

Focus on scrap iron, tourism: ministry launches 5 services

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THE Ministry of Trade and Industry is again placing focus on the scrap iron industry with three of its five new e-services available on TTBizLink.

Trade Minister Paula Gopee-Scoon introduced the new services on Tuesday at the ministry's conference room, Nicholas Tower, Port of Spain.

After recapping the previous accomplishments of TTBizLink, she said, 'Building on this momentum...we take another leap forward by integrating five new services from two key agencies, the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Trade Licence Unit and Tourism Trinidad Ltd (TTL), our partner. This brings the total number of e-services to 53, spanning 25 Government agencies across nine ministries.'

The three services tailored for the scrap iron industry are: notice of intention to load scrap metal for export, allowing approved scrap metal dealers in T& T to request appointments for supervision of loading scrap metal for export; permit for shipment and/or alteration of scrap metal allowing scrap iron dealers to apply online for approval to reduce or modify the size of scrap metal for transport; and permit for the shipment of broken machinery directly from the place of purchase, eliminating the need to transport it to an approved scrap metal site.

The two announced for TTL are: interim approval for a tourism project, which allows entities to receive interim approvals from TTL for incentives for the construction of tourism projects and duty-free permits for entities who have been granted interim approval to import items free of customs duties for their respective tourism projects.

'By digitising these processes, we are removing bottlenecks and attracting investment and the position in T& T as a competitive destination for tourism development,' said Gopee-Scoon.

She also shared that there are two modules—the administration and portal module and the maritime transport module—that are planned to launch in June.

'Once the system is fully implemented in 2026, it would increase transparency and traceability in the clearance movement and storage of goods across the supply chain, significantly reducing lead times, mitigating bottlenecks and enhancing the attractiveness of the ports of T& T,' Gopee-Scoon stated.

Acting permanent secretary of the Ministry of Digital Transformation Cory Belfon added that T& T now has over 300 e-services across the public sector.

'At this point, we have more than 300 e-services across the public sector, and our vision is to boldly empower citizens and businesses to meaningfully benefit from digital technology to create a greater quality of life for all we look forward to the continued and holistic progress and the implementation of further citizen, and business centric, user friendly, e-services that continue to tragedies of doing business, throughout,' said Belfon.

Operations manager of Single Electronic Window, Andre Dickson, said, as of July 2023, TTBizLink crossed the \$5 million milestone through 22,000 online transactions.

'Year over year, we have a 94% monthly increase in the average revenue and a 56% increase in the monthly average transactions. You'll see that the revenue value is much higher than the transaction increase, so that means people are more comfortable making larger payments online,' said Dickson.

He added that for non-Central Government agencies, a drawdown or pre-payment feature was added, which also crossed its \$5 million milestone in July 2023, representing 48,000 transactions.

Speaking at that launch, Gopee-Scoon said, 'These two new scrap metal services are very important as we move to regulate and modernise the scrap metal industry, ensuring that all of the players operate within the legal framework, thereby contributing positively to the economy. So, overall, by expanding services such as product registration, certification and licences, we are, in fact, reducing barriers to entry businesses, allowing them to participate more effectively in global partnerships.'

Gopee-Scoon added that six of the new services were already facilitating online payments. Those services are manufacturer and product registration for exports in both preferential and non-preferential markets, local free sales certificates, control drug licences, and recommendations for the import and export of live, fresh, frozen, and ornamental fish.