



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice, UNDP, and EU Partner to Enhance Defence Capacity MEDIA RELEASE

July 20, 2026

The Ministry of Justice today launched the Intensive Defence Optimisation Training and Train the Trainer Programme at the Radisson Hotel, Port of Spain. This three-day initiative is part of a broader push to strengthen advocacy, trial readiness, and judicial efficiency through strategic capacity building.

The programme represents a collaboration under the PACE Justice Project, the Partnership of the Caribbean and the European Union on Justice. Proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the European Union, the initiative is being spearheaded by the Public Defender's Department (PDD) within the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority (LAAA) of the Ministry of Justice. By addressing critical capacity gaps for defence counsel and prosecutors, the programme serves as a vital intervention in the Ministry's ongoing mandate to reduce case backlogs and enhance access to justice.

Highlighting the Ministry's commitment to a more agile justice sector, the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, emphasised the importance of these initiatives in addressing systemic delays.

"With crime rates and charges remaining high, limited capacity among both the defence and the prosecution, it has significantly affected the number of cases moving through our courts. This programme addresses strategic capacity building, ensuring that our legal practitioners are equipped to manage the load, all while advancing our core mandate of access to justice and restorative justice," said Minister Maharaj.

The training arrives at a critical juncture, as the justice sector continues to implement reforms aimed at increasing efficiency and fairness. Chief Justice of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ronnie Boodoosingh, emphasised the transformative potential of such collaborative efforts, noting that the human element of the justice system must remain a priority.

"What we do after this dialogue is far more important. Through the Criminal Justice Board, we've been meeting monthly, we now have a list of every prisoner in custody of the state, we are working to ensure that every person in state custody is seen as a human being rather than a statistic, and our work is focused on ensuring that the vulnerable can exit the system efficiently... We all benefit from a more efficient, timely, and fair justice system," stated Chief Justice Boodoosingh.



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EU Ambassador Cécile Tassin reaffirmed the EU's commitment to the region, noting that a well-functioning justice system relies not only on laws but also on the professional development and effectiveness of those who operate within it.

The collaboration represents a push to ensure that justice is accessible to all, including those from vulnerable economic backgrounds. Through these efforts, the Ministry of Justice continues to prioritise the reduction of case backlogs and the implementation of reforms that promise a more equitable future for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Photo 1: *The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, and Chief Justice of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ronnie Boodoosingh at the opening ceremony of the Intensive Defence Optimisation Training and Train the Trainer Programme.*





Photo 2 (from l to r): Mr Ugo Blanco, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Ms Renuka Rambhajan, Director/ Chairman of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority (LAAA), The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, at the opening ceremony of the Intensive Defence Optimisation Training and Train the Trainer Programme.





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Photo 3: The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, along with various stakeholders and event attendees, pictured at the opening ceremony of the Intensive Defence Optimisation Training and Train the Trainer Programme.



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