

US export squeeze

TTPost temporarily halts mailing of packages, amid Washington's duty-free tax crackdown



Minister of Public Utilities Barry Padarath



TTPost packages

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Public Utilities Minister Barry Padarath says he is hoping to resolve the issue of taxes in the United States that forced the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) to temporarily stop all exports to the US that are not packages.

In a media release yesterday, TTPost said due to a US Executive Order of July 30, 2025, entitled “Suspending Duty-Free De Minimis Treatment for all Countries,” which comes into effect today, all client packages that are not documents cannot be sent to the US.

Other Caribbean countries, among them St Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados and Jamaica, also implemented similar measures yesterday.

TTPost’s release added that it is actively engaging with international partners to address the matter and restore the shipment of parcels as soon as possible. It said the duty-free de minimis exemption for goods valued at US\$800 meant all international postal items containing goods destined for the US, regardless of value, will now be subject to customs duties.

Contacted on the issue, Padarath told Guardian Media that he was made aware of the situation on Wednesday and is seeking a speedy resolution.

“It has created an operational challenge,” he said, adding that he asked the company to show how its operations will be affected by the introduction of the taxes within “a reasonable timeline.”

“I am awaiting further advice on that. But I’m hoping that it will be a short timeframe so that we can mitigate any further impact in terms of disrupting the operations of TTPost. I am advised that some of these private service providers continue to operate unaffected in terms of their operational issues.”

Padarath said the operationalising of the taxes is his main concern.

Guardian Media understands that there is nothing yet in place to determine the value the US may place on an item that is to be exported, as the taxes are imposed on the US value of the product.

Padarath said based on the regional and international conversation on the matter, he is not of the view that the US would change their policy. He said moving forward, TTPost was given two weeks to “make their recommendations and put their house in order,” and then the country will be updated.

Contacted yesterday on the development, T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce president Sonji Pierre-Chase said it will impact small businesses. She explained that the decision stemmed from President Donald Trump’s fight against drug cartels, resulting in all items costing less than US\$800 now being subjected to regular duties.

“The change will impact small exports to the US from Trinidad and Tobago, with potential consequential losses. TTPost’s temporary suspension of shipments to the US is in compliance with the Executive Order, which we understand has been equally implemented in other jurisdictions, including the UK, EU and Jamaica,” Pierre-Chase said.

“Nonetheless, the chamber notes that it will have an impact on the business community in Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, our members in the SME sector who export their products in these parcels to the US.”

She added that the chamber was comforted that TTPost is actively engaged with its international partners to address the matter and restore the shipment of parcels as soon as possible.

“We look forward to an expeditious resolution of the matter,” she said.

Meanwhile, Web Source CEO Lincoln Maharaj said this development means customers will be forced to pay possibly up to ten times the cost they once paid to send the same package they may have sent last week.

He said the immediate impact will be an influx of customers to private couriers.

“On the courier side of things, based on the zip code, it will vary in cost, and it is going to be at least six, eight, ten times more for the same said package to go through a courier service,” Maharaj said.

This latest issue is separate from the 15 per cent tariff imposed on all imports to the US by the Trump administration.

Earlier this month, Trump set a 15 per cent tariff on imports from T&T under a new executive order titled “Further Modifying the Reciprocal Tariff Rates.” The announcement by the US was part of a sweeping update to the US tariff schedule affecting 69 trading partners worldwide. The previous tariff rate was ten per cent, which had been announced in April.

According to the Caricom Private Sector Organisation (CPSO), the 15 per cent tariff could cost the country nearly \$2 billion (US\$291.9 million) in losses. Under the ten per cent tariff, the CPSO estimated a loss of \$1.3 billion (US\$194.6 million).