



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

TTMA Leadership Forum 2026

Remarks

Senator the Honourable Satyakama Maharaj

Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Wednesday 25th March, 2026

Salutations

- Her Excellency Ayşe Selcan Şanlı Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye and other Members of the Diplomatic Corps.
- Dr. Aiyana Ali Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Cabinet Colleagues and other Members of the Government
- Mr. Larry Howai Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago
- Dr. Gosine, Parliamentary Secretary of The Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism and Other Permanent Secretaries
- Mr. Emil Ramkissoon - Newly Elected President and Members of the Board of TTMA
- Dr. Ramesh Ramdeen, CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association
- Past Presidents and Board Members of the TTMA
- Members of the Media
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

Let me first thank the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association for convening this Leadership Forum 2026 under the theme, **“Positioning the Trinidad and Tobago Economy.”** This theme is timely, because positioning an economy does not happen by accident. It requires leadership. It requires vision. It requires action. And above all, it requires people moving in one direction with confidence and purpose. If Trinidad and Tobago is serious about building a stronger, more competitive and more diversified economy, then we must also be serious about the kind of leadership that can take us there.

On that note, I would like to just take a moment to recognize Mr. Parson for his leadership and contribution to developing the manufacturing sector over the past 2 years and congratulate the new President, Mr. Ramkissoon. I look forward to working with you during your tenure.

Trinidad and Tobago stands at a point where the global economic climate demands more than resilience. It demands leadership, clarity of purpose, and the willingness to adapt to a changing world order. For too long, our economic story has been tied too narrowly to the fortunes of the energy sector.

That must change, and it is changing.

At the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism, our mandate is clear: Economic Diversification. We are not simply searching for alternatives to oil and gas. We are working to build a more sophisticated, competitive and self-sustaining economy. That effort is being guided by the Ministry's Immediate Action Plan, which is intended to remove systemic barriers, stimulate diversification and catalyse growth.

We have set ourselves bold but achievable targets: to generate **US\$2 billion in export revenue** and attract **US\$3 billion in new investment** within the next two years, rising over five years to **US\$5 billion in exports** and **US\$9 billion in investment**. These are serious targets, and they require serious leadership.

But leadership must first begin with vision.

Economies do not transform themselves. Ministries do not move themselves. Institutions do not inspire themselves. People lead. People decide. People act. With the support of the business community, including you the manufacturers, these bold but achievable targets become a reality.

Leadership must also be visible in action. Vision, on its own, is not enough. It must be matched by decision-making, discipline, follow-through and credibility. People are not persuaded by rhetoric alone. They are persuaded when they see that what is said is being matched by what is being done.

We are living in a time when the world is shifting beneath our feet. Old assumptions are collapsing. Markets are becoming more uncertain. Trade patterns are being redrawn. Investment is becoming more selective. Competition is more intense. A Ministry cannot therefore drift into transformation. A country cannot stumble into diversification. A business community cannot align around uncertainty. Somebody must define the destination.

Leadership is, at its core, about leading people. It requires taking the time to know your people, to understand their passions, their concerns, their circumstances and their mindsets, and to bring them into genuine alignment with the vision and mission. The same is true of stakeholders. If we are to position the economy successfully, then government, industry and the wider business community must feel that they are part of a common national effort.

We must collectively be seen as driving reform, removing barriers, pushing delivery, and creating real momentum. It must show, not simply tell, that the country is serious

about competitiveness and growth.

That is why the Ministry's work is focused not only on policy, but on practical support for manufacturers and SMEs.

The Road Ahead: Strategic Partnerships

The road ahead cannot be travelled by government alone.

The sustainability of non-energy manufacturing requires partnership. The Ministry is committed to providing the framework, the digital tools and the enabling environment. But the wider economic transformation we seek will depend on sustained alignment between public leadership and private sector effort. We are creating the enabling environment for you to succeed!

Each businessman and businesswoman must determine where he or she intends to lead: within the business, within the sector, and within the wider economy.

Will you lead on quality?

Will you lead on volume?

Will you lead on price?

Will you lead by becoming the best workplace in your sector?

Those are important questions, because they go to the heart of purpose, identity and strategic direction.

There is no single correct answer. Not every business is meant to distinguish itself in the same way. But every serious business must know what it is seeking to lead in, what sets it apart, and how that purpose is reflected in its leadership, its culture and its execution.

Once you distinguish yourself in the leadership space, you create value. You create confidence. You create market strength. And in doing so, you do not only strengthen your own enterprise, you strengthen your sector, and by extension, you strengthen the national economy.

Different sectors will lead differently. Some may lead through scale and efficiency. Others through premium quality, innovation, service, niche expertise or workforce excellence. What matters is clarity of purpose and consistency of execution.

Because each sector forms part of the wider economic development plan. Each sector has a role to play in diversification. Each sector has a role to play in growth. Each sector has a role to play in building a Trinidad and Tobago that is more resilient, more competitive and more capable of shaping its own future.

So as Government works to create the enabling environment, I urge every business leader here today to ask a simple but important question: **where do I intend to lead, and how will that leadership contribute to national development?**

That is how business leadership and national leadership begin to reinforce each other.

Conclusion

As we navigate the complexities of 2026, let us be driven by a shared sense of purpose. We are building an economy that is innovative, competitive, and deeply rooted in the talent of our people. The work we are doing today, from the "Buy Local, Build Trinbago" movement to the digital transformation of our ports, is laying the foundation for a prosperous and resilient future.

We're focused, we're ready, and we're open for business!

I thank you.