



NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER HON. TILLMAN THOMAS

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow Grenadians

As Prime Minister and Minister for National Security I have decided to address you on the commencement of this new year. During the past few weeks, we have experienced an uncharacteristic emergence in unsavory events which have resulted in the loss of life and considerable pain to families and friends.

Undoubtedly, the death of Mr. Oscar Bartholomew was an extremely unfortunate and tragic event.. Coming on the heels of a very peaceful and quiet Christmas season, all of Grenada was shocked and stunned.

This disturbing, isolated incident has virtually overnight, placed GRENADA under the microscope of the international community, especially the international media.

It has also subjected our reputation and image as a peaceful, friendly and law abiding society to international scrutiny. However we are still among the safest and most peaceful countries in this hemisphere.

As promised, an exhaustive, independent and professional investigation has so far yielded appropriate actions. Progress to date on this matter is testimony to the strength and independence of our judicial institutions; pillars of our democracy which we should all respect.

As we seek to rally and heal from this event, concerns about the varying levels of professionalism within the police service lingers.

In this regard, my government is arranging for a comprehensive review of the recruitment, training and custody management procedures and protocols of the RGPF.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are also affected by the industrial impasse that has developed at the Grenada Breweries.

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My government is making every effort to get both sides back to the negotiating table to bring this situation to an end. While we recognise that this is an employer/union relationship, we also appreciate the importance of bringing this industrial action to an end.

It is in Grenada's interest to ensure that our industrial climate remains harmonious and peaceful. This is a priority. Any period of prolonged or escalated industrial action is not beneficial to anyone.

In fact, Grenada's development challenges require that all stakeholders collaborate to ensure that we remain productive, competitive and attractive for investments that are necessary for economic growth, job creation and increased revenues.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we look forward, I am optimistic that 2012 will be an exciting one for us as our economy is once again on a growth path. This we need to sustain and accelerate. Some of our strategic goals and focus for this year will be as follows:

- Further enhancement of relations with the business community
- Job creation and protection
- Attracting resources into the domestic economy
- Maintaining Industrial peace and stability
- The Promotion of national interests through good governance and commitment to service to the Nation.
- The Maintenance of a strong, united and productive Grenada
- Increasing quality opportunities for young people
- Remaining faithful to the trust of the people.

I am constantly aware of the fact that we are the trustees and servants of you the people. All our thoughts and actions should be informed by your needs and aspirations.

Ladies and gentlemen, I anticipate that a number of the projects and programmes I announced as part of our two year work plan in September last year will come to fruition. This includes our new Parliament building for which funding is already secured.

I also look forward to the finalisation of the process that will lead to the start of the Agricultural Feeder Roads programme which will further support our efforts to strengthen the sector.

Importantly, we are working assiduously with the International Finance Corporation and St. George's University to finalise preparations for the new hospital with teaching capabilities. This will directly benefit our health, tourism and education sectors, while increasing employment and strengthening our economy.

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I am also pleased that the Market Access and Rural Enterprise Project is on stream. This project is providing finance, training and hands on assistance to sustainable projects in several communities in our country.

Additionally the Grenada Youth Upliftment Programme which has provided financial support to young persons with viable projects, is making a significant contribution to the youth of this nation.

These two programmes are providing support for viable, sustainable projects that will stimulate self employment and help young persons to become independent and successful.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am excited that our young people are making use of these opportunities to improve themselves and to contribute to the enhancement of their country. This speaks well for the future of Grenada.

Our government continues to work with investors to attract funding for some of the private sector projects that remain stalled as a result of the global economic downturn. Access to finance is still challenging.

I must also report that inspite of all the difficulties we have experienced as a result of the actions of the previous administration in the Grand Beach matter, this administration is taking action to return that asset into the hands of the Grenadian people. Government will acquire the prime beach front property which was given away one day before general elections in 2008.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this New Year is one of hope and optimism.

Our nutmeg and cocoa industries are showing considerable growth, both in production and in value added. These two commodities continue to present tremendous opportunity to revitalize our rural communities and earn valuable foreign exchange.

In this vein, I welcome the new processing plant in Nianganfor and look forward to a close working relationship with the entrepreneurs to make it a successful venture.

It is investments like these, by Grenadians who have a direct link with the raw material we produce, that will position us to take advantage of the niche opportunities available in the global market.

Our government has laid the foundation for an increase in agribusiness activities and we applaud our farmers and our people who are making use of these opportunities.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, I am of the view, that we have an opportunity to make 2012 one of our most successful years, if we collectively put our hands to the wheel and collaborate. We must work together, hand in hand, each Grenadian, at home and abroad to become more deeply involved in the development of our country.

Let us recommit to improving relationships that will bring harmony to families, villages and communities, to the benefit of all in this wonderful country of ours. Let us all work to achieve a morally, spiritually and economically prosperous nation.

I thank you and may God bless our nation.