



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Trade and Industry**

---

# *Trinidad and Tobago Gospel Festival Media Launch*

---

REMARKS

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

FEBRUARY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2023

Salutations:

- Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly - Minister of Education
- Ms. Frances Seignoret – Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Ian Haywood - Managing Director, Celian Group
- Ms. Melissa Jimenez - General Manager, Trinidad and Tobago Music Company Limited (MusicTT)
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I am pleased to be part of today's Media Launch of the Trinidad and Tobago Gospel Festival 2023—which I understand to be the first of its kind, having morphed out of the Music Awards; so congratulations to you on that achievement. The Trinidad and Tobago Music Company Limited (MusicTT), a state agency under the remit of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), has been in support of the Celian Group in hosting the Gospel Music Awards of Trinidad and Tobago since 2019.

Gospel music—and Minister [of Education Nyan Gadsby-Dolly] has spoken about the effects of music even on the youth, but for all of us it really creates a unique experience mesmerizing audiences with melodious songs and potent messages, which are so important to our well-being. One need only attend a local gospel concert to witness the passion and awe inspired by our very talented artistes whose appeal spans generations and demographics.

Now we are hearing about “Hard Fete” being transformed into “Hard Mass” and being acknowledged by the Archbishop of Port of Spain, and I endorse it as well—good messaging coming out of ‘Hard Mass’ as transformed from “Hard Fete.”

Gospel Music, as we understand it, is the 2nd largest subset of the local music industry with gospel artistes from Trinidad and Tobago generating millions of views on various social media platforms from local and international followers. Gospel music is considered one of the fastest growing music segments internationally, with recording valuing more than US\$500 million annually.

Award programmes such as the Gospel Music Festival recognize and reward the achievements of gospel artistes whose musical offerings span several genres. These initiatives also provide opportunities for networking and marketing. Artistes who are featured at these events benefit from increased media recognition through radio, print, online and broadcast exposure. Other outcomes include placements in film productions, performance gigs, increased collaborations and co-writing engagements.

The ongoing association with Celian Group has created regional and international exposure for our local gospel artistes through various platforms. Local gospel artistes have performed on stages in various countries regionally and internationally including Grenada, Guyana, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This was also evident at the Marlin Awards in 2022, in The Bahamas where Trinidad and Tobago received 136 nominations in 43 out of 54 categories and our local artistes captured 18 awards for their contribution to Gospel music. T&T received the most awards at the event. Congratulations again for the work that you are doing.

The Ministry, through MusicTT, has also been supporting gospel artistes and promoters through MusicTT's Live Music District (LMD) initiative. The very first LMD gospel event was hosted in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic when there was an escalation in the live streaming of events. The series of quarantine concerts involved collaboration with various industry stakeholders such as Aspire Agency and Golden Eagle which attracted over 50,000 online viewers. MusicTT continues to support Gospel stakeholders with seven Gospel music promoters and 175 gospel musicians and singers benefiting from its live music showcases.

This is in fact diversification because this is an expansion of the music industry, and, of course, it is creating employment. We are hearing about exports, and this is a contribution to the economic landscape of Trinidad and Tobago.

I commend Celian Group for not only hosting this 2023 edition of the Gospel Music Festival but again it amounts to increased flights, increased hotel room bookings and creating economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago and really expanding our event tourism.

This is what it is about: just after Carnival, we have a big occasion again in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is about gospel music and we have the region attending and including, I understand, international performances as well. We look forward to that creation of economic activity and bolstering again of employment in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, we look forward to this four -day event from April 27-30, 2023, with components such as:

- Exalt – the Worship Experience;
- iREP Christ Concert;
- The Gospel Music Awards of Trinidad and Tobago (GMATT)—for which the government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Music TT, will be the main sponsor, contributing \$100,000 to the Music Awards;
- a Food Fair;
- a Food and Clothing Drive;
- a Health Fair; and
- a Music Business Conference.

These events will take place at various venues including Sound Forge, the Government Plaza Auditorium, and the National Academy for the Performing Arts.

The Ministry's continued involvement, through MusicTT, with Celian Group in hosting this event will also redound to a significant transformation of the Gospel Music landscape in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad as we seek to develop the local Music industry.

In closing, I acknowledge Mr. Ian Haywood and the team at Celian Group for hosting this signal event in the Gospel Music Calendar for 2023. This is the first festival of many to come. I look forward to participating in all of the events along with my ministerial colleagues as well. I know this is going to be a huge event and a highly anticipated one that all of Trinidad and Tobago, I trust, will buy into.

I thank you.

