, interact with locals, perform physical and mental challenges, and utilise various modes of transportation - airplane, boat, taxi, and other public transportation options on a limited budget provided by the show. Teams are progressively eliminated and the first team to arrive at the end of the final leg wins a grand prize of US\$1 million.

This premiere episode which is scheduled to be aired on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, was shot on locations in both Trinidad and Tobago, in November 2018. Approximately 310 locals were hired and TT\$ 1,915,000.00 was spent filming on location.

According to E-Online, an entertainment magazine, “The Amazing Race” typically averages about 10 million viewers per season, which means that the beauty and culture that Trinidad and Tobago has to offer will therefore be seen by this large audience.

Viewers can expect to be treated to highlights of several unique cultural aspects of Trinidad and Tobago during the show, including our steel pan, carnival costumes and goat racing in locations that include Exodus Pan Yard, Nylon Pool, Pigeon Point and the Buccoo Goat Racing Facility.

In this vein, I am extending an invitation to everyone at home and abroad to view this episode, which will undoubtedly have a profound impact on our national pride.

I would like to emphasize that this international film production is not a one off or isolated event. In fact, The Amazing Race was among thirty-five (35) film productions of varying genres, sizes and budgets shot in Trinidad and Tobago in fiscal years 2019 and 2020, spending approximately TT\$18,900,000 and employing 629 locals. Some of the more prominent productions filmed during this period include “Ainsley’s Kitchen” which aired on January 2019 and “Love and Hip Hop Atlanta” which aired on May 2019.

Furthermore, I am pleased to announce that five (5) major productions have commenced discussions with FilmTT and have signalled their interest to film in Trinidad and Tobago in 2021, with an overall estimated projected spend of over TT\$78,000,000.00.

Based on the figures that I just outlined, it is evident, that incoming international film productions have a deep economic and social impact providing:

- ✓ increased foreign exchange earnings,
- ✓ employment opportunities,
- ✓ an avenue for our local talent to work alongside international film crews, and
- ✓ increased exposure of Trinidad and Tobago as a prime location for filming.

There are also undoubtedly knock on effects of film publicity boosting our tourism product.

I would therefore like to congratulate FilmTT for its work thus far, as well as encourage the agency to continue pursuing its mandate and seizing all available opportunities.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has and continues to play an active role in developing our indigenous film industry and promoting Trinidad and Tobago as a choice location for

filming. The diversity of our people, culture and landscapes make a compelling backdrop for a range of films that would appeal to audiences around the world.

In this regard, several strategic initiatives have been implemented by FilmTT to grow and develop the industry while also promoting Trinidad and Tobago as the region's premier production destination. These include:

- The **Film Production Expenditure Rebate Programme** which offers a tiered cash rebate of 12.5% to 35% on a minimum expenditure of TT\$630,000 up to a maximum of TT\$51,200,000 to foreign production companies filming on location in Trinidad and Tobago. Local film producers are eligible for a 35% rebate for expenditure from TT\$100,000 up to a maximum of TT\$51,200,000. An additional rebate of 20% is granted on the labour cost for hiring local labour for a film production, which takes the rebate up to a maximum of 55%. Additionally, the Government offers an exemption on customs duties and VAT applicable to the temporary importation of equipment once this equipment leaves the country after filming has concluded. These incentives are critical to attracting foreign producers to make their films in Trinidad and Tobago.
- “**Film Production Tools**” which was launched in February 2019. These online tools include:
  - A Production Directory: which is a database of professional services and suppliers in Trinidad and Tobago.
  - A Locations Database: which is a database of locations and festivals in Trinidad and Tobago.
  - A Production Guide: a publication that highlights the benefits and procedures to produce a film in Trinidad and Tobago.
- An advertising campaign entitled ***Locations: Unseen, Unexpected*** which promotes Trinidad and Tobago as a premier location for international films in several prominent digital film publications such as World of Locations, KFTV International Production Guide and Screen International. This promotional drive will continue to bolster our image as a key location in 2021.
- Establishment of the **Film Friendly Network** comprising Ministries, Agencies, and Associations that have key roles to play in facilitating film productions in an effort to provide guidance particularly as it relates to regulatory requirements to make the film production process more seamless.

The Government will continue to provide financial support to the three (3) leading media festivals in 2021. These include the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, the Anima Caribbean Digital Media Festival and the Green Screen Environmental Film Festival. These festivals and their activities are directly aligned to the Strategic Plan for the Film Industry as it relates to

audience development and fosters an appreciation for indigenous films by local and foreign consumers.

In the new fiscal year FilmTT will execute a structured funding programme with appropriate criteria to assist viable local film productions that support the overall development of the sector. Productions being considered for funding must have a comprehensive plan for commercial viability and subscribe to the highest levels of quality.

As part of an ongoing effort to do business more efficiently and to streamline the services of FilmTT, the MTI will seek Cabinet's approval in 2021 to implement a Film Permit System that all productions must adhere to in order to shoot in Trinidad and Tobago. This would allow FilmTT to report on a more realistic picture of the numbers and types of productions on the ground at any time and to enhance their service to incoming productions. The system will also provide the Government with the necessary economic data on the sector so that effective policy decisions can be made.

In closing, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is grateful for the support provided by the Ministry of Finance with respect to VAT and customs duty waivers provided for the temporary importation of film equipment to be used in the filming of the episode. Sincerest thanks are also extended to the Ministry of National Security, for facilitating visa and work permit exemptions for incoming film crew and cast for "The Amazing Race". This is a testament that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the growth and development of the local film industry. To the international film community, I want to state unequivocally that Trinidad and Tobago will continue to provide the perfect location for all your film production needs.