

PSA workers promised Christmas cash advance

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Finance Minister Davendranath Tancoo has assured that Public Service Association (PSA) workers will receive a cash advance for Christmas through an initial advance payment on arrears.

However, regarding the PSA's demand that the full arrears of \$3.8 billion in backpay also be paid in cash, the Minister would not immediately offer a firm commitment.

He noted yesterday that negotiations between the PSA and the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) are ongoing, while also emphasising what he said was the dire economic state left by the former People's National Movement (PNM) administration.

The *Express* contacted the minister for comment on the dispute between the PSA and the CPO over the 10% backpay payment.

PSA president Felisha Thomas, in a social media post, described the CPO as the 'Chief Personnel Obstructionist' and indicated that her membership had mandated her to negotiate a full cash payment for backpay.

In response, CPO Dr Daryl Dindial has maintained that noncash options must also be on the negotiating table, aligning with the Government's position.

So what is the Government's position?

Tancoo told the *Express* that there will be a cash payment, while other details are determined.

'The negotiations between the CPO and the PSA are still ongoing and there are several matters still in discussion,' he said.

He said when the United National Congress (UNC) entered office, it met an economy on the brink of collapse due to poor fiscal policies and mismanagement by the former government.

Tancoo said despite these challenges, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has instructed her Cabinet to find workable ways to ensure delivery to the people of the nation.

'I think the country knows the financial crisis that the PNM left this country in. Despite that, I am extremely happy to report that in keeping with the Prime Minister's promise and mandate, there was an agreement to a 10% increase in salaries together with increases in a large number of allowances,' he stated.

'Moreover there is agreement to make an initial advance payment on arrears in cash in the month of December. All other matters are still on the negotiation table and cannot reasonably be subject to public discussions at this time,' said Tancoo. **Payment referred to was for cash advance** Thomas' Facebook page shows a video of Tancoo being interviewed outside Parliament recently, where he was asked about the backpay for PSA workers. When asked if he has the money, he responded, 'Yes I do.' Responding to questions from the *Express* about this comment and Thomas' post, the Minister explained that he was referring to the initial cash payment.

'The payment referred to here was specifically for the advance cash payment of arrears in December,' he said.

Tancoo said he was confident the matter will be resolved, insisting that under a UNC Government, workers win.

He emphasised that the Government has not faltered on its promise and has ensured it is kept compared to a decade of pain and punishment under the former government.

Earlier this week, the PSA and the CPO reached an agreement that will see public officers across the Civil Service, Statutory Authorities and the Tobago House of Assembly receive a 10% salary increase following the signing of a new Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).

Under the MoA, officers will receive:

- a 10% increase
- consolidation of Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for both outstanding periods
- new salary payments beginning January 2026

- allowances retroactive to January 1, 2014
- an advance on arrears to be paid on or before December 23, 2025.

Yesterday, a document was circulated on WhatsApp detailing what appeared to be guidelines for payment of arrears to public officers under the MoA between the CPO and PSA for the periods January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016 and January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2019.

The document stated that the advance payment does not apply to retirees and officers on no-pay leave.

According to the breakdown, eligible public officers on duty prior to, on, or after January 1, 2014 up to December 31, 2023 will receive a gross payment of \$26,666, tax of \$6,666.67 and net of \$20,000.

With effect from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025: gross \$18,666.67, taxes \$4,666.67 and net \$14,000.

With effect from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025: gross \$13,333.33, tax \$3,333.33 and net \$10,000.

The MoA instructed that all ministries and departments pay these sums by December 18, 2025.

It stated that to allow for this change, the finalisation date has been adjusted to December 10, 2025.

The document further stated that requests for funding are to be made to the Budget Division on or before December 10, 2025, and must include the gross amount due as well as any increase in the employer's contribution to NIS as a result of this advance payment.

The *Express* tried to contact both the PSA's Thomas and the CPO yesterday, but calls and messages were not immediately returned.