



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Remarks by

Ava Mahabir-Dass

Deputy Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Gala Christmas Dinner and Awards Ceremony

Couva/Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce

Friday, November 28th, 2025

Salutations

- The Honourable Barry Padarath, Minister of Public Utilities, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Member of Parliament for the Couva South Constituency. And his distinguished colleagues of Government.
- Mrs Ava Mahabir-Dass, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism.
- Dr. Jenifer Neidhart de Ortiz, Chargé d’Affaires of the United States Embassy.
- Mr. Carl Jaigobind, United States Customs.
- Mr. Riad Juman, Comptroller of Customs and Excise.
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the Couva Point Lisas Chamber of Commerce.
- Members of the Media.
- Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening.

It is a privilege to extend greetings this evening on behalf of the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Tonight’s Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony is more than a celebration—it is a moment of reflection and renewal. It provides us with the opportunity to engage directly with the nation’s business leaders, to share the Government’s vision for sustainable growth, and to reaffirm our collective commitment to building a stronger, more competitive Trinidad and Tobago.

Honouring the Chamber’s Legacy

The Chamber has long been a pillar of progress in Couva and Pt. Lisas. Since its transformation in 1991 from the Couva Businessmen Association into the Couva/Pt. Lisas Chamber of Commerce, it has consistently championed economic development while fostering social and cultural connections within the community.

Under the leadership of President Mr. Deoraj Mahase and the dedicated executive, the Chamber continues to embody resilience and innovation. This year’s gala theme, “Golden Memories,” fittingly honours the Past Presidents whose vision, dedication,

and leadership laid the foundation for the Chamber's enduring success. Their contributions have created a legacy of excellence that your membership can take great pride in.

Partnership for National Growth

The Government shares this commitment to resilience and growth. We firmly believe that economic progress cannot be achieved without the active partnership of the private sector. Together, we can build a Trinidad and Tobago that is not only competitive on the global stage but also inclusive and sustainable at home.

To this end, the Ministry has set bold yet achievable targets:

- Export revenue growth of US\$2 billion within two years, and US\$5 billion over five years.
- New investments of US\$3 billion in the next two years, and US\$9 billion over five years.
- The creation of thousands of new jobs, ensuring opportunities for our citizens and prosperity for our communities.

And we invite the private sector to join us in achieving these ambitious goals.

Ease of Doing Business and Innovation

We are actively implementing initiatives to make doing business easier. Among them is the modernization of permits and licensing through a unified online government platform—designed to reduce red tape and eliminate costly delays. We are also transforming payment systems, including electronic platforms at the Customs and Excise Division, to ensure Trinidad and Tobago remains competitive in the global marketplace.

At the Ministry we are expanding the SEW/TTBizlink platform, identifying bottlenecks and reducing the leadtime for approvals and feedback.

Upcoming Initiatives

In the coming weeks, three major initiatives will be launched:

On December 2nd, we will welcome a new cruise line to Trinidad as part of the 2025/2026 Cruise Ship Season.

On December 10th, the formal unveiling of the Private Sector Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago (PSOTT), which will deepen collaboration between Government and business.

In early January, the patriotic “Buy Local, Build Trinbago” national campaign, aimed at conserving foreign exchange, reducing imports, and strengthening domestic supply chains.

Global Trade and Investment

We are also expanding our trading relationships and attracting foreign direct investment from major global partners. A recent achievement was the removal of the 15% tariff on agricultural products such as Urea Ammonium Nitrate (UAN) exported to the United States.

This breakthrough allows our exporters to resume sales, easing supply constraints and safeguarding the competitiveness of our agricultural products in that market.

We are now approaching investments with one voice. All the key investment-related agencies, together with the private sector, are now working together to raise the investment profile of Trinidad and Tobago.

We are committed to reducing barriers and challenges, with the goal of making this country a top regional investment destination.

Support for Manufacturing

The Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism remains steadfast in its support for the manufacturing sector. Through targeted incentives, trade missions, and investment facilitation, we are ensuring that our manufacturers have the tools and guidance to thrive both locally and internationally.

Assessment and Revitalisation of Under-utilised Assets

The Government is also aware that there is a substantial number of unutilized, underutilized or idle assets that represent a significant drain on the resources of the State.

These assets represent both a fiscal liability and a missed economic opportunity as many could be repurposed with minimal resources.

To address this issue the Ministry is currently engaged in developing a National Registry of all assets with a view to monetizing them through various appropriate rejuvenation models.

Closing and Gratitude

As we approach the close of 2025, I extend heartfelt gratitude for your hard work, your resilience, and your unwavering contribution to your community and to the nation.

May this holiday season bring peace, health, and happiness to you, your families and all the hard working members of your staff.

We look forward to deepening our partnership with the Chamber in the year ahead, building on the successes of 2025.

Thank you, and may tonight's Golden Memories inspire us all to create a brighter future.

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