

# Moonilal waiting on refinery status reports



Petrotrin refinery

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Now that negotiations with Nigerian energy company Oando have been put on hold, Minister of Energy Dr Roodal Moonilal says he is awaiting technical reports before touring the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, which has been closed since 2018.

Oando had been named the preferred bidder for the refinery by the last government.

Speaking to reporters in Debe yesterday, Dr Moonilal said: “We are putting together a team to do a quick technical assessment of the state of the refinery at this minute. We know what the refinery was in 2018, and certainly in 2015. But we would like to get a technical report now on the mothballing process and what is called tracking reports on the refinery. Then we will be in a position to tour.”

In a separate Whatsapp response to the Guardian, Moonilal said the current administration is “reviewing all transactions and initiatives re the refinery by the former administration. A technical team will first access the state of the refinery, then we will move from there.”

He also responded to recent comments made by the Vice President of Guyana Bharatt Jagdeo, regarding T&T’s energy plans and its interest in regional collaboration.

“The prime minister has outlined a vision for Trinidad and Tobago becoming an energy hub of the Caribbean and reemerging as a major and leading energy player in the Caribbean. It is a vision that we will implement that involves Suriname, Grenada and of course Guyana,” Dr Moonilal said.

He explained that T&T’s interest in Guyana extends beyond natural gas.

“They are not as advanced with the production of gas as they are with oil. So our business with Guyana has to do with providing technical service support to the oil industry, to the energy industry there,” he said.

He added: “Several of our state companies are involved in Guyana at this time and involved in bidding for contracts to provide services and so on. Technical, administrative, in some cases,” he

added.

He noted that Guyana's limited gas supply is not likely to benefit T&T at this time.

"No, they don't have the production of gas at this time that will help us. That is why we've had discussions over the years and we will now intensify those discussions, I imagine, after the election as well in Suriname, because there is an ongoing interest in a pipeline from Suriname to Trinidad. That can also connect to Guyana, if and when Guyana produces the quantum of gas that will be for both their domestic consumption and for export in the region, primarily Trinidad and Tobago."

He said there was a misunderstanding about the feasibility of a regional gas pipeline.

"The former energy minister is wrong. There is a model to run the pipeline outside of Venezuela's waters. It is quite common with international, commercial arrangements and international law to run a pipeline through other territorial waters belonging to several countries and on land. In fact there are pipelines that run through eastern Europe, western Europe everywhere," he said.

He added: "There is a model for that pipeline outside of Venezuelan waters as well. It is something we have on the cards and there is a major gas symposium in June to which Trinidad and Tobago will have strong representation and we intend to raise matters of the fuller participation of the energy sector from Trinidad in Suriname."

Dr Moonilal also said the private sector has already built relationships in Guyana and Suriname, but the government must now take a more active role.

"We must also have a significant presence and I'm happy to say that there are state enterprises now that we're working with to get a bigger role in Suriname and Guyana in the coming months," he added.

Last week, Dr Moonilal announced that negotiations with Oando have been put on hold pending a comprehensive review.