

Integrity Commission records 74% compliance rate

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COMPLIANCE rates for company declarations filed with the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago under the Integrity in Public Life Act are the highest ever since the commission's inception, according to chairman Haydn Gittens.

He said the compliance rate to date is over 74%.

He made the comments Friday at the Integrity Commission's Anti-Corruption Day seminar at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre in Port of Spain.

Although the compliance rate has improved, Gittens said those who have not complied will be exposed when the commission publishes their names.

'We will continue to seek the assistance of the High Court to ensure compliance from those who still refuse the corporate after their names are published. Coming out of this year's exercise, however, we will be in a position to zero in and focus on the public entities that were plagued by local clients whilst ensuring general compliance levels continue to improve,' he said.

He added that the commission's investigation unit currently has 31 matters under active investigation, with 16 cases closed so far this year.

Gittens said to strengthen policies and procedures and reduce the possibility of corrupt practices within public entities, the commission's staff members were trained accordingly.

'In addition to day-to-day business operations, we built a strong team by resolving existing staffing issues; implementing initiatives to build morale and strengthen competencies through staff training; strengthening the legislative framework to add the most sensible amendments to the Act; and simplifying declarant interface and improving operating efficiencies through digitalisation,' he pointed out.

Although these projects have been undertaken, he stated that progress has been limited, with one of the key issues being short-term employment-threemonth contracts-which have led to instability within the organisation.

Gittens explained that the board has been working on amendments to the Act, such as introducing penalties for breaching the code of conduct and facilitating the sharing of information with sister agencies; however, the proposal was withdrawn by Cabinet after submission.

'We will, however, continue our efforts to strengthen our effectiveness and impact via legislative reform,' he said.

He said the allocation by the Finance Ministry in the 2024/2025 budget has allowed the commission to carry out its digitalisation project.

'This project is currently underway and we have started the process of digitising our paper files and records. We are also in the process of issuing an RFP for phase one of our digitalisation exercise which will involve scoping our current processes, solution identification, costing and execution,' Gittens noted. In keeping with the anti-corruption theme of the seminar, he said the commission will be collaborating with international anti-corruption organisations to ensure the best practices are adopted.

'For the public, I urge you to remain vigilant, your voice matters and your actions matter. Corruption thrives in an environment where silence reigns. Do not be afraid to speak up, report wrongdoing and demand justice, you are the backbone of the integrity we seek to foster in our nation,' he said.