

# NIDCO: connecting the country

## INTERVIEW WITH KAISHA INCE

PRESIDENT, NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LTD (NIDCO)



### KAISHA INCE

graduated with an LLB (Hons) from the University of the West Indies (UWI) and holds an LLM in Commercial and Corporate Law from University College, London. She has been a Barrister and Attorney at Law for the last 21 years in the UK and Trinidad and has worked for a number of international firms including Clifford Chance, Swiss Banking Corporation, Bankers Trust and Citigroup. Ms Ince is President of NIDCO and also serves on a Cabinet appointed committee for oversight of infrastructural works.

A modern, well-designed and constructed network of highways is being cited as a critical element of the government's drive to accelerate the development process and to lead Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status by the year 2020. At the epicenter of this process stands the National Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (NIDCO), a 100 per cent state-owned 'special purpose vehicle' established by the government to expedite key projects consistent with accelerated development goals.

A Request for Expressions of Interest for a National Network of Highways Project issued ahead of a Request for Proposals Tender Package in December 2009 refers to the fact that an extensive network of highway currently exists, but rapid economic growth and prosperity have stressed the existing network capacity.

As a consequence, the government intends to carry out major network enhancements to the highways network by constructing the Highways Project, which requires the creation of 471km of new and improved highways. "The objective", says Kaisha Ince, NIDCO's President, "is to link the country."

NIDCO has more than adequately established its bona fides as the premier official agency with responsibility for some of the country's more important infrastructural and transportation projects. In 2009, it has already launched the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Uriah Butler Highway Interchange which includes the highest and longest bridge in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Interchange, explains Ms Ince, comprises one component of a comprehensive road transport project designed to accommodate the growing needs of a nation on the move. The Interchange bridge is 600 metres long and 15 metres wide, comprising 10 spans. More than 2,500 tonnes of steel was used in its construction and its impact on traffic congestion at one of Trinidad's busiest road intersections has already been widely praised by the travelling public.

NIDCO was also, in December 2008, responsible for the successful launch of a Water Taxi service between the capital city of Port of Spain in the north of the island and the industrial capital, San Fernando in the south. This service currently enjoys a high level of usage by commuters wishing to move freely between the two cities. Phase Two of the project will transport passengers between these two points and Point Fortin, further south

of San Fernando.

The primary purpose of the service is to provide an alternative mode of transport between the coastal cities of Port of Spain, San Fernando and the Borough of Point Fortin and to ease the traffic congestion along the North-South Corridor and ultimately the East-West Corridor.

Integrating the service with other public transportation facilities, NIDCO also has entered into an arrangement with the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) to provide a shuttle-bus service.

Ms Ince has described the Water Taxi project as having brought a new dimension to NIDCO's work – that of a public transportation function – and in her view, the service has achieved the high level of 'public buy-in' initially sought.

Now, NIDCO is engaging in the ambitious project to vastly expand the country's highways network. The Highways Project includes three phases of work to be executed prior to the year 2020. NIDCO has been assigned responsibility for Phase 1 of the Project which consists of seven packages of approximately 250km of highway development. The procurement process has already begun with Expressions of Interest invited from major design and construction firms, joint ventures and/or consortia interested in providing Design/Build contracting services for this phase. AECOM USA, Inc, a leading provider of professional technical and management support services for government and commercial clients around the world, has been awarded the contract to provide project management services for Phase 1 of the Project. The procurement processes for Phases 2 and 3 are scheduled to commence in 2010 and 2011 respectively. They will then run concurrently through to completion in 2020.

The ambitious project has already been hailed by President of the Trinidad and Tobago Contractors' Association, Mikey Joseph, who has been reported as saying it offers local contractors an opportunity to benefit from the work to be executed either as stand-alone enterprises or as consortia.

Among the several expectations arising out of NIDCO's mandate is a capacity to 'fast-track' major infrastructural projects.

Ms Ince believes the company's work has the potential to dramatically influence the pace and direction of change as the country heads toward its 2020 target. **E**