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Excerpts from the 2018 Independence address: Part Two

Solid Progress continues amidst Challenges

Introduction

There are those among us who are addicted to the malaise of learned helplessness and paralyzed by contrived recitals of lamentations. Most of our people subscribe not to any of these anti-developmental impulses or maladies. Rather we elaborate and pursue a compelling developmental narrative stuffed with sensible policies and practical programmatic details.

Moreover, overwhelmingly, our people, with good reason and inspired experience, believe that our Lord's compassion faileth not; morning by morning new mercies we see; all that we need His hand hath provided; great is His faithfulness. We thus apply our heart to wisdom, utilize our knowledge, embrace understanding, and work productively. This has been the tried and tested formula for good and successful living from time immemorial.

It is a formula that has served well both Jews and Gentiles! We remember and thank our forebears and their leaders for their contribution in building a platform upon which we further build and advance.

Successful Policies and Programmes

Currently, a bundle of policies and programmes of our government is delivering much success, and promises to yield even more in the future. The historic Argyle International Airport (AIA) which began operations on February 14, 2017, has occasioned an increase in passengers-by-air; successful direct non-stop connections have been established between Argyle and New York and Toronto, respectively by CAL and Air Canada. On December 15th this year American Airlines begin their non-stop flight from Argyle to Miami; and other international carriers and destinations are in the offing. The doomsday pessimists have been proven wrong yet again and again about AIA.

Meanwhile the existing hotel stock is expanding; and new hotels and apartments are currently being built or are shortly to be built. The Resort at Adams Bay, Bequia, is about to be opened. The Buccament Bay Resort has finally been sorted out with new investors who are soon to take over ownership. The Black Sands Resort at Peter's Hope is under construction. The Mandarin Canouan

Resort is in operation; and the Government has secured low-cost funding to construct a 250-room brand-named hotel at Mt. Wynne and a 90-room airport hotel at Diamond. The cruise and yachting visitors are dramatically on the rise; and the top-of-the-line Glossy Bay Marina in Canouan is about to enter its first full year of operation.

Current expanded initiatives in fishing, agriculture (cocoa, coffee, root crops, and vegetables), manufacturing, and the proposed medical cannabis industry, offer solid prospects for real economic growth and job-creation.

Game Changing Endeavours

As the private and cooperative sectors, including the credit unions, continue to play a most significant role in our country's development, current initiatives by the state sector facilitate and fuel further developmental advance. Among the major game-changing endeavours of the state sector are: the consolidating and expanding of the Education, Health, and Housing Revolutions; the expanding of renewable energy (improving efficiency at hydro-electric plants (\$20 million), starting-up of the Geothermal Project (US\$ 100 million), and building-out solar installations); advancing practical plans to construct a modern cargo port (US \$145 million), and the City at Arnos Vale including the anchor project of the Acute Referral Hospital (US \$50 million); and construction of satellite warehouses for NEMO.

In the meantime, substantial and vital infrastructure work on roads, bridges, sea and river defences, is ongoing in order to strengthen our country's resilience against climate change. Indeed, between 2010 and 2017, our country has suffered loss and damage in the sum of EC \$700 million or in excess of one-third of our country's Gross Domestic Product due to storms, excessive rainfall, landslides, raging seas and rivers.

The weather patterns arising from climate change are now unfamiliar in time, type, and seasonality; unprecedented in frequency and intensity; and thus urgent beyond measure. Both the pre-existing condition of countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the immediacy of climate change have given rise, most assuredly, to the many-sided concept of "Small State Exceptionalism" as a category in the global political economy which deserves an especial carve-out and recognition beyond the traditional rubric, hitherto, of "special and differential" treatment.

Climate Change

At a global level, climate change has, in part, redefined the issues touching on peace and security. New global security challenges, beyond those with which the world has been traditionally occupied, have come to the fore. Non-state actors, for example, have launched activities antithetical to peace and security;

and states, not only so-called rogue states, have branched off into, or permitted, activities which undermine global peace and security. The circumstances are thus propitious for a small-island state to seek a role at the United Nations' Security Council as a non-permanent member. Accordingly, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is poised to become the smallest country ever to sit on the Security Council, representing the 33-member states of GRULAC (the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean) for the years 2020 and 2021; the elections at the General Assembly of the United Nations take place in June 2019. Our election to the Security Council would represent an extraordinary historical moment for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, all small states, and all humanity.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines stand in solidarity with all who suffer from the scourge of climate change. Last week, our Cabinet approved the sum of US \$40,000 as a mark of our solidarity with the people of Trinidad and Tobago consequent on the terrible floods which have recently afflicted them.