Daily Express
Trinidad Express Newspapers

■ Chambers on meeting with US general:

Positive step for T&T

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BUSINESS groups in Trinidad and Tobago see United States General Dan Caine's visit as a positive step in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

Director of the Confederation of Regional Business Chambers, Angie Jairam, said the high-level discussions between chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Caine and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar on Tuesday foster deeper trust and economic development.

'While his role is primarily in security co-operation, these high-level engagements often help to build broader trust and open doors for deeper collaboration in areas that ultimately influence trade, investment, and economic confidence,' said Jairam via WhatsApp yesterday.

She said, in the short term, there were no expectations that his visit alone would ease import challenges or immediately resolve forex constraints directly, but noted that this could contribute to a stable environment.

'However, relationship- building of this nature contributes to a more stable and predictable environment, something that international partners pay close attention to. When diplomatic and security ties are strong, they often support smoother trade processes, enhance investor confidence, and encourage more robust economic partnerships,' said Jairam.

She added that, along with the other ongoing discussions and co-operation be-tween the US and T&T, the developments can improve the overall economic climate.

'Taken together, these developments can improve the overall economic climate by fostering greater transparency, facilitating trade flows, and strengthening institutional partnerships. Over time, this could positively impact business operations, including access to foreign exchange, once supported by broader economic reforms,' she said.

Jairam said T&T must continue to monitor these developments.

'But we are cautiously optimistic that deeper co-operation with key international partners like the US can help create a more enabling environment for local businesses,' she said.

President of the Greater San Fernando Chamber of Commerce Kiran Singh agreed that Caine's visit signals a strengthening of security and diplomatic ties between T&T and the US.

'While this is positive for overall stability and investor confidence, it will not directly ease the import problems or forex shortages businesses currently face. The talks focused mainly on regional security, crime, and trafficking, not trade policy, shipping costs, or financial support,' said Singh in response to questions from the *Express.*

He stressed that import challenges continue to be driven by global freight costs, recent tariff changes, and supply-chain pressures.

'Forex limitations remain tied to structural issues such as export earnings and energy-sector revenue-areas untouched by this visit. However, stronger US-T&T cooperation can still bring indirect benefits over time. Improved security and maritime stability may reduce risks for trade and make the business environment more attractive for investment. This could support long-term economic activity, export growth, and eventually help ease pressure on foreign exchange,' said Singh. **'Good diplomatic signal'**

President of the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce Baldath Maharaj said Caine's visit is a 'good diplomatic signal for T&T, especially at a time when security and economic relationships are closely linked'.

'While his visit is primarily security-focused, engagements like these help strengthen our relationship and reinforce our importance as a strategic partner in the region. That image of stability and co-operation is important because it builds international confidence and, over time, helps attract foreign investment,' said Maharaj in a WhatsApp exchange with the *Express* yesterday.

However, he noted that this type of visit will not immediately solve the forex shortage or import challenges businesses are facing.

'The forex issue requires sustained local policy reform, stronger exports, and increased foreign direct investment. That being said, deeper co-operation with the US has already shown improved trade facilitation and investment opportunities. These are the types of developments that, over time, can improve overall business confidence,' said Maharaj.
He added that the chamber sees this as a positive step in strengthening longterm relationships, 'but meaningful economic relief for businesses will only come when these diplomatic discussions translate into real, on-the-ground economic action'.