

Phillip Julien: Hydrogen could be energy lifeline for TT

CLINT CHAN TACK SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER 2020



TT's involvement in the hydrogen strategy, which is being advanced by the European Commission (EC), could lead to a revitalisation of petrochemical industries at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

This was the view expressed by NewGen managing director Phillip Julien during a webinar hosted by the Energy Chamber on Friday.

Dr Ruud Kempener, EC policy officer (Directorate General for Energy (ENER) Renewables & CCS Policy, European Commission), said the strategy was first articulated in July as a means of reducing carbon

emissions and transitioning to renewable energy in several economic sectors.

Kempner added that the covid19 pandemic's impact on traditional energy industries has heightened the need to unlock investment in key clean technologies and value chains, to foster sustainable growth and jobs.

Julien said TT has "the right stuff" to get involved in the hydrogen strategy, given its energy history and achievements such as the establishment of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. He said TT has all the raw materials to become "a first mover in this hydrogen space." These include availability of excess heat from single-cycle power plants and a well developed petrochemical industry.

He said NewGen is looking at building a facility at Point Lisas that uses excess heat and other green energy sources to produce hydrogen for the estate. Julien said the project would generate hydrogen that can be produced without adding to TT's carbon emissions.

He suggested hydrogen can be supplemented into an ammonia producer's operations to improve production levels, without using more natural gas. Saying a feasibility study for the project is ongoing, he opined that the natural-gas curtailments the energy sector has been suffering from since 2010 meant Point Lisas was suffering from a shortage of hydrogen.

This is an essential input for ammonia and methanol production which is sourced from natural gas, and he hoped that by the end of 2023, NewGen would have its plant operational and "start supplementing and replenishing our starving petrochemical industry, with hydrogen."

He also said hydrogen can help create green methanol and ammonia products that "will start taking the revenue of our local petrochemical industry back up." Julien projected that by 2030, the industry could be back up at "full enabling capacity. where everybody is operating flat out at 100 per cent production."

He said NewGen's US\$300 million project could bring significant revenue to the Government over the next 25 years, with an estimated annual revenue of US\$30 million to T&TEC and US\$1 million to WASA.

European Union Delegation to TT international cooperation/aid officer Natalja Miolato said the EU is pursuing renewable energy projects in TT and many other countries. She underscored the need to simultaneously pursue climate controls and transitioning fossil fuel driven industries to clean energy ones.

Energy Chamber president and CEO Dr Thackwray Driver observed, "Hydrogen has been an integral part of the activities of the energy sector in TT and particularly the petrochemical sector."