



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF FINANCE

For immediate release

August 12, 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

UNINFORMED EXPRESS EDITORIAL REGARDING LAND ACQUISITION FOR THE NEW AIRPORT TERMINAL IN TOBAGO

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Colm Imbert, MP, has taken note of an uninformed editorial in today's Express (August 12, 2022) which incorrectly claims that the Government has "*short-circuited*" the land acquisition process for the construction of the new airport terminal building in Tobago because the matter was before the court.

However, nothing could be further from the truth and in fact, the Government has painstakingly sought to negotiate compensation with the occupants for the acquisition of these particular lands for the last three (3) years without any resolution. It should be noted that in several instances, these lands were already acquired and paid for by the State many years ago. It should be emphasised that the total compensation being offered to the occupants of the lands is significantly more than is required under the Land Acquisition Act and the Government has raised the sum of \$300 million for land acquisition for the new airport terminal in Tobago, of which over \$200 million has already been paid to over 100 owners and/or occupants of lands required for the project.

This stalemate has stymied the construction of the critically needed new international airport terminal in Tobago for over a year and is costing millions of dollars in claims for delays, which are facts for which the Express clearly has no regard. It would appear that the Express is content for Tobago to remain underdeveloped in terms of air transport facilities.

However, the Government is committed to modernising the air transport infrastructure in Tobago, so that Tobago will keep pace with its tourism competitors in the Region, who are all upgrading their airports for the benefit of their citizens without being humbugged by political obstructionism. If the process of land acquisition continues to be obstructed, a new airport terminal will never be built, and Tobago will remain uncompetitive and lag behind in terms of aviation facilities.

Further, the exercise of possession yesterday was NOT before the court when it commenced, which is the false premise on which the Express editorial is based. The front page of the newspaper also falsely claims that the court granted an injunction to stop the land acquisition process.

This is simply untrue and it is hoped that the paper will be more responsible in future.

- END -

The Honourable Colm Imbert M.P.

Minister of Finance