

Caribbean Airlines CFO suspended



Caribbean Airlines Limited chief financial officer Varuna Kuarsingh

NEWS DESK

Mere days after Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar called on the management of Caribbean Airlines (CAL) to “sort out the mess” at the airline, one of the airline’s top executives has been suspended.

Guardian Media understands Chief Financial Officer Varuna Kuarsingh was sent on leave a few days ago by the new CAL board, headed by Reyna Kowlessar.

Kuarsingh has been with the company for over two years. Speaking during the United National Congress’ Monday Night Report on August 11, the Prime Minister told supporters gathered at Camden Hall, Couva, that the airline had not submitted audited financials for the last nine years.

The CFO is responsible for the submission of financial reports, but Guardian Media could not confirm if the company’s failure to produce financials over the past couple of years was the reason for Kuarsingh’s suspension. Guardian Media sent questions to CAL chairman Kowlessar yesterday, but there was no response.

Guardian Media also reached out to CAL’s line minister, Dave Tancoo, for a comment on the latest development, but he redirected the questions to CAL, saying, “This Minister of Finance does not get involved in the day-to-day or administrative operations of CAL or any other boards.”

In her August 11th speech, the Prime Minister issued a warning to CAL's management.

She said, "I am giving the management of Caribbean Airlines two years max.

They have to sort out the mess. Otherwise, everyone there will have to look for a new job."

However, this statement sparked concern among CAL workers, prompting their representing unions, the Aviation, Communication and Allied Workers Union (ACAWU) and the Trinidad and Tobago Airline Pilots' Association (TTALPA), to write to Persad-Bissessar on August 14th requesting an urgent meeting. The unions want, among other things, clarity on the future of the airline.

Subsequent social media reports of workers in CAL's finance department being either fired or earmarked for dismissal did little to allay workers' fears.

However, ACAWU, which is the union under which the finance department falls, yesterday denied workers had been fired.

ACAWU president general Nwannia Sorzano told Guardian Media, "This information is new to us, as none of our members has reported such occurrences".

As for the unions' request to meet with the PM, Sorzano said, "We are eagerly looking forward to an audience with the Honourable Prime Minister to clarify concerns raised with us by the members and to see how we can contribute to a successful CAL."