



Media Release

BUILDING A DIGITAL ECONOMY IS THE WAY FORWARD

17 December, 2020: The Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce has launched its “Nearby Stores” App which provides a platform for entrepreneurs and businesses in the Borough of Chaguanas and the wider business community an opportunity to promote their products and services through geo-targeting of customers, in-app messaging and business directions via Google maps. Speaking at the virtual launch of the “Nearby Stores” App on Thursday 17 December, 2020, Trade and Industry Minister, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon commended the Chamber for what she described as an “*innovative and timely initiative*”.

Minister Gopee-Scoon said **“Prior to COVID-19, e-commerce was often seen as an unnecessary expense to many businesses, especially micro and small enterprises; but now, it is an invaluable investment. Firms—both small and large—are expected to have an online presence to remain competitive, relevant and to better serve the needs and wants of consumers”**. She noted that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT), even before the pandemic, recognized that easy internet access, fast connectivity, an enabling digital environment, and optimal data storage are the foundation for the digital transformation of the country. To this end, she said, the Ministry of Trade and Industry for the past 3 years has been implementing the National E-commerce Strategy with the main goal of promoting e-commerce for local businesses to serve domestic and international consumer markets.

The Trade Minister detailed a number of the initiatives being implemented by the Government in their continued efforts to build a digital economy. She said **“Currently, 47 Government services can be accessed online through the TTBizLink platform and this has significantly reduced the bureaucracy and long waiting times...We are also very pleased with the roll out of the Automation of the Construction Permit process, referred to as DevelopTT... As of September 1, 2020, all applications through the Town and Country Planning Division for the regions of Port of Spain, Diego Martin, San Juan/Laventille, Chaguanas,**

Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo and parts of Tunapuna/Piarco have been mandated to be fully automated and paperless...Additionally the Government completed the Electronic Funds Transfer Policy (EFT) in 2019 and is currently working to define the requirements for the implementation of electronic payment systems."

Minister Gopee-Scoon encouraged the private sector to work together with the Government to achieve the digital transformation of Trinidad and Tobago's economy.

Mr. Vishnu Charran, President, Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce stated ***"The Chaguanas Chamber recognized the challenges faced by our business community as a result of the pandemic and has seen the emergence of more innovative businesses. The launch of the "Nearby Stores" App is one initiative being implemented to assist businesses in promoting their goods and services via an online platform hence making them more accessible. It is the first B2C App of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago and we are happy to be leading the way."***

His Worship the Mayor of Chaguanas, Mr. Faaiq Mohammed in his Remarks applauded the Chamber for their innovative way of thinking. He said ***"this app will place the Chaguanas businesses at your fingertips and showcase all that we have to offer just by the click of a button"***. The Mayor reaffirmed his commitment to working with all stakeholders to improve the lives of the burgesses of the Borough of Chaguanas while developing it into a model city where quality goods and services can be accessed.

The Chamber also took the opportunity to present Awards to Mr. Vineet Ramsarran whose SEA score was the highest in Chaguanas and Konnect the Kids for their philanthropic work to schools during the pandemic.

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