

■ Penal/Debe chairman to lead Guaracara Refinery board...

'A true servant of the people'

CHAIRMAN of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation Gowtam Maharaj has been appointed the chairman of the board of the State-owned Guaracara Refinery Company Ltd.

Maharaj's appointment comes as Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal announced that the board will oversee the planned restart of the Petrotrin refinery.

Maharaj previously worked at Petrotrin for 28 years before its restructuring in 2018.

The Pointe-a-Pierre branch of the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union (OWTU) celebrated Maharaj's appointment on its Facebook page yesterday.

'Congratulations to Comrade Gowtam Maharaj, a true servant of the people, on his appointment to the board of Guaracara Refining as chairman! Another Labour Movement recommendation to a State board. We wish him all the best in his new position and look forward to seeing the positive impact he will undoubtedly make on the board,' it stated.

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.

Moonilal said last week that the new Guaracara board will oversee the work of the refinery restart committee.

When Petrotrin was restructured 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).

On January 3 last year, Maharaj succeeded Diptee Ramnath as chairman of the PDRC following Ramnath's death on December 22, 2023.

Maharaj had been involved in local government for several years and had previously occupied the post of alderman in the council from 2010-2013.

The other members of the Guaracara board are Marisa Ramsoondar and Raymond Surujbally.

In addition to the Guaracara board, Minister Moonilal also issued letters of appointment to the boards of directors of Heritage Petroleum Company Ltd and Paria Fuel Trading Company Ltd.

The brief ceremony was held at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries' Head Office at the International Waterfront Complex, Port of Spain.

'In delivering remarks, Minister Moonilal started by welcoming and congratulating the newly appointed board members. He emphasised the critical role these entities play in the national energy landscape and reminded the members of the mandate issued by The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, for the country to re-emerge as the energy hub of the Caribbean. He called on the appointees to bring their expertise and visionary leadership to bear in strengthening governance, strategising, improving operational efficiency, and ensuring accountability and transparency across all subsidiaries,' a release from the energy ministry stated.

'The new board appointments bring together a blend of technical proficiency, strategic insight, and corporate governance experience aimed at advancing the performance and competitiveness of TPHL's subsidiaries. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries will continue to provide oversight and policy direction to ensure that these companies contribute meaningfully to national development while upholding the principles of good corporate governance,' it stated.

Yesterday the *Express* reported that former chief executive officer of the Urban Development Corporation of T&T (UDeCOTT) Kurt Ramlal had been appointed the chairman of Heritage.

The other directors on the Heritage board are Khalid Hassanali, Ronnie Sookoo, Richard Hansraj, Lincoln Dookhran and Kamini Ramraj.

Attorney Nyree Alfonso has been appointed the chairman of Paria Fuel Trading Co Ltd.

The other directors are Geeta Ragoonath, Christopher Jackman, and Kent Ramlal.