

■ After weeks of speculation...

Ramdeen appointed NGC chairman

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ATTORNEY Gerald Ramdeen was yesterday officially appointed the chairman of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd (NGC), following weeks of speculation and mounting questions directed at the energy minister and the NGC.

Minister of Energy Dr Roodal Moonilal confirmed the appointment yesterday, fulfilling his promise to address ongoing concerns about the composition of NGC's board and its chairmanship in particular.

In recent weeks, public concern has grown over the leadership of the State-owned energy company, especially due to confusion surrounding who held the top board post.

On June 5, NGC stated it was 'duly notified by Corporation Sole of the appointment of Dr Randy Ramadhar Singh as chairman of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd'.

However, within weeks of that statement, questions emerged on whether Ramadhar Singh had been removed from the position.

Ramdeen was widely expected to succeed him. But both Moonilal and the NGC had, until now, avoided confirming this, despite repeated questions from the media.

Ramadhar Singh's absence from major public engagements added to the speculation.

He was notably absent from the NGC delegation to the Suriname Energy Oil and Gas Summit, and was not part of the recent Brechin Castle Solar Farm site visit, which included several Cabinet members.

The Brechin Castle Solar Farm Project, managed by Lightsource bp on behalf of project owners Shell, bp, and NGC, is among the largest renewable energy initiatives under way in the country.

Speaking to the *Express* via WhatsApp, Moonilal expressed confidence in Ramdeen's capabilities.

'He is an outstanding attorney-at-law and has practised in several areas of the law, including corporate law,' Moonilal said.

'At this time, NGC is challenged, as everyone knows, in terms of several illegal matters and negotiations over gas supply contracts and so on, and many other challenges as well, including matters of energy policy and diplomacy. And we are convinced Mr Ramdeen will make a very good and strong showing of himself and work with us across the ministry, serving not only the Ministry of Energy, but at a critical time, the people of T& T as we rebuild the energy sector and position ...(it as) the energy hub of the Caribbean,' he said.

'T& T cannot afford weak, unqualified leadership' However, the appointment drew sharp criticism from former energy minister and prime minister Stuart Young. In a WhatsApp response to the *Express*, Young stated, 'As a key player in the global energy market, T& T cannot afford weak, unqualified leadership in the energy sector. The individuals appointed to govern our State energy sector entities, especially NGC, must carry proven credibility, good professional reputations, and the trust of industry stakeholders.'

He described the Government's appointments as a 'glaring display of incompetence'.

'Instead, every single appointment made by the UNC Government to State energy sector boards has been a glaring display of incompetence and political patronage. These appointments inspire neither confidence nor respect-locally or internationally.'

Young further criticised the shifting leadership at NGC and said: 'The recent debacle surrounding the appointments to the NGC board is not just embarrassing-it is dangerous. At a time when NGC is preparing to engage in critical gas sales negotiations with major petrochemical players, this level of disarray signals instability and undermines our national interest.'

He warned that the developments represent a deeper problem.

'This is not just a misstep; it's a setup for failure. The UNC Government clearly does not understand the energy business-and worse, it is prepared to sacrifice T& T's future for political patronage. The consequences of this recklessness will not be political-they will be economic, structural, and long-lasting. T& T deserves leadership that treats the energy sector with the seriousness it demands,' said Young.

Ramdeen is an attorney and a former Opposition senator.