



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Finance and the Economy

Communications Unit

Media Release

Attention All Editors

For Immediate Release

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Finance Minister adds 76 New Customs and Excise Officers to boost border protection and enhance Revenue Collection.

In a move designed to strengthen the Customs and Excise Division, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy today issued appointment letters to seventy-six (76) new customs and excise officers to help bolster the protection of the country's borders and increase revenue collection.

The acting Comptroller of Customs, Mr. Ammar Samaroo, expressed his appreciation to Minister Howai for taking this proactive step to boost the manpower at the Customs and Excise Division, which has had to deal with chronic staff shortage over the past few years.

The Honourable Minister, Mr Larry Howai, in commenting on the matter, stated that 'this measure is part of a series of measures aimed at ensuring compliance with customs laws and heightening the fight against the smuggling of narcotics, arms and ammunition and evasion of excise duties'.

The Minister pointed out that the administration has developed a plan to transform the operations of the Division and noted that the hiring of the additional staff is simply one of a number of measures being put in place. He pointed to the introduction of new legislation a few months ago to allow for advanced passenger and cargo information, which is being

implemented, which will improve the efficiency of clearing of goods and people at the air and sea ports and the introduction of increased fines and penalties in the Finance Bill. The Plan also includes the deployment of new scanners at the nation's major ports. Five sophisticated container scanners will be deployed at the country's major ports well before the end of the year.

Apart from these measures, he added that it is the intention to place renewed emphasis on training of officers and ensure that Customs has improved facilities from which to operate. The latter will come with the completion of the new Customs Headquarters on Wrightson Road which is scheduled for occupation by the last quarter of this year.

The Minister also confirmed that he intends to continue to build closer ties with US customs enforcement with the renewal of the contract arrangement with US Customs to ensure that improved operating systems and methods are introduced and maintained.

The Minister noted that within recent times cross border crimes and their sophistication have increased, in particular smuggling of narcotics, arms and ammunition and therefore it was important to upgrade all aspects of law enforcement to create a greater deterrent effect and the changes already effected at Customs and Excise as well as those expected to be completed within the next few months will achieve that objective.

End

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