



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
**MINISTRY OF FINANCE**

For immediate release

December 10, 2024

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MEDIA MISINFORMATION ON TOBAGO AIRPORT PROJECT**

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Colm Imbert, MP, has noted the media's complete avoidance of publishing documents in its possession to correct the misinformation in the public domain regarding a leaked Cabinet Note on the airport project in Tobago.

This suppression by the media of substantive evidence to the public smacks of deceit and runs counter to accepted press behaviour and standards.

Concrete examples of this deceit are illustrated in the deceptive editorial published in the Daily Express on Friday, December 6th, 2024. That editorial falsely accused the Minister of relying on dubious "*word of mouth*" evidence, falsely insinuated that the increase in the cost of the airport project was in the vicinity of \$500m, and questioned the airport's structural integrity, without a shred of evidence.

To debunk the half-truths, deception and outright lies in that editorial, the Minister of Finance held another press conference on December 6th, 2024, and produced documentary evidence of the structural integrity of the project to the media from a range of experts working on the project, such as:

- the specialist structural engineering consultants, KS&P, on the project, who were engaged by NIDCO, the executing agency for the project, to review the structural designs produced by the Contractor, CRCCCL, and
- the specialist international construction consultants, Gleeds, who were engaged by the Ministry of Finance, to seek its interest on the project.

***These letters (attached) confirmed strict adherence to the most up-to-date and rigorous international building codes on the project.***

However, not one of these letters was published by the media to the public to set the record straight and correct the misleading stories produced by the media earlier in the week.

Further, and more baffling, is the media's inability to properly and honestly utilise the information in the very Cabinet Note they relied on as support for their story on costs at the airport to inform the public of the actual cost of the project to date and the further funding being requested, especially when all of the relevant information to clear the air, was contained in the Note that reporters were brandishing at the press conferences held on the matter.

***The Express has overstated the cost of the airport project to the public by at least \$100 million and has refused to correct the error.***

The reasons for leaving that degree of misinformation in the public domain baffle and escape the Ministry.

The Cabinet Note clearly indicates the project's timeline, the challenges faced, the amendments to and phases of the project, the costs per fiscal year to date, the new requested funding to complete the project and the **JUSTIFICATIONS** for those requests. Any right-thinking journalist and editor would see the need to share this information with the public as part of its fourth estate role.

This is a malicious attempt to smear the new Tobago airport terminal, which, when completed, will be one of the most modern and finest airports in the Caribbean, untainted by the naked corruption that plagued the 2001 Piarco Airport project, over 20 years ago.

This is yellow journalism at its worst, made famous by Pulitzer and Hearst over 100 years ago. It uses lurid features, false information, malicious campaigns, and sensationalised news in newspapers to attract readers and increase circulation. It is to be condemned as having no place in Trinidad and Tobago.

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The Honourable Colm Imbert MP  
Minister of Finance