

Khan: Paria Fuel not sold to Aruba Govt

SEAN DOUGLAS

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ENERGY Minister Franklin Khan denied the Government had ever said it had sold fuel to the Aruba Government, replying to an urgent question in the Senate on Wednesday.

Opposition Senator Wade Mark had asked if the Government would take action against the board and management of Paria Fuel Trading given the Aruba Government's denial of buying a shipment of fuel from them (as reported in the TT media on Wednesday.) Khan said the oil was not sold to the Aruba Government but to an oil trader, ES Euro Shipping SA.

Reuters last April reported that a shipment of 150,000 barrels of oil was delivered to central Venezuela's El Palito oil refinery by a tanker, the Aldan, owned by Wilmer Rupert, while not transmitting a signal with its location since April 22 after loading up in Trinidad. All this came after a visit to TT in March by Venezuela Vice President Delcy Rodriguez.

Energy Minister Franklin Khan retorted that, like the UNC, Mark's question was the definition of mischief.

“Paria Trading and the Government by extension never said that it sold fuel to the Aruba Government. We sold fuel to a trader ES Euro Shipping, a company registered in Switzerland, whose final destination of the cargo was Aruba.

“At no point in time did the Government say it sold the fuel to the Aruba Government.”

Khan said recently the Dutch Embassy rightly told a TT newspaper the Aruba Government bought no fuel from TT. He added that a

paid press advert on Thursday by Paria had clearly detailed the transaction.

“To go further, in the days when Petrotrin sold fuel to Aruba it was never sold to the Aruba Government. It was sold to traders, because it is a trading business. Governments don’t involve themselves in that.”

He reiterated that Mark’s question was the definition of mischief.

“But let me conclude by saying this mischief has consequences.

“It is undermining Paria’s business. Paria is a trading company. The trading environment is sensitive. Heritage is also a trading company. Heritage has its crude marketed through traders.

“They (questions) are all affecting these companies and the viability of the companies.”

Mark, in a supplemental question, asked if Paria had conducted a due diligence before selling fuel to the Swiss-registered company, but Senate President Christine Kangaloo disallowed this question..

Mark further asked how questions like these were undermining Paria’s viability.

Khan replied, “I’m glad for that question. The trading business is a serious business. Confidentiality is the essence of this business. If you are trading on a spot market, you are trading on spot purchases, you are trading on long-term contracts. Price is sensitive, source of fuel is sensitive, everybody knows of the US sanctions, and by implying Trinidad is breaking US sanctions hurts the business. Oil companies are sensitive towards that narrative. To propagate that narrative is hurting Trinidad when there is absolutely no factual basis to so justify. It could impact, I’m not saying it has impacted, on Paria trading business in Caricom and in the Caribbean.

Khan said this all could impact on Heritage’s sale of crude to traders like Trafigura, Shell Trading, BP Trading and others. He said

Heritage crude goes to US Gulf Coast refineries, the same place Paria sources its refined oil imports.

“So the narrative of the UNC is a deliberate attempt to undermine the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.” Mark retorted, “I think your Government is undermining Trinidad and Tobago.”

Aruba is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with internal autonomy, with a governor named by the monarch, plus an internally-elected prime minister.