

Businesses push for stronger crime measures

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THE business community is again pleading with the Government to include crime-fighting measures in the upcoming 2025/2026 budget.

The national budget presentation is carded for October 13 at 1.30 p.m.

President of the Fyzabad Chamber of Commerce Angie Jairam stressed that security could not be overlooked.

'Rising crime is no longer just a social issue; it's an economic one. Businesses need safer environments, and citizens need hope. We call for a well-funded, results-driven approach to crime prevention and rehabilitation,' she highlighted. Jairam noted that T&T stands at a 'critical crossroads' with oil and gas revenues declining, limited business expansion, persistent unemployment, and ongoing security challenges.

'We must chart a new course for stability and progress. The Chamber firmly believes that this budget must focus on three clear priorities in fiscal credibility, private sector stimulation, and national security,' she said.

Jairam also called for a transparent, three-year fiscal plan that narrows the deficit and strengthens investor confidence.

'Fiscal discipline must be matched with accountability; every dollar spent should drive growth or social resilience,' she explained.

In addition to this, she urged the Government to create the conditions for business expansion and job creation.

'We need targeted incentives for investment in non-energy sectors in the manufacturing, agro-processing, digital services, and the creative economy. Let's empower our SMEs with easier access to credit, faster approvals, and a genuine ease of doing business,' she said.

She also called for investment in skills training and digital infrastructure to prepare our people and enterprises for the future economy.

'The Chamber stands ready to work alongside the Government to ensure implementation, transparency, and results.

Together, we can restore confidence, attract investment, and secure sustainable growth for T&T,' stated Jairam.

Expressing similar sentiments related to security, president of the Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce Baldath Maharaj

said, 'We expect the budget to address critical national issues that impact daily operations and investment decisions.

This includes definitive action on crime, improvements to national infrastructure, and simplifying the ease of doing business.'

He added that he was optimistic that this year's budget would 'truly reflect the needs of the private sector, successfully creating the necessary environment for investment, innovation, and sustainable progress across T&T'.

Maharaj also noted that the business community was approaching the budget with 'a mix of cautious optimism and high expectation regarding the measures and policies to be outlined'.

'The Chamber's priority is a budget that acts as a strong catalyst for growth. Specifically, we look forward to seeing concrete steps that will stimulate overall business confidence and deliver strengthened support for SMEs, the backbone of our local economy,' said Maharaj.

Meanwhile, president of the Greater San Fernando Area Chamber of Commerce Kiran Singh said reopening the Petrotrin Refinery was 'top of the agenda for us'.

'Focus on green hydrogen, solar and wind power to reduce the demand for fossil fuels while maximising offshore deep-water exploration with the energy giants,' he added.

Singh also suggested the creation of an SME

unit in the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism for the sector.

'Its role and function would be to address all issues emanating from this sector. Supporting SMEs is crucial because they drive job creation, innovation, and diversification beyond oil and gas. Easier access to financing, digital tools, and simpler regulations will help them grow and compete globally,' he explained.

He also noted that the ease of doing business must improve.

'Improving public sector efficiency and maintaining fiscal discipline are equally important. Faster approvals, digitalised services, and better spending transparency will boost investor confidence, reduce red tape, and create a more business-friendly environment,' said Singh. He also called on the Government to address the foreign exchange crisis that continues to plague the business sector and urged them to look at the services sector for revenue generation.

'The services sector has tremendous potential to generate revenue. It is a trillion-dollar industry that we can tap into

from the human resources we possess,' noted Singh.