

## PM hands over \$35m Sando Fishing Facility

■ Khamarie Rodriguez

A NEW \$35 million San Fernando Fishing Facility was on Saturday handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries by Prime Minister Stuart Young.

It replaces the King's Wharf as a point of congregation for the city's fisherfolk who for years have populated the seawall with their vessels.

The opening comes as part of the San Fernando Waterfront and Redevelopment project being undertaken by the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) and what Young said was a Government-driven effort to add value to the southern city.

The facility includes 25 finger piers, which can house up to 50 vessels or more, and according to the Prime Minister, will facilitate registered vessel owners who plan to offload their catch and make use of its refrigeration and waste disposal systems.

Young was joined by Minister of Local Government Faris Al-Rawi, Trade Minister Paula Gopee-Scoon, Agriculture Minister Kazim Hosein, Housing Minister Adrian Leonce, and Works and Transport Minister Rohan Sinanan at the opening.

Young said the facility was not a vanity project, but a result of what he deemed a 'responsible' Government. 'I am really proud today as a citizen to stand on the jetty and look at the facility. These are not just projects built as vanity projects, look at the redevelopment coming in...this is not done in a shoddy manner where there are questions immediately afterwards which is what we have seen time and time again in that 2010-15 period.'

'...There are no questions raised, or no legitimate questions raised on the handling of this project and the value and how it fits into the master plan...So don't look at the false promises, the false narratives, and what cannot be delivered. Look at what has been delivered,' said Young.

The squatting community at the wharf, he added, had been humanely relocated.

Also speaking at the opening Al-Rawi said the project was one of 31 occurring at the redevelopment site, and part of a four-phase plan.

'This means thousands of jobs for San Fernandians, housing for mixed use, private sector housing, public sector housing. This means we are now on solid ground that has been talked about for 40 years, it is in actual existence. Marina facilities, docking facilities, customs and excise, port, fishing housing, and the Hatter's redevelopment. This is a dream that San Fernando fought for decades and only this Government has delivered this,' he said.

'I thank Mr Prime Minister, my colleagues, especially Dr (Keith) Rowley who has backed San Fernando all the way as Prime Minister then continued by our Prime Minister now,' he added.

### **Fishermen compensation**

Last year, disgruntled fisherfolk were relocated from the site and promised compensation throughout the project's duration pending the facility's completion.

In January, fisherfolk however refused to occupy the partially opened facility as they did not believe it was equipped to house them.

Asked about fishermen who had questioned if compensation would extend until the facility was ready to be occupied, Young said the past could not be changed and acknowledged that unforeseen circumstances may occur during construction.

'You do renovations in your home, the contractor may tell you one month and a month and a half, they are still there. The point is it has been delivered now,' he said.

He said the Government would look into compensation in a responsible manner.

'With respect to compensation the Government will look at those things. Compensation is not something where we will just throw out money on the population that is not going to happen...The claims for compensation will be looked at in a responsible manner,' Young said.