



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Feature Address

Delivered by

Dr. The Honourable Roodal Moonilal, MP

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries

At

the

American Chamber of Commerce Trinidad and Tobago

**29th Annual Health Safety Security & Environment Conference &
Exhibition**

“Innovative Growth, Resilience”

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Introduction

Good morning to all and a special commendation to the American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago (AMCHAM) for its commitment to the promotion of best practice in Health, Safety, Security, and the Environment (HSS&E). This year marks the 29th year of the event which is a testimony to the enduring contribution of AMCHAM to the HSS&E landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. Congratulations are in order for the Board of Directors and Members of the organization.

The theme for this year's event is, and I quote "Innovative Growth, Resilience" which is very applicable to the oil and gas industry. In its current state, the global oil and gas industry is undergoing a profound transformation, shaped by the increasing demand for efficiency, sustainability, and technological innovation. No longer can the industry rely on traditional strategies focused on maximizing output and maintaining a reliable supply. To remain viable and relevant the industry must confront the several challenges

that require innovative solution, strategic foresight, and a multifaceted approach. These challenges include navigating stringent environmental regulations, geopolitical uncertainties, and rapid technological advancements. The industry must surmount these challenges to ensure long-term resilience and continued growth in this dynamic and often volatile sector.

The honor is mine to address this multifaceted and knowledgeable audience on a key subject matter.

Before I come to the core of my presentation and in light of the circumstances of the last six months I wish to state that our short journey so far has been challenging. After ten years of decline in the energy sector I am pleased to report that we stopped the decline and registered a 5.5% increase in oil production from 52,357 barrels per day in April 2025 to 55,271 barrels per day by October 2025. Gas production also rose from 2.41 to 2.63 billion cubic feet per day between April and June 2025. We are moving steadily in the right direction. While President Donald Trump exalts his

industry to “drill baby drill”, in Trinidad and Tobago we say “keep it pumping”!!

In the six short months may I remind you that we have been able to negotiate the return of Energy giant Exxon Mobil after twenty-two years away from Trinidad and Tobago. We were described by Exxon Mobil as attaining the “gold standard for the pace of negotiations”. Just yesterday Rystad Energy a leading international energy research and intelligence consultant alerted the globe with a blaring headline “Exxon Mobil could unlock \$20 billion in new investment opportunities in Trinidad’s Deepwater”.

We have moved with quiet pace to obtain a new OFAC license to conduct all transactions and negotiations in relation to the Dragon Gas field. We did it without a conga line!!

We have worked with another oil major, Shell to take steps with a view to increasing gas production from the Manatee field. This project now titled Manatee Plus has the potential

to ease the gas shortages and boost the government's revenue.

We have corrected the era of discrimination against the people of Tobago when recently the Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar directed us to issue an export license to allow the Tobago House of Assembly to generate their own foreign exchange by exporting aggregate from the Studley Park facilities.

Along the way we corrected what was described to me as an “error” that would have cost the government \$ 7 Billion in revenue.

In six months we have redrawn the energy map of Trinidad and Tobago.

Revitalization of the Energy Sector

It is also appropriate to locate our discussion this morning within our overriding developmental framework. It is within this vein, on Thursday the 6th, the Honourable Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar announced the Government's Revitalization Plans for Trinidad and Tobago. This plan aims to improve the country for future generations, focusing on ensuring all citizens benefit from progress.

A fundamental aspect of this strategy is the re-emergence of Trinidad and Tobago as the Energy Hub of the Region. This revitalization will encompass the expansion of Galeota into a Mega Port, the development of a vital energy corridor through a state-of-the-art 100-kilometre highway linking San Fernando to Mayaro, and the reopening of the Guaracara Refinery.

The Port of Galeota is geared to become the leading energy logistics hub in the Caribbean by using advanced technology and global connections. The National Frontier

& Energy Base will serve as the main logistics hub for offshore oil and gas operations, strategically located in Guayaguayare. Phase 1 has already established Galeota as an operational base, while Phase 2 will focus on expanding the port's capacity through two stages. Stage 1 involves a US\$108 million investment to create four new berths and deepen channels for larger vessels and Stage 2 will require an additional US\$63 million investment to build five more berths.

The Government's Mega-Port Transformation project aims to develop Galeota into a major energy and industrial port with a 100-year lifespan. It will reclaim 250 to 300 acres of seabed and build 18 to 20 berths for various operations. The project will create over 10,000 jobs and is designed for strong engineering and climate resilience. A Public-Private Partnership framework will guide its development, enhancing operational efficiency and promoting economic diversification in Trinidad and Tobago.

As Minister of Energy, I have also directed our public sector teams and international partners to advance the expansion of facilities at Point Lisas and Galeota, while working with the Ministry of Finance on Special Economic Zones legislation to attract investment and ensure global Environmental Social and Governance compliance. With our proven talent, infrastructure, and commitment to excellence, Trinidad and Tobago is not just prepared to ride the wave of nearshoring—we are ready to lead it.

Another cornerstone of our future-focused energy transformation is the development of a next-generation, 100-kilometre highway connecting San Fernando to Mayaro. Anchored in the industrial powerhouses of the south-west and extending to the dynamic, emerging offshore and marine energy hub of the south-east, this corridor redefines connectivity. More than a roadway, it is envisioned as an intelligent energy spine — a conduit for advanced logistics, automated materials movement, workforce mobility, and integrated support systems that

will power the new era of Trinidad and Tobago's energy ecosystem.

As we maintain our unwavering focus on revitalization, we are also looking ahead to a renewed future. The Guaracara Refinery is poised to become a pivotal element in our vision for the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The Refinery Reactivation Committee is nearing the end of its work and expects to submit its report by the end of this month. The committee has assessed the conditions of all units in the refinery, distributed control systems, supporting utilities and the status of the port and marine facilities to determine what is required to restart

Ease of Doing Business

We are dedicated to ensuring accessibility and facilitating a favorable business environment within the energy sector. A significant challenge to enhancing oil and natural gas production lies in the inefficiencies associated with government approvals that companies must navigate. In this industry, time equates to money, research conducted

estimated that a one-year reduction in time to first gas for a typical offshore field could add US\$120 million in net present value. Given the urgent need to get projects off the ground, we intend to establish an Energy Accelerator Hub within the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, whose mandate will be to de-bottleneck the approval process along the energy value chain and accelerate the development of projects in the energy sector. We aim to establish the Energy Accelerator Hub by the second quarter of 2026.

Innovation and Resilience of Technologies

Innovation and resilience are of critical importance to mature petroleum economies in the quest to navigate industry challenges and optimize the opportunities for exploration and development of the country's hydrocarbon resources. The discovery of new oil and gas reserves has become increasingly challenging as easily accessible deposits diminish. However, advancements in seismic imaging techniques such as three-dimensional (3D)

seismic surveys and sophisticated data processing algorithms enable greater clarity and visualization of geological formations resulting in a significant reduction of the occurrence of dry holes.

Additionally, advances in techniques like horizontal extended reach drilling, automation, including robotic drill rigs and autonomous downhole tools have boosted safety, efficiency, and data collection in the drilling process. These innovations are helping to ensure the continued productivity of the petroleum industry while minimizing its environmental impact.

Waste Management

As a government we have prioritized waste management and recovery to protect the country's environment. The oil and gas industry generates a variety of waste, such as drilling fluids, produced water and chemical waste. Proper waste management is essential to protect natural resources, reduce pollution and ensure compliance with environmental regulations. There are number of

technologies available to the industry such as near infrared analysers, advanced separation and filtration systems, thermal desorption, and bioremediation techniques, that are enhancing efficiency, reducing waste and emissions, and enhancing environmental safety, and sustainability.

Role of MEEI and HSS&E

While the oil and gas industry is the cornerstone of global energy supply, it is fraught with inherent risks to human health, safety, security, and the environment. Effective Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) management is not only critical for operational success but also essential for ensuring sustainability, regulatory compliance, and social responsibility. Such concerns are universal and are of relevance to our own domestic oil and gas industry which is at transitory stage with a mature land and shallow marine sector and an emerging deep-water province with untapped potential. Exploration and production of oil and gas in each of these provinces have their own challenges and risks.

The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries as the regulator for domestic energy industry, its subsets, including the downstream retail marketing network and the minerals sector is responsible for ensuring that sound HSS&E practices are employed within the domestic energy industry.

The Petroleum Act 1969 Chapter 62:01 and Section 42 of the Petroleum Regulations 1970, empowers the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to conduct investigations into incidents within the industry and to make recommendations to avert the recurrence of such incidents.

Trinidad and Tobago's upstream is undergoing a sustained and positive change as increasingly exploration activities are targeting the country's deep-water provinces. While this is a positive development it imposes a greater responsibility on the Ministry in ensuring

stringent adherence to HSS& E practices in both mature and frontier provinces of the country's upstream sector.

The energy industry is a major emitter of greenhouse gases accounting for approximately 60% of emissions. Government has set a target of a 15 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. While steps to increase use of renewables, such as the Brechin Castle Solar Plant, will reduce greenhouse gas emission, the industry has a significant role to play. Through advancements in technology, process optimization, elimination of all non-emergency flaring, the integration of renewable energy and other measures, the industry can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In this regard as part of Government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions energy companies will be requested to provide their programmes and time tables for the reduction of emissions.

Effective Health, Safety, Security and Environment policies are not merely a legal requirement but a critical foundation for protecting workers, communities, and the

environment while ensuring operational efficiency and sustainability. I am confident that the industry will embrace this opportunity which will lead to a healthier workforce, a safer work environment, and a more sustainable future.

The Ministry will therefore take a proactive approach in overseeing and evaluating HSSE practices within the industry. To facilitate this, the Ministry plans to conduct annual workshops with energy companies, which will include a thorough examination of HSSE protocols. These workshops will address critical areas such as risk management, employee safety and wellbeing, security measures, legal and regulatory compliance, and emergency preparedness.

Facilities Audit of the Oil and Gas industry

As a mature upstream industry Trinidad and Tobago has a critical energy infrastructure which is comprised of a mix of aging and new installations. In 2014, arising from its concerns about the number of HSSE incidents in the energy sector, the Ministry contracted Consultant Det Norske Veritas (DNV GL) Trinidad & Tobago Limited, an independent consulting organization with U.S. headquarters in Houston to conduct a Facilities Audit of the Oil and Gas industry. Thirty companies drawn from the upstream, midstream, and downstream sectors of the domestic energy industry were audited.

In its 2016 Audit Report, DNV GL advised that the performance of Asset Integrity Management systems showed a wide variation across the industry. In many cases, company management appeared not to recognize the potential safety and business risks posed by the continued operation of impaired safety-critical equipment. On completion of the audit, companies were provided with

individual reports with a detailed assessment of their asset management, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. DNV GL suggested a five-year timeline for implementation of the HSS&E measures required to attain the level of asset management consistent with best practice.

It has been nearly ten years since the evaluation of critical energy infrastructure was last performed, aimed at identifying company deficiencies to facilitate necessary improvements. The industry has made progress in this area, evidenced by a decline in significant incidents, with the Ministry reporting a drop from 58 incidents in 2016 to 24 in 2024, and a current tally of 20 incidents this year. In total, there were 305 reported incidents, predominantly occurring in the upstream sector, including 44 incidents attributed to fires or explosions, resulting in eight fatalities. Despite these advancements in safety within the domestic energy industry, considerable work remains to be done to further enhance safety measures.

To uphold industry standards, it may be necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing regulatory framework along with the pertinent Health, Safety, Security, and the Environment standards and codes of practice. In this context, consideration is being given to engage an HSSE Consulting Firm to assess current HSSE practices within the domestic energy sector. The mandate of the Firm will be to provide recommendations aimed at enhancing safety protocols and the adoption of best practice for workplace safety and environmental stewardship within the industry. The goal of this review is to assist companies in further reducing risks and cultivating a robust safety culture within their operations.

Oil and Gas Exploration and HSS&E

Oil and gas exploration and development in Trinidad and Tobago have primarily been in the mature provinces, namely land and shallow marine areas. The country's deep-water province has had limited exploration to date but has had a major discovery in the Woodside Calypso

Project which is currently in the pre-development stage. However, the landscape is changing with current exploration activity in deep-water blocks surpassing that in the shallow-marine areas.

In the deep-water, exploration activity is being undertaken by the Consortium of bpTT and Shell in deep-water blocks 25(a), 25 (b) and 27 and by ExxonMobil in seven (7) blocks in the ultradeep area, blocks Trinidad and Tobago Deep Atlantic Area (TTDAA) 17 -23 comprising Block Trinidad and Tobago Ultra Deep (TTUD) 1. In addition, negotiations are ongoing with bpTT on Block 23 (b) and bids by China National Offshore Corporation for deep-water blocks TTDAA 24, TTDAA 25 and TTDAA 30 and the consortium of STIT Energy Limited and Groundports Limited for Block TTDAA 5.

Trinidad and Tobago has not had any catastrophic upstream incidents. It is my intention to take steps to ensure that record remains intact. The development of deep-water oil and gas fields present unique challenges that require

careful consideration and proactive management. The key challenges include rigorous safety measures and effective emergency response plans for potential spills and other emergencies. Addressing these risks require adherence to safety measures, regulatory compliance and the incorporation of the advancements in technology.

Given the movement to exploration in deep-water in Trinidad and Tobago the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has upgraded its well control regulatory framework. The current regulatory regime for oil and gas well control is the “Code of Practice for Drilling and Production Rigs” developed by the Ministry. This is utilized in concert with American Petroleum Institute Recommended Practices for blowout prevention equipment systems for drilling wells, and the US Code of Federal Regulations. All aspects of a well are reviewed in detail, including the possible well controls measure and blowout preventer specifications.

Additionally, there is inspection of the drilling rig to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that its maintenance records and standard operating procedures have been certified by recognized certification bodies. Deepwater drilling operators have also been required to demonstrate accessibility to a containment cap system to arrest a sub-sea blow-out event, as well as the availability of an additional rig to drill a relief well to effectively seal any uncontained well in the event of an oil spill.

Oil Spills and Leaks

Oil spills and leaks represent a significant percentage of the reportable incidents in the upstream both on land and in marine areas. From 2016 through the first half of 2025, Trinidad and Tobago experienced 1858 oil spills, with 71 percent occurring on land. There were 51 spills in 2016, 302 spills in 2023 and 180 spills to June 2025. In total, 92,335 barrels were spilled, with 83,569 barrels recovered. Heritage and its predecessor Petrotrin were responsible for 80% of the number of the oil spills and 94 % of the barrels of oil spilled. Of significance was the 2017

Pointe-a-Pierre Refinery Tank #70 leak which resulted in a spill of 79,547 barrels, most of which was mainly contained onsite.

These figures do not include oil spilled from the Gulf Stream vessel oil spill incident in Tobago in 2024. The Quantity of oil recovered from the vessel was in the range of 31,000 to 32,000 barrels and the quantity of liquid waste recovered was 60,000 barrels of oil and water. There was an unaccountable quantity of oil which was absorbed by sand along the shoreline and some drifted out of our territorial waters.

The increase in the number of oil spills is a cause for concern as oil spills have devastating effects on local economies, land and marine ecosystems and disrupts economic activity. The continuing elevated level of oil spills highlights the need for effective management and prevention strategies within the domestic upstream sector. Heritage will need to find an effective solution or innovative ways to curtail or minimize recurring oil spills

from its pipelines and facilities. This is a matter which I have instructed the new Board of Directors to treat with as a matter of urgency.

MEEI Role in Oil Spill Incidents

The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries currently serves as the primary agency for national oil pollution preparedness, response, and collaboration; however, it faces limitations in both labor resources and technical expertise. Oil and gas operators are tasked with managing Tier 1 spills, which are localized incidents, while Tier 2 spills, categorized as medium, are intended to be addressed using national resources. For Tier 3 spills, international assistance is required, as demonstrated during the Tobago oil spill, where the absence of national capabilities necessitated external support.

The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries possesses a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan which was intended to ensure that necessary response and recovery

mechanisms are in place in the event of a major spill. It also identified the protocols to be observed in the management of spills. The plan was designed to provide the means to respond to all land and marine spills including pollution by oil and other hazardous substances. It included a proposal for the establishment of a National Oil Spill Resource Organization, with membership from the relevant government agencies and the upstream sector. This organization was to be equipped with resources to manage oil manage major spills. To date, the Plan has not been implemented.

National Oil Spill Contingency Plan

The Government's strategy for establishing a regenerative economy places significant emphasis on energy production. However, this focus on increasing energy output will not compromise environmental integrity. Oil spills, a major consequence of energy production, represent a serious environmental threat due to their extensive and enduring effects. Consequently, it is

imperative to promptly revise and implement the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. This initiative requires not only governmental action but also strong collaboration with industry stakeholders to ensure effective preparedness and response to potential oil spills.

There will be a re-activation of the National Oil Spill Contingency Committee with broad participation from the relevant Government Agencies, Industry and Civil Society with a mandate to develop recommendation for the implementation of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan. I look forward to the industry's support.

Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to several International Conventions and Protocols concerning the control of oil and chemical pollution. However international laws must be actively incorporated into national legislation to be binding and enforceable in Trinidad and Tobago Courts. Accordingly, being a party to the Conventions and Protocols is ineffective without the provisions being incorporated into national legislation. There have been

previous but unsuccessful attempts to incorporate international conventions and protocols in pollution legislation. It may be necessary to address the international conventions and protocols in separate pieces of legislation. In the matter of oil pollution two conventions that impact the industry are the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) 1990; and the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund (IOPC) 1992. Accordingly, we have already had discussions with the Honourable Attorney General for consideration to be given to the introduction of legislation to incorporate these conventions into national law.

Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) incidents

A major focus on safety in the upstream and downstream sectors of the energy industry is required due to the high-risk nature of their operations. However, of increasing concern is the high incidents of Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) incidents, particularly LPG for residential use. It raises the question as to why technology is not being used to minimize or eliminate accidents. There are currently a range of technologies for LPG safety use such as LPG Monitoring and Safety Systems which monitor LPG use, detect leakages, shut off gas supply, and provide immediate alarms. There is also blast proof technology that can be incorporated into cylinders to reduce the risk of explosions.

Under the Petroleum Regulations the Ministry's approval is required for the storage of crude petroleum, petroleum, and dangerous petroleum more than 100 Imperial Gallons. The storage facilities, including piping, are assessed based on a checklist developed from the US

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 54 and 58 Standards.

As a matter of urgency, I have instructed the Ministry to collaborate with the Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) and other regulatory agencies continue to investigate the series of explosions and fires linked to LPG cylinders. It is intended that the findings of these investigations will better inform safety practices in the use of LPG. In the interim, NP has been directed to review the processes and procedures of its subsidiary company, NATPET Investments Company Limited (NATPET), which operates a filling, testing and refurbishment plant for LPG to ensure that all LPG cylinders supplied are verified as being free from leaks or any other defects. The same duty of care will be applied to other distributors of LPG. Furthermore, a team comprising Legal and Technical Officers from the MEEI are in the process of reviewing draft LPG Regulations and Licenses with the intention of finalization and implementation.

The proliferation of LPG incidents can also be attested to the lack of national standards for LPG. There have been work in this area with draft standards having been prepared by a Specification Committee constituted by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, comprising the MEEI and other regulatory agencies and stakeholders. These draft national standards for LPG are for both industrial and residential use. I would have personally directed that the Ministry formally request the reconvening of the Specifications Committee, as a result the committee is currently working towards the completion of the LPG standards which will be made available for public comment and ultimately be considered for approval as National LPG Standards.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

Our efforts are not limited to LPG, under the CNG Regulations of the Petroleum Act, applicants seeking a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) licence are required to comply with standards established by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) and modeled on the US National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Guidelines. The current standard TTBS/NFPA 52:2017 which was adopted in 2017 provides comprehensive guidance on the proper design, installation, operation, and maintenance of CNG engine fuel systems and dispensing infrastructure.

Since then, there have been updates to NFPA 52 with respect to fuel quality, the maintenance programmes for fueling stations and the integration of modern technology. Given the advancements and updates to the NFPA 52 standard, the Ministry intends to partner with the TTBS to implement the necessary upgrades to ensure the standard remains aligned with international best practices and evolving safety requirements.

Conclusion

Whether its asset management and maintenance, adapting to modern technologies, the energy sector faces ongoing challenges as the industry evolves and adapts to changing conditions in the energy market. At its core, safety compliance for the energy sector requires adherence to laws, regulations, and guidelines designed to protect the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from risk assessment and hazard mitigation to emergency response planning and environmental stewardship. Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector has had a low incidence of major accidents but there is room for improvement. As a Government we prioritize safety and our goal is work with the sector for a brighter, safe future.

Trinidad and Tobago stands ready to become the premier energy logistics hub of the Americas. Strategically located between North and South America, outside the Hurricane Belt, and within reach of major offshore reserves in Guyana,

Suriname, Venezuela, and our own waters, our nation offers a unique advantage for upstream operators seeking to strengthen and de-risk their supply chains. By nearshoring rigs, subsea equipment, and other critical Exploration and Production (E&P) inventory to a centralized, HSSE-compliant base in Trinidad and Tobago, companies can enhance operational resilience, reduce transit times, and improve safety and environmental performance. Our deepwater ports, skilled workforce, fabrication expertise, and world-class HSSE standards position us to support this new era of regional hydrocarbon development efficiently and sustainably.

In closing, let me thank AMCHAM for the opportunity to address this esteemed audience. HSSE is not merely a compliance tool but a comprehensive approach to the management of health, safety, security, and environmental responsibilities within organizations. Companies that adopt such practices benefit from a safe and productive working environment. Let us be exemplars for the global energy industry. I thank you.