

# Govt gives go-ahead for Manatee development

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The Government has given the green light for Shell to explore development possibilities for the Manatee gas field, the Prime Minister has said.

Manatee is part of the larger Loran-Manatee gas field which straddles the TT-Venezuela maritime border. Approximately 30 per cent of the acreage lies within TT waters. The entire field is estimated to contain 10.25 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Dr Rowley said the decision was one of the agreements the Government made with energy giant Shell during his recent trip to Europe and the US, where he led a delegation to meet with the biggest multinational energy companies operating in TT. Shell operates the Manatee field, the assets for which it acquired from Chevron in 2017. "One of the things the Government encouraged Shell to do is move towards production of the Manatee aspect of Loran-Manatee. There are some legal aspects we have to (consider) but we have agreed to go forward with that," Rowley said. Investment will focus on Manatee, he said, while Venezuela keeps control of Loran. It will involve talking to the Venezuelan government, but not as complicated as deal-

ing with Dragon, which is completely in Venezuelan territory. In September 2013, then-Energy Minister Kevin Ramnarine signed an agreement with his Venezuelan counterpart, Rafael Ramirez to develop Loran-Manatee. A decade before that, both countries had signed a memorandum of understanding to develop cross border reserves.

Rowley said this was part of the medium-term outlook for the country's energy industry. "It would be knowing for certain that you have something you can use (and complement) exploration."

Dragon, he added, was still in the works. Last August, the Government signed an agreement with the cur-

rently embattled Venezuelan government headed by Nicolas Maduro. Rowley said the deal was not dead but acknowledged the current political instability and uncertainty in that country.

"I'm sure you will appreciate that any timeline for this will depend on the timeline for the return to normalcy in that country," he said.

He added that the Government was no longer directly involved in the negotiations because it was in the commercial stages, and discussions were ongoing at the company level. The parties involved are Shell, Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA and TT state gas company the National Gas Company.

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