

## Strong support for new trade minister

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THE appointment of Satyakama 'Kama' Maharaj as the country's new Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism has been met with strong support from the business community, with leaders praising his entrepreneurial track record, practical experience, and potential to reinvigorate the economy.

Maharaj, the founder of Sacha Cosmetics, is seen as bringing a deep understanding of the private sector-an asset stakeholders said they believe is crucial for tackling long-standing challenges, and boosting exports.

Here are some of their comments: The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce (T& T Chamber) extends its heartfelt congratulations to the Honourable Satyakama 'Kama' Maharaj on his appointment as Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism.

Minister Maharaj is a distinguished member of our business community, having been recognised at the T& T Chamber's 2014 Champions of Business Awards with the 'Internationally Known...T& T Owned' award for Sacha Cosmetics Ltd. This honour celebrated his innovative approach and significant contributions to the local and international business landscape.

The T& T Chamber eagerly anticipates collaborating with Minister Maharaj to advance a robust national trade and investment agenda. We are committed to working together to support sustainable economic growth, promote local enterprise, and enhance Trinidad and Tobago's competitiveness on the global stage.

President of the T& T Chamber, Sonji Pierre-Chase, stated: 'Minister Maharaj's track record of entrepreneurship and innovation positions him well to lead our nation's trade and investment initiatives. The Chamber looks forward to a productive partnership aimed at fostering a thriving business environment for all.'

### **T& T Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI)**

President of the T& T Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI) Dianne Joseph said she is looking forward to working with Minister Maharaj to advance a trade agenda that supports the growth of the services sector.

In a release yesterday, she stated: 'We look forward to working collaboratively with Minister Maharaj to advance a trade agenda that supports the growth of the services sector, diversifies the economy, and improves market access for our service providers both regionally and internationally.'

She added that as the national umbrella organisation representing the services sector, TTCSI is eager to engage with the new minister on initiatives to drive digital transformation, expand professional services exports, and strengthen public-private sector partnerships.

'We believe that Minister Maharaj's insight as a successful entrepreneur and his understanding of global market dynamics will greatly enhance efforts to position T& T as a competitive player in the international trade arena. TTCSI stands ready to support the Ministry's work and looks forward to a productive and forward-thinking collaboration,' she said.

**Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce** President of the Chaguanas Chamber of Commerce Baldath Maharaj said he is satisfied with the appointment and believes Maharaj will add real value to the ministry.

'He has the necessary practical competence to make a big difference. While we understand that major change won't happen overnight, we also believe there are low-hanging fruits that can be tackled immediately-such as cutting red tape, improving access to trade support, and making it easier for SMEs (small and medium enterprises) to do business,' he said.

He expressed hope that policies will address the everyday challenges faced by SME owners and unlock their potential for growth and export.

'We also expect the minister to reach out and engage directly with the business community through chambers of commerce across the country. This collaboration will be key to developing practical solutions and restoring confidence in the economy,' he added.

**Greater San Fernando Area Chamber of Commerce** President of the Greater San Fernando Area Chamber of Commerce Kiran Singh said Maharaj's wealth of business experience will be a significant asset in strengthening trade and tourism ties.

'He is the founder and owner of Sacha Cosmetics, a global brand indigenous to T& T. His vision to create a cosmetic line suited for persons of colour won many local and international accolades,' Singh noted.

He believes Maharaj's background gives him a unique advantage.

'Maharaj has the potential to invigorate the economy as a businessman in a way that has not been done before. He understands the challenges the SME sector faces, having come from the business environment,' he said.

Singh highlighted urgent issues for the new minister to address, including port management inefficiencies, extended service hours during weekends and public holidays, and reforms to streamline business registration and operations.

'The new minister's experience in dealing with international business has the potential to propel local business opportunities on the international stage,' Singh said.