

After weekend crime surge...

Chambers warn of investor risk

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THE business community has expressed concern over the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago over the weekend.

Between April 18 and 19, Anuska Eversley, 38, an acting corporal, was killed and a stockpile of guns and ammunition stolen from the San Fernando City Corporation Municipal Police station.

And in a separate incident, an eight-year-old girl was among four people killed in a shooting along Lady Young Road in Morvant on Sunday night.

Chamber heads warned such incidents can erode investor confidence, public safety and trust in authorities.

President of the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries Dianne Joseph said she supported State intervention to stabilise the national environment, but believed greater oversight and scrutiny of those in positions of trust is needed.

'It may be a good time for a total overhaul of the recruitment processes and stronger governance systems in an effort to get the best fit to hold these positions of trust. Our members-from small service providers to large professional firms-are operating under a cloud of constant anxiety, and this is not considered the best option as it will affect each one in different ways, with mental health being one of the factors,' said Joseph in an e-mailed response to the *Express*.

She said the killing of Eversley while on duty at the San Fernando Municipal Police Station sent a shockwave through the national services sector. She added that the breach could undermine ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago.

'The TTCSI views this tragic loss of life and the unprecedented theft of State weaponry not merely as a criminal act, but as a direct assault on the climate of safety required for professional services to function. This breach of a State sanctuary trans-n forms crime from a general concern into an immediate, existential threat to the ease of doing business, proving that even the institutions sworn to protect our economic pillars are currently vulnerable to catastrophic failure,' said Joseph.

She said the attack could erode investor and consumer confidence, questioning how service professionals could operate effectively when high-security police facilities were so easily compromised.

Joseph said the TTCSI believes the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is operating under greater demand for services than in the past.

'And, while they may be doing their best, the high rate of crime and what may be classified as organised crime and criminality seems to be an everyday occurrence, and it does require innovative and creative ways to address them as well as continuous support for those involved,' said Joseph.

'This incident of April 19 is grave and raises the question about institutional integrity and the 'internal betrayal' cited by our Honourable Prime Minister. While we acknowledge operational milestones reported under the state of emergency, such achievements are

being overshadowed by the glaring vulnerabilities exposed in San Fernando. This is unfortunate and touches the heart of every citizen,' she said.

Joseph said safety for members of TTCSI is also a concern, whether at their homes, workplaces or on the streets.

'Our sector is calling for more than just increased patrols; we need hightech, integrated partnerships between the TTPS and the private security industry that utilise intelligence-driven data to ensure rapid response times in business districts. Furthermore, there must be absolute legislative clarity regarding the Home Invasion (Self-Defence and Defence of Property) Act, providing our service professionals and business owners with the legal certainty required to protect their lives and property when state protection falters,' said Joseph.

Erosion of public confidence

The Confederation of Regional Business Chambers (CRBC) expressed serious concern over the continued deterioration of public safety and the erosion of public confidence in the security system.

'Certainly, the public was in shock. The business community continues to shoulder a significant burden, investing heavily in private security while also contributing through taxation to national security services. This dual cost is unsustainable without clear, measurable improvements in safety, accountability, and performance,' the CRBC stated. It acknowledged that the current administration is operating within inherited fiscal and structural constraints.

'This reality underscores the urgent need for collaboration across Government, Opposition, civil society, and the private sector to stabilise the country and rebuild trust. All must play their role. The time for incremental responses has passed. Structural reform is now essential,' the CRBC stated.

It called for:

☑ Independent audit of firearms and ammunition systems, supported by modern digital tracking and transparent reporting. ☑ Modernised recruitment and continuous vet - ting, aligned with international standards including rigorous background and integrity checks. ☑ Professionalisation of policing, with certified training, continuous development, and enforce -
able standards of conduct. ☑ Technology-driven accountability systems, in - cluding digitised asset control, integrated crime data systems, and body-worn cameras and vests for police officers with functional modern moni -
toring security systems at all police stations. ☑ Strengthened independent oversight mecha - nisms, with authority to investigate, audit, and publicly report on failures. ☑ Clear performance standards and leadership ac - countability, ensuring measurable outcomes and public reporting.

'CRBC further calls for structured and continuous engagement between national security leadership and the business community to ensure that dialogue translates into action and measurable results. We cannot continue to apply temporary solutions to systemic problems. The country deserves better, and the time to act is now,' the CRBC stated.