



**TURNING THE SOD:** Prime Minister Keith Rowley and Works and Transport Minister Rohan Sinanan turn the sod for the extension of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway to Manzanilla on September 26. —Photo: CURTIS CHASE

## JCC: Revisit 'cartel' contracts

THE Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Industry (JCC) is calling on the National Infrastructure Development Company (Nidco) and Government to revisit the \$400 million contract for the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway extension to Manzanilla and potential contracts to Namalco, valued at \$436 million, for the Point Fortin Highway.

In a statement issued yesterday, the JCC expressed concerns over the contracts, their seemingly prioritisation over outstanding payments owed to the construction industry as well as a disconnect with the Government going after contractors that are receiving contracts from the Government.

"It is public knowledge that the State has initiated legal action against five companies among whom are the two companies referred to above who have been named for alleged 'cartel behaviour' as reported in the media. Is it that the legal arm of the State is oblivious of what the implementation arm is doing? The JCC would like to believe that the AG would not commit limited State resources by proceeding with litigation in the courts without tangible and compelling evidence. In these circumstances, the issue of following due process in making these awards by Nidco cannot be acceptable to concerned citizens," it said.

Furthermore, the JCC queried whether these contractors can give value for money.

"In the case of Kall Co (the company that received the Churchill-Roosevelt extension contract) the Maracas contract was terminated well before completion by another State agency and Nidco was given the responsibility to manage the completion of that project utilising other contractors. The obvious question that arises is how this construction company can have qualified for a project that is twice as large and whether it can deliver value for money. The JCC suggests that in the interest of transparency and equity, Nidco's performance ratings of both companies and the reasons for the termination of the Maracas contract should be made public," it said.