



LAW ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MEDIA RELEASE

The Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago (LATT) views with great concern recent comments made on political platforms regarding proceedings which are currently engaging the attention of the Court of Appeal. Matters engaging the attention of a Court ought not to be the subject matter of public debates, discussions or comments. The Court should be allowed to make its decision uninfluenced by such discourse and, certainly, uninfluenced by the views or comments of politicians.

The LATT knows that verbal sparring between political contenders is quite common and is likely to be more energetic during an election season when no effort is likely to be spared by contenders seeking to gain an advantage over their opponents. What is troubling to the LATT, however, is the apparent lack of concern displayed by those offering themselves to govern for the impact on the governed of encouraging the belief that our Nation's Judiciary is not impartial. This is a dangerous development for which we are not grateful.

An unfounded claim that the Court has ruled in one side's favour has been answered by a direct insinuation from the other side that the Judiciary is in cahoots with the maker of the unfounded claim. Not so long ago, a Minister of Government unapologetically insinuated that a judge's ruling on a serious matter of State overreach had been the product of some personal relationship between the judge and the party complaining of the overreach. Politicians must know that unwarranted attacks on the independence of the Judiciary sow doubts in the minds of their followers about the integrity of our judicial system: doubts which may not be easy to remove.

There are, of course, laws which proscribe unjustified, unsubstantiated attacks on the independence of the Judiciary. However, the spectacle of hauling Members of Parliament before the Courts to account for possible transgressions of these laws may do more harm than good.

The Judiciary appears to have considered the possible implications of enforcing these laws and has decided that it may better serve the Nation's interests simply to endure these unwarranted attacks. The Judiciary, however, must not be the only body which places the interests of our Nation first.

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