

**November 8<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**Twenty Announcements that are People-Centre (Part II)**

**Introduction**

Continuing from last week's article where we examined the first ten (10) of the twenty (20) announcements made by Prime Minister Gonsalves at the Independence Parade at Victoria Park, this week, we conclude the two-part series by looking at the other ten (10) announcements. Most Vincentians can appreciate the meaning and value of these people-centred policies as part of the government's thrust to lift the living standards of Vincentians. It must be emphasised that these announcements represent a number of initiatives, most of which have budget implications, while a few may not, that will positively touch the lives of every section of the Vincentian society. The remaining ten (10) announcements detailed below were delivered by Prime Minister Gonsalves:

*“Eleventh, a shipment of 5,160 sacks of fertiliser from Taiwan will be distributed to farmers at highly subsidised prices to boost further agricultural production. A grant, free of cost, of 40 sacks of fertiliser to each of the 16 registered agricultural cooperatives will be made. Note the symbolism of 40! Big up the farmers!”*

*Twelfth, the physical infrastructure for our judicial system and parliamentary democracy will be strengthened consequent upon the recent decision of the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to support a soft-loan of US \$20 million from a Taiwanese bank to construct a modern Parliament building and Court House Complex on two parcels of land almost obliquely opposite the headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture on Richmond Hill Road. [One of the parcels of land which was acquired by the government, is still enmeshed in*

*litigation on the issue of the extent of the compensation. Our government is anxious to have that matter resolved, if possible through negotiation and mediation.]*

*Thirteenth, the commencement date for duty-free Christmas barrels and packages is Monday November 18, 2019; the duty-free concession will run until December 31, 2019. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> successive year that this government has offered this concession.*

*Fourteenth, please keep your eyes and ears open for a number of national and community projects, inclusive of roads, which will be formally commissioned or launched over the next few weeks and months. There is a huge number of them. One which touches my heart is the impending opening of a rehabilitated building and associated structures to accommodate, temporarily, our indigent elderly at the Lewis Punnett Home until the construction of a modern geriatric facility at the existing site.*

*Fifteenth, three deserving nationals are being accorded the status of Cultural Ambassador: Kingsley “Hero” Roberts (pan player and arranger, musician, song writer, and calypsonian; Peggy Carr (Poet and veritable mother to our students in Taiwan); and Cherry Ince, who currently resides in New York (musician, song writer, musical arranger, and music producer).*

*Five Sporting Ambassadors are also being appointed:*

- 1. Elliott “Morrie” Millington (Captain of the 1979 Football Team);*
- 2. Rawltie Lewis (Outstanding member of Team 1979 and Caribbean Football Team in 1981 and a Coach today);*
- 3. Ian Sardine (Football Administrator);*
- 4. Dr. Kishore Shallow (Vice President, West Indies Cricket Board, and former national cricketer);*
- 5. Doris Mc Intosh (Netball Administrator).*

*Sixteenth, the project for the writing of a comprehensive “History of St. Vincent and the Grenadines” is being elaborated through the efforts of four Vincentian historians: Dr. Michael Dennie, Dr. Adrian Fraser, Dr. Cleve Scott, and Dr. Arnold Thomas. Cabinet has already approved the initial budget. The government will fund the project fully.*

*Seventeenth, during this 40<sup>th</sup> year of reclaimed independence, a final determination will be made in time for National Heroes Day 2020 for the elevation to the status of National Hero of one or more of the following persons: George Mc Intosh, Ebenezer Joshua, Robert Milton Cato, and John P. Eustace.*

*Eighteenth, a Committee is being established by Cabinet to examine, review, and engage in public consultation regarding the naming and/or renaming of various public places, streets, and buildings. The overwhelming number of Vincentians considers that some colonially-named public spaces, including streets, ought to be renamed. It is part and parcel of the exercise of remaking ourselves in our own image to fit our collective sense, and sensibility.*

*Nineteenth, during the coming twelve months, especial efforts would be made to honour appropriately dozens of our citizens, who have excelled in this or that uplifting human endeavour. The various communities will be asked to assist in the elaboration of a permanent Honours Roll, as a fitting memory to our exemplars.*

*Finally, the activities under the recently-launched Sport Against Crime and Renewal at 40! will be ramped up over the next twelve months. All hands and minds are needed for these two initiatives”.*

The “buzz” that these announcements generated days after they were made, even to the present is testament to the degree of anticipation that awaited them as the large crowd listened intently to the Prime Minister’s address. As was expected, there were some anticipated

disclosures, such as the duty-free barrels that's into its 19th year, a measure that many families depend on and take full advantage of, as their relatives in the diaspora continue to provide tangible support to them here at home. The appointment of deserving Vincentians who have served in cultural or sporting disciplines and ambassadors in recognition of their contribution. The farmers continue to benefit directly from this targeted intervention in agriculture, and the symbolism of our 40th anniversary of independence should not be lost as 40 registered cooperatives will benefit from subsidised fertiliser courtesy the Republic of China, Taiwan.

Whether you are a public servant, a nurse, a teacher, a farmer, the head of one of the approximately 40,000 households in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a member of the sporting or cultural fraternity, a daily-paid worker, a tradesman/woman or a part of the youthful or elderly population deservedly receiving public assistance, you have reasons to celebrate. This ULP government that has been elected to govern with the popular majority over 4 successive elections, continues to work on your behalf, to ensure the constant improvement of the quality of life of Vincentians of all ages and all backgrounds.