

October 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

## Getting Ready for the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence

### Introduction

In another week or so, the nation called St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and all Vincentians, will be involved in a number of activities to mark the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence. We will display our national colours, and flags of all sizes to mark this event. Some buildings in the State will be decorated in the national colours, in all sorts of imaginative arrangements. This is all a demonstration of the national pride which is on display at this time.

Many persons will attend the military parade at Victoria Park, to see our uniformed forces go through their paces and to hear the Independence Address by our beloved Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves. He will have some special announcements to make, as is customary. Then the attention will shift to the activity at the Chatoyer Memorial Park in the north of the country, where some ninety plots of land will be handed over to persons who lost their lands due to natural disaster events.

The fact of the matter is that since March 2001, there has been an outpouring of national pride by Vincentians around this time. There is much to be proud of as Vincentians. Our country has achieved much over the last seventeen years under the ULP administration, with Ralph Gonsalves as Prime Minister. In the Caribbean, and wider afield, we have attained a reputation as a progressive country that stands by its principles

### The last 38 years

Over the past 38 years St. Vincent and the Grenadines has made significant socio-economic and technological progress, despite its small geographic and population size, its relative scarcity of material resources, its extremely challenging external economic and political environment and the vulnerability to natural disasters. Still, we must strongly urge that we renew our commitment to the on-going quest to lift St. Vincent and the Grenadines further and higher in the interest of all of our people.

Our nation's progress, enhanced prosperity, peace, and socio-political stability have been achieved largely through our own efforts at home, in concert with the considerable assistance of our diaspora, friendly nations abroad, and supportive institutions and peoples regionally and globally, and through the abiding grace and beneficence of a loving God. This combination of a many-sided human effort and divine inspiration, ensures our continued upliftment today and beyond. Morning by morning new mercies we see and receive bountifully; and all that we need, His divine hand has been providing. Great is His faithfulness for which we are truly thankful!

It is right and proper that as we acknowledge our nation's socio-economic and technological advances, we must recognise, too, and lament, our individual and collective short-comings and fall from grace, and be accordingly contrite, and recommit ourselves to do what is better and right. As always, change for the better has to come from, and start with, each of us.

Each adult able-bodied citizen of this blessed country is required to exert himself or herself in honest lawful labour, in accordance with his or her ability and circumstance, in return for just rewards. No progressive society has ever been built on leisure, pleasure, or nice time. Instead what is required is disciplined, smart and lawful productive labour. Laziness may appear to be hip and cool to a misguided small minority; but laziness is an absence of virtue, and leads to damnation for Jew and Gentile alike.

### **Our achievements**

As a country, together we as Vincentians have achieved a great deal, considering the obstacles we face. We have managed to construct and to operationalise, a beautiful modern day international airport, the largest capital project every attempted in the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Year after year, we continue to put our young people through an educational process, preparing them for the world of work, and for them to contribute to the further development of their country. The success of the education revolution has been tremendous, and has affected every household in the State, in a positive way.

The far-reaching policies of the ULP administration has kept the country stable, in the face of severe global financial and economic shocks, and the effects of climate change. No public servant has been laid off, and salaries have been paid on time, including those of the opposition NDP.

Internationally, we have achieved much, particularly at the United Nations, where our Ambassador, Rhonda King, is now the president of the all important ECOSOC committee of the global body. In another few months, our country will ramp up its campaign to gain a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

And now, let us keep our eyes on the vital matters of unity, peace, justice and prosperity. We know the way, we have the vision, the ideas and the programmes. We must be aware of the false prophets and the apostles of gloom and doom, particularly those in the NDP.

Above all, we must celebrate the abundant blessings which the Lord Almighty has bestowed on our Blessed country.