



**INDUSTRIAL COURT
of Trinidad and Tobago**

Address

by

**Her Honour Mrs. Heather Seale
the President of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago**

**at the Special Sitting of
the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago
to mark the Opening of the 2026/2027 Law Term**

Wednesday 16th September, 2026

Industrial Court Building
First Court Room, Ground Floor
Cor. Queen & St. Vincent Streets
Port of Spain, Trinidad W.I.
Wednesday 16th September, 2026

Earlier this year I spoke at a forum at which I addressed the VUCAH environment as it relates to the workplace. The term VUCAH as you may know, describes an environment which is volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and hyper-connected.¹ That is an accurate description of the context within which organisations presently operate. A technological development may alter established jobs. A cyber incident may disrupt operations-we are well aware of this having suffered an attack on our website. A complaint may circulate beyond the workplace in minutes. A shift in demand may require rapid adjustment. A public institution may be expected to deliver more responsive service with limited resources. An employer, including courts may have to balance cost, output, public expectation, employee wellbeing, legal risk and industrial stability, all at the same time. I pointed to the example of the many seafarers who were stuck in the Strait of Hormuz, to show that an unanticipated conflict may turn what was a routine workday into an unpredictable, seemingly unending traumatic event.

The VUCAH environment points to the need to pay greater attention to the psychosocial working environment. ILO publication 'The psychosocial working environment Global developments and pathways for action'² reports that:-

“According to the latest estimates released by the ILO for the first time in the global report the psychosocial working environment: Global developments and pathways for action psychosocial risk factors are responsible for more than 840,000 deaths annually due to associated cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders.

These risks also lead to nearly 45 million disability adjusted life years (DALYs) lost each year. The combined impact of cardiovascular disease and mental disorders associated with psychosocial risk factors is estimated to result in 1.37 per cent of global GDP lost annually.”

In the VUCAH environment, employers and trade unions may well have to place more emphasis on the provision of services offered in Employee Assistance Programmes. Of four hundred and seventy-three collective agreements registered in the Industrial Court between 2021 and up to June 2026, sixty-five of those collective agreements included a clause covering EAP. In some of instances, there were no concrete provisions, merely an undertaking to discuss the EAP.

Members Demitting Office in 2025/2026

Six Members demitted office during the 2025/2026 period. Three of them left in November 2025, namely His Honour Mr. Lawrence Achong, former Chairman of the Essential

¹ <https://www.beverlylandais.co.uk/blog/how-to-thrive-in-a-vucah-world>

² 28 April 2026 – World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Services Division, His Honour Mr. Vincent Cabrera who also sat in the Essential Services Division and from the General Services Division, Her Honour Mrs. Wendy Ali, now the Honourable Madame Justice who has joined the Judiciary.

His Honour Mr. Achong rendered over twenty years' service to the Court and much more than that to the field of industrial relations in various capacities, including that of Minister of Labour. He features in the jurisprudence of this Court, not only as a Judge of the Court but also in his capacity as Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, where he was the successful Applicant in a Mareva injunction brought in his capacity as Minister in the matter of the *Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (on behalf of himself and all hourly and weekly rated workers/former workers of Carlisle Tyre and Rubber (Free Zone) Limited* **AND** *Carlisle Tyre and Rubber (Free Zone) Limited*³ By virtue of his office as Chairman of the Essential Services Division, he was Chairman of the Special Tribunal. He also served as a Conciliator for a number of years.

His Honour Mr. Cabrera served the Court for just over six years. Prior to joining the Court he was a member of the Trade Union movement with extensive experience in industrial relations. He served as President of the Banking Insurance and General Workers Union for thirty-four years.

The Honourable Madam Justice Wendy Ali, an experienced attorney at law, served in the Essential Services Division for one year and then in the General Services Division for just over five years. She brought to the Court vast experience in law and in industrial relations from a managerial perspective. Just before joining the Court, she was Chief Executive Officer of the North West Regional Health Authority. She brought to the Court a sense of camaraderie and some very admirable culinary skills which were often on display in our Wednesday lunchtime meetings in the common room.

In May and June, respectively, Their Honours Aberdeen and Rousseau demitted office. They both sat in the General Services Division of the Court. Taken together, their service amounts to over fifty years, as His Honour Mr. Aberdeen completed 28 years in May this year, and His Honour Mr. Rousseau served the Court for over twenty-three years. Their Honours Aberdeen and Rousseau, like His Honour Cabrera, were members of the Trade Union Movement. They had vast experience in industrial relations prior to joining the Court. His Honour Mr. Aberdeen served as President of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union prior to joining the Court. He was a very experienced Conciliator. Their

³ Dated March 5, 2004.

contribution to the Court's jurisprudence also predated their appointments to the Court as they often appeared as advocates for their respective Unions.

On May 17, 2026, the Court suffered a body blow by the untimely passing of Her Honour Ms. Bindimattie Mahabir. Ms. Mahabir was in her twenty-sixth year as a Member of the Industrial Court. She was an experienced and dedicated Conciliator and Judge, who rendered yeoman service to the Court. Some of her skills as a Conciliator were honed in the Ministry of Labour where she worked for many years prior to joining the Court. Many of her judgments will continue to be cited well into the future. May her soul continue to rest in peace. She will long be remembered.

The Industrial Court owes a debt of gratitude to all of our brothers and sisters who demitted office in the year 2025/2026.

Appointments to the Court

I welcome to the Bench, two new Judges, Their Honours Mr. Adrian Darmanie and Ms. Ashti Sookhan. They have both been appointed to the General Services Division effective March 2026. His Honour Mr. Darmanie is a retired Senior Magistrate. Her Honour Ms. Sookhan is an attorney at law with a background in industrial relations. She joins the Court from the Ministry of Labour. They have both been sitting since April and we look forward to their continued contribution to our jurisprudence.

Appointments under section 4 (9) of the *Industrial Relations Act*, Chapter 88:01.

Section 4 (9) of the *Industrial Relations Act*, provides for a member of the Court, whose term has expired to continue in office for such period after the end of his term. This is done with the permission of the President of Trinidad and Tobago acting in accordance with the recommendation of the President of the Court. This continuation in office, often referred to as being on extension, enables a Member during that period to deliver judgment or to do any other thing in relation to proceedings that were commenced before the term of office expired. Therefore, during this period a Member continues to hear part-heard matters as distinct from new matters and also writes judgments. In my twenty-two years at the Court, this section has been used not infrequently by Presidents. It allows the Court to continue to operate in circumstances where appointments have come to an end or are soon ending and no re-appointments or new appointments have been made.

There may be some misunderstanding about this section of the Act. It is not designed as a benefit for Judges, although it may provide a buffer in certain cases between the end of one appointment and another. Also, it may well cushion the effects of the end of

an appointment by delaying it for such period as may be recommended and approved. However, any recommendation made for a Member to continue in office after his term has expired is based on the fact that the Judge has outstanding judgments to complete and/or is engaged in part-heard matters.

There is also some angst, it would seem, among certain of our stakeholders concerning Judges who have been allowed to continue in office beyond the end of their term and who may have left outstanding judgments on their departure. This is understandable. I agree it is not ideal. However, in most cases in the General Services Division and in the Essential Services Division, section 7(5) of the IRA allows for the remaining Judge(s) of the panel to deliver judgment. Where there is no remaining Judge, there is no choice but to have the matter heard *de novo*. There have been instances where faced with the prospect of a new trial both parties have agreed to settle the matter.

The Special Tribunal poses a challenge in cases where the Chairman of the Essential Services Division who is also the Chairman of the Tribunal demits office and leaves outstanding judgments in matters which he has chaired. Neither the IRA, nor the *Civil Service Act*, Chapter 23:01, under which the Special Tribunal is established has made express provision for such a situation. It is my understanding that in the past, once a Chairman demitted office, any matter in which there was a reserved judgment or was part-heard, would trigger a rehearing. I consider this to be a situation in urgent need of legislative attention. I see no good reason why matters in the Special Tribunal should be treated differently from those in the General Services Division and the Essential Services Division when it comes to the remaining Judges continuing the matter as provided for in section 7(5) of the IRA.

Arguably, section 4 (2) (C) of the IRA implicitly provides for such treatment. It states in so far as is relevant that:-

“The Special Tribunal established by the Civil Service Act, “... shall consist of the Chairman of the Essential Services Division and two other members of that Division selected by him, and shall hear and determine disputes arising in the Civil Service, the Police Service, the Fire Service, the Prison Service, the Teaching Service, the Supplemental Police and the Central Bank as if those disputes arose in essential services”.

Where a dispute arises in the Essential Services Division as in the General Services Division, section 7 (5) applies which allows for the continuation of the matter with the remaining Judges.

It is also my view that the powers under section 4 (9) which allow the President of the Republic to allow a member to continue in office on the recommendation of the President

of the Court, after the expiration of his term, could also be invoked in this regard. However, because the Court operates oftentimes in a very heavily charged industrial relations climate, the most prudent course may be a simple change in the *Civil Service Act*.

Terms and Conditions of Service for Members of the Court

Based on section 5 (3) of the IRA, the salary and allowances payable to a Judge of the Court appointed, other than under section 4(3) (a) (i), and his other terms of service shall not be altered to his disadvantage after his appointment. Judges are entitled to certain benefits payable annually, such as the Travel Grant. Therefore, if the Court is unable to pay Judges their annual entitlement as set out in their terms and conditions of service, a question may well arise as to whether the Court is running afoul of section 5 (3).

Pensions

The *Industrial Court (Pensions and Gratuities of Members) Regulations* made under the *Industrial Relations Act*, govern the pensions arrangements of Members of the Court. In recent years there has been a delay in the payment of gratuity to Judges when they demit office. In cases where Judges have been reappointed, there is also a delay in the payment of their gratuity for their completed term of appointment. The long established practice at the Court has been to pay Judges, who qualify, the gratuity owed to them after the expiration of each completed term of office. Judges who continued to serve after qualifying for a pension, were also paid a gratuity for their service thereafter for each completed term.

Not only has there been a delay in payment but further, there has been no official communication to the Registrar or to the Judges regarding the reason(s) for such delay, in spite of repeated enquiries.

We urge the competent authorities to address this matter urgently. Such undue delay may be viewed as nonpayment of a benefit to which a Judge is entitled, and contrary to the earlier referred to section 5(3).

Perhaps the time has come for a comprehensive review of the Regulations to, among other things, improve their clarity, and also to provide enhanced benefits to Members.

THE WORK OF THE COURT 2025/2026

The Court conducted hearings during the year in three locations, at our Courts in Port of Spain and in San Fernando and in Tobago at the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago. Our matters are mainly heard in-person, except for our Case Management Conferences and Mentions and Reports (status updates) which are virtual hearings.

However, this year the Court held at least nine hybrid sittings, including one of the Tobago matters heard in August. Parties are now able to make an application to the Court for a hybrid sitting in cases where for any reason such as, incapacity of the worker, the remote location of the Worker or of a witness in a matter, including an expert witness, the individual is unable to attend Court in person. The Court will entertain such application, hear both parties and once granted, have that person appear virtually.

The hearings in Tobago were held during the week beginning August 3rd to August 7th, 2026. The Court fixed nine (9) matters for hearing, eleven (11) for conciliation and four (4) for case management (Mention and Reports). Of those nine (9) matters, three (3) were disposed of by way of oral judgments; oral evidence was completed in one (1) and directions were given for written submissions, after which the judgment would be reserved; one (1) was set for continuation of hearing; three (3) were given new dates for hearing, and one (1) was fixed for Mention and Report as parties were in bilateral talks. The parties have since reported a settlement and filed their terms of settlement.

Two of the matters set for Conciliation were adjourned upon application of one of the parties; one was settled in principle; one was settled bi-laterally, one (1) was dismissed since the RRCB indicated that the worker was not a member in good standing, two (2) were fixed for hearings and the others were set for further conciliation or Mention and Report.

I thank the Honourable Chief Justice, for facilitating our sittings especially at a time when the Judiciary was experiencing its own challenges with accommodation at its Court in Tobago. We are truly grateful.

The Court also extends its gratitude to all of the parties and their representatives who contributed to the success of the sittings at what is normally vacation time.

We commend our Judges who also gave up time during their vacation and members of staff who worked tirelessly, selflessly and efficiently to ensure the smooth-working of our Tobago sessions.

We look forward to the realization of the Industrial Court in Tobago in the near future.

Statistics

During the period **15th September 2025 to 14th September 2026**, **876** new cases were filed at the Industrial Court, **105**, cases more than the same period in 2024/2025 which recorded **771** cases. The Court disposed of **1014** matters this year, **160** more than the **854** matters disposed of for the same period in 2024/2025. The clearance rate during the period 2025/2026 is **115.75%**, which is **4.98%** percentage points higher than the period 2024/2025 when the clearance rate was **110.77%**. A clearance rate of around 100% or higher, means the Court is able to resolve at least as many cases as are filed. It does not measure the backlog of cases.

During the year in review the Court delivered **304** Judgments; **386** cases were withdrawn, **216** matters were settled through conciliation and bilateral process and **108** matters were dismissed for reasons which include:

- Lack of jurisdiction by the Court in matters where the Registration Recognition and Certification Board (RRCB) determined that the worker was not a member in good standing and/or opined that the person was not worker within section 2 (3) (e) of the IRA;
- Failure of both parties to a dispute to appear at hearing of the matter;
- Undue delay by a party in adhering to the Court's orders to file its Evidence and Arguments and witness statements.

Of the total number of disputes filed at the Court for 2025/2026, in both the General and Essential Services Division, Trade Disputes remain the largest number of matters filed, totaling **759**, followed by **39** disputes under the *Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act* Chapter 88:13; **22** Industrial Relations Offences and **19** Occupational Safety and Health Complaints under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act*, 88: 08.

The Industrial Court Online Network Services (ICONS) Project

The Court continues to work on the Industrial Court Online Network Services (ICONS) project. The project is still in a relatively early stage. A Committee of Judges, the Court Administrator, the Registrar and staff have been overseeing this project. The data migration stage is well underway. Data is being transferred from the old database, Judicial Enforcement Management System (JEMS) to the new proposed database, ICONS. This stage includes Project Initiation and Management; Case Record Migration; Document and Evidence Management; Case workflow; Scheduling and Calendaring; e-filing, user acceptance testing, stakeholders engagement, Training and Project Closure. It is expected that this project will be well advanced by December 2026.

Upon its successful completion, the Court is expected to derive operational improvement through an increase in automated workflows, and reduced manual processes. It will also include faster access to data and case file information. Additional staff will be needed for the Information Technology Unit for the maintenance of the new software when installed and its operationalization. At the appropriate time we will be engaging our stakeholders.

The Warehouse Project which we had hoped to be fully operational by the end of 2025 hit a snag. The management of the facility at tradezone where our warehouse is located had to install steel beams in the ceiling as reinforcement for the other tenants at the facility. This has now been completed and all the shelving that was removed to facilitate this project has been reinstalled as well as the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tracking equipment. In addition, cameras have been installed at the facility. All the boxes and documents that were located at the old facility have now been moved to the new location.

Replacing the old boxes and labelling them to facilitate RFID tracking has to be undertaken. All documents that need to be archived will be stored at the warehouse. This is a relatively big project that will require funding and staffing. We anticipate that the initial stage can be handled as a short term project. When the warehouse is fully functional the Court estimates that it will require, one (1) Records Manager I; one (1) Records Officer, one (1) Business Operations Assistant I, one (1) Office Support Assistant and one (1) Driver/Courier. We hope to continue apace in 2026/2027.

Staffing

The Service Commissions Department has made a number of appointments during this year. The posts filled by appointment or promotion were- Research Officer; Statistical Officer II; Accounting Executive; Auditing Assistant; Accounting Assistant and five posts of Orderly. We congratulate them all.

Court Reporting

However, the Court continues to experience critical shortages in key areas, in particular, in the Reporting Section and among Secretarial staff. All of the posts of Verbatim Reporter I and II remain vacant. The gap continues to be filled by a combination of acting Verbatim Reporters/Service Providers, many of whom work on a part-time basis and are drawn from retired Verbatim Reporters. The CAT Reporting side is in a much healthier state as most of those contract positions are filled.

I have highlighted the Reporting section mainly because it has a direct impact on the delivery of our written judgments. I have also observed a growing trend by practitioners for requests for transcripts to facilitate their written closing submissions, changes in

attorneys at law, etc. While it may be possible to facilitate such requests with a full complement of staff, it places immense pressure on the Reporters given our current staffing levels. Priority will continue to be given to the provision of transcripts in cases of appeals and in completed cases where judgment has been reserved.

Secretarial Support Staff

There have been no appointments among Clerk Stenographers during the year. They perform the critical Secretarial role. As a result, the Court is in dire need of Secretarial support for Judges. There are three persons performing the duties of Secretary to the Judges. Two of them support seven Judges and one is assigned to six Judges. The Secretary to the vice-President will be retiring soon which will add an additional burden. The Court may have to resort to contract employment to improve this unhappy situation.

Registry/Court Clerks

We continue to await the decision of Cabinet with respect to the creation of Court Clerks. They already perform a specialized function. The Court is seeking to properly compensate them for their excellent work and also to bring about greater stability in Registry personnel which would avert the need to use On the Job trainees in that area. Trainees are attached to the Court for two years and usually leave after their stint, just when they are becoming proficient. This has been affecting the efficiency of the Registry as there is need for constant training and retraining. This is not intended to knock the OJT initiative which is very useful and in many instances we rely on our OJTs. They have produced excellent work, especially in the IT Department.

The Library

The Library of the Industrial Court has served as the institutional memory of this Court — the repository through which its jurisprudence is preserved, organised and made accessible to the Bench, the legal profession, and the public it ultimately serves.

The Library's judgments collection comprises decisions delivered by the Industrial Court, together with related judgments from the High Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. During the review period, 237 new judgments were added to the collection, drawn from all four sources.

Mrs. Janice Jhinkoo-Mahabir, Librarian II and Ms. Sandy Lall, Librarian I, attended the Caribbean Association of Law Libraries (CARALL) 40th Conference and AGM on 27-30 July 2026. At the Association's Gala Dinner and Awards ceremony on 29 July, Mrs. Jhinkoo-Mahabir, was awarded a CARALL Service Award and the Spirit of CARALL 40th

Anniversary Award (First Recipient of this award) for her dedication and outstanding service in advancing law librarianship across the Caribbean. We applaud her and can testify to her excellent work.

Because the Library staff are the staff of NALIS, the Court does not exercise control over their appointments etc. Therefore, as has been our experience in the past, Librarians like Mrs. Jhinkoo-Mahabir who serve at the Court with distinction, after becoming fully proficient and experienced as Law Librarians, are subject to be reassigned outside of the Court, leaving a void in the Court and also creating a loss of specialised expertise to the law library fraternity. This is a situation which, in my view, should be avoided as far as possible and should be addressed.

Legal Officers

Our two Legal Officers are spread thin. They support the President and the Judges with legal research. In addition, they draft and review contracts, review Court Orders and attend Case Management Conferences. One Legal Officer serves as the Designated Officer for requests under the FOIA, while the other is the Alternate Officer. They serve on the Court's Disposal Committee, the Procurement and Disposal Advisory Committee and the Occupational Safety and Health Committee. They liaise with the Solicitor General's Department in Court, such as judicial review proceedings involving the Court. The time is overdue for a Legal Department in the Court which would comprise of a Senior Legal Officer, a Legal Officer II and two Legal or Legal Research Officers I.

Office of Economic and Industrial Research

The Office of Economic and Industrial Research (OEIR) was established by the section 82 of the IRA. Under the provisions of the Act, the OEIR is responsible for providing information collected and the results of research conducted, to any person, trade union or other organizations desirous of obtaining it. In accordance with the Act, the functions of the office are to collect and compile information in accordance with the directives of the Court which may assist the Court in the exercise of its powers and functions under the Act; to keep information as collected and compiled up to date and to carry out research in respect of such matters as the Court may direct. The Office serves as the repository of Collective Agreements.

The Office performs a number of analyses including; Analysis of Wages and Salaries extracted from registered Collective Agreements including Analysis of Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) extracted from registered Collective Agreements. It also prepares Research Notes to assist Judges in their deliberations on matters before the Court and also for the benefit of parties.

Communications

Our lone Communications Officer is overstretched. From time to time she is assisted by an OJT. She willingly functions also as our Protocol Officer. A tall task indeed. The Court intends to address this position in the coming year.

Institutional Strengthening

This year the Court in conjunction with the ILO held a two-day Conciliation Training Seminar for Judges, the Registrar and Assistant Registrar. It was facilitated by Pablo Arellano, Regional Specialist for Latin America and the Caribbean in Labour Relations and Social Dialogue and Ms, Nancy Varela, Social Dialogue and Labour Administration Specialist, ILO Decent Work Team and Office of the Caribbean. It was very well received and Judges are eager to put their training into practice during the coming term.

The Court thanks the Director of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office of the Caribbean, Dr. Musabayana and Mr. Arellano and Ms. Varela for their continued support in the area of training.

Improving Access to Labour Justice

On August 12, 2026, at the invitation of the ILO's Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, His Honour Mr. Herbert Soverall, Vice-President, represented the Court in an on-line regional knowledge exchange session on labour dispute prevention and resolution systems aimed at improving access to labour justice. He joined Her Honour Mrs. Indira Demeritte-Francis, President of the Industrial Tribunal of the Bahamas, and Ms. Nazira Ann UC Myles, Chairperson of the Labour Complaints Tribunal of Belize, to share their respective institutional experiences, processes and approaches to labour dispute prevention and resolution. Again, I express the Court's appreciation to Mr. Pablo Arellano, Senior Social Dialogue and Labour Relations Specialist at the ILO Regional Office for the Americas and Ms. Nancy Varela, Social Dialogue and Labour Administration Specialist at the ILO Caribbean Office, for hosting these important sessions.

In this year, with the assistance of the JEITT, the Court will provide training in Unconscious Bias and Judicial Ethics as well as in Judgment writing.

By way of further enhancing the performance of our Bench, the Court will continue to standardize some of our practices, including the grant of adjournments, provide guidelines for effective case management, guidelines for the conduct of hybrid hearings as well as guidelines for the standardization and formatting of the Court's judgments.

I intend to engage the Judges on establishing key performance indicators for the Court as a whole and for Judges individually.

Public Education

When we reflect on the mandate of the Industrial Court, our core function of adjudication is only part of the story. Equal to our responsibility inside the courtroom is our duty to foster understanding and build trust; the need to ensure that the public understands who we are, what we do and how our labour dispute resolution processes work. Over this past term, we have continued this mission which was accelerated during our diamond jubilee year, to actively step beyond our judicial chambers to engage directly with our stakeholders and the wider public.

In October last year, the Court hosted an information booth at the JTUM/NATUC Trade Union Fair at the Brian Lara Promenade. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect directly with the public, workers and trade union members to share our history, explain our core functions, guide them on how they can access labour justice and emphasize the Court's vital role in maintaining industrial peace. I commend our trade union partners for driving this initiative, and I encourage them to keep powering these essential educational efforts.

We have also made an intentional investment in our youth. From inspiring future professionals at Barrackpore East Secondary School's Career Day, attended by the Registrar, Mr. Swan, to hosting educational visits right here at the Court, and providing hands-on work opportunities for secondary students through initiatives like the St. Francois Girls' College World of Work Programme. At the tertiary level, we welcomed interns from the Ministry of Culture and Community Development's Trailblazers Undergraduate Programme as well as from the Hugh Wooding Law School.

Additionally, our partnership with the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-Operative Studies to facilitate practical Moot Court sessions, which were conducted in December last year, has given students an invaluable, real-world window into the Court's legal proceedings. As we have done in the past, the Court also facilitated moots for the Employers' Solution Centre.

Infrastructure

As I mentioned last year, the Court has been occupying this building since 1997. The two elevators were installed at the inception. They were earmarked for replacement at least 2 years ago. However, there was a delay in procurement, not occasioned by funding, I

must add. One elevator has been completely unserviceable for over a year. The lone elevator that was in operation also stopped working last year for roughly four months. It is now back in service. The replacement of both elevators commenced earlier this month, starting with the non-functioning elevator. When work on that elevator is complete and it meets all the necessary approvals and becomes operational, work on the second elevator will begin.

Apart from the elevators the entire building is in need of refurbishment and upgrade. The dome has been leaking for some time and we would be happy to have our clock working again. I need only echo the sentiments of the Honourable the Chief Justice at the commemoration opening of the Supreme Court last week, regarding our need for the money.

We also need additional space. We look forward to suitable premises being found for the relocation of the RRCB in this term.

VOL II OF the COURT'S Law Report

Very high on list of priorities for our diamond jubilee year was publication of the Second Volume of the Court's law Reports which has been stalled since 2014, mainly because of a lack of funding. We are close to the finish line in the publication of our second Volume. We await necessary releases of funds, in the next week or so for its completion. The Registrar and Assistant Registrar are working closely with the Budget Division in this regard. Volume II will be in digital format mainly, with a limited number of printed copies. At the launch of the volume, which we had hoped would have coincided with today's sitting, details for obtaining digital copies will be forthcoming.

Thereafter, the Court will appoint an Editorial Committee for preparation of our third Volume.

Freedom of Information Requests

The Court is quite used to requests for information under the *Freedom of Information Act*, Chapter 22:02 (FOIA). The Court generally responds to these requests within the thirty-day time frame stipulated by section 15 of the FOIA and is committed to continuing to do so, as far as possible. However, the information sought in some requests requires legal advice. In any such case, the Registrar is directed to obtain the necessary advice. The applicant is informed and agreement sought to extend the deadline. The Court will continue to adopt this approach only as necessary.

Activities in commemoration of the Court's Diamond Jubilee

In last year's Address, I mentioned that among the activities planned in commemoration of our diamond jubilee was an awards function for Judges and staff, to show the Court's appreciation for their service over the years. I am pleased to say that the Court held its awards ceremony at the Government Plaza Auditorium on 18th December, at which a total of 39 Judges and Members of staff were recognized for over 15 years of service to the Court.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI seems certain to be a part of the future of the world of work and industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago, from AI hallucinations, which have already made their way into local courts to AI Armageddon. Until our laws provide specifically for the use of AI, employers and Unions would be well advised to have policies and collective agreements which govern its use at work.

Following in the footsteps of the Caribbean Court of Justice in 2025 and the Judiciary in 2026, the Court intends work toward issuing a Practice Direction on the permissible use of Generative Artificial Intelligence ('GenAI') tools by attorneys at law, industrial relations practitioners, parties, witnesses, self-represented persons, and other court users in proceedings before the Industrial Court.

I end on this note.

Conclusion

I thank you all for joining us in person and those who have joined us online, listened on the radio or followed the television broadcast on TV6 or the Court's You tube Channel. Special thanks to our Sign Language Interpreter. I thank our three Judges, Their Honours, Bartlett-Alleyne, Indarsingh and Mohammed for their invocation.

I also thank our Sound Specialists and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Special thanks to the tireless efforts of those members of staff who have made yet another Special Sitting a success. I know it was no easy task.

The Court now stands adjourned to 9.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Mrs. Heather Seale
President, Industrial Court
September 16, 2026