



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

REMARKS OF

Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh,

Minister of Education

at the

LAUNCH OF THE 2012

INTERNATIONAL SOCA MONARCH COMPETITIONS:

- *Digicel International Soca Monarch*
- *Play Whe Groovy Soca Monarch*
- *Flavorite Supreme Ice Cream National Schools Soca Monarch*

Monday 5th December, 2011

Salutations:

- Mr. William Munro, Chairman of Caribbean Prestige Foundation
- Mr. Gregory Fernandez, Special Advisor to the Chairman
- Cabinet colleagues
- Distinguished Soca artistes
- Other specially invited guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

A very pleasant good evening to all present here.

As I stand here tonight at the launch of what is without doubt, one of our country's biggest cultural events in modern times, I recall the words of American Author by Daniel Quinn who once said:

“Once you learn to discern the voice of Mother Culture humming in the background, telling her story over and over again to the people of your culture, you'll never stop being conscious of it. Wherever you go for the rest of your life, you'll be tempted to say to the people around you, 'How can you listen to this and not recognize it for what it is?’”

For 20 years now, Trinidad and Tobago has listened to the voice of our beautiful, unique and inspiring culture in the form of Soca. I want to pay a special tribute to the man who made its development possible—Mr. William Munro.

In 1990, when the calypso art form - now known as Soca- was being expressed in diverse ways, which were not being properly reflected in the traditional Calypso Monarch competition, Mr. Munro had the foresight to ensure that the younger generation of performers received a much needed outlet for the exposure of this new sound, and indeed, validation of their talents.

In the two decades since, he has ensured that the competition grew and improved, to the point where now, it stands as one of the Carnival's most internationally acclaimed events.

For that, our country is eternally grateful and this would most definitely enhance your reputation as a true patriot of our soil.

To all the artistes and other contributors of this great event, I want to congratulate each and every one of you for the tremendous level showmanship you have developed over these past 20 years for this competition, which consistently serves to remind our country, the Caribbean region and the world at large, that we are a people of amazing talent and abundant creativity.

As Minister of Education, I cannot underscore enough the major significance of the National Schools' Soca Monarch competition to nation's children and indeed, our education system.

In 2011, this event had 24 finalists, and was truly a national success, which boasted of the involvement of 45 schools throughout our country and 77 participants.

The promotion of the development of the music and other visual arts' and talents of our nation's children is quite in keeping with the Ministry of Education's new thrust to introduce holistic development of our students at the level of the school curriculum which we just completed a revision on.

Indeed, Mr. Munro, when you took the decision to introduce the National Schools' Soca Monarch Competition in our nation's primary and secondary schools so many years ago, it was based on the foresight and recognition that music programs in our schools of all genres, and visual arts programmes in general, go a tremendous distance in helping our children, communities and country in very real and substantial ways.

I therefore give the assurance here tonight that the Ministry of Education will continue to support this great venture in every possible way.

As I close, I must say that being in the presence of such a great pool of our country's musical talent impresses upon me the fact that music is a gift from God which society's leaders have a duty to nourish and cultivate if we are to ensure the social and cultural progress of our nation.

For two decades now, the Caribbean Prestige Foundation and you, Mr. Munro and you, the artistes have had the courage and conviction to stick to your dreams, hone your remarkable talents and believe in the power and inspiration of your beautiful music, and because of your dedicated efforts, our country today is poised to embark on a path where its leaders and citizens recognize the true worth of our culture, of which Soca music is such an important facet.

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, we have one of the most prosperous cultures in human history and we must continue to market it to the world.

It is therefore a proud moment tonight, that as we gather to launch the now trailblazing Soca Monarch Competitions for 2012, we once more recommit to the protection of our intangible cultural heritage and the continued dedication of our collective efforts to maintaining the continuity of our national culture as an essential base for enhancing our continued social and economical cohesion in the nation and its overall development and progress.

Indeed, it is the only way we can move forward culturally and in every other instance as a nation and a people.

I thank you.