

■ Pleas for peace in region:

War is bad for business

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AGAINST a backdrop of heightened geopolitical strain in the Southern Caribbean, there are renewed calls for peace and deeper business collaboration as a pathway to greater stability across the Latin American and Caribbean region.

'War is bad for business,' said president of the Greater San Fernando Chamber of Commerce Kiran Singh as he urged stronger economic international ties. He said on Saturday he believed the Government can navigate complex diplomatic strain to enable the business community to continue building partnerships that promote resilience and long-term prosperity.

Singh made the remarks at a diplomatic reception at the Royal Hotel in San Fernando.

'So far, we haven't had any negative fallout or any negative feedback on what is going on between the USA and Venezuela, and we maintain the peace. We always say that war is bad for business, and we are sure that the powers that be, who are in charge and the authorities will do their best to ensure that the Trinidad and Tobago public and society remains safe going into 2026,' he said.

Singh urged South Trinidad businesses to explore more trade opportunities in South America.

'We want to do more South-to-South trade. We know that because of the US tariff measures that were imposed some time ago, it had made it more challenging for trade, especially from the Trinidad perspective. We still do a lot with energy business in terms of how we trade with the USA, but we also need to do that with the non-oil sector. And South-to-South trade is the way to go, we think, for expanding the trade that we currently have with the rest of the world going forward into 2026 and beyond,' he said.

Singh said the field of medical tourism in Latin America had been emerging and proving more cost-effective for Caribbean citizens.

'Those who seek immediate, serious surgeries find it more expensive to go to the northern part of the world. The South offers more competitive pricing and is more hospitable to its Caribbean neighbours. It is an attractive option for urgent medical care and even cosmetic procedures. South America is the home for the beauty queens of the world, and many Trinidadians will seek that professional view going forward,' said Singh.

Ambassador: Opportunities in Venezuela Venezuelan Ambassador Álvaro Enrique Sánchez Cordero said the Venezuelan economy was improving and seeking international business opportunities.

'I always say that any tensions are underlying opportunities. There are a vast number of opportunities for commerce, trade, collaboration and co-operation with not only T&T but the whole of the Latin American and Caribbean region. There are opportunities to be tapped into. We have always been open to doing business with Latin America and the Caribbean. Our economy is improving a lot, all sectors of our economy are growing, our GDP is going up, our oil production is going up, so we are open for business with the whole world. Some countries have imposed restrictions, but we are absolutely open for commerce, trade, collaboration and cooperation with the wider world,' said Cordero.

Colombian Ambassador William Bush said several companies were investing and seeking opportunities

in various industries, such as in the fields of medicine, automotive and food.

'We have a free trade agreement with Caricom and we have a lot of T&T companies investing in Colombia. More than five big companies...are investing and creating jobs in Colombia. Every week, we have patients from Trinidad and the Caribbean going to Colombia for medical treatment,' said Bush.

Asked about geopolitical tensions in the western hemisphere, Bush said, 'I am a 'Western Hemisphere aficionado' and want peace. I pray, I am not so religious, but I pray.'

Also in attendance at the function were Minister of Health Dr Lackram Bodoë, High Commissioner of Ghana William Anani-Abots, Ambassador of Cuba Gustavo Daniel Véliz Olivares, Ambassador of Spain María Cristina Pérez Gutiérrez, Ambassador of Panama Diomedes Heraclio Carles Cleghorn, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic Raquel Josefina Jacobo Jaar, Ambassador of Chile Hernán Núñez Montenegro, and Ambassador of Korea Seijoong Kwon.