

Dhanpaul: Wage negotiation could cost taxpayers billions

PROPOSALS being made in the public 'not by this Government' to commence public sector wage negotiations at a 10% rate could cause taxpayers billions. So said Finance Minister Vishnu Dhanpaul while speaking yesterday at the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) leadership discussions and networking event at the Hyatt Regency (Trinidad), Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

'It will be remiss of me not to add that proposals are also being made in the public domain, not by this Government, to commence public sector ways negotiations at a 10% increase, which could cause taxpayers between \$6 and \$7 billion in backpay. While if you take it up the higher level of 14% to 15%, that will increase the amount of between \$8.5 to \$10 billion in backpay alone,' said Dhanpaul.

Noting this as well as the calls for revenue measures, he questioned: 'How will this ballooning fiscal deficit of close to \$20 billion be financed?'

Dhanpaul said once the necessary financing means are exhausted and the International Monetary Fund is tapped into, this is when the population would understand the \$15 to US\$1 coupled with massive retrenchment of public sector workers.

'I'm not sharing fear, I'm sharing facts. They are promising public servants shortterm gain for extremely long-term pain,' he said.

In light of the 10% US-imposed tariff on T& T, Dhanpaul said the Government was committed to fostering a resilient business environment in T& T and the Caribbean through strategic initiatives, policies and collaborative partnerships. On April 2, US President Donald Trump announced a 10% tariff on T& T and other countries.

-Vishanna Phagoo