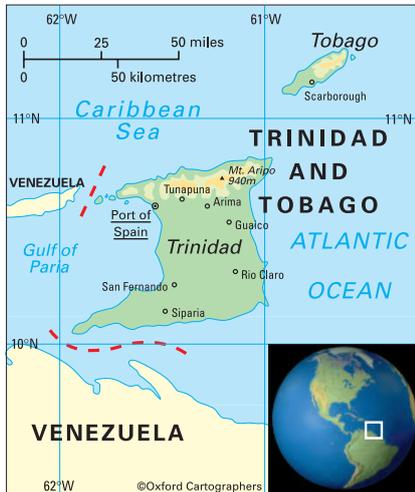




# Trinidad and Tobago



## KEY FACTS

**Joined Commonwealth:** 1962

**Population:** 1,341,000 (2013)

**GDP p.c. growth:** 3.5% p.a. 1990–2013

**UN HDI 2014:** World ranking 64

**Official language:** English

**Time:** GMT minus 4 hrs

**Currency:** Trinidad and Tobago dollar (TT\$)

## Geography

**Area:** 5,128 sq km

**Coastline:** 362 km

**Capital:** Port of Spain

The country, the most southerly of the West Indian island states, situated 11.2 km off the Venezuelan coast, consists of two islands: Trinidad and Tobago.

**Area:** 5,128 sq km: Trinidad (4,828 sq km) and Tobago (300 sq km).

**Topography:** Trinidad and Tobago are unique among Caribbean islands in that only 10,000 years ago they were a part of the South American mainland; the geology and rich flora and fauna are closely akin to Venezuela. A mountain range runs along the north coast, rising to Trinidad's highest point, El Cirro del Aripo (940 metres); there are rolling hills in the south and the flat Caroni Plain lies in between. Trinidad is well supplied with rivers, some of which end in mangrove swamps on the coast. The Pitch Lake in the south-west is the world's largest natural reservoir of asphalt. A string of small

islands off the north-west peninsula are the remnants of the land-link with the continent. There are sandy beaches in the north and east, and Trinidad has many excellent harbours. Tobago also has a central mountain range descending to a plain in the south-west and many fine beaches.

**Climate:** Tropical, tempered by north-east trade winds, with a temperature range of 22–31°C and an average annual rainfall of 1,631 mm. The dry season is January–May and the wet season June–December, with a short dry sunny season called the *Petit Careme* during September and October.

**Environment:** The most significant environmental issues are water pollution from agricultural chemicals, industrial wastes and raw sewage; oil pollution of beaches; deforestation; and soil erosion.

**Vegetation:** Forest covers 44 per cent of the land area, having declined at 0.3 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. The forest is tropical evergreen: high in the mountains are mountain mangrove, tree-ferns and small palms; on the lower slopes, hog-plums and sand-box; and in the fresh and brackish swamps, mangrove and gable-palms. The most important agricultural areas are in the central plain of Trinidad. Arable land comprises five per cent and permanent cropland four per cent of the total land area.

**Wildlife:** There are many more species of birds and butterflies than on any other Caribbean island, including 15 varieties of hummingbird (in all some 130 species of birds). There is a wildlife sanctuary in the Northern Range on Trinidad at El Tucuche with agoutis, golden tree-frogs and more than 400 species of birds, and the Caroni Swamp reserve is the home of thousands of scarlet ibis. The government has proposed a National Parks and Wildlife Bill, which aims to protect endangered species of which there are now relatively very few. Two mammal species and four bird species are thought to be endangered (2014).

**Main towns:** Port of Spain (capital, pop. 37,074 in 2011), Chaguanas (83,516), San Juan (greater Port of Spain, 56,200), San Fernando (48,848), Arima (greater Port of Spain, 33,606), Point Fortin (20,235), Tunapuna (greater Port of Spain, 19,100), Sangre Grande (17,500) and Princes Town

(11,000) on Trinidad; and Scarborough (4,800) on Tobago.

**Transport:** There are 8,320 km of roads, 51 per cent paved. There is no railway.

Port of Spain and Point Lisas are the main ports. Point Lisas' deep-water port on the west coast serves the petro-chemical industries. Other terminals are at Pointe-à-Pierre, Point Fortin and Guayaguayare (petroleum); Claxton (cement); Tembladora (bauxite); Brighton (asphalt); Chaguaramas (dry-docks); and Scarborough on Tobago. Tourist cruiseships dock in Scarborough and Port of Spain.

Piarco International Airport, 25 km east of Port of Spain, is a major regional centre for passenger and cargo traffic and aviation-related industries. Crown Point International Airport on Tobago can handle wide-bodied intercontinental aircraft.

## Society

### KEY FACTS 2013

**Population per sq km:** 262

**Life expectancy:** 70 years

**Net primary enrolment:** 95% (2010)

**Population:** 1,341,000 (2013); some 54,000 on Tobago; nine per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 0.4 per cent p.a. 1990–2013; birth rate 14 per 1,000 people (27 in 1970); life expectancy 70 years (66 in 1970).

The population is of about 40 per cent Indian, 38 per cent African and 21 per cent mixed descent, with smaller numbers of people of European, Latin American and Chinese descent (2000 census).

**Language:** English is the official and national language; English-, French- and Spanish-based Creoles, Indian languages including Hindi, and Chinese dialects are also spoken.

**Religion:** Mainly Christians (Roman Catholics 22 per cent, Pentecostals 12 per cent, Anglicans six per cent), Hindus 18 per cent and Muslims five per cent (2011 census).

**Health:** Public spending on health was three per cent of GDP in 2012. Traditionally good services have suffered somewhat from reductions in public expenditure. Some 94 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 92 per cent have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2012).

Infant mortality was 19 per 1,000 live births in 2013 (61 in 1960). In 2012, 1.6 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

**Education:** There are six years of compulsory education starting at the age of six. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. Some 89 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2009). The school year starts in September.

Tertiary institutions include the St Augustine campus of the regional University of the West Indies (UWI), which also has main campuses in Barbados and Jamaica. At St Augustine, UWI offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses in agriculture, education, engineering, humanities, law (the Hugh Wooding Law School), medical sciences, sciences and social sciences. The University of Trinidad and Tobago was established in 2004 and includes the Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. Other tertiary institutions include the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts; and Polytechnic Institute, which provides adult education in the evenings and shares premises with the Sixth Form Government School. There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

**Media:** English-language dailies include *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, *Daily Express* and *Newsday*; *The Bomb*, *The T'n'T Mirror* and *Sunday Punch* are weeklies.

The Caribbean New Media Group operates public radio and TV services; and there are a number of private radio stations and TV channels including Caribbean Communications Network's TV6.

Some 88 per cent of households have TV sets (2006). There are 132 personal computers per 1,000 people (2007).

**Communications:** Country code 1 868; internet domain '.tt'. Mobile phone coverage is good. There are numerous internet cafes and post office branches on the islands.

For every 1,000 people there are 217 landlines, 1,449 mobile phone subscriptions and 638 internet users (2013).

**Public holidays:** New Year's Day, Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day (30 March), Indian Arrival Day (30 May, 1845), Labour Day (19 June), Emancipation Day (1 August, 1834 and 1838), Independence Day (31 August), Republic Day (24 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Carnival (Monday and Tuesday before Lent), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Corpus Christi, Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan) and Diwali

(October/November). Carnival is celebrated during the month leading up to Carnival Monday and Tuesday.

## Economy

### KEY FACTS 2013

**GNI:** US\$21.2bn

**GNI p.c.:** US\$15,760

**GDP growth:** -0.6% p.a. 2009–13

**Inflation:** 7.4% p.a. 2009–13

Trinidad and Tobago has a very sophisticated economy for a country of its size, embracing mineral extraction, agriculture, industry, tourism and services, but it is underpinned by a single commodity – oil – which was first discovered in 1866. The high price of oil in the 1970s allowed considerable publicly financed development, but when the price fell in the 1980s the economy faltered badly. In the recession years (1985–89), GDP fell by 30 per cent in real terms. Although the government had substantial reserves, these were exhausted by 1987, and the economy

had to be supported by the IMF until 1993, when oil prices had recovered.

In the late 1980s, a programme of privatisation was under way and continued through the 1990s. At the same time industries based on natural gas, tourism and other service industries were developed. Tax receipts have been rising through more efficient collection, though many tax rates have been cut.

With the new industries on stream and oil prices strong, the economy was buoyant in the latter 1990s into the 2000s, pausing briefly only in 2001–02, a period of political uncertainty, when the government was distracted from the structural reforms and investor confidence diminished.

Then during 2002–06 the economy grew at ten per cent p.a., moderating to 4.8 per cent in 2007. In the global economic downturn of 2008–09 demand for Trinidad and Tobago's manufactures weakened sharply and the economy shrank by 4.4 per cent in 2009; it stood still in 2010, contracted by a further 1.6 per cent in 2011 and recovered modestly in 2012–15. Unemployment, which had fallen to an all-time low of 4.6 per cent in 2008, rose rapidly in 2009–12.

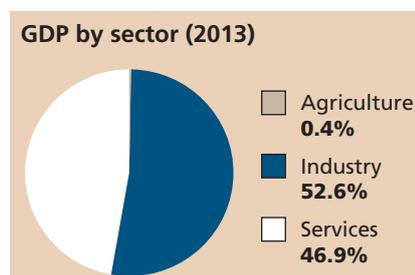
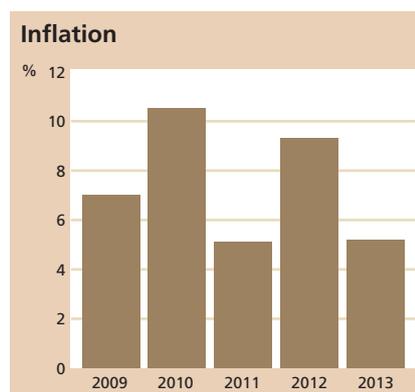
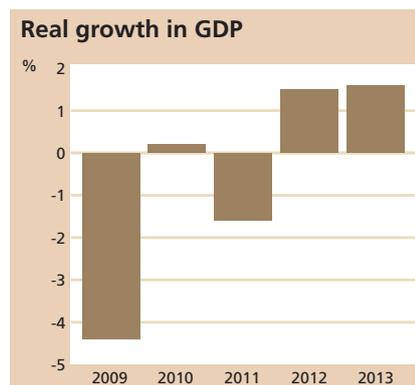
### Oil and gas

There are more than 30 producing oil and gas fields, many of them offshore. For a long time after the 1970s there were no significant fields discovered, but exploration in areas off the east coast led to discovery of the large Angostura field in 2001. In January 2014 oil reserves were estimated at 800 million barrels. Exploration has intensified following the Angostura find, but offshore fields are costly to exploit and slow to be brought on stream. There are two oil refineries: at Pointe-à-Pierre and at Point Fortin.

Trinidad and Tobago has estimated proven natural gas reserves of 400 billion cubic metres (January 2014). The Atlantic LNG Plant at Point Fortin started to export natural gas in 1999. It was then expanded in stages during the 2000s. The country is among the world's biggest exporters of LNG.

### Manufacturing

Manufacturing and process industries are centred on the free-trade zone. The government established joint ventures with foreign companies to produce iron and steel, petrochemicals, cement, ammonia and other nitrogenous fertilisers, urea and methanol. A plan for construction of a large aluminium smelter prepared by US-based Alcoa was rejected following a challenge by environmentalists. New plans for construction



of an aluminium smelter funded by China were announced in 2008 but then cancelled in 2010.

Trinidad and Tobago's natural gas has a high methane content with few impurities and is very suitable for methanol and ammonia production. The Point Lisas industrial estate has seven large, modern methanol plants, nine ammonia plants and a urea plant, with more under development, and the country is among the world's largest exporters of both methanol and ammonia.

It also assembles motor vehicles and produces consumer durables, such as television sets and gas cookers, and clothing, and there is a significant printing industry.

## History

Until 1888, Trinidad and Tobago were separate territories. Both have a history of repeated invasion and conquest by competing European powers.

Trinidad, named *Iere* (probably meaning 'humming bird') by the Arawak inhabitants, was claimed for the Spanish Crown by Christopher Columbus in 1498 CE. The embattled Spanish colony that developed was raided by the English, Dutch and French through the 17th century. Large-scale importation of African slaves enabled a plantation economy to develop. French Haitians (who were offered incentives by the Spanish Crown) swelled the settler population.

In 1797 the island surrendered to a British expedition and became a British Crown colony in 1802. Slaves were emancipated in 1834, free trade adopted in 1846, and more than 150,000 immigrants from India, China and Madeira brought in between 1845 and 1917. These indentured labourers came on short contracts, after which they were free to return home or buy plots of land. The Indians worked mainly on the sugar plantations of

the Caroni and Naparima plains and introduced the cultivation of rice there.

Tobago's name derives from the Carib word *Tavaco*, the pipe in which the Amerindians smoked tobacco leaves, and was inhabited by Caribs at the time of Columbus's visit in 1498. These people had all been killed by 1632 when 300 Dutch settlers arrived. Further Dutch and French settlers followed. Tobago changed hands more frequently between 1650 and 1814 than any other Caribbean territory – ownership shifting from a settler (Cornelius Lamprosius, declared owner and Baron of Tobago by Louis XIV of France) to the Duke of Courland, to a company of London merchants, to neutral status in 1748, to the English Crown by the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

Even then, Tobago was fought over. The French captured it in 1781; the British took it back in 1793; the French regained it through the Treaty of Amiens (1802), but it was returned to the British in 1814. Despite these battles, Tobago was prosperous until its sugar industry was weakened by the abolition of slavery, a hurricane, the decline of West Indian sugar in general and the Belmanna riots. No longer viable as a separate colony, it was amalgamated with the larger island of Trinidad in 1888.

The Spanish constitution was retained after Trinidad became a British Crown colony in 1802. The Governor was assisted by a council of advice and a *cabildo* elected by the taxpayers. The council of advice evolved into the nominated legislative council and the *cabildo* became Port of Spain's town council. When Tobago was amalgamated with Trinidad in 1888, the laws of Trinidad were extended to the smaller island and, after a period, the revenues of the two islands were merged and Tobago's debt to Trinidad cancelled. Tobago was administered by a commissioner (later a warden) appointed by the colony's Governor.

In the 1920s the labour movement organised trade unions, and pressure increased for greater local democracy and then independence. A new constitution brought a limited form of electoral representation to Trinidad for the first time (Tobago had had elections before). But only seven of the 25 members were elected, and high property and language qualifications limited the vote. This did not satisfy the growing demand for political expression, which led to the 1937 labour disturbances, an increase in the number of elected members in 1941 and, in 1945, universal adult suffrage.

In 1950, the constitution was redrawn, providing for a legislative council of 26 members, 18 of them elected; a policy-making executive council of nine (five elected by the legislative council), and a rudimentary ministerial system. Further constitutional changes followed, and by 1959, the legislative council had more elected members and an elected Speaker, and the ministerial system had developed into a cabinet elected from the legislative council. The Governor's powers were circumscribed: he did not normally chair cabinet meetings, and had to act in accordance with the cabinet's advice.

The 1956 elections gave the majority to the People's National Movement (PNM), led by Dr Eric Williams. Williams instituted further constitutional talks with the UK in 1959–60, resulting in full internal self-government and a bicameral legislature (nominated Senate and elected House of Representatives). The general election of 1961 was again won by the PNM, which implemented the new constitution.

In 1958 Trinidad and Tobago became a co-founder of the Federation of the West Indies, which aimed to become an independent country, but Jamaica withdrew in 1961, and Trinidad and Tobago also decided to seek its own independence. Further constitutional talks with the UK began, and a draft constitution was drawn up after much consultation. The country became independent in August 1962, and a republic in 1976.

The PNM under Williams (and after his death in 1981, George Chambers) had a long run of electoral successes. Economic conditions worsened in the early 1980s and the PNM was ousted in 1986 by a coalition of opposition parties, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) led by A. N. R. Robison. However, the coalition was troubled, and soon the United Labour Front (led by Basdeo Panday, Robison's deputy) quit the alliance to form the United National Congress (UNC).

## Trinidad and Tobago on the international stage

Sir Vidia Naipaul, born in Chaguanas in 1932, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001; Earl Lovelace won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1997; and Sharon Millar the Commonwealth Short Story Prize in 2013.

Brian Lara, born in Santa Cruz, Trinidad, in 1969, was Wisden Leading Cricketer in the World in 1994 and 1995.

Singer Billy Ocean was born Leslie Sebastian Charles in Fyzabad, Trinidad, in 1950. Moving to England with his family at the age of seven, he went on to become Britain's biggest selling black artist, with sales of more than 30 million records to his name.

Journalist and television news anchor Sir Trevor McDonald OBE was born George McDonald in San Fernando in 1939. After starting out as a print and broadcast journalist in Trinidad in the 1960s, he moved to London to work for a BBC Radio service that broadcast to the Caribbean. He is best known for being an anchor on ITN television news and for fronting his own current affairs programme, *Tonight with Trevor McDonald*.

In July 1990 an attempted coup was staged by a militant Muslim faction, which stormed Parliament and took Robinson and members of Parliament hostage for five days and led to an outbreak of looting in poor areas of the capital. The hostages were released on the promise of an amnesty, but the NAR government was never able to recover and the PNM, under Patrick Manning, won an easy electoral victory in December 1991.

The PNM lost its substantial majority in the November 1995 elections: it won 17 seats, exactly the same number as Panday's UNC, while the NAR won two and thus held the balance of power. The NAR chose to support the UNC, which was then able to form a government, headed by Panday. Following the retirement of President Noor Hassanali, A. N. R. Robinson became the country's President in February 1997.

The UNC's position was strengthened by divisions within the PNM. Although its leader, Patrick Manning, won a leadership contest in October 1996, his challenger received 40 per cent of the votes. Two PNM MPs subsequently left the party, becoming independents. Both later began to support the UNC and were appointed government ministers. Consequently, although the UNC–NAR coalition remained intact, the UNC had a parliamentary majority on its own from the middle of 1997.

In June–July 1999 ten convicted murderers were hanged. These executions – the first since 1994 – had been delayed for several years by appeals to the Privy Council in the UK, and had only been carried out when the Privy Council had ruled that hanging was not in itself inhumane. The Caribbean Court of Justice was subsequently established in Port of Spain as the final court of appeal for CARICOM countries.

In the December 2000 general election, the UNC was re-elected, winning 19 of the 36 elected seats, while PNM took 16 and NAR one; Panday continued as Prime Minister. However, the PNM immediately challenged the result on the grounds that two UNC candidates had had dual nationality. There was further controversy when the President was unwilling to appoint seven of Panday's nominations to cabinet posts who had all been defeated in the elections.

President Robinson finally gave way in February 2001 but the PNM's challenge to the legitimacy of the two UNC members took far longer to resolve and the new administration continued in 2001 amid considerable uncertainty, which was only dispelled when a fresh national election was called for December 2001.

## Constitution

**Status:** Republic

**Legislature:** Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago

**Independence:** 31 August 1962

Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary republic with a representative government and a degree of regional autonomy. The head of state is a non-executive President elected by an electoral college comprising all the members of Parliament. The executive is led by the Prime Minister who heads a cabinet chosen by him or her and is responsible to Parliament.

The legislature consists of the bicameral Parliament, with a directly elected 41-member House of Representatives and a 31-member Senate. Senators are appointed by the President, 16 on the advice of the Prime Minister, six on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and nine of the President's own choice. Elections are held every five years. The House of Representatives has 42 members when the Speaker is not already an elected member of the House.

Tobago has a regional House of Assembly, set up in 1980, with certain local powers over finances and other delegated responsibilities. It has 12 elected members and several members appointed by the political parties. Constitutional amendments have granted Tobago greater control over urban and rural development, health, education and housing, though its House of Assembly has no legislative powers.

## Politics

**Last elections:** 7 September 2015 (national)

**Next elections:** 2020 (national)

**Head of state:** President Anthony Carmona (2013–)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Dr Keith Christopher Rowley

**Ruling party:** People's National Movement

**Women MPs:** 31%

Following the tied December 2001 general election – when the People's National Movement (PNM) and the United National Congress (UNC) each secured 18 seats in the House of Representatives (and the National Alliance for Reconstruction none) – a fresh election was called in October 2002 when the PNM secured a majority, with 20 seats with 50.7 per cent of the votes, while the UNC took 16 with 46.6 per cent. PNM leader Patrick Manning – whom the President had chosen to be Prime Minister and form a government after the tied election – resumed as Prime Minister.

In the elections in November 2007 (with the number of contested seats increased from 36 to 41), on a platform that highlighted its strong economic management and proposed introduction of an executive presidency, the ruling PNM won with 26 seats and 45.9 per cent of votes. The main opposition UNC took 15 seats and 29.7 per cent of votes and the newly established Congress of the People gained 22.6 per cent of votes but no seats. PNM's majority was a few seats short of the two-thirds required to amend the constitution.

Following a threatened vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Manning in April 2010, Parliament was dissolved. In the general election which followed in May 2010, a new five-party coalition, the People's Partnership, led by UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar and including the Congress of the People, won 29 of the 41 seats in the lower house and 42.9 per cent of the votes cast, soundly defeating the incumbent PNM (12 seats and 39.6 per cent). Persad-Bissessar became Prime Minister, the first woman in the country's history to assume the role.

On the retirement of President George Maxwell Richards at the end of his second five-year term of office, on 15 February 2013 Justice Anthony Carmona, the sole candidate, was elected President by the electoral college. He was sworn in on 18 March 2013.

The general election of 7 September 2015 was won by the PNM and its leader, Keith Rowley, was sworn in as Prime Minister on 9 September. The PNM took 23 seats in the House of Representatives (securing 51.7 per cent of the votes cast) and the UNC the remaining 18 seats (39.6 per cent). Turnout was 67 per cent. The Commonwealth observer group that was present at the election concluded that 'the poll was inclusive, peaceful and well conducted'.

## Tobago

In the Tobago House of Assembly election, held on 21 January 2013, the People's National Movement, led by Orville London, won all 12 elective seats.

## International relations

Trinidad and Tobago is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Community, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of American States, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Trinidad and Tobago hosts the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States in Port of Spain.

## Traveller information

**Immigration and customs:** Passports must be valid for at least the duration of the stay. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. If you are travelling on from Trinidad and Tobago, some countries will require you to have a yellow fever vaccination certificate (see *Travel health* below). Prohibited imports include any parts or products of coconut palms; honey; and marine animals and plants.

**Travel within the country:** Traffic drives on the left. Most visitors can drive for up to 90 days with a foreign driving licence.

Scheduled flights and ferries operate between the two islands; fast ferries take 2.5 hours. Taxis are available on both islands and official taxis are recognised by the 'H' on their licence plates. Taxis are not metered and fares should be agreed before travel.

**Travel health:** Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include dengue fever, diphtheria, hepatitis B, rabies and yellow fever. The World Health Organization has recommended vaccination against yellow fever. There were 402,000 tourist arrivals in 2011.

## Further information

Government of Trinidad and Tobago:	<a href="http://www.gov.tt">www.gov.tt</a>
Elections and Boundaries Commission:	<a href="http://www.ebctt.com">www.ebctt.com</a>
Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago:	<a href="http://www.ttparliament.org">www.ttparliament.org</a>
Central Statistical Office:	<a href="http://www.cso.gov.tt">www.cso.gov.tt</a>
Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago:	<a href="http://www.central-bank.org.tt">www.central-bank.org.tt</a>
Go Trinidad and Tobago:	<a href="http://gotrinidadandtobago.com">gotrinidadandtobago.com</a>
Association of Caribbean States:	<a href="http://www.acs-aec.org">www.acs-aec.org</a>
Commonwealth Secretariat:	<a href="http://www.thecommonwealth.org">www.thecommonwealth.org</a>
Commonwealth of Nations:	<a href="http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Trinidad_and_Tobago">www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/Trinidad_and_Tobago</a>

### Media

<i>Daily Express:</i>	<a href="http://www.trinidadexpress.com">www.trinidadexpress.com</a>
<i>Newsday:</i>	<a href="http://www.newsday.co.tt">www.newsday.co.tt</a>
<i>Trinidad and Tobago Guardian:</i>	<a href="http://guardian.co.tt">guardian.co.tt</a>
Caribbean New Media Group:	<a href="http://www.ctntworld.com">www.ctntworld.com</a>
i95.5 FM news station:	<a href="http://i955fm.com">i955fm.com</a>
TV6:	<a href="http://www.tv6tnt.com">www.tv6tnt.com</a>



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