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Welcome Remarks

Delivered By

Mr Moonilal Lalchan

Senior Vice President

Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce

**BREAKFAST MEETING
WITH HON MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY,
JACK WARNER
WEDNESDAY 18 JULY, 2012
8:00AM –10:30AM
LEON AGOSTINI CONFERENCE HALL,
CHAMBER BUILDING**

- **THE HONOURABLE JACK WARNER – MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY**
- **THE HONOURABLE COLLIN PARTAP – MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY**
- **HIS EXCELLENCY MALAY MISHRA – HIGH COMMISSIONER OF INDIA TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**
- **MR PETER MATTHIEU, DEPUTY AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**
- **MR FRANCIS JOSEPH – SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

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- **OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**
- **CHAMBER DIRECTOR – MR RAKESH GOSWAMI**
- **MR ANTHONY ABOUD – CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER’S CRIME AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE**
- **SPONSOR OF THIS MORNING’S EVENT – AE TACTICAL**
- **SPECIALLY INVITED GUESTS**
- **MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA**
- **CHAMBER MEMBERS**

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Good morning and welcome to each of you in attendance at the Chamber's Breakfast Meeting with the Honourable Jack Warner, Minister of National Security.

Since his appointment last month to the post of Minister of National Security, this is Minister Warner's first public appearance at a Chamber Breakfast Meeting, and so we would like to thank him for taking the time to be here today for what promises to be a very informative and interactive session.

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We also specially welcome and thank our sponsor for this morning's event – Chamber member, AE TACTICAL, who is actually one of the newest additions to the Chamber family. Your support of this important event is greatly appreciated.

Maintaining a significant reduction in *CRIME* has been a major challenge for all governments and has become a topic that, especially over the past decade, has dominated the national agenda – with the

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conversation dealing with concern about the obvious rise in crime, its cause and effects on communities, and the general inability of successive government administrations to combat it.

Crime has managed to capture our attention almost on a daily basis because its effects are so visible and widespread. I am certain that whether or not we have, ourselves, been victims of a crime, we would have been affected in some way.

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The most notable of the serious crimes that has pervaded our society, is that of murders. We have seen the number of reported murders increase year after year, and the detection rate remains woefully low. It would seem that the spate of murders continues unchecked and therefore unabated.

The 2012 murder toll up to the 17th of July, was 228, compared to the same period in 2011, which stood at 211, as reported at

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yesterday's Daily Police Briefing. Within the period of last Thursday to Monday – 11 murders have reportedly been committed. Six murders were committed in less than a 24-hour span on the Monday alone. It is clear that the strategies which have been put in place are not addressing the real problem as the murder toll continues to climb and spiral out of control. The Chamber is seriously concerned about the impact on business and all nationals of T&T.

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Less than a year has passed since the State of Emergency ended, and while we supported the SoE at the time to allow for the simultaneous development of a holistic crime plan, we are now seeing a clear return to gang warfare and serious crime.

The current situation cannot be allowed to continue and we strongly believe that the Government **MUST offer solutions that can bring about a **LONG-TERM** improvement in the crime situation.**

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Therefore, the Chamber reiterates that an integrated approach is certainly needed, based on better policing and an improved judicial system, as well as an improved social services delivery system and more focus on delivering an education curriculum that facilitates the holistic development of our nation's youth.

In our own recommendations to the upcoming National Budget 2012-2013, the Chamber re-emphasised the urgent need for

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Government to ensure that all relevant Ministries work together in fighting this scourge that plagues our nation. We have recommended that the Government put its resources into three major initiatives:

- Prisoner Rehabilitation**
- Youth Development, and**
- Crime Management**

Just as the effects of crime are widespread, so, too, are the causes – which range from

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problems within the family, to the increased use of drugs, to the rise of gangs and gang warfare; therefore the only way to effectively battle serious crime is to tackle it at all levels.

In addition to its obvious negative social impact, on a wider level, we cannot develop T&T effectively if we cannot combat crime.

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For yet another consecutive year, the category of Crime and Theft has been identified as the Number 1 most problematic factor for doing business in Trinidad and Tobago on the 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Report. We expect that this will not change in the 2012-2013 Report. This Chamber sees crime – both blue collar and white collar – as main deterrents to economic development and investment, as businesses are affected at all levels, from

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our international competitiveness to employers and employees.

Blue collar crime can lead to the loss of life, but other impacts include increased cost of security and provision for theft. In some cases productivity can be affected for those businesses that are in high-risk areas.

White collar crimes can directly impact government revenues and the long-term

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survival of companies, which could also affect economic performance. In some cases, there is also the impact on individuals who may lose hard-earned savings and investments because of fraud.

And while most of us are here today to hear about the Minister's plan to tackle the serious crimes that we see on a daily basis, we must make mention of these aspects of crime as they are equally important to

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battling the overall culture of crime which is threatening to take over our beloved nation.

We must remember, too, that while high-profile cases of violent crimes grab the headlines, there are several other crimes that occur on a daily basis. Traffic violations such as talking on a mobile phone while driving, speeding, or breaking the traffic lights all occur on a daily basis and are all against the law. The result is often the

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various road accidents we see, many of which are often fatal.

And while in some cases new laws may be required to address emerging problems, as was done with the Anti-Gang Legislation, simply adding more laws is not sufficient. Efforts must also be made by our security and law officers to enforce the existing ones which are being violated on a daily basis.

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With that said, I think we can all agree that crime on every level affects us all, and is therefore not just a “Government problem”.

This morning, we look forward to hearing the Minister’s plans for tackling crime – particularly the initiatives that will help drastically reduce our very high murder rate and gang activity.

However, we do acknowledge that the issue of crime is a multifaceted one and that there is no one or easy solution. As such, the

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Chamber gives our commitment to the new National Security Minister that we stand ready to play our part in the fight against crime, and we call on all of the members of our business community to stand with us to do the same.

I now hand you over to the Honourable Jack Warner, the Minister of National Security and our Feature Speaker this morning.

I thank you.