

Dr. the Right Honourable Keith C. Mitchell
Address to the Nation
August 30, 2017

Fellow Grenadians, and friends of Grenada,

I am especially pleased to address you on the heels of another exciting and incident-free Spicemas celebration.

It was heartening to see the eclectic and vibrant mix of tourists, visiting friends, and citizens—all coming together to showcase our rich, diverse and unique Grenadian culture.

We commend the Spicemas Corporation for their stewardship of the season, despite the ongoing challenges that the events are faced with each year.

We are encouraged that in recent years, Spicemas is doing better at managing its affairs and meeting its commitments in a much timelier manner, to performers and other stakeholders alike. In fact, this year, the corporation was able to pay prize monies sometimes immediately after events—and this has traditionally not been the case.

I must pause here to address the debacle of the Panorama “non-event.”

I join in the shared disappointment of all pan-lovers, but most importantly, the dedicated men and women, especially the numerous young people who spent months preparing to showcase the sweet sounds of carnival. Your efforts are truly a labour of love, as you persevere year after year to ensure that as Grenadians, we do not lose this part of our rich cultural heritage.

To therefore not have had the opportunity to showcase your craft this year, is something for which we all must feel an abiding sense of disappointment and injustice.

As a Government, we have to investigate and address the situation with the resoluteness that it deserves.

To that end, Cabinet has appointed an independent two-man committee of Mr. Byron Campbell and Mr. Colin Dowe—two very well-known Grenadian cultural stalwarts—to investigate the events that led to the cancellation of panorama. They will be expected to present the findings within one month, so that the appropriate mechanisms can be put in place to prevent any similar occurrences in the future.

We assure the Nation that Government will act accordingly to ensure a just conclusion to this matter.

To all the performers, masqueraders, and especially the winners of the Spicemas events, I congratulate you all on behalf of the Government and People of Grenada. You deserve highest praise for the dedication you show to your craft, and for entertaining us so beautifully, and with true sportsmanship.

Brother and sisters,

Over the years, Spicemas has become known as one of the safest carnivals in our region, and our Government continues to appreciate all the locals and visitors alike who ensure that it remains that way.

As Minister of National Security, I am exceptionally pleased with the work of our security forces, led by our very diligent Commissioner of Police, Mr. Winston James.

Our men and women in uniform continue to uphold the highest standards of vigilance in the execution of their duties. As citizens, we are extremely grateful to them for their sacrifices in ensuring our safety and the security of our shores. In great measure, the work that they do is responsible for our reputation on the global stage. Tourism, culture and by extension economic development, are altogether dependent on the security of a nation.

As a Government, we will continue to provide the necessary resources and encouragement to our men and women in uniform to meet the high demands of their trade.

To all the visitors, including all our sons and daughters abroad who return home to celebrate with us—some of them year after year—we thank you for playing your part in national development. You give a significant boost to our local economy during the carnival season—and you do so with true Grenadian spirit and class.

It is because of your patronage that our vendors, restaurateurs, taxi drivers, and other specialized servicemen and women, continue to have an enhanced livelihood in August of each year.

While there is not yet an official count of the number of visitors to Grenada this carnival season, our tourism and aviation officials are preliminarily reporting that it was indeed a “bumper season.”

Sisters and brothers, now that the carnival season is firmly behind us, we focus our attention on another major feature of our calendar year—back to school.

In a few days, our Nation’s children will return to school, with the accustomed feelings of jubilation, anxiety and excitement.

Our dedicated educators too, will return to the classroom to work their magic, amidst all the challenges.

We wish them all the best for the new school year.

Government acknowledges that we can never do enough for education, but we are working tirelessly to ease the burden on parents, caregivers and educators each year.

Already this year, we have provided uniform and transportation allowances for needy students. Through the generous donations of our representatives, we have secured Book Bags for over 10,000 students across the different levels and socioeconomic spheres.

We have also upgraded our school book stock and are working to address critical infrastructural needs in schools where most needed.

We have also awarded dozens of new scholarships and other monetary assistance, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, to students who wish to pursue tertiary education locally or abroad.

We are also working to address the professional and other needs of our teachers. In the last several years, we have sought to regularize the statuses of many so that they can enjoy the benefits of the profession without having to worry about their future. We continue to regularize temporary teachers until we are confident that we have met the demands as far as the system can absorb.

So, as you embark on this new school year, may the bright Grenadian sun rise up to meet you, and may you know with deep and abiding certainty that you are living in the best country on earth, and that while your academic and professional needs are many and varied, your Government is working for you.

And so the future beckons.

Sisters and brothers, as we approach the dawn of another Grenadian morning, we recognize that there is much work to do and we are on duty.

We also recognize that in this new season, as we endeavour to serve you better before we come to you again seeking your support, we know that we must make some adjustments.

On the political front – only in the last week, our ruling party finalized the full list of caretakers to manage the political work going forward in this last period of the current term.

We continue to build on our successes; and to fine-tune our agenda to meet the needs of these modern times.

Our attitude going forward is based on the understanding of the need for continuity, while constantly dipping into the well of renewal.

We are confident that the next generation of Grenadian leadership is beginning to emerge under our guidance and influence.

Previously, we spoke about the pending retirements as MPs of brothers Elvin Nimrod and Roland Bhola.

Senator Brenda Hood as well, who has been a true and faithful servant of the party and the Grenadian people, and who has served as MP and Senator, is also retiring from Parliament.

This has been on the cards for the last several months -- and her final task was to see through the recent carnival season, as the Minister for Culture.

She will continue to lend her services as an Advisor to the Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture, Honourable Clarice Modeste.

In the context of renewal, she is being replaced in the immediate period as a Senator by Kate Lewis – a 35 year old now former teacher of St. Joseph’s Convent, St. Andrew’s, and who hails from Paradise, St Andrew’s. She has a track record of hard work, dedication to the youth, community service and academic excellence.

Lewis has been an educator throughout her adult life, and her time has now come for full national service.

Lewis will be the new Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry for Education and Human Resource Development.

In this context Senator Simon Stiell will be elevated to be the full Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, while the portfolio for Environment will be diverted back to its original place under the Ministry for Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, under the leadership of Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford.

With Honorable Bhola now moving out of representative politics and transitioning to lead the work of the New National Party– he will no longer be in the Ministry of Sports.

Minister Anthony Boatswain will therefore take over his portfolio as Minister for Sport – and he will continue to be assisted by Senator Pamela Moses, the Minister for Youth. The Ministry for Religious Affairs therefore, will now be under the Prime Minister’s Ministry.

Minister Oliver Joseph will also be modifying his ministerial portfolio in order to have more of a presence in his constituency of St. David’s—one of the largest and most demanding constituencies. He will retain his Government portfolio as Minister for Labour, while Cooperatives will now revert to him as well.

With a new and expanded administrative team and encouraging young leadership in the Ministry of Finance, the work of Economic Development is being consolidated within the department under my watch as the overall Minister for Finance and Economic Development.

As has been evident in the recent period – and as will become increasingly more evident in the coming period – we are beginning to engage more youth and more women in the leadership of the country.

The likes of Pamela Moses, Kate Lewis, and our sister Kindra Mathurine-Stewart are current evidence of this.

The young and vibrant Mrs. Kindra Mathurine-Stewart will lend her services as the Advisor to the Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs.

And we are not just replenishing at the top political levels, but at the lower levels as well, including the administration of governance.

Enthusiastic bright young people are returning home or contributing their services abroad, with an eagerness to serve and to make a difference—like Akima Paul, for example, who has recently agreed to be our non-resident Ambassador to the Holy See.

Our young people from all walks of life are showing that they are able, willing and ready to give back, and we must embrace them and facilitate them.

Sisters and brothers,

We have repeatedly spoken about the many successes of this administration, but we know that there are still many economic challenges to confront.

This rising tide is yet to lift everyone up. But make no mistake that this is the season of high tide, and this ship of hope sails purposefully.

Our commitment to those still untouched, is that we have every reason to keep moving.

Yes, there is reason to rejoice – but through the grace of God and the commitment of our people, we've got good news for you. We are far from finished!

In these next few years, we will bring unemployment down to the lowest levels we have seen since our independence; we will ensure that Grenada has the lowest rate of poverty in the Caribbean; we will introduce health care for all and reintroduce public pensions.

This Caribbean beacon that has been an impressive example for all will shine even brighter.

And so we cannot stop now. We cannot rest now. Together, we have to keep moving!

May God bless you – and may God bless these beautiful islands of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.