

■ Amid refinery restart plans...

Guaracara board to be named

■ Khamarie Rodriguez

THE board of the State-owned Guaracara Refinery Ltd Company Ltd will be appointed in the coming days and will oversee the restart of the Petrotrin refinery, according to Minister of Energy and Energy Industries Dr Roodal Moonilal.

Moonilal made the comment while speaking to reporters following his address at the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPETT)'s 2025 Mature Basin Energy Symposium at Cara Suites yesterday.

'We hope in a few days to have the board at the Guaracara Refinery company set up. And that board will also take some responsibility for the overseeing of the refinery restart committee, and restart committee matters before the Cabinet,' Moonilal said, '-just to tweak here and there, and maybe look at a couple more experienced professionals in the area.

'We would expect in a week or two, to have the refinery restart committee up and running under the overall supervision of the Guaracara Refinery Company-whose board will be in place in, I believe, a few days,' he said.

When Petrotrin was restructured in 2018 and the refinery was shut down, the government formed Trinidad Petroleum Holdings Ltd to manage the company's assets. Trinidad Petroleum Holdings has four subsidiaries: Heritage Petroleum Company Ltd, Paria Fuel Trading Company Ltd, Guaracara Refining Company Ltd, and the Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago (Petrotrin).

Speaking at this year's Labour Day celebrations, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar said her administration was committed to exploring options to restart the refinery and had agreed to establish a committee to develop strategies for its reopening.

Asked about security and theft from the former company's fields, Moonilal said it had posed a major problem. However, he said once security was provided, he believed the issue could be dealt with.

'We have had a lot of reports of theft and sabotage, vandalism of installations, and that is because, of course, over the years, a lot of these installations and compounds have been left unattended.'

'The materials have been taken away for different economic purposes, but now we have asked the board to ensure we have ample security. And once we go back to the compounds and we do the kind of work, maintenance and so on, we are sure we can protect the assets of Trinidad and Tobago,' he said.

However, he said security would always be an issue: 'As you know, Petrotrin had their own estate police that managed the security in the estates and throughout the oil belt... Once we closed down Petrotrin and sent home all the security, we had a big problem. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) cannot extend themselves beyond what they do.'

'In the old days we had Caroni Estate Police and Petrotrin Trintoc Estate police. They played a big role in minimising crime...particularly in rural areas. Once that had been removed, then the TTPS had a bigger strain and bigger burden and we all know what happened after,' he said.