



Remarks at the
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITEC
(India's Technical & Economic Cooperation Programme)

BY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST
AND MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Honourable
Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan

Friday 21 November, 2014 | 6.30 to 8.30 p.m.
India House, 21-23, Trinidad Crescent,
Federation Park, St. Clair, POS.

SALUTATIONS [ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED]

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen...

We are here this evening to salute an incredible, global initiative which was inaugurated by the Government of the Republic of India on September 15, 1964 – the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. ITEC, as we fondly call it, celebrates its Fiftieth Anniversary this year; a major milestone by any standard. Before I go any further in my remarks, please join me in a resounding round of applause for ITEC on the occasion of its Golden Anniversary.

---[ROUND OF APPLAUSE]---

Over its 50 year history, ITEC has served some 161 developing countries, to date. At the inauguration of the Programme, the Government of India made a conscious commitment to be a major promoter of the principle of South-South Co-operation. Indeed, it can be argued that through Indian's global technical cooperation policy, it has advanced this noble cause greatly, as it provided a myriad of opportunities for developing countries to share in India's successes over the sixty years of its existence as an independent Republic.

During the fifty years of ITEC's existence, India itself has come a very long way. Sri Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, in speaking of this period has said:

"I have seen vast, perhaps unbelievable, changes during the journey that has brought me from the flicker of a lamp in a small Bengal village to the chandeliers of Delhi."

Many of these changes have been passed on to us here in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as to all the other nations that benefit from ITEC, and other aspects of India's technical co-operation policies.

Yet, notwithstanding all this progress, and throughout fifty years of real achievement as a nation, its history of study in astronomy especially, rarely has India ever boasted of what it has been able to accomplish.

- It is the seventh-largest country in the world, in terms of geographical area.
- It is the world's second-most populous country, with over one point two (1.2) billion people.
- It is the most populous democracy.
- It is an economic powerhouse, and boasts one of the fastest growing economies. According to the World Bank, the Indian economy is the world's tenth-largest by nominal GDP, and third-largest in terms of purchasing power parity.
- It is the first Asian country to reach Mars, the Red Planet, and did so at a cost considerably lower than quite a few Hollywood blockbusters about space exploration.

Behind these remarkable statistics lies an extraordinary story of the power of human aspirations, and what can be achieved with focus, strength, determination and an indomitable will.

Our two countries began their multi-layered relationship of almost two hundred years on May 30th, 1845, with the arrival of the first indentures on the Fath Al Razack. Today, some 167 years later, the economic and social ties forged back then have expanded to include sports, culture, science and technology, as well as shared values and exchanges.

The economic ties between our countries remain healthy. In 2009, notwithstanding the global economic crisis back then, two-way bilateral trade between India and Trinidad and Tobago peaked at US\$414 million, dominated heavily by hydrocarbon products. In the period 2010-2011, trade between our countries amounted to almost US \$120 million, and consisted mainly of products such as hydrocarbons, drugs and pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, garments, rice and other food stuffs.

In terms of culture, so many of our artistes and artisans have exchanged ideas and shared experiences in the arts, music and dance in a manner that has enriched the world. Looking at the world of sport, and cricket in particular, who could have imagined that a Trinbagonian – all-rounder, Robin Singh – could or would play for India? And what about the fact that our very own Kieron Pollard, internationally acclaimed all-rounder, has captained the Mumbai Indians of the Indian Premier League? Incidentally, Robin Singh is the coach for the Mumbai Indians which Kieron Pollard captains.

To come back to the reason we are here this evening, even as I hold on to the cricketing analogies a bit longer... We must salute ITEC for an excellent innings thus far. Like any batsman who has managed to stay in the wicket for 50 runs, it is your turn now to take off your helmet, raise your bat and salute the stands, before hunkering down to the task at hand once more; namely, making another 50 runs.

Earlier this evening, immediately after the National Anthems of India and Trinidad and Tobago were performed, the Indian High Commissioner His Excellency Gauri Shankar Gupta, along with Members of the NCIC, together took part in a lamp-lighting ceremony that I consider the high point of tonight's ceremony.

Lighting a lamp, while it is a common practice in Indian homes, is a highly significant ritual. This evening, we, performed a ceremonial act which pays tribute to the work ITEC has done over fifty years and in 161 developing countries, to light the way for knowledge increase and sustainable development in those partner countries. As Jane Porter, a British historical novelist, puts it:

"Imparting knowledge is only lighting other men's candles at our lamp without depriving ourselves of any flame..."

I would like to argue that in its fifty-year history, ITEC has lit 161 candles throughout the world, even as it made its own light stronger, brighter, more successful and more sustainable. It also has multiplied the power of that light exponentially. Today, every one of those 161 candles has the capacity to share its flame, setting imaginations ablaze and driving back the darkness for many others.

Trinidad and Tobago is one out of the 161 candles, which ITEC has lit over the years. Upon becoming Minister of Public Administration, I was heartened to discover the myriad programmes being offered by ITEC to private citizens and public officers of Trinidad and Tobago.

This country continues to receive tremendous benefits from the advanced training in Broadband Technology, Network Management and ICTs; as well as in Energy Studies –the renewables such as solar and wind.

Our own public service transformation efforts, through the Gold to Diamond Initiative, obtained a major fillip because we could send public officers to ITEC programmes targeting public service reform issues, such as: Auditing for the Public Sector; Integrated Financial Management; Human Resources Management, among others.

Overall, ITEC has brought the world closer together through a vast network of cutting-edge technology, which is the power of ICTs (information and communications technologies), all anchored firmly on a foundation of science. This is the power, the splendour and the simplicity of ITEC.

This evening, let us again commend ITEC and the Government of the Republic of India for their breadth of vision and tremendous achievements. I thank you both, on behalf of the many nationals who have profited from ITEC sponsorship and support. Most importantly, I thank you for your continued willingness to share with us the progress that you have earned through sacrifice and determination. You have offered us an opportunity to start at the top of the class. For your magnanimity, your spirit of brotherhood and togetherness, we, the people of Trinidad and Tobago thank you...

May God continue to bless the visionaries in the ITEC Team in all your future endeavours...

May God continue to bless the Republic of India...

May God continue to bless our wonderful country, Trinidad and Tobago...

I THANK YOU...

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