

The Honourable Minister of Education Doctor

the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh press

conference speech 23rd June 2010 Loinsworth

Building St. Clair Ministry of Education 3:00pm

STATEMENT SEA RESULTS

Members of the media, a pleasant good afternoon and thank you all for attending this news conference. I wish to state this afternoon that the People's Partnership Government, our Prime Minister the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar and myself as Education Minister, have taken a decision to release the results of the Secondary Entrance Assessment exams of 2010 on Thursday, July 24, 2010 - one day ahead of the previously scheduled date of Friday July 25, 2010. Our decision is based solely on our promise of good governance that places a special emphasis and return to transparency and accountability at all level of Government.

With specific regard to the release of the SEA results, I wish to point out that it was the former PNM administration, under Education Ministers Hazel Manning and Esther Le Gendre, over the last eight years that had set the questionable precedence of taking the results of the SEA to the Cabinet first before releasing them to principals, students, their parents and the public an entire day after. It is our belief that in order to maintain the integrity and transparency of the process by which the SEA results are given to the public, there should be no avenue for possible contamination and pre-release of these results. We believe there is no reason whatsoever to take the results to Cabinet before releasing them to the public. We are of the view that Cabinet and the Government have nothing to do with the marking of the papers and the results at this stage. Our primary role is to ensure that the process and procedures for the exams are properly conducted and facilitated.

We in the People's Partnership's Government, are firmly committed to the best practice of transparency and integrity and we intend to ensure that there is no chance of leaking the results by any unnecessary action.

As such, I wish to announce to the public that tomorrow morning, Thursday July 24, 2010, from 9.00 a.m. the SEA results will be released to Principals of all Primary schools. All Principals are advised that the SEA results must be released at 9.00 a.m. to coordinate with the results given by text messages.

As Minister of Education, I was given a copy of these results an hour ago and I wish to state that they are in order for release.

These results will remain confidential until their release tomorrow morning.

I wish to state that the media will be advised tomorrow of the school the Education Minister intends to visit, which traditionally is the school or schools from which the top students come from.

However, let me take this opportunity to publicly congratulate every child who wrote the SEA this year, all 17,270 of the boys and girls throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

It was the UNC Administration, under our now Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, as Education Minister of 2000, who implemented the system of universal secondary education for all children and as a result of this, no child, will be left behind.

Your places in secondary schools throughout the country are guaranteed and this will ensure that you have the fundamental tool for every aspect of your future development - proper secondary school education.

At the tender ages of just 11 – 13 years you, the brilliant, beautiful children of this nation, have all undergone the amazing discipline, hard and diligent work that is routine for your exams, not to mention your emotional, mental and psychological stress.

For that task of enduring and completing the exams alone, you have proven, each and every child who sat the SEA, that you are model young citizens in the making, citizens who recognize the worth and necessity for hard work to achieve laudable goals towards making this country a better place.

The SEA exam is the first milestone of your educational and social lives that you must endure, and let it be a preparation and commitment for your continued progress academically and in every other way.

Always remember that the first journey towards success in life has been conquered by your sitting of the SEA exam. You all have already passed that test and have begun that journey positively.

To the parents of the children receiving their results tomorrow, I know this time was equally, if not more, unnerving and stressful for you. You too, should be congratulated for seeing your children through this milestone.

However, it will be remiss of me if I fail to address the very real fear of placement that parents more than anyone else endure and unwittingly put their children through the

stress themselves.

I know it's important for many that their children make it into the school of their first choice, but we must all acknowledge that this is simply a logistical impossibility.

However, I wish to remind parents that they must not be disappointed if their child does not pass for the schools of his or her first choice.

Remember, every school in this country offers the chance of equality for children and an equal opportunity to learn and develop. My intention is to enable and to facilitate all schools as near as possible for equality in excellence for learning.

It is up to a child to learn and do their best in these schools and it therefore becomes of paramount importance that children know from their parents that they can learn and develop into scholars or any goal their heart desires in any school.

Parents please recognize that a fundamental development element of self esteem that will determine your child's progress and success at the secondary school level will come from your reaction and your acceptance of their placement. Your recognition that your child did the best he or she could and therefore, has the ability to succeed in any school with proper parental and teacher's guidance, discipline and determination from you and the teachers. In this vein, I entreat you all to applaud your child's efforts tomorrow and celebrate their graduation to the secondary school system regardless of where they are placed.

Let me give the commitment at this point that as Minister of Education, I, led by the Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the People's Partnership Government, intend to improve the education system to the point where every school ensures our students the future of our nation, the best education and developmental opportunities available in a safe and productive, enabling learning environment.

To the Principals and Teachers who guided these students for those long important years of these children's lives, I say thank you and congratulations on your stellar contribution to the country's future leaders.

Without you, the students could not have succeeded, and please recognize that your role is to endorse them and congratulate them further tomorrow, as you continue to prepare them for life's journey of continuous learning and critical thinking.

Let me close by assuring all the SEA students, their parents and the general public that

the People's Partnership intends to deliver its promise of laptops for all the SEA students and this is currently being worked on at the moment.

So get a good night's rest and tomorrow be ready to celebrate the fruits of your hard labour.

Congratulations to all the students once more. You are all true success stories.

Thank You.