

Shell explores boosting gas output from Manatee field

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SHELL Trinidad and Tobago is open to exploring the possibility of increasing gas production from the Manatee field, in response to a call from Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal, Shell's senior vice-president and country chair Adam Lowmass has said.

The proposed boost in output is expected to ease the country's ongoing gas shortages and support Government revenue.

The development offers a glimmer of hope, coming just days after Finance Minister Davendranath Tancoo painted a grim picture of the country's fiscal outlook, including a projected \$9.67 billion deficit.

Moonilal previously indicated that the ministry was very focused on working with Shell to ensure the safe delivery of the Manatee project and first gas by 2027.

He said yesterday: 'This is an important step to right-siding the shortage of natural gas that we inherited in April 2025 and which has negatively impacted industrial output, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. Given the gas crisis we inherited, in the coming months we will be working with Shell to see if there are opportunities to increase the volumes of gas Manatee can bring to the Trinidad and Tobago economy.'

Lowmass told the *Sunday Express* in a telephone interview yesterday that it is possible to increase volumes.

'Shell Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the development of the Manatee project. We continue to work closely with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other relevant parties to progress the project. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries on opportunities to enhance the value of the Manatee field,' he said.

'We welcome the opportunity to work closely with the minister on the project to increase the value of the field, so the next couple of months we will work with him and his office to see how we can progress with that. There are a couple of opportunities available to look at increasing the daily production,' he added.

Lowmass recalled that Shell recently declared the final investment decision for the Aphrodite project.

'It's tied back to the existing Dolphin platform in the East Coast Marine Area and that will bring just over 100 million standard cubic feet a day on stream in 2027, assuming that it performs as expected,' he said.

'I think the next couple of years with the decline in production, until things like Manatee and Aphrodite come on, will be a little bit hard; but the future after that looks relatively positive from our perspective,' said Lowmass.

'Every molecule of gas counts'

In a telephone interview with the *Sunday Express* yesterday, Moonilal said the ministry is prepared to work with Shell to facilitate what is needed to increase volumes.

'The Manatee project is slated to deliver 604 million cubic feet per day by 2027. Further to a call I made for Shell to deliver more natural gas production from Manatee's reserves, Shell has indicated their willingness to explore that possibility. The ministry is prepared to work with Shell to facilitate any modifications to the plans for Manatee that would facilitate levels of production above the stated 604 million cubic feet of natural gas per day,' he said.

With regard to the Aphrodite project, the minister noted this was recently approved by Shell and its first gas is expected in 2027 at a rate of 104 million cubic feet per day, which will complement the additions from Manatee in that year.

'In the grand scheme of things, the volume may seem small, but every molecule of natural gas counts when you are in a shortage like the one we inherited in April 2025,' he said.

Moonilal said there is hope for the future despite the dismal figures presented, which revealed a ballooning deficit. 'There is hope; there are a number of discussions going on with the upstream producers of natural gas to maximise their investments and to bring new natural gas into commercial production,' he said.

'The BP Cypré project which is the result of the fiscal incentives put in place by the first Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration in 2014 has been a positive for Trinidad and Tobago,' he added.

Moonilal said this project began production in April 2025 and is currently supporting national natural gas output, which averaged 2.7 billion cubic feet per day in May 2025.

'As natural gas production begins to recover by 2027, we will see greater inflows of revenue and foreign exchange into the country. We also have plans to increase drilling activity in acreage currently held by Heritage with a view to turning around oil production, which is now unacceptably at approximately 50,000 barrels per day,' he said.

The former People's National Movement (PNM) government had placed high hopes on the Dragon gas deal with Venezuela, with projected yields in 2027.

However, under United States President Donald Trump's administration, this was placed in limbo.

'The US government cancelled the two OFAC licences that were related to the Dragon and Manakin-Cocuina projects.

Without these licences, investors like Shell and BP would be exposed to US sanctions if they ventured to invest in Dragon and Manakin-Cocuina respectively. Contrary to what is being suggested by the Opposition PNM, the UNC

Government is not elated by this turn of events, but we respect that the United States has a right to determine their foreign policy,' said Moonilal.

'There is always room for dialogue and diplomacy, and we remain very engaged with the US government on matters of energy sector collaboration,' he continued.

Moonilal has been in office for close to two months since the United National Congress (UNC) won the general election on April 28.

Asked about his tenure so far and the prospects ahead, he responded: 'Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector is endowed with a stable political environment, great human capital and world-class infrastructure. These are the building blocks for making the country into the hub of what is emerging rapidly as one of the centres of the global oil and gas industry. There is also a lot of potential to turn around oil production. I think the last government did not focus on oil production. With the correct policies, we can get investment to flow again towards oil production,' he stated.

He said Shell has expressed 'great confidence' in the Government and the economy going forward.

'Other leading players in the energy sector will follow soon to ramp up production and participate in our new vision of Trinidad and Tobago as the energy hub of the Caribbean. It is not coincidental that we are receiving news of final investment decisions post-April 2025. The word is out-when the UNC wins, the energy sector wins,' he said.

Moonilal concluded: 'We are excited with new near-term projects that will increase employment and generate more income distribution in previously depressed regions.'

Last year, Shell was the country's second-largest natural gas producer, accounting for 23% of output at an average rate of 586 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscf/d).

About Manatee

The Loran-Manatee field was discovered in 1983.

Loran represented the portion of the field in Venezuelan waters and Manatee represents the portion of the field in Trinidad and Tobago waters.

In 2007 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Venezuela signed a Framework Treaty covering all cross-border fields and in 2010 they signed a Unitisation Agreement specifically covering Loran-Manatee. In 2019, the two governments terminated the Unitisation Agreement and entered into another government-to-government agreement, allowing each country to independently develop its respective share of the Loran-Manatee field.

The project will involve a Normally Unattended Installation platform located in the East Coast Marine Area (ECMA) acreage with eight development wells via a 110 km 32" pipeline to the Shell-operated onshore Beachfield gas processing facility, for onward export to the Atlantic LNG facility, and to the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago for the domestic gas market.

About Aphrodite

The Aphrodite field was discovered in 2022.

Earlier this month Shell Trinidad and Tobago Ltd, a subsidiary of Shell plc, announced it had taken a Final Investment Decision (FID) on the Aphrodite project, an undeveloped gas field in the East Coast Marine Area (ECMA) in Trinidad and Tobago.

Aphrodite will allow Shell to incrementally expand its Integrated Gas business by building on existing developments in the ECMA, one of the country's most prolific gas-producing areas, Shell stated.

The ECMA is currently home to Shell's largest gas-producing fields in the country, including Dolphin, Starfish, Bounty and Endeavour.

Once online, this gas field will serve as a backfill for the country's Atlantic LNG facility, Shell said.

The increased production will help to maximise the potential utilisation of Shell's existing assets.

'This investment is testament to our commitment to help secure the energy future of Trinidad and Tobago on several fronts' said Lowmass on June 3. 'By increasing the gas supply to Atlantic LNG, the project will not only serve to fortify the domestic gas market, it will also boost the local petrochemical and power-generation industries.'

Development of the Aphrodite field remains subject to receipt of all applicable regulatory approvals, and once approved, is expected to start production in 2027 with an estimated peak production of approximately 18,400 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d) (107 MMscf/d).