



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

# *Certificate Distribution Ceremony of the Ultra Bespoke Tailoring Programme*

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FEATURE ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE SCOON  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
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29<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2019

## Salutations

- Chairman of MIC Institute of Technology – **Professor Clement Imbert**
- Chairman of FashionTT – **Mr. Jason Lindsay**
- Principal, Savile Row Academy - **Professor Andrew Ramroop**
- Chief Executive Officer, MIC Institute of Technology – **Mr. Anil Ramnarine and other MIC Managers**
- General Manager of FashionTT – **Ms. Lisa-Marie Daniel**
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening.

It is my distinct pleasure to meet with you this morning. Today I wish to congratulate all of you on your successful completion of the intensive One Year Certificate Programme in Ultra Bespoke Tailoring, Pattern Drafting, Cutting and Fitting. You are officially Trinidad and Tobago's first cohort of trained Bespoke tailors.

This programme was truly a collaborative effort led by the Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Industry Company Limited (FashionTT), along with the MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT), an agency under the Ministry of Education, and the Savile Row Academy (SRA). Notably, they worked alongside the Ministry of Education as well through the National Training Agency (NTA), which provided valuable guidance

This collaborative effort is a testament to the commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in implementing the core tenets of the National Development Strategy 2016-2030, Vision 2030, particularly Theme Four "*Building Globally Competitive Businesses.*"

As you may be aware, the global Fashion Industry is thriving and was valued at US\$2.4 trillion in 2016. By the same token, the 2018 study by EY-Parthenon, a global strategy consulting firm, identified the premium segment as the emergent driver of growth within the global luxury fashion industry<sup>1</sup>. With the completion of this programme, Trinidad and Tobago is well-positioned to capture a share of this growing premium market.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consultancy.eu/news/768/premium-products-driving-growth-in-420-billion-luxury-fashion-market>

I want to state that as graduates, you have gained a wealth of knowledge and skills which include understanding customized, bespoke tailoring and hand-sewn craft skills; understanding the importance of creating garments in harmony with various body shapes for comfort, style and elegance; sculpturing cloth in the creation of stylish garments and pattern cutting with increased proficiency. I expect that the introduction of these skills will inevitably lead to increased commercialization, export development of the local fashion industry and a meaningful contribution to the diversification of the economy.

Many of you present here today will experience heightened levels of curiosity as it relates to transforming these acquired skills into commercial value. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is here to create an enabling environment to encourage entrepreneurial efforts and develop micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and to give direction. According to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, MSMEs contribute approximately twenty eight per cent (28%) to GDP in Trinidad and Tobago. MSMEs generate employment, increase innovation and engender competitiveness within the economy and you must be a part of this development.

Some of you have already generated sales in excess of TT\$100,000.00 and I applaud that entrepreneurial spirit. Should you need financial assistance, the Export Grant Facility and the enhanced Research and Development Fund are available for those who are able to meet the requirements.

The Export Grant Facility provides financing up to a maximum of \$250,000 for machinery and equipment for production of export oriented items, including the manufacturing of leather and craft products, textile, garments, footwear and headwear. The Research and Development Facility provides tiered funding up to a maximum of \$1 million per beneficiary, for the successful market entry of innovative, technology driven business ideas in the creative and other sectors. As entrepreneurs operating in this dynamic global economic climate, you must all adopt a research posture in order to identify new product and business prospects and take advantage of all the opportunities that are open to you.

According to a McKinsey and Company November 2018 report, *The State of Fashion 2019: A year of awakening*, it was predicted that this year would be shaped by consumer shifts linked to technology. The report stated that companies are ‘engaging in a digital landgrab to diversify their ecosystem and using automation and data analytics to produce on demand to reduce waste and react rapidly to trends.’<sup>2</sup> It further explains that countries such as India, have become destinations for fashion companies due to savvy technology which enhances ‘speed to market’, however, new trade barriers and global tensions may provide opportunities for the Caribbean if there is quick and seamless fulfillment of orders. Based on the current geopolitical and macroeconomic events, diversification is the only way forward and innovation is key. You have to distinguish yourselves from the rest.

As graduates in need of further guidance in establishing or improving your business acumen and expanding your business, FashionTT offers the Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme (FVCIP), where you can be mentored and assisted based on your level of operation. If selected by the panel of international fashion experts, your business may be placed in one of the following four tiers:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-state-of-fashion-2019-a-year-of-awakening>

1. Strategic Training
2. Business Advisory and Financing Programme
3. Non-Global Value Chain (Non-GVC) and
4. Global Value Chain (GVC).

Currently there are over one hundred (100) designers participating in the various levels of the value chain and notably, all of the previous and current participants in tier 3, the Non-Global Value Chain, are exporting to markets all over the world, in countries such as South Korea, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Samoa and the Philippines.

The first two tiers are done in tandem with the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) and focus on training in specified areas, as well as providing support in understanding the business value chain. The third and fourth tiers focus on improving the business elements of local designers in order to be better positioned to compete on the international market.

Added to this, FashionTT is partnering with the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), which is under the remit of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and Independent Senator Anthony Vieira to host an IP workshop next month, specifically crafted for the fashion industry. This workshop would provide vital information for your businesses to succeed in international markets.

Some of you may also want to consider advancing your training and passing on the acquired knowledge and skills to others. In this case, I am pleased to announce that there is a Train the Trainers Certificate Programme in Ultra Bespoke Tailoring, Pattern Drafting, Cutting and Fitting that will be coming on stream in the upcoming weeks.

This programme will also be offered by FashionTT in collaboration with MIC-IT and the Savile Row Bespoke Academy (SRBA). The main objectives of this programme are to:

- Provide specialist skills, to enable progression to employment at the highest levels of the tailoring and fashion related industries.
- Teach the skills required of a Master Tailor in an effort to inspire others by passing on skills to newer learners.
- Enable the tailoring sector, particularly the bespoke tailoring industry in Trinidad and Tobago to flourish thereby becoming a cluster of excellence ready for export to the rest of the world.

The success of the Bespoke Tailoring Programme was the impetus for establishing this Train the Trainers Programme. This will ensure sustainability in the Fashion Industry, as well as build our international brand that will inevitably be linked to meticulous skills and superior quality products. According to the lecturers and evaluators from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, recently engaged by FashionTT to participate in interviews as the expert panel, Trinidad and Tobago's fashion initiatives to build capacity surpass the initiatives they have personally experienced in the Middle East, Africa and other Asian countries. As such, Trinidad and Tobago is already set on a solid foundation for growth on the international stage.

I want to reiterate that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to establishing the necessary framework for the growth and development of the creative sector. Likewise, the MTI continues to explore new opportunities and engage in developing partnerships with various countries which will redound to the benefit of our local businesses. An example of such is our ongoing dialogue with the European Union (EU) with respect to the Protocol on Cultural Cooperation under the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. The Protocol on Cultural Cooperation sets up the framework within which both CARIFORUM and the EU shall cooperate for facilitating exchanges of cultural activities, goods and services, including in the fashion sector, among others. I urge you all to keep abreast of our trade agreements and areas of cooperation which facilitate access to larger markets, thus increasing exports and generating economic growth.

In closing, I again want to congratulate you all. You have come a long way but this is only the beginning. All I ask is that you continue to give of your best, as we work towards the shared goal of improved economic prospects for the country and yourselves.