

October 28th 2022

CELEBRATING VINCENTIAN EXCELLENCE IN 2022

Introduction

The last two years, 2020 and 2021 have been extremely challenging for our nation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the eruptions of the La Soufriere volcano. The April 2021 eruption of the volcano came at a very bad time (not that there is a good time for an eruption) when this country, was preparing for some recovery with the changing fortunes of the pandemic. While we were by no means out of the woods, losing close to 80 lives between April and October to Covid-19, the government had laid out a clear plan to get the best out of the limited opportunities that had started to become available. Even as we faced those challenges however, our Unity Labour Party government lead by Comrade Ralph, continued to invest in our people providing income support, business opportunities through PRYME, education opportunities through scholarships and bursaries, and investment opportunities to local and foreign investors. To the best of our ability, based on the circumstances, our government laid the foundation for recovery and growth in 2022 putting systems in place to execute policy initiatives and programs that include some large capital projects as well as the continuation of a number of private sector projects. What has resulted in this year 2022 therefore are a number of significant accomplishments by Vincentian individuals as well as national accomplishments that put our country solidly on a path of sustainable economic growth while cementing our reputation as a global leader on important issues. This week we examine and celebrate a number of accomplishments by our nationals and our country, as we celebrate our 43rd anniversary of independence.

Celebrating Individual Accomplishments

On an individual level, a number of Vincentians have gone on to accomplish significant milestones or have been recognised for their contribution to various aspects of life. These Vincentians need to be recognised and celebrated for their efforts and accomplishments as part of our noble civilisation that continues to show the value of our contribution to the world.

We can start with the latest of these recognitions since it may be the freshest in our minds, but also because it reinforces what we already know regarding the legendary status of the individual. The University of the West Indies this year conferred the honorary doctorate of letters to our very own Cultural Ambassador Alston “Becket” Cyrus. For decades, Becket has been turning out hits after hits, winning the road march title on numerous occasions, racking up accolades not just locally or regionally, but also internationally with hit mega hit “Teaser” being sang in other languages. SVG already knew of the legendary status of Becket, but now we are proud of his recognition by UWI, and we celebrate his accomplishment, Dr Alston “Becket” Cyrus.

Becket paved the way for the current group of performing artists who are making waves with their music across the globe. Two of these artists are multiple soca monarch champion, Gamal “Skinny Fabulous” Doyle, and prolific performer and writer Shertz “Problem Child” James, who just this year dominated the Miami carnival, winning the top spots in the road march competition. We congratulate these top performers for their accomplishment and wish them well as they continue to fly the Vincentian cultural flag globally.

This year, the Hon Keisal Melissa Peters, became the youngest and first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This offers much to celebrate for our young people and our women as the continued support and investment by this ULP government in the talent and professionalism in our young is displayed. Congratulations to Senator Peters and may she continue to serve with honour, integrity and distinction.

Celebrating National Accomplishments

Since the beginning of this year, our government has been busy, rolling out project after project for the benefit of the Vincentian people, doing exactly what was promised during the 2022 general elections. The ULP makes governance look so easy that it is not inconceivable for our citizens to take for granted the strides we have made and the many accomplishments we have achieved.

This year, our government embarked on an ambitious infrastructure improvement program that would see a boom in the construction over the next 3-4 years. The start of construction of SVG's modern port at a cost of approximately US\$200 million will lead the charge in this regard, this will be the second largest capital project, second to the AIA, with partners that include the CDB, the Government of the UK and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Other projects that were kick-started include: the Holiday Inn at Diamond, the bridges at Noel and Overland, and add to this that fact that we have secured the funding for our Acute Referral Hospital to be constructed in Arnos Vale, and will add critical care services to our improving health care system.

Finally, our accomplishments in development infrastructure were appropriately complimented by our investment in our human resource, through the education revolution. The "patron" of this revolution, the Comrade himself, decided to create under his office the department of post-secondary and tertiary education, as he takes a personal interest in this area. This is welcome news since many of our students know that the leader of our government, the Prime Minister himself takes a personal interest in their education. During 2022, more than 900 Vincentian students were awarded tuition assistance from this education government, making it possible for them to pursue post-secondary education. This is the largest number of tuition scholarships ever awarded and could be added to those scholarships to the University of Wales Trinity St David, Taiwan and other education partners. The Prime Minister also announced that this year the government is awarding 73 national scholarships, exhibition and bursaries based on the A' Level results. This puts this country on course to award close to 1100 scholarships, tuition and bursaries. Just imagine, in a country where there are just about

30,000 students, more than 1100 receive assistance from the government, easily making us the country with the highest number of scholarships per capita, at least 1 in 30 students in this country will receive some form of assistance. This is truly remarkable.

As we celebrate our 43rd anniversary of independence, we have a lot to celebrate based on what we have accomplished this year, both individually and as a nation.