

TTMA CALLS FOR INCREASED EFFICIENCY ON THE PORT

The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) is alarmed at the reports from the Joint Select Committee (JSC) of Parliament that some 19,000 containers entered T&T over an 8-month period without being properly scanned due to limited operations of the scanners at the country's ports.

President of the TTMA, Ms. Tricia Coosal stated, "Traditionally, TTMA has lobbied for greater efficiency on the Port and has, in the past, welcomed the introduction of scanners to aid in this efficiency. The reports of these scanners not working are concerning and its negative impact on the ease of doing business cannot be denied. There is also the challenge of many illegal items finding their way into the country and into the hands of unscrupulous persons. Importantly as well is the government not getting their due revenues based on the evasion of proper customs duties to be applied on goods."

Coosal continued, "Christmas is approaching, which means the volume of goods that must be moved on the port increases. Delays due to inefficiencies at the Ports have a real cost to manufacturers as companies incur demurrage and other charges. Additionally, without efficiencies that would allow for the faster clearance of goods, can result in slowing of production and exports - all of which is not good for the manufacturing sector that is growing and meeting the call to expand operations."

Commenting on the potential increase in illicit trade activity as a result of limited functioning port scanners Coosal indicated, "The concern for consumers' safety is heightened as illicit trade is allowed to proliferate without the proper inspection of goods. These include goods which have not been tested as safe for human consumption or use and goods that do not have proper labels for consumers to understand what they are using."

The TTMA recommends that the government acts swiftly to rectify these inefficiencies, which place an unnecessary burden on manufacturers in their daily operations. Ms. Coosal concluded, "Further, our members are already facing undue delays with the movement of containers on the Ports, a matter which we are working assiduously alongside the relevant authorities to resolve. To have this matter of none optimal utilization of scanners and reverting to manual inspection can further create problems for manufacturers. Such activities can result in the Association falling short in realizing its objective of doubling exports by 2025."

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