

Technology to further our tradition of creativity & innovation

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On this day, April 21st, we come together to celebrate the United Nations World Creativity and Innovation Day. Officially recognised as a global occasion, this day emphasises the essential role of imagination and progressive thinking in cultivating human growth and advancement, at both personal and collective levels. The inspiring theme for 2023, "Step Out and Innovate," invites us all to break boundaries and explore new horizons.

Our vibrant nation of Trinidad and Tobago, proudly lays claim to the invention of the steelpan - the last significant musical innovation of the 20th century. This unique instrument is a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of our country's people, who transformed discarded oil drums into melodious percussion instruments. The steelpan's creation showcases the innovative spirit that thrives within the heart of Trinidad and Tobago's culture, demonstrating how the fusion of artistic expression and resourceful thinking can give birth to a timeless and globally celebrated musical treasure.



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Trinidad and Tobago, renowned for its rich cultural tapestry and innovative spirit, evident in the many talented artists and creators hailing from this vibrant nation. We take pride in the contributions made by our creative luminaries, such as V.S. Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Boscoe Holder, Winston Duke, Hazel Scott, Sundar Popo, Carlisle Chang, Heather Headley, Stephen Bennett, Joanne Sewlal, Calypso Rose, Cecilia Salazar, Machel Montano, George Moon Sammy, Barbara Hull, and Drupatee Ramgoonai, among others.

These trailblazers have excelled in diverse fields such as literature, acting, visual arts, and music, including the steelpan, calypso, soca, chutney, and the art of limbo. As we celebrate the United Nations World Creativity and Innovation Day, we honour our heritage of ingenuity and artistic prowess, and the remarkable achievements of our nation's gifted individuals and as country, we look forward to the future.

In today's rapidly evolving world, digital transformation is taking centre-stage, revolutionising how we live and work in Trinidad and Tobago. It is essential that we recognise and harness the power of technology to fuel our journey towards diversified and sustainable growth. At the heart of this digital revolution, lies the creativity and relentless pursuit of improvement, effectiveness, and efficiency.

By embracing these technological advancements, we can unlock a world of innovative solutions, creativity, and fresh ideas, leading to a positive feedback loop that nurtures even more creativity and value.

The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) contribute significantly to the global economy. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) revealed in their 2022 Creative Economy Outlook, that creative goods accounted for US\$524 million in global exports in 2020, while creative services exports reached a staggering US\$1.1 trillion.

Focusing on Trinidad and Tobago, Creative TT - a state enterprise operating under the Ministry of Trade and Industry - reported that the local music industry alone generates over \$329 million in revenue, encompassing more than 5,000 artists. Furthermore, the burgeoning fashion industry has produced over \$266 million in revenue, featuring over 200 companies and upwards of 150 designers, reflecting the flourishing creative landscape of the island nation.

The UNCTAD report also highlights the transformative power of technology and creativity, urging developing nations to invest in digital infrastructure and adopt forward-thinking policies. The Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) has taken up this challenge, spearheading the digitalization of T&T along three (3) dimensions - digital society, digital government, and digital economy.

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Technology, however, is only 10% of any digital transformation journey. The true catalyst for change and the other 90% is the people. A fact that does not go unrecognized by the MDT. The MDT in close collaboration with iGovTT are introducing an exciting initiative, the Developer's Hub (d'Hub), that will unite developers from all walks of life, including newcomers, experienced professionals, nonprofit trailblazers, and passionate individuals! It will be an inclusive platform that invites developers and aspiring tech enthusiasts to collaborate, learn, and grow, empowering our nation with a formidable local force of digital experts. It will be a chance for our people to showcase our expertise and learn from others, while aspiring developers can dive into enriching courses and obtain guidance from seasoned mentors. This vibrant d'Hub aims to nurture our nation's digital talent pool, cultivating a generation of skilled and innovative experts ready to propel our nation's digital capabilities into a future-proofed and prosperous tomorrow.

In terms of music, the fusion of technology and creativity has redefined the way we consume and create content through "digital convergence." This phenomenon has leveled the playing field for musicians, allowing them to record, produce, and distribute their work independently through platforms like Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, YouTube, and SoundCloud.

Software development, another creative powerhouse, challenges developers to craft innovative solutions from scratch. At iGovTT, our talented team has devised digital services like GovPayTT (online government payments), EmployTT (public sector recruiting), and eAppointment (public sector agency scheduling), all of which improve the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Website design has also evolved, striking a delicate balance between creativity and functionality through UX (user experience) design. This approach allows websites to be visually captivating while remaining user-friendly and efficient.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) continues to reshape the tech landscape, promising to revolutionise countless aspects of our lives. However, the uncertainty surrounding AI's potential has led to an informal global agreement to curb research and development in this area for now.

Technology's capacity to foster creativity and tackle daunting challenges is undeniable. It holds the key to diversifying our productivity and addressing national and regional issues. iGovTT, alongside the Ministry of Digital Transformation, invites the nation to join us in embracing our creative and innovative traditions, supported by cutting-edge technology.

Together, let's forge a new future for T&T, driven by digital innovation and creative collaboration.