

COMMENTARY

Yes, we can make it if we try

THE EDITOR: As we anxiously look forward to the finance minister's presentation of the 2025-2026 budget, after all has been said and done, it is now all about revenue, expenditure and national priorities. This is the sum total of our expectations.

Today, however, I want to publicly express congratulation to three local enterprises/institutions, whatever we may wish to call them. Whatever their shortcomings, we should be justifiably proud as taxpayers of their success and recognition they are now enjoying, nationally and internationally.

- First Citizens Bank under the leadership of former chairman Anthony Smart and CEO Karen Darbasie.
- Caribbean Airlines under the leadership of former CEO Garvin Medera.
- Pan Trinbago under the leadership of Beverley Ramsey-Moore.

These three enterprises – all beneficiaries of some form of taxpayer assistance, all former victims of mismanagement, political interference and allegations of corruption – have now earned both national and international recognition.

While CAL continues to be dependent on taxpayers for its survival, it continues to enjoy international recognition as the best airline in the region.

FCB has made a remarkable recovery, earning unprecedented profits, whatever its shortcomings. And if there are in fact shortcomings, we should as taxpayers be proud of the excellent performance of our national bank. Ramsey-Moore has finally turned around the ailing, controversial and sometimes highly questionable Pan Trinbago, responsible for the management of our proud national instrument, from financial paralysis with a level of unprecedented management to financial stability.

It is now left for TUCO, the Bandleaders Association and most of our unproductive state enterprises to get in the success queue, bail out our new finance minister and our overburdened taxpayers, and give the newly elected government the opportunity to carefully prioritise its financial allocations in the national interest. As Black Stalin said, "We can make it if we try."

FERDIE FERREIRA
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Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, centre, talks to beneficiaries of prosthetic limbs at a ceremony on October 3 at the Diplomatic Centre, St Ann's. PHOTO COURTESY UNC

EOC supports Jaipur Foot Centre in TT Walking towards equality

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar that TT will soon establish a Jaipur Foot Artificial Limb Fitment Centre is a powerful statement of equity, partnership, and inclusion. It reflects a deep understanding that equality is not achieved through words alone, but through action that restores independence and dignity to people whose lives have been disrupted by disability.

The Jaipur Foot Organisation, known globally for its innovative and affordable prosthetic limbs, has transformed millions of lives. Bringing this model to our shores is a proud moment for TT, and a significant milestone for people with disabilities who will now have access to free, world-class prosthetic services right here at home.

This is more than a health project; it is a social justice initiative. It supports the right of every person to participate fully in society, regardless of physical ability. It gives amputees a chance not only to walk again, but to work, study, and live with confidence and dignity.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), we warmly commend the Prime Minister and her team for advancing this initiative, which directly aligns with our mandate to promote equality of opportunity for all citizens. Under the Equal Opportunity Act, "disability" is one of the seven protected status grounds, and the EOC continues to educate, advocate, and intervene to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, education, accommodation, and access to goods and services.



'When people with disabilities regain movement, they regain independence. They can return to work, support their families, and contribute their skills to national development'

The establishment of a permanent limb-fitment centre strengthens this vision. It reflects a tangible commitment to inclusion, ensuring that people with disabilities can access not just healthcare, but the means to rejoin the workforce, pursue education, and participate fully in their communities.

We must also recognise the far-reaching benefits of this project. Restoring mobility is not simply a medical outcome, it is an economic and emotional one. When people with disabilities regain movement, they regain independence. They can return to work, support their families, and contribute their skills to national development. This creates a ripple effect of empowerment and productivity that benefits the entire country.

Equally important is the partnership behind the project. The collaboration between the TT government, the government of India, and the Jaipur Foot Organisation

shows how international co-operation can advance local goals of equity and human development. It also underscores the importance of sustainability; training local technicians, transferring knowledge, and building a centre that can serve future generations.

At the EOC, we see this as part of a broader national effort to build a culture of inclusion. True equality means not only removing barriers but creating systems that actively support participation. In that sense, the Jaipur Foot Centre complements other ongoing efforts to make public spaces, workplaces, and schools more accessible to people with disabilities.

Employers, too, have an important role to play. As more people regain mobility through the use of artificial limbs, they should find open doors in the labour market, not closed ones. Inclusion at work benefits everyone, it brings diversity of thought, resilience, and per-

"When April 28 came, you raised your deyas high and called your leader home."

– PM Persad-Bissessar at Divali celebrations in Siparia



spective that strengthen organisations and communities alike.

In education, accessibility must go hand-in-hand with opportunity. Students with disabilities, whether physical or otherwise, deserve environments that support their full potential through inclusive facilities, adaptive technologies, and understanding peers and educators.

The establishment of the Jaipur Foot Centre is therefore not just a medical achievement; it is a moral and national one. It is a reminder that a just society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members. When we invest in people's dignity, we invest in the strength and future of our nation.

The Equal Opportunity Commission congratulates Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the government, and all partners involved in making this initiative a reality. It is a remarkable stride toward equality, empowerment, and hope.

Together, let us continue to build a TT where everyone, regardless of physical ability, has the opportunity to live, learn, work, and thrive.

Let us celebrate our progress, acknowledge our challenges and take concrete steps to ensure that every citizen of TT has the chance to learn, to grow, and to contribute.

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