

T&T moves closer to energy partnership in Middle East





T&T Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Neil Parsan, from left, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Nicholas Morris, Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Sean Sobers and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs Randall Karim make their way to one of the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York on Wednesday. PHOTO COURTESY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal has hailed this country's recent meeting with Saudi Arabian energy giant Saudi Aramco as a major step towards easing the foreign exchange crisis and creating jobs.

On Wednesday, Foreign and Caricom Affairs Minister Sean Sobers told Guardian Media that a productive meeting on energy-related matters was held with Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, here on the sidelines at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

Speaking with Guardian Media outside of the UN Headquarters, Sobers said, "Saudi Aramco is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, oil company in the world. And so, we also have mature companies in Trinidad and Tobago. So, we're just really seeing how best we can partner and grow together with Saudi Arabia and that would have been the centre of our discussions and to set up a footprint in the Middle East, that was also discussed as well too. And some of those discussions will also continue with other Middle Eastern countries like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar as well too."

Sobers explained that Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar will also be meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and the Emir of Kuwait.

Speaking via telephone from T&T yesterday, Energy Minister Moonilal told Guardian Media that

these meetings are part of the Government's "expansive and aggressive approach to reinvigorate the energy sector."

Commenting on the meeting via WhatsApp, the minister said, "We would be interested in expanding our investment portfolio and partnering with the oil majors throughout the world. Saudi Aramco is, of course, the largest state-owned oil and petroleum company in Saudi Arabia. And we are interested, of course, in meeting and discussing partnerships as it relates to their participation in the energy sector locally, but also our involvement with them in related upstream, downstream matters."

However, Moonilal said the country is also looking beyond the Middle East.

"We are extremely pleased that after the last bid round, the third largest national oil and gas company of China, CNOOC (China National Offshore Oil Corporation), has expressed an interest in working in Trinidad and Tobago offshore, particularly the deep-water areas. And that is very positive, so that we are on a mission to attract the oil majors of the world for investment and participation in our economy to reinvigorate the energy sector," Moonilal said.

The Energy Minister believes this will create employment, revenue and foreign exchange for the country.