

**Greetings**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING**

**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

**Children's Phagwa Celebrations**

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

**Tunapuna Hindu School Grounds**

- President General of the Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha, Mr. Seegobin
- Secretary General, Mr. Maharaj
- .....
- .....
- Principals
- Teachers
- Parents
- Students
- Representatives of the Media

I am happy to share in the excitement that is children's Phagwa. It is always a good feeling to be among the youth and on the occasion of this joyous spring celebration, it is even more so.

The exuberance of the children here today certainly reflects the goodness of this season.

I must commend the Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha for its continued emphasis on improving the quality of education by providing enriching opportunities for its students. Today is another enjoyable learning experience for all participants. During Children's Phagwa, music, dance and drama collaborate to ensure effective learning. The importance of this collaboration is recognized by the Ministry of Education. Indeed, **Aesthetic Appreciation** is an **essential learning outcome** of our national curriculum.

- The National Curriculum for Visual and Performing Arts seeks to present the arts in a holistic and integrated manner. This is because The Ministry of Education understands the overall importance of the Arts to our society.
- Our vision for education in the Visual and Performing Arts embraces the arts as integral to the development and preservation of culture.
- At both the primary and secondary levels, art, music and drama are emphasized and students are encouraged to respond positively to their various forms.

- In fact, our students are expected to demonstrate understanding of the contribution of the arts to daily life, cultural identity and diversity.

The Phagwa celebrations today underscore the role of the art in defining and deepening human experience. This ancient practice serves to connect time and space, body and spirit, intellect and emotion. It is a vibrant example of the diverse artistic expressions in our twin-island Republic. It gives me pleasure to witness the harmony of music and drama as the children engage in Chowtal singing ([folk songs](#)), drumming and dancing. The drumming of the dholak ([small hand drum](#)) and the playful spraying of the abeer ([brightly dyed water](#)) give much pleasure to all participants.

**Join me in congratulating the Maha Sabha** for ensuring that this ancient cultural event is enjoyed and preserved through this celebration. **The Maha Sabha must also be complimented** for introducing Children's Phagwa since, I believe, the early 1980s. Isn't it true that Children's Phagwa is unique Trinidad...That there is no Children's Phagwa in India?

There are many lessons that can be learnt from Phagwa that are beneficial to our society. Some of these are explored in Social Studies classes.

- Phagwa celebrations symbolize goodness overcoming evil. Research reveals that it was the strong faith of the child Prahalal that protected him from the evil and murderous plans of the king.

- Phagwa also endorses the promotion of good health. As one article attests, the liquid dye known as Abeeir enters into the pores and has the effect of strengthening the ions in the body, adding health and beauty to it!
- Whatever the claims may be, we all agree that Phagwa is a time of good, clean, colourful fun. Mr. Sat Maharaj himself in a past interview explained that the colours at Phagwa represent the colours of spring.

The Ministry of Education continues to have a healthy, working relationship with the Maha Sabha. Together we continue to strive for excellence in education. The Ministry is mindful of the continued high performance of many Maha Sabha schools at both primary and secondary levels. We are also aware of the untiring work of direct stakeholders that results in maintaining such high standards. For this we at the Ministry applaud you and look forward to continued collaboration in the interest of our students and our society.

And today, in the festive spirit of Phagwa, let us all enjoy the celebrations!

Thank you.