

Dhanpaul expects \$9B deficit



Opposition Senator Vishnu Dhanpaul

PETER CHRISTOPHER SENIOR MULTIMEDIA REPORTER PETER.CHRISTOPHER@GUARDIAN.CO.TT

Opposition Senator and former finance minister Vishnu Dhanpaul is expecting a significant fiscal deficit in the upcoming national budget.

“(A deficit of) about \$9 billion. I hope I’m wrong,” said Dhanpaul, when asked about the 2026 budget, which is expected to be presented in the next month.

He said, “ I would say that given the revenue projections and the expenditure projection, and they made those projections, I expect at least a significant fiscal deficit.”

Dhanpaul said given the Government’s campaign promises and subsequent decision to scrap the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority, he struggled to see the Government covering most of

those expenses.

“They’re going to have to deal with the ten per cent for the public servants. Given their borrowing programme, that looks a bit sketchy at this time. And I’m speaking on behalf of all retired public servants everywhere about the no taxes on a public service pensions is a significant point. And also decrease in corporation tax. How are they going to handle all these transactions if you have no Revenue Authority?”

He continued, “You’re prepared to give up that \$5 billion a year while trying to increase expenditure, while trying to manage the deficit, while trying to manage the borrowing programme. It’s going to be very interesting to see what it will look like.”

Dhanpaul made the projection while in attendance at the People National Movement’s Back to School distribution at the Arima Community Centre last Thursday.

In presenting the 2025 budget in Parliament on September 30, 2024, former minister of finance, Colm Imbert, projected that the Government’s total expenditure for the fiscal year, which ends on September 30, would be \$59.74 billion.

He also projected that T&T would collect \$54.22 billion, resulting in a projected fiscal deficit of \$5.41 billion.

Imbert’s budget projections assumed an oil price of US\$77.80 per barrel and a natural gas price assumption of US\$3.59 per MMBtu.

In delivering the mid-year budget review in June, Minister of Finance Davendranath Tancoo projected a \$9.67 billion deficit.

Dhanpaul replaced Imbert as finance minister on March 17, 2025, and held that position until the PNM’s defeat in April 28 general election.

He raised similar sentiments concerning the planned expenditure of the UNC during the election campaign.

Dhanpaul served as permanent secretary in the Ministry of Finance from 2005 to 2021 and was T&T’s high commissioner in London from November 2021 to March 2025.